THE HEAD START MOTHER:
Organizational Participation and the Selves,
Self-Concepts, and Empowerment of Low-Income Mothers
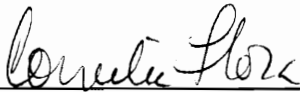
by

Barbara J. Peters

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
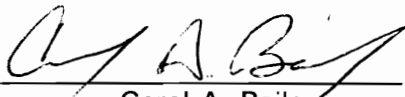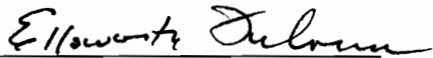
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Sociology

APPROVED:

_____
Cornelia Butler Flora, Chair

_____   _____
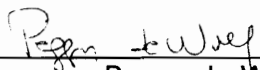Carol A. Bailey   Ellsworth Fuhrman
Co-chair

_____   _____
Peggy de Wolf   Danny Axsom

_____
Jill Kiecolt

August 1996
Blacksburg, Virginia

Key words: Head Start, Mothers, Selves, Self-concept, Empowerment

THE HEAD START MOTHER:
ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND THE SELVES,
SELF-CONCEPTS, AND EMPOWERMENT OF LOW-INCOME MOTHERS

by

Barbara Jean Peters

Chairperson - Cornelia Butler Flora
Co-chair - Carol A. Bailey
Department - Sociology

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study of women whose children are or have been enrolled in a Head Start program in the midwest. Head Start is an educational program designed to provide a wide range of services to disadvantaged children and their families. Part of the program's goals is to encourage parental participation in order to provide low-income parents a possibility of enriching their lives and empowering themselves through education. Using symbolic interaction as the initial theoretical perspective, I examine the experiences of mothers and how their involvement in the Head Start program has impacted their lives. Through interviews and observation, I investigate how Head Start as a formal organization designed to be part of the solution to the officially defined social problem of poverty affects the lives of Head Start mothers. As a former Head Start mother, I use my experiences as the starting point for the study.

From the mothers' accounts of their experiences with Head Start, I found several factors which may lead to changes in self-concepts and personal empowerment. The women identified "mother" as a very important self. Head Start is able to provide an arena where the women can see their self as mother in a positive light. Parental involvement in the program is both expected and appreciated. The mothers indicated that through their work as volunteers, they feel important and needed for the program's operation and feel good about the things they do in Head Start.

Among the factors identified which may lead to changes in self, empowerment, and self-concepts were the Federal mandate calling for maximum feasible participation of the parents, the transformation of clients into volunteers, the appreciation and encouragement

shown to the mothers, the acknowledgement of the parents as primary educators of their children, and their peer relationship with the Head Start staff. Through participation in various Head Start activities, the women reported positive changes in their "selves."

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of Joyce Wilcox (1933 - 1994), the epitome of a Head Start Director, Head Start mother, citizen, and friend.   She is sorely missed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Personal experience can be the very starting point of a study, the material
from which the researcher develops questions, and the source for finding
people to study.

Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*

My personal involvement with Head Start as a parent provided the impetus for this study. During and shortly after my time as a Head Start mother, I made several changes in my life. I became involved in community affairs. I decided to go back to college. I quit using corporal punishment on my children. Also, I fought for and won previously denied relocation assistance for me, my children, and other tenants who were going to be evicted from our apartments. We lived in a building scheduled for demolition to clear the site for the new Social Security building and the government did not want to help us relocate. My ideas about whom I was, what I could do, and what I believed about what I could accomplish for myself, my children, and my community changed in what I considered a positive direction. Head Start was then and still is a social service type organization with a uniqueness. It integrates parents into the program that serves their children. In addition, Head Start provides services to the parents and children as clients.

Later, from the perspective of a sociologist and social psychologist, I theorized that what had changed because of my Head Start experience was my self-concept (the ideas I had about my self became more positive), my empowerment (I became more empowered than I had been and insisted that other people see me as I wanted to be seen), my possible selves (I expanded the possibilities of selves I might become), and my self as mother (I learned positive ways to change the generalized other I had been using as a perspective to parent my children).

From this starting point, I considered whether something within the organizational context of Head Start led to my experience. Was Head Start an arena for self-change and empowerment? Much of the research on the impact of Project Head Start has been to determine if the intellectual abilities of the children increased. Although parental

1

participation has been considered an important component of the Head Start program from its inception (Valentine and Stark 1979), the voices of the parents, particularly mothers, have not been thoroughly documented. "Given the central place of parent involvement in Head Start policy, there has been surprisingly little research one on its impact on children, parents, or communities" (Zigler and Muenchow 1992, p.113). One of Head Start's founders, Edward Zigler, indicates that over the years there has been "considerable anecdotal evidence about the impact of Head Start on the lives of parents themselves . . . (Zigler and Muenchow 1992, p. 114). He suggests what we need is " . . . research on how participation in Head Start affects the whole fabric of parents' lives . . . (1992, p. 116). In this dissertation, I want to move from anecdote to ethnography to give Head Start mothers a voice regarding their involvement in Head Start, their perceptions of its impact on the way they see themselves, and how this may affect their everyday interactions with others.

This research is an attempt to use the mothers' perspective to uncover factors within the Head Start program and within the individuals participating which the women identify as inhibiting or encouraging change in the ideas they have regarding their selves and which they see as inhibiting or encouraging change in their degree of empowerment. What do women, previously defined as clients by the bureaucracies with which they interact, identify as critical for them in an official institution?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As I reflect upon my own life, I see how I have changed. I see how my social class and gender made it difficult to change at times. Power relations had clearly affected me and my interactions with others. Given this, when I was in graduate school, I was drawn to symbolic interaction as a vehicle for understanding my life, and I hope for understanding the lives of others. Consequently, I draw upon symbolic interaction for the sensitizing concepts that I use to guide this study. From a symbolic interactionist's perspective, I argue the self is a process in which its meaning is created and recreated. Symbolic interaction allows us to view self-change in the context of social interaction.

2

Symbolic interaction also has the potential to explain how power relations are created and maintained and how they can be changed. Ferguson (1980) points out:

> By proposing a definition of power that rests on the ability of persons or groups to define the situation within which others must act, this view also addresses all different kinds of dominance/subordinance relations without reducing them to any one particular common denominator, whether it be class, or race, or sex (p. 74).

I find symbolic interaction useful to a feminist study[1], as it helps to explain how power and gender are manifested within interactions. This is important when we are trying to understand interactions between the "haves" and the "have nots." Power is the ability to define the situation (or what is happening within an interaction and what it means) and to be able to control whose generalized other will be used as the perspective through which the interaction is further defined. Ferguson (1980) points out how this power becomes institutionalized and leads to some defining themselves as subordinate. She writes:

> An institution exists when a social act arises and arrangements are made to perpetuate it. An institution provides the context within which individual members of society take the attitudes of the generalized other toward their own activity in order to direct it socially. Once particular social acts are institutionalized, the power relationships within them are also institutionalized; that is, the ability of particular persons or groups to define the situation within which others must act is perpetuated (p. 71).

As this research gives voice to women involved in situations in which their gender and class limit their power to define the situation in which they must act[2], symbolic

---

[1]I claim this to be a feminist study. Besides giving a voice to the women involved in the research and placing their lives at the center of the study, I am also concerned with other feminist issues. I want the resulting work to involve praxis. I want the work to be collaborative, involving the participants in the final product.

[2]Although race is as important as class and gender in helping us understand power, this research was conducted in a predominately white area. I did not focus on issues of race and the self. It is certainly important and is a matter for further research with respect to Head Start and self-change.

3

interaction helps us theorize how they go about negotiating the "gendered" and "classed" interactions in their everyday lives. Further, symbolic interaction explains the self as emerging in interaction. It is defined and redefined as meanings are given to the self in various situations. Consequently, symbolic interaction helps to explain how the self and the concepts of one's self can change. Symbolic interaction is useful in understanding how gender contributes to our self-concepts and our definitions of our selves, how interactions become gendered and how through the gendered interactions, power can perpetuate gendered oppression.

THE SELF AND SELF-CONCEPT AND EMPOWERMENT

The self is the individual as a **social object** to her/himself and arises out of interaction. The self-concept comprises the **ideas** one has about that object, "self." Rosenberg speaks of the self-concept as both a social product and a social force (1990). It is influenced by the location of individuals in society, that is, where they are in social structures by virtue of individual characteristics such as race, class, and gender. It is formed through interactions in the contexts of such institutions as family, school, church, and economy. Self-concept is affected by the immediate situational contexts in which the individual interacts. The individual's self-concept in turn influences society by the behavior of the individual in the interactions in her/his everyday world. The study of the self and self-concept are important to sociology by virtue of the fact that self and the self-concept are ". . . acted upon and, in turn, act[s] upon society" (Rosenberg 1990, p.593).

The study of the link between the interactions at the macrosocial level (defining of a social problem) and the interactions at the microsocial level (selves and self-concepts) addresses the need to pay "more attention to the interrelationships between individuals and macrosocial structures or processes" (House and Mortimer 1990, p.71). I believe it is important to research the self-concepts of low-income mothers, and how they relate the self-concepts to participation in their social worlds. Studying the ways in which low-income mothers view their selves and their self-concepts through their participation as parents of children in Head Start can lead to knowledge that has the potential to alleviate some of the oppression and negative conditions the mothers may experience in

4

their lives and provide an opportunity for personal empowerment. Personal empowerment is the ability to define the situation one is in and to affect the meaning of one's "self" in an interaction. Allowing the mother's own perceptions to help identify the mechanisms of Head Start participation that lead to self-change, positive or negative, may help other agencies, whose purposes are to provide services to low-income women, facilitate the use of the mechanisms which women could use for personal empowerment. I discuss the self, self-concept, and empowerment in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Agencies designed to "help" people living in poverty often provide "looking-glasses" (Cooley 1964) that reflect images that encourage definitions of selves that are not positive (Diamond 1986; Dujon 1986; Dujon, Gradford, and Stevens 1986; Mandell 1986; Praeger 1986; Withorn 1986; Zopf 1989). An examination of the organization of most social service agencies would reveal that they do not stress the importance of the clients to the agency's own survival. Head Start is different in that respect. In the following sections, I discuss the site of this research and the methods I used to give the mothers a voice.

THE SITE

Project Head Start is a program designed to give disadvantaged children from low-income homes preschool education to overcome any deficits in their preparedness for elementary school. By focussing on preschool development, the founders hoped that the children will have a better chance of having their intellectual capabilities improved (Zigler and Valentine 1979). The government has dictated parents' involvement as volunteers and decision makers be part of the requirements for continued federal funding. The assumption is the children will gain from having their parents learn with them.

Each Head Start program operates under the federal mandate to give parents authority and has the potential to use parents as important decision makers in the program. However, the actual distribution of power between staff and parents may depend on social class and educational similarities and differences between staff and parents. For example. a center director who has advanced education may view the parents in a proprietary manner, directing the decisions made by the parents. On the other hand. a center director who has been a Head Start parent her/himself may guide

decisions rather than direct them. At this research site, Flussburg, the last director and the present director are former Head Start parents. This may have influenced their relationship with the parents which was peer to peer. The Head Start program researched in this work is located in a Midwestern state and services both metropolitan and rural areas.

Staff members at the Flussburg Head Start Center tell parents from the beginning that their participation is an integral ingredient for the continuing success and existence of the program. This has the potential for impacting positively upon the participating mother's "looking-glass self." Mothers could perceive the self reflected by Head Start as a woman who is important and depended upon, not a woman who is merely dependent. The officially articulated importance of parents to the Head Start program and in the direct administration of the centers presents a social context in which low-income mothers have the possibility of experiencing reflected selves that reinforce positive self-concepts and challenge reflected selves perceived to be negative.

METHODS

I began this research with the idea that I would use several methods of gathering data. This, I thought, would somehow guarantee that the results would be close to the "truth." I used two questionnaires, the Possible Selves Questionnaire (Markus and Nurius 1986) and the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn and McPartland 1954). I also constructed an interview guide. In addition, I spent time in the field, observing. With this triangulation, I presumed I would have data, which would, after being scrupulously analyzed, yield valid, reliable, and accurate knowledge that could then be used to affect policy.

Besides the difficulties I encountered (see Appendix A), I was also dissatisfied with the process and the resulting information. The women had wonderful, rich lives, albeit filled with the difficulties one experiences due to a scarcity of resources. These lives did not come alive using quantitative measures. Furthermore, I knew that my presence as a researcher was affecting some of their ideas about their "selves", and I wanted to account for this. I saw my research becoming more ethnographic than positivistic. I used ethnography, defined as "a descriptive account of social life" (Johnson 1995, p. 101),

6

because it could strengthen my ability to give the mothers' voices. Using ethnography also fit the way my work progressed.

As I proceeded, one discovery would lead to another idea that would take me back to the data. Agar (1980) describes this well. He explains:

> In ethnography, you learn something ("collect some data"), then you try to make sense of it ("analyze"), then you go back and see if the interpretations make sense in light of new experience ("collect more data"), then you refine your interpretation ("more analysis"), and so on. The process is dialectic, not linear (p. 9).

The process involved in this research is indeed dialectic.

Another reason for creating an ethnographic work relates to "ecological validity." Researchers encounter this problem when trying to generalize results from conducting laboratory experiments to the "real world." Studying in "real life" settings can resolve some "ecological validity" problems encountered in using a method more removed from the "real world." However, using everyday settings also presents a problem in "ecological validity" because of the influence of the researcher's presence (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). The tenets of ethnography as method makes us more aware of this and demands that we be reflexive. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) write:

> The first and most important step towards a resolution of the problems raised by positivism and naturalism is to recognize the reflexive character of social research: that is, to recognize that we are part of the social world we study (p. 14).

Because this research began from my own experience in Head Start, and because of the emphasis in ethnographic methods on reflexivity, ethnography is a very useful strategy to employ for this study. "Ethnography, whatever else it is, is an experientially rich social science" (Agar 1980, p. 6).

Being reflexive further demands that I acknowledge my epistemological stance; how do I know the world, and where is my position as an inquirer in relation to knowledge? Further, I need to explicate my stance in relation to the nature of reality, my ontological position. The resolution of these questions linked to my methodology fit into

existing paradigms within social science. Resolving these questions also leads me to answer Howard Becker's (1967) question, "Whose side are we on?"

Whose Side am I On?

Guba and Lincoln (1994) discuss what they see as competing paradigms within the social sciences. Of the four paradigms they cover, (positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism), the one with which I would most closely associate myself would be constructivism. Guba and Lincoln describe constructivists' ontology as relativist. What we take as reality does not exist as one truth, but instead, reality is composed of multiple constructions that are:

> . . . socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions (p. 110).

There is no assumption that these constructions are "the truth," but are the truths known by those holding the constructions. As researchers and social scientists, we can give voice to those truths.

The epistemology of the constructivist paradigm assumes the way we know reality involves interaction in which the knower and the researcher, create the knowledge "resulting" from the investigation. In my study, the interaction was between the Head Start mothers holding the constructions (the knowers), and me as I attempted to understand their knowledge. The final product is knowledge constructed by the interactions "between and among the investigator and the respondents" (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p.111).

The methodology of this paradigm is dialectic in nature and includes the methods routinely used by ethnographers. All these together influence the answer to the question, "Whose side are we on?" Becker (1967) questioned the assumptions of the positivistic paradigm that social scientists could distance themselves from the subjects of their research and produce work ". . . that is uncontaminated by personal and political sympathies" (p. 15). Becker suggests accusations of bias result when the researcher is seen as presenting the views of those who are in a hierarchically subordinate position.

8

This is perceived as "taking sides." This accusation is not often made when the voices of the superordinate are not contradicted. Becker points out, ". . . the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather, whose side are we on" (p. 15).

As a former Head Start mother and activist for those living in poverty (a group of which I have been a member), I have been unabashedly on the side of the women whose voices I present and the program, Head Start. I believe Head Start to be one social service organization that respects the clients it works with and encourages the clients to become part of the organization as volunteers or perhaps even employees. Head Start has the possibility of being a counter-hegemonic agency for low-income families. However, I'm wary of the increasing separation of staff and parents in some centers, which may be related to the increasing demand for college degrees as a criterion for hiring on the part of those who hire local staff. When there is a kind of "cooperative" leadership, with parents being considered peers of the staff at every level, I see Head Start as an agency which allows mothers to increase the volume of their voices. It made a difference in my life that I am only now coming to fully comprehend. I believe the "parent (or client) as peer" model should serve as a model for other human services. I am critical of the movement toward the "credentialization" of the Head Start staff. The importance of obtaining advanced education is not the question. It is how those with the "credentials" view the clients.

As a feminist, I also want this work to reflect the concern that feminist research is more than putting women at the center of the research (Mies 1991; Eichler 1988). I am concerned about praxis, collaboration, ethics, and letting the women's voices in this study be heard and that they are heard the way the women want their voices to be heard. Because of the side that I am on, my former affiliation with the organization, my feminist concerns, my paradigmatic stand, and my methodology, this work has been very much like the German work, Die unendliche Geschichte, or The Neverending Story (Ende 1983). In this book, one reads a story of a reader reading a story and as he does, he becomes part of the story, and through this, he affects the ending. In this dissertation, I am telling the story of women who participate in an organization with which I have been affiliated,

and because of the story, have become re-affiliated, and I have affected the story I am telling. And this story is unending.

I began this research because I wanted to know why Head Start had made a difference in my life and the lives of other former Head Start mothers I know. I wanted to understand the involvement of parents in Head Start as a process that may affect their lives and the lives of their families in what I presumed would be in a positive direction.

ORGANIZATION

Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework of my study, symbolic interaction and reference group theory. I discuss social structure and how it relates to the self. I briefly review the theories, show how they are useful in a feminist analysis, and define the concepts used in my research.

In Chapter Three I introduce Head Start as one putative solution to an officially defined social problem, poverty. I review the history of and justifications for founding the program, setting the larger context for understanding interactions at the micro-level. I give the basis for including parents as active participants in Head Start from its inception. I also review research literature that addresses Head Start and parent involvement.

I describe the research locale and the local organization of Head Start in Chapter Four. I analyze Head Start as part of the putative solution to the officially defined social problem, poverty. I explain the local response and founding of the program that was the site of this study.

Chapter Five includes a discussion of how the informants were selected and an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in the selection processes.

Chapter Six contains an overview of ethnography and why it is useful to this research. I describe my method of interviewing, the settings in which they took place, and the management of my self during the interviews. As it was the starting point for this work, also included in this chapter is an autobiographical account of my experience as a Head Start mother.

Chapter Seven introduces the women I interviewed. I have constructed vignettes which are presented in the first person. These vignettes serve to introduce the mothers,

who are identified by pseudonyms. I introduce the staff also using pseudonyms, and I provide a brief biography of each staff member I interviewed. I also describe my techniques for assuring the confidentiality of my informants.

Chapter Eight contains the analysis of Head Start and "others." Included are significant others, generalized others, and Head Start as a reference group.

In Chapter Nine, I report the findings regarding Head Start and how the mothers report their selves and self-concepts.

I report the findings regarding personal empowerment and involvement in Head Start in Chapter Ten. Also included is a discussion of Head Start as an organization that could challenge the preponderant authority structure of agencies providing services to a low-income population. I discuss Head Start as a potential counter hegemonic agency.

Chapter Eleven is a summary of the findings and uses them to lay out the factors identified by the Head Start mothers that influence how an official institution, organized and legitimized to carry out a specific function, can facilitate or impede change in the participants, particularly participants not officially designated as beneficiaries. Also, included in Chapter Eleven are recommendations for future research.

The Appendices include the methods used in conducting this research, the problems encountered, and the research instruments used.

CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK [3]

> In the sociology room
> the children learn
> that even dreams are colored
> by your perspective.
>
> I toss and turn all night.
>
> Theresa Burns, *The Sociology Room*

In this chapter I will present the theoretical perspectives I use, define the concepts, and then relate the concepts to Head Start.

PERSPECTIVES

I began my research from the symbolic interaction perspective. I also used concepts from reference group theory, and concepts drawn from the literature on social structure and personality. As my study progressed, I found concepts explaining class and formal organization to be helpful in understanding the macro-level processes affecting the micro-level interactions. I first discuss symbolic interaction and how it is useful to feminist analysis. Next, I focus on concepts from reference group theory. I then discuss social structure and the self and concepts drawn from this perspective. These concepts help us to understand how an individual self is linked to social structures.

One's position in certain social structures can limit or expand the alternatives available to her/him in choosing and defining selves. Social structures also play a part in determining who will be involved in the interactions at each stage in the process of defining poverty as a social (as opposed to an individual) problem and the conception and implementation of the putative solutions which directly impact the targets of those "solutions," which in this case are the Head Start mothers. Finally, I discuss concepts from

---

[3]Segments of this Chapter owe a great deal to collaboration with Tracy Luff on a theoretical paper titled. "Choosing the Generalized Other: Toward a Feminist Perspective on Personal Empowerment and Symbolic Interaction."

theories of class and of formal organizations and how they are helpful to understanding the interactions mothers experience during their involvement with Head Start.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism provides a framework for studying the behavior of the individual in society. Because symbolic interaction theory focuses on intra- and inter-actor interactions, it is particularly useful for understanding the development, change, and maintenance of the self. It is also useful for understanding how individuals experience their lives. This perspective focusses on social interaction, "the dynamic social activities taking place among persons" (Charon 1992, p. 23). Symbolic Interaction draws heavily upon the works of George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and Herbert Blumer. From their works come the concepts and ideas that are central to the development of the idea of empowerment through self-redefinition.

The central assumptions of symbolic interaction are:

1) People act toward objects based upon the meaning those objects hold for them.

2) The meaning arises out of social interaction with others.

3) Those meanings are managed in and modified through an interpretive process (Blumer 1969).

Mead explains an object does not exist outside meaning, and meaning is socially defined through interaction. He says:

> Objects are constituted in terms of meanings within the social process of
> experience and behavior through the mutual adjustment to one another of
> the responses or actions of the various individual organisms involved in
> that process . . . . (1962, p. 77)

The world inhabited by human beings is one in which they create and recreate objects. Objects have symbolic meaning given to them as a result of actions toward them (Hewitt 1988). This symbolic meaning is created and then recreated through the interactions involving them. For example, Gordon (1994) says regarding the term "welfare":

> What once meant well-being now means ill-being. What once meant
> prosperity, good health, and good spirits now implies poverty, bad health,

13

and fatalism. A word that once evoked images of pastoral contentment now connotes slums, depressed single mothers, and neglected children, even crime. Today "welfare" means grudging aid to the poor, when once it referred to a vision of a good life. (p. 1)

Through definition of the situation and interaction, what was once a word symbolizing dignity, well-being, and satisfaction is now a pejorative. It has come to mean a few programs which aid the poor, and almost exclusively refers to Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The redefining of the symbolic meaning has consequences for those to whom the new term applies. It can create ambivalence for the recipients of "welfare," who are generally single mothers and their children. While some mothers may hate "welfare" and all that it represents, these same mothers might also understand that without it, the entire family may go homeless and unfed (Gordon 1994).

Self

The self is a social object toward which an actor acts (Charon 1985), the individual as defined by that individual (Tucker 1978). Development of the self is a process involving interaction with others. To develop and have a self is to "have the capacity to observe, respond to, and direct one's own behavior" (Lauer and Handel 1977, p. 66). The self develops in interaction with others. and the actor acts toward the self through taking the views of the others. It is through this interaction that meaning is given to the self as a social object. The looking-glass self contributes to the process of developing the self.

The self as object. Objects can be concrete or abstract. The self is an abstract object toward which the actor acts and interacts based upon the meaning the self holds for her/him. The meaning of the self arises out of interaction with others. and the self is managed in and modified through an internal interpretive process.

The concept of the looking-glass self provides a basis for examining aspects of that interpretive process involving the self. "A social self . . . might be called the reflected or looking-glass self . . . " (Cooley 1964. p. 142). In our imagination we perceive what we

14

appear to be in another's mind and alter our behavior in response to how we value that person's perception. The looking-glass self has three elements:

1. The person imagines her/his appearance to others.
2. The person imagines others' judgements of that appearance.
3. The person develops a self-feeling based upon that imagined judgement of others. (Cooley 1964, p.184)

Because the self is an object, the actor will act toward the self based partly upon the meaning that has arisen from the interaction with others through the looking-glass process. The significance of these others to the actor has a great impact on the self-feeling that develops within the actor. These others can be people with whom the actor has primary interactions, generalized or significant others who may be real or imaginary, and groups with whom one has interacted to learn their rules and expectations.

Self-Concept

A person's self-concept is the **ideas** one has about one's self (Lauer and Handel 1977; Hewitt 1988). It is how the person describes her/his self to her/himself, as well as the positive or negative values placed on the descriptions. The self-concept is a general idea of how the actor views her/his self. Cooley (1964) suggested that people view themselves through social interactions that allow actors to have conversations with themselves. The actor imagines how others view her/him, and how others evaluate that view. The actor then develops a feeling about the view and judgements she or he perceives the others hold. The generalized other the actor is employing influences this imagining.

Two concepts which help to clarify the impact others have on the actor's self-concept (the ideas one has about one's self) and self-feeling (the emotions attached to the ideas) are "significant other" and "generalized other" It is from Mead (1962) that we get these concepts. He said that the play and game stages of the development of a self in children are the processes through which the self arises as an object.

Significant Others

Individuals who are emotionally more important to the actor, and with whom the actor has primary relationships, are termed "significant others." They tend to have a significant impact upon the actor's definition of self and upon the selection of perspectives the actor takes. Significant others are those persons with whom actors have primary contact and whose perspective comes to have higher importance on a continuum for the development of the actors' self-concepts (Shibutani 1978). The actor comes to have emotional ties to the significant other. The nature of these ties will influence the degree to which the actor takes the role of a variety of generalized others.

Generalized Others

Mead (1962) tells us during the game stage of children's development of "self," they learn to take the role of many others involved in a particular interaction. Mead described the generalized other as ". . . an organization of the attitudes of those involved in the same process" (1962, p.154). He was not referring to an organized set of emotional reactions to particular objects, but rather to "the beginnings of acts," a mental stance regarding objects (Mead 1962, p.5). These positions or "attitudes" direct responses to objects, including the self. Mead referred to the "generalized other" as "[t]he organized community or social group which gives to the individual his [sic] unity of self . . . " (p.154). The generalized other results from the organization of the attitudes of those involved in the same process as the actor.

Shibutani and Mead have different definitions of the "generalized other." Mead tells us it is akin to an overall moral view; the rules of conduct one comes to internalize. These rules are the attitudes of group or community, which guide the conduct of the individual. The generalized other becomes the basis for the actor's self-control, self-direction, and self-judgement (Mead 1962).

Shibutani says the generalized other is a shared perspective on how to view reality and especially how to define the self, other persons, and the world. The perspective shared by those in a particular group is its culture, and the members of each cultural group support the perspectives of one another by responding to each other in an expected

16

way. Culture is maintained and supported through communication. Shibutani interprets Mead's concept of taking the role of the generalized other to mean that the actor "approaches the world from the standpoint of the culture of his [sic] group" (1978, p.110). The actor employs the generalized other to guide her/his behavior toward the self. It is the ideas, values, and attitudes that the actor has internalized from interaction with others and groups of others. The generalized other may be organized from real or imaginary others, alive or dead, from the past or the present, physically present or physically distant, or from membership in concrete or abstract groups (Charon 1985, Mead 1962). Because the generalized other is organized from a matrix of the multiplicity of interactions with others, we develop many generalized others. Like a painting comprising many points of color of many different shades, tones, and hues, these generalized others come together to create our "selves."

Possible Selves

Possible self is a concept developed by Markus and Nurius (1986). They describe possible self as a part of self-knowledge; the way people think of potential selves. Possible selves are distinct from present selves; they are the selves of the future. These possible selves can be the hoped for self in the future, such as an unemployed mother considering her self as secretary in the future or a mother anticipating a self as grandmother. Possible selves might also take the form of a dreaded self, as a mother dreading remaining a welfare mother or becoming a homeless person, the self as a failure. Markus and Nurius explain that possible selves originate from the images the actor has of the self from the past. Possible selves also include images the actor may have of the self in the future. Although possible selves are connected to the self of the present, they are clearly separate from them.

Possible selves available to an individual are drawn from her/his sociocultural and historical context and "from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences" (Markus and Nurius 1986, p. 954). The individual can be creative in imagining possible selves, but may be limited by socially determined elements; i.e. social structures. Social structures help determine generalized

17

and significant others. They also help determine the individual's available reference groups from which models may come to help the individual conceive of and plan possible selves.

Empowerment

"Empowerment" is not a concept that is generally associated with symbolic interaction. I include it at this point in my discussion because my colleague, Tracy Luff, and I found taking a symbolic interactionist view of empowerment useful in explaining the process of becoming empowered. Further, we feel our definition is distinct from other definitions of empowerment.

The term "empowerment" has received a great deal of attention in terms of alleviating a variety of oppressions. It has been used without definition as a rallying point for politicians, feminists, community workers, and so on. Sociologists, and others, may have an intuitive understanding of it as something good, a goal, a desired thing, and having something to do with power.

There are many references to the concept "empowerment" covering a variety of definitions about what it is and what it is not. In their book, Women and the Politics of Empowerment, Morgen and Bookman say that for their purposes empowerment means something different from "individual self-assertion, upward mobility, or the psychological experience of 'feeling powerful'" (1988, p.4). For Morgen and Bookman, it is instead:

> . . . a **process** (emphasis in the original) aimed at consolidating, maintaining, or changing the nature and distribution of power in a particular cultural context. (1988, p.4)

Collins suggests:

> Empowerment involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional, that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization. (1990, p. 230)

Hall writes that it is:

> . . . individual and collective strengthening of negotiating position in relation to the negotiating position of other people; development, growth, and

18

maturation of real talents and aptitudes; recognition and responsibility as
an equal. (1992, p.121)

The term has been used to describe self-efficacy through assertiveness training (Ozer and Bandura 1990), the creation of power and the decrease of powerlessness in organizational development (Murrell 1985), a goal Hartman (1983) links with responsibility but never really defines, and participation in interventions affecting one's welfare (Mulvey 1988). Gutièrrez defines empowerment as:

. . . a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so
that individuals can take action to improve their life situations. (1990, p.
149)

Swift and Levin (1987) point out that in the mental health field empowerment has no clearly operationalized or consensual definition. Their field is not alone in experiencing this deficiency. They used the term to mean increasing people's control over their own lives.

Two consistent themes emerge from these definitions. (1) Empowerment is important to enable people to experience a change in their lives that will assist them in overcoming whatever oppression they are experiencing. (2) Empowerment is a process rather than an event. Empowerment is something that the disempowered need, but being a process, it is not something that can be bestowed upon them. Those hoping to develop programs to help people become empowered need to understand empowerment as a process. It does not proceed directly from the empowered to the disempowered. Morgen and Bookman point out:

This process is rarely a linear one. It takes twists and turns, includes both
resistance and consent, and ebbs and flows as groups with different
relations to the structures and sources of power come into conflict. (1988,
p. 4)

It may also be helpful to consider empowerment as having different dimensions which correspond to different spheres of life: political empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment, and personal empowerment. Although feminists may be concerned with **all** aspects of empowerment, different schools of feminist thought focus

on different dimensions. For example, liberal feminists seek political empowerment of women, Marxist and socialist feminists seek economic empowerment, and radical feminists seek social empowerment for women. Feminists who take the symbolic interactionist perspective look at personal empowerment as it arises in social interaction. We have defined personal empowerment as:

> . . . the process by which the actor comes to have control over and the
> choice of which generalized other whose perspective of her/his self she or
> he will take in an interaction. (Peters and Luff 1993, p. 12)

Gaining control may involve redefining self or acquiring new selves.

Reference Group Theory

In 1942, Hyman coined the term "reference group" (Hyman 1968). Social psychologists from both psychology and sociology employed it. The comparison function explains how individuals use groups to compare their behavior and perceptions with the behavior and perceptions of others. The normative function explains how individuals use groups to set and enforce standards of behavior. (Kelly 1968). For example, Clark (1972) used reference group theory to study juvenile delinquency. He suggested that by affecting the juvenile's choice of reference groups (comparative), and/or by changing the norms of the juvenile's reference groups (normative), one could expect to change the juvenile's level of involvement in deviant behavior. In a study conducted in 1957, Siegel and Siegel (1968) found that attitude change could be linked to both reference group and membership group. They defined membership groups as a group to which one belongs and reference group as a group to which one aspires.

There seems to have been great interest in reference groups in the fifties through the seventies. Shibutani reports that in 1955, ". . . the concept of reference group has become one of the central analytic tools in social psychology . . . " (Shibutani 1978). However, that interest appears to have waned. Singer (1990) points out:

> Almost forty years after Hyman (1942) first coined the term, it must be
> acknowledged that its [reference group theory] promise has not been
> fulfilled. There is at present no reference group theory. (p. 66)

20

In existing research, the concept "reference groups" is used to explain how individuals use them to evaluate their own status compared to others in a group, or to explain normative behavior within groups. I found no research that uses this perspective to help explain self change. However, I believe reference group theory can help us understand part of the process involved in the acquisition and redefinition of selves. The concept of reference groups also helps explain the process of self-definition and self-redefinition.

The groups with whom the actor associates can come to serve as reference points for the way she/he organizes her/his perceptions of the self (Shibutani 1978). Usually the groups that become important are the ones in which the actor participates directly. Shibutani calls these membership groups. Shibutani asserts that the reference group is "that group whose perspective constitutes the frame of reference of the actor" (1978, p. 109). Because the actor may interact with many groups, she/he comes to have many reference groups and thus develops a perspective from each group (Charon 1985). This leads to the actor having several generalized others, because she or he belongs to several social worlds, real or imagined, each with its own perspective and generalized other. Because we live in a mass society characterized by cultural pluralism, he says, "each person internalizes several perspectives" (1978, p. 111). Charon points out that the actor comes to interact with many different reference groups, and that she/he:

> . . . shares a perspective, including a perspective on the **self**, with each of them. If he or she is to continue to interact successfully with a reference group, then that perspective must, at least temporarily, become the individual's generalized other, used to see and direct the self in that group (1985, p. 70).

Because actors can have many reference groups, conflicts and overlapping of participation and loyalty will undoubtedly occur. Shibutani suggests that for the most part, these perspectives overlap in such a way that the reference groups for most actors support one another. However, the times when the perspectives of significant others and reference groups conflict and when there is conflict between reference groups, the actor is faced with the dilemma of choosing one perspective to define the situation. Which generalized other's role is to be taken? Shibutani states:

21

. . . to what extent the culture of a group serves as the matrix for the organization of perceptual experience depends upon one's relationship and personal loyalty to others who share that outlook (1978, p. 114).

The actor will choose the reference group or the perspective of the significant other with whom she/he feels the most personal loyalty. Shibutani maintains that to ascertain how a person defines the situation, which perspective has been used in that definition, and whose responses will support the actor's position, it is necessary to focus attention on what expectations the actor has of others, the communication channels in which she/he is involved, and the nature of the relationships with those with whom she/he identifies her/himself (1978). Social structures can impose upon the nature of the relationships one has with others thereby affecting the actor's selves.

Social Structure and the Self

Social structures are the stable patterns of social relationships forming the framework in which social interaction takes place (Levin 1991). They are the hierarchical organizations or arrangements of social positions. Groups, organizations, communities and so forth are concrete forms of these structures. Race, class, age, gender, etc. influence what positions a person might occupy and influence the meanings and definitions of those positions. Attributes such as race, class, and gender have been referred to as abstract structures (Stryker 1980), as part of the macro-social structures (House 1990), as special social structures (Charon 1993), and as structural parameters (Blau 1977). The intersections of race, class, and gender (and also other attributes) differentiate the positions in social structures with respect to the power, prestige, and privilege which accompany them.

House (1977) suggests there are three aspects or faces to social psychology: psychological social psychology within the discipline of psychology, symbolic interaction within sociology, and social structure and personality, also within the discipline of sociology. This third face purports to link the ". . . macrosocial phenomena to individuals' psychological attributes and behavior . . . " (House and Mortimer 1990, p. 71). Macrosocial phenomena are based upon stratification and differentiation (by race, gender,

22

age, occupational position, socioeconomic levels, etc.) or social change (such as geographic mobility, global restructuring). Social structures imply inequalities.

The underlying assumptions of social structure and personality are:

1.   The behavior of individuals is not solely the result of psychological processes, i.e., individual pathologies cannot account for all behavior.

2.   Not only do social structures affect individuals, but it is through individuals that the structures are enacted. In other words, individuals and their interactions are the vehicles through which any social structure operates. For example, education as an institution does not exist in and of itself, but is carried out by and consists of individuals.

3.   Social structures have meanings for individuals. Those meanings will depend upon the structure in which the individual is positioned. In other words, different structures have different meanings.

Charon (1993) regards gender as one social structure which provide links to psychological attributes and behavior. Charon considers race, class, and gender "special social structures." Charon points out features of these structures that make them special:

1.   The individual is placed in all three at birth.

2.   The individual's position in the family perpetuates all three.

3.   The individual's position in these structures influences placement in most other structures.

4.   The individual's position in these structures is generally fixed.

5.   Various institutions in society cooperated to protect and perpetuate the structures as they have developed.

6.   These structures are embedded in a long history. (p. 83-84)

He regards these special social structures as essentially secured and fixed. They have been incorporated in the composition of social stratification. The special social structures of which one is a part determine at what strata one is in the social hierarchy (Charon 1993). Although Charon speaks of the special social structures being race, class, and gender, in a highly stratified society other attributes may also be conceived of as special. For example, people with disabilities may be part of a special structure. One difference

23

here is a person may be placed in this structure anytime in her/his life. Charon's special social structures can be regarded as the parameters of which Blau speaks. The intersections of these parameters influence the power, privilege, and prestige of positions. Social structures help to establish who will interact with whom as Stryker points out, ". . . it is social structure that shapes the possibilities for interaction and so, ultimately, the person" (1980, p.66).

Stryker also points out that if a social person changes the patterns of the interaction, the altered patterns have the potential to change social structure. When one has the power to choose and control which generalized other's perspective of one's self will be used in an interaction, the potential to change a social structure exists. By joining with others in one's social class and working together for the benefit of one's particular social class, the potential to change the social structure exists.

Strata and Class

Krauss (1976) points out the difference between social strata and social class. He defines a social stratum as, ". . . any aggregate of persons who are similar in the possession of, or access to, social goods" (p. 13). The persons in a stratum are not organized, but are similar in ways that are measurable. For example, they may have similar incomes or occupations or educations. They do not engage in a collective action to accomplish a goal such as trying to increase their share of social goods. As Krauss points out further, "[o]rganized attempts to alter the allocation of social goods within a community are likely to involve social classes, which are quite different phenomena" (p. 14).

For strata to become classes requires "communalization." Members of a stratum must define their interests as similar to others in the same stratum and dissimilar to those in another stratum. Krauss says:

> The key difference between social stratification and social class is
> communalization; therefore class formation requires some kind of
> structuring which may lead to informal groups or to formal organizations.
> Otherwise the aggregates of persons continue to be strata, and discontent

24

does not lead to organized attempts to change conditions. (Krauss 1976,

p. 15)

Reference groups are one arena through which the structuring and communalization may take place. If one's reference groups include groups with the power to define certain social conditions as problematic, it is possible that the proposed "solutions" to the problem might work to the advantage of one's own class while affecting in unintended ways individuals in a less powerful stratum.

Official Definition of a Social Problem

Social problems are social-phenomenon which become defined as problematic through collective social behavior or claims-making activity (Blumer 1961; Spector and Kitsuse 1977). Defining a social condition as a social problem can produce activities and behaviors designed to address and redress the condition and reduce its perceived harmful effects. When the definitions of the situation as a social problem are the products of groups of people with the resources to try to "do something" to solve the purported problem, the definitions will have direct impact on those who become the target of the solution. The consequences will be real and the effects will depend upon whose definition of the situation is being used (Thomas and Thomas 1928). Thus, when the state (macro) defines a condition as a social problem and sets policy to address it, the policies will have an impact at the micro level in the lives of the targets of the solution. People are transformed from "citizens" to "clients" (McKnight 1987).

Definition of the situation is especially important for making the macro/micro link. When we take into account whose definition is being used in which situation, we gain an understanding of the manufacturing and remanufacturing of reality and the impact of that process on all actors. If the oppressed do not have their definitions of what is going on accepted, reality then becomes the reality of the powerful (Thomas and Thomas 1928). When the powerful, as represented through the State and its agencies, define situations as problematic and then respond with programs that further define reality for the clients, the consequences of the programs are real for the oppressed whether or not the programs address the clients' lived reality.

25

The ability to impose one's will on others is the ability to get one's definition of the situation used in an interaction with others. This imposition of will is the result of having access to resources, material, social, or economic. Thus, power may be defined as the ability by access to resources to have control over the definition of the situation (Peters and Luff 1993; Ferguson 1980).

When the less powerful generally know that those with power control social resources defined as punishments and rewards, the less powerful are likely to comply with the way in which the powerful distribute the rewards and punishments (Lipman-Blumen 1984). In other words, one is most likely to accept, or at least feign acceptance, of a more powerful person's definition of the situation, which means employing her/his perspective as the generalized other in that situation, when one is aware that the other controls desired resources (Peters and Luff 1993).

This becomes apparent when we look at the effects of the powerful state's definition of the situation (e.g., poverty) as a social problem. Blumer stated in 1961 that, "[s]ocial problems are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of a society but are the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem" (p. 301). While a given condition may exist and be problematic to those affected by it, it is the designation of being a "social problem" that will result in the condition being targeted for collective remedy.

I turn now to a discussion of formal organizations as vehicles through which social phenomena are defined as problems and proposed "solutions" to social problems are enacted.

Organization

Social organization unites people with "shared beliefs and orientations" into collectivities that guide their conduct (Blau and Scott 1962). As such, participating in an organization may affect individuals interacting within that milieu. Etzioni (1964) describes organizations as social units whose formation is deliberate. Organizations form to accomplish specific goals and involve a commitment on the part of the members to meet again under conditions that imply a certain amount of control. Ährne (1990) suggests:

26

The basic features of organizations are individual commitments to
continue, which also means yielding to some kind of control (p.33).
Blau and Scott tell us:

> . . . [that when these organizations] have been formally established for the
> explicit purpose of achieving certain goals, the term 'formal organizations'
> is used to designate them. (1962, p. 9)

Table 2-1 shows four types of organization. An organization's beneficiaries are used to
define which type they are. It is the service organization that generally develops to
address problems of those who become designated as clients.

As the definition of the social problem takes shape, there will be a mobilization of
resources, social and economic, directed at "solving" the problem. As various social
groups engage in "claims-making activities", official responses are created and then
revised as a result. These responses often take the form of new social service
organizations that can then become a base where further claims making are carried on
(Joffe 1979). The new social service agency creates **professionals** who need **clients**.
As a result, the mobilization of the less powerful which produced the official recognition
of the problem may result in an institutional structure that defines them as clients,
delivering some good and services, but further marginalizing them as actors (Flora 1995).

Table 2-1 Typology of Formal Organizations

TYPE	BENEFICIARY	SPECIAL PROBLEMS	EXAMPLES
Mutual Benefit	Membership	Maintaining internal democratic process	Political Parties, clubs, religious sects, Professional organizations.
Business Concerns	Owners	Maximizing operating efficiency in a competitive situation	Industrial firms, wholesale & retail stores, banks
Service	Client Group	conflict between professional service to clients and administrative procedures	Social work agencies, hospitals, schools
Commonweal	Public-at-large	Development of democratic mechanisms for control by public	State Department, military, police

In the service organization, the client is presumed not to know what is in his or her own best interest, therefore the professional will determine what that is and then provide it (Blau and Scott 1962, p. 51). Social service organizations become the spheres of activity from which patterns of interaction and meanings are generated. These spheres then become the context in which negotiations over how particular social problems and their victims will be defined (Luff and Peters 1994). Joffe (1979) points out:

> Both established and newly created social services must be viewed as arenas in which different social actors attempt to impose their own definition of reality on the situation (p. 239).

SUMMARY

Symbolic interaction is a strong theoretical base from which to explore the self. This perspective allows us to examine how the actor comes to define her or his self as a social object and then acts toward that self according to the meanings that become

28

attached to the self, or according to the meanings that are managed and redefined through interactions with:

1. Significant others (real or fictional) which have emerged in the socialization (interaction) process.

2. Generalized others (real or fictional) that have emerged in the socialization (interaction) process.

3. Reference groups (real or fictional) with whom the actor interacts. Reference groups can serve as generalized others.

The self, its definition and meaning, results from interactions with others, the nature of the interactions, and the importance placed upon them. These interactions can take place in the context of reference groups. The perspectives of these groups may at times come into conflict with the actor's significant others and other reference groups. The actor will then need to choose which perspective she/he will take to define reality. This choice will depend upon the importance of relationships in which she/he is involved, the power others in the relationship have over resources needed or wanted by the actor, and interactions with those in whom she/he recognizes aspects of her self.

Coupling concepts from symbolic interaction with concepts from reference group theory and from social structure, produces a perspective that can help our understanding of: the ways in which individuals, particularly women with low-income, perceive their selves and their self concepts; the plans they make for future selves; and how they may become empowered. It enables us to look at internal factors that may promote or inhibit such change and also factors present in an organization, in this case Head Start, which may promote or inhibit self change and empowerment.

The social structures influence the defining process because they may determine who are the players in social service organizations and who are the victims. Social structures contribute to the definition of a phenomenon as a social problem and the solutions implemented, and the impact on the targets of the solutions. The targets may be members of a particular social stratum, such as when the situation being defined as a social problem is poverty.

It is possible that the more reference groups in which one participates or which one has from the same stratum, the more likely the interactions and perspectives produced in and used by the individual can result in class and class actions. Conversely, the fewer reference groups an individual has, the less likely the individual will be part of a class and will remain part of a stratum. We might further speculate that the more reference groups available to the members of a stratum, the more likely the stratum will develop and act as a class, and conversely, the fewer reference groups available, more likely the stratum will remain a stratum. Therefore, if low-income women have fewer reference groups than members of a superordinate stratum, they are unlikely to challenge the unequal distribution of the social goods and are more likely to internalize the oppression and remain disempowered. This becomes more profound when the reference groups available to the superordinate also have the power to control and allocate resources needed by the subordinate.

The next chapter details the founding of Head Start and its "claims-making activities." At each level, the definition of the situation created a different response depending upon who was doing the defining and their positions in the social structure.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORY OF HEAD START

People are trapped in history and history in them.

-- James Baldwin

The next section is a history of the formation of Head Start and the inclusion of parental participation as part of its program. The history of the War on Poverty, with the founding of Head Start and the involvement of the poor, shows how change in social structure, in this case the delivery of services to the poor, and self-change come together. The notion, "maximum feasible participation of the poor," as part of the arsenal of the War on Poverty, and the beliefs the founders of Head Start held regarding the part the parents should play in the program led to a philosophy of parental involvement. This philosophy could serve to influence the effects parents have had on the Head Start Program and in turn the effects the Head Start Program has had on the parents.

THE FOUNDING OF PROJECT HEAD START

Poverty was "rediscovered" with the airing in 1960 of Edward R. Murrow's television documentary "Harvest of Shame" and the publication of Michael Harrington's book The Other America in 1962 (Harrington 1984; Murray 1984). Harrington's book was not an instant success[4], but a review of it by Dwight Macdonald appeared in the January 19, 1963 issue of the New Yorker and became a topic of conversation in intellectual circles (Harrington 1984). Macdonald's review impressed Theodore Sorenson, a presidential aide. He urged President John Kennedy to read it, and a copy of The Other America was given to the president. Advisors to the president began to provide him with data regarding the extent to which citizens of the United States lived in poverty (Zarefsky 1986).

---

[4]From March 1962-December 1962, The Other America sold only a few thousand copies. After the Macdonald review, the paperback version sold several hundred thousand copies (Levitan 1969).

31

This alone did not prompt presidential action. The Civil Rights Movement of the early sixties waged a campaign for social and political rights. Leaders of the struggle for civil rights pointed out that African Americans comprised a disproportionate segment of the poor. Kennedy was sympathetic to the Civil Rights Movement and saw the connection between economic discrimination and political discrimination. Additionally, in October of 1963, the New York Times published an in-depth portrait of the poverty and despair of the poor in eastern Kentucky. Apparently, the president read the article and was deeply affected by it. Consequently, just prior to his assassination in November of 1963, Kennedy committed himself to campaign for an antipoverty program during the upcoming presidential race (Levitan 1969).

Upon taking office after Kennedy's death, Lyndon Johnson made developing an antipoverty program a top priority. Johnson appointed Sargent Shriver, a brother-in-law of President Kennedy, to direct the planning of a viable antipoverty program. Shriver put together a task force to assist him, and together they drafted the legislation to annihilate poverty. On August 20, 1964, President Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act, and with the signing declared war on poverty (Levitan 1969).

The notion that poverty reproduced itself across generations in what seemed to be a never-ending cycle, led social engineers to attempt finding ways to break the cycle (Cooke 1979). The 1960s brought a change in the theories of the reproduction of poverty. Prior to 1960, some of the dominant theories, (see for example Kelso 1929; Gillin 1937; Galton 1871) had focussed on how the genetics of an individual led to a life of poverty. These theories had even resulted in the involuntary sterilization of indigent people during this country's eugenics movement (Gordon 1974). Other theorists declared cultural traits were passed on to new generations, resulting in the perpetuation of poverty. In 1959, Lewis, an anthropologist, wrote of poverty as a subculture of the larger national culture. He said:

> One can speak of the culture of the poor, for it has its own modalities and distinctive social and psychological consequences for its members. . . . The **culture of poverty** [emphasis added] cuts across regional, rural-urban, and even national boundaries. (p. 2)

This led to further studies about the values and attitudes of people living in poverty (Banfield 1974; Gans 1962; Lewis 1968; Miller, Riessman, and Seagull 1968; Haggstrom 1968; Miller 1968). Studies like that of Deutsch (1968) focussed on the deficits found in disadvantaged children that impeded their progress in school. Deutsch writes:

> There are various differences in the kinds of socializing experiences these
> children have had. as contrasted with the middle-class child. The culture
> of their environment is a different one from the culture that has molded the
> school and its educational techniques and theory (p. 476).

The theoretical foundations of Head Start differed from the theories of poverty previously set forth. It was assumed the intellect was a result of environmental conditions rather than of inheritance (Cooke 1979). When this assumption is linked to community action, it results in the state assuming the role of "an agent of socialization." The government becomes responsible for preparing poor children for school because it is assumed the parents cannot (Quadagno 1994).

This led the way to the search for modes of intervening in the lives of these families with education directed at the early developmental stages of childhood. The belief was that education could and would solve the problem of the poor recycling their inadequate social skills. It was believed this would allow children coming from the culture of poverty to attain the much desired attitudes and values of the middle-class. These beliefs were at the heart of the War on Poverty. "The failure of the poor to acquire middle-class attitudes and middle-class incomes was attributed to a lack of education" (Zigler and Anderson 1979. p. 5). Zigler and Anderson further point out that education was viewed as a means to the end of poverty, saying:

> The naive optimism of this view is apparent in hindsight. but when the War
> on Poverty was designed in 1964. it embodied a basic belief in education
> as the solution to poverty (Zigler and Anderson 1979. p.7).

The "cultural" approach to the problem led to the attempts to intervene at the level of the "whole child" (Zigler and Anderson 1979. p.15). In other words, this approach would be concerned with the child's family, community, environment and so forth. The idea of holistic intervention paved the way for parental involvement in Project Head Start, which

was designed to foster in low-income children middle-class attitudes that would emphasize intelligence, value academic success, and reinforce the Protestant work ethic. The theorists and framers of Head Start decided parent participation would help the children continue some of the progress they made in school, in their own homes.

Research conducted under the auspices of the Kennedy Foundation had found that early intervention could positively affect the intellectual and social lives of the children (Shriver and Valentine 1979, p.50). The Foundation supported research designed to find a cure for mental retardation and to help alleviate some problems faced by the retarded. Sargent Shriver, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, was one of the original founders of Project Head Start. Head Start came under the auspices of the OEO and thus came under the mandate of "maximum feasible participation of the poor." Shriver, who had married into the Kennedy family and was familiar with the work of the Kennedy Foundation, had seen reports of research conducted by Susan Gray and sponsored by the Foundation. The results of her research indicated intervention at an early age could raise the IQs of mentally retarded children. Further, the studies demonstrated that the child's social well-being as well as intellectual well-being could be affected. This led him to believe that low-income children and their families would be affected in the same way with a similar kind of intervention (Shriver and Valentine 1979).

Shriver also wanted parents involved from the beginning because the children would feel more comfortable with familiar faces in the classroom and would not feel as though they had been wrenched from a world they knew and thrown into one totally alien. In addition, the founders believed that parents who could not read or write, might also learn along with their children. Because of Shriver's involvement with the Kennedy Foundation, he was very committed to courses in parenting. He commented on the irony that while most people will eventually be parents, how to be a parent is never taught, and consequently parents make mistakes. If parents could experience change through education, then perhaps children would not repeat "the same errors their parents made" (Shriver and Valentine 1979, p.54).

Bronfenbrenner, a leading child development researcher at Cornell University, was a member of the Head Start Planning Committee. He had begun to develop an

34

"ecological approach" to child development. This approach meant developing programs that would not only affect the children's lives a few hours a week but would also change the child's day-to-day environment. He believed that the children's families, and their neighborhoods and communities, must be involved and develop similar goals as those put forth in the school. He declared that, ". . . to be effective, any program for children, whether they were rich or poor, would have to include the children's parents" (Zigler and Muenchow 1992, p. 15-16). Researchers, such as sociologist James Coleman, also determined that parental support was needed in addition to early educational intervention (Cooke 1979).

Community Action Agencies[5] administered most local Head Start Programs(CAA)[6]. CAAs were part of the overall Community Action Programs(CAP). CAP did not view the problem of poverty as a problem to be solved by education and an improvement of parenting skills. The CAP philosophy tended to see the root cause of poverty as disenfranchisement from established social structures resulting from such factors as racism and classism. They did not tend to see it as a deficit in education or parenting skills (Zigler and Muenchow 1992). Nevertheless, from its inception, parents were considered important to the success of the Head Start project.

According to Valentine and Stark (1979) policy making regarding the involvement of parents in Head Start fell along three lines: education of parents, participation of parents, and control by parents. Each of these constructs had different implications for two types of changes. "These three constructs signify different dimensions of social change: individual change and institutional, or 'systems,' change" (Valentine and Stark 1979, p. 308). The parents' involvement had the potential for changing the lives of the individuals involved (parents, Head Start children, siblings, etc.), and could also influence the way in which the education of low-income children was achieved.

---

[5]However, the Head Start program where this research takes place was not administered by a CAA, but rather the local university.

[6]The Community Action Program (CAP) was the means through which projects to assist the poor were administered. Community action agencies (CAA) were the local means of administration and were created at the local level.

35

With a commitment to parental involvement and education, the groundwork was laid to include parents in the everyday activities of the school experience. To accomplish this in a way that would be effective, parents and teachers needed to work together. That led to educating parents to enable them to be "contributors to the Head Start program and to their communities" (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1979, p.6).

The 1970 training manual, Parents and Teachers Together (Rood 1970) still in use today, unrevised, stressed that parents not only needed to be involved but that their importance should be emphasized. The founders believed that the child needed to feel that her/his parent's presence in center activities was important. Otherwise, conflicts within the child may arise and she/he, at worst, would "have to choose between the behavioral demands of his [sic] teachers and those of his [sic] parents" (p.9). The manual also states that if parents do not feel a sense of a proprietorship, they would see the local center as another program belonging to "them" rather than "us." A program goal was to integrate the Head Start Center into the daily fabric of the community.

The perceived importance of parent participation led to training programs that stressed their importance to the parents and trained them in ways to express that importance. Thus, the list of supplies for the workshop on leadership included newsprint and magic markers and instructions such as:

The trainer should not spend much of his [sic] time telling people things,

but rather ask questions and encourage people to share their ideas and

knowledge with each other (p.12)

and "Impractical suggestions are not ridiculed or scoffed at" (p. 14). These kinds of directions set the foundation for the program to become a place where parents would participate and be appreciated in ways they had not previously been.

PARENT PARTICIPATION TODAY

Since 1969, Head Start has served more than eleven million children and their families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Bureau 1990). Rodgers (1986) observed that for fiscal 1982, when most federally funded programs were being scaled back, Head Start saw funding increases. This was no less true ten years

later, as Head Start continued to receive increased funding in a time of fiscal crisis. In February 1993, President Clinton called for full funding of Head Start as part of his economic program. Head Start has been deemed a successful attempt at early childhood intervention, though at most the centers reach 33 percent of the nation's poor children[7]. Most recently, Head Start was able to resist a move by House Republicans as part of their "Contract with America" to combine Head Start with child care legislation and funding.

Parents remain a vital part of the Head Start program. The mandates from the federal government still call for active participation from the parents. Some serve on Parent Advisory Councils and receive leadership training. Others become a part of the centers' staffs. Parent participation accounts for a large portion of the in-kind services needed for continued federal funding. Education of parents as well as children remains a goal for the operation of a successful Head Start center. For example, the Head Start Parent Handbook (Rood 1970) contains information on how to be involved on a committee, skills that can possibly translate into becoming an effective community activist.

The main purpose of parental involvement is still to increase the life chances of low-income children. The manual states:

> The outreach and training efforts of Head Start programs have helped provide low-income parents with the knowledge and service they need **to build a better life for their children** [emphasis added]. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1990, p.8)

and

> The organizational structure of every Head Start program must provide this opportunity [to influence the character of programs] by increasing the effectiveness of parent participation in the planning and implementation of programs on the local level, in order that parents may also become more effective in **bringing about positive change in the lives of their children** [emphasis added]. (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1970, p. 1)

---

[7] This information was obtained in a phone conversation with a staff member in charge of statistics at National Head Start.

Given my experience and my understanding of symbolic interaction, it seems likely to me that the organizational structure which encourages parents to be part of the decision making process, also provides the potential for change in a participating mother's self-concept. Each mother comes to Head Start with a variety of selves and with positive and negative self-concepts. Through this structure, the low-income mother has the potential to find a "looking-glass self" which gives her (or reinforces) a positive reflected image, which she may use to construct a self-concept which can support the process of personal empowerment.

Head Start policies on parental participation facilitated and continues to facilitate the creation of a structure in which low-income mothers may be able to receive a reflection of self that contributes to their definition of their "self as mother." For example, mothers who receive public assistance in the form of AFDC might be able to define themselves as good mothers who are or can be experts in the needs of their families, instead of a public reflection of "those damned Welfare Mothers."[8] Within their communities, low-income women can effect change by participating in the control over educational resources for their children and the children of other low-income parents. The structures of Head Start enable mothers to participate in activities such as volunteering in the classroom, attending classes in parenting, or seeing their ideas written largely and looking important on pads of newsprint attached to walls. Through participation in these activities, mothers may gain another generalized other, another perspective from which to view what they are doing for their children and for their communities, and who they are, and thus another way to perceive their selves.

Previous Findings

Very little research has focussed upon how the Head Start experience affects the lives of the parents themselves. There have been many studies regarding the effects upon the cognitive development of the children and some studies on what effect parental involvement has had on the children (Hubbell 1983).

---

[8] It is not uncommon to hear this exact phrase when engaging Flussburg citizens in conversation regarding welfare.

Although Head Start is considered a family oriented program, little research had been conducted on the effects participating in this organization has on parents. Of that research, some has examined parents' involvement in the literacy of their children (Nespeca 1995a; Nespeca 1995b; Roskos and Neuman 1993), the effect of involvement in Head Start on the parenting skills of the parents (Wohlford 1974; Roggman, Moe, and Forthun 1994; Rodgers 1993), Head Start as social support and the psychological effects it has on parents (Siantz and Smith 1994; Leik, Chalkley, and Peterson 1991; Greathouse, Gomez, and Wurster 1988; Parker, Piotrkowski, and Peay 1987), and the effects of parental participation on the Head Start program itself (Washington 1985; Oyemade 1985; Oyemade, Washington, and Gullo 1989; Slaughter, Washington Lindsey, Nakagawa, and Kuehne 1989).

In introducing a special issue of The Journal of Negro Education which focussed on Head Start research, Murphy and Waxler (1989) state "Parental involvement is one of the most unique and distinctive features of Head Start" (p. 2). They report that parents' involvement in Head Start has been linked with the development of better cognitive skills in their children. They suggest that part of this may be due to the parents' developing better parenting skills. A number of programs have been developed to assist parents learn better ways of being parents.

One program involved parents in "sensitivity training" groups, which were popular in the early seventies. The goal was to get more parents involved, but it began from what I consider a faulty assumption that parents would not be serious about their children's education unless they learned to trust the sensitivity trainers. This training was thought to be an effective means of delivering psychological and educational services to the parents (Wohlford 1974).

Factors which produce undesirable parenting traits were found to be linked to the parents' emotional symptomology, defined as "psychological and somatic symptoms that may interfere with one's ability to parent effectively." (Rodgers 1993). This parental symptomology is supposed to be a link between the parent's stress and the parent's behavior. Participating in recreational activities could counter that problem. Roggman et al. (1994) found increasing parents' involvement in leisure activities such as those

39

provided by Head Start, is associated with positive parenting. These activities include family suppers, interaction with other parents, and community activities, to name a few.

Greathouse et al. (1988) found evidence that counters the perception that minority, low-income parents possess an external locus of control. They find that as parents became "highly involved in their children's school activities, [they] felt they could affect change in the school" (p. 7). Greathouse et al. suggest programs need to avoid three commonly held stereotypical views of minority parents: minority parents' locus of control is external, and they believe they have little control over their children's education; they do not possess many positive parenting skills; and they are unwilling to become involved in the education of their children. Head Start should gear programs to the parents and "program implementers [should] carefully examine their biases and expectations . . . " (p. 17).

Leik et al. (1991) found that mothers who commit to one program are more likely to take part in the entire Head Start program. This has implications for outreach to parents and the continuing of efforts to get them involved in a program which meets their needs. Parker et al. (1987) found that parents more involved in Head Start reported having fewer psychological problems, feeling more powerful, and were more satisfied with their lives at the end of their participation year. They do point out that Head Start was part of many experiences parents encountered during the year, but that, "[s]ome parents reported that Head Start had changed their lives, enlarged their world, and improved how they saw themselves" (p. 231). Further, parents reported feeling more competent as parents and felt they understood better what good education meant. Parker et al. conclude that "Head Start serves as a supportive institution for those who use it" (1987, p. 282). Other research has found that parents' participation led to upward mobility for Head Start parents (Oyemade et al. 1989).

Slaughter et al. (1989) found that centers which offer more options for involvement have more parents involved. They also report that increasing the parents' involvement in decision-making activities is likely to have a positive effect on the parents. Washington (1995) fears that although Head Start appears to bring about positive changes in parents

40

and families, their participation is in danger because of cuts in Training and Technical Assistance monies which had helped pay for such things as mileage and babysitting.

Research has found involvement in Head Start activities has impacted families in a positive direction. As mothers become involved in Head Start, as a new group, it has the potential to facilitate their reformation of self and identity. In this study, the mothers' perception of self and identity reformation are given voice. The next chapter explains how the voices were selected.

CHAPTER 4
LOCAL SETTING AND HEAD START ORGANIZATION

There is no reason why the institutions of an American welfare state could
not be democratic, accountable, decentralized, and respectful of individual
dignity - and there is no reason why liberals and feminists should abandon
this as a goal.

Barbara Ehrenreich *What Makes Women Poor?*

HEAD START, THE COMMUNITY, and the "SOCIAL PROBLEM" -- POVERTY

In the early-sixties in Flussburg, the community where this research took place (as
in other communities in which Head Start was implemented), local groups concerned
themselves with meeting the needs of low-income children. Each group of social actors
had their own definition of the problem of poverty, what to do about it, and the part the
local Head Start program would play. Because Head Start involved them, mothers also
had a definition of what the program was. All these definitions and the resulting behaviors
and interactions helped to shape the program as it is today.

The following is an account of the founding of Head Start by these groups of social
actors. The Head Start program of Flussburg, where this research took place was the
Head Start where I enrolled my daughter and where I became a "Head Start mother."
The definition of the problem, the solution, and the behaviors are subject to the memories
of the definers and their position in the social structure of the community. This is their
story of the development of Flussburg's Head Start Program.

The Definers and Developers[9]

A women's auxiliary group known as the Infant Welfare Auxiliary (IWA), under the
auspices of the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) a group of volunteers was involved in
the development of the Flussburg Head Start that serves as the site of this study. IWA

---

[9] This information comes from interview with three women, Susan. Carol, and Mimi. who were involved
with the auxiliary, and with the former dean of the College of Education. I interviewed Susan for approximately
two hours face-to-face. Carol and Mimi provided clarification of historical details during brief telephone
interviews. I also interviewed the dean by telephone.

was a high status social group consisting of wives of professional men of the community. Most of them had children themselves. As one member remembers, members were:

. . . wealthy older women who had a lot of influence in the community. It

was a prestige thing to be asked to join. You couldn't just walk in (Susan).

As one of its focusses, this group helped manage a well-baby clinic. They worked with mothers who did not have health insurance for their infants. Local pediatricians and general practitioners donated their time once a month to weigh, measure, and generally examine the children. They kept records on the children through their first two years. By 1961, four VNA nurses were employed to go to the homes of the babies seen at the well-baby clinic. Another program grew out of a concern for what would happen to these children after they were too old for the Well-baby Clinic. Susan recalls:

The nurses of the Visiting Nurses Association would go into the homes of

these families . . . once a month or so and talk to the moms and see how

things were going. And they became very upset about the fact that from

[ages] three to five, none of these kids were being seen or given help in

any program.

This became defined as a problem. A member of the IWA attended a conference in Michigan where she heard of a new program called Head Start. She brought the information regarding how it was to run back to this community. Based on this, the members of the IWA decided to begin a day program for children that they named the Child Development Center. They hired a teacher and a "grandmother figure who . . . sat and rocked and talked with the kids."

The doctors, who had been attending the children of the Well-Baby Clinic, suggested holding some "little evening get-togethers" for the mothers, which they did. The physicians gave talks on child health care. The program operated for about three years. Then the volunteers who had been transporting the children in their private vehicles began to experience insurance problems. Susan recalls:

Insurance and transportation was becoming a big problem, because we

were transporting other people's children in our own private vehicles, and

we realized that that was getting . . . politically, it was getting a little

dangerous . . . or legally I guess I should say. And so, the program was turned over . . . we gave them all of our . . . equipment and . . . the little rugs [that had been donated by a local rug company for the children to sit on and nap on]. There were several parents and Yolanda in particular who had been the strong support group for the parents originally and who went on [into Head Start].

The IWA ended its program once Head Start began.

We were not actively members because part of the Head Start role was for the parents of the Head Start children to be involved, so they took over the role that we had played in many ways. (Susan)

In the mid-sixties, the local college was trying to find a way to prepare first generation students and students from rural areas to enter college and do well. They defined the problem as the students failing due to their inability to deal with the "fundamentals of the college." The dean of the College of Education wrote a grant proposal, subsequently funded, which would research ways to provide special help in skills development and the personal development of these at-risk students. The dean saw a connection between what they, the College of Education, were trying to accomplish with the failing rural and first generation students and what the Head Start program was trying to accomplish. He wrote the first Head Start grant proposal, which was funded, for $50,000. He remembered, "I felt the Head Start program should be promoted . . . Their needs were the community's needs." He did not recall the involvement with the Child Development Center and the Visiting Nurses Association, although a VNA brochure states the Child Development Center became Head Start. One former IWA member, Carol, recalled that having the Child Development Center blossom into Head Start was easy. She said, "They [Head Start] had a lot more funding and could do a lot more." Yolanda[10], whose children attended both the Child Development Center and Head Start remembered:

---

[10]   See Chapter 7 for an introduction of the mothers and their pseudonyms.

The nursery school that my children went to, said they couldn't afford to operate it anymore, so . . . the College of Education got together with people from the nursery school. Head Start money was available, and they decided to write for it. At first they thought it would just be a good place to train student teachers.

The dean also recalled the College of Education's interest in Head Start as a sort of Lab School.

Various groups within the community defined problems in different ways. The College of Education's definition led to a long association between Head Start and the University. Head Start benefitted from having access to university resources such as computer support, an initial location for a center, office space and so forth. Student social workers and student teachers were also placed with the Head Start program as interns. The IWA's and VNA's definition of the situation included the mothers as part of the solution. That perception and the Federal mandates shaped the way mothers were viewed in the program.

The Client/Volunteers

Community organizations, such as the IWA/VNA and the college, carried out the official federal plan to help alleviate poverty by giving young children a head start on their education. The clients/volunteers of the agency further negotiated the meaning of this program. Some early Head Start mothers I interviewed who had also been part of the original center indicated the meaning for them was a better start for their children.

Somebody came to me because of [my] low-income. It seemed like a good thing. It sounded like [my] kids needed it because the most contact [my] kids had was within the family. And I thought this would be a way for them to have learning experience. Get to know other kids and [I] thought it would be good for me because I didn't get out a lot and I needed social contact. I thought it would be good for all of us (Angie).

******

45

I wanted to help my children. The son that I got involved with [in Head Start], I was having so many problems with at home, behavior. To get out of the house and I really enjoyed it so much (Andrea Alysse).

For other Head Start mothers, the program came to mean employment.

My kids were in a pre-school program run by the visiting nurses. After that I visited off and on [Head Start] and I kind of like it. I was asked to be on the Policy council of the Head Start Program the very first year it was here. . . . [I] decided I would like to work there and the next year I was hired (Yolanda).

******

I think I heard about it through Social Services. When I filled out their application [Head Start] I also indicated that I was willing to work. The job opportunity was there and it was now and it was a decision . . . it was fate. So, I took the job (Xenia).

The originators of the program at the federal level envisioned that the parents would learn to be better parents. At the center level, some parents looked at the program as a way for them to be part of a community that was tackling a particular problem.

I was for it [participation in Head Start], because I think it was a great help . . . not so much just for my kids, because my kids interacted with each other, but for families where there was a single child in the family or maybe two. I don't like to think of my kids as having emotional problems. Maybe they did, but being close to them I didn't see it. But, there were a lot of kids that really were wrecks that I think Head Start helped tremendously (Angie).

******

I would volunteer. I enjoyed being there and I enjoyed being around the children. [The director] asked me if I would like to work there. I volunteered the whole time. I must have been there every day (Andrea Alysse).

46

Parents reported that being a part of Head Start was a way for them to feel good about themselves through their contribution to the program. The comments made by the original Head Start mothers interviewed and the comment made by one of the members of the IWA are strikingly similar.

> I still feel that was something I was so glad I was involved in . . . as an accomplishment. It was something that was doing something for other people, you know, that wasn't going to benefit me directly (IWA member).

******

> Without parents, grandparents, they couldn't run it [Head Start]. And I know its [parent involvement] important. I was on the policy council. Without it they'd lose their funding. They had to have a parent in the classroom everyday. I loved it. It made you feel like you were worth something (Christine).

Through interaction, the ideas of what the low-income mothers appeared to change.

> As I got to know these mother through maybe four or five years of doing that Infant Welfare . . . I grew to respect them and think they are wiser than I am about a lot of things. They know about things that I will never really know about or experience (Susan).

The ways in which the community leaders and the mothers related had the potential for structuring the interactions between the Head Start personnel, some of whom had been the mothers in the IWA's Child Development Center, and the Head Start mothers. Some mothers recognized this.

> I always felt like they thought I had some worth. That's just the feeling you got. They dealt with everybody. They treated people like the average. They didn't treat you like you were on welfare. They treated you like you were important. They treated you nice. They respected you. Your little child, whether he was the brat of the class or what . . . . They knew all those children very personally. You know? And they would share with you good things and bad. I never felt like they treated you like you were a

47

welfare person. They always treated me with a great deal of respect (Beth).

From the inception of defining poverty as a social problem, forming the official plan of action, and the implementation of that plan, there was room for much negotiation and defining of the situation. This may have resulted in interaction patterns that developed in a different way than the originators of the official plan intended. (Joffe 1979; Blumer 1961). The negotiations and the defining and redefining of the situation will have a direct influence on what happens in the everyday lives of people whose personal troubles become public issues and are targeted for remedy.

The Community

Because Head Start has a community foundation, understanding something of the community in which the Head Start program in this study began and now operates, is important. The 1970 census shows the population of Flussburg to be approximately fifty-three thousand and it was about the same in 1990. The median age of the population has risen from 24.8 in 1970 to 30.4 in 1990. The population is mostly of European ancestry; however an addition of around two thousand Asian immigrants has been added in the decade between 1980 and 1990 (Bureau of Census 1970, 1980, and 1990). The immigrants are mostly Hmong from Laos.

About 5 percent of Flussburg families had incomes below the poverty level in 1970. One quarter of these were families headed by females. Approximately one half of these families had someone in the labor force. The percentage of families living below the poverty level had risen by 1990 to about 7 percent (Bureau of Census 1970 and 1990).

This rise in the number of families below the poverty level has been coupled with an animosity directed toward the poor who are welfare (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) recipients. For example, one state senator during a 1995 panel discussion on welfare reform, held welfare recipients responsible for the decline of "family values" and "state budget problems." She said welfare recipients would "have to become responsible like the other good people of this state." New legislation designed to make recipients more responsible affects the Head Start program directly as ever more of the mothers'

48

time is spent in mandatory programs. These programs are designed to address the worker self rather than the mother self. This means there is less time for the mothers to spend volunteering at the Head Start centers. Parents volunteer by serving on committees, helping with classroom activities, serving on the policy council, attending center committee meetings which may address a variety of personal growth and parental issues. It is time in which mothers may enhance their ideas about their mother selves (see chapters eight and ten).

In the 1970s, the Nelson classification system listed Flussburg as a diversified city due to an economic mix of heavy and light manufacturing, educational, governmental, medical, and transportation services, with none of them dominating. This diversity is also reflected in the type of neighborhoods found in the community then[11]. Some residential areas contain majestic homes that are the heritage from the "lumber baron" history of Flussburg. There are also neighborhoods that could be classified as semi-suburban middle class. There are many residential areas around the city that could be classified as working-class. In addition, are neighborhoods of poverty. One of them surrounds the downtown area. The housing was originally built early in the century as single family dwellings that have since been divided into apartments. Lower-income neighborhoods border the older manufacturing areas of the community. These lower-income neighborhoods, now comprising apartments converted from single family houses, also include neighborhood taverns which the men who work at the neighboring manufacturing plants ordinarily patronize. These are the areas from which the first parents came to Head Start and are also the areas in which many present parents live. There is also another area of recently constructed low-income housing labeled derisively, "Welfare Alley." Several Head Start families live in this area.[12]

---

[11] This information comes from a combination of observation, discussions with the Oshkosh City Planning Department, and a research project I participated in as an undergraduate Urban Affairs student.

[12] One low-income area, called North Home, does not seem to be represented in Head Start. This area has a unique history when compared to the rest of the community. The director intends to explore past and present relations in North Home. If it turns out that this area is not represented, there will be active recruiting done in the area.

These neighborhoods may have influenced the type of program Head Start was and has become. Many mothers, for instance, talk about the alcoholism in their families that relates to the neighborhood drinking patterns. Also, a history of involvement in unions and cooperatives exists leaving a legacy of community problem-solving. Located in an area with a history of co-operatives and labor unions, Flussburg might be characterized as expecting to solve problems themselves, not through the beneficence or patronage of an authority figure, including the government. People expect to join to solve their own problems. The notion of voluntarism was one that was well established prior to the founding of this program.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

National Head Start

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) administers Head Start at the Federal level (see Figure 4-1). Ten regional offices and two offices (which administer the ACYF Native American Program and Migrant Program respectively) award grants to "local public agencies, private nonprofit organizations and school systems for the purpose of operating Head Start programs at the community level" (DHHS, ACYF 1995). In fiscal year 1994, 1,405 grantees received 3,215,946,000 dollars that served 740,493 children. This compares with 1992 fiscal year (DHHS, ACYF 1992) when Head Start enrollment was 621,078 children at a cost of $3545.13 per child (see Table 4-1). Four percent of the children served were Native American, 22 percent Hispanic, 8 percent African American, 33 percent Caucasian, and 3 percent Asian American. Most children were three and four years old. Head Start maintained 31,287 classrooms staffed by 105,500 paid employees. At the national level in 1992, 36.1 percent of the staff were parents of former or current Head Start children. This figure dropped to 30.5 percent in fiscal year 1994. The present director of the local center attributes this to a move at the national level requiring higher educational degrees for supervisory staff.

50

Region Five administers the Flussburg Head Start program, through the state office, which then contracts with the Board of Regents of the state university system. Locally, the university, through the College of Education, administers it (see Figure 4-1).

Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

Executive
Director

REGIONS AND PROGRAMS
I   II   III   IV   V   VI   VIII IX   X   NATIVE AMERICAN   MIGRANT

State Head Start

Board of
Regents

Local University

College of Education

Local Head Start

Figure 4-1 National Program Structure

The Flussburg Head Start population

The Flussburg Head Start Program[13] is in its 27th year of operation. Originally, the Flussburg program was funded to serve fifty families[14] from a community of approximately fifty thousand and its surrounding area. Since that original grant, the program has expanded to serve 402 federally funded families and twenty-four families funded through a state grant. The area served has also expanded to serve three additional counties. Out of the total 426 families, they serve forty-eight in a Home Visiting Program, which included one day in the classroom. They serve the other 378 families in a classroom setting, four days per week. Although the program serves largely a metropolitan area, two of the centers serve a rural segment of the population. These centers have a larger population of isolated, illiterate parents with a different set of problems than those who live within the larger city area. The majority of the families (328) are European Americans. There are also ten Native American families, sixty-four Hmong families, fourteen African-American families and ten Mexican-American families enrolled in the program. This geographic area has a concentration of Hmong families, many of whom are non-English speaking. One center is located in a city adjacent to an Indian Reservation and serves the Native American families who have moved to that city. The other ethnic families are scattered throughout the nine Head Start centers. A new center in one of the larger cities is located at the area technical school to serve families whose parents are enrolled in Goal Oriented Adult Learning (GOAL) and English as Second Language (ESL) programs.

Of the total number of families served during the 1991-92 school year, 60 percent were receiving AFDC benefits. The majority of the Hmong families were receiving AFDC benefits, with many family members in school. The Hmong traditionally have large families with five to seven children, are more likely to be two-parent households, and often have extended family members living with them. The average size of non-Hmong families

---

[13]This information is from Flussburg Head Start records.

[14] Head Start refers to the number enrolled as either families or children. These appear to be interchangeable. I did not come across any families with more than one child enrolled at a time.

was four, a mother and three children. In nine families the father had custody of the children, and six children were in foster care. Twenty-one families had income above the guidelines but were accepted in the program because an agency referred them, or they had a public school child with special needs. One classroom consists of three-year-olds whom the Department of Social Services-Protective Services Division referred.

During 1991, the Flussburg Head Start Program received a Family Service Research Grant to focus on literacy, employment, and substance abuse. They implemented the program in January of 1992. Presently, the Family Service Center (FSC) provides additional services to forty Head Start families.

The Flussburg program had an enrollment of 426 children in the 1992-93 school year (see Table 4-1). They actually served five hundred and five children. The director told me this discrepancy between enrollment and children served is attributed to families moving out of the service areas creating a vacancy in a classroom that a child who had been on a waiting list would quickly fill.[15] Of these 505 children, 3 percent were Native American, 2 percent Hispanic, 2 percent African American, 74 percent Caucasian, and 19 percent Asian American, mostly Hmong.

The local program maintained twenty-two classrooms at ten centers for an average cost per child of $2,843.01. The grant totaled $1,142,891. Paid staff numbered fifty-seven, of which thirty (57 percent) were parents of former or current Head Start children, which is higher than the national percentage. The local cost per child was less than the national cost per child. Seven hundred and ninety-seven volunteers offered their services during the research year. That is one and half volunteers for every child.

---

[15]This represents a turnover rate of about 25%. This has not changed over the years. The staff attributes this transiency to parents looking for more affordable housing, better job opportunities, or attempting to move away from problems they are experiencing.

Table 4-1 Characteristics of U.S. and Local Head Start 1992-93

	ENROLL MENT 1992	RACIAL/ ETHNIC MAKE-UP	AGES	# OF CLASS ROOMS	# OF CENTERS	AV. COST @CHILD	STAFF
U.S.	622.000	[f]NA 4% H 22% AA 38% C 33% AS 3%	5↑ 7% 4 63% 3 27% <3 3%	31,287	1,346	3.410	Pd 105,500 Vol 52,000
LOCAL	402	NA 3% H 2% AA 2% C 74% AS 19%	4 78% 3 22%	22	10	2,843.01	Pd. 57 Vol 797

Flussburg Staff Structure

The Head Start director heads the local program (see Figure 4-2). The director answers to the Parent Policy Council. At least 50 percent of the council members must be parents of presently enrolled Head Start children (Department of Health Education and Welfare. Office of Child Development 1970), although at this center it is higher at 60 percent. Parents are elected to serve on the council by other parents whose children are enrolled in Head Start. Twenty-five per cent of the council members are parents of formerly enrolled children. At the end of each school year, the seated Policy Council elects from its members the parents who serve as alumni parents on the next school year's council, one parent representing each center. The Council presently has between 25-30 members each year. Fifteen per cent of the council are community representatives who volunteer to serve. Community representation is an area that the director explains falls below the number of representatives desired.

The Policy Council has decision making authority and meets once a month to consider issues relating to Head Start business. The council must approve all hiring and firing of staff, the goals of the program and means of achieving them within HHS

---

[f] NA=Native American: H=Hispanic;AA=African American;C=Caucasian;AS=Asian

guidelines, the guidelines for selecting children within legal guidelines, the request for funds and the work program proposals, and any major changes in the budget and work program while it is in operation. The Policy Council has the additional responsibility for identifying child development needs in their area and for conducting a self-evaluation of the program.

Staff members ultimately answer to the Head Start director. Figure 4-2 provides an organizational chart of the chain of operations. The parent advocates help the parents plan and conduct the center committee meetings. All parents whose children are enrolled in Head Start are members of these "center committees." Each center committee works with the classroom teachers and other staff to help carry out the daily activities of the program. They plan, carry out, and participate in a variety of informal as well as formal programs and activities for the center parents and staff (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development 1970). At this program, for example, parents have planned and carried out fund-raising activities and planned parent/child outings. At the center committee meetings, which are held once a month, they may have a program on self-esteem, for example, or some issue involving parenting.

```
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  Dept.          │
                          │  HHS/ACYF       │
                          └─────────────────┘
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  College of     │
                          │  Education      │
                          └─────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
        │  Assistant   │  │  Head Start     │  │  Policy      │
        │  Director    │  │  Director       │  │  Council     │
        └──────────────┘  └─────────────────┘  └──────────────┘
```

Education Director	Family Services Director	Parent Involvement Director	Social Services Director	Health Services Director	Disabilities Services Director

```
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  Office         │
                          │  Manager        │
                          └─────────────────┘
```

| | Fiscal Assistant | Transportation Manager | Data Entry Program Assistant | |

Family Services Specialists	Parent Advocates	Social Services Specialists	Education Assistant	Disabilities Services Aides

```
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  Center         │
                          │  Directors      │
                          │  Teachers       │
                          └─────────────────┘
```

Drivers	Teacher Assistants	Bi-lingual Assistants	Nutrition Aides/Cooks	Center/Bus Aides

Figure 4-2: Organization of Staff

57

The parent advocate assists the center committees in their operations. In addition, the parent advocate visits all the parents assigned to her, conducts a needs assessment for the family, documents and refers all families with identified problems to the social worker, follows up on all child absences of longer than three days, and plans goals, policies, and activities designed to insure parent involvement.

Augmenting the programs planned and implemented by the center committees, the Head Start program utilizes community resources which may help families. One such program I observed was a class on nurturing. The local Head Start contracted another community agency to serve the families who signed up for the program to learn nurturing skills. Child care and transportation were provided to the families. Parents learned how to change some parenting patterns they had learned from their own parents (see Chapter 9).

During this research, the local Head Start program had a pilot program grant to develop a program called the Family Service Center (FSC). It has since become a regularly funded program of this Head Start. This component appeared to formalize the informal relationships between staff and family that existed when the program was smaller. The FSC staff serve as case managers. Participation is voluntary and a family may be referred by a teacher, social worker, parent advocate, or by self-referral. One staff member described her role as a "paid friend" and another as a "professional hand holder." There are three major areas in which the staff usually help the families; drug and alcohol problems, employability, and literacy. Other areas may include help obtaining a driver's license, helping to find resources to resolve a domestic abuse situation, listening to problems, celebrating the progress a parent is making toward a personal goal, and so forth. The families participating are able to avail themselves of the services beyond the period the child is enrolled in Head Start. It is designed to provide additional help during the transition from Head Start to public school.

Parents come in contact with many of the staff members during their affiliation with Head Start. They are encouraged to be part of the decision making, planning, and carrying out of a variety of activities. Besides the staff who are specifically assigned the responsibility of working directly with parents, parents may volunteer in the classroom and

interact with the teachers and teachers' aides. They may volunteer to ride the bus and interact with the bus driver, or help serve the lunch and interact with the cooks. At every level of operation, there are opportunities for parents to come in contact and interact with staff members. Some of these staff members may contribute to the ideas a mother has about her "self" as mother, as friend, as citizen, and so forth. In the next chapter I explain how the mothers and staff I interviewed came to be part of this study.

CHAPTER 5
SELECTING INFORMANTS

There were many things we meant to ask - as soon as we could talk well
enough.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

In this chapter I first explain how the women I interviewed became part of this study. Next, I discuss demographic characteristics of the families participating in the Head Start Centers. I include a discussion about reliability, validity, and generalizability as they pertain to ethnography. Finally, I present summaries of selected characteristics of the participants.

SELECTION PROCEDURES

I used three sources in selecting the women who participated in this research. The sources were the list of all staff members provided by the director (who served both as a gatekeeper and a key informant), a list of twenty-one mothers the director thought might be interested in participating, snow ball sampling, and inclusion of those mothers who showed willingness to be interviewed by indicating so on a consent form. These interviews took place during six weeks in the summer of 1992 and January-May of 1993.

Director's List
Staff

The director, Yolanda, of the Flussburg program was extremely helpful to me from the beginning. I first phoned her and told her I was interested in doing a pilot study at the Flussburg location. I would conduct this pilot study during six weeks in the summer, and it would provide a test-run for the research instruments I had prepared. Yolanda not only remembered me as a Head Start parent in the Flussburg Center, but also remembered the name of my daughter, although our involvement had been twenty-one years earlier. She was most receptive to my presence and assisted me by funding the pilot study from a grant for the FSC, a pilot program they were conducting to offer extended services to some Head Start families.

I met with Yolanda on several occasions to discuss my research and how I would go about including mothers and staff in the interviewing process. I explained to Yolanda the purpose of my research and showed her the research instruments. She completed the Possible Selves Questionnaire and Twenty Statements Test herself and went over the interview guides.

She first provided me with a list of all fifty-seven paid staff members. To keep the context of this research the same as the context of my experience as a Head Start mother, I decided to limit all interviews to Flussburg. I wanted to interview only the staff from the center, Flussburg, at which my daughter and I had been involved. The main office was located in Flussburg. The number of possible staff interviews was twenty-three. I did not interview the office support personnel. I decided to confine the interviews to the ten members of the program staff as they worked with all the families enrolled in the program and thus with the families from Flussburg as well. I also wished to interview the Flussburg classroom staff. The staff and mothers would then come from the same community as my daughter and I had. In addition, I interviewed four staff members recently hired for the FSC. The FSC pilot grant provided some funding for my summer research. That brought the number of staff members interviewed to fourteen. The interviews took place in the summer, which was an opportune time as most staff were employed by Head Start for the school year only and thus had more opportunities to meet with me.[17]

Mothers

The director first provided me with a list of five former Head Start mothers from twenty years prior. She then went back to the enrollment lists from the time when my daughter was enrolled in Head Start. At that time there were only two centers with a total of forty families. Of those forty families, we eliminated those known by the director to have moved from the area. Yolanda knew where many mothers were and what they were

---

[17]There are also a few men employed at this center. I did not interview them, but they did fill out the Possible Selves Questionnaire and the Twenty Statements Test. However, I did not include these in my analysis.

61

presently doing. Of course, she did not know the location of some, and we could not find them in the current Flussburg phone directory. It is possible they moved, married or remarried and changed their names. Nevertheless, the list narrowed to seven women for whom Yolanda could find current phone numbers. I began by calling them. I had known most of them when my daughter was enrolled in the program. One Head Start mother from that time heard about my research from another woman I had interviewed and asked if she could also be part of the research. Out of the women on the list we compiled, I was able to interview five women who had been involved in Head Start twenty years before.

The first part of my research was being conducted in the summer when the mothers were not involved daily with Head Start. Also, this phase would last just six weeks. Therefore, I relied on Yolanda to help me generate a sample of current Head Start mothers to interview. Yolanda was concerned that I interview those who might give negative, as well as positive, views of their Head Start experiences. In fact, it was my impression that she put me in touch with some mothers to test my reaction. Would I take the perspective of a former Head Start mother and someone who was familiar with what it was like to live in poverty, or the perspective of someone who was highly educated and removed from the lives of those with low-income?

For example, one woman she suggested I interview lived in a house that was certainly far from clean. Yet, in the yard, she and her husband had constructed the most amazing playground for their children. When I returned from the interview, Yolanda said, "Well, what did you think?" I had the impression after we discussed that interview, that had I taken an extremely judgmental stance, Yolanda may not have been as helpful as she turned out to be. She was not only serving as a key informant, but also as a gatekeeper.

Although she did not share with me the reasons she selected the mothers to be on the list she gave me for the pilot study, I had the impression she was not constructing a sample of the "perfect" Head Start mother or mothers who would only give glowing reports of their Head Start experience. She commented, "I want you to talk to women who will be blunt and tell you the problems as well as the good experiences." I felt

comfortable attempting to schedule interviews with the women she recommended. In addition to these mothers, I also used snowball sampling.

Snowball Sample

During the interviews I asked, "If you had to choose one mother to send to a meeting and she was supposed to be 'THE HEAD START MOTHER,' who would you choose?" I then contacted the mothers named and arranged to interview them. None of these women had been on the director's list. With the exception of one, the mothers named as "THE Head Start mother" were on the Policy Council, had organized fund raising activities, and/or volunteered a considerable amount of time in the classroom.

I felt that being able to talk to women named by other mothers was important. I thought I might be able to see a pattern regarding what the women believed to be the model of a Head Start mother. This might also indicate what they thought they were supposed to be. I believed I would find some characteristics that were common among THE HEAD START MOTHERS. Also, by giving me the name of someone who the woman being interviewed considered the ideal, I thought I might uncover what the Head Start generalized other for Head Start mothers was. What was their understanding of the Head Start community's view of what they were to be?

Self-selection

All of the 426 families enrolled in the entire Head Start program for the 1992-93 school year were to have been given two questionnaires to complete with a cover sheet attached asking them if they would be willing to be interviewed. If they indicated they were willing, I asked them to write their address and phone number on the form. From the forty-three mothers who consented to being interviewed, I limited the interviews to the nine consenting mothers from Flussburg. I contacted those mothers and was able to interview seven of them.

From this sample, I present the voices of mothers who may have differed in some respects, but who could relate their experiences in Head Start and what those experiences meant to the mothers' and to their children. If the mothers experienced "success," I

63

wanted the definition of what success meant to come from them. I did not want to impose a standard for successful experiences as defined by policy makers. Further, I expected to uncover the generalized "other," THE Head Start mother.

Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees

I ultimately was able to interview fourteen current Head Start mothers, five mothers who were Head Start mothers more than twenty years ago, fourteen staff members[18], eight of whom were former Head Start mothers who became staff. Of the current mothers, five were divorced, six were married, and three had never been married. Three of the experiential staff members were divorced and the other five were married. The six non-experiential staff members interviewed included five married women and one who had never been married. The non-experiential staff members have the highest level of education with a mean of 16.8 years. The experiential staff members have a mean education of 12.4 years and the current parents' educational mean is 12.1 years. Many parents go to school during their tenure with Head Start, and the parents who become staff are encouraged to attend classes and increase their education. Three of the five parents from twenty years ago received education beyond high school (see Table 5-1)

I calculated the ages of women I interviewed at the birth of their first child. The median age of all three groups of women who were or had been Head Start mothers was little more than 19.5, while the non-experiential staff's median age at first birth was twenty-four.

---

[18] I will refer to staff who had never enrolled any of their own children in Head Start as "non-experiential staff" and the Head Start parents who later became members of the staff as "experiential staff."

Table 5-1. Summary of Interviews

	Parents-91-93	Non-Experiential Staff	Experiential Staff	Parents-20 yrs. ago
Mean age	27.1	45.5	44.8	51.2
Marital Status	5 divorced 6 married 3 never married	5 married 1 single	3 divorced 4 married	3 divorced 2 married
Mean Years of Education	12.1	16.8	12.4	13
Employment Status	6 U[a] 5 S 3 E	All Employed	All employed	4 E 1 U
Number interviewed	14	6	8	5

ETHNOGRAPHY AND VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND GENERALIZABILITY

In this section, I consider to what extent the procedures I have used produced knowledge that is valid and reliable. I will also discuss the limits of its generalizability. Three concepts. validity, reliability, and generalizability, have been very important to social scientists seeking to have their research accepted as "real" science (Kvale 1995). In recent years with the growth of postmodernism, researchers, particularly qualitative and feminist researchers, have called into question the salience of the concepts as they pertain to the real world. at least as they have been defined by those adhering to positivism. Reliability refers to being able to obtain the same results each time when using the same measure. The accuracy or "truth" of the knowledge produced is validity. Silverman (1993) tells us "[t]he two central concepts in any discussion of rigor in scientific research are 'reliability' and 'validity'."

---

[a]U=unemployed
S=in school
E=employed

These concepts are also central to qualitative research methods and their results. However, some significant differences exist between reliability and validity in qualitative (in this case ethnographic) and quantitative studies. One difference is hypothesis testing. Silverman (1993) tells us " . . . a feature of many qualitative research studies is there is no specific hypothesis at the outset."   This is true of my research.   Rather than testing a specific hypothesis, my goal is to give voice to the mothers' own perceptions of their lives.

Another difference is that an ethnographic researcher becomes one of the measuring instruments she/he uses to produce data and may even become data (Dobbert 1982).   Therefore, reflexivity is going to play a part in assessing the validity and reliability of an ethnographic study.   For the ethnographer, reflexivity means she/he includes a discussion of the research process and the researcher's part in it.   The ethnographer recounts such things as problems encountered gaining entrance to the setting, her/his relationships with the participants, reasons the researcher chose the subject for examination, the means of recording and interpreting data, and so on (Altheide and Johnson 1994; Fonow and Cook 1991).   The ethnography reflects upon her/his part in the whole of the research process.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability of a measuring instrument to give consistent results each time it is used to measure a phenomenon.   For example, a reliable test for the presence of HIV would get the same results for test 1 and test 2 if the person's HIV status has not changed.   Each time the measure was used, the same result would be recorded no matter who did the test.

In ethnography, various means are employed to obtain data.   These methods rely upon observations, interviews (often open-ended), the actors' relationships, and the context of the observations, to name a few.   Then, how do we address the issue of the reliability of our work?   The answer is to be rigorous in the way we report our methods. Ethnographers describe their use of field notes and employ reflexivity to report their own perspective and relationship with those they are studying.   Ethnographers use

transcriptions from recorded interviews[20], and they describe the setting of the interviews (Silverman 1993; Dobbert 1982). I report these all in Chapter Six.

Validity

Knowledge is recognized by ethnographers as being socially constructed, contextual, and subjective. Then, to what extent then can we accept the knowledge as truth? Because ethnographers concede that knowledge is constructed, they accept that there is a relationship between the knower and the known. This relationship ultimately impacts the construction of the knowledge.

Validity is the degree to which an indicator measures what it says it measure. For example, the color of a person's hair is an invalid indicator of their temperament, despite being a reliable measure. i.e. many different investigators or the same investigator over time can observe the hair is red. It is therefore a reliable measure. But, it is not a valid measure of the individual's temper. Validity is determined by the logical link between the concept and the indicator and by validating a measure against other, known measures.

Validity of Relations

Internal and external validity both can influence how we answer the question, "Does the change in one factor influence the change in another?" The intrinsic factors of history, subject maturation, subject bias (who was chosen), subject mortality (those who did not fit the hypothesized relationships dropped out of the potential pool of subjects), reactive effects of the observer, changes in the observer, and peculiar aspects of the situations in which the observations were conducted. Reflexivity is necessary to address validity in case study and participant observation research in order to be sure each factor that can influence validity has been recorded and analyzed. In addition, two other means have been proposed to deal with the validity question. These strategies are: the use of

---

[20]The use of tape recording produces reliable transcriptions. but is also subject to problems. Batteries fail. causing the loss of data. Those doing the transcribing, do not always hear or understand the words on the tape in the same way. A recent discussion which took place on the QUALRS e-mail discussion list produced many anecdotes of the humorous ways in which tapes can be mistranscribed.

multiple methods of obtaining data, generally referred to as "triangulations," and having the informants examine the findings (Silverman 1993; Altheide and Johnson 1994; Dobbert 1982).

The selection methods I used could certainly affect the validity and reliability of this research. Altheide and Johnson (1994) refer to "[v]alidity-as-reflexive-accounting" (p.489). Further, they say:

> The ethnographic ethic calls for ethnographers to substantiate their interpretations and findings with a reflexive account of themselves and the processes of their research (p. 489).

To establish the context and potential problems of validity and reliability, I include accounts of my self in the interviews (see Chapter 6), the problems with the instruments I encountered (see Appendix A), and my experience as a Head Start mother (see Chapter 6).

Generalizability

I am not attempting to generalize these findings to the entire population of Head Start mothers or to all Head Start programs. Rather, I am using these data to give mothers a voice in describing their experiences with Head Start and their perceptions of any changes they might have experienced. It has been suggested that generalizing findings to a larger population should not be one of the goals of an ethnographer. Miller and Crabtree (1994) suggest:

> Perception and subjectivity or 'bias' are essential data and a crucial part of the knowledge generated by qualitative research. Local context and the human story, of which each individual and community is a reflection, are primary goals of qualitative research, and not "generalizability." (p. 348)

The directed sample I described above identified respondents who were likely to understand the ideal type (in Weberian terms) Head Start mother. Although I believe the director, Yolanda, wanted to give me the names of respondents who would be "honest," the women on her list were special in their loyalty to Head Start since they had kept in contact with her to the point she knew their whereabouts twenty years after they had left

this program[21]. Further, the snowball sample surely introduced respondents into the sample who by virtue of being thought of as "THE Head Start Mother" may have possessed a particular zeal for the Head Start philosophy. They certainly understood what it was. Those mothers who volunteered to be interviewed via their signed questionnaire may have felt more confident in their ability to articulate the Head Start process correctly than those who did not. Also mothers who were extremely dissatisfied with Head Start may have volunteered so that they might have "their say." Thus, this sample included women who were inclined to see Head Start as significant in their lives.

I believe, however, that I constructed the interview guide in a way that allowed for opportunities to express problems with Head Start, their children, their financial situations, and many facets of their lives. I also asked someone familiar with ethnographic work and interviewing to listen to some interviews, compare them with the transcriptions, and to detect ways in which I may have led the respondents to provide the "correct" answers.

In the next chapter, I present my interactions during the interview process, reflections of the part I may have played in the mothers' reconstruction of their participation in Head Start, and my own recollections of my time in Head Start.

---

[21]The size of the community may also be a factor in Yolanda's knowledge of some mothers' whereabouts.

CHAPTER 6
THE INTERVIEWS AND MY "SELF"

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography
and the relations between the two within society.

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

THE INTERVIEWS

Denzin (1989) suggests that the interview relationship is between two people who meet as strangers, which creates the problem of the respondents creating "tales of self" that are different than the actual facts. Additionally, he suggests that there must exist a fiction of equality and open exchange of information in order for the respondents to feel free to express attitudes on emotional issues (1989, p. 114).

Although I had been previously acquainted with ten of the thirty-three women interviewed, we all created "tales of self." Our former relationship eased the interaction between the women I interviewed and me. I experienced these interviews as an exchange of information between old friends. These ten (staff and mothers) interviewees were women I had been friends with during and after our time in Head Start. We talked about the selves we were then and the selves we became. I did not feel a "fiction of equality" existed during these discussions. We talked about who we had been and who we were now. This was true whether I was talking with staff or with former Head Start mothers.

The remainder of the interviews varied in the type of relationship we created. Because I had been a Head Start mother myself, the relationships with some of the women I interviewed had the possibility of beginning with a common understanding. I explained to them that my daughter had been in Head Start and I was doing research on mothers' experiences in Head Start today. With some of the newer mothers, there was an expression of "likeness" between us, but some of the interviews were a bit more "informally formal", possibly due to age and educational differences and the lack of a perceived common history. In these interviews we were strangers meeting and creating the tales of selves and the "fiction of equality." I am somewhat uncomfortable with

applying the phrase, "fiction of equality," to the interactions I had with the staff and mothers. I must acknowledge that I have access to resources some of the women do not have, and I have more education than any of the women interviewed. However, I think because I still strongly identify with my poverty background, I prefer to pretend that it doesn't make a difference. Nonetheless, they were giving me private information about themselves and their childhoods, not because we were forging a close and lasting friendship, but because I was a researcher which carried with it some degree of higher status. I was much more selective in sharing my background.[22] In most cases (there were a few with whom I shared a great deal more) I avoided the commonalities of abuse, parental alcoholism, problems with male partners, and so forth. I sought commonality based upon positive experiences. Between "newer" staff members and me, an atmosphere of camaraderie developed during the interviews as a result of a common university experience. I had not quite completed my PhD, and they had completed or were soon to complete Masters' degrees.

Interviews with all the staff, the mothers from twenty years ago, and a few of the mothers from the school year 1991-92 took place during six weeks in the summer of 1992. At the end of that time period, I hosted a party for the staff, mothers interviewed and their children. As a "thank you," I gave gifts to the participants. The children were often present during the interviews and were asked to be extremely patient with this intruder into their territory. By way of thanking them, I gave the children boxes of crayons and pads of paper provided by the center that I wrapped as gifts. For the staff members and mothers, I purchased pens with my name, the year, and "thank you" stenciled on them. However, due to time constraints, I was not able to repeat the party and gifts for the interviewees the following spring.

Many of the interviews took place in the respondents' homes. Often this meant the respondents became hosts, offering me a cup of coffee, showing me family pictures, or bringing out craft projects they were working on. Before the interviews took place, the director and I talked about what I should wear and how I should conduct myself. We both

---

[22]I use the words "much more" with some hesitancy. I really have no way of knowing what the mothers added or left out of their stories. I accept what they told me as a construct within our interview interaction.

71

wanted the interview experience to be a pleasant one for the respondents. The director asks that her staff members dressed casually when they interact with parents. I was told that due to many factors like lack of money, emotional depression, lack of ability, and so forth, some of the homes would not be as clean as they might be. The rule was, if there is "jelly on a chair," sit in it, so staff and I were to dress appropriately. The mother is not to be embarrassed. I agreed with this policy totally, therefore I dressed casually and in one case did actually sit in jelly.

THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE -- MANAGING MY "SELF" DURING THE INTERVIEWS

An investigator can regard her position and her perspective and what part they play in the outcome of the investigation by being aware of herself in the research process. As a feminist symbolic interactionist, I sought to put women at the center of inquiry and to include their experiences, interests, ways of knowing the world, and voices. Because of my own affiliation with Head Start, I needed to be aware that I might impose my experience, interests, way of knowing, and voice upon the respondents. During the research, I kept two logs in small ring-binders. One I had with me during each interview. In it, I took notes regarding the setting, the appearance of the woman being interviewed, body language, questions which elicited a facial expression, the names of her children and siblings, and so forth. While transcribing the interviews, I would refer to those notes to help contextualize the process of transcribing for me.

The second ring binder was my emotional log. I thought if I kept a log of my emotions, I could separate the feelings from the analysis I was to do. I no longer believe that separation is necessary. What I experienced, in terms of emotional reactions, also became data. Of course, that introduces strong possibilities that I would define and record the data according to my own definition.

Each interview was an emotional experience for me. Just being back in the community where I had spent time as a low-income single parent brought forth memories both pleasurable and painful. Some of the mothers' stories evoked childhood memories for me that were difficult to remember without pain. In my "emotions" notebook I grappled with the feelings I was developing regarding the respect I had for all women who raise

72

children alone or with a partner under the conditions of low-income and poverty. For myself, I was able to find pride in what we all did and in what others are still doing.

As a means of possibly detecting my imposition of my definition of their situations, I asked a colleague and professor of English to listen to some of the interviews and read some of what I had written. Estella Lauter was the principle investigator for an oral history collection on Wisconsin Women Artists that is housed at the Golda Meir Library at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. She has both supervised and conducted interviews. Three tape recordings were selected at random. Professor Lauter listened to them two times to detect any sign of my injecting the answer I anticipated in the way I asked my questions or responded to the answers. In a letter to me she writes:

> I see no sign of any "leading questions" or any other problems with your research . . . . The questions about social service agencies and Head Start are so deeply embedded in the interview format, which contains many opportunities for positive and negative responses to a broad range of people and conditions, that I see no way that the responses to those questions could be distorted.

I provided her with the interview guides I had used as well as a copy of my own biography.

As previously stated, this research is driven by my own personal and cultural biography. Reflexivity and subjectivity on the part of the researcher can lead to insight and discovery concerning the problem in question (Reinharz 1979).

Interviewer as Other

Reinharz (1979) points out:

> Subjectivity can be developed into a method by applying the sociological imagination to the researcher's experiences, using these experiences as an avenue for creating meaning in the social world (p. 256).

The research problem, the research site, the sample, and the methods were all derived from my experience as a Head Start mother and the desire to understand the meaning

of that social world as it might empower women previously viewed as deficient and powerless.

Feminist epistemology takes reflexivity into the realm of understanding oppression from within and letting the ". . . consciousness of oppression . . . lead to a creative insight that is generated by experiencing contradictions" (Fonow and Cook 1991, p. 3). Collins speaks of the "outsider within" as a status that provides a special standpoint which permits one to understand and challenge insider's knowledge. She says:

> [Outsiders within need to] learn to trust their own personal and cultural
> biographies as significant sources of knowledge. In contrast to approaches
> that require submerging these dimensions of self in the process of
> becoming an allegedly unbiased. objective social scientist, outsiders within
> bring these ways of knowing back into the research process. (1991, p. 53)

As part of the process of learning to trust my personal and cultural biography, I reflected upon my experiences as a Head Start mother in 1970-71. I use this reflection as a source of knowledge and a perspective from which to begin the research process.

The following section is the autobiographical account of my own involvement in Head Start which provides me with a "significant source of knowledge." The purpose is to reclaim that Head Start "self" and use it to create meaning out of that social world.

HEAD START TO FRESH START: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCE

What follows involves my recollection and my interpretation of that recollection of a particular period in my life. It is not possible for me to relate the incidents exactly as they occurred, as time has passed, and I do not have the same self that went through the experience the first time. While many of the memories and the emotions those memories evoke feel strong and accurate to me, I am reflecting upon them not as the Head Start mother I was then, but as the sociologist I am now. The perspective I take will undoubtedly be that of the sociologist. That is not to say that the incidents I relate did not occur, but that they are selected and framed by my current self. My definitions of situations are interpreted from my present situation. Also, what follows is also the result of a dialectical process. I began with my recollections. As I interviewed, some of the

74

mothers' stories would trigger another memory about my Head Start days, I would reflect upon it, and I then included some of those reflections in my own story.[23]

I am the oldest of seven children. There were very few times during my childhood and adolescence that there was enough money. We moved a lot, always trying to find something better. I never finished a full year of school in one place until seventh grade. We moved the next year. I graduated from high school in 1965 and continued this pattern of relocating into my adulthood. Because of the frequent moving, I did not develop deep relationships and loyalties to others and to reference groups. I was a "joiner" because it was a way to meet new kids and later, new adults, but I did not become enmeshed in the groups I joined. Throughout the moves I had to "prove" myself to try to work my way into the tight social groups that were already formed in the rural areas and the small towns that went with them. As a comfort, I turned to literature for a source of constant companionship. No matter how many times I moved, my Bobsey twins, Nancy Drew, the boxcar children, and Cherry Ames moved with me. They provided me with a way of imagining myself to be resourceful and in control of my life to a greater degree than I felt I really was. I read English historical novels and dreamed of living in an elegant lifestyle. Literature provided me with generalized others to imagine alternative possible selves.

In 1971, my private troubles intersected with public issues (Mills 1959) during the War on Poverty. I was a 23 year old, divorced, Anglo woman with one child and expecting a second, living for one year in Flussburg, Centralstate. My daughter and I had moved there by ourselves to get away from another small town near my parents where we had been living. Also, Flussburg had a university, and I like being around universities. The economic difficulties I experienced after my divorce motivated me to seek out human services for assistance in supporting my family. I received Aid to Families with Dependent Children and became a member of a much vilified group - Welfare Mothers.[24]

---

[23]When the mothers began describing the drinking patterns in their families and the problems they might have caused, I did reflect upon the drinking behaviors in my family. I do not include any reflections regarding those circumstances, although some may be similar to the mothers' accounts.

[24]I developed an understanding of the negative attitudes my community of others held toward Welfare mothers through conversations, interactions, reading the newspaper, and so forth. It is part of my socialization experiences growing up in the Midwest.

Centralstate had better support available to assist poor families than many other states. Nevertheless, we were still in poverty.

Poverty and public assistance were not new to me. Many times when things got tough for my family, my parents would apply for some kind of public assistance. We knew many ways to disguise the taste of U.S. surplus food, referred to as commodities.

My best friend in 1971 was also on welfare. We provided each other reflected selves that were more positive than what we received from the social service agencies, the media, and the public. We laughed together when my friend was able to "pass" to obtain an apartment. The landlady told her, "Yes, you can have the apartment (which was not prime property). You look okay. We don't want any of that welfare riffraff around here."

At that time, my daughter and I belonged to the Episcopal church. Members of this church were among the community elite, and I would pretend to be one of them. I knew I wasn't really. On Sundays after church there would be a Sherry Hour. I thought it was very elegant, like something out of an English historical romance novel in which people were always drinking sherry.

During the latter part of 1969 and throughout 1970, I'd had some medical problems to which physicians could not attach a disease name. I never felt very well and saw the physicians in the communities in which I lived who would honor my Medical Assistance card. Although eighteen years later the medical problems would finally be diagnosed as a physical ailment, at that time, because the physicians could not discover a diagnosis, it was decided I was in need of psychological treatment. Certainly, if the medical community could not diagnose my symptoms, then the problems must originate in my mind. So, to a state-paid (one who accepted Medical Assistance) psychiatrist I went.

This doctor was the epitome of a patronizing male expert. He sat behind a huge desk and entered into my medical records that, because I suggested that I wanted to finish college,[25] I was suffering from delusions of grandeur.[26] Certainly, poor women

---

[25]I had attempted college after graduating from Washington High School in New City, Centralstate. I dropped out after one year and got married. My reasons for dropping out were similar to those described by Donna Langston (1992). The college environment was alienating and lonely. I did not feel like I belonged

with children would not aspire to something different unless they were mentally ill. I was told by the "expert," "You don't want to do that (go back to college). It will only make your condition worse. You should accept that you will have to stay on welfare for the rest of your life."

In September of 1971, I enrolled my four year old daughter in the Head Start program. I do not recall how we were contacted[27], nor how we got involved, but I do remember getting a tour of the facilities with my daughter. At that time I was expecting my second child and felt trapped by professionals, my "mental health", and poverty. If early education could offer my daughter an opportunity to avert the same traps, that was worth my involvement.

As I recall, parental involvement was not only encouraged, but expected. We were a necessary ingredient in our children's education. We served as assistants in the classroom. We accompanied our children on field trips. We were kept informed of many aspects of the classroom activities and how our children were doing. The most important involvement for me was on the Policy Advisory Council. I do not remember how I was selected to participate in this part of the program.[28] I do, however, remember the meetings. They were run by Robert's Rules of Order, which were contained in a small guidebook the chair of the committee (also a Head Start mother) always had with her. No

---

socially. The others from my hometown who were attending the same school were the sons and daughters of local business owners and were invited to join sororities and fraternities. I was not and began to hang round the "townie" haunts where I met my husband. Getting married was more in line with what my aunts, uncles, and grandparents thought I should be doing. My parents were pleased that I had at least attended college, the first in the history of our family to do so.

[26]I happened to read this later on when during a move from Texas, I hand carried some of my medical records with me. Although I hadn't read the specific medical opinions when I consulted with him, he managed to convey them to me very clearly.

[27]Because of the eligibility requirements and selection process, it is likely that my AFDC case worker from the Social Services Department referred us to Head Start. She confirmed this belief in a recent phone conversation. She said Head Start was the "hot" program to which to refer clients at that time, and it was likely that she referred my daughter and me.

[28]In the Head Start Policy Manual (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1970), it states that "All parents serving on policy groups must be elected by parents of Head Start Children currently enrolled in the program" (page 4). It can be assumed that I was elected by other parents.

one had ever asked her to do anything as "important" as running a meeting before, and that book, "Robert's Rules of Order," was a symbol of power, order, and the importance of the process in which we were involved. We were made to feel that our opinions and wishes for Head Start were vital to the program's operation.[29] In essence, we were treated as experts. As important people to the project, we received training in leadership.

Head Start parents attended leadership workshops while our children received care. Transportation to every Head Start parent event was provided for those of us who did not have any. This transportation was in addition to that provided to get our children to the center for school. The structures of support to facilitate our participation were in place. We met in rooms that had pads of newsprint attached to the walls around the rooms. We were taught how to brainstorm with EVERY idea written on the pads of newsprint, written big and in color and looking important. The trainers were other parents who had been trained in previous sessions, lending more credence to our abilities and our expectations. We learned how to listen to one another, work through any differences, and to condense the lists of ideas prominently displayed on the newsprint. We learned how to reach decisions so that we all felt that the final decisions reflected the parents' opinions and input and were not the result of one authority. We were taught how to conduct meetings and how to get things accomplished. We came to see ourselves not as "those damned Welfare Mothers," but as important, capable people who knew what our families needed.

I made new friends and even joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) because one of the staff members and his family were members. When a tornado ripped through our community and tore off the roof of the home of the chair of the Parent Advisory Committee, I took her and her five children into my home until other arrangements could be made. My best friend and I were beginning to drift apart (for a while). She was finishing up her college education and was involved in increasingly more professional reference groups. There was no room for me in her new groups.

---

[29]The Head Start Policy Manual (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1970) directs the staff to learn to encourage parents sharing by resisting the temptation to dominate meetings. "Self-confidence and self-respect are powerful motivating forces" (p.7).

With some of the other Head Start mothers, I went to college and got one credit for a course in child development. At first everyone in the class was very frightened. We were being graded and had homework to do. Again, transportation was provided as well as child care. We gained respect for ourselves and our classmates. I remember reading letters to the editor about those "damned lazy Welfare Mothers" and feeling angry, not just for myself, but for the other women who were trying as hard as they could to be the best parents they could under extremely difficult circumstances.

Head Start provided me with a different mirror from which I could evaluate my "self" (Cooley 1964) which had lasting results. One consequence was I became even more involved in community decision-making committees. At that time, the Community Action Agency in the county to the south sought to expand their services to the poor into our county. They formed a task force to determine the needs in our county and to deal with public officials who had to vote to support the expansion. Many involved in the decision making aspects of Head Start were asked to be part of this effort. Thus, I was asked to join the task force and subsequently was elected chair, at which time the chair of the Parent Advisory Council gave me her Robert's Rules of Order booklet. I began talking to county board members, newspaper reporters, community groups, and so forth.[30] I was a "representative of the poor" and that representation was very important according to the community action agency.

It didn't take me long to begin questioning the psychiatric reflection of my self. If I could do all of the things I had been doing in Head Start, why couldn't I go to school? I was not that mentally ill Welfare Mother who could not ever do anything of importance. I could do things, think things, and be listened to. I got an undergraduate catalogue and found a major called Urban Affairs. The program described seemed very much like what I had been doing with Head Start and with the Community Action Agency. I decided to enroll over the objections of the psychiatrist.

---

[30]This was also when I learned that one must be careful what one says to a reporter and even then, misquotes are likely to occur. I learned not to believe statements were actually made merely because they were contained within quotation marks.

His diagnosis did do one thing for me. He had given me a condition from which to be rehabilitated. I contacted the Vocational Rehabilitation office, and although the psychiatrist told them I would never be able to make it through school, they funded my education. The year my daughter began kindergarten in the public school system, I began attending the University of Centralstate at Flussburg. I got my degree in urban affairs with a minor in sociology. By the time my son was Head Start age, I was employed and no longer met the income criterion for him to be enrolled in the program.

My "self" and the reference groups which reflected it when I began to participate in Head Start had both negative and positive aspects. I thought of myself in many negative terms, mostly that I wasn't "good enough". To combat the abundance of negative self-concepts, I chose an imaginary generalized other that made me feel competent, despite the psychiatrist's diagnosis, opinions of family, newspaper editorials, landladies resisting welfare riffraff, and so on. That generalized other was formed from the copious amount of reading I did as a child and adolescent. I knew that inside of me there was a self that would overcome anything to become what I wanted. It was a generalized other comprising characters from books such as the Cherry Ames series and as many Nancy Drew books as I could borrow from the library, to name a few.

It is possible that aspects of that self contributed to the changes I experienced. A recent conversation with the woman who was my case worker from the Department of Social Services during that time period supports this. When I said, "I don't know why I was selected to be on the Parent Advisory Council," she said, "I do. You were feisty. You refused to see yourself as you thought others viewed you." It is my sense that Head Start provided a group in which I found the reflected self that was more in line with the way I **wanted** to be seen by others even though I was sure that they knew I was not "good enough." This group provided the structure that facilitated the changes that were necessary for me to come to believe that I could do what I had always wanted to do: get an education, provide a better life for my children, and become somebody. This, of course, did not happen all at once, but I believe Head Start gave me the impetus I needed to begin the process of personal empowerment. I do not expect all mothers to begin in the same place I was when I first became involved in Head Start. Some may have more

positive self-concepts and some may have more negative. Some may have generalized others which, positive or negative, will be different than mine. The question is are there structures within Head Start that facilitate a low-income woman's process of personal empowerment.

In Chapter Seven, I introduce the Head Start mothers I interviewed. I seek to give them their own voice in this work. My motivation was to discover the degree to which we shared the experience of empowerment through Head Start.

CHAPTER 7
BIOGRAPHIES

Woman, Mother -- your responsibility is one that might
make angels tremble and fear to take hold!

Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice in the South*

To better distinguish the speakers in this work, I identify each of the interviewees and participants using pseudonyms. I conducted thirty-three interviews; five mothers from the period 1968 to approximately 1973, fourteen mothers from 1991-1993, eight mothers who ultimately became staff, and six current staff members. They are grouped by their alphabetical pseudonyms with a-e names given to parents from twenty years ago, f-s to recent parents, t-aa for parents who became staff, and ab-kl to staff who had never been Head Start parents.

The following vignettes are designed to introduce the respondents who are the Head Start mothers. They are presented in the first person and are distillations of their interviews and my observations. Although they are written in the first person and I use some of the respondents' own words, these vignettes are constructs. Margot Ely (1991) suggests:

> [Vignettes/constructs] are devices that are established through analysis and
> offered to provide meaning, cohesion, and color to the presentation. They
> serve also to counter the danger of over abstracting by anchoring the
> findings firmly in the field that gave rise to them (p. 154).

Again, these vignettes are not to represent an objective truth of the mothers' lives, rather they are constructed from the stories the mothers told of their Head Start and life experiences. The vignettes are also subject to the way I interpreted the mothers' presentations of their "selves."

At the end of each vignette [********], I explain how the respondent woman became part of the study. An asterisk [*] alone identifies those women who had volunteered to be part of the study by indicating so on their questionnaires.

82

HEAD START MOTHERS - 1968 to 1973

Angie

I was born in this community fifty five years ago. When I was in first grade, we moved to the house that became the family home. Ma sold it, though, in 1979. I had a circle of friends in that neighborhood, and I still keep in touch with them. I have three half-sisters and one brother. My sisters were much older than I. In fact I don't remember much about the oldest one. My brother was my dad's SON. Dad and I had a close relationship as I was his little girl, but my brother was SON. I used to say my brother was an only child. With my ma, I never thought she liked me. I couldn't talk to her very easily, but I was able to talk to my dad. My older sisters used to care for me a lot and when I was naughty, they'd spank me or send me to my room. I would think, "You wouldn't be able to do that if Dad was there." Then, I realized it would probably be worse if Dad were there. But, I could accept punishment from my dad because he was my hero.

My relationship with Ma just wasn't very good. I would do something that I thought was an accomplishment, but there was never a "good for you" from Ma. And she used to play one of us against the other. I knew with Ma, nothing I did was ever good enough. My dad was an alcoholic. Ma was not pleased with that. But, my dad was a happy drunk. It was my mom that started the fights. If I had a problem, I went to Dad.

Well, I graduated from high school. None of my sisters did. They all got married very young. After high school, I joined the Air Force. I got married the first time while I was in the service. I was eighteen, and it lasted for nine months. He turned out to be a real loser. I was still in service when I got married the second time. I was twenty one. I got out of the service and came back here because I was pregnant and my husband had to finish his enlistment. Then he, too, moved up here. We moved around quite a few times here. He drank. I ended up having eight children. The last one was a girl. I never thought I would have a large family, it just happened one kid at a time. I thought I would become a professional, an accountant. I have a good mind. When I got involved in Head Start, it became my universe. I had all the kids and no transportation, so where the heck could I go? I loved being on the Policy Council and I loved the meetings. I found

out I had something to say and that I wasn't always wrong. I could be me. I am educated, and I am articulate.

I went back to school while I was in Head Start and after the tornado destroyed my house. I am three credits short of having an associate's degree in accounting. I worked for a while as a secretary, but I was raped in my home. My boss was a total jerk about it. I broke down a few times after I went back to work, and my boss came over and sat right down in front of me and asked me if the rapist made any noises. I left there. I met the other victims, and we put the guy away. I have a job I like now. It's taking care of disabled people in their homes. If someone would have asked me if I would end up doing something like that, I would have told them they were crazy. But, after all these kids . . . I'm happy.

****

I had known Angie when we were in Head Start together. It was she who gave me the Robert's Rules of Order. I learned from the director she was still in the community, so I phoned her and set up an appointment.

Beth

I am 50 years old, and I still have a lot of ambition. Look around and you see all the things that I do. My furniture that I refinish, my doll collection. I am proud of this house. I keep it very clean because I like everything in order. I moved in here divorced with eight children. I was 17 when my oldest son was born. I got married to escape my parents' home. I didn't graduate from high school, but I got my G.E.D. My first husband was an alcoholic and mentally and physically, he was very abusive. People told me I was crazy to divorce him and that I would never be able to raise eight children alone. But, I knew I could. I knew I had ambition. I did get married again for three years. That man had made friends with my children. But, when we got married . . . he, too, had a drinking problem. So, I raised my children here, alone. This is my home. I am very proud of it. We always had a lot of other children coming over. I would make popcorn, and it was real comfortable for all the children here.

I love talking about my children, and I am proud of them all. I came from a large family myself. My parents stayed married, and Dad died when he was 51. Had he lived, they probably still would have stayed married forever in that misery.

I have fourteen brothers and sisters. I'm the third. My mother was wonderful. She was like a child herself. We didn't have much, but my mother was very inventive. She played hide and seek with us and baseball. She was smart. She didn't have high school, but she was self-taught. She read every inch of the newspaper. My father . . . he was never . . . he . . . I don't have . . . he's connected to my mother's grave. He slapped my wonderful mother around. We slept three in a bed and when the beating started, we would lay awake. He'd get his shotgun out. And he'd say he was going to shoot himself. However, he died from a heart attack, and he died without the respect of the family. My father made sure he was always taken care of. He ate steak when we kids had nothing. It made me give my children lots of food when they were growing up.

I went back to school to become a practical nurse. I had wanted to be a registered nurse, but . . . it was the second best thing. You know, I came alive after I got divorced. In Head Start, I felt like they thought I had some worth. They didn't treat you like you were on welfare. They treated you like you were important. I participated in everything. I met my best friend in Head Start. My youngest is now 22 years old. My children have had some problems with alcohol. But, they have all succeeded.

****

The director recommended that I contact Beth. She knew she was still in the area and thought she would want to talk to me.

Christine

I have this theory. My husband keeps telling me, "you should lose weight, you should lose weight, for your health, you should lose weight." Why? I'm forty-five years old, and I feel good the way I am. I wear what I please. If people don't want to look at me, they don't have to look at me. My husband's a good grandfather, probably better than he was a father. He's my second husband, and we've been married for twenty three

years now. My first husband is the father of my oldest daughter and of the twins. They're 25 and 24 now. It wasn't easy when we divorced. His lawyer told the judge that I was young and healthy and that I could work. . . with three little children, eleven months apart. He only had to pay $25.00 a week. We were only married for a year and a half. He wasn't much of a father. And then, when he finally started paying some attention to his girls and they were getting to know him, he ups and kills himself.

You can probably see that I am very child oriented. I ended up having six children. I don't think my mother wanted me to have so many children. My sister was the one with all the ambition. But, hey. I'm a mother and a grandmother. That's what I do. Well, I also have a paper route. But, I take care of kids. I told my mother when my girls started getting pregnant and didn't finish school, "Hey. Don't even talk to me about abortion. Don't even talk to me about kicking them out. No, they're my children. And no matter what they do, whether I like it or not, I'm going to accept, because you accepted everything we did, and I have tried to use that."

I don't know why I can't keep them in school though. I've got five grandchildren from my oldest daughter. She's married now. And then three from my second. She's married. My one daughter has a mental illness, and she's not married. My youngest son is nineteen and he's not married and he's got two children. See, I watch them? And my youngest daughter is seventeen, and she has two children.

I thought Head Start was wonderful. I was involved in everything that they had. I was even a Head Start grandmother on the Policy Council. My kids liked that because then they didn't have to. I loved it. It made you feel like you were worth something. And your child was worth something.

I don't think my kids are going to turn out the way I wanted them to. I had all these dreams for them. But, tonight I'll go home after baby-sitting here all day with my son's children, I'll make supper and spend some time with my husband. I'm trying to keep this all together. Two years ago we would go camping with all the grandkids, but you know? Someday it's just going to be the two of us.

****

The director recommended Christine. Christine has been active in Head Start as both a parent and a grandparent.

Denise

I really want you to see what I have done. I have this business . . . my day care center for seventeen years. My second husband and I have been married for fifteen years now. I was single for about fourteen years, and I was pretty capable of surviving on my own. I married the first time when I was very young, and I was married for about seven years. I met my second husband at Head Start. He was dating one of the other mothers.

You know, Head Start was just the joy of my life. There will be nothing else like it.

All my kids are married. They are all doing well. They've gotten education. My oldest son is 37, and my oldest daughter is thirty five and graduated this June. The next son is 32. He's a corrections officer. Then the next daughter is 29 and graduated from college. They have two children and one of the way. So, that will make twelve grandchildren. They each have three. I'm very proud of them all.

It was tough raising the children alone. My sons had Big Brothers. I'm very committed to a two parent family. Otherwise, all the decisions have to be made by one parent, and the children do not learn the give and take of relationships. Everything has to be done your way.

I graduated from high school here. I've had some courses, all through Head Start. And then I got my CDA, Child Development Associate's degree. Both my husband and I have the equivalent of ninety credits of early childhood development.

I've lived here since I was three. I've lived all over the community. But, now I have this child care center because of the things I learned through Head Start about children.

****

When Denise heard of this research, she asked to be a part of it. However, part of her taped interview was damaged and unable to be transcribed.

Elizabeth

You can tell that I am a pretty strong woman. I'm a bus driver. Don't ask me to do anything I don't want to do. I am fiercely proud of my children. See? Their pictures are the only things you'll find decorating my walls. With five of them, I have a lot of pictures. They've had it kind of rough. One of my sons did have some trouble with the law. He spent about ten months in reform school. But, he's been pretty good since then. He's thirty five now, and he's pretty much a yuppie. His wife is an even bigger yuppie. Of course, she's got college. And my daughter, the one that's thirty four? She's a pretty straight-laced Baptist. I was pretty shocked when she turned up pregnant and not married. But, she's married now and very happy.[31]

I'm fifty five years old now. I'm the sixth child and the youngest surviving. I had two sisters that died a long time ago. I've never been alone. I don't know what I'm going to do when my youngest finally leaves. I had my mother living here until she died. My father was into a real strict religion. He spent every minute at church. One of my brothers still belongs to that church. Long hair. Skirts, no slacks. No earrings, no make-up, no drinking. Just church. My mother went along with it for years. My father died when he was fifty eight. My mother was old-fashioned, but she didn't get into church like father did. I don't go to church now. I used to. In fact, I got baptized last year. But, the church moved out in the country some place, and I haven't found another.

I don't have too many friends. I've lived in this house for thirteen years, and I don't know the neighbors. Let me tell you about Head Start. The friends I have, I made there. Christine and I are grandmothers to two of the same children. Her son's and my daughter's children. They aren't married. I heard about the Head Start program, but my daughter was too old and just missed it. So, it was ten years before my next son was

---

[31]This daughter ended up being very good friends with my sister and her husband who is a Baptist minister. They met in another state. My brother-in-law performed the marriage for the daughter and her husband. We discovered this during the interview.

ready to go. I started to take him to visit from the time he was two years old until he was old enough to enroll. So, I was involved and volunteered there before my kids got in. And the teacher was always happy to see me. You know, my youngest daughter got hit by a car and had a skull fracture. The doctor wanted me to get her to remember things so I got her to sing a Head Start song with me. I'm not going to get as involved as a grandparent. This grandson will be ready to go in the fall.

****

The director recommended Elizabeth because she felt I should have access to mothers who might not have wonderful things to say about Head Start, and she felt Elizabeth would be very candid. She was, but she had no negative things to say. She did let me know that she wasn't going to fill out any questionnaire.

HEAD START MOTHERS 1991-1993
Faith

I'm kind of in a mess right now. We're building a Habitat for Humanity home. We have to put in so many hours working on the house. And I'm going to school right now. I'm taking classes at the technical school to be a child care teacher assistant. I was a Head Start kid. My mother's Christine. My oldest daughter, who is eight, was in it. And now we're in the home school program with my four year old daughter. I wasn't married when my oldest daughter was born. I'm twenty five years old, and I'm married now. My husband is a cook.

We have lots of friends at church. We are very involved. We go every Sunday morning, and Sunday nights, and I go to a women's bible study on Tuesday mornings. On Wednesdays, we go with the kids. I really like to stay active. You know I was a kid whose mother got AFDC and then I was a mother myself and getting it. I figured I'd better get my butt to school. I've got to make something of my life and the kids.   I ' v e become a very responsible person. I'm having some trouble keeping up with everything right now because of building the house. Things are pretty chaotic. I do a lot of things, barbecue, go to the beach, and stuff. And I feel most comfortable at home with my kids because I know they love me, even though it's really disorganized at the moment.

I got into Head Start because my mother told me it would be good for me. I've been on the Policy Council, and I'd like to be on there again. I tell others, "Hey, there's a program here and your kids need it." I tell them, "go over to the open house, fill out an application, get your kid involved, get involved yourself, you'll love it."

****

Faith was part of a snowball sample. She was identified by staff as a mother who would be considered "THE Head Start mother." I then called and asked if she would consent to be interviewed. Faith was part of that sample and agreed to let me question her. (Her mother, Christine, did not identify her as "THE Head Start mother.")

Grace

If you come to my house, you're going to find out that I'm not real sure how to manage everything. You might even think that I'm not very neat. I know there's jelly on the chairs and crayon writing on the walls, and laundry everywhere. I guess you could say it's pretty filthy in here. But. let me take you outside. Here's where my heart is. My husband and I built this playground equipment. Some would say that it looks like a park.

I've got these five kids. and I sure wish someone would tell me how to be a mother. I feel so overwhelmed. There's a lot of things I don't do because I have the five kids, and I just don't know how to keep them organized.

I'm thirty four years old now, and I didn't grow up in this town. I grew up in a much smaller community. I'm the oldest of five children. We didn't see my dad much. He was always on the road and didn't get home until after we were in bed. And then he belonged to other things like the Legion and bowling. We spent more time with my mother.

I'm kind of bewildered why people don't come and see us. I think with the kids and all . . . . I don't know. I'd like to figure things out. I really want to have some friends.

My husband works swing shifts. I plan my times to go to Head Start when he is sleeping or when he is working. I really like being on the policy council, but I haven't

90

gotten involved in anything else, because my life is kind of hectic. The one thing I don't like is the newsletters. They should tell you farther ahead what's going on so that you can plan . . . .

As I said, my life is pretty hectic. We pretty much have to take the kids with us wherever we go so we don't have to worry about them rippin' the place apart. I think every mother wishes she could control her kids more. I just wish I could control them once in a while. Like if I say they can't ride their bikes and I wouldn't have to lock the bikes away because they wouldn't go behind your back when you are busy and ride them. I've got five and when I think I'm watchin' two of 'em real close, the third one sneaks out.

Now, my husband and I. We have special times together. We'll just sit outside and get a fire in the grill and just watch the flames. We like to have the quiet times to talk about whatever. We like woodworking. We get into making lots of woodworking stuff. But, we end up selling the stuff, and I never get any of it. Maybe some day when the kids are grown. . . .

****

The director provided me with a list containing the names of some mothers and staff that I might be interested in interviewing. She did not share with me her reasons. Grace was one of the mothers on a list provided to me by the director.

Helen

I really like to talk to people, even though I'm a little shy. My husband and I have been married for nine years. I was twenty when we married. And we are just learning how to communicate. We want to make sure that our home is filled with love. We have four children, and we want the world for them. We are so proud.

They are into all kinds of activities, dancing, tumbling, soccer, reading books. My oldest daughter is in first grade. She was in Head Start. She gets all As on her report card.

91

I had one year of college in when I met my husband, and we eloped. I grew up in Chicago, and my father had us go to a real strict Catholic school. My mother died when I was young. My father drank a lot, but I think he is still a good man. He wanted us to go to school and get out of the inner city.

I was seven when my mother died. Dad re-married and now he's getting a divorce. She is just terrible with us children. None of us called her "mom." I have an older brother who has a mental illness, and then I have two sisters and my youngest brother is twenty four. We're closer now than when we were growing up. We were there for each other, but we didn't talk about stuff like we do now.

I used to feel bad about myself because my father grew us up. I didn't know how to be with my children. When I got to Head Start, I learned how to talk to children and how to play with them. I'm surprised at the things I've done. I'm basically a real shy person, and yet I've been secretary of a fund-raising committee, and then I got on the Policy Council. I don't know why I did that.

You know, I don't have everything I thought I wanted, but I feel happy that I have a house . . . right now to me it's good. I have a family, I'm happy with them. I want to teach my children about their Mexican heritage and be proud of who they are.

****

Helen became part of the study as a result of the snowball sampling. Her name kept coming up as an example of "THE Head Start Mother." Therefore I called and asked if I could interview her and she consented.

Imelda

The first thing you might notice about me are my wheels. But being in a wheelchair is not all who I am. Come into my house and come into my kitchen and you will know I'm an extraordinary cook. I get around just fine, thank you. My kids are great kids. I have two sons. I'm 35 years old, and I was 30 when my first one was born. My husband and I have been married for seven years. We've had our ups and downs due to some problems with alcohol. But, we're doing okay.

92

I'd really love to go back to school and learn the catering business. I'm beginning to feel more like an individual again. Until the children started going to school I was solely a mom. I'm the kind of person people can tell their problems to. But, I don't share my problems too well with others.

I wasn't from around here. I lived in Texas, Michigan, and Florida. My accident happened when I was about fourteen years old. I finished high school through tutoring.

Things were kind of tough growing up, even before the accident. My mom and dad got divorced once because of his drinking. He was an alcoholic and very abusive to my mother. They were divorced for a couple of years. We were living in Texas then, and my mother was fixin' to go back to Michigan. My dad asked her if he quit drinking could he go back with her and she said "yes," and he hasn't had a drink since.   I was the youngest of three and the only daughter. I think growing up was kind of hard. Mom was a perfectionist about her house. I had a very critical upbringing. But, the accident changed things.

I've been pretty involved in Head Start. I was calling around for a pre-school for my son. And the prices they quoted were just ridiculous. A friend said I should try Head Start. I was surprised when we qualified financially. I got involved right away. I was not going to just hand my children over to a bunch of strangers and expect them to do what was right for them. The more I did, the more enthusiastic I became that I was actually accomplishing something outside my nucleus here.

****

Imelda was another mother whose name kept coming up in other interviews as "THE Head Start Mother." She and her husband have been very involved in Head Start activities. Imelda has also recently joined the Head Start staff.

Jessica

We're kind of different than a lot of the other families in Head Start. First, there's the bi-racial thing. My husband is Black. His relatives have been real good to me and taught me how to do my daughter's hair and everything. My family, it took a little longer.

93

They wanted me to go to college and become educated, and I went to college and met my husband. And now we have three children. They are 5, 19 months, and 1 month.

I grew up in this state, but not in this community. My hometown is much smaller. My husband grew up in Chicago. We go there a lot to visit, and we're much more comfortable there. My husband is more optimistic about what the world will be like for the children. I see it becoming much more racially split. I have a brother who still doesn't accept my marriage, and we've been married for almost four years.

Some day I want to go back to college and finally have a life for myself. My husband has a degree and is a performing artist. I have a year and a half of college. I was looking for a pre-school for my daughter, and we couldn't afford to get her into regular pre-school and I saw Head Start in the yellow pages. It turned out different than my expectations. I thought it was going to be like the pre-schools my friends have their kids in. But, it's different. You ride the bus in and help them get on and off the bus. Help the teacher lay out the stuff on the tables so that they can work with the kids. Help with the lunch so they can get the lunch going. Help them get dressed again and on the bus again and home. You know, it showed me that what I was doing there, being a mother, was just as good as going out and working.

****

Jessica was one of the mother's on the list provided by the director.

Karen

I'm engaged. I sure hope that when we get married next year, this guy stays around. Our baby will be about 11 months old when we get married. I have the other two kids, too. My daughter is 5. I'm only 21. I'm kind of a young mom.

I dropped out of school. Well, I never actually finished eighth grade. I'm going to the tech [community technical college] now, and I'm going to get my high school diploma. When I was in school, I hated it. I always felt that I didn't know what was going on, and I was just passed on, and I'd feel further behind. I got frustrated and dropped out.

94

I ran away to Florida when I was fourteen. I stayed for three months and came back because I was homesick. Otherwise, I lived in this town, in this house, for all my life. When I was sixteen, I got married, and we moved to another street. I'm getting a divorce now. This isn't the way I thought my life would be.

I'm mommy's girl. My dad, all he cares about is money. My mom and dad are divorced, and when I got pregnant with my daughter, who's five now, he wanted me to give her up for adoption and come and live with him and finish school. Money's all he ever cared about. I'd ask him for money for school stuff, and he'd give me five dollars. My step-dad, he's my brother's dad, was okay at first. They went to a pretty strict church. So did I. But, he was an alcoholic, and it got bad. I don't believe in any of that church stuff.

I have a brother who is seventeen. I really like his name. It's from the Bible. Anyway, he's finally going to school, and it looks like he's shaping up. He is a really good and protective uncle. He was going to beat a kid up for picking on his nephew.

Head Start? I don't feel like a "young mother" there. I just feel like a mom. Before that I just had a daughter, but I wasn't a mom. I'm glad the bus driver on my route told me about it.

I hope my kids can see that I am going back to school, and I'm going to set a good example for them. I want to have a decent job. I hope we can nave a house out in the country. This guy better stick around.

<p style="text-align:center">••••••••</p>

Karen was referred by one of the Family Center workers.

Lee·[32]

I got married when I was sixteen. I got married so my dad wouldn't have to pay child support anymore, and then my mom couldn't spend my child support checks on drinkin'. I was married probably two years. I liked to party. I was seventeen when my

---

[32] · indicates the respondent volunteered to be interviewed by returning a signed consent slip with her questionnaire.

son was born. My daughter will be two pretty soon. They're brats. He has mood swings, and she whines a lot.

I've worked at a lot of jobs, waitressing, housekeeping at a motel. Waitressing is pretty good 'cause you get tips. I'd like to get back at that.

I've moved around a lot here in this town. I have to be out of this apartment in two weeks. I'll go wherever I can find an apartment. Maybe that's why I don't have any fingernails left. But, I'm tough. If you look at my calendar, you'll see that I really am a very organized person even if it doesn't show in the rest of my life. See? I've got all the stuff on there that I have to do.

My relationship with my mother and father? Pfft. Pretty shitty. They're not together 'cause I caught my mom cheatin' on my father, and I told him. They're both remarried now. After they got divorced. I lived with my mom or out on the streets, it depended. I was fourteen. You know, I think my mom's cheatin' was for the best. My dad was all the time beatin' my mom up. And I didn't want to see it anymore. So, I told my dad about the cheatin.' My dad beat me too. My mom? She's an alcoholic. She don't want to go get help. My dad's married to someone only eight years older than I am now, and she wants to act like my mom, and I don't like it. And she treats my kids like they are her kids, and I don't like that either.

I've got one brother, and they're always telling me how HE graduated. And I've got two step-sisters. I don't get along with the older one. I see too much of me in her. I had another stepbrother, and me and him were real close. He died of a drug overdose. I went through a lot of emotions after he died. My grandmother, we were very, very close, my dad's mom. She died in 1985, and my whole world fell apart. That's when I started getting into trouble. I started doin' drugs. I stopped 'cause I had my son, but then my step-brother died, and I let everything go again. I'm doin' fine now.

I seen a flyer about Head Start when I went to WIC. I was in Head Start and I thought it was a good thing, so I signed my son up. My mom still has my Head Start papers. I was scared when I first went there. A lot of parents blow off goin' in there and helpin.' I blew if off, too, for a couple of months 'cause I turned twenty one and went on a drinkin' binge.

96

Things are different now. A year ago, I had people over to the house all the time. My daughter's father was in prison, and I was partyin.' The guy I'm with now? He makes all the difference. He's a worker, and I figure, "Why should I sit home and party while he works?"

I read a lot. I love reading. Mostly romance novels. But, there was this one book. It made me feel like I was the person in the story 'cause she was twenty one with two kids and she was on aid, but she got off of it. I want both my kids to grow up and finish high school and to have a job. And to not have kids too young. I want to go back to school yet and have a good job, maybe interior design.

****

Margaret*

Well, I've got a lot to say. I'm twenty seven years old and I have four children. We're pretty strange, my husband and me. He's nine months younger than me, and we planned to get pregnant so we could married, and we're just strange. That's what our parents always say.

I could go on and on about my children's bouts with medical problems, or broken bones, and whatever. Every one of them . . . well not the youngest. She's sweet, cute, and adorable. Nothin's happened to her. My doctor said we must have hit the right mold with her.

My kids call me "teacher." That's 'cause I'm a teacher's aid. So, that's what they call me. We have a place fixed up in the basement, and each of my kids got a desk and books and crayons and stuff. I'm teacher. Even when we're down there and I'm doin' laundry . . . I'm teacher. I'm going to the tech now for being a teacher's aide. I started out being a lunch room supervisor, and then I went to sub-aiding, and now I'm an aide.

We moved around pretty much when I was growin' up. I was born in North Carolina. Even when my parents moved one time, only one block, it was a major, major adjustment. Me and my husband have moved about twenty times around town. We can't decide where exactly we want to live. My husband's got a pretty bad foot right now, and we're involved in a legal fight to get back pay for him and stuff. And they fired him when

97

he got hurt. So, we've had to sell a lot of our stuff. And my parents said we could move back in with them. So, I've been in and out of their house because jobs come and they go.

My dad owned a hamburger restaurant downtown. That's where I met some wonderful women who worked there. Especially the one, she's like a mother to me . . . better than a mother. My parents fight all the time. I never, ever saw them kiss. They're different. My dad's Polish. That's why he's an idiot. My mom's Norwegian. I know that makes me Polish, too, but I'm more Norwegian. My dad and I used to be really close. I went everywhere with him, and then I turned thirteen. Everything changed. I started getting called every name in the book, like stupid, dumb, windbag. I still think I'm a windbag. With my mom, I keep parts of me hidden because I'd be hated otherwise.

I really don't think that I am like other people who don't have enough money. We have to go for help because stuff happens, like my husband's foot. We're deserving. We ain't no low life. I know plenty of women who are. Have baby after baby just so they can get more money from Welfare. We're just on it for a crutch to lift us out. One girl I know's got twelve kids all with different fathers. We ain't like that.

I got my kid into Head Start 'cause his speech is messed up. His hyperactivity drove me nuts too. Well, I couldn't afford to put him nowhere because we were at the financialist low. So, I reached out and found Head Start. I thought it was stupid at first. Those parents meetings. I knew those mothers in the room, and they were low-life. None of them's tried upgrading themselves. None of 'em are worried about gettin' married. They got their kids, and they're livin' off the system. And I think the meetings did a lot of male-bashing. That's wrong. And I wanted to be treated different, like an individual. Okay, that mother's in an abusive relationship. So? I ain't. I expected it more to be . . . to up bring everybody. I walked out of there feeling worse than when I went in. I went to a sex abuse thing. That was pretty good. I think its a good program. I think the home base thing is kinda stupid. I made a friend with another mom, but to have one teacher visit nineteen kids, and me with my occupation going up the ladder. I'm hard to get a hold of. But, at Head Start I'm a teacher. I can't get away from that. They tell me I'm important, and I can do things. When I get around a group of kids, I just am a teacher.

I'm a complex person. You know, about the selves you could be? Well, some people don't see they have them. It's kind of sad 'cause they're losing out on a lot of themselves. I really think I'm a whole different than what people see. I'm a teacher.

****

Nancy*

I've been divorced now for almost five years. I was married for two years to a nightmare. I'm twenty four years old, and things are calmer now. I lived mostly here until I got married, and then my husband kept moving us all around the country. I didn't have any friends because he wouldn't let me. I wasn't allowed to talk to anyone. After I divorced him, I got all my friends back. I was in New York when I broke away from him. My parents came and rescued me. My husband was like schizophrenic. He was afraid everyone was trying to kill him, and so we'd move. I was eighteen. I'd have to play along with him thinking everyone was trying to kill him, or I'd get my butt kicked. He hit me all the time. Everyday for two years. I finally figured . . . I'm going to tell someone or he's going to kill me, and if he kills be while I'm trying to tell someone, then at least I tried.

Things are much better with my parents now. When I was growing up, they only picked on the things I did wrong. Now it's a little better. Both my brothers are addicts, and we've all gone through counseling.

Life is so much better now. I'm happy. I've got a good man who treats me well. I always wanted to be a police officer. I don't know if I'm going to do that or let it go. Some day I hope to be married and have a nice house. I joke around now. I like living. I may not have much, but what I have is neat and clean and it's mine.

I heard about Head Start through a friend who had her son in there. I went down and applied. I'm not too involved. I don't know why. I'm not one to be around little kids all the time. But, I feel very relaxed and patient there. And it's good for my kids. I hope my kids have a nice conservative life, no troubles.

****

Olivia*

I'm very proud of my sobriety. I'm thirty two years old now, and I've been clean and sober for six years. My kids think I'm a better parent now, and they love me better now. It took a lot for me to get sober. I finished the 11th grade. I didn't grow up here, but my hometown isn't too far away. We moved around a lot, though. I lived at home off and on growing up. I get along real good with my mother, but my father . . . we were supposed to love him, and I just didn't. My dad would beat me. My mom is forty nine years old and works hard. She and my dad are divorced because he had an affair on her.

I used for a long time. I finally ended up in jail. Some people shun you down for that, but I can't change it. That's what happened. And it's a disease, and I guess I had to do time to straighten out and everything. My mom's in recovery, too. She has been for nine years and now she's married to a nice man. He's more of a father to me than my own father, and that's kind of sad.

It's really hard to live on $500 a month and take care of everything. I have two daughters here and everything. My son . . . well, he's got some troubles, just like I did. You know, people will say "go get a job if you can't live on $500 a month." But, I'm going to school, so that I can get a good job. I feel bad being on aid. It seems like everyone kind of make you down . . . like you're a bad person and then every time I feel good, somebody has to shove me down. Then, you have to go somewhere and get yourself back to where you were again. And it's real hard to get back up there again. It makes you like have to climb that ladder, and you have to take that extra step higher to make you feel better again. And that's about that.

This is the second time we've been in Head Start. They do such nice things for the kids, give 'em balanced meals and all. I got a notice that told me they knew I had a four year old child, and that she could be enrolled, so I went down and applied. I felt really happy going with here. I joined in everything . . . as much as I could. I was more involved with my older daughter. Things were different then. I do the home base now with my younger one. I don't go everyday. And then I have to go to school, and I don't have time to be as involved and go to the meetings and stuff. But, if I have any good ideas, I hope that they can take them and use them. When I got in back then, I didn't feel

so good about myself. And they told me I was funny. And that I'm good with kids. I would try my best with my children, but I'd been usin.' I see myself whole total different now. Now, I try to show them what a mom's supposed to be like. It's kind of hard with all the stuff I'm forced to do with the schooling and all. My daughter was feeling like I didn't love her anymore, 'cause I couldn't spend a lot of time with her like I used to. I told her things would slow down again. And in them times we can do a lot of things together. I says to her, "Mom's just really busy right now. And you're going to have to accept that. I'm sorry. I can't change that. I cannot tell them people, gimme a break. We have to do things by the law. And we have to get along, and we have to love each other if it's good or bad or what."

****

Paige*

Well, I'm thirty-two years old, and I have five precious children. Each one is like a miracle. I am divorced. It hasn't been very long officially, but we were separated a long time. I'm fairly well educated. I need about forty more credits to graduate with my undergraduate degree. I was only nineteen when I got married, and my husband was already thirty.

We moved here from a town where I had done most of my growing up. I didn't fit in. My parents didn't have any money, and it was tough. So, I hung around with a lot of dirtballs who were fun and understanding. After high school, I went to Michigan to school for one year. My husband said, "Come back, you finish school, and we'll get married." So, I thought I was getting the family I always wanted and all my dreams. A job, career, husband, you know.

My parents, well, my mother and step-father . . . it was not a healthy marriage. She was real passive-aggressive. And he was real quiet. But, we went through . . . it started when I was eight. There was a lot abuse of every kind. It was one of those families where you were afraid to breathe. We didn't talk about the real problems. Mom said she divorced my father because he was an idiot. But, there was alcoholism. But, divorcing the problem doesn't necessarily make it change. When she re-married, she

101

married in a lot of ways, the same kind of . . . . The abuse was most violent when the drinking was the worst. When they were both drinking there would be the domestic abuse. I have two sisters and a brother . . . two from mom's second marriage. The sexual abuse started the day my little sister was born. Before that it was just rage fits. Basically just treating the kids like very useless human beings.

With my mother, it was like I was a competitor and caretaker. I never felt like her child. I felt like her equal. A lot of that came from the abuse. I never was anybody's little girl. I'd just put so much of it away. After I was married, my mother called me to come over, and there with my sister and mother standing there, my step-father said he was sorry for what he'd done to me when I was little. I said that I'd put it out of my mind. My sister and my mother yelled at me and said I was in denial. I yelled back and left, and when I got out to my car, I had my first flashback of me trying to hold the door shut and his fist coming through and with it, the smell of liquor. And then when I got home, I found out my husband was cheating and in three hours, my whole perfect world with all the trappings was gone . . . just like that.

I went to a bunch of counseling. And then I became manicky. I've been diagnosed with manic-depression. You know, with all the chaos in my life, I was very fortunate to have some very stable people in it when I needed it. My one friend has been in my life for fourteen years. She has a son a few weeks older than I am. She gave me my ideas of how to be a woman and a wife. She's a real gift.

I was hooked on Head Start right from the start. When we got involved, it was a time when we were all hurting real bad. To go there was like being on a safe island. And there were other parents there who knew what I was going through. It was wonderful. God, it was just like the best thing in the world. I probably haven't done enough. It's hard with being in school. But, when I go . . . just sitting down and playing with the PlayDoh, it's such a blessing. It was like the gift of life, it really was.

I want to keep going to counseling so that we can all feel our feelings and to talk about our feelings. And if I gave them that, I gave them something my parents never did. Anything more than that would be a bonus.

Quincie*

Okay, this is the way life is. Stuff happens, you cope. More stuff happens, and you cope some more. I'm twenty five years old. My brother died, I've had cancer. My daughter will probably not live a real long time. I cope. I didn't finish high school because we moved and I needed one more credit in a class they didn't have at my old school. But, I know I need to finish. Head Start helped me realize that I was living for my daughter, and I needed to start living for me, too. My boyfriend has a college education. He's book smart and common sense stupid. I'm finishing the high school credits, and I'm also taking some business courses.

We moved a lot after we got married. I wasn't allowed to have friends. We lived in one community for a year while he finished some schooling, and then we moved back here, and I was pregnant. We moved right next to his parents and that pretty much killed our marriage. The straw that broke it was when my brother was dying, and none of them would watch my daughter so I could go to him. I was so angry and so hurt, I moved out. I divorced his family first, and then I divorced him. When he started hitting our daughter and not just me, that was it.

I've worked hard my whole life. This is the first time I've had to depend on the government for help. And I hate it. They make you feel so . . . untrustworthy. But, with the cancer and her health. I have to do what I have to do. I cope.

I'm the youngest of seven. Two sisters and one brother are dead. One sister died very young - a baby - cancer. The other committed suicide when I was 15 and she was 29. And then my brother died of cancer of the spine.

My mother taught me my caring and sensitive side and my father taught me responsibility. They were and are good parents, and my daughter is the apple of their eye.

My cousin drives bus for Head Start and told me about it. I knew my daughter needed to be around other kids. And it's been a good thing. I found out that I've been doing the right things. I was always feeling so negative about the things I was doing.

Now I found out that I'm a good parent. I've learned that sometimes its not just my daughter who needs a time-out. Sometimes I need it too.

****

Roxanne*

Everybody calls my son a walking tornado. See? He's pretty active. He's four now. Let's see. I'm twenty-five years old. I've never been married. I finished eighth grade. I'd say I was going to school, and then I just wouldn't. Until my son was born, I worked in a factory for five years.

We moved all over this town when I was growing up. Mom was on AFDC. She just got off last year. She ain't got no perfect job, but. . . I started making friends when I started working, otherwise I didn't have any growing up. My dad was Indian and German and Italian. He always scared me when I was little 'cause he'd say if I got on the reservation they'd never let me off. His mother wouldn't talk about the Indian part. She don't believe in Indians, so we're not Indians. Everyone mistakes me for Mexican.

My mother and father are divorced. His drinking caused it, but then after they got separated, she started drinking, too. Boy, when she was drunk, she'd cry and kiss and hug. But, then she would turn on you just like that. I didn't want to grow up and be like my mother. I did move in with my father after he got into AA and stopped drinking. I think he was the better parent.

I've got one sister and four brothers. I'm second. My sister's older. They're coming along pretty good. My one brother is now married. He got himself out of the gang, and stopped doing drugs and drinking. They have one kid and another one on the way. But, her parents took the first one and adopted it. He really loves his son, but he don't know what to do.

I'm going to school now. The teachers tell me it's like starting over because I only had eighth grade. And in Head Start I'm learning what to do with my son. I didn't know what kinds of things to do with him, and now I know I can give him something to do while I do something else, and he'll enjoy it. I didn't know, you know.

104

I really don't have much more life than my son. I don't have any friends. I guess I'm kind of alone. I hope some day I can get married. I'd like to be married before I'm thirty. And I hope my son has a much better life than what he's had until now. I scream and yell a lot, but I'm learning, and it's getting better. I'm hopin' he will be able to come and talk to me. And I'm going to do everything I can to make that happen.

****

Sarah*

I don't like talking about myself too much. I'm kind of private. But, I will tell you a little bit. I was married before. My Head Start son is from my first marriage. My other son is two, and he's from this marriage. They're pretty good kids. Easy going. Happy all the time. I finished high school. My husband didn't, but he went back and got his GED. I'm twenty-five years old, and I was twenty when my son was born. I've lived all my life in this community. I used to live next door to this house. That's how I met my husband. He had never been married before. And he was someone to talk to. It's kind of complicated.

My parents have been married for thirty-four years and have a really good relationship. I'm the youngest of four children. We get along real well. I never met any of my other relatives, like my grandparents or nothing.

My husband and I had a rough stretch when he got laid off, and welfare helped us get back on our feet. When I was in WIC for the little one, I found out about Head Start, and we could get in. I wanted my son to get some more better education before he went to regular school. At first I felt a little embarrassed, because I didn't know what was going on and all. I help out there, cleaning the tables, putting the name things on, and I cut out stuff. I don't go to any of the meetings or anything. As I said, I'm kind of quiet and private. But, what I do do is very important to Head Start because it counts for in-kind.

When I was a kid, I wanted to be a model or a movie star or something. Now, I'm just a housewife. But, I'd like to do that in-home schooling to become a veterinarian's assistant. As soon as I can afford the tuition. We'll have this house paid for in five years.

105

and then we'll have extra money. For my kids, life is going to be whatever they make it out to be, I guess.

EXPERIENTIAL STAFF [33]

Teresa[34]

I am Teresa. I am Hmong from Laos. Life is much different here for my husband, me, and my five children. Here, we experience discrimination. It hurts, but life in Laos after the war would have been dangerous. So, I am very glad to be here. We left Laos and made our way to a refugee camp in Thailand. Then, a Lutheran church in Columbus sponsored us to be able to come to United States. Later, we came here to be near family. Family is very important to my people.

I am thirty-five years old. My oldest child is seventeen years old. Life for my daughters is going to very different here in the United States. In my country, women are not respected. When a man wishes to marry a woman, he kidnaps her. She has no choice. I was lucky. Many women are abused. My husband is a good man and has given up many of the Hmong men ways.

I work as a bilingual aide for Head Start. My children's education is very important. See? There on the walls are the awards and diplomas we have gotten. I want my sons and daughters to be respectful, educated people with good families.

****

Ursula

You see before you a strong, determined woman. My life has taken many twists and turns to bring me here. I love my life the way it is now, but it has not been so in the past.

---

[33]This term applies to women who had been Head Start mothers themselves before they became Head Start staff members.

[34]My tape recorder batteries failed during this interview. I have not been able to transcribe the tape. Therefore, this vignette is constructed from my notes.

First, let me tell you that I am forty-five years old and married to a wonderful man. This is my second marriage. My four children are from my first marriage and some still carry the scars of growing up in a rather unhealthy atmosphere.

I wish my children had more education, but the one thing that people say about them is they are very nice people. I wanted more for them than working in factories and such, but they will have to bump up against life the way I did before they decide what they need. They all quit high school like I did. And some have had problems with alcohol and drugs. That is always a tight rope they walk, sometimes being able to stay on, sometimes falling off.

We moved around a lot when I was a kid. I remember at one school, I figured out that being a very good reader did not get me the same attention as the other students. I could read very well, but I never got to stand up as long as the other kids, so I began to read like them. Then, I got to read longer and got more attention from the teacher. You learn to cope with what life deals you.

I grew up in a home where alcohol was a real problem. We didn't have money. My father drank. Family life was terrible. I was the oldest of five. My mother worked from early evening until three in the morning. My dad was home with us. My father wouldn't even let us go to bed until she came home. It was really tough to try and do homework. My sister and I had to do all the household chores. And yet we were beaten when we didn't do schoolwork.

I survived by figuring out that my parents were crazy. When they called me awful names and told me I was stupid, I would just say in my head, "Dumb? I bet you can't even spell it." When things got out of hand, I would bundle up my brothers and sisters and go to nearby relatives who told me to just stay out of their way and keep my mouth shut until it was over.

I felt really responsible for my younger brothers and sisters. One time during a really bad fight, I was comforting my sister in our room, and I began to worry about my brother, whose room was further down the hall. I remember the noise my parents were making was really bad. I tried to convince myself that my little brother would be alright, but then I just had to go and check. I found him hiding in the corner, and I was just

devastated. This brother is now an alcoholic. Excuse my tears. It's hard to remember some of this.

So, I got married, of course to a man who put me down and who drank. And I started repeating with my children the things I heard and the ways I was treated when I was a child. I hated myself for what I was doing with them, screaming and so on. But, you know, I didn't know what to do.

Well, I've learned better now, and I've had some amends to make to my children. I remember getting involved in Head Start. My neighbor told me I should try and get my son in. The staff, they were so nice. And they talked to me about my children. I was invited to come in once a week and do an art project. It didn't matter how awful the project was, these people never, ever put me down. When I was there, I was sort of like spying. It amazed me that there could be sixteen or whatever children in the room, and no one was yelling, and no one was getting hit. What a revelation. I wanted what those people had. I thought it was because they had degrees, which some didn't, I didn't know it came from within.

I have never felt so okay about myself. I have been with Head Start for over fifteen years. I am a parent advocate, and I am a lucky person. I get to make friends with different people every year. I become very involved with the parents, and I want so much for them. The ones that really hurt to see are the battered women. Except for kidnapping, I can't get them out of there. The only thing negative about this job is we don't have enough money to do all we could do.

****

Vicki

Thank you for coming to my home. I really love this apartment and try to keep it very neat and clean and decorated. I love to hang pictures of my family on the walls. Here is my son's room and soon we will have to make room for the new baby.

Me? I'm thirty years old. I wasn't married when I had my son. I was twenty-three years old. For Head Start, I drive bus. I've been doing it for four years now. I heard

about Head Start when my son was one year old. I tried to get him involved then, but I was told he was too young. My neighbor was always talking about one of the teachers. I'd call her and she'd say, "I can't talk now because Wendy's here." As soon as my son was old enough, I got him in.

Growing up was okay, I guess. My parents stayed together a really long time. They just got a divorce after forty-four years. My dad's an alcoholic. My mom drank, too, but she was always there for us, me and my six brothers and sisters.

I dropped out of high school in the tenth grade. I worked, lived at home, would move out and move back in. I moved a lot. Finally, after my son was born, I was able to move into a low-income apartment, and I stayed there until I got married and we moved here.

I love my job. I get to help parents get involved. I love my husband. Life's not bad. There could always be more money. You know, the worst thing about working for Head Start is being off in the summer and not getting paid. They used to get paid, but then when Reagan took office, they took it away. You know, he thought we didn't need it. But, still, it's a great job. Meeting all these new people and stuff. Making lots of new friends and stuff. The parents and stuff. Working with the people I work with. My life is better knowing them and working with them, than not having met them.

****

Vicki's name was on the list of staff member provided to me by the director. I called her and she agreed to be interviewed.

Wendy

I'm a newlywed. I'm thirty-eight years old, I have two children and one grandchild, and I'm a newlywed. My daughter is nineteen and is the mother of my little four month old grandson.

I guess my life has had some drama in it, but I hope it doesn't show. Let me show you my house. We're very proud of it. And I do crafts, see? Also, I love working in the garden. Make sure you get some raspberries before you leave. And I love my cats. I

guess some people wouldn't think I've done some of the things I've done. In fact, I think my kids would call me a nag. I nag a lot. I know all the things I've gone through, I don't want my children making the same mistakes.

My first husband and I were married for five years. He is an alcoholic and when we first got married, he kind of worked on and off. Then, he signed on to work on the Alaskan Highway in British Columbia. We moved up there and gee, it was kind of hard. I was nineteen with a new baby. We had no t.v., no radio, no contact. There was no running water and we were 143 miles from the nearest city. I only lasted three months before I told my husband that he could stay, but I was leaving. People who stopped by would tell us how hard the winters were. So, we left. We moved to Montana. He worked as a janitor in a school.

Things got kind of bad with my husband's drinking and all. So, I called my parents, and they sent me the money to get back here. I didn't take anything with me. I only had my daughter. We just left all our stuff in Montana. But, then, my ex-husband starting calling me and promising me that things would be all different. I figured marriage was important, so I'd better give it one more try. I went back. We had a son. I was there for over five years.

The next time I left. I was a little smarter. I planned it out. Thank goodness my parents were really behind me, even though I went back that one time. I sent some boxes back home. I had a friend who was going to take me to the airport in Great Falls. But, on the way, her car broke down. There I was, stranded with these two little kids. I guess you could say we hitchhiked, but not really. There was this young man with a pick-up. He said he was a cowboy and gave us a ride. And we came back here.

That man never had anything to do with his kids. Not for Christmas, not for birthdays nothing, until my daughter was thirteen. My ex's mother dies. He came back here and saw his kids. My daughter got kind of curious. She had been a daddy's girl during the five years we were there. So, she wanted to go and try living with him in Montana. So, she went out there and came home in the summers. But, it didn't work out. She'd been there about two years when I got a call from a social worker out there. He'd

110

kicked her out, and she had no place to go. I sent the money out there, and the police took her over to his house and helped her pack and just sent her back here.

As for my work with Head Start. Well, I heard about it from a friend, and she suggested that I get my daughter into it. It was probably the best thing I ever did. I learned parenting skills. I was chairperson of the center committee. I really needed that after coming back from Montana, and my self-esteem was real down. It really makes you feel good to be the head of something.

After my daughter was done with Head Start, I was always stopping in at Head Start to still keep in contact. I didn't like the job I was doing at a Burger King. There weren't enough hours, so I couldn't really take care of my kids on my own. Well, a bus aide was getting married, and they needed someone to take her place, and they asked if I would apply for the job. I got the job, and I got my GED and I got my CDA [Child Development Associate's degree] which allowed me to work with children. I worked as a home base teacher, a classroom aide, and now I have my own classroom. I love the children. It's been good. I've been able to keep up with my interests. I do crafts and sewing and ride motorcycle. I have a lot of good friends. I get a lot of hugs from the children. I'm happy. Now, don't forget your raspberries.

****

Xenia

My life has been wrapped up in my kids. I have four and I have eight grandchildren. I'm fifty years old, and my children range in age from 31 to 25. I have had a pretty stable life in terms of community. I am living in the same house I grew up in. My husband and I split after eleven years of marriage. He died ten years ago. Anyway, after our divorce, I never really dated or anything. I'm content with my kids and grandkids and of course Head Start.

I've taken on a big responsibility filling the shoes of my closest friend, Yolanda. We worked together for a very long time. I miss her very much. And now, I'm the director. I hope I can do the job well. I believe that I am a very competent woman. I

know what my strengths are. I have a talent for matching the right person to the right job.

Let's see. My life growing up. Well, Dad drank a lot and ran around. Mom stayed home and raised kids. There wasn't a great deal of loud fighting or anything like that. My mother did what she saw as her job. My father worked hard, always brought home the paycheck, and I really never saw him drunk. We were seven girls. My parents were not real involved with our lives. But, they were there.

My marriage was not too great. He was an alcoholic. We lasted eleven years. I did receive AFDC, but it was mostly as a supplement as I always worked. I heard about Head Start through Social Services. My daughter was enrolled at the same time as I got a job with Head Start. It ended my potential career in computer science. Head Start was supposed to be a place where parents would learn job skills and then move on. That was twenty-three years ago.

The children are so precious, and the parents are so important to them. I know that I am able to make a difference. I can recognize what people's talents are and figure out ways of making them feel special. I'm pretty level headed. Can you imagine? I really respect those who get more education. I think that's very important. However, without a degree, I started out as a teacher's assistant and now I handle this large budget, and some would say, I do it well. That's the beauty of Head Start.

****

I had known Xenia for a long time and asked to interview her. She is a very active and busy woman and finding the time was difficult outside of work hours. She invited me to her home for dinner, and that is when we completed the interview. I have a great deal of respect for her and find her ability to deal with people amazing.[35]

Yolanda

I've spent a long time here in Head Start. I'm fifty-eight years old, and it's such a part of who I am now. How did it begin? Well, I was married for about eleven years.

---

[35]Xenia is a modest woman and was somewhat uncomfortable with the way I presented her talents. She is afraid it makes her sound like a braggart, which she most definitely is not.

I had six children, and now I've got seven wonderful grandchildren. Anyway, after I got divorced, I was able to stay home until the youngest went to kindergarten although I received AFDC. Things were different then. After the youngest started school, I became a crossing guard.

I had wanted to be a teacher, and later I wanted to be in Social Welfare. My first job out of High School was with a mail-order company. After my divorce, I had my kids in a pre-school program run by the Visiting Nurses. I really liked that program. So, when Head Start got started from that program, I was asked to be on the Policy Council the very first year it was here. I decided I would like to work there, and the next year I was hired. My first job was as a substitute for a teacher aide who had eye surgery.

That first year I was very confused. I didn't know what was going on. It was confusing for everyone at first. I've done a lot of different jobs at Head Start. I think I've done everything except be the cook. I've been the director now for eighteen years. I've been with Head Start almost twenty-five years.

The best thing about working here has been the children. We should write a book sometime about the wonderful things the children say. A hard part about working here is becoming emotionally involved. It can be very depressing, very depressing. I guess the harder thing about being the director now is that the program is so large, although I'm very proud of our growth. I used to get to know all the parents. Now, I only get to know a few who are on the policy council.

I care about how the parents feel when they come to Head Start or when a Head Start staff member comes to visit them in their home. I'm concerned with the people who would go into a home all dressed up, and they look like they are afraid to sit in a chair that might have some dirt on it. A lot of our parents don't have anything, many not even a skirt. I want them to feel comfortable. The staff wear comfortable clothes, and that should make the parents comfortable. I encourage the staff and the teachers to wear jeans.

When I started way back when, things were very different. AFDC was different. Social Services had workshops and activities for families. The social workers acted as your equals. Parents got together and had speakers and played games. With the attitude

back then, I knew that I could go on and be back in the work force. And that's the attitude we've tried to have here in Head Start. But, Social Services isn't like that anymore.

Every year we have staff training to let staff know how important the parents are. Without them, there would be no children to teach. If I had it all to do over again, I'd still get a job at Head Start. When you're down, you can call another Head Start director and let them tell you about their problems, and then yours don't seem so bad any more.

Our program may be different here in Flussburg. Not every program treats the whole family as a whole. We encourage our parents to bring their children to everything: bring those babies. They are welcome. Head Start includes everyone. I notice sometimes when we get a social work student in as an apprentice, they place themselves so above the parent that it's hard to relate to them. This immediately turns the parent off. But, the students come around to the Head Start way.

I love to shop, to travel, to work in the community theater, and with the Boys and Girls club. I love my grandchildren. There's never enough time to spend with them. And sure, I spoil them. I would love to spend more time with my kids, too. When I retire, I'll travel and visit my kids and stay home.

****

Yolanda has died since this interview took place. To many, Yolanda **was** Head Start. She was one of my key informants. Her philosophy of dealing with the parents and children was to deal with them where they were and treat them with respect.

Zora

I hope that I do this interview right. Let's see, I'm forty-five years old, I've been married twice, this time for thirteen years. I have two children, twenty-six and twenty-four and I have one grandchild. I've always lived in Flussburg.

I had a very good relationship with my parents. We really get along. We weren't well-to-do, but I never missed it.

After I got divorced, I tried very hard to make it on my own with my child support and my unemployment, but it was very hard. I finally decided I needed to get the extra

114

help from AFDC. So, I went down and signed up. I still worked though. And when I was working, I developed a severe allergy to some of the things I had to work with, so when I went on unemployment, one of the trips there, they told me there were openings at Head Start. This was the year after my son was enrolled there.   I went down, talked to Yolanda, and got the job, and I've been there ever since. I was able to work my way off AFDC. I have my own classroom now. I've seen some changes in the families coming to Head Start. It used to be almost all single parent families. But, now, everybody's low income. Even the intact families are low income. I'm very fortunate. I think I'm where I want to be, at home, and my job, and my grandchild.

<div align="center">*********</div>

Zora was my very first interview. Her name was on the list of staff members provided to me by the director. She was very reticent at first, perhaps trying to be a "good interviewee", but on subsequent encounters became much more open and friendly with me.

Alysse Andrea

I may be sixty-one, but I've been told I don't look it. I try and keep myself up. I've been married and divorced twice. I feel like I've been married all my life. I have eight children. My girls are from my first marriage and the boys from the second. I have a GED and some course work at college that I've been able to get through Head Start.

My family is the center of my life. I kind of live through my kids. I know that's not good. I enjoy just being in the same room with my kids. My relationship with my mother was not a good one. She just makes me so angry. I don't like my mother. I don't even love my mother. She was never there for me. Maybe that's why I always try to be there for my kids. My father? He smoked and drank a lot and worked in a foundry a lot of his life. Excuse my tears. I get kind of emotional.   They both drank way too much. And believe or not, both my husbands turned out to be alcoholics.

It was my two younger boys who were in Head Start. Look here on the wall. This is a picture my son drew of me when he was in Head Start. It really meant a lot to me to get them involved. I volunteered a lot, and I really enjoyed being there. I must have

<div align="center">115</div>

been there every day. Head Start has given me, I haven't made a lot of money, but I've had a job all these years. I've been able to survive. I'm fortunate. Talking about all this has really gotten me emotional. I hope to live a long, long life. I just had a new grandbaby born, and I was thinking how much I would like to watch her grow up.

****

Alysse Andrea has been affiliated with Head Start a long time. She showed me around her home, drawings her son had done in Head Start when he was a little boy, and drawings other Head Start children have done of her over the years.

NON-EXPERIENTIAL STAFF[36]

Anna Becky

Anna Becky is fifty-two years old and married. She has been married for nearly thirty years. She is the mother of two children, one living and one deceased. She was twenty-seven when her first child was born.

Anna Becky has a bachelor's degree and has worked for Head Start for over twenty-five years. She is a warm and giving woman. I had known her when I was with Head Start. Her interview took place in her backyard where she served me coffee and danish.

Anna Becky is a member of several community groups. She enjoys spending time with her husband playing tennis, bike riding, and other outdoors activities.

****

Carol Donna

Carol Donna is fifty-three years of age and has a Master's degree. She has been married for over thirty years and has four children. Carol Donna has also been employed with Head Start for over twenty-five years.

Due to her time constraints, our interview was very short. Carol Donna was my daughter's teacher when she attended Head Start.

****

---

[36]This term applies to staff members who joined the Head Start staff with no prior affiliation to the program.

Emily Fran

Emily Fran is thirty-six years old, married for fifteen years and has no children. She is working on a Master's degree in counseling. Emily Fran is a recent addition to the Head Start staff. She has had a great deal of experience being a case manager in other social service programs.

****

Ginny Hope

Ginny Hope has been married for over thirty years. She and her husband have three children. Ginny Hope is forty-nine years old at the time of the interview and was a recent addition to the Head Start staff. She has a master's degree. She spent many years as a teacher in public schools before going on for her master's degree. She has since gained experience in parent training and career counseling.

****

Iona Jennifer

Iona Jennifer is twenty-five years old and had been married a little more than a year. She is working on her Master's degree in counseling. Prior to being employed with Head Start. she was a case-worker for another social service agency matching people with disabilities to jobs that were available. Iona Jennifer has no children.

****

Kristin Lynn

Kristin Lynn is twenty-five years old and single. She, too. had only recently begun to work with Head Start. She has a Bachelor's degree and is taking classes towards a Master's. She has had past experience working in public relations for a youth group and also worked for a youth employment service. She appears to be a quietly compassionate woman.

CHAPTER 8
HEAD START AND THE SELF AND SELF-CONCEPT

> . . . men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.
> > Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*

HEAD START AS CONTEXT

The self does not emerge in a vacuum, but is a social product created and revised in a social context through social interaction (Rosenberg 1990, Mead 1962). Head Start provides one context in which to examine the maintenance and reformation of self, and the selves of low-income women. In this chapter, the Head Start mothers present their perceptions of their selves and self-concepts.

This chapter focusses on the self and self-concept as both stable and dynamic (Demo 1992). In the first section the mothers discuss their self-concepts, or the ideas they have about their selves. In the second section, they present their selves, its stability and change, and the ideas of what kinds of selves may be considered possible.

Selves and Self-Concepts
Self as Mother

I chose the Twenty Statements Test (TST) (see Appendix A) as one measure of self-concept because it had the potential to name reference groups (Charon 1992) and because it had been found to be a reliable measure. In conducting test-retest for reliability, it was the contention of Spitzer, Crouch, and Stratton that:

> [W]hen a short time interval has elapsed between test administrations,
> when nothing drastic has happened to the respondents such as undergoing
> some sort of entry into a new social group, test-retest coefficients are
> informative about the stability of the responses elicited by the TST (1971,
> p.61).

I administered the TST to everyone I interviewed, but I will report the results of eighteen Head Start mothers I interviewed, the fourteen present mothers and four from twenty years ago as one mother declined to complete the TST.

The Twenty Statements Test did provide insights regarding the mothers' perceptions of their situation, but not for the reasons anticipated. Charon indicates that ". . . individuals will usually answer a question like 'Who am I' by identifying themselves in groups or social categories" (Charon 1992, p. 83). However, the only group mentioned in the TST by the mothers was family.

Mother emerged as an important identity for these women (see Table 8-1). Fifteen of the eighteen, listed mother as part of their twenty statements, eleven listing it in their first two statements. The three who did not list mother answered the question "Who am I?" with what might be called personality and social conduct characteristics. These included statements such as smart, carefree, kind, loving, caring, giving, friendly, hardworking, and so forth.

The importance of mother as a critical identity is further demonstrated by the way the respondents separated the many tasks performed in mothering into occupational selves and/or by referring to themselves as hardworking. All but three of the mothers did this. The selves mentioned in the capacity of "mother as occupation" were cook, housekeeper, homemaker, nurse, teacher, chauffeur, "child shuttle," driver, "sewer," banker, carpenter, coach, referee, cheerleader, counselor, warden, and "matcher of socks." They view mother in its complexity, as not only a status, but as a many faceted occupation.

Table 8-1 **Frequency of selected statements**

Statement	Mothers 1991-1993 n=14	Mothers-20 yrs. n=4[37]	Total n=18
Mother	6 in 1st statement 5 in 2nd-10th	All in 2nd statement	15
Hardworking	7	1	8
Occupation title	11	4	15
Caring	11	1	12
Family	4	4	8

The occupations listed are among the tasks that mothers do. I believe the listing of tasks as occupational titles demonstrates the women's views of the complexity of the self as mother and its importance. By labeling their selves by occupation, the mothers defined the tasks involved in "mothering" not as something they merely do, but **who they are.** This is an important distinction. Involvement in a program that entails these selves has a greater potential to influence the concept the women have of their selves.

These tasks, which the mothers indicate as selves, are made even more difficult when their lower income is taken into account. For example, none of the women I interviewed drove newer model vehicles, making even the task of "child shuttle" challenging. Older cars generally use more gas and are often in need of repairs, both of which eat into the already limited family budget. The older cars are often less reliable, which makes the job of "driver" not only expensive, but also frustrating. A few of the mothers did not even have cars. To get their children to the doctor, to do their shopping, to visit family, to do anything at a distance from their home, they would have to take the

---

[37] One mother from this group declined to take the TST. She said, she didn't have the patience to fill it out.

bus, bicycle or walk (at 30 degrees below zero in the middle of January, this is not a good option with a sick child in tow), or rely on friends and family with cars, thus relinquishing some of their adult independence.

Housekeeping tasks can also be more difficult on a limited budget[38]. The "matcher of socks" may have to take the laundry to the laundromat and with limited funds, do less sorting of colors. This results in fewer washing machines that need to be plugged with quarters, but clothing comes out without the brightness laundry detergent advertisements tell us is desirable. They may not be able to buy the laundry enhancing products. The clothes may not even have started as new, further diminishing the possibility of the clothing looking bright and clean.

When we separate the tasks of caring for a home and family, factor in the cost of supplies and equipment (for example, cleaning a carpet with a broom instead of a new vacuum cleaner) to do the kind of job that would meet the standards of "good housekeeping," keeping house is indeed challenging at best. The cleaning can be done, but it will not be as deep and it takes a lot longer. Understanding these difficulties gives specific meaning to "homemaker" or "hardworker."

Fifteen of the eighteen interviews took place in the mothers' homes. Only four were in newer housing, one in her new Habitat for Humanity home, two in townhouses which had been built within the last fifteen years, and one respondent's home had been built in the late 1960s. The others all lived in older homes built around the turn of the century, in neighborhoods of older homes. Two of the three apartments I did not see as we conducted the interview in the back yards. Older homes, like older cars, are often in need of repair. Some of the homes were sparsely furnished, some were run down but neat, some were run down but not so neat. The decor in the homes further demonstrated the importance of the mother self. The walls of most of the homes were decorated with pictures of their children or with pictures drawn by their children.

In Chapter nine, I discuss the "others" in the mothers' lives. However, I will briefly discuss the "self" in relationship to the men in the lives of these women.

---

[38]See Marjorie DeVault's Feeding the Family (1991) for a discussion of class differences in providing meals for one's family.

Self in relationships

In the Twenty Statements Test, the women always mentioned "mother" before "wife" or "lover." Of the eighteen respondents in this sample, seven are married. Out of these seven, not one mentioned the role of wife before the role of mother. Three are divorced women and have romantic partners, but they did not mention this relationship in their Twenty Statements. Overall, the men currently in their lives seem important, but peripheral. This mirrors the part they report fathers and stepfathers had played in their growing up days (see Chapter Nine).

Further, the predominate self being "mother" is underlined in how the women report activities that involve their partners. As wife/lover, the women report going to the bars, renting movies, and going for rides in the car. Although two couples have worked at adding more communication to their marriages, none of the mothers mentioned talking as one of the activities they do with their husbands/lovers, but all of them mentioned talking as part of the activities they do with their best friends.

Possible Selves

The concept "possible selves" is very important. What we think of and how we define our past selves influences what we desire for future selves and how likely we think we will achieve these selves. The concept, "possible selves," not only deals with what we desire, but also what we fear we might become (Markus and Nurius 1986). As part of the interviews with the eighteen mothers and the mothers who became staff, I asked what they, as children, thought their lives would be like when they grew up. I asked this to get at a "back to the future" self. This allowed the mothers to compare their present selves with their past anticipated selves. Asking them to describe their lives in the future presents a picture of their desired and feared future selves. In answering this question and the question about whether they believe their children's lives will turn out the way they desire, the mothers may present their views of their own possible selves. Many times they answered these questions referring to areas in their own lives that were problematic. For example, a high school dropout wants her child to graduate from school and get a good education.

Thirteen of the mothers responded to the question regarding the possible selves they held as child.[39] Five of the mothers thought they would be married with children. The marriages they imagined were based on the accepted cultural concept of the traditional family. Quincie[40](151) said of her childhood aspirations "I would have to say, . . . being happily married, two children, the white house with the picket fence. That was a childlike dream."

Reality turned out to be very different for many of the mothers. Grace (90) related:

When I was young, I thought it would really be nice to grow up and have
children. It was gonna be easy and so much fun. And now I know what
kind of a struggle it is. When you're young and looking at having kids and
a family, playing house, it's not the same when you have to do the real
thing 'cause a lot of other stuff . . . adds into the picture all the time.

Karen (95) had hoped to meet someone special and have a family. However, she says, "I always had that dream of meeting that Prince Charming, getting married and having kids. I didn't really know until I had a kid what my life was going to be like."

Roxanne (105) wanted to avoid what she perceived as the mistakes of her mother. She said:

I was hopin' that I would not be like my mother. And I kinda turned out like
her . . . . Bein' on welfare. I had him when I wasn't married at the same
age she did. I always said I was gonna be married and then I would have
a family.

Also mentioned as desired selves of childhood were occupational and educational dreams such as finishing high school, going to college, and becoming a model or police officer.

---

[39]Not all of the questions were asked of all of the mothers. Most of these interviews took place in the presence of small children who needed their mother's attention from time to time. As they became more impatient, I would delete some questions to keep the interviews a more pleasurable experience for both the mothers and the children. I interacted frequently with the children, recording and playing back their voices, having stickers placed all over my tape recorder and papers and so forth. But, this did not always allay the impatience. And children can become quite vociferous in their demands for the attention they need. I did not want the mothers to have to decide between their selves as mother and their selves as "good interviewee." Therefore, some questions were not answered by every mother I interviewed.

[40]The page number on which the respondent's vignette is found follows her name when cited in the text.

123

Looking ahead, the mothers are optimistic. Although their present lives do not compare favorably with their dreams of the future they held as children, the childhood dreams do not fade away easily. They anticipated having jobs, being married and having "a nice house. Leave it to Beaver" and "[e]verything will probably be the way I want it to be. I'll have a decent job, hopefully." Despite the difficulties in their present lives, they defined the situation as temporary.

Not one mother indicated seeing anything negative in the future. This could mean that a mother will be more receptive to involving herself in activities that could lead to the kind of future she envisions. If she defines the future as still having the potential to fulfill childhood desires, she may be more ready to change the present.

The mothers may define present selves more negatively as they begin to plan positive future selves. Roxanne (105) had not wanted to be like her mother, but thought she was turning out like her. When asked the question, "What kind of life to you want for your child?" she responded, "Oh, somethin' better than I had. I don't want him to hear all the yellin' and screamin,' which he's hearin' now because of me."
She then indicated that she was going to do everything she can to be sure he did have a better life. She has been to every activity at Head Start and said being involved in them is important because, "it helps me to do things with my son. I didn't how what to do with him . . . . " She defined herself as yelling and screaming all the time, but that in the future it would not be like that, because she would do what she could to change things. She involves herself in activities that help her learn how to change the "yellin' and screamin'" self.

Fifteen years in the future was a little more difficult to imagine. When they projected their children's ages and realized that active mothering would be over, the answers were more ambiguous, reinforcing the importance of self as mother. Roxanne's (153) reply provides a typical response. She said, thinking of her son in the future, "He'll be eighteen. Thank God. I don't know. I don't know. Happy."

The experiential staff all included retirement and travel in their plans. There was not the ambivalence in their responses that was evident in the other mothers' responses. This could be attributed to their older ages. However even the younger staff members

124

who had been Head Start mothers indicated retirement. Motherhood is not an occupation from which one retires, and at present as indicated by the TST, mother appeared to be the most salient self for fifteen of the non-staff women.

Along with being optimistic about the future for themselves, the mothers want their children to have better lives than the mothers have had. Getting an education and getting a good job is not only seen as the path to obtaining the desired futures for their children, but also as goals in themselves. Lee (96), who had dropped out of high school, pregnant, at the age of sixteen, told me she wanted her son and daughter to "grow up and finish high school. To have a job. To not have kids until they're at least old enough to understand."

Also mentioned as dreams for their children were the same dreams the mothers had for themselves when they were children. Vicki (109), a Head Start mother who became a staff member, expressed desires for her son, aged six, which reflect the views of the others. She stated:

I want him to graduate. I want him to go onto college if he wants to. And

hopefully find a nice lady to marry and have some grandchildren here.

Someday, not real soon. Just have a good life.

Do they think their children's lives will be like that? This is not so assured. Many anticipated their children will likely find their lives as difficult as their mothers' have been. For example, Vicki responded to the question "Do you think your children's lives will be like that (the way she wanted)?" She replied, "Probably not exactly. They're going to have to learn and find out the hard way, the way we all did."

However, Karen (95) did express some feeling of control over her children's future, "[a]s long as I set a good example and show them it's important [they will turn out the way she hopes]." She has gone back to school to get a high school diploma. For Karen, improving her education affects her self as mother by being an example to her children.

Looking-glass self or Reflected appraisals

How we think others see us is important for our self-concepts. The importance of this reflected self has been researched and debated for many years (see Cooley 1964;

125

Hewitt 1988; and Gecas 1982). The Head Start mothers reported that their selves were dependent upon people in their lives. After explaining the looking-glass self as how we imagine others see us and how we feel about it and that it sometimes affects our behavior, I asked the mothers about their "mirror selves" with their parents, siblings, children, social service agencies, and Head Start. The meaning of the self arises out of social interaction and that meaning is then managed and modified through the actor's interpretive process.

"I am who I am" is a response I received many times. As a looking-glass-self, "I am who I am" seems to suggest that the viewer (looking-glass) saw the mother as she saw herself, and she did not have to change her behavior according to how she thought the viewer saw her. This meant in the interaction the mother could relax rather than concentrate on self-presentation because the meaning of her "self" coincided with the other in the interaction. For example, Nancy (100) said of her brothers, "They really see me for who I am."

I asked her, "How do you know?"

Her reply was, "I just really let myself go around them 'cause they're fun to be around." Letting go of oneself means the actor does not have to work as hard in that interaction as she would in an interaction requiring constant interpretation and modification.

When describing her "normal" behavior in the presence of the County Department of Social Services worker, some mothers expressed a desire for acceptance in a place where they expected none. This behavior might also be a form of self-presentation. Sarah (106) told me, "I just act normal when I'm in there. Hopefully they see me for who I am."

In some cases, the reflected self modified the mother's behavior. For example, Faith (89) limited her actions around a sister she perceives as viewing her very critically. She reported:

> One of the sisters is real critical. She likes to cut people down. I'm always
> thinking 'Oh my gosh. I can't do that or she'll think I'm a bad person or
> something.' I try to do stuff I know she won't criticize me for.

How they believed their own parents saw them and how it modified self-presentation depended upon which parent it was as with Margaret (98) who said,   " . . . to my mom? Basically I am who I am with my mom . . . . I'm not me when I'm around him [dad]."

Beth (84) modified the meaning of her mother's expression of doubt regarding the difficulty of something Beth proposed to do into an expression of support. She said:

> My mother knew exactly who I was, and she was always my biggest
>
> encourager. She said to me, 'How can you possibly do that? It's too hard.'
>
> But, you could always be honest with my mother.

Karen (95) linked her perception that her mother knew her to acceptance and encouragement to "do things."   "I can pretty much do anything around my mom and she accepts it. She always tells me that I can do things."

This is interesting considering the relationships they described [see Chapter Nine] having had and having with their mothers. In these cases, it might lend support for the notion that we look for the person who provides a looking-glass self that will enhance our self-view. It could also be linked to the understanding of "mother" as a generalized other. "Mother" is expected to be supportive, so even those respondents who had rocky relationships with their mothers interpreted the looking-glass-self more positively than they interpret the actual interactions.

With social service agency people, the reflections the mothers believed they saw depended upon the worker.   When the mothers saw positive reflections, it was in relationship to the more negative reflection they expected.   Roxanne (105) said of her experience:

> I don't know she doesn't really look up or nothin'. If I've got a question,
>
> she answers it. . . . She's one of the nice ones. She doesn't look down
>
> on you. That I know.

Roxanne reported she expects to be looked down upon when interacting with case workers; she interprets not being looked down upon as a pleasant interaction, although the case worker does not even look up during the interaction.

Margaret (98) reported that she expects looking-glass self to be negative and that she needs to manage her self-presentation. She stated:

> I had to go in there kind of caring about myself. I couldn't go in there and not care. 'Cause they're going to read right through that. No matter how depressed I was when I went in there. Um . . . when I first met my caseworker, I sat there and cried because of the whole situation that brought me there. And she understood that. She understood that I wasn't being put there by choice. If I had any ways around it, I wouldn't be there. I'd rather be at the desk that she's at than sitting on the other side. Yeah, but you have to bring yourself across. You're not going to get anywhere being a bum. The only thing you're going to get is people to hate you.

Some mothers perceived other reflections in a more negative light. Karen (95) and Nancy (100) felt the workers saw them very disapprovingly. Karen said she felt like a "Loser, needy, all my fault."

Nancy saw different reflections from her former workers and the one she had at the time of the interview. She said they saw her as low and scummy but said, "Not the worker I have now, Other ones, yeah. Bad attitudes. But, the one I have now is real good. Understanding." Nancy was able to define the reflected self as a problem with the workers' attitudes rather than incorporating the negative reflection into her working definition of her "self."

This does affect the behavior the mothers reported when they have to deal social service workers. They expressed an ambivalence associated with knowing they are expected to present a particular self to the worker. Imelda (93) expressed this when she told me of the way she felt going to the Department of Social Services for help. She said:

> [Y]ou feel funny and you feel like you have to make a certain impression
> and that's going to make a difference . . . that I may be needy, but I'm
> worthy . . . .

In taking the role of the other, Imelda perceived the people at the social services office believed a woman needs to be worthy of the help for which she was asking. Therefore,

her reception of the help she needed depended upon her managing her self-presentation in a particular way; needy but worthy.

The looking-glass selves the mothers reported when considering Head Start stands in sharp contrast to all the others. Lee (96) said she thought people at Head Start viewed her as, "Helpful. Different than Social Services."

Margaret (98) believed they saw her in a professional way, "I'm a teacher." Nancy (100) expressed feeling that she is a different "self" at Head Start. She said, "I feel sort of like a different person when I'm there . . . I feel more patient, relaxed." Olivia (100) reported a change in how she perceived herself because of the way she thought the people at Head Start perceived her. She related:

They like me . . . they say I'm good with kids. [Makes her feel] good.

Because back then [when she first got involved] I didn't feel so good about

myself . . . .

Many of the women expressed looking-glass selves at Head Start that related to the "self as mother." Considering the importance the women's reports placed on the self as mother, receiving a positive reflected "mother self," is also important. Helen (92) said, "I've been told I'm a good parent. I'm a good worker."

For Karen (95), (aged twenty-one with a five-year-old child) being seen as a good mother, despite being young, was very important. She said the staff at Head Start saw her as, "[a] young mother. But, they don't look down on me for being young [which she had felt social services did]."

These responses are similar to the parents' reported experiences of twenty years ago. Christine (86) said, "I think Head Start saw me as a mother that was willing to do for them. Not just what I or my child would get out of it, but I was willing."

Imelda (93), who is disabled, felt Head Start saw her as someone who could accomplish things. She said. "I think that they look at me as just a strong person that can accomplish things. As a leader." Imelda became very involved in center activities and fund raising events. But, she felt that the staff handed out praise too freely, saying, "I'm not doing anything the other mothers shouldn't be doing." Excessive praise for doing what

she con ders ordinary activities, emphasizes the "disabled self" rather than the Head Start mother self.

The mothers reported that Head Start gave them positive reflected views of themselves as mothers. This is important when contrasted with the self as "less than positive mother" received from other social service agencies. The self as "mother" is very important to these women. This has the potential to bring about change in the mothers' actions as a parent. One mother indicated that imagining the people at Head Start seeing her as a good parent made her work harder to be an even better parent.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the "others" in the mothers' lives and Head Start as a reference group and potential source of reference others.

CHAPTER 9
OTHERS

He [she] has to take all of these roles [of the others]. They do not all have
to be present in consciousness at the same time, but at some moments he
[she] has to have three or four individuals present in her own attitude . . .
These responses must be, in some degree, present in his [her] own make-
up.

George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*

This chapter explores the relationship of the mothers with the others in their lives.
As part of their interactions, others serve in the developments of the mothers selves and
self-concepts.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Significant others are those who are important to the individual. She/he might
respect them, want to impress them, identify with them, or they are "those he or she wants
acceptance from, [or] those he or she fears" (Charon 1995, p. 70). Therefore,through an
individual's interactions with others, there are those who will come to have more
significance to her/him. Rosenberg (1990) suggests that there are two foundations which
determine the significance of an other. They are valuation, how greatly we care about the
others' opinions, and credibility, the "degree of faith, trust, or confidence that we repose
in that person's judgement" (p. 598). Social structures can determine to some extent the
individual's ability to define others as significant. Some people will be significant even if
their appraisals of the individual are painful. For example, parents and teachers may act
negatively toward a child, but the child must endure them. Hewitt (1991) states:

> Emotional attachment will not develop with teachers who act negatively
> toward the child, but such attachment to the parents occurs to some extent
> regardless of what they do, since the child's earliest experience of the
> social world has been with them (p. 150).

Because of the inevitability of the parents becoming significant in their children's live, in
the next section I discuss the Head Start mothers' definitions of their relationships with
their own parents.

Significant Others Growing Up
Parents

A child usually depends upon its care-giver for the things it needs such as sustenance, shelter, safety, approval, and affection. It is usually a child's parent[s] (with varying degrees of ability to do so) who is [are] responsible for providing these things. Therefore, parents usually become significant others for their children.

Because Head Start focusses on the child, we might expect if changes in the self occur, they would occur in the areas that relate to parenting. To understand the respondents' ideas of how to parent, understanding how they were parented is important. As children grow, they take the role of their parents to guide their behavior. The parent other becomes part of the child's maturing unity of self. As an adult, an individual might them have a tendency to repeat with her/his children the parenting patterns of her/his own parents.

Parental alcohol abuse. I asked no specific questions regarding the use of alcohol in the family of origin, but references to drinking and alcohol abuse by one or both parents were frequent as were references to physical violence and in one instance sexual abuse. Over half the mothers reported these behaviors within the descriptions of their family life. Only two mothers said specifically that their parents were not alcoholics (although one said her mother was "tested" for it and was not). I am not able to determine the drinking behavior in the families of origin of the other mothers. In the case of the parents who became staff, all but one indicated alcohol abuse in the family of origin. For this reason, I include the following discussion of the effects of parental alcohol abuse on the children's selves.

There is a maxim in the Al-anon family group for adult children of alcoholics, "You will marry one parent and become the other." This is said to point out the potential the adult child has for becoming an alcoholic similar to the drinking parent, or marrying an alcoholic and behaving in the same manner as the non-drinking parent. Having incorporated into the unity of self the positions of the others comprising the alcoholic family system, a person might take the position of one parent and find someone to marry

132

who appears to enact the position of the other. Bennett, Wolin, Reiss, and Teitelbaum (1987) point out that enough evidence exists to support the idea that alcoholism follows family lines. "Therefore, children growing up in families that already have alcoholic members are at a relatively greater risk for developing alcohol problems themselves" (Bennett et al. 1987, p.111). Included in those alcohol problems may be the propensity to marry an alcoholic or someone with alcoholic traits and reestablish the family patterns in the family of origin. This includes recreating the parent-child interactional patterns even if no "alcohol problem" is present.

Steinglass (1980) postulates that in certain interactive systems, such as the family, the use of alcohol becomes a central point around which behavior is organized. He points out:

> [A]lcohol use might come to play such a critical role in day-to-day behavior
> as to become a central organizing principle around which patterns of
> interactional behavior might be shaped (p. 213).

It is in this context that patterns of behavior might be so influenced by the consequences of alcohol abuse that the use of the term "an alcoholic system" is warranted. Steinglass suggests that as the family revolves around both the cycles of active alcoholism and around the "dry" periods, the behavior, which takes place in the intoxicated interactions, might become habitual and be exhibited in non-intoxicated interactions as well.

In the alcoholic home, many things become distorted. The child is called upon to define complicated situations over and over again. Is the parent sick? Is the parent responsible today? Is the non-drinking parent angry with the child or angry with the drinking parent? Thomas and Thomas (1928) point out that if we define a situation as real, it will be real in its consequences. It matters not what the reality of the alcoholic situation is. It does matter to the child's self-concept (the consequences) how it defines the situation and the importance the situation has. For example, a "real" situation may be that Daddy is drunk and lashes out verbally when he is in this condition. The child may define the situation in a way that she/he feels responsible for Daddy's anger. Subsequently, through taking the perceived perspective of the angry father, the child may

133

change her/his behavior when similar situations arise to try to avoid evoking the parent's anger again.

As the child in the alcoholic system develops its self, it is learning ways to interact that help it to cope within the alcoholic structure in which it must operate (Nardi, 1981). When this child then interacts with the greater world and acquires more others from whose perspectives to view its self, some of these may come into direct conflict with the self that allows it to interact best in the alcoholic structure. This would help to explain why adult children of alcoholics would recreate the family of origin patterns within their families of procreation. In the home, it would be the "alcoholic coping" self that would emerge in conjunction with the parenting self. The alcoholic structure contributes to the generalized other from whose perspective the child, now adult, perceives her/his self as parent.

As stated previously, over half the mothers reported coming from homes in which alcohol use was abusive. The generalized other, including the organized attitudes toward "parent," developed in the alcoholic system. The mother could see the coping and enabling behaviors as necessary, positive, and useful. These behaviors might then become part of the current parenting skills of the mothers. Some mothers indicated what they learned in Head Start were ways of parenting that were more effective than the ways they had been using, ways that may have included the patterns of behavior learned growing up around alcohol abuse. They acquire a new generalized other which views different parenting behavior as positive.

Parents' marriages   Eight of the eighteen mothers' parents were divorced, although one couple reconciled after their divorce and are now still together. One mother has a stepmother because her biological mother died when she was seven years old. Five of the parents have remained together. Two of those marriages were described as good, one as average, one not good, and one as having their ups and downs, but that the couple got along fairly well. Of those indicating their parents remarried (5), mothers described their parents' new marriages (the home in which they were raised) as not good with lots of fighting (3) and good with the qualifiers "they have their fights like all parents do." and "they've had some troubles and fights like most people do."

134

Those who remembered troubled marriages recalled drinking and fighting as the main problems. Parental behavior, toward each other and toward their children, would become verbally and/or physically abusive. This interaction behavior becomes part of the generalized others which gives the respondent her unity of self. In other words, in taking the perspective of the "wife" or "mother," the respondents might make verbally and physically abusive behavior part of their interactions with spouse/partner and between them and children. This might continue until a new perspective is created.

Relationship with mother and father. In only one case did a mother describe her relationship with both parents as good. Her father is the stepparent. An interesting feature here is that the respondent went to Head Start as a child. Her mother (also interviewed) was very involved in center activities in the early 70s. This may have introduced a change in her mother's generalized other created in the original family. In the subsequent marriage, this could have changed the family's patterns of interactional behavior.

In two out of the eighteen cases, the respondents indicated that their relationship with both parents was not good. Both described periods of physical abuse, and one indicated that her stepfather sexually abused her. Nevertheless, she also described feeling as though he were also her protector, protecting her from problems she had with her mother.

The remainder of the respondents described a good or close relationship with one parent and a difficult or distant relationship with the other. The fathers were more likely to be described as distant or not close and the mothers as difficult. Both interaction patterns could have an impact on the respondent. We might assume that for at least the early years of the respondents' lives, both parents were significant others whose perspectives the respondent valued and who she thought were credible. This would mean that the self in relationships with a partner and/or children could include perspectives that define limited interaction with husband/father and/or volatile interaction as wife/mother as routine. Most of the respondents reported having had one parent with whom they could talk and feel close and one with whom they had problems getting along.

135

Discipline and affection   I asked the mothers how their parents showed disapproval of things they had done. The responses indicated that half the mothers in the sample grew up in homes where discipline was not physical. Instead it would consist of talking and grounding or another kind of punishment. The other half indicated that verbal abuse and physical violence were very much a part of the discipline routine. Lee (96) said her parents dealt with disapproved behavior in the following way:

My mom would call my dad [after they were divorced] and my dad'd come

over and he'd just start shaking me and he'd hit me.

Mothers reported a lack of consistency regarding behaviors would produce disapproval. Margaret (98) stated matter-of-factly, ". . . I'd get a good biff or a black and blue mark. [Otherwise] I'd be called every rotten name . . . . " Imelda (93) said, "I got a lickin' with belts, egg turners. There were no questions asked about what happened." This kind of interaction could affect the generalized others of these mothers. In taking the role of the other when constructing their actions in a situation, the mothers might have a difficult time predicting which behaviors would elicit a physical response. Consequently, their ability to define the situation accurately and choose actions which would produce consequences might be impaired.

It was much harder for the respondents to remember how their parents let them know when they were proud of them.[41] For example, Roxanne (105) relates, "I don't remember ever doing anything that she was proud of. As far as I know . . . . " That is not to say that no one could recall times when her parents were proud of her, but it was not easy, and a period of reflection would follow before they would answer. The most positive response was from Sarah (106) who said her parents, "Congratulated me and took me out to dinner." Sarah did not elaborate regarding what occasions would mean congratulations and dinner.

Affection was shown most often by hugging, usually done by the mothers. The respondents' answers suggested that fathers showed fewer outward signs of affection. This might contribute to the peripheral places men have in the women's lives. In

---

[41]They had no trouble telling me how Head Start let them know they were important.

imagining the perspective of a male significant other, they may not expect the giving of outward signs of affection.

When asked if their parents brought them up to believe certain things were important, three of the eighteen mothers interviewed indicated that what they were told and what they saw were different. Paige (102) remembers, "There was a lot of it we kids should determine for ourselves. So, we didn't have a lot of guidance." For these mothers, defining a situation may be less easy. The experience of having significant others who did not provide consistency between verbal and physical actions may mean that it would be more difficult for these women to define a situation and to plan their own actions in it.

The other sixteen mothers reported they were taught that honesty, knowing right from wrong, belief in God, family, and getting an education were the important things in life. Except in one case, the emphasis was not on having money. In fact, having money was downplayed as Quincie (104) said.

It didn't matter if you had money or not. Health, emotionally, everything.

As long as we were healthy.

The things mothers indicated they were brought up to believe were the important things in life, such as not breaking the law, taking care of themselves and their families, getting an education, seemed to be the things perceived to be within their control. They saw these things as attainable and appropriate. The organized set of attitudes of the community, the generalized other, for the low-income women interviewed does not include having money as a measure of self-worth. Being able to care for one's family, going to church, getting an education, and so on were expected, even if the lack of money made doing them more difficult.

Other Mothers and Fathers

Out of the fourteen mothers who answered the question regarding others who served as a mother or father, twelve of them indicated they had had special people in their lives who served as a "mother" or a "father" to them. With the exception of one man serving as "father" (he was the respondent's stepfather), all of the people mentioned were "other mothers," women. The biggest qualifying factor in their relationship appeared to

137

be trust and being able to talk to her. For example, in responding to a question about the quality of the relationship with her friend's mother, Nancy (100) said she had,

> A real good one [relationship]. I could talk to her back then way more easier than I could talk with my parents.

This may be an important factor in being able to establish a relationship with staff at Head Start. If "other mothers" is part of the background, it may signify the importance of being able to reveal parts of the self in a safe and trust-filled relationship. I did not ask the mothers questions which would demonstrate this importance. However, I believe this does demonstrate the ability and desire to expand family significant others beyond the confines of the family of origin. Because Head Start's emphasis is on family and relationships between parent and child, the mothers with "other mothers" might more readily develop a Head Start generalized other.

Children

Half the mothers responded that their children were the most important people in their lives. However, I had problems when trying to elicit responses that would provide me with a better understanding of the mothers' relationship with their children. When describing their children, some would talk about their ages and their personalities. Some mothers spoke about their parenting. It is as though they had never considered this relationship before. When I asked how their children would describe them, it really became difficult and many answers were negative like Lee's (138) response. "Honestly? Bitch. I don't know." Roxanne (105) said she thought her son would say, "I'm [Roxanne] bad. I'm naughty." It is interesting that "mother" was such a strong self, yet there is little self-reflection when it comes to what their children think of them as mothers. In others words, their children do not provide a strong looking-glass self, but it is what other adults think of them as mothers that is more salient. It seems intuitive that children would be significant others for mothers. However, although the mothers may want and need affection from their children and may value their children's opinions of them, they may not consider children credible when it comes to evaluating the mother's performance as

138

mother, except Margaret whose children called her "teacher." This is an area that requires further research.

The next section deals with generalized others whose perspective guides the respondents' definition of themselves and others as low-income women.

GENERALIZED OTHER AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Some literature regarding generalized other suggests that one generalized other provides the unity of self and guides our behavior (Hewitt 1991; Kollock and O'Brien 1994) However, as Joel Charon (1995) points out:

> Mead does not always make it clear if the individual has just one generalized other or several. It seems that what begins as one increasingly becomes several (p. 72).

Shibutani (1978) speaks of actors taking the perspective of groups in which they interact. He calls these reference groups. This would suggest more generalized others than one.

The unity of self, or the stable self, may be better conceived as a unity of selves. The generalized other guiding the unity of selves, may be conceptualized as the unity of generalized others. Therefore, we may speak of distinct generalized others whose perspective guides the behavior of an actor in particular situations. How a generalized other guides the actor's behavior may depend upon whether the actor needs the resources controlled by the group whose perspective serves as the generalized other for that particular situation.[42]

I asked the respondents to tell me about their experiences with "helping agencies" like Social Services. One of the interesting things were the nonverbal expressions that were displayed in response. Most of the mothers made faces indicating negative reactions. Twelve of the mothers reported having had experience with Social Services. This is the agency that administers Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

---

[42]Patricia Hill Collins (1990) demonstrates this when she speaks of the "outsider within."

In addition to Social Services, some had contact with other helping agencies in the community such as the churches, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, Vocational Rehabilitation, the local Community Action Agency, a local government agency designed to help with educational needs, Habitat for Humanity, and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children). Three women of the eighteen mentioned Habitat for Humanity. Their experiences are discussed in the section on reference groups. Six women mentioned the WIC program. For two, it was at a WIC center that they heard about Head Start. The others merely mentioned it as a helping agency.[43]

When asked about the most positive thing about the contacts with social service agencies, the mothers most often reported it was knowing there was financial help coming in on a regular basis. Also, some of the mothers said the people they dealt with were "very nice" to them. Paige (102) said, "They are run by some of the nicest people you'd ever want to meet." Helen (92) also told of the same feeling, "They were nice. I think because my husband was working we were treated well."

I then asked if there was anything negative. Actually, many of the mothers reported the negatives before I even got to that question. For example, Quincie (104) volunteered but did not elaborate:

Well, actually I had an experience with Red Cross that I'd rather not talk about because I have nothing good to say about them. Twice I don't have something good to say about them, in fact.

Imelda (93) reported on a distasteful experience with Vocational Rehabilitation while recovering from a serious injury. She said:

Voc Rehab down in Florida. It was not a good experience. I tested above average in everything, and I wanted to work with handicapped children . . . they wanted to put me in Goodwill, put me into the back room repairing things. [Head Start has since hired her to work for them].

---

[43]WIC distributes vouchers that mothers can exchange for certain food items. At the initial screening, the mothers provide diet and income information. Eligibility is based upon monetary and dietary needs. Mothers attend a class on nutrition when they come into the WIC office to receive their vouchers. They may be given recipes and samples at that time.

The looking-glass self provided by Vocational Rehabilitation did not reflect Imelda's own positive view provided by experts (tests). Believing she was not seen as competent because of an acquired disability made her affiliation with Vocational Rehabilitation negative for her.

Quincie (104) is recovering from cancer and her daughter is terminally ill. She reports feeling tired of the way she perceives she is treated by Social Services. She reports:

> I've always worked and I've never had to have complete aid until now.
> And let me tell you, I don't like having to report how I have to poop, and
> where I poop, and what I poop. I'm really tired of their games. . . . My
> biggest bitch is, "Does your child have a savings account? Does your child
> have savings bond?" [44]

Linda Gordon (1994) suggests the welfare system is stratified so that the better strata will be rights- and earnings- or contribution- based; and the worst, like AFDC, will be only needs-based. The better welfare programs are federal, serve disproportionately whites and men, and respect a recipient's privacy. The inferior programs are state or local, and they disproportionately serve minorities and women and children. And "the inferior ones [welfare programs] bring with them supervision" (p. 11). There is an assumption that the recipients in the lower welfare strata are inferior to the recipients of the higher welfare strata, ready to cheat to live off of "welfare" and not work. The assumption is "welfare" recipients are less moral and undeserving of the help they are being given, therefore they must give up the rights to their privacy which those in the higher welfare strata, who are seen as more moral and deserving, are guaranteed.

This lack of privacy over one's affairs was one of the complaints I most often received about the Department of Social Services. After asking the mothers about negative experiences, the answer often was they did not like someone else having the right to ask about every part of their lives. Nor did they report appreciating someone else having the right to tell them what to do. Karen (95) told me, "You've got to tell them

---

[44]Children in families receiving aid are not allowed to save money or have savings bonds, even if they are received as gifts. These become part of the family income and are used to determine monthly assistance.

everything you do. You feel like you've got to answe to someone all the time. You don't have your own life." Sarah (106) concurred, saying, "They just want to know so much about you. I don't feel comfortable with that."

Some mothers expressed the impact going to Social Services had on the way they felt about their selves. Paige (102) said it made her feel like she was being judged in a negative way. She attempted to resist the generalized other (welfare mother) by justifying her need as a good "mother" taking care of her children. Paige indicated:

> The hard part are the judgmental looks and judgmental things that other people say. It's very harmful. I had to decide at some point. . . what was more important. Were my children more important or was my pride? What I'd love to do is educate the public on just how very little fun it is to be on aid.

Nancy (100) didn't like the way going to Social Services for help made her feel. She said:

> Makes me feel really low. I was always raised to support yourself, you know? Nobody ever depended on that kind of thing. It makes me feel scummy. I don't like depending on them, but I have to.

Only Olivia (100) actually mentioned the amount of assistance as being too low, saying:

> We've had our checks cut and cut and cut and cut. And you CANNOT live on five hundred dollars. You can't. [that's five hundred dollars a month for a family of three].

Welfare mother   Departments of Social Services are charged with providing minimal care for low-income adults and children through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Commonly, the women receiving aid are referred to as "welfare mothers." Because many of the mothers receive AFDC, I asked them what they thought when they heard the term "welfare mother". The community in which this research took place is politically very conservative. One frequently hears and reads in the local newspapers invectives against "welfare mothers." There is an organized set of community attitudes which constitute the generalized other - "welfare mother". Head Start mothers (who were necessarily low-income), shared the set of community attitudes regarding "welfare mother"

142

regardless of whether or not they received AFDC. Of the fourteen mothers responding to this question, eleven of them gave answers which indicated they knew of the community attitudes. They showed an understanding of the stigma attached with being a single woman (whether through divorce or having never married) with children and receiving help to care for her children from the state in the from of welfare payments. This stigma is of the form Erving Goffman (1963) described as being when:

> . . . an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social
> intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn
> those of us whom he meets away from him (p. 5).

Goffman points out that although the stigmatized person may consider her or himself as "a normal", she/he has an understanding that others do not accord her/him the same respect and treatment other "normals" receive in their daily lives. In order to carry on in the world of normals, the stigmatized individual must be able to manage the "spoiled identity." This may mean rejecting it as a label that in fact belongs to them, as many of the respondents did. The women I interviewed do have a clear understanding, and in some cases, fully agreed with the generalized other of the "welfare mother", but not for themselves. Olivia (100) said of the term "welfare mother":

> I'd just like to be called a mother. Leave the "welfare" out. Why you know.
> It makes you sound really bad. It makes you sound like, "Oh God. You
> can't go get a job. Oh God, you can't do this. " . . . Then there's people
> that say, "Welfare Mother." They're bad-mouthing you? They're calling you
> names. . . . They call you like a person of the streets. Or they call you
> like, a bitch. Or you're a bad mom. You're no good. You'll never amount
> to anything.

Karen (95) said when she hears the term, "I feel ashamed. It's very degrading when people say that."

Roxanne (105) reported she distanced herself from the term, but related the effects the negative connotation being a "welfare mother" has had on her. She said it is:

> Somebody who needs help and it's really a cut down. Cause everybody
> looks at it as you're just too lazy. I even got discriminated on in an

apartment I was looking for. He thought Welfare moms were just the worst. And he told me that right out.

Other mothers also attempted to distance themselves from the identity and explained that they weren't like that. For Margaret (98) the term conjures up a vision of:

Scum. Slut. It's irritating, because I'm not low life and I ain't no slut. [**Do you think most Welfare Mothers are?**] Yeah. One girl I know has got 12 different kids, and they've all got different fathers.[45]

Nancy (100) said:

Honestly? I think of somebody who has a drug problem and lives in the slums and . . . that's why I don't like being on it 'cause I'm not like that.

Quincie (104) expressed the ambivalence the term held for her, "I'm not a Welfare Mother. I mean, I am . . . but I'm not."

Some mothers struggled with the label itself and attempted to re-cast it as a means of managing their identification with the label. Faith (89) talked about the "welfare mother" as:

[s]omebody who depends on the system. I don't like it [the way people talk about them] 'cause I don't think it's right. Some people can't get out and do work. You know, there's a reason why they can't. People sometimes talk about them not knowing the reason they're on it. They used to do it when I was on it. You know, "She's depending on welfare." Well, I couldn't help it. J. . . 's dad up and left me. I had to. I couldn't go out and get a job. I had to finish my education first.

Helen (92) said a "welfare mother" is, "[a] mother because of divorce or because something happened, they have to struggle."

Grace also equates being poor and on welfare with struggle. She says, ". . . I don't like it [negative talk about poor people] because all my life I've had to struggle. It's

---

[45]This may fall into the area of an urban myth. It is common to hear of the woman who has twelve children, all by different fathers. Quite a feat when one considers the time it takes to gestate, bear, and recover and then meet and mate with another man.

never been easy." Each of these women who received AFDC, spoke of welfare mothers as "them" not "us."

One mother who has not had to depend upon state assistance said she acquired a new view through her association with AFDC recipients in Head Start. Jessica (94) told me:

> Before I got into Head Start, I thought they could have gone out and gotten
> a job and at least got some of their income from a job. Since I've been in
> Head Start, and seen how little they actually get, you know. It has
> changed dramatically in that I think they should get more help.

The mothers come to Head Start with an understanding of the generalized other "welfare mother." And they have an understanding of how it affects their behavior in order to obtain assistance. Beth (84) sums it up well. "You're supposed to act in a certain way, so that you can be criticized for acting that way." They may attempt to manage the spoiled identity by distancing themselves from it, justifying their own need, or by re-defining the situation. Ten of the eighteen mothers rejected the pejorative label for themselves and for other women. Six rejected it for themselves, but accepted it as applicable to other women. Two did not give a response. Elizabeth (88), who was a Head Start mother twenty years ago, pointed out the mutability of the generalized other. She said:

> I suppose we were [welfare mothers]. But, we were in a different class.
> I don't know, it was different than it was then. [Her youngest daughter]
> wouldn't go to high school because they called her "welfare scum."
> Because she had to get hot lunch. So it was negative for my younger kids,
> but not for my older kids. It wasn't negative until the social workers went
> out and the case aides came in.

She explains that her daughter, who receives food stamps, is still afraid friends will see her spend her food stamps even though she is working.

In the next section I discuss Head Start as a reference group which may help some of the women plan a future "non-welfare" self.

REFERENCE GROUPS

Shibutani (1978), Charon (1992 and 1995), and others have talked about the importance of reference groups in self construction. Charon says:

> With adulthood come reference groups, each influencing a different view
> of the self, and making the self somewhat different in each situation (1995,
> p. 85).

Reference groups provide a perspective, generalized other, from which to view oneself. It would seem the more reference groups we have, the wider the variety of selves we have, which could assist us in resisting generalized others that would have us view a self in a negative way. Therefore, I attempted to uncover the reference groups of the Head Start mothers. Only two of the eighteen mothers mentioned belonging to a church, and three talked about belonging to twelve-step recovery groups. This contrasts with the staff who were not from low-income families. Those staff members mentioned several group affiliations. These affiliations have the potential for becoming "a group whose outlook is used by the actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his [her] perceptual field" (Shibutani 1978, p. 109). Middle-class individuals would have potentially more reference groups and therefore more generalized others from which to view their selves as object, increasing their prospects of seeing themselves positively. The greater the number of reference groups one has could mean one also has more opportunities for managing one's identity and for planning future selves.

Having more reference groups could also be a source of working for a social class interest. Three mothers, through their affiliation with Head Start, became involved in Habitat for Humanity, which helps low-income families build and purchase their own home. These mothers also sat on the Policy Council and subsequently served on the board of Habitat for Humanity[46]. Helen (92) said the greatest benefit of participating in Head Start was, "Being part of them . . . we're becoming better people [she, her husband, and her children] because of the support." Faith (89) belonged to church, Habitat for Humanity, and participated actively in Head Start. She became involved in Habitat for Humanity

---

[46]It would appear that this newer program also turns its clients as volunteers.

through her affiliation with Head Start. Faith states that, "Head Start gives you a feeling that you're worth something, that you can make something of yourself. You can go out in the community and be a part of it." She reports she is seeing her self through the eyes of another generalized other, one that sees her as a community participant.

Paige (102) is involved in "retreat groups", Habitat for Humanity, and Head Start. She does not live in a Habitat house herself, but helped to build three houses. Two were owned by Head Start mothers about which Paige said, "Go Head Start Mommies!" Her participation in these activities changed her view of herself, "I came to accept myself and say. this is okay . . . . Made me feel competent, you know." These three women who have multiple reference groups speak of feeling like better people in general, worth something, and competent.

For the most part, the other mothers reported family as their only reference group and thus the major source of generalized others. They did perceive the addition of Head Start as a reference group as bringing about some changes in their lives, which will be discussed in the next chapter. In the next chapter I discuss Head Start and personal empowerment.

CHAPTER 10
HEAD START AND PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT[47]

It [Head Start] makes me feel like a full mother, a teacher . . .

Faith, a Head Start mother

In this chapter I discuss the staff's attitudes toward the mothers and the Head Start philosophy. I connect this with the beginning history as a community-based social service agency.

HEAD START AND COUNTER HEGEMONY

Recognizing Head Start as a formal organization is important. Using Blau and Scott's (1962) typology of organizations, Head Start would be classified as a "service organization" (see Table 2-1). A service organization is an organization ". . . whose prime beneficiary is the part of the public in direct contact with the organization, with whom and on whom its members work" (Blau and Scott 1962, p.51). Blau and Scott suggest that in the service organization, the client is presumed not to know what is to be done in her or his own best interest. Therefore, it is the professional's job to determine what that is and then provide it (p. 51). We can see this in most of the service organizations with whom the mothers reported having had contact.

Two tiers of social services agencies exist. Nancy Fraser (1989) classifies these tiers as having gender norms "encoded in the structure of the U.S. social-welfare system" (p. 149). Further, the tiers may be classified as masculine and feminine. The masculine tier includes the programs which pose the recipients as "rights-bearer." These programs assume the recipient has some right to the benefits, such as unemployment insurance, Social Security insurance benefits, and Medicare. These mirror the separate spheres which men and women are assumed to occupy, although there is more of fiction than fact remaining of these separate spheres. the man as wage-earner in the public sphere and the woman as caretaker of the family (mother) in the private sphere (Fraser 1989). The

---

[47]The information regarding the process of becoming involved in Head Start and the policies of the Flussburg center was provided by the present director.

feminine tier consists of programs that are means tested, in other words, the relief programs, such as AFDC, food stamps, Medicaid, and public-housing assistance. While the respondents see themselves as "rights-bearers," the agencies do not. Fraser points out:

> These recipients are therefore essentially *clients* [emphasis in original], a
> subject-position that carries far less power and dignity in capitalist societies
> than does the alternative position of purchaser (p. 152).

The feminine tier carries the accoutrements for maintaining hegemony rather than for countering it. There are seldom features within these programs that provide the means to attain the status of "honored mother", nor the means to become rights-earning laborers. Instead Fraser says:

> This system creates a double bind for women raising children without a
> male breadwinner. By failing to offer these women day care for their
> children, job training, a job that pays a "family wage," or some combination
> of these, it constructs them [women raising children alone] exclusively as
> mothers . . . . Yet the system does not honor these women. On the
> contrary, instead of providing them a guaranteed income equivalent to a
> family wage as a matter of right, it stigmatizes, humiliates, and harasses
> them. In effect, it decrees simultaneously that these women must be and
> yet cannot be normative mothers (Fraser 1989, p. 153).

Distrust of the recipients is inherent in these programs. Therefore, as the mothers noted negatively, every aspect of the mothers' lives comes under extreme scrutiny. The receipt of food stamps to supplement the diets of the AFDC recipients, for example, serves to point out this distrust. Originally designed as a means to subsidize American agriculture, vouchers are given in place of cash. DeVault (1991) suggests:

> [This displays] an underlying distrust of recipients and a desire to control
> the purchases of those in the program. As a supplementation to AFDC, it
> suggests that spending money on food ("wisely," of course) can legitimately
> be enforced as part of "proper mothering" (p. 184).

Head Start maintains some features of a service organization, providing services to a portion of the population who come in contact with it and with whom and on whom the staff works. However, Head Start does not always assume that the client does not know what is best for her/him. In fact, the stated Head Start policy is to include the parents in the decision making process, deciding how and what services are to be delivered.

Head Start Philosophy

As pointed out in Chapter Three, parental involvement in a meaningful way was built into the Head Start program from the beginning. This means parents would not be merely clients whose children receive services, but they would be involved in making decisions regarding those services. Head Start operates under the assumption that the parent is the primary educator of their own children. Implementing this philosophy begins when the teachers introduce themselves by their first names to emphasize the peer relationship between the teachers and parents.

The Head Start Center Committees are charged with the responsibility of assisting in the "development and operation of every component including the curriculum in the Head Start Program." They are to assist in the classroom, planning the programs and activities for parents and staff, and they are to participate in the recruiting and screening of Center employees (Head Start Policy Manual 1970, p. 5-6). The Flussburg Head Start program has no formal curriculum. However, the staff develops an educational plan which the Policy Council reviews.

The Center Committee and the Policy Council have similar responsibilities but are at different levels. For example, the Policy Council is involved at all levels, including serving as a link between public and private organizations and the community Head Start serves. The Flussburg Head Start Policy Council has been instrumental in linking parents with Habitat for Humanity. Most recently, The Flussburg Head Start program has become partners with the Boys and Girls Club in building a facility to house both programs. The Policy Council approved decisions regarding this collaboration, and some parents helped in making the move from the old offices to the new one.

150

The manual also includes a stipulation that, "Parents are one of the categories[48] of persons who must receive preference for employment as non-professionals (U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development 1970, p. 8). Although the mandate was for employment as non-professionals, this employment became the stepping-stone for many of today's Head Start directors who were once Head Start parents. This is true across the country.[49]

The community-based founding of many local centers and the continued direct involvement of parents in Head Start meant a philosophy very different from that of the hegemonic service agencies. Hegemonic service agencies are those which serve to perpetuate the preponderant authority of the providers of services over those provided for. Also, these agencies help to preserve the hierarchy of strata already in existence by not implementing policies which help the recipients move into authoritative positions either within that agency or in the community at large. Hegemonic agencies are a part of a system that assumes if one is needy, one does not know what is in one's own best interest nor the interests of anyone in similar straits. If people who need to receive services are not allowed to be part of the decision making regarding how those services are to be delivered, status quo is certain to be maintained.

Nationally, Head Start parents have been involved in a way that makes them part of the entire process and gives them access to authority. For example, parents have been directly involved in assuring that funding remains intact and even expanded during presidential administrations where Head Start was in danger of being co-opted by other educational agencies (Zigler and Muenchow 1992). Those who had power (such as local politicians) over economic and social resources have not always received this challenge to hegemony well. In the early days, this direct involvement met with some resistance from the more traditional leaders of communities, states, and the nation, mostly white,

---

[48]The manual does not define what the other categories of persons are, but I believe they may have meant protected categories such as women and minorities.

[49]This information has come from conversations I had with Head Start Directors from across the county during the National Parent Involvement Institute held in Washington D.C. in August 1993.

mostly wealthy, and mostly male. Zigler (Zigler and Muenchow 1992) recalls one senator informing him that he did not want to fund community activism, including Head Start. The senator asked Zigler, "Why should I pay poor people to stir up trouble . . . when I can't find anyone to iron my shirts?" (p. 110). Head Start centers were burned in Ohio and parents harassed, but this did not stop the parents, particularly mothers, from asserting themselves, taking the mandates for direct involvement seriously, and shaping the forms the involvement took. Much of the resistance was directed at keeping African Americans from having decision making power, keeping African Americans and European Americans from working together, and keeping poor people overall "in their place."

The Flussburg program I researched had not met with local organized resistance. Because the community is largely of European descent, the students and parents were very homogenous with respect to ethnic background. There was not the racial friction that existed in other communities. That is not to say the racism is nonexistent in this community. It most certainly does exist and is clearly directed at the Hmong population and the Native American population. Racism in this community is not directed at trying to keep people of color from having power, but rather it is directed at keeping people of color from being a neighbor or from exercising certain rights granted by treaty.[50] At the time of this program's founding there was not a substantial African-American population.

The parents involved in the Flussburg program are actively involved in the political aspects of keeping the program going. For example, parents did and still do organize protests when it seems Head Start funding might be in trouble. Recently, when it appeared as though congress might change the program by incorporating it as part of overall child care legislation and funding, parents from this program joined Head Start parents from all over the country who wrote letters to and called their congressional representatives to protest. Head Start was not subsumed under the heading of being solely a child care agency.

---

[50]There are often hostile confrontations between Anglos and Native Americans over fishing rights. African American students and adults who are out jogging or walking are often stopped by police and asked for identification. The racism sometimes manifests itself in subtle ways that are nevertheless difficult for people of color.

Nationally and locally, the Head Start philosophy means parents are partners in their children's education. They are not to be silent partners, but vocal and active. Head Start considers early childhood education a family affair. Ursula, a local staff member, summed up it up this way, "Our philosophy is that we work with families, not just the children." Included in The Head Start Employees Code of Ethics are the following statements:

> I agree to reach out to each child and family, attempting to enhance their quality of life by recognizing their unique needs.

and

> I respect parents as the prime educators of their children and will endeavor to strengthen the bond among all family members (Adopted by National Head Start Association 1985)

The Mothers' Experience

The mothers reported their experience in Head Start as very different from their experience with other social service agencies. Some mothers reported they were surprised and pleased by the way the staff at Head Start treats them. They reported being treated as though they are important. It is as if in this place, they do NOT expect to be treated as important, and it comes as a pleasant surprise. One mother remembered the teacher sitting down with her to have coffee. which was unexpected. Beth (84) said, "They treated everybody nice. I got the feeling that they were genuinely interested in you. They were so good to your children."

I saw the joy of one mother as she prepared to do something very frightening for her. but something that would give her real independence, getting her driving license. This woman[51] had been dependent on her parents, brothers, and the men in her life to tell her what to do and to take her where she needed to go. Obtaining a driver's license meant she could assume a great deal control over her own life. Head Start helped her pay for the driving lessons.

---

[51] I did not interview this woman. but sat in on a home visit made by a staff member.

The staff help mothers deal with the agencies to which Head Start referred them or with which they were required to deal. For example, staff may help a mother sign up for classes at the local technical school or to become involved with Habitat for Humanity or find out where and how to receive emergency provisions. Sometimes a staff member will assist a mother by simply supporting her while she complains about the lack of control over her own life. Parents come to Head Start with a variety of problems and with a variety of skills (or lack thereof) to enable them to improve their lives. The staff is trained to help parents take the next step from whatever level they are.

Finding out about Head Start[52]

Head Start does outreach to recruit families into the program. The tactics have changed over the years. When this program started, they had one center. At that time they recruited by putting posters in grocery stores, laundries, and churches. Current parents were asked (via parent newsletters) to tell neighbors with preschool children about Head Start. As the program grew to the ten centers they currently have, outreach has changed, for example, flyers are included with AFDC checks which reaches more potential enrollees. Presently, they hold two open houses at each center each school year. These events are advertised in the public schools, on radio, on local access cable television, through churches, and in newspapers. In addition, the Head Start program continues to rely on the "grapevine," prior and current parents telling other parents about Head Start. Some people who read or hear about Head Start, call the office. Information is taken over the phone, and the caller is told about and encouraged to attend the next open house. Head Start sends a follow-up letter reminding them of the date, location and time.

Staff members are present at the open houses. This includes the teachers, bus drivers, cooks, social workers, parent involvement specialist, and so forth. Parents are encouraged to bring their children with them. The support staff is there to show the

---

[52]This information was obtained during an interview with the present director. This was a separate interview from the one during which she reported on her own experiences with Head Start.

154

children around and to watch them while family support staff[53] helps parents in filling out applications. Depending on the size of the community in which a center is located, there may be as few as five families or as many as sixty who will attend the open houses. Translators are present to help the non-English speaking Hmong parents. They serve refreshments, and parents leave with a folder that contains information about Head Start and medical and dental forms to be filled out[54].

Some parents who phone for information do not attend an open house. They are then called and asked if they are still interested. If they are, they are told about the next open house. If there is a reason they cannot attend, the staff member asks them if they would like to have a family support specialist come to their home to take their application.

A variety of ways exist in which the respondent mothers learned about the Head Start program. Two mothers found out about Head Start through a notice on the bulletin board at the WIC office. Social Services informed two of the other mothers. Her own mother, who had seen an advertisement in the local paper regarding obtaining applications for the program, told one woman. Three heard about it from friends, one found it under pre-schools in the Yellow Pages of the phone book, and another was informed when she called the public school offices seeking to have her child "tested" for hyperactivity.

Enrollment Process

After they receive the applications, the staff screen them for eligibility. The goal is to make certain the "neediest of the needy" are given highest priority. They send those who are accepted a letter informing them that their child has been enrolled, reminding them to take their child for a dental and a medical examination, telling them when school begins, and that their child's teacher will be calling them to make an appointment for a home visit. The teacher then phones the parents, and they arrange a home visit for the

---

[53]Family support staff include the parent advocates, family service specialists and the social workers.

[54]All parents are encouraged to have their children receive medical and dental examinations. A nurse is present to guide them to affordable or free services, depending on the situation.

155

last week in August or the first week in September. If the parent does not have a phone, the teacher will go to the home and make an appointment for the visit. If no one is home, the teacher leaves a note and her phone number. Some people are never able to be contacted. In that case, the next child on the waiting list is enrolled. There are approximately ten to fifteen children at each center in the Flussburg program on a waiting list for enrollment.

The first home visit lasts for forty-five minutes to an hour. During this visit, much of the time is devoted to filling out paperwork. The teacher will introduce herself[55] again, using her first name. Some parents never become comfortable calling a "teacher" by her first name and either call her "teacher" or call her by no name at all. Part of the purpose of having the teacher make home visits is to begin the process of instilling in the parents the idea that they are their children's prime teachers and are in a partnership with Head Start. During this visit, the teacher tells the parents about the bus service. Teachers also tell parents that they are expected to attend the first day of school with their children. As more parents are required to be in school or working, it is becoming more difficult for them to attend the first day. If this is the case, the parents are asked to find another responsible adult to take their place.

A second home visit is made, this time by the parent advocate, unless the teacher has determined there is a special need because she saw evidence of abuse, extreme financial problems, etc., and that a social worker should make the call. At the second visit, the parent advocate does an assessment of their social and financial needs, a "needs assessment." The advocates get to know "their" parents, for example, the parents' talents, abilities, needs and so forth. It is part of this program's philosophy to "begin with the parent where they are." This means if a parent is very depressed, getting up and getting dressed and getting their child dressed to get on the bus is applauded. If it seems a parent might have leadership potential, this is encouraged. Being able to get dressed and being able to run a meeting are both given respect and acknowledgment.

---

[55]All the teachers at this time are women.

The First Day of School

All the children ride the bus. The first day of school actually occurs over two days, with half the class attending the first day and the other half attending the second day. The parents accompany their children on the bus, and the parent training begins at that time. The bus drivers explain the rules and regulations of the bus service. Many parents who became staff started as bus drivers and thus may serve as an example for incoming parents. After the first day, parents are encouraged to volunteer to take turns riding the bus with all the children. The bus driver and the parent are thus able to interact and exchange personal information if both so desire.

Once at the school, the teacher greets the parents and children. The children are encouraged to explore while the teacher talks to the parents, gives them the tote bag their child will use to bring home pictures and things done during school. They are shown the daily routine, which is posted in the room. Then, everyone goes to wash her/his hands. They have breakfast or lunch, depending upon whether it is a morning or an afternoon class. The tables are preset with name cards showing where the child sits. They serve the meal "family style," and the parents are encouraged to let the children help themselves. Conversation during the meal is directed at both the parents and the children. After breakfast or lunch, they clean up, and the parents help their children brush their teeth.

They then begin with what will become the daily routine, and parents are shown what they can do to help when they come in and volunteer. The staff ease the parents into orientation. After showing them how they might help, they are then taken to another room at which the first center meeting takes place. This gathering of parents is called a "Center Committee Meeting," and all the parents belong. These are not what is typically thought of as a committee. Part of using this nomenclature is to begin socializing the parents to the language of leadership and community involvement. Many have never before been a part of any committee. During this first meeting, parents are given this program's parent handbook. The parent advocate goes through the handbook page by page. They are given a highlighter to mark important information. They go through the "Seventy point two" (70.2), which is the Head Start policy manual. During this meeting,

two parents from each center volunteer or are elected to serve on the policy council. The policy council meets for the first time two to three weeks after school begins.

Most of the mothers indicated they got involved because they perceived Head Start would help their children. Faith remembered being in Head Start herself as a child, remembered it as a good experience, and wanted the same good experience for her child. Often, if low-income women become involved in community activities, it is their motherhood which becomes the vehicle by which involvement begins (Collins 1990; Safia and Flora 1992; Luttrell 1988; Naples 1991a and 1992). When mothers became involved for their children, they learned that it is also a program in which they become involved through the center committee meetings, riding the bus, helping in the classroom, and so forth. Some women discovered that they felt good helping others. For example, Olivia (100) found it was an opportunity to do good. She reports:

> It gave me like a job. It was . . . how do you call it . . . you don't call it free
> . . . you don't get paid for it, but I like it. It was volunteer.

Prior Perceptions   All but Margaret (98) reported being afraid or shy when they first came to the classroom. Margaret was not scared, but expressed anxiety over being thought of as what she perceived as "low-life" women. This she resisted and thought the first meeting was stupid. She asked:

> Why? Because they made me go to a thing called the parents meetings
> and it was . . . . I looked at the mothers in the room and I knew quite a
> few of them. They were low-life.

The other mothers reported their anxiety came from a fear of not being accepted by the staff or other parents. These mothers reported it was because they did not know what to do, or they perceived their self as unacceptable, not good enough, that they could not be accepted for whom they thought they were. However, once having gotten over the initial anxiety, most of the mothers said they found the experience to be very rewarding. As Paige (102) put it:

> You know, it was the best thing in the world for me because it came at a
> point when we were all hurting really bad.

158

For Olivia (100), the reward was meeting friends. She said:

> You don't know none of the parents . . . you're getting to know the kids and you're getting to know the parents. And a lot of them turned out to be friends.

For two of the mothers, Faith and Grace, it was the chance to do something new and important. Faith (89) said:

> [being elected to the policy council] . . . felt great. . . . I can't wait until this year when I can find out if I can be on it again.[56]

And Grace (90) told me:

> I was on the council 'til this past year. It was kinda nice. It was kinda nice to know what's goin' on and how things were actually run and why and what their reasons were. [*How did it make you feel?*] Well, it was kind of different, you know. I'm a big person to make decisions, you know. This was the first year that I was in, and I kind of took it slow. I wanted to know what it was before I was making a decision that might not be the right one.

The Policy Council reviews all the written plans and approves them. Each component director presents her/his plan. At the beginning of the year, parents from the previous year will ask the most questions. When the director presents the budget, she will put some line items in brackets which encourages the parents to ask for explanations, and thus they become more actively involved in the decision making process. Parents also approve all hiring and firing of staff, the goals of the program, requests for funds, and so forth.

Activities

The activities in which the mothers participate are self-selected and depend on the time the mother has available and encouragement from staff. Three of the mothers I interviewed were involved in either the center committee or policy council. By

---

[56]At the end of each year, one parent from each center currently on the policy council is elected to be a "holdover" parent or community representative for the next year. The council members themselves choose these parents.

involvement, I mean they served on the council or served as an officer of the center committee. All the mothers attended center committee meetings, some more regularly than others. The mothers who were not in positions of leadership participated in classroom assistance, which includes riding the bus, helping the students on and off with their coats, helping the children with their projects, clearing and setting the tables for lunch and so forth. These activities do not seem to be viewed in any kind of hierarchy. When parents are first selected to serve on the policy council, they are often not sure what that is and what decision-making is involved, therefore, it does not have a higher status than riding the bus with the children. Also, because the philosophy is to deal with the parent at the level they are at the time, the Flussburg Head Start shows parents appreciation for whatever they do. Therefore, parents who assist in the classroom may see themselves as a teacher, good with children, or good at crafts. The Head Start self (looking-glass-self) often matched their involvement. For example, Margaret (98), who often refers to her "self" as teacher, volunteered to help the teacher. She read to the children and said her Head Start looking-glass self was "teacher." Olivia (100) reported helping some children with their putting on their shoes and getting them dressed for the bus. She said Head Start saw her as "good with kids."

Importance   I asked several questions concerning the importance of the mothers' activities to them, to Head Start, and to their children. I also asked them how that perceived importance was communicated to them. Every mother indicated she perceived the things she did were really important. For example, Quincie (104) reports:

> I think it's very important . . . being vice-chairperson. We have a lot of
> decisions. We have to decide if the center needs this or that . . . or if we
> want to do this or that. We do a lot. There's no way around it.

Margaret (98) said, "I'm told they're [parents] really important and I'm told that I'm greatly appreciated for the things I've done."

The mothers receive the gratitude of the staff of Head Start and are told in many ways that they are important to the program. One area of importance is in-kind matching funds for grant reporting. A portion of the budget of the Head Start program must come

160

from the community. For every so many dollars awarded to the program, they must raise a local dollar. This means a dollar value is attached to donated goods and services. Head Start counts the parents' volunteer time toward the local budget match in the category of an "in-kind" contribution. The director, in fact, is very proud of the point that this center would not have to count any other donated goods and service outside parental contributions because the parents are so very active. The parents understand this. Sarah (106) said, "They told us that as many hours as we put in they get paid for and stuff." Lee (96) reported what her activities meant, "The in-kind . . . [my son's] teacher always says that she's so grateful when I come in."

Staff members let the mothers know of their importance to the program by telling them directly. Quincie (104) said:

They always say thank you and stuff. . . . [One of the staff] was at our meeting. . . . She was there and says that was one of the better meetings that she had ever seen. It really made me feel good considering I was really down in the dumps lately about not being able to do so much . . . . [The parent advocate tells us] "You're doing a great job." She tells us we were good parents.

Sometimes the staff stresses the mothers' importance by simply making them "feel that way." There are more overt ways to express the importance such as dinners and awards. Once a year, a "Parent Appreciation Day" is held at which certificates and awards are presented. Every parent receives an award that has been personalized based upon "where that person is at." Each parent is recognized and appreciated. One parent may receive an award for being the number one craft volunteer, another for being the best fund-raiser. Faith (89) reports:

They award things, number one volunteer and number one parent or something. [Who got it?] I got one for number one volunteer.

Helen (92) said:

They tell you, and they give you those special pot lucks and awards and just how they make you feel when you're over there.

Jessica (94) tells of the banquet:

161

At the end of the school year, you know, with their little banquet and saying "we really appreciate you" and all. But, you can see it. The teachers would absolutely not have any time with the kids if you weren't there, laying the stuff out and helping with lunch and helping them getting dressed and undressed.

Parents perceived the value of their Head Start participation as important through (1) the in-kind, with a dollar being attached to what they do which then goes to the program and (2) understanding how the program is better.

I asked the respondents about the importance of their involvement in Head Start to them and their children. The mothers indicated varying degrees of the importance their activities held for them and for their children. For example, Nancy (100), indicating the importance to herself, simply said, "medium."

The generalized other from which they view their Head Start mother self suggests they should be involved with the program. This is reflected in answers I received when I asked the respondents "What is a good Head Start mother?" Nancy, who had indicated her activities were only of medium importance to herself, seemed to hedge a little when describing a good Head Start mother. "One that's willing to get involved when they ask, if they have no prior . . . . " She left the sentence unfinished. However, we had earlier been talking about how busy she was now with some required programs for continuing AFDC and she could not volunteer as much as she desired. I believe she felt she could not be the good Head Start mother she just described and desired to be.

Other mothers found it made them feel bad when they could not participate as much as they wanted. Quincie (104) voiced this when she reported, "When I don't do something I say I'm going to do, it really eats me?" She thought a good Head Start mother is one who has her child in Head Start to learn. Quincie's time to volunteer has become limited because of Department of Social Services requirements that she be in school. She is afraid if she goes to the parent appreciation banquet, and the parent advocate stands up and says something nice about her, she will start to cry, because she has not done as much as she thinks she should.

162

Karen (95) said of her participation, "It makes me feel really good. If I don't do it [participate] I feel like crap. Feel guilty." She said a good Head Start mother was one who participates and pays attention and helps out.

Paige (102) volunteered in the classroom. She told a story of helping two little Hmong girls because they could not communicate. She started playing with them, and they started "coming around." She said, "You know, this makes all of this worthwhile, doesn't it?" Paige also felt guilty about not doing as much as she thought she should. When I asked her to describe a good Head Start mother, she started by saying, "Probably someone who's . . . . " and then continued, ". . . see I was a real schnook because I didn't do any of the home activities."

The mothers reported that as they came to view their mother self from the perspective of Head Start, they wanted to participate. They indicated they wanted to be good Head Start mothers. As the state requires more of their time be supervised while they attend school or job training, they will have less time to spend volunteering at Head Start. Head Start has the potential to help them view their selves as what the state says it wants them to become, good mothers. They could be torn between the mother self, which appears to be the most salient self, and the worker self, one some see as a future self.

I asked how important the mothers' participation in Head Start was for their children. Eleven of the twelve respondents who answered this question thought their own involvement was important for their children because it makes the children feel good having them in the classroom and seeing their mother involved in their activities. As Helen (92) pointed out:

At first I did it for the kids . . . then, I realized it really made me feel good.

And then the kids felt, "It's neat. My mother's doin' something."

The mothers' answers were very short. As with the trouble the mothers had reporting a looking-glass-self with their children, they kept their answers about the importance of "mother" being involved shorter than most other answers. Imelda said, "[i]t really makes them feel good." Faith (89) said, "I think it's really important to them." It appears that while the children may be significant in the mothers' lives, at this age at least, the children

163

are not significant others. It is important to the mothers to be seen as a "good" mother, but by adults. I believe this is an area that needs further investigation.

Head Start Programming

Head Start programming for the parents varies from year to year. During the first home visit, the parents fill out interest sheets. From these, the staff meet to determine what interests were expressed and what training needs were mentioned. These interests and needs tend to reflect what is going on in the community. For example, twenty years ago, they never mentioned alcoholism, sexual abuse, and domestic abuse. At that time, the community at large also did not discuss this issues. As these issues are now discussed publicly, parents also express interest in learning more about them. Some interests mentioned were unique to the community. For example, a few years ago, a child was abducted, raped, and murdered. That year, parents expressed an interest in programming about child safety.

The center staff identifies what programs the parents are interested in having, and the parent advocate finds volunteers, such as a community police officer, to come in and address the parents at a Center Committee meeting. Again, all parents are part of the Center Committee that meets once a month. Child care is provided while the meetings are in session. Besides conducting business, during which parents make decisions about dispensing and raising funds, they may have speakers on subjects that range from budgeting to beauty tips. Sometimes they focus on the problems of being low-income parents. Other times, they may have a program designed to enhance their self-esteem.

Although all parents belong to the Center Committees, not all parents attend. For illustration, we assume that there are thirty-two families enrolled at a center. Out of that number, ten[57] will be working and cannot attend as the meetings are held during the day. This leaves twenty-two out of which five just do not want to attend. Ten attend meetings regularly. It is the parent advocate's responsibility to discover why the remaining seven are not attending and to try to encourage them to "come in." Most of my respondents

---

[57]Fathers do not often attend the center meetings that often. They are considered part of the committee, but are often unavailable to attend morning or afternoon meetings.

164

attended regularly. Lee did not, but indicated that she "knew" she should go in more often. Lee is dealing with her own addictions and has some successes and then has some slips which tend to affect her attendance.

Parents may also go on field trips with their children. They hold fund-raising activities. If they are on the council, they may attend conferences away from their community. Sometimes, the Head Start program contracts other agencies to do training for the parents. As part of my observations, I attended a nurturing class designed to help the families, fathers, mothers, and children, develop positive family living skills. They held the classes in the evening and lasted three hours. They met once a week for six weeks. The children met with some caretakers who cuddled them, played with them, and did projects with them. Meanwhile, the parents met in smaller groups to talk about the way they were parented and how they might repeat that with their own children. They then discussed ways of dealing with everyday family problems and were given workbooks to fill out. Each chapter dealt with a different aspect of parenting. For example, the week I attended, the parents logged the praise they had given their children and partner [where applicable]. They described how this might be different from the way their own parents spoke with them. They also recorded what event prompted the praise and what the outcome was. Each week they reported how they used the new skills during the week and what the results were. Everyone participated in sharing past and present family life, including me. After the small group discussions, the families reunited for snacks and singing, and then they worked on a craft project. Transportation was provided for the families who were without it. Head Start did not conduct this program, but contracted with the Family Nurturing Program to serve Head Start parents. This contract was paid for out of the Family Service Center pilot program grant.

Depending upon the budget. the Head Start program will contract training programs. This was how the leadership training I participated in as a parent was funded. While the training is going on for the parents, the staff learn how to conduct future parent training. The director said, "We contract out the training until the staff can do it themselves." In addition to grants received specifically to do special training for parents, there are also some funds available for staff training.

165

Head Start Staff

Part of the program's goal for parents is to introduce them to new ways of seeing themselves, new ways of parenting, new ways of living, and so on. As previously stated, a portion of the Head Start philosophy is "dealing with parents where they are." This means not all parents will readily accept all of the new opportunities they encounter, but they were at least exposed to them. In the future, they may think back to something that happened in Head Start and use it for change. This is referred to as "planting a seed and waiting for it to grow." The staff is very important in helping either "plant the seeds" or providing opportunities for change. The staff learns along with the parents. At a parent center meeting, the parent advocate again shares her past self and her present self, not just in terms of being a mother and being mothered, but also in being in a relationship. Margaret (98) was disgruntled by some of this sharing. Although the advocate was married, Margaret felt everything was geared toward the single mothers and that too much "male-bashing" went on.

The Family Service Center [FSC] staff are what they [FSC staff] call "paid friends". At the time of the study, the FSC had just begun as a pilot program. Therefore, it was new and the staff hired were all college educated social workers, perhaps because the head of the FSC came from a social work background. There was definitely a difference between the way FSC staff members talked about their jobs and the way the other staff members talked about theirs. The FSC staff members reported interacting themselves with the parents in a different way than other staff. The relationship with the "client" was more of the client-provider relationship rather than the Head Start peer-to-peer relationship. The new center program staff members' responses to "do you have friends among the parents and do you think you will do things together outside of Head Start?" were reflective of what could be typed as professional distancing. Compare Ursula (107), an experiential staff member, with Kristin Lynn (119), the new "professional" staff. Ursula answered:

> I've only been able to have visited with one or two [parents] this year and
> ten or twelve phone calls at the most. In the past, more so before I was
> married, I would go bowling with them. We would meet in the park and

have picnics. Talking on the telephone of course. Some baby sitting I would do. We've gone out to eat. They've been to my house to eat. I've been to their house to eat.

Kristin Lynn's response was very different:

[*Do you think you will do things together outside the program?*] Hopefully not because I want to make sure there's still a little bit of professionalism there. But, I don't see that . . . if I ran into them in the park I wouldn't play with the kids for a few minutes or whatever. I don't think I would establish and start setting up things.

However, this same staff person, while acknowledging this professionalism comes from her human services background believes Head Start may be different.

I'm not exactly [sure what] the philosophy is for Head Start. I'll be anxious to see. I have the feeling it will be friends.

It is this counter hegemonic "friend" philosophy which might allow the sharing of past and present selves. That subsequently could facilitate parents recognizing a comparable self and perhaps use that experience to imagine a future self that could lead to personal empowerment.

Importance of Parents

All the staff that I interviewed indicated the importance of parents to the program. The differences in answers depended upon whether the staff member was a parent who became staff or a staff member who had never been a Head Start parent. To the experiential staff member, the importance lay in what the parents could do for Head Start. Ursula (107) said of the reason parental involvement is important:

Because if they don't "come in" [volunteer in the classroom or attend the center meetings, for example] and find out new ways of doing things, they . . . if nothing else, they might have something to offer us as well as other parents. So they need to come in so we can see what they have to offer us and they can see what we have to offer them.

167

Wendy (110), another experiential staff member, when asked if the parents are important to Head Start stated:

> Oh, definitely! They wouldn't be able to run this without the parents.
> [mentions riding the bus, holding children on their laps, being extra hands]
> . . . . So, parents are just so important and sometimes they don't realize
> it that they are . . . they are so important.

The other staff members mentioned reasons that had to do more with the importance for the parent and the children, for example, being less isolated and being able to make friends. Anna Becky (117), a non-experiential staff member said of the importance of parents' involvement:

> First, just showing the children that they are interested in the children's
> education and well-being . . . . Second of all the use of us as role models
> to learn other ways of dealing with children . . . and building up a parent's
> self-esteem.

Iona Jennifer (119), another staff member, is concerned about what the changes in the AFDC regulations are doing to the chances for the mothers to participate and gain the benefits available for that participation. She says:

> I see it as being important . . . with the new AFDC law, parents need to be
> going to school or working. What I see with the parents is that struggle to
> be going to school, and I know like parents that are working will do cutouts
> at home. . . . I see [participating] as very important without undue pressure
> on those who can't.

PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

Changes Mothers Perceive

Mothers, both those presently in the program, those from past years, and parents who became staff reported some changes in their lives which they attributed to Head Start. These perceived changes range from learning better ways to parent their children, to making friends and just feeling better about themselves. Jessica (94) said of the changes in her life:

168

I think just for the fact that getting myself involved with other mothers, it
gave me a time when I could get out and meet other mothers. It may not
sound like a great change, but it did. And . . . making decisions there, you
know and getting suggestions . . . it showed what you're doing here, being
a mother, is just as good as going out and working.

Many of the mothers specified that they had more patience with their children, and
had learned ways of controlling their tempers. As Olivia (100) puts it:

It helps me to . . . control my anger. Not control but to help it, not to get
ANGRY angry . . . and to work better with my children . . . And I try and
show them what a mom is supposed to be like.

Head Start seems to give the mothers new options and new ways of defining their
selves as mothers. Rather than the identity of a non-normative mother reinforced by other
service agencies, Head Start may give these low-income women the chance to be what
the society has set up for them to achieve without giving them the means to achieve it,
i.e. good mothers and good citizens. I acknowledge some would suggest that helping
women to become better mothers encourages them to stay in the position reserved for
women only. This could then be seen as reproducing the patriarchal status quo.
However, if the status quo for **poor** women has been to be the "dishonored mother," a
contrast to the "good and honored mothers" the more "superior, higher class" women are,
then anything that moves the low-income women out of a "lower than" position could be
seen as empowering. This is especially true when we consider that according to the
women, "mother" is a very important self to them. This moves them from members of the
community who are recipients and "takers," to participants and "givers." This could
definitely be seen as empowerment for the "mother" self. Faith (89) sums this up when
she said:

Head Start gives you a feeling that you're worth something, that you can
make something of yourself. You can go out in the community and be a
part of it.

169

CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSIONS

Enrich, Empower, Educate . . .

Flussburg Head Start motto

I began this research with three guiding questions.

1. Was Head Start an Arena for self-change and empowerment?

2. What do women, previously defined as clients by the bureaucracies with which they interact, identify as critical for them in an official institution?

3. How does the public definition of a social problem and the implementation of a solution to it victimize or empower those initially viewed as part of the problem?

I used the mothers' perspectives to uncover factors within the Head Start program and within the individuals participating which the women identify as inhibiting or encouraging change in the ideas they have about their selves. I also used their perspective to uncover the factors they see as inhibiting or encouraging change in their degree of empowerment. My goal was to move from anecdotal information to ethnography and let the mothers tell about their experiences.

In this chapter, I discuss: the factors the mothers identified as important for their self-concepts, how the mothers perceived the definitions of and solutions to poverty as victimizing or empowering them as mothers, the need for further research, and the policy implications of my findings. I begin with a discussion of factors the mothers recognized within Head Start, an official institution, organized and legitimized to give low-income children and their families a hand in moving out of poverty, which facilitated or impeded change in them.

HEAD START AS AN ARENA FOR SELF-CHANGE AND EMPOWERMENT

Mothers who were in Head Start twenty-four years prior to this study reported they have kept friends from that time. One credits her experience in Head Start for helping her to open her own day care center. All agreed that Head Start saw them as important and

170

that the experiences there encouraged them to do more with their lives. All agreed that we became better parents because of the things we learned in Head Start.

The mothers of today reported experiencing some of the same changes. They see themselves becoming better mothers. These women indicated "mother" is an important self for them, as did mothers from Head Start's early days. Those who serve on the policy council or become officers of the center committees reported seeing their selves as important women, who can make important decisions. Mothers who come to the classroom and assist the teacher, described seeing themselves as volunteers and as essential factors in Head Start's continuation through their in-kind contributions. Those who are "welfare mothers" reported resisting the community's perspective of what that means. They said the "mother" perspective they acquire in Head Start helped them to make decisions to benefit their children, their community, and their selves. Some may suggest this maintains the status quo by encouraging the women to see "mother" as their primary identity and therefore occupy this position reserved for women only. Thus, Head Start would be an agent of social control rather than counter hegemony. I found "mother" to be the identity that is most salient to them when they come to Head Start. However, it is possible there are resource and structural barriers to low-income women being able to be the kinds of mothers they want to be. More importantly, if low-income women's motherhood is measured against the motherhood of more affluent and powerful women, it is the intersection of gender and class that is an area for counter-hegemony, not gender alone. The mothers in this study report that Head Start provides them an opportunity to see their mother selves as important to others as well as to themselves and teaches them how to be even better mothers regardless of their socio-economic status.

From the mothers stories, I found that Head Start encourages community participation and has done so for the thirty years of its operation. For example, three of the present day mothers said they became involved in Habitat for Humanity. They served on the board of directors and participated in building homes for themselves and others. This is similar to those of us from twenty-three years ago who became involved in the Community Action Agency.

171

I identified factors within the Flussburg Head Start program and factors within the national Head Start program which facilitated this change. At the national level, participation of the parents has been built into the program from the beginning. That the national program outlined the mandate for "maximum participation of the poor" in directives stating the ways in which that was to be accomplished. That mandate has not changed, although some programs are beginning to define the mandate differently. They suggest it be carried out in ways that position the staff as "professionals" who are to identify problems the mothers have and guide them to the programs to "solve" their problems[58]. However, thirty years after its formation, local Head Start programs are still charged with seeing that parents are encouraged to participate to the fullest extent possible.

Within the Flussburg program, mothers and staff members identified factors which encouraged parents to experience change. One of these is the way the staff seek out programs and training and make them available to the parents. For example, twenty years ago parents attended a college class on child development, while today's parents were able to attend nurturing classes. Another factor within this program that facilitates change is the availability of staff members who could provide mothers with ideas for new possible selves. The present and former directors "moved up through the ranks." They had been Head Start mothers themselves and may have an understanding of the parents' lives that connects the directors to the parents. The policy of having the staff dress casually and teachers addressed by their first names are among the practices which may have come out of an empathetic understanding for the parents' perceived subordinate position, i.e. being low-income. Many of the Flussburg Head Start policies position the relationship between staff and parents as peer to peer.

The policy of providing employment for parents is still part of the structure of Head Start at the national level. However. there does appear to be a change regarding the

---

[58]See for example Workman and Gage's article "Creating Family Support Systems: In Head Start and Beyond. They describe the competencies needed by staff members in order to fulfill a role in creating family support systems. They suggest the staff members who fill the positions of teacher, director, and family services coordinator have "solid groundings" in child development and "professional-level skills with roots in social work. counseling, and community psychology" (Gage and Workman 1994).

levels at which parents may be hired without a four-year degree and in some cases, a master's degree. As more directors lack experience as low-income parents themselves, they may not be able to connect to or even regard the Head Start parents as peers. Indeed, the staff in this study who were not past Head Start parents related very differently to the mothers than did those who "rose through the ranks." Overall, this could stifle some of Head Start's counter-hegemonic potential.

One difference reported between yesterday's and today's mothers is the time available to the mothers to volunteer in the program. There are regulations under current welfare reform efforts, pioneered in the state where the Head Start studied is located which put more demands on the time of mothers receiving AFDC. Lack of time is one of the laments reported by both the mothers and the staff. Time spent at the Head Start center volunteering is regarded as important by the mothers and the staff. The mothers indicated that being able to volunteer makes them feel good about themselves, helps them learn how to parent better, and provides opportunities to begin to make changes in other areas of their lives. Mothers of today, as well as mothers from before, report making changes in their lives for the better, whether it be getting a driver's license, a General Education Diploma, or setting their sights on a college degree.

The parents of today provided the same description of a good Head Start mother as the former Head Start mothers. They all described a good Head Start mother (the generalized other) as one who really cares about her children and as one who volunteers her time for the program. Not having time to volunteer may generate feelings of failure as a mother, further supporting their lower positions in the stratification of motherhood. It will most likely reduce some of the potential the mothers have for making positive changes in many areas of their lives.

The mothers did identify some personal inhibitors which might impede change, although these were not as universally mentioned as the facilitators. They reported such factors as lack of interest, substance abuse,[59] fear, and feeling unsure of the self as a

---

[59]However, even here mothers can make changes. One woman who has had substance abuse and alcohol problems and has assisted on the Head Start bus with an alcohol induced hangover, has met and become very close friends with another mother who is very involved with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics

mother. However, they also reported that Head Start provides an opportunity to address the factors which inhibit change, and many mothers reported having done so.

Two barriers make it more difficult for me to fully investigate the question of inhibiting or encouraging factors for self change in Head Start. The first one involves the degree to which the mothers were able to express the ideas they had regarding their "selves" prior to coming to Head Start. The possible selves questionnaire may have been able to address that issue, but due to the operational problems I experienced with the instrument, I was not able to determine changes from time-one to time-two change. Second, I may not have included questions in my interview guide which would have uncovered personal factors to the degree they may have existed. For example, I had no questions concerning the mothers' parents' drinking behavior, but many of the mothers reported growing up in alcoholic homes. I did not provide a means to explore alcoholism as a factor in their present lives or whether it inhibits or encourages change, or makes no difference. This needs further attention.

Within Flussburg Head Start, the mothers reported very little that would inhibit changes. Factors inhibiting change were more likely to be identified as coming from outside influences such as state regulations which impinge upon the time available to become involved. At the local level, mothers report more factors within the Flussburg program as encouraging change and very little which may inhibit it.

One factor identified as positive is the policy to address the parents "where they are." Mothers indicated they were treated as individuals. I also observed this practice. There are some staff members who have the talent for recognizing where a parent's needs and strengths lay. Therefore, a mother who is able to cut out decorations for the classroom reports being given the same recognition as the mother who chairs the Policy Council. With the exception of Margaret, who thought some of the things she was encouraged to do were stupid (however, she also felt they recognized her as "teacher"), and Imelda, who thought she was given too much credit for things any mother should be doing, the mothers reported "being appreciated" for their own individuality.

Anonymous. This is encouraging her to become involved herself.

The Flussburg Head Start encourages parents to move from clients to volunteers to citizens. One factor encouraging this movement is the philosophy that the parents are the prime teachers of their children. This can be seen at all levels of practice, from the teachers being called by their first names to the policy council reviewing the curriculum plans. At every level of the formal organization which is Flussburg Head Start, parents are involved.

The staff and mothers both identified the practice of giving parents encouragement and recognition. The Flussburg Head Start encourages parents to move forward from where they are when they enter the program. Awards are given to parents for any contributions they are able to make. Mothers reported being told they are important to their children and that they are important to the very existence of the Head Start itself. Head Start is able to provide a looking-glass self for the mothers which may reflect them in a positive light.

DEFINITION OF POVERTY AND HEAD START MOTHERS

As reported in chapter three, the definition of poverty as a social issue and not merely a personal problem resulted in programs which were aimed at involving the community, "experts", the government, and the poor themselves in addressing the issue. Built into the structure of Head Start as a formal organization is the mandate that parents, although they enter the program as clients, become members of the decision making component of Head Start and volunteers to help other families like themselves. Also, built into the organization is the practice of hiring former Head Start parents. These "parents turned staff" then have the potential to provide ideas for possible selves for new parents.

Parents become part of Head Start through their children and for their children. They soon learn to define Head Start as a family program. From the first day of classes which the parents are expected to attend to the parent appreciation night at the end of the school year, mothers reported that they can and are expected to be involved.

This may change if regulations are implemented requiring a higher degree of education to occupy the supervisory positions within the program.[60] The Head Start model came out of a period of the United States' history when the poor were expected to participate in designing and carrying out solutions to poverty. Presently, the sentiment of those in the position to define social problems at a national level and also at a state level, define the welfare system as a social problem and the recipients as the source. This definition of the situation is leading to the development of solutions which may have a direct impact on one of low-income mothers' most salient identity, the self as mother. I believe if the government (federal and state) designs programs to reform welfare "as we now know it" without taking into consideration this identity, the programs will result in the further victimization of low-income women rather than be a source the women could use to empower themselves.

PRAXIS

Some feminists argue that research not linked to action is **not** feminist research (Reinharz 1992). I did not start this project with the idea of developing any specific action from the results. However, from the beginning, this research process has been very interactive. For example, when I found that I needed to compare the group of mothers who did fill out a Possible Selves Questionnaires with those who did not, together the director and I were able to turn what might have been an imposition upon the program into something that had practical use. It ultimately led to the redesign of the needs assessment instrument used by Head Start to plan programming.

I have shared this work with the present director. We met periodically and discussed the findings. From our discussions we began developing a workshop to be implemented in the future. I was invited to attend the end of the year Policy Council Banquet to tell the story of my days in Head Start and how I got to the present point in

---

[60]In a recent classified advertisement seeking a new Head Start director in another state, the requirements listed included possessing a Master's degree. There was no mention of experience accepted in lieu of the degree.

176

my life. From that event and our previous discussions, the director asked me to develop a "you can do it" workshop.

Our goal is to incorporate the findings from this research into the fabric of the workshop. We will conduct three sessions. The first one will introduce the concept of possible self, structural barriers, and community. The parents will first meet in a large group and there will be pads of newsprint available so that we can write the ideas of the participants "large and looking important." At the end of the first session, the participants should have created lists of possible selves, their dreams and wishes, and real barriers which might prevent them from achieving them, such as racism, classism, and sexism. We will ask them to develop a list of their own individual strengths and shortcomings, and a list of personal accomplishments.

The second session will celebrate progress and look for other ways to deal with barriers and shortcomings. The last session will highlight the strength of the collective. We will attempt to prepare the parents to move their activism into the community to address structural barriers to the fulfillment of their goals and the goals they have for their children.

THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This was the study of one particular Head Start program. Further research is needed to compare the involvement of parents in Head Start programs in the different types of communities. Their histories should be examined to uncover how each one was designed to respond to the grass roots definition of the situation.

Another area which needs further consideration is the relationship of the mothers with their children. What part, if any, do the children play in the mother's definition of herself as a mother? Do the mothers ever take the perspective of their children in guiding their behavior in parent-child interactions? If they do, how does that perspective alter their behavior?

In addition, we need to consider the impact of multiple reference groups on planning future selves. Does having a greater number of reference groups increase the number of positive possible selves an individual sees as obtainable? Does the number

of reference groups available to a stratum increase its likelihood for communalization and acting as a class in its own class interests?

Also needed is a study to determine the extent to which a history of substance abuse in the women's families of orientation is a factor which impedes self-change and empowerment. Research in this area may result in programs being implemented which address this issue in Head Start families.

SUMMARY

The process of change in self and self-concept is very complex. Reflected appraisals certainly do play a part in self-concepts. The unity of self is mainly stable, but as the self-concept is concerned with ideas about the object "self," the object can change and when it does, the self-concepts change. This can also work in reverse, as the ideas about the object "self" (the self-concept) change, it can prompt a change in the "self." Through their involvement in Head Start, the changes that are most recognized and reported by the mothers concerns their mothering. They also reported "mother" was their major identity. But Head Start provides opportunities for other changes to occur through education, career opportunities, relationships, and so forth. Head Start provides a social context and structure for encouraging the desired selves of the mothers. The Head Start model of serving the poor is one that addresses low-income mothers most salient self, that of mother. It involves them directly in the operation and administration of the program that serves them and their children.

Head Start has been instrumental in affecting change in the lives of families for thirty years. It is a social service organization which does not treat its clients as clients, but as volunteers. Through involvement as employees, as decision makers, and as volunteers, many low-income women have made positive changes in their lives and the lives of their children. Recent trends toward "professionalizing" Head Start may take away the very ingredients which have made these changes possible. Research needs to continue. The research that is conducted and has been conducted needs to be taken into account when policy decisions are made.

178

REFERENCES

Agar, Michael H. 1980. The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography. New York: Academic Press.

Ährne, Göran. 1990. Agency and Organization: Towards an Organizational Theory of Society. London: Sage.

Altheide, David L. and John M. Johnson. 1994. "Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research." Pp. 485-499 in Handbook of Qualitative Research edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Banfield, Edward C. 1974. The Unheavenly City Revisited. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.

Becker, Howard S. 1967. "Whose Side are We on?" Social Problems 14:239-47.

Bennett, Linda A., Steven J. Wolin, David Reiss, and Martha Teitelbaum. 1987. "Couples at Risk for Transmission of Alcoholism: Protective Influences". Family Process 26:-111-129.

Blau, Peter M. and W. Richard Scott. 1962. Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co.

Blau, Peter M. 1977. Inequality and Heterogeneity: A Primitive Theory of Social Structure. New York: The Free Press.

Blumer, Herbert. 1961. "Social Problems as Collective Behavior." Social Problems 18: 298-306.

_____. 1969. Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Charon, Joel M. 1985. Symbolic Interactionism: an Introduction, an Interpretation, an Integration. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

_____. 1992. Symbolic Interactionism: an Introduction, an Interpretation, an Integration. 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

_____. 1993. The Meaning of Sociology. 4th ed. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

_____. 1995. Symbolic Interactionism: an Introduction, an Interpretation, an Integration. 5th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Clark, Robert E. 1972. <u>Reference Group Theory and Delinquency</u>. New York: Behavioral Publications.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. <u>Black Feminist Thought</u>. London: Harper-Collins **Academic**.

_____. 1991. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." Pp. 35-59 in <u>Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research</u>, edited by Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Cooke, Robert E. 1979. "Introduction." Pp. xxiii-xxvi in <u>Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty</u>, edited by Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine. New York: The Free Press.

Cooley, Charles Horton. 1964. <u>Human Nature and the Social Order</u>. New York: Schocken.

Curry-Rood, Leah, Larry A. Rood, and Sylvia E. Carter. (N.D.) <u>Head Start Parent Handbook: Revised Edition</u>. Mt. Ranier, MD: Gryphon House.

Demo, David. 1992. "The Self-Concept over Time." <u>Annual Review of Sociology</u> 18:303-326.

Denzin, Norman. 1989. <u>The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods</u>. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Deutsch, Martin. 1968. "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process." Pp. 476-493 in <u>Poverty in America: A Book of Readings</u> edited by Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Kornbluh and Alan Haber. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

DeVault, Marjorie. 1991. <u>Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work</u>. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Diamond, Janet. 1986. "'And the Skies Are Not Cloudy All Day': Confession of a Welfare Mother Poster Girl." Pp. 184-189 in <u>For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States</u>, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Dobbert, Marion Lundy. 1982. <u>Ethnographic Research: Theory and Application for Modern Schools and Societies</u>. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

Dujon, Diane. 1986. "Out of the Frying Pan: Reflections of a Former Welfare Recipient." Pp. 14- 17 in <u>For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States</u>, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Dujon, Diane, Judy Gradford, and Dottie Stevens. 1986. "Reports from the Front: Welfare Mothers up in Arms." Pp. 211-219 in For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Eichler, Margrit. 1988. Nonsexist Research Methods: a Practical Guide. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Ely, Margot. 1991. Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles. London: The Falmer Press.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 1986. "What Makes Women Poor? Pp. 18-28 in For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Ende, Michael. 1983. Die unendliche Geschichte (The Neverending Story). Translated by Ralph Mannheim. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday.

Etzioni, Amitai. 1964. Modern Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Farnsworth, Judy, Marjorie A. Pett, and Dale A. Lund. 1989. "Predictors of Loss Management and Well-Being in Later Life Widowhood and Divorce." Journal of Family Issues 10:102-121.

Ferguson, Kathy E. 1980. Self, Society, and Womankind: The Dialectic of Liberation. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Flora, Cornelia Butler. 1995. "Social Capital, Justice and Power from the Village." Plenary address, Community Development Society, Fayetteville, AR, July 25, 1995.

Fonow, Mary Margaret and Judith A. Cook. 1991. "Back to the Future: A Look at the Second Wave of Feminist Epistemology and Methodology." Pp. 1-15 in Beyond Methodology: Feminist Research as Lived Research, edited by Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

Fraser, Nancy. 1989. Unru: Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Galton, Francis, Sir. 1871. Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences. New York: D. Appleton.

Gans, Herbert J. 1962. The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans. New York: The Free Press.

Gecas, Viktor. 1982. "The Self-Concept." Annual Review of Sociology. 8:1-33.

Gillin, John Lewis. 1937. <u>Poverty and Dependency: Their Relief and Prevention</u>. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. <u>Stigma; Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.</u> Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gordon, Linda. 1974. "The Politics of Population: Birth Control and the Eugenics Movement." <u>Radical America</u> 8:61-98.

_____. 1994. <u>Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935</u>. New York: Free Press.

Greathouse, Betty, Reynaldo Gomez, and Stanley Wurster. 1988. "An Investigation of Black and Hispanic Parents' Locus of Control, Childbearing Attitudes and Degree of Involvement in Head Start." <u>Negro Educational Review</u> 39:4-17.

Guba, Egon G. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1994. "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research." Pp. 105-117 in <u>Handbook of Qualitative Research</u> edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gutièrrez, Lorraine M. 1990. "Working with Women of Color: An Empowerment Perspective. <u>Social Work</u> 35: 149-153.

Haggstrom, Warren C. 1968. "The Power of the Poor." Pp. 457-476 in <u>Poverty in America: A Book of Readings</u> edited by Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Kornbluh and Alan Haber. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Hall, C. Margaret. 1992. <u>Women and Empowerment: Strategies for Increasing Autonomy</u>. Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Company.

Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson. 1983. <u>Ethnography: Principles in Practice</u>. London: Tavistock Publications.

Harrington, Michael. 1962. <u>The Other America: Poverty in the United States</u>. New York: Macmillan.

_____. 1984. <u>The New American Poverty</u>. New York: Penguin Books.

Hartman, Susan. 1983. "A Self-Help Group for Women in Abusive Relationships." <u>Social Work With Groups</u> 6:133-146.

Hewitt, John P. 1988. <u>Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology</u> 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Hewitt, John P. 1991. Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology 5th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

House, James S. 1977. "The Three Faces of Social Psychology." Sociometry 40:161-77.

_____. 1990. "Social Structure and Personality." Pp. 525-561 in Social Psychology. Transaction ed. edited by Morris Rosenberg and Ralph H. Turner. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

House, James and Jeylan Mortimer. 1990. "Social Structure and the Individual: Emerging Themes and New Directions." Social Psychology Quarterly 53:71-80.

Hubbell, Ruth. 1983. A review of Head Start Research Since 1970. Washington, D.C. CSR, Inc.

Hyman, Herbert. 1968. "The Psychology of Status." Pp. 147-165 in Readings in Reference Group Theory and Research edited by Herbert H. Hyman and Eleanor Singer. New York: The Free Press.

Joffe, Carole. 1979. "Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Social Services." Pp. 235-256 in Studies in Symbolic Interaction: A Research Annual edited by Norman K. Denzin. Greenwich, CT: Jai Press Inc.

Johnson, Allan G. 1995. The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology. Cambridge, MA:Basil Blackwell Inc.

Kollock, Peter and Jodi O'Brien. 1994. The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings in Social Psychology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Kelly, Harold H. 1968. "Two Functions of Reference Groups. " Pp. 77-83 in Readings in Reference Group Theory and Research edited by Herbert H. Hyman and Eleanor Singer. New York: The Free Press.

Kelso, Robert W. 1929. Poverty. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

Krauss, Irving. 1976. Stratification, Class, and Conflict. New York: Free Press.

Kuhn, Manford H. and Thomas S. McPartland. 1954. "An Empirical Investigation of Self-Attitudes." American Sociological Review 19:68-76.

Kvale, Steinar. 1995. "The Social Construction of Reality." Qualitative Inquiry 1:19-40.

Langston, Donna. 1992. "Tired of Playing Monopoly?" Pp. 110-120 in Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology, edited by Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Lauer, Robert H. and Warren H. Handel. 1977. Social Psychology: The Theory and Application of Symbolic Interactionism. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Leik, Robert K., Mary Anne Chalkley, and Nancy J. Peterson. 1991. "Policy Implications of Involving Parents in Head Start. Pp. 217-235 in The Reconstruction of Family Policy, edited by Elaine A. Anderson and Richard C. Hula. New York: Greenwood Press.

Levin, William C. 1991. Sociological Ideas: Concepts and Applications. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Levitan, Sar A. 1969. Programs in Aid of the Poor for the 1970's. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

Lewis, Hylan. 1968. "Child Rearing Among Low-Income Families." Pp. 433-444 in Poverty in America: A Book of Readings edited by Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Kornbluh and Alan Haber. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Lewis, Oscar. 1959. Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty. New York: New American Library.

Lipman-Blumen, Jean. 1984. Gender Roles and Power. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Luff, Tracy L. and Barbara J. Peters. 1994. "A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Approach to the Study of Social Problems: The Case of Adolescent Motherhood." Paper presented at the Southern Sociological Society meetings, April 1994.

Lund, Dale A., Michael S. Caserta, Margaret F. Dimond, and Robert M. Gray. 1986. "Impact of Bereavement on the Self-Conceptions of Older Surviving Spouses." Symbolic Interaction 9:235-244.

Luttrell, Wendy. 1988. "The Edison School Struggle: The Reshaping of Working-Class Education and Women's Consciousness." Pp. 136-156 in Women and the Politics of Empowerment edited by Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lynn, Naomi B. and Cornelia Butler Flora. 1973. "Motherhood and Political Participation: the Changing Sense of Self." Journal of Political and Military Sociology 1:91-103.

Mandell, Betty Reid. 1986. "Welfare: Death by Exhaustion." Pp. 190-210 in For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Markus, Hazel and Paula Nurius. 1986. "Possible Selves." American Psychologist 41:954-969.

McKnight, John L. 1987. "Regenerating Community." Social Policy 17:54-58.

Mead, George H. 1962. Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist. Phoenix ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

McCrae, Robert R. and Paul T. Costa, Jr. 1988. "Age, Personality, and the Spontaneous Self-Concept." Journal of Gerontology 43:177-185.

Meltzer, Bernard N., John W. Petras, and Larry T. Reynolds. 1978. "Varieties of Symbolic Interactionism." Pp. 41-58 in Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology, 3rd Edition edited by Jerome G. Manis and Bernard N. Meltzer. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Mies, Maria. 1991. "Women's Research or Feminist Research? The Debate Surrounding Feminist Science and Methodology." Pp. 60-84 in Beyond Methodology: Feminist Research as Lived Research, edited by Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

Miller, Walter B. 1968. "Focal Concerns of Lower Class Culture." Pp. 396-405 in Poverty in America: A Book of Readings edited by Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Kornbluh and Alan Haber. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Miller, S.M., Frank Riessman, and Arthur A. Seagull. 1968. "Poverty and Self-Indulgence: A Critique of the Non-Deferred Gratification Process." Pp. 416-432 in Poverty in America: A Book of Readings edited by Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Kornbluh and Alan Haber. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Miller, William L. and Benjamin F. Crabtree. 1994. "Clinical Research." Pp. 340-352 in Handbook of Qualitative Research edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. The Sociological Imagination. London: Oxford University Press.

Morgen, Sandra and Ann Bookman. 1988. "Rethinking Women and Politics: An Introductory Essay." Pp. 3-29 in Women and the Politics of Empowerment edited by Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Mulvey, Anne. 1988. "Community Psychology and Feminism: Tensions and Commonalities." Journal of Community Psychology 16:70-83.

Murphy, Clennie H. Jr. and Trellis Waxler. 1989. "Head Start: A Brief Review and Preview." Journal of Negro Education 58:1-4.

Murrell, K.L. 1985. "The Development of a Theory of Empowerment: Rethinking Power for Organization Development." Organization and Development Journal 3:34-38.

Murray, Charles. 1984. Losing Ground: American social Policy, 1950-1980. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Naples, Nancy. 1991. "'Just What Needed to be Done':The Political Practice of Women Community Workers in Low-Income Neighborhoods." Gender and Society 5:478-494.

_____. 1992. "Activist Mothering: Cross-Generational Continuity in the Community Work of Women from Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods." Gender and Society 6:441-463.

Nardi, Peter M.. 1981. "Children of Alcoholics: A Role-Theoretical Perspective." The Journal of Social Psychology. 115:237-245.

Nespeca, Sue McCleaf. 1995a. "Parental Involvement in Emergent Literacy Skills of Urban Head Start Children." Early Child Development and Care 111:153-180.

Nespeca, Sue McCleaf. 1995b. "Urban Head Start Mothers: Their Personal Reading Habits, Involvement in Sharing Books with their Children, and Perception of their Public Library." Journal of Youth Services in Libraries 8:188-94.

O'Keefe, Ann. 1979. See U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. 1979.

Oyemade, Ura Jean, Valora Washington, and Dominic F. Gullo. 1989. "The Relationship Between Head Start Parental Involvement and the Economic and Social Self-Sufficiency of Head Start Families." The Journal of Negro Education 58:5-15.

Oyemade, Ura Jean. 1985. "The Rationale for Head Start as a vehicle for the Upward Mobility of Minorities: A Minority Perspective." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 55:591-602.

Ozer, Elizabeth M. and Albert Bandura. 1990. "Mechanisms governing Empowerment Effects: A Self-efficacy Analysis." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 58: 472-486.

Parker, Faith Lamb, Chaya S. Piotrkowski, and Leonore Peay. 1987. "Head Start as a Social Support for Mothers: the Psychological Benefits of Involvement." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 57:220-233.

Peters, Barbara J. and Tracy L. Luff. 1993. "Choosing the Generalized Other: Toward a Feminist Perspective on Personal Empowerment and Symbolic Interaction." Unpublished Manuscript.

Praeger, Roberta. 1986. "A World Worth Living In." Pp. 89-98 in <u>For Crying Out Loud:</u> <u>Women and Poverty in the United States</u>, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Quadagno, Jill. 1994 <u>The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on</u> <u>Poverty</u>. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reinharz, Shulamit. 1979. <u>On Becoming a Social Scientist: From Survey Research and</u> <u>Participant Observation to Experiential Analysis</u>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

_____. 1992. <u>Feminist Methods in Social Research</u>. New york: Oxford University Press.

Richardson, Laurel. 1994. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." Pp. 516-529 in <u>Handbook of</u> <u>Qualitative Research</u> edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rodgers, Antoinette. 1993. "The Assessment of Variables Related to the Parenting Behavior of Mothers with Young Children." <u>Children and Youth Services Review</u> 15:385-402.

Rodgers. Harrell R., Jr. 1986. <u>Poor Women, Poor Families</u>. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Roggman, Lori A., Sondra T. Moe, Andrew D. Hart, and Larry F. Forthun. 1994. "Family Leisure and Social Support: Relations with Parenting Stress and Psychological Well-being in Head Start Parents." <u>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</u> 9:463-480.

Rood, Larry A. 1970. <u>Parents and Teachers Together: A Training Manual for Parent</u> <u>Involvement in Head Start Centers</u>. Washington, D.C.: Day Care & Child Development Council of America, Inc.

Rosenberg, Morris. 1990. "The Self-Concept: Social Product and Social Force." Pp. 593-624 in <u>Social Psychology:Sociological Perspectives</u>. Transaction ed. edited by Morris Rosenberg and Ralph Turner. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Roskos, Kathleen and Susan Neuman. 1993. "Enhancing Head Start Parents' Conception of Literacy Development and Their Confidence as Literacy Teachers: a Study of Parental Involvement." <u>Early Child Development and Care</u> 89:57-73.

Safia. Helen and Cornelia Butler Flora. 1992. "Production, Reproduction, and Polity: Women's Strategic and Practical Goals." In <u>Americas: New Interpretive Essays</u> edited by A. Stepan. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shibutani, Tamotsu. 1961. Society and Personality: An Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

_____. 1978. "Reference Groups as Perspectives." Pp. 108-115 in Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology edited by Jerome G. Manis and Bernard N. Meltzer. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Shriver, Sargent and Jeanette Valentine. 1979. "The Honorable Sargent Shriver" Pp. 49-59 in Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty, edited by Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine. New York: The Free Press.

Siantz, Mary Lou de Leon and M. Sheldon Smith. 1994. "Parental Factors Correlated with Developmental Outcome in the Migrant Head Start Child." Early Childhood Research Quarterly 9:481-503.

Siegel, Alberta Engvall and Sidney Siegel. 1968. "Reference Groups, Membership Groups, and Attitude Change." Pp. 394-401 in Readings in Reference Group Theory and Research edited by Herbert H. Hyman and Eleanor Singer. New York: The Free Press.

Silverman, David. 1993. Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction. London: Sage Publications.

Singer, Eleanor. 1990. "Reference Groups and Social Evaluations." Pp. 66-93 in Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives, Transaction Edition edited by Morris Rosenberg and Ralph Turner. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Slaughter, Diana T., Rachel Washington Lindsey, Kathryn Nakagawa, and Valerie Shahariw Kuehne. 1989. "Who gets Involved? Head Start Mothers as Persons." Journal of Negro Education 58:16-29.

Spector, Malcolm and John I. Kitsuse. 1977. Constructing Social Problems. Menlow Park, CA: Cummings Publishing Co.

Spitzer, Stephan, Carl Couch, and John Stratton. 1971. The Assessment of the Self. Iowa City: Escort Sernoll Inc.

Steinglass, Peter. 1980. "A Life History Model of the Alcoholic Family." Family Process 19:211-226.

Stryker, Sheldon 1980. Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version. Menlo Park, CA: The Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company.

_____. 1990. "Symbolic Interactionism: Themes and Variations." Pp. 3-29 in Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives, Transaction Edition edited by

Morris Rosenberg and Ralph Turner. New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publishers.

Swift, Carolyn and Gloria Levin. 1987. "Empowerment: An Emerging Mental Health Technology." Journal of Primary Prevention 8:71-94.

Thomas, W.I. and Dorothy Swain Thomas. 1928. The Child in America. New York: Knopf.

Triandis, Harry C., Christopher McCusker, and C. Harry Hui. 1990. "Multimethod Probes of Individualism and Collectivism." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 59:1006-1020.

Tucker, Charles W. 1978. "Some Methodological Problems of Kuhn's Self Theory." Pp. 232-241 in Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology, edited by Jerome G. Manis and Bernard N. Meltzer. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of Census. 1970. 1970 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics. United States. Washington D.C.

_____. 1980. 1980 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics. United States. Washington D.C.

_____. 1990. 1990 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics. United States. Washington D.C.

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Office of Child Development; Head Start. 1970. Transmittal Notice - Head Start Policy Manual 70.2. Washington, D.C.
_____. 1979. What Head Start Means to Families by Anne O'Keefe. Washington, D.C.

Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Office of Human Development Services: Administration on Children, Youth and Families: Head Start Bureau. 1990. Head Start: A Child Development Story. Washington, D.C.

_____. 1992. Project Head Start Statistical Fact Sheet. Washington, D.C.

_____. 1995. Project Head Start Statistical Fact Sheet. Washington, D.C.

Valentine, Jeanette and Evan Stark. 1979. "The Social Context of Parent Involvement in Head Start." Pp. 291-313 in Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty, edited by Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine. New York: The Free Press.

Verkuyten, Maykel. 1990. "Self-Esteem and the Evaluation of Ethnic Identity Among Turkish and Dutch Adolescents in the Netherlands." The Journal of Social Psychology 180:285-297.

Washington, Valora. 1985. "Head Start: How Appropriate for Minority Families in the 1980s?" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 55:577-590.

_____. 1995. Project Head Start: Models and Strategies for the Twenty-first Century. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Washington, Valora and Ura Jean Oyemade Bailey. 1987. Project Head Start:Past, Present, and Future Trends in the Context of Family Needs. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Withorn, Ann. 1986. "For Better and For Worse: Women Against Women in the Welfare State." Pp. 220-234 in For Crying Out Loud: Women and Poverty in the United States, edited by Rochelle Lefkowitz and Ann Withorn. New York: Pilgrim Press.

Wohlford, Paul. 1974. "Head Start Parents in Participant Groups." Journal of Allied Behavioral Science 10:22-249.

Zarefsky, David. 1989. President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History. University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.

Zigler, Edward and Karen Anderson. 1979. "An Idea Whose Time Had Come." Pp. 3-19 in Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty edited by Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine. New York: The Free Press.

Zigler, Edward and Jeanette Valentine. 1979. Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty. New York: The Free Press.

Zigler, Edward and Susan Muenchow. 1992. Head Start: The Inside Story of America's Most Successful Educational Experiment. New York: Basic Books.

Zopf, Paul E. 1989. American Women in Poverty. New York: Greenwood Press.

APPENDIX A
METHODS

The best-laid plans o' mice an' men [and women]
Gang oft a-gley

Robert Burns. *Ode to a Mouse*

In this section, I recount the metamorphosis of this research. I discuss the original research plan and the problems I encountered. I also discuss the Twenty Statements Test (TST) and the Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ). I include a description of problems I encountered both with the instruments and with the distribution, coding, and analysis.

THE BEGINNING

Early in 1992, I was asked to present a paper at the Midwest Sociological Society meetings. The topic of the session was "Women as Social Protestors." I accepted the invitation and began to reflect upon my days as a social activist, as a parent in Head Start, and a member of the board of directors for a community action agency. As I prepared that paper, I decided to change my dissertation research from women's aggression to low-income mothers' participation in Head Start.

Initially, I was determined to use a number of strategies to obtain my data. I believed if I used both quantitative and qualitative methods, it would insure I would get at the "objective truth." Using multiple methods, I was able to gather a sizable amount of data. However, I also encountered sizable problems. The following describes the strategies and the problems.

THE ATTEMPT TO TRIANGULATE

I originally planned to employ triangulations, the use of more than one research technique in the course of one study. Fonow and Cook (1990) suggest that this is usually done by using one quantitative and one qualitative method. For this study, I intended to use the strategies participant observation, interviews, and questionnaires.

191

THE ORIGINAL RESEARCH PLAN

The Site

Originally I chose a Head Start center in a mid-south state as the research site. During the planning of the research, I decided to also include a pilot study to be conducted at the center my daughter attended and at which I had been a Head Start parent twenty-four years earlier. I thought this would bring an integration of biography and history to the study that would not be possible at another center. I planned to collect data at both the mid-southern and midwestern sites. Partly because of my prior relationship with the Centralstate center, I easily gained access after phoning the director. During the attempt to gain access to the mid-south site, it became apparent that the relationship was going to be very different and not as accommodating. I believe the director of that center was enacting the role of gatekeeper. This might be because she is a director with professional training, or it could be that this site is located near a large university. She may have become leery of researchers invading the Head Start domain in droves.

The Pilot Study

I conducted what was to have been a pilot study at the Flussburg Head Start program during the summer of 1992.[61] At this time, I was able to interview eleven mothers whose children were enrolled in Head Start during the last twenty-five years and eleven staff members. In addition to the interviews, these participants also completed two measures of self-concepts. the Twenty Statements Test (TST) and the Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ). As the study progressed, and Flussburg became the primary site, the data from the intended pilot study became part of the whole project.

Twenty Statements Tests and Possible Selves Questionnaires

All of the incoming parents for the school year 1992-93 were to be administered the TST and PSQ measures (unless they declined to participate). In case of parental illiteracy, the staff members were to administer the TST and PSQ. Some parents

---

[61] I was hired as a research consultant by this center. enabling me to travel to the site and complete a six week stay in the field.

received and answered both questionnaires. I discuss this below. I also explain the rational for using these measures and the problems I encountered.

TST

Respondents taking the TST (Kuhn and McPartland 1954) are asked to answer the question, "Who am I." The directions state:

> There are twenty numbered blanks on the page below. Please write twenty answers to the simple question "Who am I?" in the blanks. Just give twenty different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. Don't worry about logic or "importance." Go along fairly fast, for time is limited (p. 69).

Kuhn and McPartland analyzed the responses by categorizing them dichotomously as either consensual or subconsensual. They defined consensual references as those which "refer to groups and classes whose limits and conditions of membership are matters of common knowledge" (p. 60) and subconsensual references as those which refer to "groups, classes, attributes. traits or any other matters which would require interpretation by the respondent. . . " (p. 69).

The TST has been used successfully in much research on self-concept and self-identity (see for example Lund, Caserta, Dimond, and Gray 1986; Triandis, McCusker, and Hui 1990; Verkuyten 1990; Farnsworth, Pett, and Lund 1989; and McCrae and Costa 1988). Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds write:

> Today, the TST is the most widely used technique for studying self-conceptions. . . [and]has been utilized in over 100 reported researches. . . (1978, p. 44)

I planned to conduct a content analysis of the TST using the Michigan State University System coding protocol (Spitzer, Couch, and Stratton c.a. 1971). I intended to use the results to measure changes in self-concepts over the year of involvement in Head Start.

The TST has been used successfully to study changes in the self over time. For example. Lund. Caserta. Dimond, and Gray (1986) examined the impact of bereavement

on the social anchorage of older surviving spouses by administering the TST six times over a two year period. They defined the degree of social anchorage as references to social positions, relationships, and group memberships, and measured it by counting the number of consensual statements or references. A social anchorage score of 20 would indicate that all of the responses referred to social positions, relationships, and group memberships. They found that over time, the bereaved have less social anchorage, which they attributed to the loss of important and consistent interactions.

In addition to using the TST to measure changes in self over time, I also wanted to use it identify the mothers' reference groups. When individuals define themselves by means of the TST, "there is almost always a simultaneous identification of reference group" (Charon 1985, p.78). Therefore I felt I the TST would result in data which would name some reference groups the mothers may use as perspectives to consider their selves, self-concepts, and empowerment.

PSQ

I intended to have the PSQ administered to all parents from the 1992-93 school year. I revised the PSQ slightly to include items in keeping with the gender and socio-economic status of the respondents. I made changes to make the language used simpler, to include occupational choices more in line with those of working-class women's hopes and fears while keeping those requiring advanced training and education (for example, nurse's aide, stripper, store clerk, and waitress were added), and to include items in keeping with the goals of Head Start. The original measure was developed by Hazel Markus and associates (Markus and Nurius 1986).

The questionnaire asks the respondents to indicate how much each of the descriptive terms (possible selves) described them in the past, describes them now, how much they would like the item to describe them in the future, and how much they think the item would describe them in the future. The terms were derived from six categories: general descriptors, physical descriptors, life-style possibilities, general abilities, occupational possibilities, possibilities linked to the opinion of others. The items were positive, negative, or neutral.

194

I chose this instrument for its ability to measure the ideas the respondents have about their selves as "tenses," i.e. past self, present self, future self. According to Mead (1962), role-taking allows one to rehearse potential interactions and to choose which action from the actor's repertoire seems appropriate. As Markus and Nurius point out:

> Whenever individuals engage in this type of role-taking, they are in the
> process of creating potential selves, and there can be as many of these
> selves as there are times when the self is the object of definition,
> expectation, or evaluation (1986, p. 956).

I felt the PSQ might show a change in the way a respondent defined herself before, during, and after interaction with Head Start.

I had originally planned to have the TST and the PSQ given to incoming parents on three separate occasions, September, February, and May. The September data collection would give a baseline against which the February and May results could be compared. I had hoped that the February data collection would show the changes that might take place at the halfway point and the May collection would show changes that occurred after a full school year of involvement. I was going to make comparisons of the data gathered and analyze them in terms of changes in self from time-one to time- two to time-three.

THE PROCEDURES & FAILINGS
Administration of TST and PSQ

I was able to administer the TST and the PSQ to the women I interviewed during the summer of 1992. After reviewing the results, I revised the PSQ slightly. I had to return to the mid-south at the end of that six week study. I made arrangements to have the TSTs and PSQs printed by the Head Start Center main office. As part of their job, the parent advocates are mandated to visit every home in the beginning of the year. The central staff suggested that the parent advocates hand out the TST and PSQ when they made their home visits. This was all to be done in my absence. The director assigned one staff member the task of collecting the questionnaires as they were returned. I planned to return to the site in Centralstate during the semester break, between the

195

middle of December 1992 and the middle of January 1993. At that time, the assigned staff member and I would work together to code the returned questionnaires and tests.

The instruments included instructions, which the parent advocates were to go over with the parents, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which to return the questionnaires and tests to the Head Start center. As the questionnaires were returned to the center, they were stored in a locked file drawer. As outlined above, the original plans were to have the questionnaires administered three times during the school year.

I was able to return to the research site in January, 1993 and stay for the remainder of the school year. Upon my return, I found that all of the questionnaires had still not been handed out and that the parent advocate for the Hmong families had handed out none. Apparently, the advocates had scheduled their home visits to encompass a longer time period than had been originally planned. Because of this time span, there was no way of knowing when each questionnaire was completed. Additionally, the questionnaires were not dated upon their receipt, and the envelopes with postmarks had been destroyed. Consequently, the order in which they were received by the main Head Start office could not be determined. I also do not know how the questionnaires were presented to the parents. Although I had discussed the presentation with the center director, I have no way of knowing if the advocates presented the questionnaires at the beginning or end of an already lengthy interview. I got a response of 52 out of 401 or about a 13 percent return, which is extremely low. I sent out a letter of encouragement to the parents (excluding the Hmong parents) to try and increase the number of returns (See appendix B). I did receive additional completed questionnaires. Some of the mothers I had talked to during the pilot study were in Head Start again and did not fill out a new questionnaire.

Because the first questionnaires came in through the middle of January, I decided to use only two points in time instead of three. The second questionnaires were only sent to those who returned the first questionnaires. Despite sending follow-up letters, only 40 percent of the respondents returned their second questionnaires.

Confidentiality

It was important that I be able to match the respondent's TST with her PSQ and her interview. To do this, I first obtained a list of staff and Head Start parents. I assigned numerical codes to all of them. The questionnaire packet consisted of the TST, the PSQ, a background questionnaire, a consent form, and a coding sheet (See Appendix B). The coding sheet was the top sheet. It asked the respondent to give her name and informed them that it was for the purpose of matching her questionnaire, test, and interview. When the envelopes were opened by either me or the staff member who had been assigned to assist me, the top sheet was used to match the name with the previously assigned code number. The code number was recorded on the background sheet, the TST, and the PSQ. The coding sheet was then shredded. All of the code lists, questionnaires, and consent forms are kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office. The consent forms were not coded and were used for the purpose of arranging interviews.

Coding and Analysis

TST

Initially, I attempted to do a statistical analysis of the TSTs using SPSS. I entered the data and got a frequency distribution. To code them for data entry, I tried using the coding schemes of other researchers (Spitzer, Couch, and Stratton 1971). None of them were adequate in identifying the selves I needed to understand. For example, one protocol seemed to be very thorough, but grouped all familial relationships, excluding marriage, together under one category. As I coded the data using that protocol, it became apparent that it would obscure the partition of mother from sister from daughter and so forth. This was very important information that would have been lost in the aggregation. I abandoned the idea of doing a statistical analysis using SPSS.

After trying several other protocols, it seemed necessary to devise my own. I went through each of the tests and extracted the relationships listed. Mother emerged as a very important self to the women. I did this for all twenty statements. Using WordPerfect, I typed the statement number at the top of the page. I then used the line numbering function as a further means to cross check the TST with the interview information and the

PSQ[62]. After I had done this with each of the twenty statements, I extracted specific answers, for example, homemaker. I would write this item on a sheet of paper, then tally the number of times it appeared on the test. As I went through each of the statement sheets, each time the item was mentioned, I wrote the line number and above it the statement number. After I had gone through all twenty statement sheets, I tallied the results. These results are analyzed in chapters eight, nine, and ten.

PSQ

During the data entry phase, I experienced yet another problem with the questionnaires. For the PSQ that were handed out by the parent advocates, the last two pages were inexplicably omitted during the printing. The follow-up PSQ included all of the pages, but the last two were not included in the analysis.

The staff at Head Start compiled information on the parents' ages, education, employment status, number of children, marital status, and years in Head Start. I compared this information to the information I had for those who returned their first questionnaires. I did this to detect selection bias. There were no statistical differences between those who returned the questionnaires and those who did not based upon the variables for which we could account. The director was not happy about doing this but understood the need. I offered to give her a printout of the aggregate data and to show her how to do this from now on so that they have this information for future grant applications. This made her happy and work progressed very well after that. During the fall semester. 1994. I supervised a student who served an internship at this Head Start center. Under my direction, she was to have created a program that would allow the staff to enter these kind of data directly from the intake sheets. She was to show them how to run the SPSS program to create frequency distributions of parental age, education, marital status, employment status, race/ethnicity, and size of household. This would be extremely helpful to the center when it comes to writing grant proposals and in reporting

---

[62]Although I had decided not to use the quantitative analysis of the PSQ, I did use them to cross-check. For example. if a women did not list "mother" on her TST. I would be able to go back to her PSQ and see how she had scored the item "good mother".

to funding agencies. However, when she met with staff members to go over the needs assessment instrument, it became apparent to the staff that the instrument needed revising. They discussed the reasoning behind each question and with the help of the intern, totally revised the assessment instrument. This was to be tested for its usefulness, and then I was to show them how to enter the data and run the programs. However, a computer program from National Head Start has recently become available to centers across the nation. The Flussburg Center has chosen to use the standardized program.

Using SPSS, I entered the data from the PSQ. I then ran a frequency distribution, computing the means and cleaned the data. The PSQ consisted of 144 items, each having a past self, present self, desired self, and expected self dimension for a total of 576 PSQ variables. To make the analysis more manageable, I computed means for Positive selves and Negative selves for each dimension, i.e., Positive Past self, Negative Past self, Positive Present self, Negative Present self and so forth. To obtain total selves, I subtracted the negative self mean from the positive self. If a negative number resulted, then it could be assumed that the respondent had more negative self concept for the past, present, desired or expected dimensions of the self.

I grouped variables into positive and negative areas of Health and Appearance, Finances, Social Attributes, Self Attributes, Control Over One's Life, Skills, Parenting, and Family. I used SPSS to run reliability coefficients to discern if the variables were grouped together in a trustworthy manner. I ran T-tests between the item pairs from time one and time two questionnaires to ascertain if there were changes in the perception of self. I also attempted testing of the relationships between variables using non-parametric statistical programs from SPSS.

Problems with the Possible Selves Questionnaire

In addition to the problems of distribution of the questionnaires to the parents, I also had problem with doing a statistical analysis. There were far too many variables and far too few cases. It did not matter which statistical procedure I used, the results were meaningless. I finally abandoned the idea of using an analysis of the PSQ for this study.

199

I also feel the instrument itself may have been problematic, had I been able to do a statistical analysis. When Hazel Markus and associates first constructed the PSQ, they asked college students to "tell us about what is possible for you" (Markus and Nurius 1986, p. 958). From those answers they developed a list of 150 items or possible selves from the responses. College students are already attempting to make certain possible selves a reality. Also, students are exposed to the existence of many occupations and social selves to which non-students may not be exposed. Although there may be many items which would be germane to other populations, the fact that the students are working to make some possible selves a reality may have biased their responses in a particular direction. When I revised the questionnaire, I did try to orient it toward low-income mothers, but I may have missed some items and retained some that didn't need to be there.

The mothers may also be different from students because they originally get into Head Start to expand the possible selves for their children. They are not consciously looking for changes of selves. Although they may not have enrolled their children in Head Start to enrich their own lives, most of them indicated desires for future selves that are different than the ones they now have, and they have indicated wanting lives for their children that are different from their own. To the degree that we project some of our desired selves onto our children, we might say that they are trying to change their selves vicariously. However, they are not in Head Start primarily to alter their selves. Through the parent center meetings and some of the other parenting classes that they may get involved in, changes may and do occur. However, college students are in college for the purpose of changing the self. Parents are not in Head Start for that specific purpose. Therefore, the PSQ may have been problematic from the beginning because the construction was initially based upon responses from college students.

An additional problem with using the possible selves questionnaire to assess self-concept change over time occurs because of the existence of other intervening variables which may produce or inhibit the change. Self-concept is both stable and dynamic. If the respondent has not moved from the social structure which restricted the development of particular possible selves in the first place, nine months in a program like Head Start,

which is not a total institution, may not be enough to effect immediate change. Only some parents, for example may recognize a self-model for themselves and change their views about what and who they might become. The self-concept change may be a longer process in which the social change program may, as the Head Start director suggests, plant a seed which may germinate later. Perhaps a slight change in the actor's social structure would occur which would make the "seed" which was planted more salient and prompts her/him to change her/his self-concept and allows for the acceptance of new possible selves.

QUALITATIVE METHODS
Interviewing, Transcribing,

I conducted the interviews during the pilot study and again during the spring of 1992. For the spring, I selected women who had returned their questionnaires and had indicated on the cover sheet their willingness to be interviewed. I designed this cover sheet in the fashion of an informed consent document. It asked participants to give their names, address, and phone number so that I might contact them for an interview time. We detached these forms from the rest of the questionnaire so that anyone other than me could not match data with a name. I found the person on the list provided me by Head Start and was able to determine from what center the mother came. Subsequently, I contacted the mothers and set up and interviewing time and place.

Most of the interviews took place in the homes of the mothers which provided additional data regarding the home environment. Often the children were present. In fact, my tape recorder ended up with little stickers all over it thanks to one of the children. I used three interview guides: parent, staff, parent who had become staff (see appendix B). I took notes regarding environmental data and recorded the interviews.

I used the interview guides to transcribe the tapes. Using the word processing software, WordPerfect, I retrieved the guide so that it appeared on the computer screen. I then highlighted the questions and after the questions, I typed in the replies of the respondents as I listened to the tapes. This shortened the time needed to transcribe. The

interviews were coded to match the questionnaires so that I would be able to cross-reference the data.

The analysis of the interviews was based upon the concepts outlined in the theory chapter. This analysis was classified under the headings: significant others, generalized others, reference groups, possible selves, looking-glass selves, relationship with children, and comments by staff. I used the word search function of WordPerfect to find patterns. I also went through the interviews by hand and coded the responses under the concept headings.

Participating in Center Meetings

I attended several functions as a participant observer during the course of this research. Here I was able to observe the interactions of staff and mothers. The activities I attended were: a home visit with a staff person from the Family Services Center[63] and one of the mothers, several Nurturing and Parenting sessions, and a center meeting. During the summer, I also observed the staff painting classrooms for the upcoming school year. These observations were used to complement the analysis of the interviews.

As described previously. I used two notebooks in which I recorded my observations. One notebook I used to record data such as descriptions of the mothers' homes, the staff offices, body language, and so forth. In the other notebook, I recorded my emotional reactions to such things as seeing and visiting old friends, memories evoked during the interviews. and seeing the consequences of poverty for the women and children.

SUMMARY

After determining that there were problems with the quantitative segments of this research. for the purposes of analysis, I decided to use only those data I had gathered

---

[63]The Family Service Center is a program of Head Start. At the time of the research it was operating under a federal grant. The staff personnel provided more services on a one on one basis in the form of case management. It formalized some of the aspects of the informal services that Head Start had been providing. One staff called it. "paid friend": another "hand-holding". Participation of the families is voluntary.

from the participants I had interviewed. This made integrating the information more meaningful. The problems in data collection were two-fold. One was the unfortunate ways in which the questionnaires were distributed. The second problem is one that bears further investigation. It is very possible that one cannot appropriate instruments and analysis techniques from research conducted on members of one social class and use it to understand the interactions and behavior of the members of a different social class. We must give care to recognize the differences in ways of understanding, responding, and ways of knowing and experiencing the world of the members of diverse social classes. For example, if we use instruments and analysis procedures that have been developed using the perspective of the middle class, those instruments and methods of analysis may obscure the experiences of members of the low-income or working class.

In order to make this questionnaire more meaningful as a measure of self change over time, a researcher would need to tailor the questionnaire to the population being observed. One might replicate the original process of designing the questionnaire by doing a pilot study and asking the target population about what they see as possible for them.

The problem with this approach arises when the target population has had certain positive possible selves constrained by the social structure in which they were socialized. These selves may not appear in the list of items generated. Due to constraints from social structures and stratification, some possible selves may not occur to the respondent, and if they do, they may not be desired or thought possible, so would not be listed. After becoming part of a new reference group and interacting with reference others, individuals may view selves as possible that had not occurred to them previously. Therefore, the list of possible selves generated by a target population might not contain some selves which later become possible.

If one is testing the affect of a particular program on self change, it would be desirable to include in the questionnaire items which are in line with the goals of the program. For example, if the purpose of the research involving the PSQ was to determine the effectiveness of a youth program in reducing juvenile crime, items pertaining to those goals should be included. This would allow the researcher to ascertain whether the re-

203

socialization goals of the program have introduced positive selves which have now become part of the target population's repertoire of possible selves.

It might be possible to use the PSQ to assess the effectiveness of a program designed to bring about self-change if the target population is in a total institution, such as the new boot-camp programs for rehabilitating juvenile offenders. A primary list could be generated by conducting a pilot study of offenders when they are initially adjudicated and before they are sentenced to the boot camp. Added to the list of possible selves would be the "self-change" goals of the program. Since a program like the boot camp is a total institution, the researcher/program evaluator would be able to control such variables as when the questionnaires are dispensed. All participants would answer the questionnaires at the same time. Also, intervening variables would be more controlled. Therefore, any changes in self-concept might be more confidently attributed to the effects of the program.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Code_____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

      The questions you answer on this page help me find out what things Head Start mothers have in common and what things are different. Thank you for answering them.

Age _____

Married _____   Divorced/Separated _____

Widowed _____   Never Married _____

How many years of school did you finish? _____

Are you employed? Yes _____ No _____

What do you do for a living? _____

Number of children you have _____

Gender(s) and age(s) of your child(ren):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Number of brothers _____ How many are older than you? _____

Number of sisters _____ How many are older than you? _____

Is this your family's first year in Head Start? Yes ___ No ___

Including this year, how many years has your family been in Head Start? _____
THANK YOU!!

Code number_____

TWENTY STATEMENTS TEST

There are twenty numbered blanks on the page below. Please write twenty answers to the question **"Who am I?"** in the blanks. Just give twenty different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. Don't worry about logic or "importance." Go along fairly fast, for time is limited.

THINK "I AM . . ." AND WRITE IT DOWN. PLEASE TAKE ONLY 10 MINUTES

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

16. _____

17. _____

18. _____

19. _____

20. _____

CODE NUMBER   DATE OF INTERVIEW:

PARENT INTERVIEW:

1.   **Age:**

2.   **Marital Status:**

        Marital History: Are you married? How long? Only marriage.
Have you ever been married?

        Ask if marriage is first marriage. If not, get history.

If presently single, is there someone in your life that you would be
describe as a romantic partner?

3.   **Children: Ages and genders:**
        Mother's age at 1st child's birth

Tell me about your children.

How would they describe you?
If you need advice about them, whom do you ask?

4.   **Education:**
        How much education have you had? Where did you go to school?
        Of spouse/partner if applicable

5.   **Present Occupation: Mother   Spouse/Partner**

        Occupational History

6.   **Residential History:**

Have you always lived in the same (community, neighborhood, house)?
Approximate locations (neighborhood, community)

Changes in Friends/group membership as a result of moves.

Comments

7.   Do you belong to a religious organization? If yes, ask about activities.

<u>Now I'm going to ask you about the family you grew up in</u>

8.   a. Are your parents together?
           If not, how did it end?

       b.   Tell me about you parents marriage.
   How did they get along?

       Information about mother and father:
       c. Tell me about your mother and father...
       d.   What is the nationality of your mother?   Father?
         Or where did your relatives come from originally....
       e.   Tell me about your relationship with your mother; your
father:
       f. If you did something they disapproved of, how did they let you
know it and what did they do about it?
       g.   If you did something the were proud of, how did they let you
know?
       h.   Was/is your mother/father an easy person to talk to? How
does/did she show affection?

       i.   We often imagine, when we're getting dressed, when we're
talking to someone and so forth, how another person is seeing us. Then

we think about how they judge us. And we have feelings about that. It's like a mirror self. Sometimes we make our behavior different because of that. Did you/do you do that with your parents?

     j.   What kind of person do you think your parents hoped you would grow up to be?

     k.   Did your parents bring you up to consider certain things important in life?

     l.   Would you say that you received the ideas you had about how to behave from both you parents, or did one play a more important part than the other? (Thompson 1988, p. 296)

9.   Did anyone else serve as a "mother" or a "father" to you? If yes, tell me about your relationship with this person/s.

10.   Siblings: (for each)
     A. Gender.   Age.   Marital Status.   Children.
     B. Tell me about your relationship with each sibling.
          What about the mirror self with them?

11.   Other relatives that are important in your life:
     A.   Relationship. Gender.

SOCIAL SERVICE EXPERIENCE:

12.   Have you had experiences with helping agencies. I'd like to explore this further.

For each agency:
Name of agency. Length of contact. Nature of contact.

Who did you talk to/ deal with? Gender.

What was your experience with _____?
What was the most positive part?   Explain.
Was there anything negative? Explain.

I want to ask you again about the mirror self when you've been with agency people.

What do you think of when you hear the term "welfare mother?"

HEAD START EXPERIENCE

13.   a.   **How did you and your child become involved?**

       b.   **Why did you get involved?**

       c.   **How did you feel when you first got involved?**

       d.   **What were your expectations?**

       e.   **What do you do in Head Start?**

       f.   **How important are your activities to Head Start. How do they let you know?**

       g.   **How important are your activities to you ... to your children ...?**

       h.   **What does your spouse/partner think about your involvement?**

       i.   **What do your children think about your involvement?**

j.   Have you joined other community activities because of Head Start?

k.   Who are your friends among the parents and staff?

l.   What is a good Head Start Mother?

If you had to pick one mother to send to a meeting and she was supposed to be "THE Head Start Mother," who would you choose.

m.   What mother is most like you? Why?

n.   Tell me about your mirror self in Head Start?

o.   What have been the greatest changes for you?

p.   What have been the greatest difficulties?

q.   What have been the greatest benefits?

s.   How do you know what is going on in Head Start?

REFERENCE GROUPS AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

14.   Let's talk about your life today.

a.   How do you usually spend your time?

b.   How are these activities different from what you did;
        one year ago...

        five years ago...

c.   How are they the same?

d.   Where do you feel most comfortable? Why?

e.   Where do you shop? Why?

f.   What do you like to watch on television?

g.   What magazines and newspapers do you read? Books? Do you think of yourself as one of the characters?

h.   What do you do for fun?

15.   I'd like to know a little more about the people and groups in your life.

    a.   Tell me about your husband/partner.

What do you do together? How did you meet?

    b.   Who is your best friend?

What do you do together? How did you meet?

So far, you have mentioned_____ (list the people for her). As you think about others in your life, is there anyone else you would add?

c.   Tell me about the most important person in your life today.

    Who knows you better than anyone else?

d.   Tell me about the most important person in your life overall.

16.   To what groups do you belong?

Tell me about them...

How long have you been in ...

How did you get involved...

How much time to you spend in....

What do you do in them?

Who are your friends there?

Who do you really think best represents the group?

Do you belong to other groups with these same friends?

OUTLOOK ON LIFE FOR SELF AND CHILDREN

17.   As a child, what did you think your life would be like when you grew up?

How does your present life compare to that image?

What do you think your life will be like five years from now?
Fifteen years from now?

18.   What kind of life do you want for your children.
        (for each child)

Do you think their lives will be like that? Why? or Why not?

I have only a few more questions.

19.   If you had it to do over, would you still enroll you son/daughter in Head Start? Why/why not?

20.   If yes, would you change anything about your involvement in the parental activities.

STAFF INTERVIEW

Age:

Marital Status:

Marital History:

If presently single, is there someone in your life that you would be describe as a romantic partner?

Children: Ages and genders:
     Age at 1st child's birth

Tell me about your children.

Education:
     Of spouse/partner if applicable

Present Occupation: Staff   Spouse/Partner

     Occupational History

How long have you been employed with Head Start?

How did you come to be employed?

What is the best thing about working here?

What are the drawbacks?

Who are your friends among the staff?

What do you do together?

Who is most like you?

Do you have friends among the parents?

What do you do together?

Are there mothers (fathers if respondent is male) who are like you?

Which mother is most like the kind of parent with whom you like to work? Why?

What is the kind of parent with whom you dread working? Why? Are there mothers like that in this group? Who?

We often imagine, when we're getting dressed, when we're talking to someone and so forth, how another person is seeing us. Then we think about how they judge us. And we have feelings about that. It's like a mirror self. Sometimes we make our behavior different because of that. We may behave the way we think others expect us to behave. How does this mirror self affect your behavior with the kids, with the mothers, with the other staff.

How do you know what is going on in the center?

How do you let the parents know?

What are most proud of about your work here?

What would you like to see changed?

What are your goals for the children?

Do you think parent participation is important? Tell me about it?

REFERENCE GROUPS AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Let's talk about your life today.

How do you usually spend your time?

What do you do on a typical day?

216

How are these activities different from what you did;

    one year ago...

    five years ago...

How are they the same?

Where do you feel most comfortable? Why?

Where do you shop? Why?

What do you like to watch on television?

What magazines and newspapers do you read? Books? Do you ever see yourself as one of the characters?

What do you do for fun?

I'd like to know a little more about the people and groups in your life.

Tell me about your husband/partner. How would he describe you?

What do you do together? How did you meet?

Who is your best friend? How would she/he describe you?

What do you do together? How did you meet?

Tell me about your friends?

Tell me about your family?

So far, you have mentioned_____ (list the people for her). As you think about others in your life, is there anyone else you would add?

Tell me about the most important person in your life today.

Tell me about the most important person in your life overall.

To what groups do you belong?

Tell me about them...

How long have you been in ...

How did you get involved...

How much time to you spend in....

What do you do in them?

Who are your friends there?

Who do you really think best represents the group?

Do you belong to other groups with these same friends?

I have only a few more questions:

If you had it to do over, would you still try to get a job here?

Is there anything you would like to add?

POSSIBLE SELVES QUESTIONNAIRE

Most of us think about what we have been, what we are now, what we'd like to be, and what we might be. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's not so good. We could call these ways of being "possible selves."

Listed below are a number of possible selves that other people have thought of. We are interested in what possible selves, both positive and negative, you have thought of for yourself.

The following questionnaire asks 4 questions about each item in the first column:

1.　How much does this possible self describe you **IN THE PAST?**
2.　How much does this possible self describe you **NOW?**
3.　How much would you like this possible self to describe you **IN THE FUTURE?**
4.　How much do you think that this possible self **WILL** describe you in the future?

Please use the scale below to mark your answers to these questions. For example, the first question asks "How much does this possible self describe you in the past?" If this possible self does not describe you at all, put a "1" for "not at all" in the first blank. If this possible self described you in the past very much, please put a "7" for "very much" in the first blank. Use the in between numbers for less strong responses.

Please mark your answers in the blanks beside the word or words. Please work very fast on this questionnaire. We are interested in your first thoughts and responses about your possible selves. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS. THERE SHOULD BE A NUMBER IN EACH AND EVERY BLANK.**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			somewhat			very much

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
In good shape	_____	_____	_____	_____
Athletic	_____	_____	_____	_____
Financially Secure	_____	_____	_____	_____
Travel a Lot	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content with Life	_____	_____	_____	_____
Self-employed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good Driver	_____	_____	_____	_____
Long-lived	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good Mother	_____	_____	_____	_____
Famous	_____	_____	_____	_____
Have a nervous breakdown	_____	_____	_____	_____
In poor health	_____	_____	_____	_____
Close to family	_____	_____	_____	_____
Unemployed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Alone	_____	_____	_____	_____
Street person, homeless	_____	_____	_____	_____
Married	_____	_____	_____	_____
On Welfare	_____	_____	_____	_____
Unwanted, forgotten by my family	_____	_____	_____	_____
Creative	_____	_____	_____	_____
Daughter of Problem Drinker	_____	_____	_____	_____

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	not at all			somewhat	·		very much	

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
Divorced	_____	_____	_____	_____
Farmer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Depressed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child abuser	_____	_____	_____	_____
Competent	_____	_____	_____	_____
Loved	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bored	_____	_____	_____	_____
In good health	_____	_____	_____	_____
Not in control of my life	_____	_____	_____	_____
Carefree	_____	_____	_____	_____
Drug Addict/ Alcoholic	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good looking	_____	_____	_____	_____
Likable	_____	_____	_____	_____
TV Personality	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sexy	_____	_____	_____	_____
Overweight	_____	_____	_____	_____
In touch with your feelings	_____	_____	_____	_____
Homemaker	_____	_____	_____	_____
Motivated	_____	_____	_____	_____
Respected	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lawyer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Model	_____	_____	_____	_____
Appreciated	_____	_____	_____	_____
Movie TV star	_____	_____	_____	_____
Store clerk	_____	_____	_____	_____

1 not at all	2	3	4 somewhat	5	6	7 very much

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
Nurse/Nurse's Aide	_____	_____	_____	_____
Offensive	_____	_____	_____	_____
Secure	_____	_____	_____	_____
Admired	_____	_____	_____	_____
Despised	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ambitious	_____	_____	_____	_____
Teacher	_____	_____	_____	_____
Scientist	_____	_____	_____	_____
Technical School Graduate	_____	_____	_____	_____
Home Owner	_____	_____	_____	_____
Welfare Worker	_____	_____	_____	_____
Independent	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wrinkled	_____	_____	_____	_____
Have an Affair	_____	_____	_____	_____
Rich	_____	_____	_____	_____
Very organized and efficient	_____	_____	_____	_____
College Graduate	_____	_____	_____	_____
Happily employed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Powerful	_____	_____	_____	_____
College Professor	_____	_____	_____	
Able to fix things	_____	_____	_____	_____
Selfish	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community leader	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good reader	_____	_____	_____	_____

1 not at all	2	3	4 somewhat	5	6	7 very much

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
Dentist	_____	_____	_____	_____
Doctor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Boring	_____	_____	_____	_____
Janitor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Blind	_____	_____	_____	_____
Paralyzed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good Cook	_____	_____	_____	_____
Writer of books	_____	_____	_____	_____
Religious	_____	_____	_____	_____
Old	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to give to the needy	_____	_____	_____	_____
Business Executive	_____	_____	_____	_____
Feared	_____	_____	_____	_____
Church Worker	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Worker	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to act Helpless	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grandmother	_____	_____	_____	_____
Computer Programmer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lonely	_____	_____	_____	_____
Incompetent	_____	_____	_____	_____
Poor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Artist	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good lover	_____	_____	_____	_____

SCALE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			somewhat			very much

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
Workaholic	_____	_____	_____	_____
Important	_____	_____	_____	_____
Working Class	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saint	_____	_____	_____	_____
Good public speaker	_____	_____	_____	_____
Have enough money	_____	_____	_____	_____
Politician	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lesbian	_____	_____	_____	_____
Prison Guard	_____	_____	_____	_____
Unpopular	_____	_____	_____	_____
Self-confident	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dislikable	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to con people	_____	_____	_____	_____
Carpenter	_____	_____	_____	_____
Trusted	_____	_____	_____	_____
Helpful	_____	_____	_____	_____
Craftswoman	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interesting	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to get own way	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to repair cars	_____	_____	_____	_____
Truck Driver	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wife of Problem Drinker	_____	_____	_____	_____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			somewhat			very much

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
Prostitute	_____	_____	_____	_____
Psychologist	_____	_____	_____	_____
Have a lot of Friends	_____	_____	_____	_____
Battered woman	_____	_____	_____	_____
Drug Abuser	_____	_____	_____	_____
Insurance Agent	_____	_____	_____	_____
Waitress	_____	_____	_____	_____
Health Conscious	_____	_____	_____	_____
Police Officer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Heart Attack Victim	_____	_____	_____	_____
Stripper Exotic Dancer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Engineer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to speak other language(s)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Married several times	_____	_____	_____	_____
Problem drinker	_____	_____	_____	_____
Business owner	_____	_____	_____	_____
Know about art or music	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to defend yourself physically	_____	_____	_____	_____
Stupid	_____	_____	_____	_____
Intelligent	_____	_____	_____	_____
Middle Class	_____	_____	_____	_____

1 not at all	2	3	4 somewhat	5	6	7 very much

Possible self:	Described you in the past	Describes you now	Like this to describe you in the future	Think that this **will** describe you in the future
Judge	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thin	_____	_____	_____	_____
Architect	_____	_____	_____	_____
Minister/Preacher/ Priest	_____	_____	_____	_____
Relaxed/mellow	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lazy	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hair Stylist/ beautician	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bartender	_____	_____	_____	_____
Successful	_____	_____	_____	_____
Musician	_____	_____	_____	_____
Rape victim	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parent of a Disabled child	_____	_____	_____	_____
In prison	_____	_____	_____	_____
Jealous	_____	_____	_____	_____
Failure	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please list anything not listed here that described you in the past.

Using the 1-7 scale, how much did it describe you?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much does it describe you now?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much do you would like it will describe you in the future?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much do you think it will describe you in the future?

Please list anything not listed here that describes you now.

Using the 1-7 scale, how much does it describe you?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much do you would like it will describe you in the future?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much do you think it will describe you in the future?

Please list anything not listed here that you would like to describe you in the future.

Using the 1-7 scale, how much would you like it to describe you?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much do you think it will describe you in the future?

Please list anything not listed here that you would <u>not like</u> to describe you in the future?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much would you <u>not like</u> it to describe you?

Using the 1-7 scale, how much do you think it will describe you in the future?

TO: PARENT ADVOCATES
FROM: Barbara J. Peters
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Department of Sociology
660 McBryde
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0137

RE: Helping Parents with Research Forms

When you do your needs assessments this year, I'd like to add on an additional task to your visit. I'm asking that you give them the research packet and go over it with them.

The forms are for the mother to fill out. If there is no mother (or other substitute mother) in the house, there's no need to leave one.

The first sheet for just their name. After Judy receives the forms, she'll put the right code number on it and tear off the name sheet and throw it away. That way no one else can connect a name to an individual response. The forms will then be sent to me in Virginia.

The second sheet asks for some brief biographical information.

The next form is the Twenty Statements Test. It isn't really a test and there are no right answers. They are to just answer the question "Who am I?" in twenty statements. They should try to think of as many as they can in 10 minutes. If they don't get 20, that's okay. It might help if they think to themselves, "I am ..."

The third form is the Possible Selves Questionnaire. This one is long and looks complicated. There is an instruction sheet you can go over with them. THERE SHOULD BE A NUMBER IN EVERY BLANK. In other words, each item should have 4 numbers across the line. Again there are no right or wrong answers.

Two more times during the year, they will receive a packet to fill out. They will then send it back to the office. The office will send them on to me.

After I have analyzed all of the results and written my dissertation, I will send Joyce a copy of the whole thing and some summary sheets. Everyone will be welcome to look them over.

Thank you for your help. I will be staying in touch with the office, so if you have any questions, tell Nancy and she'll get them to me. Thanks Again.

Department of Sociology

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

January 14, 1993

Hello,

I want to thank you those of you who have taken the time to fill out the long questionnaire your parent advocate left with you.

I will be in XXXXXXX until the middle of May. I look forward to meeting you at different Head Start events. Also, I will be calling on some of you to ask for a time to interview you. I know that everyone is very busy and I thank you for the time you spend working on this project.

For those of you who have not yet filled in the first questionnaire, could I ask you to please do so as soon as possible and mail it to Head Start?

If you have questions, please call me at xxx-xxxx in xxxxxxx or leave a message for me at Head Start.

Thanks again.

Barbara J. Peters

VITA

Barbara Jean Peters was born in Elgin, Illinois, the daughter of Ben and Erna Peters. She has two children, Traci Le Pack Rodriguez and Peter Bralich, and three grandchildren, Dillon, Jessica, and Paige Rodriguez.

In 1974, she received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh with a major in Urban Affairs, an emphasis in Urban Planning, and a minor in Sociology. In 1990, she completed a Master of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of Texas at El Paso.

Having taught at the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh and the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay, Barbara Peters is presently an assistant professor of Sociology and Psychology at Long Island University - Southampton College. In addition, she is an advisor to National Head Start on matters of parent participation and performance standards. She and her husband, Dennis Skinner, live on Long Island.

Address:
Department of Social Sciences
239 Montauk Highway
Long Island University - Southampton Campus
Southampton, NY 11968

Phone:
(516) 287-8236
E-Mail: bpeters@sunburn.liunet.edu