Dilemmas of Trust-A Study of the Durham Child Development Center

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Deborah Riley Parks
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I, alone, however, am responsible for what follows.

Deborah Parks
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Deborah Riley Parks

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Abstract - The Durham Child Development Center is a bold, innovative, and truly unique program in early childhood education. A significant part of its uniqueness lies in the magnitude of its scope. It attempts to provide a comprehensive learning experience for young children from infancy to age ten. It experiments with babies, teenage pregnant girls, and open classrooms - all housed under one roof. This intriguing experiment takes place in an old brick school building near a poverty area in Philadelphia. For the majority of the residents in the neighborhood, the Durham School for many years, represented the image most people have of what's wrong with urban schools. It was considered by the residents as a bad school, a school for problem (discipline) and slow children. It was overcrowded, its student population was all black and the children came from mostly poor families, its teachers were insensitive, and its physical facilities in desperate need of repair. It is ironic that this same building would house the Durham Child Development Center which many educators believe to be the model for what an urban school should be about.

The Durham Child Development Center was a result of mainly one woman's dream of how a school in an urban setting should run. It should be a center which, according to Lore Rasmussen, offered total services to children for a span of their life and incorporated within these vital teacher and parent educational facilities and programs under one roof and one administrator. It should be made of continuous and high quality coordinated services and education for young children. At the same time it should train adults in service and educational programs which addresses itself to the needs of today's urban children. This dream of Lore Rasmussen became a reality when the Durham Child Development Center opened in September, 1970.

This paper represents the result of several months of intensive study and observation of the Learning Center.
In addition to observing the school's daily operation, the writer visited the homes of parents of the children attending the school to ascertain their image of the school. To ferret out views about the Learning Center, open ended interviews were conducted. They sought to answer such questions as: (1) what is the Learning Center accomplishing? What does the parent envision happens to the child daily? (2) how the parents feel about the racial and socio-economic composition of the student body, (3) are parents aware of the different components found in the school, and (4) to what extent parents participate in the school's operation. This paper outlines the perception of parents and other community members in which the school is located and the impact of the school on both.

After the first year the director of Durham and the head teacher of the elementary school issued a report to the parents and friends of the children attending the school, describing the first year's accomplishments and outlining the goals of the second year. The Report was entitled "A Climate of Trust."

In addition, this paper outlines the dilemmas, i.e. initial planning and expediency vs. community involvement, teacher autonomy vs. teacher accountability, openness vs. structure and instruction in curriculum, that directors of innovative programs in urban schools face. The findings indicates that there are many dimensions of trust that characterize this experimental schools.

The findings indicate that there is a significant level of dissatisfaction among Durham parents. The dissatisfaction stems from the dilemmas parents face when their children attend experimental schools. Apart from the disparate expectations that the parents have toward the school, they want demonstrated evidence of school performance along more traditional lines. In addition this paper outlines some of the dilemmas of administration in urban schools, with a particular focus on the dilemmas that directors of innovative schools face.

Thesis Supervisor: Robert M. Fogelson
Title: Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Humanities
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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Why grandmother,—what big eyes you have!
The better to see you, my dear. Come closer, closer, my dear
Why grandmother,—what big ears you have!
The better to hear you, my dear. Come closer, closer, my dear
Why grandmother—what big teeth you have!
....Come closer, closer, my dear

excerpt from Little Red Riding Hood
In South Philadelphia, Lombard Street manifests some of the devastating results of urban renewal in many large cities. Ten years ago, except at the extreme west, Lombard Street was the home of poor blacks. The houses were dilapidated and in obvious need of repair. The City began its restoration of Center City and the worn down houses of before were renovated into bright new town houses. The blacks viewed the street as the 'Mason-Dixon' Line. To the south of Lombard Street remained the black urban poor, to the north began Center City, the homes of middle to upper middle income whites. Besides the changes that resulted from urban renewal, Lombard Street also reflects the great diversity of class, race, religion, and ethnic backgrounds characteristic of South Philadelphia.

South Philadelphia is, perhaps, the most diverse section of the city of Philadelphia. A report issued to the city by the Voorhees Consulting Firm stated: "In this community of approximately 120,000 people, there exists probably the greatest diversity of classes, race, religion, ethnic backgrounds, and educational levels found in any community in a similar acreage of land in the city. Generally, the people who live in South
Philadelphia strongly identify with their communities. At the risk of being too simplistic, South Philadelphia divides chiefly into three sections. At the southern end lies the oldest as well as the largest Italian community in the city. The Italians who live in this area generally are first or second generation families. Italian markets, stores, night clubs, bakeries, clothing shops, for men and women are found throughout this section. In the center of South Philadelphia lies the oldest black community in the city. The complexion of this community has undergone many changes. Here, middle income blacks once resided. This middle class has been replaced by poorer blacks from other parts of the city. The next section of South Philadelphia contains a white middle income population. The complexion of this neighborhood, too, has changed. Middle-aged and older whites have been replaced by young couples or single persons. Other ethnic groups are scattered throughout this area.

The eastern end of Lombard Street, which includes the Waterfront, small factories, and newly operated boutiques is the scene of commercial activity. At the western end, is an Irish community interspersed with a few Italians. At the intersection of Lombard and Sixteenth Streets is a red brick building which houses the Durham
School. Like the street, it is not an ordinary school.

Probably, the first captivating feature of the school lies in the racial composition of the student body. Even though blacks and whites have lived near one another, hitherto, they did not attend the same elementary schools. At first glance, an unimaginable racial balance of 50/50 (black and white) seems to have been achieved. In the school playground black and white children play, supervised by adults who do not seem much older than the children. The adults are dressed as informally as the children, many wear blue jeans. The administrators at Durham as well as those in the wider city school system assert that the student body cuts across all socio-economic levels. Of the two hundred and nine children who attend Durham eighty-one are white; most of whom come from the middle to upper middle class. The remainder of the children are black and, almost without exception, poor.

The Durham Child Development Center is bounded by the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to the north, Washington Avenue to the South, Twelfth Street to the east, and Graysferry Avenue to the West. The black children who attend Durham come from the area bounded by South Street to the north, Washington Avenue to the south, east by Twelfth Street, and west by Graysferry Avenue. While entirely black, this population is far from homogenous and can best
be described by sections. The first section lies between Twelfth and Seventeenth Street with a population of 5,000.*² Most of the people are poor, about one-third of the families receive public assistance. The area west of Seventeenth Street, once the homes of the oldest black middle class, is now composed of a substandard working class community. It has many community programs and features a large concentration of 'block clubs' which promote clean-up, fix-up beautification programs designed to improve the neighborhood. However, even this subsection is not entirely homogenous or stable and there is growing concern among residents over the withdrawal of "established homeowners." The concern of these residents is exacerbated because the development and improvement of this area was held in abeyance while the City spent over twelve years pondering whether or not to build an expressway through the area. At the same time, these residents are plagued by the realities of ghetto life in America--gang warfare, drugs, vandalism, and alcoholism have become rampant.

The remainder of the children come from the area bounded by Lombard Street to the South, Benjamin Franklin Parkway to the north, Twelfth Street to the east, and west at Twenty-Seventh Street. This section has undergone some transition. Once the homes of middle-aged and older
white persons who lived in very large houses near the center of the city. Now, some of the large homes have been converted into apartments. Coupled with the City's urban redevelopment policy, the age group has drastically changed and now consists of young married couples or single persons.

In the morning, some of the children walk, others are driven, while still others bring their children to school on bicycles. Some children are bused in. A large yellow school bus arrives about 8:50 a.m. daily transporting about forty children to and from the school. About forty minutes later, a smaller bus, 'Kiddy Karter,' unloads a younger group of children. These children cannot get off the bus by themselves, for they are infants ranging from six weeks to eighteen months. They are carried into the school by a paraprofessional and the bus driver. Other young children are brought to school by extremely young girls in carriages and strollers. This is highly unusual, for most inner city elementary schools draw their students from the immediate area in which the school is located. At this school, children seem to be coming from all over. A strange school indeed.

The school day here is longer than most schools. Adults enter the school as early as 7:30 in the morning and people continue to walk in and out until as late as
nine in the evening. There must be a diverse group of activities going on inside this building to accommodate the different group of actors.

There always seems to be a different group of people entering the school every day, apart from the regular staff. There is a constant flow of visitors including prominent educators and political leaders as the Governor of Pennsylvania, a United States Senator, Charles Silberman, and Edgar Friedenberg. One wonders—what goes on in there? What are they doing? Like the little girl in the quote, one is allured into this intriguing and unknown red brick school building.
Below is a copy of a memo Dr. Buttenwieser sent to all staff today and which may interest you.

To: ALL Staff

FROM: Peter

U.S. Senator Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania will be visiting us today (Monday) from 1:30-2:30 p.m. He may then hold a press conference here at Durham at 2:30, presumably to comment on the need to support urban schools or whatever.

Senator Schweiker was invited to visit Durham by Mr. Costanzo. When the Superintendent visited the Senator in Washington six weeks ago, he asked him to take time out to see one or more of our city's schools. When Mr. Schweiker accepted for today, Mr. Costanzo sent word to me asking if Durham would be opened to him. I responded with a positive yes. (I have no idea if the Senator is visiting other schools before arriving at Durham, or if ours is the only school he will see today.)

Richard Schweiker strikes me as a pretty relaxed guy--and a good one. Further, I doubt seriously that he knows much about schools or contemporary American education, particularly on the urban scene. I intend to do everything I can (including making the group that travels around the school with him as small as possible) to make him as comfortable and at home as possible during his brief stay at Durham--and to give him the clearest possible sense of what we're trying to accomplish, what we're all about. So, let's relax ourselves, have a good time, and go about our business as usual. This is what he needs to see. And if there are photographers, etc., I will really try to deal them out as much as I can.

A quiet beginning of Spring!!

Cheers and Thanks.

Peter

P.S. I learned this morning that Mr. Costanzo will be here to accompany Senator Schweiker on his visit.
To enter the Durham Child Development Center would be a "disorienting" experience for most Americans who are accustomed to traditional public schools. The first thing that one notices is the volume of noise as children move around from room to room. The corridors, unlike most schools, are an extension of the classroom, where the children work and play. The hallways can barely accommodate all the children's crafts and paintings, the landings in the stair wells are decorated with a number of large and cared-for plants. On a typical morning around 8:30, the director, Peter Buttenweiser, is in the hallway on the first floor talking with a parent who has just brought his child to school, or talking with a child and in turn most of the children address him as Peter. This is just a small indication of the purported warmth and informality that is characteristic of the school.

The Durham Child Development Center is an intriguing experiment which attempts to provide a comprehensive early childhood education experience for children in an urban setting. The Center consists of five components: 1) an Infant center which houses babies as early as six weeks old until they reach thirty-six months, 2) a school age mothers' program designed to
permit unwed pregnant teenagers to continue their formal schooling and later offer these young mothers pre and post natal care, 3) a pre kindergarten program for three and four year old children, 4) a Teacher Center in which teachers from schools throughout the Philadelphia School System come to experiment with inexpensive materials to enhance their classroom, and 5) an elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade) the largest component.

The K-5 unit embraces the concept of open classrooms. In an atmosphere characterized by mutual trust and respect, open classrooms seek to create a learning environment which encourages independent and critical thinking in children.

The five components do not work independently of each other but are designed to lend themselves to the idea of a 'whole-building concept' in which a sense of community is fostered as different groups work together much as a family. So, too, is the idea that the learning Center should contain families of children. In admission procedures (to be discussed later) priority is given to those children who already have brothers and sisters at Durham. About half of the children in the three and four year old program have siblings in the K-5 unit on the third floor, while still others have siblings in the Infant program. This represents a commitment of the school to provide "a natural progression, i.e. that of filling the
elementary school with "graduates" of the Durham pre-
school programs."

Children are not confined to their respective 
component or classroom. Instead of the rigid segregation 
by age and grade that is prominent in American schools, 
children are encouraged to visit other components in the 
building. The toddlers and children from the pre-kinder-
garten program visit the K-5 unit and actively participate 
in the ongoing classroom activities. Likewise, the 
children in the elementary school help and play with the 
younger children. An article on open classrooms in the 
Nation's School states: According to Henry Chauncey, the 
noted American educator, "this arrangement aims at 
capitalizing on the fact that children learn from each 
other, thus increasing the number of teachers in each 
classroom. Open classroom advocates say that younger 
children are motivated by a learning environment that 
includes older youngsters."

The first floor houses the youngest members of 
the Durham Child Development Center as well as three of 
the five components which operate in the Center. The 
Infant Center consists of a nursery and toddler program. 
The Infant Center is the home of approximately fifteen 
babies, ranging from six weeks to eighteen months. Open 
Monday - Friday from 8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M., the Infant
Center seeks to provide many things to its youngsters: "stability and security, nutrition and good medical care, as well as surroundings which will awaken and stimulate all the child's senses. The underlining theory of the Infant Center has many parallels to the Soviet pre-kindergarten program. Like Durham, the U.S.S.R. starts children at a young age for "over 10% of all Soviet children under two years of age are currently enrolled in public nurseries. According to Henry Chauncey, the noted American educator, "Public pre-school education includes physical, mental, moral, work and esthetic training for education. In kindergarten, a great deal of attention must be devoted to the development of senses, perceptions, speech and thought." The two systems resemble each other in that both place importance on direct contact with adults. The Durham Learning Center is presently run by five women who were 'specially recruited' because of their unique qualities and past experiences. One room contains about fifteen baby cribs, a refrigerator, a large table with brightly colored chairs for adult members and a small table for infants who are just beginning to feed themselves. The adjacent room has a large red carpet, four rocking chairs, an old sofa, and a multitude of toys.

About five babies in the nursery have the
advantage of having their mothers with them all day; for the second component, the school age mothers program is located next door to the nursery. The girls in this program range from ages eleven to sixteen. Generally referred by neighborhood junior high schools and neighborhood hospitals, they come to Durham when they are pregnant and remain at the Center for a year. The young mothers participate in a program which combines academic work with child care practices, pre and post natal care, nutrition and home economics. At the end of the school term, each young mother, in consultation with the Durham staff, is placed in an appropriate educational setting to complete her education. Some girls return to ninth grade, some choose high school or vocational school, others may enter experimental work study programs. Young mothers whom the Durham staff feels are not ready for a public school are encouraged to stay an additional year. Even after a mother leaves Durham she is encouraged, where feasible, to bring her infant to the nursery daily while she continues her education elsewhere.

At the age of eighteen months, the young children experience their "first graduation," for they are sent across the hall to the toddler program. The general requirements for graduation are not rigorous; they include partial toilet training and development of some basic
motor skills. The toddler program, as the Soviet preschool program, encourages self-reliance and exploration. Providing a more social experience, the toddler program strives toward the formation of concepts and early skills.

Many persons contribute their artistic talents to enhance the appearance of the Durham building. This is exemplified in the toddler program where a play frame, designed by art students from a nearby college and a wall mural painted by parents enlivens the rooms. The rooms (two) contain interest areas; toys and blocks, a dining area, and a television.

All the space in the two rooms is fully utilized. Recent finger paintings done by the children are placed on the window shades. It is typical to see children's works displayed throughout the school. The children are made to feel that Durham belongs to them.

On the east side of the first floor is the home of thirty three and four year old children. The staff consist of a "head teacher," student interns from nearby colleges, and para-professionals. The three and four year old program, a Head Start program, has as its premise the belief that early intervention will help poor children (70% of the children come from homes whose family income is under 4,000) to overcome certain
handicaps that impair their successful performance in public schools. Using a triwall cardboard and masonite to partition the giant room into three distinct areas, the pre kindergarten program is housed in three highly imaginatively designed rooms, by the construction of low colorful huts and private hooks. This particular design allows for a large common room in the middle - flanked by two 'nests' which permits children to visit back and forth. In the common room, the children's own cooking area is only a few feet away from an old piano, while a large rope ladder dangles from the ceiling next to a much-used fireman's sliding pole.

At lunch time, the three and four year olds go to the second floor to their 'private dining room.' The children are served a hot lunch daily, prepared by the same women who prepare meals for the toddler program. The dining hall contains four long wooden tables which accommodate about eight children. The children have a family style lunch and the person at the head of the table, who serves the various portions of food, maybe a staff member from other components of Durham, a parent, or an older child from the K-5 unit.

The second floor is generally the most quiet floor in the building; however, the lack of noise does not detract from its importance. It is the home of many
working laboratories. This floor houses the library, the Math Lab, the headquarters of the City-wide Learning Centers Project, and a highly inventive as well as imaginatively equipped Teacher Center and workshop from which one hears the constant humming of electric saws, drills, and hammers.

The Math Lab is a fascinating place to learn about the world of numbers. Besides teaching mathematical concepts and skills, the Lab instructor hopes children will develop practical application of these theories. Thus in this large room one finds a vast array of weights, scales, math puzzle cuesenaires, rods, blocks, slide rules, boards, pegs, clocks and timers, maps, charts, play money, dice, flour, dried milk and sugar. Children from the elementary grades and the school age mothers utilize the numerous resources of this lab.

The library consists of two large rooms. One room contains a long wooden bench that resembles an old church pew. A television, and assorted books and magazines are also found. The adjoining room contains many large book cases, most of which are as yet unfilled.

From observation, the Teacher Center and workshop is a delight to children as well as adults. The Center is equipped with inexpensive materials not generally available
to teachers or parents, such as heavy cardboard, wood, ceramic tiles, and cloth samples. Using these materials and simple tools teachers build bookshelves, tables, animal cages, puzzles, and games for their classrooms. The school encourages parents as well as other residents from the area to utilize the materials of the Teacher Center. In my home visits, I found many bookcases, chairs, wooden tables, and other chef d'oeuvres proudly displayed. In actuality, the Teacher Center is a craft room with tables and chairs, a cluster of games and displays, equipment and supplies to make materials. At one end of the room is a sewing and handicrafts area with a sewing machine, a loom, and several small popsicle stick looms. At the opposite end of the room are shelves with samples of toys, along one wall is storage space for supplies, including large boxes of tiles, cardboard, and other scrap materials. Professional guidance and a wide variety of machinery is available at the Workshop. The shop contains hand tools and a number of drills, electric saws, sanders, and other equipment for wood and tri-wall construction.

The basic framework of the Durham Child Development Center stems from the Learning Centers Project. This evolution will be discussed at the end of the
chapter. The Learning Centers headquarters coordinates the activities of the Learning Center Projects Laboratories which are located throughout the Philadelphia School District. The Learning Centers Project started in 1964 in an elementary school in North Philadelphia with one teacher and a part-time consultant. A Learning Center Laboratory is a room in a school where children have access to intriguing selected materials and equipment. Based on the belief that children learn best through experimentation and manipulation, here they are free to use machinery and instruments, such as microscopes, adding machines, calculators, typewriters, etc."* One of the most important goals of the Learning Centers Project is the ultimate expansion into affiliated classrooms.

The entire third floor of the building consists of the learning Center School, an unusual elementary school with a student body consisting of one hundred and sixty-one children (95 black, 66 white). On my first visit to Durham: gerbils, an extraordinary huge white rabbit, as well as about fifteen children were in the hallways, all "doing their thing." The walls in the hallways were covered with artwork done by the children, maps, and reports recalling various school trips, pictures.
of the Jackson Five (a young black male vocal group composed of five brothers) as well as other posters and collages.

Durham utilizes free, open classrooms with a rich variety of materials designed to challenge children's interest and involve them in practical applications of math, science, social studies, and language skills. The staff hopes that such an environment will make critical and independent thinkers of children. Attention is given to helping children begin to realize that adults can respect them as individuals, "whose interest, abilities, and personalities emerge in different ways at different times. Classrooms do not consist of children in the same grade, but rather combines different age groups where one room may have second, third, and fourth graders together, etc. The particular room to which a child is assigned is decided in the early spring preceding the oncoming academic year by the director in consultation with other members of the staff. An attempt is made at Durham to eliminate the competitive nature of traditional public schools, thus, mass teaching is non-existent. In lieu of report cards, written evaluations that describe a child's performance written by the respective teacher are mailed to parents in February and June.
Classrooms divide into different interest areas; there are raw materials (sandboxes), reading materials, toys, and materials for dramatic play. Each room consists of a teacher and at least one assistant who, generally, are student interns from Philadelphia area colleges. While each room is uniquely designed, the rooms consisting of children from kindergarten to third grade have similar objects. Children do not have assigned seats but instead each room has three or four small tables. The room arrangement is designed to produce ingenuity in children. For example, rooms generally have a sandbox in which children find many uses. One day in talking with three children, a boy decided that a storybook he was reading should be thought of as a cookbook with recipes and the sand should constitute the basic ingredient to prepare a meal. A section of the room may contain an easel, watercolors, and paints are found to allow creative expression in children. Another corner may serve as a cooking area, where at least once every eight days, the class as a whole may prepare such delicacies as cookies, cranberry salad, potato pancakes. There is usually a quiet corner in the room where children's books are found. Most of these rooms have small pets as gerbils, rabbits, or pet white mice.

To a much greater extent the classroom settings
of children in the upper grades (4-5) seems to reflect the personalities of these teachers. In one room, a teacher is developing the classwork around the theme of Africa. The teacher attempts to dispel the myths that Africa is the 'Dark Continent' where savages still swing between trees. Children in this class read books, sing songs in Swahili, construct drums and model villages in the Teacher Workshop. Bulletin boards are decorated with pictures that contain brief synopsis of the life and accomplishments of African leaders, African carvings, and African words. The activities of the oldest children in the school revolve around the theme, "Mapping Our Urban Environment." The children use maps, scales, diagrams, rules, compasses, pictures, film strips, cusenaires rods. The tools enable the children to plan and make maps and scale drawings of their school, community, and city. Ultimately, it is hoped that the children will apply this knowledge to other cities, communities, both real and make believe.

Each component draws funding from different sources. The School District of Philadelphia funds the school age mothers program. A federal day care grant, Title IV, with a twenty-five percent matching funds from the Philadelphia School System funds the Infant Center. The Learning Centers Program funds as one of its major
programs of the Teacher Center and Workshop. The Philadelphia School Board provides $40,000 from Title funds for the day workshops, and the Early Childhood Education study provides $20,000 to support the after-school open hours. The Philadelphia Anti-Poverty Action Council, through a contract with the Philadelphia School District funds the three and four year old program. The Philadelphia School District, supplemented by the Learning Centers Project through its Title I, ESEA grant funds the elementary school.
"Some men see things as they are and ask why
I dream things that never were and ask why not."

George Bernard Shaw

It is difficult to imagine that such an intriguing experiment in early childhood education could be conceived by one person—a woman who unashamedly describes herself as a dreamer. Listening to her recount the evolution of Durham and her role of its creation, I began to feel that perhaps her dreams were a survival mechanism. Lore started to dream at the age of thirteen. Lore grew up in Germany under Hitler, and at the age of thirteen she began to be ostracized by her friends and then saw her relatives murdered. At the age of sixteen, Lore came to the United States. Initially she did not like America, for she thought it was inhumane and dominated by capitalists. Soon after her arrival, she began to work in a Day Care Center that consisting mainly of poor children from diverse backgrounds. At that Center, she found out that people in America cared.

Lore never finished high school or college. During her brief stay at Columbia College she developed her philosophy of education. It was based on her reading of three books—two books by Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in a Child* and Piaget's *Theory of Intellectual*
Development, and The Little Red School House. Lore married Donald Rasmussen and left New York and moved to Alabama with her husband. While working in Talladega, she was offered a position to be director of a Melcon School in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Her work at Melcon drew widespread praise, prominence, and respectability in educational circles, but Lore grew restless and decided to move on. Feeling a commitment to help disadvantaged people and moved by the tragic assassination of J.F.K., she felt she could no longer remain in Philadelphia and its environs. She agreed to remain in Philadelphia providing the Board of Education guaranteed her: 1) a school that had flexibility which allowed children to learn, 2) a school in which teachers had the freedom to teach, and most important, 3) the school must be integrated.
In the basement of a North Philadelphia school, located in a poor community, her ideas were fulfilled. Believing learning occurs when a child has an opportunity to explore and discover on his own in a provocative environment, Lore worked as a consultant with a teacher in a room that was used as a Math Lab. Designed primarily for the disadvantaged children of this neighborhood, it was hoped that through experimentation with concrete objects, cubes, cylinders, scales—abstractions and generalizations could be made. Lore's Lab gained much praise from school officials, teachers, and parents—all requesting that their schools be selected to house these laboratories.

About 1968, Matthew Constanzo, then the Superintendent of all the District Superintendents in the school system, and now the Superintendent of the Philadelphia Schools, came to Lore. He asked Lore "to train" so that he would become an effective big city school administrator. Lore moved from the school in North Philadelphia with Matthew Constanzo to a school in South Philadelphia. In 1969, Matt, Lore, and the Learning Centers Project moved to the second floor of a soon to be vacant school on the corner of Sixteenth and Lombard Streets.

During my home visits, a slightly different
version of the evolution was recounted. Not surprising in the parents' version, it was they, the parents, who played the instrumental role in the creation of the Durham Child Development Center. It all started with the need for an additional elementary school to serve the needs of the rapidly increasing Center City residents. In the past only one elementary school City Center, housed in a small building, served the educational needs of the residents. It had a reputation throughout the city as a good i.e., its children did well on standardized tests. The student body, almost exclusively middle class, was drawn from different areas of the city. As a result of its good reputation coupled with the continued increasing number of young white families moving into Center City, it soon became apparent that a new school building would be needed. In 1964, according to one parent, the white parents came up with a "savvy idea." Some parents were apprehensive that the school district, experiencing yet another financial crisis, would turn down their request for a new building. Consequently, they decided to get the black parents from the area around the Durham School to join with them in pressuring the School District for a new building. The parents from the City Center School felt that the Board of Education would be
very unlikely to turn down the request for an integrated school. In 1967, Matt Constanzo appointed a Planning Committee composed of parents, teachers, and the principals of the Durham and City Center Schools. The white parents recall that the black participation on this Committee was negligible; "No one ever knew what the Durham parents wanted."

One of the parents on the Planning Committee became "turned on" by open classrooms. The principal of the City Center School stated that he would implement this innovative educational concept in the new school, if he was convinced that most parents wanted it. Thus began a series of informal house meetings where interested parents were given articles on open classrooms to read and several Philadelphia teachers (some from Lore's Learning Center Labs) explained the underlining theory.

In the Spring of 1969, it became obvious that the new school building would not be completed as scheduled. The parents then asked Lore Rasmussen to come to Durham. In that academic year (September 1969) children remained at the old City Center building while children from grades 3-6 afforded the Learning Centers Project housed on the second floor of the Durham School. The first and third floor of the Durham School contained
grades one through six of the traditional Durham School. One's vantage point determines to whom one attributes the creation of the Durham Child Development Center. In the next chapter, it will become evident that the two versions define the perspective from which the school should be run and serves as the basis for the question of accountability. Also, it provides a framework which accounts for the level of dissatisfaction found among some parents.

The Durham Child Development Center's Creation as told by Lore, conveys in one's mind parallels to the Creation written by the renowned black poet, James Weldon Johnson.* On the first day, a woman who worked in the Learning Centers Project daily brought her newborn child to Durham. Lore became convinced that babies could profit from the Learning Center Labs. And there was an Infant Center. On the second day, Lore watched a three year old child of another staff member play at Durham. Lore thought it might work for them, too. And there was developed a pre kindergarten program. On the third day, moved by the traumatic experience that a young unwed mother she knew personally faced, Lore discovered that the first and third floors of the Durham School would be vacant. The children who now in Durham would attend
the newly constructed Greenfield School. (A result of the merger of City Center and Durham Elementary Schools). On the fifth day, she obtained the floor plans for the Durham building and began to construct her model of what a school in an urban setting should be about. It should be a center that offers total services in children for a span of their life and in corporate with these vital teacher and parent education facilities and programs under one roof. She outlined some of the needs of an urban community. According to her the needs of the community were: 1) quality integrated education 2) day care facilities, 3) pre-school education programs 4) educational opportunities for unwed-teenage pregnant girls, 5) new ways of guiding the learning experience for school staffs, and 6) extension of flexible interaction between different age groups (adults/teenagers/young babies and different educational levels i.e. under-educated and highly educated). On the sixth day (actually, March, 1976) she faced the problem of choosing a director. She convinced Peter Buttenweiser, a young bright administrator at the Board of Education, to consider Durham. Peter had gained much national prominence from his work with the Advancement Schools in North Carolina and Philadelphia. However, Lore convinced Peter that he lacked the depth of experience that comes in working on
a local community level. To Lore, the insight gained from involvement in local politics would be sine qua non to becoming an effective administrator in the field of education. On the seventh day, Lore and Peter began to select the members of their staff, the majority of whom were "specially recruited." Generally, the teachers on the third floor (K-5 unit) were recruited from the Learning Centers Project. Presently, only one teacher in the elementary school did not have prior experience in the Learning Centers Laboratory. Many of the staff members, particularly the teachers, were considered "rejects" by the public school system, Lore states; because they either didn't or couldn't pass the standardized National Teachers Exam, while others just left out of disgust with the school system. The supervisor of the Infant Center (nursery and toddler) program was selected by Lore. In turn, this supervisor chose her subordinates in consultation with the director. The head teacher of the pre kindergarten program was chosen because she was black, possessed extensive knowledge of the South Philadelphia Community, and was in general considered a "gung-ho" person whom the director felt would generate enthusiasm for the school. The director chose the clerical staff, who had demonstrated competence in
other situations. The method of staff recruitment and selection is a very delicate, but important process that can determine the effectiveness of a program as well as the image it projects onto persons not intimately tied with the program. Therefore, one cannot question the desire to have people who have already demonstrated their competency or ability to function at certain levels. However, one can only speculate upon the allegiance that stems from such an admittedly deliberate and consciously arbitrary selection process. It is not likely that such special recruits would question the people who were responsible for securing their particular job. In addition the selectors may feel a "quasi ownership" toward the special recruit. An example of which took place when a supervisor introduced me to an aide and later remarked, "I brought her here." In September 1940, the doors of the Durham Child Development Center opened its doors to students and Lore smiled as she looked upon 'her Creation.'

While obviously, the framework of the school was not chosen in consecutive, this analogy serves to illustrate the limited number of actors that were involved in the design of the Durham Child Development Center. It is important to keep three points in mind while reading the rest of this paper: 1) The Durham Child
Development reflects largely the desires of one woman as to how a school for young children in an urban setting should be run. A woman, who interestingly enough abhors elitism which she feels is anathema to the goal of equal educational opportunity. 2) Over seventy percent of the staff was selected by primarily two people. 3) Most important, Durham remains a public school and is considered by many administrators in the Philadelphia school system a prototype of a community school. The Center has one hundred and twenty eight blacks (61) percent and is located on the periphery of a black neighborhood. Yet, this community never had any input into the formation of the school or how it should be run. The people who designed Durham, not questioning their altruistic and humanistic qualities, are white and upper middle class.

The students who attend Durham are drawn from different areas of South Philadelphia. The school age mothers are teenagers who come from area junior high schools, area hospitals, or are referred to Durham by case workers employed by the Department of Public Assistance. The children in the Nursery and Toddler program are babies of the school age mothers, children of residents from the neighborhood, or children of staff members. The guidelines from the federal government require that seventy per cent of the children in the
pre kindergarten program come from families whose income is under ($3,000). The selection process for the children in the elementary school is more complicated. First preference was given to the children who had attended the Durham Elementary School before the merger and to the participants in the Learning Centers Project that was housed on the second floor of Durham. The remainder of the children, chosen by lot, came from the four feeder schools. The four feeder schools consist of the traditional elementary schools that are located within Durham's geographic boundaries; with most (3 out of 4) having student bodies around ninety-eight (98%) black. In the spring of 1970, the director and the head teacher visited the feeder schools and talked with interested parents about the Learning Center. Interested parents completed application forms and twenty-five families were chosen by lot from each feeder schools. All parents apply for their children's admission to Durham and the children are chosen on a first come first serve basis according to the head teacher. Throughout the Learning Center, priority in the selection process if given to children who have siblings already attending Durham. This is done in attempt to achieve their goal of a natural progression, i.e., filling the elementary school with families of children from
the pre school programs.

The first year, according to staff members, was a period of adjustment for both adults and children. In a report, outlining the accomplishments of the first year the director stated: "All energies were spent trying to lay a firm foundation; to see how the place feels, how it operates, what it can be made to look like, to bring many children together in a familiar setting with unfamiliar older and younger neighbors; to test our ability to give and share and sometimes just to survive." #10
Though the Durham Child Development Center can be viewed as the realization of one woman's work and inner creativity, it more accurately represents a model of a movement that is gaining widespread attention and respectability among American educators. Primarily found on the elementary school level, examples can be found in many different sections of the United States—from urban care areas as New York, in suburban towns, and small rural villages. This new movement, viewed by many as a panacea for elementary education has many names; it is referred to as informal classrooms, open classrooms, or open corridors. Whatever its particular label, it purposes to develop children into self-initiating, creative, and critical thinkers of children. These are the goals of the British Primary System, the prototype of open classrooms in America. This point of view most clearly can be seen in the Plowden Report. The Plowden Report, a 1967 document of Great Britain's Central Advisory Council, provides persuasive evidence of the efficacy of primary schools in England. While the goals of the British Primary System (ages 5-11) do not greatly differ from the goals of education in America, the system of education becomes radical when one looks at its
approach." Since there is only a limited range of materials within the capacity of primary school children; it is the approach, the motivation, the emphasis and the outcome according to the Plowden Report that are different. In these schools, children's own interests direct their attention to many fields of knowledge and the teacher is alert to provide materials, books, or experience."

First and foremost, British educators believe children constitute the basic resource of the learning process and as such should be treated as children. By contrast, Charles Silberman, writes that American educators regard children as 'miniature adults.' By applying the principles of British education, the examiners of the Report eloquently state the importance and goals of schools when they write: "a school is not merely a teaching shop, it must transmit values, and attitudes. It is a community in which children learn to live first and foremost as children and not as future adults....A child brought up in this atmosphere at all of his education has some hope of becoming a balanced and mature adult, and of being able to live in, to contribute to, and to look critically at the society of which he forms a part."12

The second difference between the countries lies
in the belief that children learn at different rates, at different times, and under different circumstances. Another underlining assumption is that children learn best through interaction with situations. Also present, is the idea that children learn best when sparked by their own interest. To achieve this goal, teachers and educators in the primary system set out deliberately to create an environment that capitalizes on the inherent differences among children as well as a classroom where children are stimulated by natural or manufactured materials of many shapes, colors, and textures.

Another striking difference in approach between the two countries lies in the attitude toward and the concept of play. Particularly in the nursery school, great emphasis is put on the importance of play. Play is seen as a constructive factor in the overall learning process. It symbolizes the expressions of the innermost and often unconscious feelings within children and serves as a problem solving mechanism for children to "reconcile their inner lives with external reality." "In play, children gradually develop concepts of casual relationships, the power to discriminate, to make judgments, to analyze and synthesize to imagine and to formulate."\(^{13}\)
The role of the teacher in the primary system takes on another dimension. No longer regarded as the omnipotent person who stands at the head of the class, the teacher's role is one of nurturer and servant as she guides her pupils through the educational process. While she has more resources available to her than exists in the regular public schools, she must decide when, how and where they should be brought into the learning environment. Such a teacher must be a keen and perceptive observer who must rely on both her general knowledge of child development and on detailed observation of individual children for matching their demands to children's stages of development. There are times when it will be necessary for a teacher to teach, for there are some facts which children cannot discover for themselves and these the teacher needs to tell them. On the other hand certain times class discussion, group, or individual investigation are more helpful.

In America, the ideas outlined above are translated into open classrooms and have the following characteristics:*14 1) classroom are decentralized and the familiar rows of desks and chairs are replaced with special learning areas, 2) children are free most of the time to move throughout the room, talk to each other, and
choose their own activities 3) children from different grades and of different ages frequently work together in the same classroom 4) teachers work with individuals or in small groups and 5) attention is given to designing a classroom environment that contains a variety of resources, raw materials, concrete materials, all forms of expressive representation in the area as well as books and other media.

In England, the primary grades consist of two divisions: the infant school for children ages five through eight and the junior school for children up to twelve. Children in the United States (assuming they begin school at the age of five) remain in the elementary school from ages five through age eleven, then go on to junior high and senior high schools respectively. The evolution of the British Primary Schools can be viewed as a social revolution whose history dates back to the founding of the first infant school by Robert Owen in the early part of the nineteenth century. About the same time as a result of her work with young children in the slums of Deptford and Bradford, Margaret McMillan began to advocate open air type schools and compulsory medical inspection for them. The results of her campaign culminated in the passage of the Education Act of 1918 which made universal nursery education along with compulsory medical
inspection a part of the state education in England. Throughout this period, primary education was viewed as an end in itself and the school was designed to teach virtues as obedience, loyalty, and punctuality which were deemed adequate for the lowly life and occupation into which most persons were expected to serve. Secondary schools were designed only for bright and ambitious children.

This situation existed until after World War II. The evacuation after the war created a radical change in the perception on the part of parents and teachers about the role of education. During this period, adults regardless of occupation were thrown together, all striving to remake their lives. Lillian Weber, the eminent American educator who has studied open classrooms writes; in such an intimate environment: "teachers could understand with more sympathy both the parents' burdens and their impatience, and how, within any or all of their impatience, they gave tremendous necessary support to their children .... Thus, their conception of what a school life could and should be, and of the inextricable wholeness of a child's life and as well as their roles as teachers were re-examined." 15 The events that took place during the wartime evacuation were in large part responsible for the
passage of the Education Act 1944 on which today's English informal school system rests. No longer was primary education seen as an end in itself, but rather became the first stage in education to be followed by a second stage for all. The importance of children in the educational process was elevated and given pre-eminence.

While the evolution of the primary system can be seen as a response to dramatic social changes in England, others outside of Britain, particularly, Jean Piaget and John Dewey, influenced the thinking of British educators. Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, theories' were based on his observation of children. From his studies, he concluded children learn in different rates, in different ways and learn best through interaction and manipulation of concrete objects.

John Dewey was the leader of the progressive movement in education in the United States. This era in education took place during the decade after World War I when ideas of educational reform were prevalent. The reformers advocated increased freedom for children to learn and teachers to teach, stress on individuality as well as purposeful activity for children. Viewing learning as a continuous process, Dewey was disenchanted with the public school's adherence to rigidity, formality, and
compartmentalization of subjects which he felt was in direct contradiction to reality. Dewey said: "the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs." Though the principles advocated by Dewey were sound, they were never really tested in America. Instead, this informal educational process he advocated was viewed by American educators in the 1930's as a license to let children do what they wanted without applying the pedagogical practices advocated by Dewey.

Partially as the result of the unsuccessful attempt to implement the progressive movement and the frightening results, many American educators, parents, and others concerned about education are very skeptical about open classrooms. While still in its embryonic stage, (existing in the United States for about five years) open classrooms have drawn strong criticisms. Much of the criticisms seem to stem from lack of understanding on the part of apprehensive parents and cautious educators. The major criticisms fall into four areas: 1) Many parents
feel that children cannot learn in an unstructured environment, for they equate a quiet school with a good school. Parents are concerned over the flexibility and freedom of movement accorded to children. A staff member at the Center for Urban Education in New York succinctly outlined the anxiety of many parents when he said: "in the climate of our times (demands for accountability, militant community preoccupation with the control of the public schools) no education program will survive, no matter how exciting its ego-enhancing and humanizing aspects - unless it teaches children to read, write and do arithmetic at a functional elementary school level"

2) The second area of criticism runs along the lines - that open classrooms do not realistically prepare children for life in the future. A more immediate concern is the apprehension by many parents over whether or not it equips children with the skills needed to assure a relatively easy transition into the regular public school setting. Open classroom advocates hope that after children have been in such an environment, the self-confidence and independence that was fostered will equip them with the flexibility and security to adjust to any new surroundings.

3) The third major criticism revolves around the fear that open classrooms will lapse into the permissiveness and unlicensed freedom that characterized the
'progressive era' in education. This fear rests with the belief that in such a situation where children just 'hang loose', no learning takes place. An eloquent response to this misgiving is found in the Plowden Report.

Some people, while conceding that children are happier under the modern regime and perhaps more versatile, question whether they are being fitted to grapple with the world which they will enter when they leave the school. This view is worth examining because it is quite widely held but we think it rests on a misconception. It isolates the long term objectives, that of living and serving society.... It fails to understand that the best preparation for being a happy useful man or woman is to live fully as a child. Finally, it assumes, quite wrongly that the older virtues, as they are usually called of neatness, accuracy, care and perseverance, and the sheer knowledge which is an essential of being educated, will decline. These are genuine virtues and an education which does not foster them is faulty.

The fourth criticism revolves around the role of the teacher. Many educators feel that the increased flexibility and autonomy accorded to teachers creates a tendency among them to cop-out. In such a relaxed atmosphere and without proper preparation, teachers may feel that their children are learning and working when actually nothing constructive is taking place in the classrooms. In his book, Crisis in the Classroom, Silberman reports that a teacher from one of the Learning Centers Project in Philadelphia said: "You have to be careful not to let this kind of teaching become a 'cop
out!! The kids are happy, the discipline problem is nil, and it's awfully easy for a teacher to convince herself that the kids are having a learning experience or some damned thing, no matter what they're doing."21

It is ironic that this warning should come from a teacher in Lore's program. Some parents from the Durham Community, think that this talked about 'teacher cop-out' is occurring inside the extra-ordinary school on Sixteenth and Lombard Streets.
FOOTNOTES

1 Lore Rasmussen, "The Durham Child Development Center," a paper March 1970.


4 "Open Education: Can British School Reforms Work Here?" Nation's Schools May, 1971, p. 48.


6 Lore Rasmussen, "Learning Centers Project," a brochure March 1969.

7 Peter Buttenweiser, "The Durham Child Development Center" a brochure September, 1971 (and conversations with staff members of the respective components).


9 Rasmussen, "The Durham Child Development Center" a paper March, 1970.


12 Plowden, p. 197.

13 Ibid., p. 187.
14 Nation's Schools, p. 47.

15 Richard Owen was a British educator who founded the first public nursery in England.

16 Margaret McMillan was a woman, who in the late nineteenth century in England advocated universal compulsory pre school education.


18 For an interesting account of the progressive period read Joseph Featherstone's Schools Where Children Learn.

19 Nation's Schools, p. 50.

20 Plowden, p. 198.

CHAPTER II: THE PARENTS

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"

Shakespeare, Hamlet 2.2.248
In June, 1970, I first visited the Durham Child Development Center. The Center had just completed its first year of operation and it was necessary to plan for its growth and development in the future. After several extensive conversations with the director, it was decided that I would conduct an independent research project that revolved around the Center's operation. My investigation would represent the first phase of an overall evaluation of the learning Center.

Because traditional evaluations of schools usually entail rigorous and systematic testing of children and also usually concentrate on the ideas of the people who work inside, it seemed reasonable to the director to begin any appraisal of the school's effectiveness by "ferreting out" views about the Center from persons in the local geographical community not associated with the Center. The director felt that both he and the members of his staff "would learn most about the program, indeed about the total thrust of the Durham Center, by looking into the Center from the several homes and community vantage points." Thus, from parental interviews, my task was to ascertain and outcome their image of Durham.

I was chosen in part because of my academic
credentials, but more important because the area of the city in which the Learning Center is located has been my only home. The sensitivity that I was deemed to have possessed was seen as advantageous in that: 1) it would establish credibility among and gain entrance into the homes of the neighborhood residents. 2) I was aware of the idiosyncracies, history, and transitions of this South Philadelphia area.

It was decided that my inquiry would rely on personal interviews. The director helped me in preparing the kinds of questions that would encourage the parents to express their thoughts. This was done with the knowledge that the questions would serve only as a framework in which to proceed. The questions were:

1. What do you think is happening to your child daily? What do you think that Durham is accomplishing?

2. How do you feel about the racial as well as socio-economic composition of the student body. Do you feel that it is advantageous, i.e. does it enhance the learning process? Or do you feel that it "slows down" the learning process?

3. Do you ever visit Durham? Are you familiar with the different components of the school?
   a. An outgrowth would be a question about the level of parental participation.
4. How did you hear about Durham?

5. If you were asked to cite changes, improvements or criticisms of Durham that you would like to see what would your response be?

The questions were drafted in July. I spent several days at Durham that month taking with the Infant staff. The Infant Center is the only component that operates from September-July. I spent the first week in which Durham opened meeting and talking with staff members. It was during this week that I was formally introduced to the entire staff received him first opportunity to discuss with them my future research. Most staff members displayed enthusiasm about my research project. They were eager to discover the image that the Learning Center projected onto the community. They felt the findings would be helpful to them as staff members. In conversations with a few black staff members, they expressed the belief that the director and other administrators would be both surprised and displeased by the level of dissatisfaction among parents.

I spent three months (January-March) conducting home visits as well as periodically observing the operation of Durham. In January,* Lore made, what proved to be an invaluable suggestion. She felt that my
interviews would be biased toward middle income parents. These parents had command of verbal skills that were lacking among poor parents. Thus, my interviews with middle income parents would provide me with more information than I was expected to receive from the homes of the poor. To overcome this handicap, it was suggested that I take pictures of children engaged in different activities in the school. In this way, all parents would have something concrete from which to begin the interviews. Also, it was hoped that the pictures would relax the reserved parents and encourage them to speak freely. I took thirty-five pictures. The head teacher chose the pictures she felt best exemplified Durham.

The director gave me the names of about eighteen parents that he felt I should visit in the beginning. He referred to these parents as being "key parents." Key parents were parents who displayed interest in the Center's operation; they visited the Center often. They often volunteered to "help out" in the various classrooms and generally participated in many activities at Durham.

From January-March I interviewed forty-four parents. These forty-four parents have a total of ninety-four children attending Durham. The remainder
of this chapter contains an analysis of the interviews.

While there is nothing definitive on the role of the parents or even a clear statement concerning parental expectations, the Plowden Report and most of the literature on open classroom consider parent education an important preliminary step. This Report and most other literature such as Lillian Weber's book, *The English Infant School*, imply that the school should initiate programs to inform parents about open classrooms. However this educational process presents a dilemma for a director. In any innovative program, a director must pool his energies in building his internal structure. At the same time he cannot neglect the concerns of parents over this new approach to learning. His task, as in Durham, is made more difficult when he must deal with parents from disparate racial, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds.

This chapter outlines the misgivings, misunderstandings, and tensions that arise when parents feel that they are not given an effective voice in the operation of the school.
Analysis of Interviews—

The test of the interviews with parents are contained in the Appendix of this paper. I have included interviews from seven parents (4 black, and 3 whites) in this chapter. These interviews exemplify and point out the general impressions (assets, apprehensions and needed changes) that were mentioned most often in my home visits by the majority of the parents. Most of the interviews took place in the home during the day when the mother was alone. However, I interviewed parents at both their places of employment and/or while they were visiting Durham. The interviews usually lasted forty minutes though some lasted over two hours. The mothers with whom I talked (occasionally husbands, too) came from contrasting backgrounds. Some of the mothers had never completed high school, while others were professionals (one was even aspiring for a public office). Some were working mothers, while others remained in the home all day, and many were "the heads" of their respective households. I presented a set of fifteen pictures to each parent. The parents were asked to arrange the pictures in the order which best exemplified what Durham is about. Besides ascertaining
how parents felt about Durham, the pictures were designed "to relax" the parents and set the framework for the interview. Some parents were unable to place the pictures in any order of priority; and where parents did, their comments are noted in the interviews.

For most parents, the Durham Child Development Center is a welcomed change from their past experiences with traditional public schools. This is illustrated in the first interview, where Mrs. Bush, a black parent, expresses her enthusiasm for Durham. However, these interviews and the remainder found in the Appendix, indicate that some parents have strong reservations about Durham. The interview with Mrs. Benton reflects the concern over whether or not the children are receiving adequate academic preparation. She also questions Durham's emphasis on play, a concern reiterate by a white parent Mrs. Kalins. The perceived departure at Durham from concentration on mastering the 3 R's is of particular concern to black parents as interviews with Mrs. Truehart and Mrs. Murray illustrate. The contrasting racial as well as socio-economic backgrounds of the children has caused some difficulties. Instead of achieving "racial harmony, the socio-economic diversity has led many white children, especially the children in the
elementary school to make negative generalizations about black people. All of the three white parents interviews included in this chapter talk about the negative racial stereotypes that their children have developed. It seems that people (even children) so different from one another cannot or have not been able to develop positive interpersonal relationships. In his book, *The Levittowners*, Gans describes the difficulties that arose between the working class and middle class people when the former moved to a suburban town. Gans writes: "people so different from each other in age or class that they cannot agree on anything are unlikely to derive much enrichment from heterogeneity."² Finally, these selected interviews illustrate the dissatisfaction expressed by parents over the absence of a parent organization at Durham. The levels of dissatisfaction is so strong that some parents have formed an "underground" organization.

Mrs. N is a black woman who has six children attending Durham Child Development Center. Five of her children are in the (K-5) unit and one child is in the 3 & 4 year old program. Her interview was relatively short for she had just learned that one of her children had to undergo surgery and hence I did not "press" upon any question. In subsequent interviews, there are several
other parents with whom I did not elaborate upon about their answers for I perceived that they felt awkward or uneasy about certain issues.

Comment on Pictures-

I choose pictures that show learning. That's important—these children don't work enough. "Learning is important." What do you think Durham is accomplishing?

It's helping them to do more at home, I think they're learning. It's helping them grow emotionally.

Why did you send your child to Durham?

Pierce School stressed too much reading, arithmetic. There wasn't enough time to have music, arts and crafts. I like the workshop.

How do you feel about racial difference?

I think it's good. We have to learn to work with each other, live with one another.

Do you visit Durham?

I used to visit Durham a lot before my pregnancy (she has a child 2 months old). I used to work at the workshop. I like to do things with my hands. The only way I know what's going on is when I visit.

Do you feel parents participate a lot?

Yea, it's good. It used to go a lot. They should
have more Pot-luck dinners. (Pot luck was held in Fall '70, parents invited to bring their specialty dish.)

When you visit Durham, do you ever visit the other components?

How do you feel about other components?

Yes, I visit the toddlers and 3 & 4 year old program. I think the school age mother's program is good for them. They can finish their education and see their kids when they want. I want to get my child in the toddler program. The workshop is a good idea.

Are there any changes, improvements that you would like to see?

They should have more homework. I want to be able to see for myself what my child is doing. The way it is now, I'm not really sure what goes on unless I visit. There should be more emphasis on learning. The kids like it, though. I feel if I transferred them they would be a grade behind. I think Pierce School children are "ahead" (academically) of my children. But I would keep Sandra (fourth grade) if Durham went further. (i.e. beyond fifth grade). They need to stop the children from going from one room to another. They should have only certain times to visit, maybe for a half-hour after lunch.

*Mrs. S, black, has two children in the K-5 unit. She is a paraprofessional at Arthur School, one of the
feeder schools to Durham.

Comment on Pictures-

It took her two minutes to decide on the order of the pictures. She finally decided that the pictures couldn't be put in any order for all the pictures represent different aspects of the school and their all equally important. Peter is most important - "he's human." He relates on a level with children, not a disciplinarian, doesn't represent a "Big Bad Wolf" but is a friend to the children. He understands the children. They are not afraid of him. The second most important thing is the Infant Center. They learn at an early age to sit down with one another and relate to one another. At Durham they learn to work together, "express themselves." The individual attention is important. The teachers are aware of the children's progress. They can better pace the child's growth and development. It's a pleasure to go there, they feel welcome.

What is happening to Sharon and Michael daily? What is Durham accomplishing?

They teach them about the community in which they live. Today parents fear for their children - not likely to tell them about the community.

They don't learn in a conventional way, for
instance, at Arthur School. Sharon didn't progress at all. When she came to Durham in a year she came up three grade levels in reading. There, allow children to move around last year, she spent most of her time in library.

They see adults as humans. They see teachers as persons with feelings with similar things (husband, home and family) like their parents. The teachers at Durham don't ask kids to do anything they themselves wouldn't do.

They learn a lot of black history. It's not found in most of the elementary schools in the neighborhood.

Durham makes them enjoy learning.

Mrs. R has a son in the three and four year old program and a son in the first grade. She is a community worker at Rebound, a neighborhood health center that primarily serves children from infancy to twelve years. Rebound provides the medical services for the Durham Child Development Center. In her capacity at Rebound, Mrs. M makes home visitation and thus has a fair indication of the feelings of the parents from the area.

What happens to your sons daily? What is the school accomplishing?

Well, I don't know what you're going to turn into
the director. I have strong misgivings about the school and I've done a lot of thinking about it. I really don't know what they're doing for my son in first grade. It might be that they don't understand him completely (this is his second year at Durham). I don't know whether the school is providing him with the skills that he needs as he will become a black man in society. I'm thinking about taking him out. I wish I could place him in a community school. For my younger son, the school seems to be providing him with experiences he probably wouldn't get in a regular school.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

Well, it's okay for those white people from Center City. I don't know how good the school is for blacks. Black children need structure to gain a sense of security. They don't get that at Durham. I know a lot of black parents don't like it. They tell me when I visit their homes. Do you ever visit the school?

I don't go to the school that often because I work every day, but I go to see my first grade son's teacher. She hasn't really been able to tell me anything. When I started working at Rebound the director always greeted me warmly when I came to Durham. He always talked about Durham as being a comfortable, trusting place, it builds confidence. Those are his
key words comfortable, trust and confidence anything he writes has those three words. Now that he knows I'm dissatisfied with Durham he's not as friendly.

I'm on the Parents Committee. I suppose he selected me because of the job. I really don't know what good is coming out of these meetings. "They're all coming from such different bags."

I think the school has to show me what my child is doing. I go to homes, visit families, and a lot of parents just want to see something tangible about what their child is doing. They're so used to homework and grades. I know the school is just beginning but they have to find some way to let me know what they are doing.

Mrs. K, black, has a son in fifth grade.

In arranging pictures only talked about the need for children to have more learning type activities. What happens to your son daily? What is Durham accomplishing?

I haven't seen anything that he has done this year. In the beginning of the year I bought him new supplies, (showed notebook to me) he hasn't written anything in it but his name. He started to keep a diary, but he stopped. Last June I thought about transferring him. I knew last year he spent all of his time playing.
He had to repeat fifth grade. I kept him at Durham for I felt that here he would get more attention from the teachers. I know at Greenfield they make the kids work. Maybe I should have sent him to Greenfield for when I ask him what he did at School, he never gives me a real answer. He just tells me he does his work in class. His brothers tease him. They tell him he plays all day and he will remain at Durham until he's fifteen. When he started he seemed interested; now I don't know. When did he start?

Well, he was already a student at Durham and he just remained.

How do you feel about children of different races attending the same school?

It doesn't really matter.

Do you ever visit Durham? Do you think that many parents participate?

I went a couple of times last year. I go to the meetings at night. No, I don't think that many do. What, if any, changes would you like to see take place?

I'd like to see it go to sixth grade. I don't know what will happen to Larry when he leaves there. If he goes to Greenfield, they're going to make him work. I have another son that just graduated from Greenfield and
they made him work. He always had homework. Larry doesn't have any and can't even read well.

Mrs. L, white, has a daughter in first grade and a daughter in fifth grade. They live in a high rise apartment complex in Philadelphia.

What do you think Durham is accomplishing?

My oldest daughter is very insightful and accepts people as they are without question. It's too early to tell about Dana. I don't know whether they are mastering the academics and that is what's bothering me. My friends, who have children at Friends Select (private school run by Quakers) are reading much better than my daughters. Quite frankly, I'm seriously thinking of taking them out. Debbie started when she was in third grade. I feel by then the "basic academics" had been ingrained. I'm not too sure now whether they're learning. I work and don't have a chance to visit Durham often. I spent an entire day there last week. "Play is wonderful—but not all day." I have no way of telling whether they are learning. They don't have homework, no tests. I don't see any results of anything. I'm worried about my daughter in second grade. The teacher sent home an envelope with simple words like pig, gig, Nan, Dan etc. and Dana doesn't recognize any of the words. When I asked the teacher why she sent the words home, she became angry,
and told me they were for Dana and not for me. How do you feel about the racial composition?

   It doesn't seem to be a problem. Debre mentioned the other day that the blacks in her class were slow. I explained to her that it was because of their background. I asked her if it detracted from her learning, she said no.

Are you aware of the other components?

   Yes, I see the young teenage pregnant girls walking around. I'm trying to accept it.

What changes, if any, would you like to see?

   1. There should be more school work done in the beginning.

   2. When a paper is done by a child, the teacher should return it so parents can know what their children are doing.

   3. Instead of those written evaluations, marks should be given. Marks are necessary. They will be needed and used when the children leave.

*Mr. and Mrs. D, white couple, with two sons at Durham. The sons are in the 3 & 4 year old program kindergarten.

Mrs. Horn felt she could not arrange the pictures
in any order of priority or importance. In her opinion—
what is most important is the close contact of student
and teachers. The concern of "adult" members (I don't
think of them as conventional teachers) with children.
What is happening to your child daily? What is the school
accomplishing?

They're learning that school is a great place to
be. They are developing a good feeling about the school
and this hopefully will lead to a good feeling about
education.

Her husband was skeptical about whether the
children are really learning at the rate that would occur
in a "good school." He wonders whether the Durham
Learning Center is capable of teaching, imparting knowledge
as is true in good schools. He is not concerned yet be-
cause the children are still young. However, he has more
faith in the conventional learning experience because he
feels that there are "certain milestones" that children
must accomplish.

What are your feelings about the racial composition?

We're pleased about the black/white ratio. It
gives children a feeling of oneness. We can see it more
in Gregory, our three year old, who is oblivious to race.
He even has a black girl friend who comes over to visit.
However, Alex, is aware of race and makes distinctions.
When the Gregory's black friend comes over Alex doesn't play with them. He tells Gregory that she is black but all Gregory talks about is her pretty red dress.

How did you hear about Durham?

We heard about it through friends. We sent our sons because (1) it was closer than the public school in our district (2) we like the idea of having all three children in the same school all day, and (3) we sent Alex to the YMCA. It was "lily white" an unrealistic setting for a child who lives in the city. Besides Durham having a more realistic setting; it also didn't cost anything.

This year more than last year we've heard unfavorable comments about Durham. They have come mainly from parents who have children in the upper grades. It may well need better structure and teachers.

You've said you visit Durham often, do you feel many parents participate in the school's activities?

You know you get the same parents over and over. We've heard that some parents want a different type of involvement. I think more along the lines of a traditional PTA, involved in the workings of the Board of Education. I also understand that the director has formed a group.
I'd like to see a more sophisticated physical education program. The school needs a much better physical plant. Physical development is important at this age. The playing process like the learning process should be a joy.

Mrs. M, an attorney, has a son in second grade. What do you think Durham is accomplishing?

Before Durham, Michael had a poor educational experience. He hated kindergarten. There were 50 children in the kindergarten and the teacher wasn't even aware that he hated it. In addition he had a poor self-image. I became interested in open classrooms when I read articles in the New Republic. I sat in on the initial meetings when parents were merging Durham and City Center. For Michael it was the right thing, his whole attitude toward school changed. It was incredible. His whole approach was so different. I don't know whether to fully attribute it to Durham or Michael. The things he does are not necessarily academic. For example he took his sketch book to the football game and while we were cheering, he was taking notes. I feel that the climate at Durham encourages him to be that way.

He has some problems with reading. In general though, I'm very pleased with the school. It is the kind of place I wish I had attended.
How do you feel about the racial and socio-economic composition of the student body?

It makes for a better learning experience.

The problem lies with the poor blacks. Michael has certain prejudices of lower-class blacks;--I'm not happy with this. The school doesn't have enough middle class blacks. Michael is more color conscious. I'm not sure whether or not a teacher can help. There doesn't seem to be that much interaction between kids. They should develop friendships. There should be more of a carry over. Because of economic plight of the black children, develops prejudices and stereotypes. He has nothing to compare with; it is not a complete diversification of economic levels.

Do you feel parents actively participate in school's operation?

I'm glad you got to that. The director is apprehensive about parental intervention--just while middle class intervention. He has thwarted every attempt at such a group. He never wanted to allow a group to form. He wants to do things his own way. He picks the people he wants to. He is so petty. We're thinking about moving to Germantown because it's so expensive in Center City. I explained all this to him. He called two of my friends and told them that I
don't have faith in him. He stopped the parents from painting the lunch room in the basement. I couldn't see where it was harmful. We have so many talented parents in the group. Besides it would have been an excellent opportunity for a get together between black and white parents. You know, too, he's in violation of Title I Statutes.

I feel that as parents we have a right to know what happens to our children after all they are there eight hours a day. The school has a duty to the parents. They should explain the philosophy: explain a typical day.

The kids feel comfortable and secure at the school. It's silly not to develop parent/child relationships. He can't have one standard for the kids and another for the parents.

The director picks his own people all the time. For instance, he picked the parent members of the Steering Committee. It's not a democratic process. It's okay if at first he picks his own people, but then he should allow the meetings to open up. He should be secure enough in his position.

They also need to issue the first evaluation earlier in the year than February.
For many parents, the Durham Child Development Center is viewed as a panacea in the educational process for their children. Their favorable attitude stems from the innovative and experimental nature of the Learning Center. Hitherto, parents had been dissatisfied with traditional public schools. They felt these schools did not permit children to grow and develop at their own rate. There was little if any flexibility for teachers or children. Instead, most school officials were preoccupied with compliance to rules, adherence to procedure, and conformity. At Durham, the staff displays concern for the children and attempts to address themselves to the individual needs of the children. A white parent said: "it's a place where they care about children. It is an open and relaxed school where children are allowed to work by themselves." While most parents cited the individual attention that is given to children as probably Durham's greatest asset, the strongest enthusiasm over individuality was expressed by the white parents. These parents mentioned this factor during the interviews while among black parents, I opened the subject and they commented afterwards. This was not entirely surprising, for numerous writer such as Herbert Gans, Talcott Parsons, Gerald Handel, and Lee Rainwater* have presented convincing evidence that middle class parents favor a modern
approach to education. This approach stresses individuality, the development of independent and critical thinkers, as well as motivation toward a positive self image. In addition, traditional public schools, being competitive in nature, placed importance on grades and tests. At Durham, children work in a relaxed atmosphere at their own pace. A white parent, in describing her son's progress at Durham said: "he doesn't have a sense of being taught, it's more social discovery. I trust the school. It's doing well by children. I'm grateful it's public."

While the parents are very pleased with general operation of Durham, not surprisingly, many parents express great reservations about the underlining premises of this learning process which one parent described as a "catch-as-catch-can affair." Other typical responses ran along the following lines- a black parent who works at Durham said: "Rachel comes home every day empty handed. I bought all the supplies that the teacher requested in September. She has never used her notebook. I don't understand that." A white father expressed his misgivings when he said: "I wonder whether Durham is capable of teaching, imparting knowledge as well as they do in good schools." While educators may hail the idea of open classrooms as a much needed departure from the
traditional public school setting, it represents at best a radical departure for most parents. Innovative techniques in education are difficult for some parents to accept. They have long been accustomed to rows of desks, report cards, daily homework assignments, etc. Which characterized the schools they attended. The flexibility in the curriculum, the autonomy given to teachers, the freedom of the children to move about throughout the building, and the overall relaxed atmosphere puzzles some parents. A white parent with two children said: "quite frankly, I'm seriously thinking of taking them out. I'm not too sure whether they're learning. I work and don't have a chance to visit Durham often." I spent an entire day there last week. Play is wonderful, but not all day. I have no way of telling whether they are learning. They don't have homework, no tests. I don't see any results of anything."

There seems to be at least a legitimate and rational if not compelling need at Durham to provide a means whereby parents are educated on the philosophy and merits of open classrooms. One parent said: "I don't understand open classrooms. They need to educate the parents." Parents must be made to understand, at least on an elementary level, the rationale behind the classroom arrangement, the new role of the teacher, and the complete
freedom of movement given to the children. A black parent succinctly expressed the concern of most parents when she said: "I think the school has to show me what my child is doing." The importance of parental support of any educational establishment is sine qua non to its effectiveness. Mario Fantini said: "if parents and teachers, home and school, are not connected in a genuine partnership, then the consequences for child growth and development can be severe. There is a functional relationship between the environment generated by the parents and the community and the child's attitude toward school."

Besides funding and support from educators, for experimental schools to succeed they need support from parents and other community members. Particularly at the Durham School, which purports to address itself to the needs of this South Philadelphia community, it needs very visible support from these residents. A former principal of an inner city school in Philadelphia, very eloquently outlined one of the dilemmas that administrators in urban schools must face. He said: "if you aren't serving parents in a way that makes sense to them, you'd better close down."

The creation of some type of parent organization would probably be the most appropriate vehicle to acquaint the parents with the basis of open classrooms. Here
again, white parents talked about the need for a parent organization before I posed the question about the presumed level of parental participation. Their usual response ran along these lines; "...the parents don't have much to say. There is no organization. The parents don't have an effective voice in the running of the school. I've talked to the director on several occasions about it but he keeps telling me to be patient, that the School is just starting." Presently, parents are made aware of the School's operation if they themselves take the initiative to visit Durham or read the literature (brochures, newsletters) sent out by the school. These lines of communication should continue; however, it is unquestionable that personal contact between the staff members and parents will be more effective and appreciated more than excellent public relations. In addition, such an organization with informal meetings between parents and teachers could represent the first step to resolving the apparent racial tensions (to be elaborated upon later) that permeates Durham.

The greatest level of dissatisfaction over the absence of a parent organization comes from the white, middle income, Center City parents. Many of these parents have gone so far as to accuse the Director of deliberately thwarting all attempts at the creation of such an
organization. Some contribute his reluctance to an inherent inadequacy on his part while others believe that the director realizes that "his teachers" are not secure within themselves to defend their role as teachers in open classrooms. At any rate, the high level of interest among middle class parents is not surprising for two reasons. First, as one recalls from the first chapter, these parents view themselves as having been responsible for the utilization of open classrooms at Durham. It was "they" who convinced "the powers that be" of the Philadelphia School System of the merits and strong parental support for instituting open classrooms. Also, "they," invited Lore and the Learning Labs to use the second floor of the Durham building. The Learning Laboratories and Lore's other "pearls of Wisdom" resulted in the creation of the Durham Child Development Center. Secondly, irregardless of the controversy over Durham's real "prime movers" middle income parents would be motivated to form an organization. Middle class people are civic minded and as such join and participate in many organizations. Gans writes: "white middle class people are good at making friends...for those people, community participation is almost a duty."5

To set up a parent organization may be easy,
however its effectiveness i.e. participation by both black and white parents, will be no small feat. While middle class people may be accustomed to making friends, joining, and participating in organizations, it is quite different for working class people. In general poor and working class people do less entertaining than middle class people. Their social life is restricted to and revolves around relatives, children, and close friends. Gans writes, "working class culture provide few skills and attitudes needed for organizational activities....they have trouble relating to strangers, making decisions in a group....In a middle class, community then, people of working class culture stay close to home...." This situation is further complicated by the fact that most of the poor and working class people in the school are black. These black people are probably uncomfortable at best and even suspicious of white people, with whom, by their own admission they have had little contact. From my home visits, the blacks who actively participate expressed uneasiness in talking informally with white parents and teachers. The problem takes on another dimension among black parents who do not visit, much less participate, in the activities of the school.

However, the director has not been totally unresponsive to the concerns of the parents. In October,
1971, he created a Parent Committee composed of seven black parents and ten white parents. An example of the level of dissatisfaction can be seen in the evolution of this Committee. In conducting my interviews, parents began to organize their thoughts. Many parents stated that they had been doing some critical thinking about Durham, but until my home visits that they voiced the results of their re-thinking. In trying to help parents to relax, I would point out that some of their voiced apprehensions had been expressed by other parents, both black and white. Thus parents began to see that certain problems (in this case the education of their children) transcended race. Before my home visits, the white parents were the only members of the Parent Committee who voiced any opinions. The black parents only commented from time to time. However, at a meeting, a white parent talked about our conversations. Further, she went on to say that the questions that I raised in the course of the interviews caused her to reflect about Durham's operation and its responsibility to the parents. From conversations with other parents, this led to a barrage of opinions being expressed. This was the first time that black and white parents communicated with one another. A subgroup of parents on the Parent Committee decided to go "underground" i.e. they decided
to hold meetings at their respective homes.* They felt that they could talk more openly outside of the Durham building where either the director or a staff person tried to direct the discussion. They are now developing a proposal of things that they would like to take place. What will be of great interest is how the director will respond to the recommendations that emerge from these two groups.

An interesting paradox exists among the parents. Initially the director gave me the names of about seventeen parents with whom he suggested I interview first. He felt that they would be very frank and helpful with my study. He labeled these parents as "key parents;" they were the people who volunteered in any of Durham's endeavors. However, it was the key parents who expressed the strongest reservations about Durham. Some of their reservations centered around: 1) Durham's ability to teach their children basic skills, 2) racial polarization 3) lack of real structure, and 4) lack of discipline, etc. The less often a parent visited the school of participated in any of its activities, i.e., the more 'isolated' the parent was, the more favorable was his attitude towards Durham. It seemed that the people with the most information were also the most critical. This in itself is not surprising for it seemed the key parents
represented the most educated body of parents; and generally educated people tend to be critical thinkers. What is intriguing was my belief from several conversations with the director as well as conversations with other staff members that they "assumed" the responses of the key parents would be most favorable.

An almost clear black/white dichotomy or perhaps more accurately a professional/non-professional division exists among the staff members who have children enrolled at Durham. Here again the people with the most information (i.e. people who work at Durham every day) express skepticism about the program. There are twelve staff members who have children attending Durham (6 black, 6 whites). All but one of the white staff members is a professional while among black parent staff members only two are professionals. Among white staff member parents, all but one (a professional) enthusiastically supports the school. In the case of black staff members only two (a professional, para professional) supports the school, i.e. thinks open classrooms and Durham's implementation of the concept has been successful. Class parents tend to prefer the modern approach to education, so that the favorable attitudes of the white staff member parents are not astounding. What is surprising is the attitude of the black staff member parents, most of whom (with the
exception of one) have been at the Durham Child Development Center since it began. Despite the fact, that working class people tend to favor a more traditional approach to education and are reluctant to accept change than middle class parents; it would seem that after two years in the school their attitude would have changed. However, most black Staff members still feel that open classrooms do not serve the needs of their children, they are not convinced that flexibility in curriculum and freedom of movement should set the tone for the educational process of their children. An indication of the level of dissatisfaction among black staff members parents took place in November when a staff member withdrew her child from the school. From private conversations among administrators, teachers, and para professionals, the withdrawal stunned the staff....After all they reasoned, here was a black woman whose child was receiving free daily care. In addition the school was providing nutritional, medical, and educational services, not to mention the obvious benefit of having the child and parent together daily. To many staff members, this seemed an "ideal arrangement." The level of skepticism among black staff member parents may well be an indication of the difficulty Durham faces in educating black parents to the merits of open classrooms and the underlining
beliefs of the British Primary System.

In general, black parents express more skepticism about Durham's ability to provide their children with the basic skills (how to read, write, and perform basic mathematic problems) that they will need in order to function in American society than white parents. The concerns were revealed in typical responses as "they should have more homework. I want to be able to see for myself what my child is doing. The way it is now, I'm not really sure what goes on unless I visit. There should be more emphasis on learning" or "I don't know whether Durham is providing him with the skills that he will need as a black man in society." Black parents also feel that there should be more emphasis on discipline and more structure at Durham. In his book, The Levittowners, Gans discusses the attitude of working class parents toward discipline. He states: "children are expected to behave according to adult rules and are often disciplined when they act as children....The main purpose of childrearing is to make sure that the child stays out of trouble.... For this reason, working class parents expect the school to enforce discipline." While black parents feel that the environments in the schools in which their children formerly attended were repressive, Durham moves too far to the left and what they desire is a middle ground.
They do not understand the constructive nature of play nor are they impressed by the degree of freedom that the children have. One black parent summarized the general sentiment of most black parents when she said: "well, it's okay for those white people from Center City.... Black children need structure to gain a sense of security. They don't get that at Durham. I know a lot of black parents don't like it." While another parent said: "some children can't handle all that freedom. Black kids need discipline. I'm wondering what's going to happen when they leave Durham."

The concerns of the black parents is understandable. School plays an important role in the lives of black people. To them, education is still viewed as necessary for survival besides being considered the only vehicle to social improvement and upward mobility. Jessie Bernard, a sociologist, writes: "even in the lowest-income classes, despite the recurring characterization of the Negro family as apathetic no research result is more consistently reported than the salience of high...educational aspirations." Black parents know full well that there are certain skills with which all people must be equipped to function in society. Further, they may sense, and quite correctly, that their children
don't have alternative sources of book learning. Black parents recognize this sort of thing quite clearly. Jonathan Kozol, the eminent educator, writes: "Black parents know full well that there's not much that a poor black 14 year old can do in cities like New York or Boston if he cannot read and write enough to understand a street sign or to read a phone book....They are, in the most simple and honest terms, kids who just can't do a damn thing in the kinds of cities that we live in.*10 Because of demanding jobs, numerous household responsibilities, and their general focus on the problems of survival, these parents depend on the school to provide their children with these basic skills. The school is expected to play a larger role than the actual imparting of knowledge. Black parents expect that the school will instill discipline in their children; discipline which the parent couldn't or didn't have the time to inculcate. Grier and Cobbs, black psychiatrists, write in their book Black Rage: "the black parent approaches the teacher with great respect due a person of learning....Here is the person who can do for this precious child all wonderful things a parent cannot. The child is admonished to obey the teacher as he would his parents and the teacher is urged to exercise parental prerogatives, including beating."*11 While black parents may want children to
enjoy learning; they realize that their children will be returning to public schools where teachers are not likely to be as solicitous of their children's needs and feelings as Durham. They feel that Durham must prepare their children for the eventual transition into traditional public schools.

The dilemma of transition is of great concern to parents. During the course of the interviews, many parents often asked: "what happens to my child after he leaves Durham?" This apprehension was paramount among parents who had children in fourth and fifth grade where transition poses a more immediate problem. It was in the context of transition that parents expressed anxiety over Durham's system of evaluation and the lack of test, grades, etc. They wondered by what criteria the next schools would assess the progress of a child who had attended Durham. To facilitate the transition, parents felt Durham should require its children to complete daily homework assignments that would be prominent in traditional public schools. Again, the problem of transition is more acute for blacks than it is for whites. One black parent said: "I asked the principal of her old school what was going to happen to the children once they left Durham. He told me that they would be put back in their regular
classrooms. I told him if that happens, Durham will have been a waste of time." Middle class whites have more options. They can send their children to private schools, "juggle" with school district boundaries because of their personal contacts, or have their children placed in other experimental schools as Parkway.*12 Moreover, the transition will be less difficult for the middle income children, whose homes are more supportive. Middle income parents are more educated, have more leisure time to spend with their children, as well as the fact that the home environment is more flexible and easy going. Poor blacks, on the other hand, are preoccupied twenty-four hours a day with just trying to survive and grapple with reality.

Even though black and white children (student population is 77% black, 23% white) attend the same school true racial integration has not been achieved. White parents are particularly disappointed over this fact as one parent remarked: "the racial balance they talked about doesn't exist." In walking through the corridors and in the classrooms of Durham, only a casual observer could not fail to see the apparent racial polarization between the children. Generally, the black children work and play together and most of the white children do likewise. In addition, one can "sense" the racial tension that
exists in the schools. There are many fights in the school and usually they involve black against white. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that although the black and white children live in South Central Philadelphia, the boundaries separating the two groups are very distinct and there is little if any interaction. Gans writes: "again, mere diversity does not assure the kind of interaction that encourages integration, and a school with great diversity but sharp internal segregation may not be as desirable as one with less diversity without internal segregation."¹³ The children only see each other in school. This leads to the formation of stereotypes and negative generalizations on the part of white children toward blacks. One worried parent said: "I've noticed this year that she has started to make racial slurs about black children. It's unfortunate that more black children don't live closer or that I don't know any black parents. Durham doesn't provide the opportunity for parents to meet informally. She never sees the black children outside of the school." It will not be easy to recruit poor whites and middle income blacks to Durham within its existing school boundaries. (It was interesting to note that the white parents at Durham talked about the need for more black middle income parents to attend Durham. They said that this addition of middle
income blacks would make the socio-economic diversification complete. The white parents did not mention the need for poor whites.) There does not exist a multitude of poor whites and middle income blacks in the area. Most middle income blacks are established homeowners who have lived in the area for many years and their children are either teenagers or adults. White parents who have had their children at the Learning Center before the merger of the Durham and City Center Schools reported that the few black middle class parents who sent their children to the Learning Center withdrew them at the end of the first year of the school's operation.

Although teachers have greater autonomy in open classrooms, only a few parents expressed concern over the probability of "teacher cop-out." Many parents felt that in such a situation where teachers have so much flexibility it is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. Some of the parents express anxiety over the new teaching methods that the teachers employ.

Finally, all the parents agreed that written evaluations should be issued before February. Presently, the school mails out evaluations in February and June. (Traditional Philadelphia public schools issue report cards in November, February, April, and June). At Durham the evaluations are written by a child's teacher.
and must be read and approved by the head teacher before they are mailed to parents. Aside from this "curious double approval system," parents feel that they should receive some type of report before mid-February. One critical parent said: "I think it's ridiculous that they only issue reports in February and June. In November, I almost decided not to attend the parent's meeting. I'm glad I went. The teacher told me that my daughter was having serious problems in reading and math. What would have happened if I hadn't gone that night. The whole School's operation and learning process is a "catch-as-you-can affair." With the realization that there are complexities in evaluating children's progress in the context of any learning process and the difficulty is enhanced in an open classroom situation, there exists a need to present something to parents by which they can judge a child's progress. It would seem with a student population as small as Durham (209), teachers could make telephone calls, visit homes, return a report or paper to the parent that gives some indication of a child's progress.

The following table is a very crude attempt to graphically summarize the dilemmas that forty-four of Durham's parents perceive for their children. The trend of this table seems to indicate that the concerns of the
parents reflect factors related to socio-economic class, family stability, and educational level as opposed to race. Because it was impossible to make accurate divisions within each racial group by occupation, the determining characteristic is household type — whether single or two parent. This, too, is a crude classification— for single parent whites are divorces and in most cases single parent blacks are not. The single parent whites are professionals and are not faced with the economic plight of the single parent blacks, most of whom receive public assistance. However disparate their life styles, they do seem to expect more from schools than two parent homes. This difference in perception of two parent homes may arise from the fact that aside from economics, single parents have more additional responsibilities.

The response total for certain questions are small because they indicate a minimum number. In some interviews, some questions were not considered. Some basic generalities are:

1. Black parents are more skeptical about Durham's ability to teach their children basic academic skills. They also feel that the children have too much freedom of movement.
a. Both groups of single parents express more skepticism than two parent homes.

2. Middle class parents express less apprehension about Durham's ability to impart certain academic skills. They favor the modern approach to learning. Even here, however, single parent homes expressed more skepticism than two parent homes. It may well be that skepticism in this area reflects a socio-economic thing rather than a racial one. Two parent homes may be more educated, more financially secure, and thereby feel that even if Durham falls short, they will be able to compensate for the losses.

3. White parents revealed concern that their children make racial slurs. This problem arises because of the socio-economic feature

4. Middle class parents want a parent organization. A surprisingly large per cent of single parents (black and white alike) want it also. This may again reflect their expectation that the school must do more for their children. They probably see this organization as a
medium to voice their criticisms of the school. Also, single parents are likely to engage in less social activities than two parent homes and may see this organization as a vehicle to meet the parents of their children's friends.

5. Finally, staff members break down according to class - with the middle class staff showing less concern with Durham's perceived shortcomings than black non professionals.
FOOTNOTES
A Peter Ballenberger, Letter to John Howard Nov. '72

1 I want to thank Mrs. Lore Rasmussen for the suggestion about the pictures and for her other invaluable recommendations that she made while I was conducting my research.


5 Gans, p. 30.


7 I'm not naive enough to think that this Committee will do "great things" nor do I take credit for its formation. I am pleased that some parents are really beginning to talk with one another and that they are beginning to see commonality in their lives.


10 Jonathan Kozol "Free Schools Fail Because They Don't Teach" Psychology Today April, 1972 p. 32.

Parkway is an experimental high school in Philadelphia which opened in January, 1969. Here, the city is the classroom and its curriculum is designed to encourage students to utilize the invaluable resources of the city.

Gans, p. 170.
CHAPTER III - DILEMNAS OF ADMINISTRATION

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble

Madbeth
### SUMMARY TABLE RESPONSES OF DURHAM'S PARENTS

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<td>(1) 50%</td>
<td>(1) 50%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(3) 75%</td>
<td>(4) 100%</td>
<td>(2) 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<th>At Durham there is too much play</th>
<th>Apprehension toward transition</th>
<th>Need for Parent Organization</th>
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<td>(7) 63%</td>
<td>(8) 72%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Black Two Parents</td>
<td>(4) 28%</td>
<td>(4) 28%</td>
<td>(4) 28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Two Parents</td>
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<td>(1) 6%</td>
<td>(3) 20%</td>
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**SUMMARY TABLE STAFF MEMBER PARENTS (SAME CATEGORIES)**

- Children make racial slurs

- Children are not mastering basic academics

- At Durham there is too much play

- Apprehension toward transition

- Need for Parent Organization

- N is the total number of responses.
The principal (or director) or any urban school in 1972 finds himself in an unenviable position. Instead of holding a position that is coveted, it should generate sympathy and understanding for the courageous soul, who daily faces problems as: funding in a bankrupt city school system, the increasing power of teacher unions and the accompanying problem of tenure, the increasing role of paraprofessionals, and demands of accountability, as well as demonstrated effectiveness demanded by parents and top school administrators.

The plight of this administrator is aggravated if he is the director of an experimental or innovative school. In this case, he must present his school as being different, unique, but at the same time convince the established school officials that his school is educating its students, i.e., that it is accomplishing for the children what they would have received in the traditional public schools and something better. To successfully operate an innovative school within the context of the established school structure, he is likely to have to accept certain constraints to receive the necessary support and approval from the "powers that be" who are also likely to be the ones who control the allocation of funds. The director of an innovative program is faced with the problem of staff recruitment
and selection. He will want to pick persons who have demonstrated their competence in the certain areas. However, if the school is unique, it will be difficult a priori to define with clarity the skills that will be needed. To complicate the problem of staff selection even further, it is unlikely that the director will be able to personally choose all the members of his staff. Because of "sticky factors" as tenure it is likely that he will inherit some teachers and other school personnel. In the initial stages of planning for the school, time constraints make it difficult to involve the community that the school is to serve in any meaningful way. The people who comprise the community are not likely to be educators, familiar with pedagogical principles. Instead they are likely to be a diverse group of people who have different expectations about what the school should and can accomplish for their children. In addition, while they may want their children to participate in a new educational venture, they will want assurances from the school that their children are learning, i.e., acquiring basic academic skills that are needed to function in today's society. So the director will be faced with parents who want tangible evidence that their children are learning in a relatively short period of time after the school begins. However, in the early beginnings of
any program the director must devote his energies to building a strong administration of his own, of laying a firm foundation to his internal structure. How to "budget his time" is an organizational problem facing the director. He must "sell his school" to the top administrators, assure the parents that the School is educating their children, and firmly establish his leadership role in the early stages of the program to assure its continuance.

Many of the problems that plague most public school principals are absent, if not greatly reduced at Durham, according to the director. There are no major financial problems – funding for the various components come from federal (Title I and Title III), state (Pennsylvania Social Security Administration) and local (Philadelphia Board of Education) sources. While the administrative allocation process of the various components is in and of itself complex, Durham is not unduly troubled about funds being drastically cut or eliminated entirely. The top administrators of the Learning Center are prominent educators who have gained respect and praise, both nationally in educational circles as well as from Philadelphia School officials. To substantiate this, one need only to recall from the first chapter that the present Superintendent of Schools was a protege of the
'creator' of the school. In addition, that Chapter provided a small indication of the impressive credentials which some of the visitors who come to Durham possess. Moreover, from news reports, television, articles in local papers and conversations with school officials, the Durham Child Development Center has been enthusiastically applauded as a "milestone in the educational history of the city. In citing the numerous innovative educational programs that should be eliminated, the skeptical mayor, Frank Rizza gave the Learning Center his tacit approval by not including it on his list of "educational frills" that should be eliminated. Also, the director of Durham had more flexibility and was able to exercise more prerogatives in staff selection than is accorded to most 'heads' of innovative programs. While most directors inherit a majority of the staff members, at Durham the director chose over fifty (50) per cent of the staff personally and about twenty (20) per cent were selected by people that he himself or the curriculum specialist (Lore R.) had recruited.

Though Durham is free of certain difficulties (funding, approval from school officials, and flexibility in staff recruitment) it still has some menacing problems. These problems can best be described in terms of three broad categories. The broad areas revolve around
(1) diversity (disparate background of children, parents) (2) evaluation (how do you tell if they're learning), and (3) authority. Then, problems of community involvement, teacher selection, and instruction can be viewed as manifestations of the broader categories.

Because Durham's children come from disparate backgrounds, and to some extent this is true of its staff members, i.e. professional/non-professional certain problems arise. Here the old cliche, "variety being the spice of life" does not hold true for neither group seems to derive much enrichment from this heterogeneity. Where you have a community composed of white middle class parents and black working class parents, it is difficult to reach any type of consensus or even attain any involvement. These parents have disparate expectations about school and their contrasting life styles (middle class parents being more civic minded, and open/working class parents' social life being more restricted) virtually rule out any likelihood of consensus. It becomes difficult for a director to ascertain, much less, adhere to the wishes of such a diverse parent body.

Staff selection becomes an onerous problem. The problem of selection is aggravated as in the case of Durham, you have an innovative program that provides a multiplicity of services, i.e., serves teenage mothers,
provides day care services, and formal schooling. Anthony Downs, the renowned political scientist, writes: "first, it is not always clear what traits new members should have. The broader the scope of activities involved in any given position, the more general the talents required and the harder it is to define them."\(^1\)

Because of the standards under which the educational establishment operates, the "qualified individuals" are likely to be white middle class. However, when the majority of the student body is black, the necessity of choosing staff members who can transcend their value system is compounded. The difficulty that arises when staff members are unaware of the needs of children they purportedly serve is best exemplified in the school age mothers program. Of the twelve teenagers who participate in this component, eleven are black. Besides experiencing the problems that arise from being an adolescent, growing up in the ghetto of Philadelphia, the plight of these girls is compounded by their pregnancy. In addition, to receiving pre and post natal training, continued schooling, clearly, these girls need supportive behavior.

According to the head teacher of this component the girls receive just the opposite. Instead of privacy, the girls are bombarded with about ten staff members, who are white
and middle class. According to conversations with young mothers (some who had completed the program last year), the girls experience additional inner conflict and confusion. The teachers, in essence, tell the girls the manner in which they were reared "was wrong" and that they should adopt the childrearing practices of the middle class. Needless to say, this suggestion caused much conflict in the homes of the young mothers and several prospective grandmothers (mothers of the school age mothers) have angrily come to the school or even withdrawn their daughters. Jonathan Kozel, eloquently summarizes the difficulty that arises when white people teach at urban schools. He writes: "White men and white women who come into teach and and work alongside black and Spanish-speaking people in the intense, committed atmosphere of the urban free school have to learn to exercise their ideologies, and their ideals with great sophistication ... Too often, these teachers do not recognize the real needs and the specific agonies that poor people in this country must cope with."²

The second broad area of difficulty lies in evaluation, i.e., how do you measure what is going, how do you determine if it's effective. In the case of the children, parents, especially, want to know how the school determines whether or not their children are learning.
In a school that does not utilize mass testing or issue grades, it is difficult to convince parents that the school is accomplishing anything for their children. The problem of diversity exacerbates the situation. Working class parents, even though they want their children to attend this experimental school, want their progress judged by traditional standards) while middle class parents favor the modern approach in education. The staff then must decide whether or not to utilize free open classrooms or to compromise and conduct some classes as they would in a traditional school. In an open classroom situation, when teachers experience greater autonomy and flexibility in the teaching methods they employ it becomes difficult to evaluate teacher performance. If, as Silberman points out, teachers can be deceived into thinking that they are teaching when in reality "they aren't doing a damn thing," then it is more complicated for a director to judge whether in fact they are accomplishing anything in the class. The problem is made more complex if he is called upon to defend his teacher to parents or school administrators. He doesn't want to say that the teacher is ineffective, for he may feel that this reflects upon his abilities as an administrator; while at the same time, he, himself, has no real assurance, that the teacher is being effective.
Finally, the most interesting problem in and of itself revolves the question of decision making and authority in a school that has no bosses, i.e. embraces an egalitarian method. In most schools, the "chain of command" i.e. the hierarchial structure is well defined. In the case of local schools, for all practical purposes, the principal has the final say on matters that directly pertain to the operation of the school - his office is where the buck stops. Durham is predicated on the belief that parents, teacher, and children are partners in the learning process and, as such, everyone has an equal voice in policy making decisions. However, grandiose and idealistic the ethos is in theory, it is inefficient, if not impossible in practice.

The following memorandum best exemplifies the dilemma that an administrator faces in a school that has no bosses. In addition to illustrating the dilemma of a director in a school that embraces an egalitarian ethos, the memo points out some of the problems that arise when there is a disparity between the ideology of the school and its practice, i.e. the difference between rhetoric and reality.

The memo sent to Gina:

Background: Gina works as a teacher in the Teacher Center. She has worked in this capacity since
the Teacher Center first started in 1966. She was the teacher who first "turned the Center City parents on to" the idea of open classrooms.

Gina has two daughters at Durham. One of her daughters is in the fourth grade. This fourth grade class is 75% black. Another staff member, Gail Delle Pella, has two children at Durham. Gail's daughter overheard a fifth grade teacher and a fourth grade teacher discussing in which section Gina's daughter would be placed next year. Gail's daughter relayed the conversation to her mother. Her mother told Gina something to the effect that her daughter was being used; that her daughter's education was being sacrificed at the expense of libertarian notion of racial balance. This particular fourth grade class is regarded as a "problem class", has children who are emotionally disturbed. The teacher is frequently absent and most people at Durham feel that little if any learning occurs in this classroom.
Dear Gina:

I wish I didn't have to write this letter. There are so many important, "building" things that urgently require my attention, so to respond to your words of yesterday afternoon represents yet another diversion from work I should be doing. This prolongs the precise condition about which I was complaining - namely, that so much time and emotional energy be invested by four staff members over such trivial matters that should never have emerged in the first place.

In addition, it seemed such a hostile action for you to confront me at 2:30 PM, yesterday, asking if I had given Thursday's conversation further thought (I had of course); if I intended to drop it (I did) or if I was going to apologize; then to add that if an apology was not forthcoming, you would "take some action", which you initiated, quite directly, might be to remove Joanna, Sophie, and yourself from Durham. All this you threw out late in the day (I was in the midst of two converging problems) and then said you could not stay to talk but would on Tuesday. There's something thoroughly inhumane about dumping so much on a person and then running.

Nevertheless, I want to respond and to defuse this situation, precisely because your two girls are so intimately involved, and I will do almost anything at Durham to protect their position - or of any child - in our community. I value this above all. With this in mind, I hope you will accept my apology, for I evidently hit you harder than you felt was fair or acceptable, and I'm sorry to have caused you that kind of pain and upset. My hope at Durham is to avoid such debilitating situations, so if I contributed to its escalation - and evidently I did- then I am truly sorry.

The content of this overblown situation is important. I believe we group and place children in Durham's K-5 program sensitively, carefully and well. Last Spring, with Lore's help and Steffie's painstaking leg-work in collecting information, Gloria and I worked out groupings with the 3rd floor staff. We did so in an open way that allowed staff members not only to scrutinize the process, but to heavily contribute to it. The teachers wrote out lists and suggestions to Gloria, discussed their thoughts with her in person, and, then after Gloria had worked through some tentative possibilities, we did, as a team, work through the entire K-5 list. Final approval rested with Gloria and me.

We tried to place each child with a teacher and peer group that would best enable the child to flourish - emotionally, socially and academically. We slavishly adhered to the value of placing each child with congenial friends - hopefully both friends already made and children we felt would represent potential friends or at least happy associates. In addition, we did work on racial balance within each classroom group. This is easy for us to handle except in our present
4th grade where, because of our initial intake procedures last Fall (1970), we have a preponderance of Black children. This will again raise a problem in next year's groupings, one we will deal with as forthrightly and imaginatively as possible - but always with the individual child as our paramount focus.

We will follow the same, thoughtful procedure this spring; only we've begun collecting data (not discussing groupings) much earlier. We're going to do an even more careful job on this go-around, but with the same values - and the openness - holding sway.

Perhaps some staff members are talking about possible groupings. This would seem a natural thing. But from my point of view, virtually nothing having to do with next year's groupings has begun at all - except, as I say, data collection beginning at the toddlers and working up through the 3's and 4's to the K-5 population. Before official discussions do begin, I will spell out a process that we'll follow and make sure everyone in the Center is apprised. That teachers will hold certain opinions, maybe even that they might want certain groupings, is both to be expected and probably applauded, for they care. But - and this is important - in the last analysis, the overall needs and values for the Center's entire population will prevail, and I suppose it's only fair and honest to say that final judgement in this area rests with me. I will share this responsibility primarily with Gloria, secondarily - but importantly - with other teachers, and, as always, I will want the benefit of Lore's overall judgement. Parents who wish to have (non-demand) input can happily and relaxedly do so.

In sum, we're operating this year on the basis of an open, altogether valid grouping procedure. We will do so for next year in the same way on the same basis, but with more thorough study. I believe way deep in my inner being that you can trust us to do what's best for Sophie and Joanna; and I suspect you'll be consulted. Meanwhile the beauty of an open process is that it can be watched. I would invite you to do so at any and all stages.

My upset arose from the feeling that two parents close to the Durham situation were involved in questioning a process I thought they might by now have understood and felt comfortable enough about not to question. Had I been in your situation, I would have written the following note to Gloria and/or me:

"I've heard from Gail (through Lisa) that Sheilagh might be placed in Marcia's room next year and that Joanna might not. I know none of this information is official, and I'm not even sure how authentic it is. I don't want to raise a fuss or appear over-concerned, but, naturally, Joanna's placement is of importance to me. Could you tell me if there's any truth to this? Is this for real or just speculative talk? Can I be assured that I might know when the grouping process begins and might I have a voice where my own children are concerned? This would greatly alleviate my anxiety."
Had you done this, I believe you would have gotten the following written reply:

"Gina: Please don't worry on this score. Nothing has been decided about groupings for next year. NO decision has been made about Sheilagh, or Joanna. We will certainly invite you to talk with us about this matter when the time comes - probably no earlier than May."

Handled this way, we might have saved 2-3 exhausting days, long hours of talk (and tears) and the opening up of a lot of other stuff that needn't have been dealt with at all. No doubt, some good has come of these sessions, but I wish we could have avoided them.

To repeat, you do have my apologies. Let's now get on to the next matter.

Peter

Peter
Gina confronted Peter and the fifth grade teacher. The four had a heated argument and even tears were shed. About two days later Peter wrote this memo.

Clearly, this memo demonstrates that the egalitarian ethos is quixotic, at best, for the successful operation of a school. At some point a director must say, "in the last analysis the overall needs and values for the Center's entire population will prevail, and I suppose it's only fair and honest to say that the final judgment in this area rests with me." Particularly when a school is just beginning, such a grandiose ethos is unrealistic. The situation is aggravated when one considers the uniqueness of Durham, i.e., the variety of services all housed under one roof. This memo provides some indication of the atmosphere of pretense that permeates Durham. There is a tremendous gap between the ethos and the actions of the principal actors. Downs writes: "a bureau's ideology does not accurately reflect what the bureau actually does. It is an idealized version of what the Bureau's top leaders would like to do - tailored to act as a public relation vehicle for them. However, if a bureau's ideology is completely unrelated to its behavior, then those whom its leaders wish to influence will eventually learn that the ideology is an unrealistic input for
their decision making." It is highly unlikely that the egalitarian ethos will ever become an efficient mechanism upon which any bureaucracy can operate at least in the early stages of a school's operation. Though the director may be reluctant to exercise his authority in school policy, he must sacrifice idealism for efficiency. Perhaps after the roles of staff members become more clearly defined and adult members become more sensitive to each other, as well as gaining a better understanding of the many theories on which the school is based, the conflict between the staff members and the director will lessen. Anthony Bowes writes: "Within any organization, greater goal consensus reduces the number and intensity of conflicts among members, thus improving the organization's overall coordination. Moreover, as the goals of lower-level members become more like those of the top-level members, the relative amount of authority leakage declines...."  

The memo also illustrates the lack of consensus among adult staff members at Durham. It shows that even among adult members that are presumably intimately familiar with the objectives and underlining premises of the school, there exists a lack of understanding. The director writes:
"my upset arose from the feeling that two parents close to the Durham situation were involved in questioning a process I thought they might by now have understood and felt comfortable enough about not to question." In his book, Inside Bureaucracy, Anthony Downs outlines some of the intrinsic problems of modern bureaucracies. In one chapter he cites many of the shortcomings in the perception of supervisors. He writes: "all officials engaged in planning bureau actions have some incentive for indulging in the superman syndrome (grandiose but impracticable formulation)....In theory, every official can assume that all other social agents will perform their social functions in the way he himself regards as most efficient. However, the actual behavior of those agents will be heavily influenced by their views of what is efficient as well as by self-interest factors."
FOOTNOTES


2 Jonathan Kozol, "Free Schools Fail Because They Don't Teach" Psychology Today April, 1972 p. 36.

3 Downs, p. 228.

4 Ibid p. 234

5 Ibid p. 232

6 Ibid p. 238
CONCLUSION

"Suffer the children and forbid them not...."

St. Mark 10; 14
The Durham Child Development Center is what one public school looks like. Only its value to the children and their families can determine whether it is a model which might be emulated elsewhere....

The above quote was taken from a brochure which describes the Learning Center. While the School embraces the "whole building concept" i.e. the five components at Durham are interdependent and complement each component vary. The school age mothers' program is designed to permit unwed pregnant teenagers to continue their formal schooling and later offer these young mothers pre and post natal care. The Infant Center and toddler component have intriguing parallels to the pre school program found in the Soviet Union. In the U.S.S.R., over ten per cent of all Soviet children under two years old are currently enrolled in public nurseries.*1 In the Soviet System and at Durham, a great deal of attention is devoted to the development of senses, perception, and thought in young children. Emphasis is also given to providing medical care for the children. Finally, both place importance upon direct contact with adults which is felt to be "imperative" to the learning process. The three and four year old program is in actuality a Head Start program. Head Start Programs emerged from the Title I
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The underlying rationale stems from belief that "early intervention" would enable poor children to overcome certain handicaps which impede their progress in public school. The largest component, the elementary school, is modeled after the British Primary System. Primary schools differ from most American public schools in their approach and motivation. In this system, children constitute the basic resources of the educational process. Each child is perceived to possess certain unique and shared experiences and capabilities when he enters the classroom. The teachers responsibility is to design an environment which best utilizes these qualities as well as one that will permit children to grow and become independent creative thinkers. The teacher's chief role changes from one of omnipotence to that of servant as she guides her pupils through the educational process. The classroom consists of different resource centers; there are raw materials, reading materials, toys, and materials for dramatic play. All interpersonal relationships are characterized by respect, trust, and confidence in this system.

Seemingly, these are the theories on which Durham is predicated; however, the School has several intriguing inconsistencies. 1) In a brochure describing Durham,
written by director, he describes his staff as being one which is "warm, open, trusting and respectful of children's needs. In a school which embraces an egalitarian ethos, interpersonal relationships especially between staff/director are characterized by an atmosphere of pretense.

2) A possible outgrowth of the interesting staff/director interpersonal relations is lack of intermingling among staff members of different components. From observation, children feel free to visit and take part in activities of different components while staff members remain in their respective components (3) The creator of the school dislikes elitism; however, essentially only "a chosen few" have any input into the School's operation. Teachers, children, and parents are not partners in learning. 4) The top administrators of Durham regard it as a prototype of a community school, yet the black community which constitutes the majority (61) per cent of the student body had no input in the school's design. 5) the children are made to feel comfortable, adults listen to their ideas, and they are regarded for their individual worth. However, there seems to be one standard for children and another for parents who are put off at a distance. This double standard is best exemplified by the absence of a parent organization. While the level of dissatisfaction among parents does not appear to have affected the children greatly, however, if the school does
not attempt to be more solicitous of the parents' discontent there could be repercussions in the attitude of the children toward the school. 6) Finally, the benefits that would accrue by having children of different racial and socio-economic background has not been achieved. The racial integration is non-existent and the socio-economic cross section is less than complete. Instead of achieving racial harmony, some white children have begun to make racial slurs.

The interesting contradictions and amusing ironies of Durham to some extent reflect some general problems found in educational innovation. Durham represents in a microcosm the dilemmas of attempts at educational reform. (In his book, The Irony of Early School Reform, Michael Katz (in focusing attempts in reform in Massachusetts in the early nineteenth century) captures some of the major problems of reform. The major theories of the book are two-fold 1) using Massachusetts in the nineteenth century as an example, and primarily focusing on the educational arena, Katz pierces to the point of destruction the myth of public education. That myth held that public education arose as the result of "a rational, enlightened working class, led by idealistic and humanitarian intellectuals, triumphantly wresting free public education from a
selfish, wealthy elite and from the bigoted proponents of orthodox.\textsuperscript{2} 2) an outgrowth of destroying the first myth, Katz goes on to say that true educational reform has never taken place in the United States "we must face the painful fact that this country has never, on any large scale, known vital urban schools.....We must realize that we have no models; truly to reform we must conceive and build anew."\textsuperscript{3}

The principal actors in the creation of Durham have many striking similarities to those who led the reform movement in Massachusetts during the mid-nineteenth century. "Very simply, the extension and reform of education in the mid-nineteenth century were not a pot pourri of democracy, rationalism, and humanitarianism. They were the attempt of a coalition of the social leaders, status-anxious parents, and status hungry educators to impose educational innovation each for their own reasons, upon a reluctant community."\textsuperscript{4} In Katz's book, the social leaders were the middle class professionals who advocated educational reform as a way to ameliorate the plight of the poor and working class. However, they never consulted the working class community that were considered the benefactors of the reform movement but instead the social leaders designed the schools in terms of how they thought it should operate. At Durham, Lore and Peter
designed the Learning Center in part to serve the needs of the South Philadelphia community, that had little if any input in the framework of Durham. The status-anxious parents in the context of this analogy are the Center City parents - eager to implement open classrooms in the school that their children would attend. They held meetings with teachers, familiar with open classrooms, and played an instrumental part in convincing the Philadelphia Board of Education that their new school merited the implementation of this innovative approach to learning. Finally, the status hungry educators are represented by the top Philadelphia administrators who want Durham "to work" and hail it as a "milestone in the educational history of the city.

One of the chief problems of educational reform stems from the perception of the reformers. This is perhaps Durham's most glaring shortcoming. Durham's creators were upper middle class Jews, professionals, who lacked insight and sensitivity for the needs of the residents of this South Philadelphia community. Katz, describing the shortsightedness of the advocates of educational reform writes: "...what they failed to see was that their own values were not shared by the entire community....More subtle, but more devastating, was the community leaders' failure to perceive the weakness in their own rhetoric...."
While one can sympathize with the difficulties facing educational planners, i.e. designing a school which meets the desires of a Board of Education, one cannot ignore the need to gain community support is not an easy task. Generally, community people are not educators and as such are not familiar with pedagogical principles or principles of human growth and development. They are not a group of like-minded people so it will be difficult to achieve consensus. The technique utilized by the planners at Durham secured for them many things, i.e. efficiency, less time, expediency, as well as the apparent strength of leadership during the initial stages of the establishment. In securing assets of expediency one must look at the consequences that arise when certain aspects of the community are neglected. In this case of Durham, and maybe in all cases of this type, the negative consequences call into question some of the underlining premises upon which the school operates and may even threaten the framework of the school. Katz eloquently summarizes, what seems to be the major shortcoming of the top administrators of Durham. This quote also succinctly states the purpose of this paper.

...when educational reform becomes too bound up with personal and group interests, it loses the capacity for self-criticism. It can be a dazzling, diversionary activity turning heads away from the nature of social problems. It can become a vested interest in its own right, so pious and
powerful that it can direct scorn to anyone who doubts. But the doubters are essential; for someone must try to keep the claims of education in proper perspective, to lose the hold of interest upon the cause of reform.  

Finally, the most difficult problem facing all innovative schools is the reality that they are finite i.e. they end, and the children must go somewhere else. While the ultimate hope of Durham's administrators is that this new approach to education (open classroom) will eventually be adopted by all public schools, they know that given the rigidity of the educational bureaucracy this will not occur overnight. So, Durham faces the haunting problem of how to prepare its students for life after they leave the extraordinary school on Sixteenth and Lombard Streets. Most of the children will return to traditional public schools that do not contain the vast resources and the rich materials that characterize Durham, nor are they going to find teachers that are solicitous of their feelings.  

The finds of this paper suggest that Durham must re-examine the assumptions upon which it rests, especially devoting attention to the problems that arise when you attempt to provide a multiplicity of services to a disparate population. In addition, it must come to grips with the obvious disparities between the rhetoric and reality of its ideology.
Perhaps Durham is so unique in and of itself that it is a model that cannot be emulated elsewhere. It is located in one of the most diverse sections of Philadelphia. Its top administrators are nationally prominent educators. It embraces a model of education that has only existed in America for five years. It attempts to provide a variety of services all housed under one roof.

If the creators of Durham have asked the right questions about how to educate young children in an urban setting; after two years of operation, the results are unsatisfactory, perhaps they should change the questions and begin anew.
Only its value to the children and their families can determine whether it is a model which might be emulated elsewhere.
FOOTNOTES


3 Katz, p. 218.

4 Ibid., p. 218.

5 Ibid., p. 85.

6 Ibid., p. 217.
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From January-March I interviewed forty-four parents. These forty-four parents have a total of ninety-four children attending Durham. The remainder of this chapter contains the test of the interviews, as well as a summary and analysis of the findings.

Mrs. N is a black woman who has six children attending Durham Child Development Center. Five of her children are in the (K-5) unit and one child is on the 3 & 4 year old program. Her interview was relatively short for she had just learned that one of her children had to undergo surgery and hence I did not "press" upon any question. In subsequent interviews, there are several other parents with whom I did not elaborate upon about their answers for I perceived that they felt awkward or uneasy about certain issues.

Comment on Pictures-

I choose pictures they show learning. That's important—these children don't work enough. "Learning is important."

What do you think Durham is accomplishing?
It's helping them to do more at home, I think they're learning. It's helping them grow emotionally.

Why did you send your child to Durham?

Pierce School stressed too much reading, arithmetic. There wasn't enough time to have music, arts & crafts. I like the workshop.

How do you feel about racial difference?

I think it's good. We have to learn to work with each other, live with one another.

Do you visit Durham?

I used to visit Durham a lot before my pregnancy (she has a child 2 months old). I used to work at the workshop. I like to do things with my hands. The only way I know what's going on is when I visit.

Do you feel parents participate a lot?

Yea, it's good. I used to go a lot. They should have more Pot-luck dinners. (Pot luck was held in Fall '70, parents invited to bring their specialty dish.)

When you visit Durham, do you ever visit the other components?

How do you feel about other components?

Yes, I visit the toddlers and 3 & 4 year old program. I think the school age mother's program is
good for them. They can finish their education and see 
their kids when they want. I want to get my child in the 
toddler program. The workshop is a good idea. 
Are there any changes, improvements that you would like 
to see?

They should have more homework. I want to be able 
to see for myself what my child is doing. The way it is 
now, I'm not really sure what goes on unless I visit. 
There should be more emphasis on learning. The kids like 
it, though. I feel if I transferred them they would be a 
grade behind. I think Pierce School children are "ahead" 
(academically) of my children. But I would keep Sandra 
(fourth grade) if Durham went further. (i.e. beyond fifth 
grade). They need to stop the children from going from 
one room to another. They should have only certain times 
to visit, maybe for a half-hour after lunch.

Mrs. S, black, has two children in the K-5 
unit. She is a paraprofessional at Arthur School, one of 
the feeder schools to Durham.

Comment on Pictures-

It took her two minutes to decide on the order of 
the pictures. She finally decided that the pictures 
couldn't be put in any order for all the pictures 
represent different aspects of the school and their all
equally important. Peter is most important — "he's human." He relates on a level with children, not a disciplinarian, doesn't represent a "Big Bad Wolf" but is a friend to the children. He understands the children. They are not afraid of him. The second most important thing is the Infant Center. They learn at an early age to sit down with one another and relate to one another. At Durham they learn to work together, "express themselves." The individual attention is important. The teachers are aware of the children's progress. They can better pace the child's growth and development. It's a pleasure to go there, they feel welcome.

What is happening to Sharon and Michael daily? What is Durham accomplishing?

They teach them about the community in which they live. Today parents fear for their children — not likely to tell them about the community.

They don't learn in a conventional way, for instance, at Arthur School. Sharon didn't progress at all. When she came to Durham in a year she came up three grade levels in reading. There, allow children to move around last year, she spent most of her time in the library.

They see adults as humans. They see teachers as
persons with feelings with similar things (husband, home & family) like their parents. The teachers at Durham don't ask kids to do anything they themselves wouldn't do.

They learn a lot of black history. It's not found in most of the elementary schools in the neighborhood.

Durham makes them enjoy learning.

How do you feel about children from different racial backgrounds and socio-economic levels attending the same school?

It's good to have different races working together. Children when they are young are not race-conscious - at that age they realize they all share common characteristics (home, family, friends). There, they realize their first human beings. Also important that there are different economic levels represented. The rich kids are able to help the poor. Poor kids by nature not trusting, always questioning; the rich kids help them to more readily accept.

Are you aware of other components?

They are all equally important - they all blend in and overlap. If you take away one component - school not the same. Is there a large degree of parental cooperation?

Durham sends letters home to encourage parents to visit. There is always an open invitation. Parents
should come and visit. That would dispel the myth that Durham Child Development is like the Old Durham School which was for problem and dumb children.

I first heard about Durham when I was a volunteer in the "follow-through" program. I used to make things at the Teacher Center and Workshop.

Are there any changes you would like to see?

There should be more public relations in the community. They should make parents aware.

They should continue to sixth grade and if possible go on to a middle school (grades 5-8). Otherwise, if children put in a regular public school - the experience gained at Durham erased, Durham will be a failure, a flop.

Do you feel there would be difficulty in transition into a traditional public school setting?

It will be hard if done before sixth grade. By the time the child reaches sixth grade he should be able to adapt. Durham is family oriented - everyone knows everyone else.

Mrs. A, white, has two children, in the K-5 unit. She is a "substitute" teacher at Durham. She is usually at the Center two or three days a week where she frequently takes children from the various components on "discovery
walks" throughout the neighborhood. During the period in which Greenfield School was being constructed, she was instrumental in "putting pressure" on the principal to allow the concept of open classrooms to be "attempted" when the building was completed.

Comments on pictures -

The most important thing is the informal interaction between teachers and children. Durham attends to the needs of its children, i.e., provides them with medical care as well as balanced meals, good nutrition. She is very enthusiastic about the racial make-up. The children receive individual attention. Children are allowed to work in classrooms, in groups, study quietly, work in workshop - there are vast numbers of options open to them.

What is happening to Lise and Paul daily. What is Durham accomplishing?

Durham provides children with the ability to express themselves, work individually, open and freely.

How do you feel about racial complexion?

It ranks as one of the most important assets of Durham. Children have a chance to work with one another. Why did you send children to Durham?

I was instrumental in the City Center parent group
organization. I wanted a school that would be responsive to the individual needs of the child as well as responsive to the racial, social and economic aspects of a child's learning experience.

Is there a significant degree of parental involvement?

There is very little parent participation. I don't think parents know how to become involved; they don't know how to use Durham. Also, there is no existing PTA. Durham needs 2 or 3 Pot Luck affairs during a school year.

Are there any changes you'd like to see?

I'd like to see more informal parental social gatherings. She added, as teacher she thinks there needs to be staff changes but she preferred not to go into that.

*Mrs. E, black, has two children in K-5 attending Durham.

Comments on Pictures.

I think school age mothers program should rank first. It is the best thing that ever happened. In my day when a girl became pregnant she was forced to drop out of school, and was unable to continue her education. Durham enables them to continue - also makes it so they don't feel ashamed. Then she chose pictures which depicted children engaged in strict academic endeavors
(reading, writing). Learning is most important. I'm afraid to help my daughter - the teacher uses different methods. Their methods are different: I don't know what they're doing. Last year, before my pregnancy, I visited the school often. Then I was able to see tangible proof of my child's progress. They should have report cards with grades. Feels director is marvelous. He knows the kids.

What is Durham accomplishing?

Felicia seemed to learn more in the 3 & 4 year old program last year. This may be because this year I can't get to the school that much and I don't see what's going on. For example, the teacher is not teaching her the alphabet. She isn't able to differentiate A from B when she sees a word on paper. She can write letters but doesn't know what she's written. Maybe they're teaching her the alphabet but she doesn't know.

Jackie, fourth grade, learns a lot of African history. She has a lot of trouble with math. She says her teacher doesn't explain the problem. She just gives them to child.

How do you feel about racial complexion?

Best thing that ever happened to black kids - white children make blacks more readily to accept things.
Do you think a number of parents participate?

No, there is not much involvement. I can understand because some of the teachers (white) "act funny" when black parents come in.

What changes would you like to see occur at Durham?

It needs more structure, less running up and down the hall. Everytime I enter the school, they're always running. Need a certain time to visit other rooms - like once a month.

*Mrs. E, black, has three children in Durham. She has one child in the 3 & 4 year old program, first grade, and kindergarten.

Comments on Pictures

The pictures illustrate the individual attention shown at the school. At Durham, children know each other.

What is Durham accomplishing?

They have homework. I like that. They also have a lot of activities. Peter is a wonderful man. He cares about all the children. He's familiar with them, knows them all by their first name. The children get reading, writing, math. They get the individual attention that they wouldn't get in public schools. "Durham's alright with me."

How do you feel about having children of different races
and different economic levels attending the same school?

   It's a very good idea. It's better to learn the realities of life early. They're going to have to learn it someday.

How did you hear about Durham?

   I had connections. My mother works for PAAC. (Phila. anti-poverty committee)

Do you feel that there is substantial degree of parental involvement?

   No, there's not much participation. Their scheduling is not right. People are afraid to leave their homes at night and in the day they work. They should have activities on the weekend.

Are there any changes, improvements, you would like to see?

   I don't want things to change. They should have tighter security on front door. There should be more "get togethers" between parents and teachers.

   *Mrs. O, black, has a son in fourth grade.

Comments on Pictures:

   At Durham children allowed to get involved in a number of activities. The teachers display concern for children and work closely with them. Children are allowed to work in groups or independently.
What is Durham accomplishing?

They're helping Clifford to realize he's an individual. They help him accept himself for what he is. They help him to face reality with his peers.

How do you feel about racial and socio-economic differences among the students?

I appreciate it; after all we all have to live together.

Why did you send Clifford to Durham?

The other schools (public) not equipped to deal with Clifford. We found out at Durham, Clifford not the monster we were told he was.

What changes, improvements, would you like to see take place?

I'd like to see it go up to twelfth grade. If children after going to a school like Durham are placed in a regular or public school, they will lose their sense of freedom, thought, and movement.

(During the course of the interview, Mr. Goldsborough came home and wanted his ideas and thoughts included).

(Mr. Goldsborough)

"Durham is the school that all schools should be. He learns what he wants to - they make him love to learn."
What do you think about children of different races and different economic levels?

"It's the only way. That's the trouble with our country now. We'll never live together unless we learn from one another - we must learn to recognize everyone is a human being.

Do you feel a number of parents participate?

I'm a member of the Parent Council. (group of about 17 parents chosen by the director. The purpose of committee's creation is unclear). If they don't participate it's not fault of Durham. They issue an open invitation. It's the only school that is open - only place let's you voice your opinion.

*Mrs. E, black, has five children in the (K-5) program.

Comments on Pictures-

Unable to arrange pictures for does not see any priorities in the school. They're all important. Although my kids and I like the workshop the best. Both my children and I make things there. I never knew you could make so many things for the house. I like the Math Lab - children learn math of different forms.

When the kids first went there, they didn't like it. Had trouble adjusting to white children. Also they
felt that there was too much freedom. I thought the same until I went there. Now, I realize kids can't just be confined to a classroom. Now, the kids like it.

What is school accomplishing?

When the children come home, the way they express themselves. They all help each other. They exchange ideas with my oldest daughter who attends a regular public school. My oldest boy wasn't particular about his work or schools before, now he's advanced in reading and math. He knows a lot of African history.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

There's widespread subtle forms of prejudice at Durham. My children tell me stories, like if there's ever any trouble the black lads are blamed. I heard other things from some of the other teachers. They pull me to the side when I visit the school. I go there often. I work in the nursery. My oldest son has been in some fights. I told him if someone hits him, I told him he should hit them back. Peter called me on the telephone and asks me to come in. I asked him, a couple of times, if it is always my son's fault. I ask him if he ever calls in the white parent. He never answers my questions. I think the school favors the white children.

You can even sense it at the parents' meeting.
Last year the director pur black and white parents as hosts in the rooms. When white parents came in, the teacher and the parents talked to each other, and just left me sleeping?

How did you hear about Durham?

Peter and Gloria gave out some flyers at Hawthorne. Then they came and had a meeting with interested parents. I was glad to get them out of Hawthorne. Hawthorne didn't care about kids, they didn't teach.

Do you feel many parents participate at Durham?

No, no many. I'm on the Parent Council. I don't know why I was; chosen although everything Peter has always had equal numbers of blacks and whites.

I am seriously considering taking the children out of Durham.

*Mrs. I, white, lives in Center City. She has three children attending Durham, one child in the 3 & 4 year old program, one child in third grade, and one child in fifth grade. One of her sons who attended Durham last year and left has asked to be admitted to Durham again. Under the Center's admission policy, priority is given to children who already have siblings in the school.

In looking at pictures, she said that she was most impressed by the warm friendly relationship between
staff and children. She liked the idea that the children weren't confined to rooms but allowed to visit other rooms. She especially liked the access children had to the workshop where they could use tools, as an electric saw, at a very young age under the guidance of the teacher.

What is Durham accomplishing for your children?

I'll start with the youngest.

a. Simon in the 3 & 4 year old program is definitely happy and seems to get happier as time goes on. He is learning to count, to take care of his belongings. He is learning to get along with other children.

b. At first Shelaugn didn't know what to do, there were so many activities. So many unplanned. Now she loves to make things. She likes to visit the rooms of the younger children. She does well academically; she likes reading and math.

c. Nicholas, fifth grade, has been in Durham for three years. He was very happy the first year. When he was in fourth grade he was unhappy. The teacher was not organized, wasn't around much. Now that he's in fifth grade he likes it. He's done more work this year, has a strong willed teacher.

How do you feel about racial differences and socio-economic levels?

I'm glad there are different races. This way
children get to know people as individuals rather than a group. They (Durham) don't force anything, no artificial forced integration; let things go naturally.

Do you visit Durham often, when you're there do you have any sense of the degree of parental involvement?

I haven't visited the Infant Center nor the school age mothers program. My impression is that there is a lot of participation. A lot of mothers volunteer as aider. Are there any changes, comments, or improvements you'd like to see take place at Durham?

No specific improvements—however I think that they should have a better screening process for teacher. There are some teachers who are unable to work in an open classroom situation. Also because of the flexibility some problems arise that could have been solved if deleted earlier. For example, last year, a woman whose child had been in Durham since its inception removed her daughter because she couldn't read. The child was in fourth grade. When the mother tried to talk with the child's teacher, she was told both by the teacher and the director not to worry, because children grow at different levels. Finally she took the child out. She had to spend a large sum of money in hiring tutors this past summer. The child is doing much better now at Greenfield.
*Mrs. V, black, has four children attending Durham. She has a son in the fourth grade, and two daughters, one in the third grade, the other in first grade.

Mrs. Weaver felt she was unable to arrange the pictures in any particular sequence for she felt that all the components in the school are equally important.

In general she has ambivalent feelings about Durham. She feels that the school allows for "too much leisure." The staff does not discipline the children enough. While her two out of three of her children are doing well she questions whether if they were placed in their old elementary schools, they could "keep up" with the children there.

Mrs. Weaver likes the idea of children of "opposite races" attending the same school at an early age. She admits that her children had a difficult adjustment relating to white children when they first entered the school. However, she feels the experience gained will be beneficial. An integrated education will make them better able to cope with problems later in life.

She is an officer in the PTA at the school from which her children transferred and does not get an opportunity to visit Durham as often as she likes. She
feels parental participation at Durham could be much better but realizes that it is difficult to get parents to attend meetings.

As to the question of changes in the school's operation feels that there should not be open classrooms in all the rooms. She thinks some children need to be handled like they do in regular public schools. This is interesting in light of the fact that she submitted an application for her children to attend Durham because she felt it was a "different" school and wanted her children to attend.

*Mrs. A, white, has two daughters attending Durham. One daughter is in the first grade, while the other is in the fourth grade. She is a counselor in a parochial school system but taught second grade in the public school for two years.

In arranging pictures felt that Durham's unique qualities were best expressed by pictures that depicted close interaction between students and teachers. The Learning Center has a vast array of resources that can be utilized--"it is a place for people in it and a place for people not found daily at Durham to get involved."

My interview took place over the dinner table at the Feinberg home in Center City. She feels that the
school's greatest accomplishments were in the
that her children are learning to love school and love
learning. She can observe from her interactions with
her third grade daughter that Durham "is allowing her to
develop all her creative talents at the same time it
combines interaction with academic

As to the area which revolves the school's racial
and economic diversity, in theory Mrs. Feinberg thinks
it's great, fine. She wonders that it might give the
middle class children a sense of false superiority be-
cause the learning environment includes so many "disad-
vantaged and deprived" children. In a school, such as
Durham she feels children from middle income homes who
excel are made to look brighter than they actually are.
Her concern is with the problem she envisions might
occur when the middle class kids go on to college and
face a truly competitive environment.

She would like to see more parent-teacher inter-
action. This interaction should be informal and not
designed as a time to criticize teachers. She has some
questions over the method in which reading is taught.
Feinberg feels that in some ways Durham ignores middle
class children who they feel will acquire basic academic
skills anyway.
*Mrs. B, black, has four children attending Durham. They run consecutively beginning with the youngest who is in the three and four year old program.

From arrangement of pictures felt most important picture was the one in which the director is talking with the young boy. To her this reflects the general atmosphere of Durham. It is a place where teachers care about children. It is an open and re-laced school where children are allowed to express themselves. It is a place where children are allowed to work by themselves.

I used to go there a lot last year before I was put on the night shift.

What do you think the school is accomplishing?

My youngest son used to be shy; now he's always talking. It is helping them to learn the 3 r's but more it is helping to develop their personality. The boys love the workshop; they bring things home that they make.

How do you feel about racial difference?

Well, I don't know. It may give some children a goal--make them dissatisfied with their life now and try to change it when they grow up.

Do you feel that there is a large degree of parent participation at Durham?
"Imagine" I see a lot of mothers when I go there. Are there any changes, criticisms, or improvements you'd like to see?

Their reports (Durham) should be sent out more often. There are a lot of parents who are unable to go to the school. They don't know what's going on. They wait so long to send them out. After the time lapse, what happens if bam they discover that their child can't do something.

*Mr. and Mrs. SS, white, have three children at the center. They are in three and four year old program, second and third grade. They have one other child. Two of their four children are adopted. The adopted children are black.

In arranging the pictures, they made the following comments. They feel Durham is a "sharing and caring" community. Children are treated as individuals respected for their feelings. The children are learning, but in such a relaxed manner that they probably don't realize it. There is no competitiveness. What is the school accomplishing?

Last year we were concerned that the children weren't spending enough time reading. We didn't see much progress. This year is so much different. The children show so much enthusiasm for their work. In playing with
the other children who live in this street, they seem to be more self-sufficient. The eldest son (third grader) always acts as the leader.

How do you feel about racial differences?

Obviously by our family, we're thrilled. My husband has just been recently unemployed. We should be looking for a less expensive home but we don't want to move. We don't want to leave Durham.

Do you feel large degree of parent involvement?

There's a lot of grumbling among some parents because there is no parent organization. We would like to see some organization formed but we'll want to hear the results of the Parent Committee appointed by the director.

We worked with the parents of the City Center School in trying to get a school that was integrated and had open classrooms.

*Mr. and Mrs. C, write, have two daughters at Durham. The girls are in the second and fourth grade. Before children attended Durham went to a Montessori School which "believes children can learn from one another and teach each themselves." In choosing pictures, selected those which showed children working with one another in small groups. What is Durham
accomplishing? What happens to your daughters daily?

They are in a non-competitive atmosphere. They are learning to love learning while not being forced to learn. As far as their social experience, I'm very concerned. Susan, the second grader, was very outgoing before she came to Durham. Since she started Durham she has been withdrawn and unhappy. Before Durham she made no distinctions about race, she had black and white friends. Now she is very selective. She only plays with white children. Katherine, who is in fourth grade, comes home from school with "black and blue marks." She doesn't like to fight back, but some of the black children are always hitting her. I started to pick her up at school once a week and invariably she would be crying. I talked with her teacher who until our conversation was unaware of the problem. I talked with the director. Nothing has happened. Some of my friends who have children at Durham, told me that the director never disciplines or says anything to black children. He (the director) says that the black children come from troubled homes and their fighting is a release from their pent up frustration. Durham does not discipline the children. I think that they should develop a mechanism to help curb the aggression. I like
Durham but I fear for my children.

I think they need a viable parent organization. It is supported by money from taxes. After all Durham's a public school. Parents should not be allowed to run and determine school policy but they should have some voice in its policy. I'm on the Parent Committee but we haven't done anything. We met about every three weeks. I think we might make more progress if the director wasn't present. He has a way of not answering questions that are put to him. I guess he has to be somewhat defensive of his school but....

I do a lot of volunteer work on the third floor. I've seen some aggression displayed but no one says anything.

*Mr. and Mrs. D, white couple, with two sons at Durham. The sons are in the 3 & 4 year old program or kindergarten.

Mrs. Horn felt she could not arrange the pictures in any order of priority or importance. In her opinion--what is most important is the close contact of student and teachers. The concern of "adult" members (I don't think of them as conventional teachers) with children. What is happening to your child daily? What is the school accomplishing?
They're learning that school is a great place to be. They are developing a good feeling about the school and this hopefully will lead to a good feeling about education.

Her husband was skeptical about whether the children are really learning at the rate that would occur in a "good school." He wonders whether the Durham Learning Center is capable of teaching, imparting knowledge as is true in good schools. He is not concerned yet because the children are still young. However, he has more faith in the conventional learning experience because he feels that there are "certain milestones" that children must accomplish.

What are your feelings about the racial composition?

We're pleased about the black/white ratio. It gives children a feeling of oneness. We can see it more in Gregory, our three year old, who is oblivious to race. He even has a black girl friend who comes over to visit. However, Alex, is aware of race and makes distinctions. When the Gregory's black friend comes over Alex doesn't play with them. He tells Gregory that she is black but all Gregory talks about is her pretty red dress.

How did you hear about Durham?

We heard about it through friends. We sent out sons because (1) it was closer than the public school
in oyr district (2) we like the idea of having all three children in the same school all day, and (3) we sent Alex to the YMCA. It was "lily white" an unrealistic setting for a child who lives in the city. Besides Durham having a more realistic setting; it also didn't cost anything.

This year more than last year we've heard unfavorable comments about Durham. They have come mainly from parents who have children in the upper grades. It may well need better structure and teachers. You've said you visit Durham often, do you feel many parents participate in the school's activities?

You know you get the same parents over and over. We've heard that some parents want a different type of involvement. I think more along the lines of a traditional PTA, involved in the workings of the Board of Education. I also understand that the director has formed a group.

I'd like to see a more sophisticated physical education program. The school needs a much better physical plant. Physical development is important at this age. The playing process like the learning process should be a joy.

Mrs. E, white, has a daughter in fourthgrade
at Durham. She and her daughter have recently undergone a tragic and traumatic experience. Mrs. Sorenson, a divorce, was remarried in November and her husband was killed in an accident two days before Christmas. I talked with her during the last week of January. At the same time of the interview she was seriously considering whether or not to withdraw her daughter from the school. She subsequently did withdraw her daughter.

In looking at pictures she made the following comments. Prior to the difficulty she had with teachers over her daughter, she felt the most important place was on the third floor. However, now she thinks Durham is better with unwed mothers and young children up to second grade. She feels Durham allows too much time spent in extra curricular activities.

What is Durham accomplishing? What happens to your child daily?

I have no proof that Andrea has learned anything this year. None of her friends from last year are there. They have all transferred. Her best year occurred when she was in second grade. Up to second grade there are more important things than book learning. The social aspects of education are important. Durham is better equipped to handle social development. It's too open
ended. There's something missing.

How do you feel about racial composition?

The racial balance they talked about doesn't exist. My daughter was placed in a class which was well over 75% black. I've noticed this year that she has started to make racial slurs about black children. It's unfortunate that more black children don't live closer or that I don't know any black parents. Durham doesn't provide the opportunity for parents to meet informally. She never sees the black children outside of school.

I don't think that children are challenged at Durham. I've done some reading on open classrooms. I think it demands a better group of teachers than Durham has especially after second grade. Durham nor the teachers set down any goals for the children.

I think it's ridiculous that they only issue reports in February and January. In November I almost decided not to attend parents meeting. I'm glad I went. The teacher told me that my child was having serious problems in reading and math. What would have happened if I hadn't gone that night. The whole school's operation and learning process is "catch-as-catch-can."

They need to require more than one hour a day of supervised book learning. In the upper grades (3-5) they
should have different teachers for different subjects. The need to change some of their teachers.

The teachers and staff didn't seem to be very supportive when Andrea had lost her step-father. They want her to stay but she seems unhappy there. I've talked to the principal at the Greenfield School and he said he's already accustomed to making special arrangements to handle the Durham Charges.

Mrs. F, white, lives in Center City. She has three children at the Center, two are in second grade, and one in fifth grade.

She felt the pictures showed children in a relaxed atmosphere, as well as a working atmosphere. She also feels the teachers are more involved with children at Durham and this attention conveys a feeling of trust to the children. What happens to your three sons daily? What is Durham accomplishing?

I have very positive feelings about Durham. They are learning in a relaxed atmosphere. They feel that it's their school. My children were bored over the Christmas vacation. They are doing well and enjoying school. My children have blossomed in the environment.

How do you feel about the racial composition?
Well, I don't think the problem is racial. There are just so many deprived children there. There aren't enough middle income blacks, many of them left last year. My children are starting to make negative racial generalizations as blacks are the slowest and the dumbest in the class. My parents came down for dinner last Sunday and they were appalled by children who used 'earthy language.' I hope that if the groups stay long enough—things will be normalized.

Do you think that many parents participate?

The parents come to visit the school but they don't have "much say." There is no organization; the parents don't have an effective voice in the running of the schools. I've talked to the director on several occasions about it but he keeps telling me to be patient, that the school is just starting. The director has told me that his teachers aren't ready to face parents.

How did you hear about Durham?

My children were in City Center. I worked with parents in the parents organization that was responsible for Lore and the Learning Centers Project coming to Durham.

Are there any changes, or improvements you'd like to see?

I don't have any complaints but a number of parents have left and there are some parents who are
thinking of transferring their children. I think it
would be tragic if the middle income parents left. I
don't really understand open classrooms. They need to
educate the parents as to the philosophy of the school.

I don't know how they can solve their racial
problems within the context of today's society.

Some weeks later the director and the head
teacher went to the Vermon home where they talked to
the parents in the Center City area.

Mrs. G, white and a Center City resident, has two
sons at Durham. They are in the second and fifth grade
respectively.

The pictures depict the close student faculty
relationship that seems unique to Durham. Also at Durham,
I like the idea of things other than the strict academic
taken seriously.

What is Durham accomplishing? What is happening to your
sons daily?

I'll start with the eldest. This year is better
than last year. Last year there were problems with the
teacher who was absent quite frequently, in general it
was a sad experience. This year, he has developed
interests in a number of activities. She makes him do
things. The youngest has been allowed to progress in
reading and math at his own rate.

How do you feel about the racial and economic composition of the student body?

   Well, I think the problem is economic rather than racial. The children are developing prejudices about lower class blacks. Some of their things are stolen. It seems kids pick up references black children and wonder. My eldest son used to wonder why the black kids in class are cross and nasty in the morning. After they started the breakfast program, he came home one day and said they weren't nasty any longer.

How long have your children been at Durham?

   They have been there since it started. My son was at City Center and he moved to Durham after the merger.

Do you feel many parents participate at Durham?

   I'm aware that there is some dissatisfaction among parents. Parents are kept out. They know that parents want some kind of group but nothing is done. I know the director is aware that he's in trouble. The Government provides the school with federal funds (Title I). The funds state that there must be community involvement.

   Mrs. G also mentioned the rumor about the little girl whose reading deficiency was not discovered until
fourth grade.

Mrs. Stoyan, white, has a daughter in fifth grade. In looking at the pictures, Mrs. Stoyan remarked that Durham isn't set up like a classroom. She is most pleased about the individual instruction and the way in which teachers work with small groups.

When she looked at the picture where two boys, one black and one white, she remarked that she notices that in her daughter's room all black girls play together and the same is true of white. This is the first year this has occurred. (Her daughter has been at Durham for three years). Before her daughter was friendly with a black middle class girl. Her parents withdrew the girl last year. "I tried to talk with them and convince them to stay; they didn't think their child was learning. Some other middle class parents have left. I think it's ideal to have integrated classes.

Durham hasn't lived up to what it promised. There isn't the parental involvement they talked about.

I'm glad my daughter's there. I had a friend who told me about the City Center parent organization. I sat in on some of the meetings on open classroom. I didn't like the composition that existed in the traditional public school. At Durham, she is moving along
in all academic areas. She's involved in crafty creative things.

I'd like to see them do more towards integration at an earlier age, then by the time they get to elementary school the separation wouldn't exist. I think that their evaluations should be issued before February.

Mrs. H, has a son in the three and four year old program and a daughter in second grade.

In looking at pictures, felt that illustrated that Durham was a place where children learn from one another. Children are allowed to express themselves. Children learn in a relaxed manner. What is Durham accomplishing?

Before my daughter entered Durham (this is her first year) she was quiet and reluctant to speak out. She was shy at the nursery and in first grade. Now she feels that she belongs. She wants to learn. She is more pleased with herself than before.

My son had never been to the school before. He verbalizes beautifully. He writes his name and recognizes letters. He doesn't have a sense of being taught, it's more social discovery. I trust the school. It's doing well by my children. I'm grateful it's public. I don't like schools where they select the type of
children they want.

How did you hear about Durham?

Someone told us about it in terms for my son. I applied for my daughter also.

I'm very satisfied with the three and four year old program, but I have some questions about my daughter's teacher. I think in such an open school, it's easy for the teachers to "cop out." I think that there are some skills that society demands as ability to read, write legibly, tell time, etc. In a situation as Durham, sometimes these things aren't taught. I think children should have homework. They should start early to have daily habits. Besides it helps develop muscular skills.

Do you feel parents play an active role in Durham?

My husband is on the Parent's Committee. He says that Durham makes efforts to keep all channels open.

Mrs. I, black, has two sons in the three and four year old program, one son in first grade, and one son in second grade. She belongs to a religious sect that seems very fundamentalistic, and demands allegiance to the leader, Bishop Sheldon. According to the director, her religious beliefs, prevent her children from engaging in some of the school's activities.

She was very reluctant to have me visit her home
and was even more reserved when I arrived. In setting up the appointment over the phone she informed me of the particular code of dress that she felt I should adhere to while I was in her home.

She heard about Durham when the director and a head-teacher visited Pierce, a feeder school. Her children have been there for two years.

She likes Durham for she feels that the children "are cared for." They are fed well--receive balanced hot meals. The teachers work with them and help bring out their personality. She particularly likes the Workshop, where she too has made things there. She feels the teachers watch over the children there more than was true at Pierce.

To me, the children seem on one level, they don't look at color. They're all one happy family.

Mrs. J, black, has a son in fourth grade. She seemed timid almost fearful of me. She was unable to put pictures in any sequential order, or order of priorities. This remained true even when I asked her to pretend that she was showing the pictures to a friend who had never been inside of Durham.

While she often picks up her son from school, she rarely comes inside. She feels the school is a "nice
place." She felt her son had more opportunities at Durham than his other school.

Mrs. K, black, has a son in fifth grade.

In arranging pictures only talked about the need for children to have more learning type activities. What happens to your son daily? What is Durham accomplishing?

I haven't seen anything that he has done this year. In the beginning of the year I bought him new supplies, (showed notebook to me) he hasn't written anything in it but his name. He started to keep a diary, but he stopped. Last June I thought about transferring him. I knew last year he spent all of his time playing. He had to repeat fifth grade. I kept him at Durham for I felt that here he would get more attention from the teachers. I know at Greenfield they make the kids work. Maybe I should have sent him to Greenfield for when I ask him what he did at School, he never gives me a real answer. He just tells me he does his work in class. His brothers tease him. They tell him he plays all day and he will remain at Durham until he's fifteen. When he started he seemed interested; now I don't know. When did he start?

Well, he was already a student at Durham and he
just remained.
How do you feel about children of different races attending the same school?

   It doesn't really matter.

Do you ever visit Durham? Do you think that many parents participate?

   I went a couple of times last year. I go to the meetings at night. No, I don't think that many do.

What, if any, changes would you like to see take place?

   I'd like to see it go to sixth grade. I don't know what will happen to Larry when he leaves there. If he goes to Greenfield, they're going to make him work. I have another son that just graduated from Greenfield and they made him work. He always had homework. Larry doesn't have any and can't even read well.

Mrs. L, white, has a daughter in first grade and a daughter in fifth grade. They live in a high rise apartment complex in Philadelphia.

What do you think Durham is accomplishing?

   My oldest daughter is very insightful and accepts people as they are without question. It's too early to tell about Dana. I don't know whether they are mastering the academics and that is what's bothering me. My friend who have children at Friends Select (private
school run by Quakers) are reading much better than my daughters. Quite frankly, I'm seriously thinking of taking them out. Debbie started when she was in third grade. I feel by then the "basic academics" had been ingrained. I'm not too sure now whether they're learning. I work and don't have a chance to visit Durham often. I spent an entire day there last week. "Play is wonderful - but not all day." I have no way of telling whether they are learning. They don't have homework, no tests. I don't see any results of anything. I'm worried about my daughter in second grade. The teacher sent home an envelope with simple words like pig, gig, Nan, Dan, etc. and Dana doesn't recognize any of the words. When I asked the teacher why she sent the words home, she became angry, and told me they were for Dana and not for me. How do you feel about the racial composition?

It doesn't seem to be a problem. Debra mentioned the other day that the blacks in her class were slow. I explained to her that it was because of their background. I asked her if it detracted from her learning, she said no.

Are you aware of the other components?

Yes, I see the young teenage pregnant girls walking around. I'm trying to accept.
What changes, if any, would you like to see?

1. There should be more school work done in the beginning.

2. When a paper is done by a child, the teacher should return it so parents can know what their children are doing.

3. Instead of those written evaluations, marks should be given. Marks are necessary. They will be needed and used when the children leave.

Mrs. L, black, has a daughter in the three and four year old program, a daughter in kindergarten, and a son in fourth grade.

When I asked what she felt the school was accomplishing, she talked mainly about the children are "not better at running errands. This may well just result from the fact that they are growing up and their sensory shells and reasoning processes are developing."

When I asked whether she thought the children were learning, she said she didn't know. She has visited the school several times and the teachers seem to indicate that they are 'up on everything.'"

How did you hear about Durham?

The counselor from Stanton told me about it and
they were automatically transferred.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

It's very good. All schools should have it.

Are there any changes or improvements you'd like to take place?

I don't see any need for change. They have everything from pregnant girls on up.

Mrs. M, an attorney, has a son in second grade.

What do you think Durham is accomplishing?

Before Durham, Michael had a poor educational experience. He hated kindergarten. There were 50 children in the kindergarten and the teacher wasn't even aware that he hated it. In addition he had a poor self-image. I became interested in open classrooms when I read articles in the New Republic. I sat in on the initial meetings when parents were merging Durham and City Center. For Michael it was the right thing, his whole attitude toward school changed. It was incredible. His whole approach was so different. I don't know whether to fully attribute it to Durham or Michael. The things he does are not necessarily academic. For example he took his sketch book to the football game and while we were cheering, he was taking notes. I feel that the climate at Durham encourages him to be that way.
He has some problems with reading. In general, though, I'm very pleased with the school. It is the kind of place I wish I had attended.

How do you feel about the racial and socio-economic composition of the student body?

It makes for a better learning experience. The problem lies with the poor blacks. Michael has certain prejudices of lower-class blacks;--I'm not happy with this. The school doesn't have enough middle class blacks.

Michael is more color conscious. I'm not sure whether or not a teacher can help. There doesn't seem to be that much interaction between kids. They should develop friendships. There should be more of a carry over. Because of economic plight of the black children, develops prejudices and stereotypes. He has nothing to compare with; it is not a complete diversification of economic levels.

Do you feel parents actively participate in school's operation?

I'm glad you got to that. The director is apprehensive about parental intervention--just while middle class intervention. He has thwarted every attempt at such a group. He never wanted to allow a group to form. He wants to do things his own way. He picks the people he wants to. He is so petty. We're thinking
about moving to Germantown because it's so expensive in Center City. I explained all this to him. He called two of my friends and told them that I don't have faith in him. He stopped the parents from painting the lunch room in the basement. I couldn't see where it was harmful. We have so many talented parents in the group. Besides it would have been an excellent opportunity for a get together between black and white parents. You know, too, he's in violation of Title I Statutes.

I feel that as parents we have a right to know what happens to our children after all they are there eight hours a day. The school has a duty to the parents. They should explain the philosophy: explain a typical day.

The kids feel comfortable and secure at the school. It's silly not to develop parent/child relationships. He can't have one standard for the kids and another for the parents.

The director picks his own people all the time. For instance, he picked the parent members of the Steering Committee. It's not a democratic process. It's okay if at first he picks his own people, but then he should allow the meetings to open up. He should be secure enough in his position.

They also need to issue the first evaluation
earlier in the year than February.

Mrs. N, white, has a daughter in second grade. What is Durham accomplishing? What happens to Andy daily?

It's making her a very independent little girl. I can't say enough good things about the school. In first grade at a regular public school, she always felt she was a failure. Her biggest problem was her fear of reading, now she feels secure enough in it that she enjoys reading contests that my husband sets up. Now school is no longer a bore, she walks in school in the morning as if she were going to visit friends.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

I grew up in a parochial school system and for a long time I felt everyone was Catholic. I think children should know different nationalities. I think it's marvelous! It's very important for children to know some people in the world have it and others don't.

Do you visit Durham often? Have you ever visited other components?

Not that often, but I'm aware there are other components. I especially think the school age mothers program is good. I can appreciate it. I was a young divorcee and I know the difficulty one has in trying to find a day care center. They can continue their
education at the same time they are assured that their babies are well care for.
Do you feel parents participate?

I'd like to see a PTA, but not of the normal fashion. I'd like a couple of meetings a year.

Mrs. O has a daughter in second grade and one in first grade. Because she was actively campaigning as a Committee woman, we held our interview over the phone.

What happens to Sara and Susan daily?

I can speak more about Susan because the younger one never attended school before. Susan spent one year at Greenfield. She was afraid of school because it was such a repressive environment. I've only had very brief discussions with their teachers because I work in the day and campaign during the evenings. I'm delighted that Susan is allowed to write stories that are uncorrected. She feels more comfortable now with her own worth.

At Greenfield I met a mother who told me about Durham. I'm glad my children were accepted.

How do you feel about racial and economic composition of the student body?

Being a working mother I don't see any effects. They had been in environments with deprived children
before. I'm delighted with Durham. I really had anticipated the children would pick up "ghetto language" but they speak correct grammar.

Since you work, do you have any feeling as to the level of parental participation?

I really can't tell, but if I felt concerned about something I would feel comfortable voicing my opinion.

Mrs. P, black, has twin daughters in the first grade. Do you feel the children are learning what do you think happens to the twins daily at Durham?

I think they're learning. They bring books home. They seem to be progressing.

How do you feel about black and white children attending the same school?

I think it's a wonderful idea. It should have been done earlier, maybe there would be less fighting.

How did you hear about Durham?

All my four other kids went there, to the old Durham. When the twins turned five I registered them.

Do you ever visit Durham. Do you know that there are young babies there and teenage pregnant girls?

I go there every day to pick up the kids, sometimes even I take them. I've only been to Miss Jackson's room. I saw the pregnant girls walking in the hallways.
I didn't know there were babies there until the twins told me. They tell me all about the things there. My twins love it.

Are there any changes that you might like to see?

No, everything's all right.

Mrs. Q has a son in first grade and a daughter in the three and four year old program.

In looking at pictures, she made several marks about the friendliness, particularly with respect to the director. Durham provides children with equipment, activities, and other resources not found at other public schools.

They are not pushing them. It's not like when I went to school. My son brings home homework. It has instilled in Donata a great love for children. I think Mrs. Myers is great (director of three and four year olds).

How do you feel about racial composition?

It's the only way it should be done. My children seem to handle it well because they don't force anything at the school. He even has a colored girl friend.

How did you hear about Durham?

My girl friend told me about it. I hated the school in my district but we couldn't afford private school.
Durham is like a private school, only free.

Do you ever visit Durham? Do you have any ideas about the level of participation?

I don't go there that often. I don't know if parents participate on the third floor but in Mrs. Myers group she asks parents to come out. I'd like to see the evaluations come out sooner.

Mrs. R has a son in the three and four year old program and a son in the first grade. She is a community worker at Rebound, a neighborhood health center that primarily serves children from infancy to twelve years. Rebound provides the medical services for the Durham Child Development Center. In her capacity at Rebound, Mrs. Murray makes home visitation and thus has a fair indication of the feelings of the parents from the area.

What happens to your sons daily? What is the school accomplishing?

Well, I don't know what you're going to turn into the director. I have strong misgivings about the school and I've done a lot of thinking about it. I really don't know what they're doing for my son in first grade. It might be that they don't understand him completely (this is his second year at Durham). I don't know whether the school is providing him with the skills
that he needs as he will become a black man in society. I'm thinking about taking him out. I wish I could place him in a community school. For my younger son, the school seems to be providing him with experiences he probably wouldn't get in a regular school.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

Well, it's okay for those white people from Center City. I don't know how good the school is for blacks. Black children need structure to gain a sense of security. They can't get that at Durham. I know a lot of black parents don't like it. They tell me when I visit their homes.

Do you ever visit the school?

I don't go to the school that often because I work every day, but I go to see my first grade son's teacher. She hasn't really been able to tell me anything. When I started working at Rebound the director always greeted me warmly when I came to Durham. He always talked about Durham as being a comfortable, trusting place, it builds confidence. Those are his key words comfortable, trust and confidence anything he writes has those three words. Now that he knows I'm dissatisfied with Durham he's not as friendly.

I'm on the Parents Committee. I suppose he
selected me because of the job. I really don't know what good is coming out of these meetings. "They're all coming from such different bags."

I think the school has to show me what my child is doing. I go to homes, visit families, and a lot of parents just want to see something tangible about what their child is doing. They're so used to homework and grades. I know the school is just beginning but they have to find some way to let me know what they are doing.

Miss S is a "child giver" (a teacher's aide) at Durham. She works in the toddler program. She has a son in the kindergarten.

What is Durham accomplishing?

Last year both I and his father were worried. He wasn't learning. Last year in the three and four year program he wasn't spelling. All he did was play a lot. This year I can see progress. I'm very pleased. He is reading sentences and is spelling. In terms of his social and emotional development, once he was shy now he is more open.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

I think it's nice. They learn from each other. This is most noticeably as the poor black children teach the middle class blacks to be independent. They teach them strength.
The racial mixtures gives them a sense of more togetherness. There are some prejudiced white children, but I think this comes from the parents. There is a white boy on the third floor who carries a confederate flag all the time. He is in the class that is focussing on African culture and from what I hear, he thinks it's silly.

How did you hear about Durham?

Well, I was in this early childhood education program at Temple and I was placed here, then I was hired as a member on the staff.

As a staff member, you must have some thoughts about the level of parental participation?

Well, it's very good on the first floor. They come in and do their thing. Parents offer to build things. Black parents don't participate. They work all day and are too tired at night. I'd like them to more encourage black parents to come to Durham. Also I think they need to strengthen the parent organization.

Mrs. T has two foster children who attend Durham. Both of the children are in the third grade.

In looking at pictures felt the most important thing at Durham was that children are fed. "That's real important, I have trouble with the children eating."
Also I like the pictures that show the children doing something. It makes me feel that they look interested. What is the school accomplishing?

They're learning. The boy is quicker than the girl. I try not to tell them the answers. The older boy helps the younger. I didn't like the school at first because I didn't understand. Now I know that you can learn from play. Up there, they learn in a different way.

How do you feel about Negro and white children going to the same school?

It's good. I think children, red, black, brown, white, chinese and green, if they live in the same neighborhood, should attend the same school. We should help each other. Do you have any idea whether or not parents participate?

She laughed and said "how should I know, I don't even go there myself." I work every day. Sometimes on my day off I go to the kid's room. The teachers are real nice and friendly.

How did you hear about Durham?

The kids were in St. Nicholas Day Care Nursery Center. The people there told me to register them at Durham.

Last year I thought about transferring them.
The white principal, Mr. Brown, told me to trust the program and let the children remain. Now that they (Durham) got the colored principal, Mrs. Bush, I'm glad. Are there any changes you'd like to see take place?

Well, don't tell anyone, but I heard a rumor that they are trying to keep the colored kids out. I know for a fact that the lady across the street has tried to get her children in and couldn't. That man, up there, Buttenweiser, showed me a waiting list though.

Mrs. U has a foster daughter in the fourth grade. She's a black woman in her sixties and believes the problem of society could be solved if parents dealt with their children more sternly.

What is the school accomplishing?

Well, I think the school is wonderful. It helps some children but it doesn't help Jackie. She isn't learning. She can't read. She can't spell. She can't even write her name. The school seems to be a great help to others but not Jackie. The girl I raised has three children there; they seem to be doing well. I think they're learning at least they're learning how to get along with others.

How do you feel about Negro and White children attending the same school?
Good, it teaches children to accept one another. I think it's a good idea; a lot of folks don't. It's a good idea to bring them up together. They learn everyone is human.

How did you hear about Durham?

The people at her other school, Stanton, referred her to Durham. At Stanton she was so figidity. She was disturbing the quiet ones at Stanton so they transferred her.

Has Durham helped to overcome this "figidity."

No, at Durham everyone does what they want. Everyone there jumps around all the time. No, it hasn't helped Jackie.

You know Jackie received a small Bible from our church for perfect attendance at Sunday School. She can't read a word in it. It's embarrassing. We say words to her but she doesn't know them. She can't read. She doesn't even know her alphabet.

Since you don't think she's learning at Durham, have you ever thought about taking her out?

Well, I don't know. It's a wonderful school. To me it seems like at sometime she should learn to pick up a book and read it. Before June, I'm going to see her teacher to see what she thinks. She should
know her alphabet by now. She isn't learning. She can't go to fifth grade when she doesn't know anything about fourth or even third grade.

I wonder when she leaves Durham, what's going to happen to her?

Have you ever visited Durham? Do you know they have other things there besides the elementary school?

I've been to the school a couple of times but just to Jackie's room. A friend of mine told me about the workshop. Jackie told me about the young babies. I read the materials that they send out.

Are there any changes you'd like to see take place?

They need to be stricter with children. They need more discipline. I was over there one day--the way they run up and down--the way they talk back to the men. The parents need to cooperate. They need to back teachers who may rightly need to exercise corporal punishment.

Mrs. V has a son in fifth grade.

What happens to your child daily? What is the school accomplishing?

He's much more easy going, much more at ease, much more confident with other people. Before he went to Durham, he had problems relating with people. Academically, what is Durham accomplishing?
I'm sure he isn't getting what he should in another public school. When I ask him what he does at school, he tells me that he doesn't do anything. I'm not really worried though, I think he'll get what he needs on his own.

How did you hear about Durham?

Philip was in the Greenfield School. He always seemed to be pressuring himself. I was excited by open classrooms and requested that he remain after the Greenfield Building was completed.

How do you feel about the racial composition of the school?

I think it's marvelous. The only problem I see is that we don't get enough chance to get to know one another. I don't think the black and white children play together enough, but that's not the school's fault.

What changes or improvements would you like to see?

The parents need to be brought in more. They should have more informal meetings between parents and teachers.

Mrs. W has a daughter in fourth grade.

What is Durham accomplishing? What happens to your child daily?

I think it's marvelous. It has the finest
learning technique in the city. Course, I haven't been to all the schools in the city—but I think it's great. By not having a set pattern, the children absorb more. Children learn at a rate according to their capabilities.

My children have been there since the school started, two years ago and I love it. I heard about it through Pierce and my children were one of the "chosen 25" that were selected out of 65 that applied.

How do you feel about the racial composition?

Marvelous, in this way they don't grow up to feel all people of one particular race act a certain way. They learn that the problem is not because of color. Course, I've been to the school and see how they segregate themselves. They do that because they get "the idea" from home. Children are innocent; they learn prejudice.

Last year I spent time in the nursery and toddler program. Because I work all the time, I don't know whether parents participate. I don't really know any of the parents.

I guess you heard my girl was burned last year.

No, how did that happen?

Well, they went on a three day camping trip in Valley Forge. They were taking a shower and someone
turned off the cold water and turned on the hot water. She still has scars; she had second and third degree burns. The school paid all the expenses. I still think the school is marvelous though. I figured it could have happened here at home just the same as it did there. (It is interesting to note that while this parent expresses very positive feelings about Durham, her actions indicate the opposite. I tried several times unsuccessfully to call her at home. I was informed that the number had been disconnected. At the Durham, the person in charge of attendance insisted that the number I had was correct. Finally, I talked with the daughter. She finally gave me the correct number. When I asked her was she aware that the school had another number she replied, of course. My moma doesn't want them to know her phone number.

While Mrs. X did not think the school was responsible for the scalding, the administration did. In talking with other teachers, and key parents, the particular teacher was relieved of her teaching position immediately (within days) after the incident. Moreover, because of tenure, the teacher in question was not fired. Most people feel that these were the expressed intentions of the director.

Mrs. Y has a son in the three and four years old
program, a daughter in third grade and a son and
daughter in fourth grade.

What happens to your children daily?

They're doing very well. They're learning better
than if they had remained at Pierce School. This is
their second year. I don't know about all that freedom.
The teachers could be a little stricter. The children
walk around from one class to another. Mine does, the
other kids come home and tell me.

How do you feel about black and white children?

It's lovely.

Do you ever visit Durham?

I used to go over more, now I work part-time. I
haven't been over that much.

Some children can't handle all that freedom.
Black kids need discipline. I'm wondering what is
going to happen when they leave Durham.

Mrs. Z has a daughter in the third grade. She
is a member of a fundamentalistic religious sect.

She believes that her daughter is learning more
at Durham than at Pierce. At home her daughter reads
more. Also she asks more questions than she has in the
past. She thinks Durham is nice and likes the idea of
having young babies at the school. In addition she is
very pleased about the racial composition of the school.
She likes everything the way it is and doesn't want to see any changes.

Mrs. #, black, is an elementary teacher at one of the neighborhood elementary schools. She has a daughter in the fifth grade. She is actively working with the director and other "concerned educators" in trying to have a middle school (grades 5-8) that embraces the open classroom. Approach to learning. What is the school accomplishing?

It's helping her to build a better self-image. She has more confidence in herself. In terms of instruction, I've seen progress. She really has gone far in reading.

How did you hear about Durham?

This is her second year at Durham, before that she attended the Greenfield School. I wanted her to be a part of this experiment, so I kept calling and pressuring Durham. Do you have any feelings about the degree of parental participation?

I'm on the Parent Committee. We're trying to find ways to get more parents at the same time pushing for the middle school. How do you feel about the racial and economic complexion of the school?

It's great! They're getting a taste of what the
world is like. They have to understand how to operate on a human level.

*, an architect, works for the Learning Centers Project. He has a daughter in the toddler program and a daughter in third grade.

What is the school accomplishing?

She's learning to read. Her math is getting better. Her relationships with people has greatly improved. In the beginning, there were real racial tensions. She has worked them out herself without the teacher working it out for her. She started out as a loner, over a period of time it cooled out and now she's making friends.

How long has she been here?

She has been here for three years. She started in a day care center that was very strict. It was tightly structured when she first came here she was kinda "uptight." She didn't know how to please the teacher. She found out that she first had to make herself happy. I think that's what Durham is about.

How do you feel about the racial and socio-economic composition at Durham?

Great, it enhances the learning experience.

As a member of the staff, do a number of parents visit
the school often and actively participate?

Not a lot yet. I'm on the Parents Committee, even that is not a coherent group of parents.

What changes or improvements would you like to see?

The parents relation with the staff must be improved.

Ø, black, has a daughter in the three and four year old program and a daughter in the first grade.

What is the school accomplishing?

Open classrooms are wild! The kids don't listen to me or my threats at home anymore. It gives them definite opinions. They express themselves, nothing is suppressed here. It helps them to develop reasoning abilities. They are able to logically handle something step by step.

How long have your children been at Durham? How did you hear about it?

I saw the children playing in the yard one day. I cam in and investigated and I've been here since October 1970.

What are your feelings about the level of parental participation?

I'd like to see more black participation. I think because a lot of black parents work the parent/
teacher meetings should be changed to Saturday.
How do you feel about the racial and socio-economic composition of the school?

   It depends on the atmosphere. The children here get what they want. It's unrealistic for black kids. The more I study open classrooms the less able I am to say positively it's good. I wonder about the transition into other schools.
What changes would you like to see take place?

   I'd like to see more black parents participating.

Mrs. /†/, black, has a daughter in the fourth grade.
How long has your daughter been at Durham?

   This is her second year. She came to Durham after completing grades first and second grades.
What is Durham accomplishing? What happens to Myra daily?
As a member of the staff what are your overall impressions of the School?

   I think the idea is good. The curriculum is very good and allows children to work at their own speed.

Last year, Rachel had a hard adjustment to open classrooms. She had a hard time adjusting to the environment. She was so used to sitting at a desk all day and having everything taught to all.

   At first she was enthusiastic but now I'm thinking
of taking her out. She hasn't made any progress. Rachel is not a dull child, but at the rate she's going she soon will become one. Some children (mostly black) can't handle all that freedom. They need to have certain times of the day when they have to do reading, math, etc. Now they have too many free periods. If they're not motivated, they spend all their time in the hall. They need to screen out the children who are emotionally disturbed and discipline children as well.

Rachel is a follower, not a leader. She has been put in a class with some very bright children. They need to test the children and group them according to abilities. A lot of that aggression you see, is frustration. The black kids can't compete with the others and hit back.

I'm more concerned with what is going to happen after she leaves Durham. I asked the principal of her old school what was going to happen to the children. Once they left Durham. He told me that they would be put back in their regular classrooms. I told him if that happens Durham will have been a waste of time. How do you feel about the school's racial composition?

I don't know. I notice as I walk through the halls and pass rooms all the black kids are together and all the white kids are together. Maybe the white
kids notice that the blacks are slower and don't want to be bothered.

Rachel comes home every day empty handed. I bought all the supplies that the teacher requested in September. She has never used her notebook. I don't understand that. What do parents have to judge from. We give them our lads every day, we want the children to get what is due to them. Up there, they all think black people are crazy and all they want to do is play.

She's been there for over a year and I haven't seen any changes.

Mrs. 0 has three children in the school. They range in grades consecutively after the toddler program. She works in the kitchen in the basement.

How long have your children been at Durham? How did you hear about it?

Two of my children have been there for two years, this is the first year for the youngest. I heard about it through my mother.

What is the school accomplishing?

Well, they're learning as much as they would have at a regular public school. At Durham, they have more advantages. They go on more trips. I think Durham is a good school, but the three and four year old program is the best.
How do you feel about the racial composition?

It's good. If brought up this way there wouldn't be as many fights.

Are there any changes that you'd like to see take place?

They need to get rid of those racist teachers. I don't care about naming them - they're Lore, Liz, and Elaine. They have "too many chiefs and not enough Indians."

They need to get rid of that Parents Committee and let parents participate more.

Mrs. U has sons in the toddler program and one in fourth grade. She works as a cook in the kitchen of the second floor.

What do you think about Durham?

This is her son's second year at Durham. Before coming to Durham, he attended the Hawthorne School. That school was dirty, old and the teachers didn't care. When the director and the head teacher came to talk about Durham, I registered my oldest son.

I think the school is very good. They need to be confined to their classrooms, they run up and down the hall all day. They already have enough time to play within their daily schedule. Although she added, "things
are much better this year."

In reference to her children, she feels the toddler has made excellent progress. When he first started he used to fight a lot, now he's more relaxed and likes to help the other children. She's thinking about removing her older son. She doesn't think he's learning at the rate he should because he knows his mother works there. I know he plays a lot. He used to bring home homework but now he stopped.

How do you feel about racial composition?
I think it's good. It gives them an opportunity to know other kids. I've heard some rumors that there has been a lot of racial tension but I don't think Durham will permit it.

As a member of the Durham staff, do you feel many parents participate?
The parents of the children on the third floor don't. They need to visit. The doors are always open. They don't need to make an appointment.

What changes would you like to see take place?
I would like to see them open a middle school. They need more black male staff members.

On the while, I think the school is just beautiful.
Two weeks later while we were having an informal conversation she said,

You know, I don't know what is going to happen to Durham. Some of his best teachers are leaving. It's like a circus up there (third floor). I don't understand it. Peter doesn't want to get involved but when he gets involved he's always on the side with the wrong people.