

number of poverty area residents on boards and councils are roughly equivalent to the number employed at the centers. In this regard, the problems and inadequacies surrounding the poverty residents' efforts to participate on the boards and councils have been discussed in the previous chapter on the role of the center. With respect to staff employment, however, little has been said.

RESIDENT STAFF MEMBERS

Nearly all of the centers have hired residents of the poverty area to work as outreach personnel for the centers. The number of such employees ranges from one per center to eighty or more. Something over two-thirds of the centers have assigned such personnel to full-time work on the outreach problem. The characteristics of these center staff members can be sketched in general terms.¹

First, most of them are female with the greatest preponderance of women workers in the small town and rural area centers (67 percent). Second, the bulk of the staff are concentrated in the age groups, 20 to 35 and 36 to 65. The latter are more heavily represented (59 percent) in the small town and rural area centers while the younger age group predominates in the medium and large city centers. Third, Negroes are heavily represented (over 70 percent) on the staffs of medium and large city centers in our sample. In the small town and rural area centers it is the whites who are in the majority (over 85 percent). Fourth, well over one-half of the center staff are married with the percentages varying from a high of 67 percent in the small town-rural area centers to a low of 52 percent in the medium size community centers. Fifth, the families from which the center staff members come are by and large modest in size—averaging just a little over four people. There seems to be no noticeable variation here by community size. Sixth, the great majority of center staff employees report at least a tenth grade education with a substantial proportion (ca. 50 percent) indicating some college training.

Although this sketch of center employee characteristics is a bit awkward to summarize, it can be pointed out that the picture which emerges resembles that of the clients in some respects but certainly not in all. In particular, the size of family and education characteristics show marked differences between center employees and center clientele. The former are associated with small families, and they also have more educational background.

This indication that the center employees are not completely representative of the poverty area population is perhaps not a surprise if it is remembered that the poor do not constitute a homogeneous group. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that the outreach effort has so far made effective contact primarily with the "respectable" poor. These are, of course, the easy-to-reach group—the ones who merely need a "break," an opportunity to get out of their dependency situation. Contact with the "problematic" and especially the "disreputable" poor is not very conspicuous. When it does occur, it tends to arise out of some crisis or emergency.

This observation about the selectivity of the outreach effort suggests the possibility that those involved with centers are already the most active element of the poverty area population. That is to say, they are the ones who were involved in what community affairs there were before centers were established. With the introduction of this new organizational unit called a neighborhood center, these people simply have shifted the locus of their activity. Indeed, this was explicitly acknowledged in one community where a poverty area resident identified the local personnel employed by the center as "neighborhood busybodies"—that is, people who have always been concerned about knowing their neighbors and interacting with them in the community. Now, as staff members of the center, they are simply being paid for doing what they have always been interested in doing. The point here is not to derogate the behavior of these people. Many if not most of them are probably sincere and contribute something of genuine value to their communities. Rather, the point is that the center has not changed these people in any significant way. It has merely given them a new (and perhaps more effective) outlet for their behavioral predispositions.

In this discussion of center personnel it would perhaps be appropriate to mention a problem involving organizational and policy matters. This relates to the OEO policy that says no employee of the poverty program nor member of his family may hold a position on a policy-making board. In effect this means that when a person is on the CAA board of directors or the center advisory board,

¹ See Appendix VI.