The FACES Embedded Case Study:
Documenting the Methodology and Early Findings

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Introduction

The goal of the FACES case study is to provide a more complete profile of Head Start families and children, their neighborhoods, and the nature of their interactions with Head Start. The case study will support and expand on the findings from the larger FACES study, pursue research questions independent of the larger study, and generate hypotheses for future research.

The FACES case study integrates two methodological or analytic strategies. The first strategy integrates qualitative and quantitative data from the case study with data from the FACES parent interview to produce a narrative for each family in the case study. The second strategy involves content coding the families' responses to open-ended questions.

The purpose of this poster presentation is twofold: First, to demonstrate the unique contributions of this methodology, which combines multiple within-case and across-case methods and analyses with qualitative and quantitative data. Second, to present early findings from the case study including a typical family narrative and emergent themes from across-case data analyses in the following two areas of interest: 1) the expressed goals, hopes, and aspirations Head Start families have for their children and 2) perceptions of their neighborhoods' strengths and weaknesses as a place to raise their child.

Sample

❑ 120 Head Start families

❑ Randomly selected from the larger FACES sample

❑ Three families from each of the 40 FACES sites

❑ Approximately one-half of the selected families had a four-year-old child in the study and one-half of the selected families had a three-year-old child in the study during the 1997-1998 school year.

❑ There were no statistically significant differences between the case study sample and the larger FACES sample of families on basic demographic information, including: household income, marital status, ethnicity, educational attainment, employment status, receipt of welfare, Medicaid or food stamps, and language spoken in the home.

❑ Overall case study attrition rate of 12% (14 families).
- September 1997 to May 1998: 8% (10 families)
- June 1998 to December 1998: 3% (4 families)

Measures

The FACES case study involves the use of four primary data collection components from April, 1997 to December, 1998.

❑ **Home Visit Parent Interviews**
Semi-structured interview includes open-ended questions regarding parent's perceptions of themselves and their family, their experiences with Head Start, and their neighborhoods.

❑ **Home and Neighborhood Observation Checklists**
Reported by the interviewers and by the families during home visits.

❏ **<u>Monthly Telephone Contacts</u>**

Monthly updates between home visits on changes in the family's household composition, child care arrangements, employment status, health status, and Head Start participation.

❏ **<u>Community Agency Telephone Interviews</u>**

Telephone interviews with agencies regarding the amount and overall nature of collaboration between their agency and the Head Start program. Information gathered is not specific to individual families.[1]

Case-Study Analytic Strategies

Strategy One:

A **<u>family narrative</u>** was developed for each case study family integrating qualitative and quantitative descriptive data from the home visit parent interview, home and neighborhood observations, and the monthly contact telephone interview with data from the main FACES study, including the parent interview, child assessment, and teacher ratings of the Head Start child. The narrative serves as a useful vehicle for beginning to identify emergent themes within families.

Strategy Two:

The second analytic approach involved **<u>content coding and analyses</u>** of the open-ended responses given by parents during the home visit parent interview. The text was systematically organized into a coding scheme which categorized information to allow for inferences across families.

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[1]Findings from Community Agency Interviews are not reported in this presentation.

I.   The Head Start Child

- ❑   Demographics
- ❑   Description of Child and Favorite Things to Do
- ❑   Social Skills/Behavior/Approaches to Learning
- ❑   Educational Readiness, Literacy, Reading Materials in the Home
- ❑   Health
- ❑   Hopes and Goals for Child's Year in Head Start

Excerpt 1: Maria is a three year old Latina girl who lives with her mother, father, and older brother in a large, southwestern city. Maria started Head Start in the fall of 1997 and attends class five days a week for eight hours a day. She lives eight minutes away from the center and walks to school each morning. Maria's mother, Gabriella, describes her as a child that is "like a good girl, a little difficult, but a calm girl to other children" and says that she "sometimes acts mean but rarely." When asked about her favorite activities, Gabriella said Maria likes "television, playing with her bike and painting and drawing" as well as "playing with the kids." Gabriella said that Maria makes friends easily and willingly shares and accepts her friends ideas when playing. Although it is sometimes true that Maria will hit and fight with other children, Gabriella did say that "Maria had a little friend in the neighborhood that hit her. I notice that she hits back. I don't like that." According to Gabriella[2], Maria can button her own clothes, count up to ten, hold her pencil properly, and likes to write or pretend to write. She cannot yet recognize any of the letters of the alphabet, cannot recognize or write her first name, and cannot identify the colors red, yellow, blue and green. Maria does have a good imagination, enjoys learning and likes to try new things, although she does have a hard time concentrating or paying attention for very long and only enjoys being read to for approximately five minutes at one time. She will sit and look at a book with pictures and pretend to read herself and while doing that, does more than just tell what's in each picture -- she connects the pictures so her story sounds connected.   There are reading materials in the home, including children's books, religious books and newspapers, yet no one in the household had read to Maria in the past week . . . .

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[2]This interview was conducted in Spanish in the fall of 1997 shortly after Maria first enrolled at Head Start.

II.   The Head Start Family

- ❑   Demographics/Household Composition
- ❑   Educational Attainment
- ❑   Employment, Economic Status, and Income Sources
- ❑   Child Care Arrangements/History
- ❑   Health Care
- ❑   Need/Use of Community Services
- ❑   Strengths, Areas of Improvement/Problems, Significant Events
- ❑   Hopes and Goals For Themselves
- ❑   Need/Use of Social Support
- ❑   Psychological Well-Being and Locus of Control
- ❑   Household Rules/Discipline
- ❑   Activities/Involvement with Child

Excerpt 2: This is a two-parent family that immigrated from El Salvador to the United States in search of a better life. Prior to the first visit with the family, Maria's father, Juan, was deported, leaving Gabriella, Maria, and her brother David with very little resources. The family began sharing housing after Juan was deported because they could no longer afford to live on their own. When first contact with the family occurred, the household consisted of Maria, her 36 year old mother Gabriella, her nine year old brother David, and another 30 year old female relative. Spanish is the language spoken in the home.

Gabriella does not have a high school diploma or GED but has received a job-related certificate and works, full-time, as a machine operator. Gabriella reports her monthly household income to be $850. Since Maria's birth, Gabriella has needed help with transportation, child care, and food and has received help from a variety of community agencies. When asked whether Head Start had helped her secure this help, Gabriella explained that she was already receiving the assistance before Maria began Head Start and therefore did not need help from Head Start. Gabriella made a point of saying that she felt it was unacceptable to "ask for handouts" and by the time of the first interview, was no longer receiving any assistance.   In January, Juan returned to the United States (after deportation) with a vehement distrust of the United States government and said the only reason the family was still in the U.S. was because things are worse in their homeland of El Salvador.   Juan's return did help the family financially as he was able to begin working full-time. . . . .

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III. The Family's Interactions with Head Start

❑ Previous Experience with Head Start

❑ Primary Reason(s) for Enrolling Child in Head Start

❑ Involvement in Head Start Activities

❑ Expected Impact of Head Start on Child and Family

❑ Satisfaction with Head Start/Suggestions for Improvement

Excerpt 3: Gabriella had prior experience with Head Start because her older son, David, had also attended Head Start. Gabriella's primary reason for enrolling Maria in Head Start focused on her need for child care. She explained, "Sometimes the necessities of work make it very difficult to leave one's children for 8-9 hours at a babysitter." She expressed concern about her child's welfare. "I have seen babysitters even treat the children badly." Maria first entered child care at the age of one and has been cared for in six different arrangements before her enrollment at Head Start. After beginning Head Start, Maria continued to receive child care, at a neighbor's home, before and after the Head Start day for approximately 25 hours per week. When asked how Maria felt about this care experience, Gabriella said the child care provider is always open to new information and learning and often gives Maria lots of individual attention, but there are times when Maria appears not to feel safe or secure in this care.

Gabriella hoped that Head Start would prepare Maria academically and improve her social interactions with children and adults. She also hoped that Head Start would help improve Maria's manners and reinforce good habits while helping her to learn how to behave better. For herself, Gabriella hoped to gain a better understanding of child development and child growth and most importantly, she hoped that Head Start would be able to help her with child care. When asked if there was anything that she would like to see improved or changed about Head Start, Gabriella wished that they would have longer hours or provide extended day care. Gabriella did mention being particularly pleased, that at times, Head Start was sensitive to her transportation needs. "On cold days they give my daughter a ride to Head Start." Transportation to Head Start is a problem for this family and Gabriella explained the difficulty of getting Maria to school. "For me, it's hard to find a person that will help me. In the time of cold and snow, I don't want for them to miss not one day. It's also hard for me to miss a lot of work. [Having transportation] could help a lot of mothers out." . . . .

IV.   The Family's Home and Neighborhood

❑   Interviewer's Description of Home/Home Observations

❑   Interviewer's Description/Observations of Neighborhood

❑   Housing Type and Circumstances

❑   Neighborhood Violence: Family's Exposure to Violence

Excerpt 4:   At the time of the October home interview, the FACES home visit interviewer describes the apartment and neighborhood as follows: "The residential neighborhood of mostly low-income/blue collar, African American and Latino families, is located in a suburban setting. The neighborhood consists of two apartment complexes surrounded by single-family homes. The family lived in one of the apartments. The apartment complex is very old and moderately populated. The yards are bare. The apartment complexes have gravel parking lots with no plants or shrubbery. The buildings are in need of repair, there is an abandoned swimming pool, and dark passage ways. The complex itself appears to be unsafe for children to play--rusted stairwells, broken cement stairs and no outside playground.   All neighborhood/ community resources such as churches, schools, recreation centers, and public transportation are at least one-half mile away. There are no signs of neighborhood activities or neighborhood identity. The apartment complexes and the surrounding houses have a small "buffer zone" between them --- the parking lot. They almost appear to be two distinct neighborhoods. In the apartments, people are out on their balconies talking, watching their children. No social interaction was observed at the surrounding houses."

Gabriella said the neighborhood is constantly in transition -- people are always moving in and out. No one really knows each other and Gabriella does not let her kids play with the other children. She fears for their safety because this is a drug and gang-infested housing project, and loitering is often observed. The family is afraid to complain to their landlord or the local housing authority because of their immigration status and their poor English skills . . . .

As you think about this year in your child's life, what are some of your hopes and goals for your child?

(75%) Reported Hopes and Goals Related to General Educational Goals

"For her to learn how to enjoy learning so that when she's in school she enjoys it and she can build her dreams."

- (34%)   Hope Child Completes Age Appropriate Tasks or Is Developmentally on Target
- (29%)   Hope Child Does Well in School/Will Get a Good Education
- (24%)   Have General Educational Goals
- (20%)   Hope Child Has a Positive Attitude Toward School and School Principal

(47%) Reported Hopes and Goals Related to the Qualities of the Child

"To learn to be a better kid. To learn how to respect other kids and to do the best you can."

"I want him to be a good and moral person."

- (36%)   Hope Child Will Have Positive Qualities or Positive Social Interactions
- (10%)   Hope Child Will Lack Negative Qualities and/or Overcome Potentially Negative Social Situations

What are your long-term educational goals for your child?

(65%) Reported Specific Long-Term Educational Attainment Goals

"I hope that she finishes school on time."

" . . . education means a lot to me. I really want them to get a college education."

- (49%)   Hope Child Continues Education after High School, Goes To/Graduates from College
- (26%)   Hope Child Graduates from High School
- (4%)   Have No Specific Educational Goals for Child

Do you have other hopes for child's future?

> "Finish school, go to college, have every opportunity Mom did not have."
>
> "I'm hoping he'll be a lawyer because he's smart."
>
> "That she's happy and healthy."

- (50%) Want Child to Do His/her Best, Have a "Good Life", or Be Happy, Including Pursuit of Own Goals
- (45%) Have Specific Career Aspirations for the Child
- (14%) Feel Family Involvement Important to Child's Success
- (9%) Want Child to Do as Well As and/or Better than the Child's Parents Have Done in Life

How would you describe your neighborhood? What kind of place is it to raise a child?

(75%) Said it Was a Good Place to Raise a Child or Has Several Strengths

> "Quiet, really friendly neighborhood. Everyone knows everyone else. When someone moves we go and introduce (ourselves). It's a nice place and everyone looks after the kids and makes sure they don't get into trouble. The kids get along really well and don't fight."

> "It's a good place. Good people. No violence."

> "It's a family neighborhood. The children all play together. The neighbors are all friendly. We watch out for each other's kids."

> "Friendly. A lot of kids. Quiet. Everyone helps everyone. It's a very good place to raise a child. Everyone takes kids as their own and treats them as their own."

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(66%) Mention Good Neighbors/Positive Interactions

- (62%)   Say Neighborhood is Quiet/Peaceful
- (53%)   Say Neighborhood is Safe/Free of Crime and Drugs
- (42%)   Like Physical Aspects of the Neighborhood
- (28%)   Mention Using Neighborhood Resources
- (25%)   Like Demographics of the Neighborhood

(25%)   Said it Was Not a Good Place to Raise a Child or Had Several Problems/Weaknesses

"This neighborhood has deteriorated . . . before there were no drugs nearby, but now they are even in my building. My neighbors are smoking them everywhere, even in the hallways. Now I have to be even more careful when allowing my children to play out in the street. I have to take them elsewhere to play but there isn't a good place to take them that is nearby."

"Rough. Guys hanging out. Kids can't play on the playground. Not a place to raise a child. If I could live someplace better I would."

"This neighborhood is definitely not a good place to raise children because children learn what they see and I don't want my children to learn some of the things that one sees around here."

"In this neighborhood, if you mind your own business you are safe. If I had a choice, I would live elsewhere."

- (68%)   Mention Safety/Reducing Crime or Drugs
- (52%)   Mention Bad Neighbors/Negative Interactions
- (24%)   Dislike Demographics of the Neighborhood
- (20%)   Mention Lack of Neighborhood Resources/Activities
- (20%)   Dislike Physical Aspects of Neighborhood

What are some of the things you really like about your neighborhood?

"I like my neighbors. My neighbors never bother me and they are helpful."
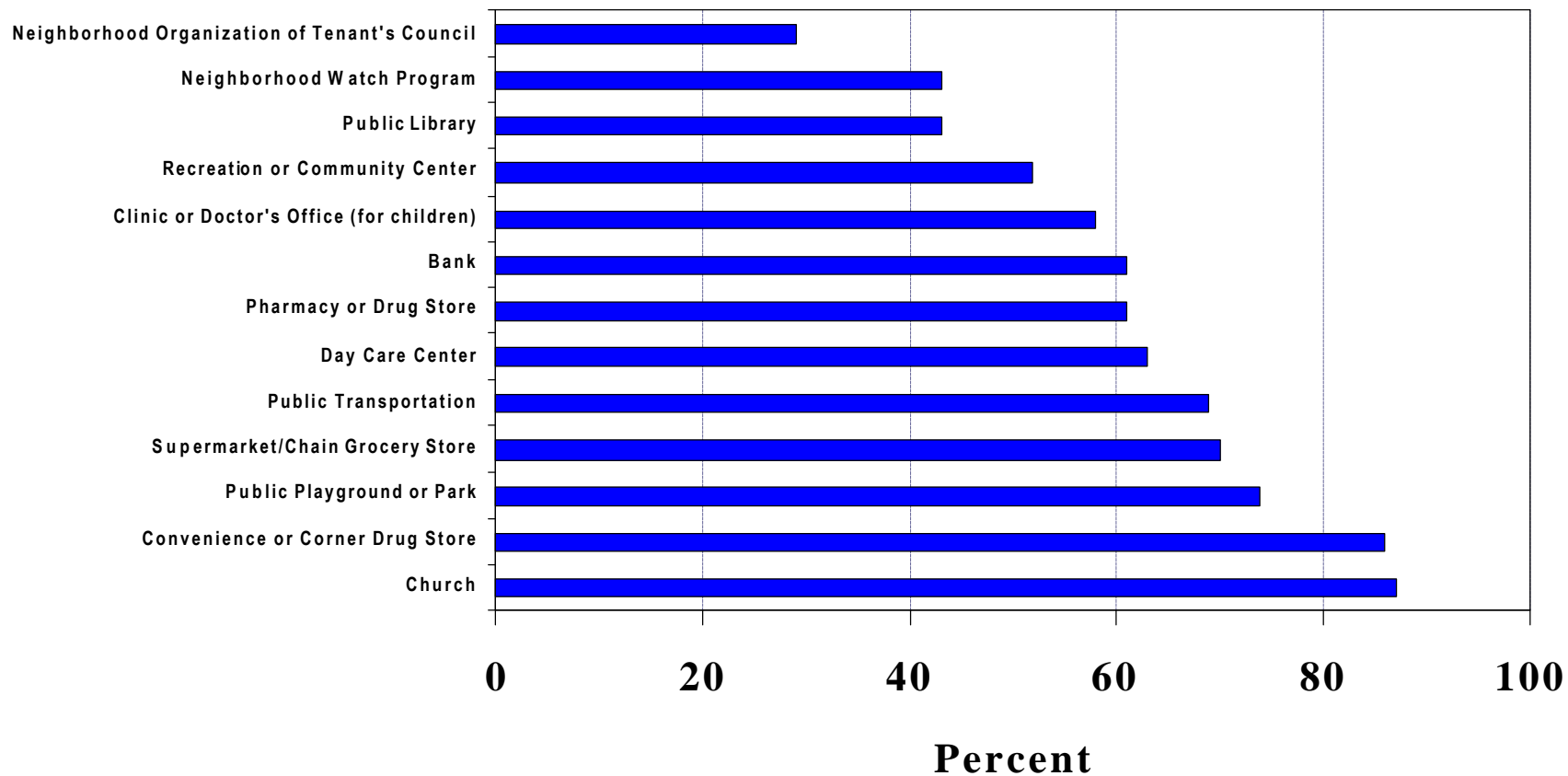
- (53%)   Like Neighbors/Interactions with Neighbors
- (32%)   Like Quiet/Peacefulness
- (24%)   Like Neighborhood Resources/Activities
- (20%)   Like Convenience/Proximity to Schools, Businesses, Transportation
- (15%)   Like Safety/Free of Crime and Drugs
- (13%)   Like Physical Aspects of the Neighborhood
- (10%)   Felt There Are No/Or Very Few Good Things
- (9%)   Like Demographics of Neighborhood

If there were three things you could change about your neighborhood, what would they be?

"I would like the neighborhood to be better taken care of. I would want to see houses painted, more trees and cleaner streets."

- (49%)   Would Improve Physical Aspects of Neighborhood
- (33%)   Mentioned Neighbors/Interactions with Neighbors
- (27%)   Would Improve Availability/Access to Neighborhood
          Resources/ Activities
- (22%)   Would Not Change Anything/or Very Little about Their Neighborhood
- (20%)   Would Improve Safety/Reduce Crime and Drugs
- (11%)   Would Change Demographics of the Neighborhood

Head Start Families Report of Neighborhood[1] Resources

	Percent
Neighborhood Organization of Tenant's Council	
Neighborhood Watch Program	
Public Library	
Recreation or Community Center	
Clinic or Doctor's Office (for children)	
Bank	
Pharmacy or Drug Store	
Day Care Center	
Public Transportation	
Supermarket/Chain Grocery Store	
Public Playground or Park	
Convenience or Corner Drug Store	
Church	

Percent

[1] Neighborhood is defined as within six blocks or a one-half mile radius

Head Start Families Report of Their Neighborhoods
Physical and Social Quality Indicators
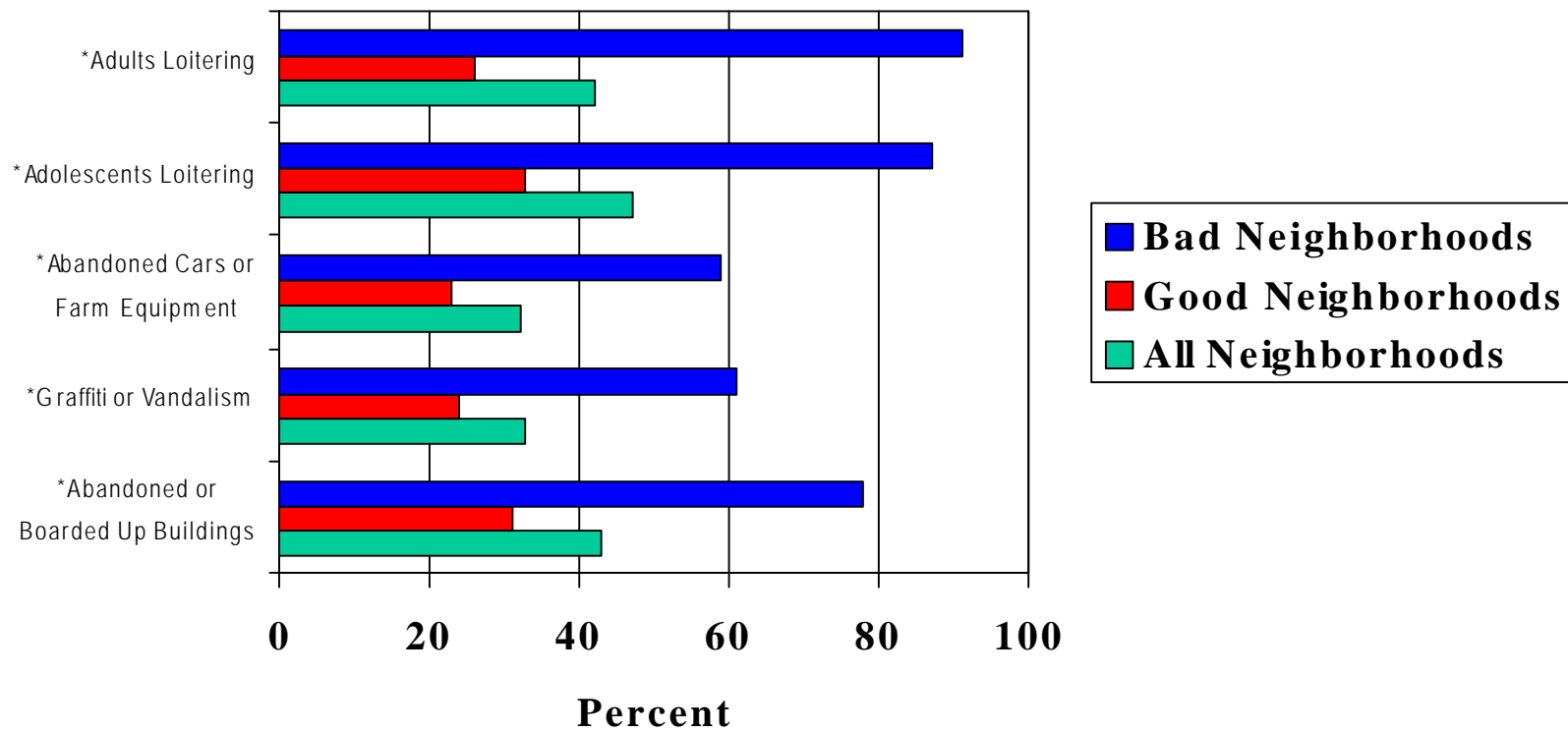
*Chi-square significant at P ≤ .01

Summary

❑ The methodology used in the FACES Case Study provides a useful framework for developing more complete profiles of Head Start families. The case study methodology integrates two analytic approaches: family narratives and content coding. This integrated methodology is valuable for exploring and confirming emergent themes both within and across Head Start families in the study.

❑ The Head Start Family Narrative exemplifies the value of the narrative as a vehicle for integrating multiple methods and qualitative as well as quantitative descriptive data in order to begin to identify emergent themes within families and generate hypotheses to be confirmed across families.

❑ Content analyses of parental hopes and goals for their children indicate that Head Start parents generally hold optimistic expectations for their child's early schooling experiences and future educational attainment. Most Head Start parents' hopes for their child's Head Start experience are focused on general education goals, such as learning basic skills and doing well in school. Most parents have specific long-term educational goals for their child, such as graduating from high school and attending college.

❑ Content analyses of Head Start families' perceptions of their neighborhoods indicate that most parents feel that their neighborhood is a good place to raise children or has several strengths. Most parents seem to use the same set of criteria in judging whether their neighborhood is a good or bad place to raise their children. These criteria include: 1) safety, particularly the presence of crime and/or drugs in their neighborhoods; 2) the quality of interactions with their neighbors or whether they can trust their neighbors; and 3) the presence of social and physical indicators in their neighborhoods, such as abandoned or vandalized buildings and groups of people loitering.