

**EMERGING VOICES: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS  
OF SELF-CHANGE IN A  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
GED PROGRAM**

By

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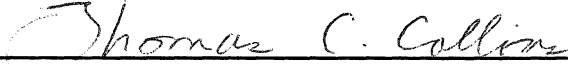
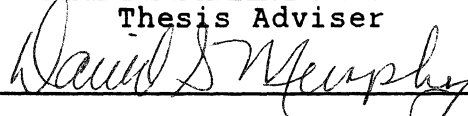
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and Origin

For many years, the American public has been concerned about how to break the welfare cycle in the United States. Today, that concern appears to be growing. Five million families (14.1 million individuals) receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) at an annual cost of \$22.5 billion (Johnson, 1992). The welfare dilemma generates headlines and produces volumes of mail to members of Congress.

After reviewing these figures it comes as no surprise that some kind of welfare reform must begin. In fact, it has already begun with the passage of the Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA). The FSA, termed the most sweeping federal reform of the welfare system in fifty years (Rovner, 1988) and "an education bill in disguise" (Houseman, 1990, p. 12), requires that every state provide educational and/or training opportunities for parents receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Advocates of the FSA believed the act signaled state welfare systems that services must be designed to reduce welfare dependency instead of providing only cash assistance (Johnson, 1992; Hagen & Lurie, 1992).



Furthermore, A. Sidney Johnson III, writing in the Journal of the American Public Welfare Association (1992), said that the FSA represented a "consensus to change what was historically an income maintenance system to a process by which welfare families could escape dependency and become gainfully employed, tax-paying citizens" (p.20).

Under the provisions of the FSA's Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS), states must provide remedial education to individuals over twenty years of age who lack a high school diploma or the equivalent. JOBS may also provide post-secondary education programs to AFDC recipients who have, or who subsequently earn, a high school diploma or its equivalent, the General Educational Development (GED) diploma. For the first time, states were permitted to use federal funds to contract with community colleges for needed education services for AFDC recipients. Prior to this, there was legal and regulatory bias against post-secondary education as an allowable education and training activity for AFDC recipients (Johnson, 1992).

Many authorities believe that the community college is ideal for delivering needed educational and auxiliary services to AFDC recipients. Alan W. Houseman, a leading analyst of the welfare system, in an interview published in the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges Journal, declared that "community colleges afford the best opportunity to deliver useful and effective educational opportunities to JOBS participants" (1990, p. 12). He

further stated, "community colleges may be the only institutions able to effectively serve this population" (p. 12).

Oklahoma's community colleges "derive the great majority of [their] total educational and general budgets" from state appropriations (Cook & Brisch in Tollefson & Fountain, 1992, p. 171). Their mission is defined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and includes the five curricular functions that Cohen and Brawer (1989) found are usually included in state legislation establishing community colleges. These include academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, remedial education, and community service.

First, Oklahoma's community colleges offer a variety of courses and associate degrees that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Second, career education is provided by Oklahoma's community colleges in the form of technical/occupational programs. Unlike most states, however, Oklahoma's community colleges share this function with the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education. Primarily, the state community colleges provide technical/occupational programs "that are strongly based in collegiate level instruction" (Cook & Brisch in Tollefson & Fountain, p. 172). Third, community colleges in Oklahoma provide continuing education, or non-credit classes, to members of the community. Fourth,

Oklahoma's community colleges provide remedial or developmental education for students who are not prepared for college-level studies. And, finally, community service in the form of a wide diversity of cultural, recreational, and academic programs and events is provided by Oklahoma's community colleges.

In 1992, the Oklahoma State Regents provided a unique opportunity for Oklahoma community colleges to meet the community service tenet of their mission. When the federal JOBS legislation was implemented as a provision of the FSA, officials of the Oklahoma State Regents and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services forged a memorandum of understanding for a program that would benefit both of their agencies. This memorandum specified that DHS would set aside \$1.5 million of its federal JOBS allocation for fiscal year 1992-93 for the purpose of funding the approved college and university programs to serve persons who received AFDC and were participants in an approved JOBS component. The Oklahoma State Regents were responsible for soliciting programs from colleges and universities, and selection of the programs was made jointly by DHS and the Oklahoma State Regents. The federally required state match of 29.26 percent was guaranteed by the Oklahoma State Regents, but would be provided by the chosen colleges or universities (Memorandum of Understanding, June 1992).

The \$1.5 million in JOBS monies allowed the Oklahoma State Regents to provide colleges and universities with

funds to establish programs and services which provided a service to their communities by significantly impacting the future of AFDC recipients. Thus, the provisions of this memorandum of understanding conferred benefits to both state agencies.

When the administration of Tulsa Junior College (TJC), a large, urban, three-campus, comprehensive community college, became aware of the memorandum of understanding, they applied for a portion of the federal JOBS monies to begin a program that would provide educational opportunities and services to eligible AFDC recipients. On September 25, 1992, the Oklahoma State Regents approved funding for five programs which would be administered by four community colleges. Tulsa Junior College received an allocation of \$119,156, based on the provision of matching funds, personnel, goods, or services by the college in the amount of \$56,990. The funds were to be expended by the end of the federal fiscal year, September 30, 1993.

Although some states have utilized JOBS money since 1989 to provide education to prepare for the GED test, the goal of self-sufficiency for the AFDC recipient has not always been achieved. Being aware of this weakness, TJC designed what it believed to be a holistic program which not only prepared students for GED certification, but also prepared them for post-secondary education and for productive employment.

The program was called EMERGE, an acronym for *Encouraging More Education to Reach Graduation and Employment*. Established in January 1993, EMERGE was a structured, three-tier skills enhancement program. The EMERGE program's three goals were consistent with the FSA's JOBS program goals described above: (1) To prepare AFDC recipients for GED certification; (2) to prepare AFDC recipients for post-secondary education; and (3) to prepare AFDC recipients for productive employment.

Students in the EMERGE program had the same rights and responsibilities as other community college students. However, because they had not earned a high school diploma, they were enrolled only in pre-college classes developed specifically for them. Students attended five classes each afternoon, for a total of twenty hours a week, which were constructed similar to college classes.

Fifty-eight students were enrolled in EMERGE during the pilot semester. The students were placed into three tiers, based on their performance on the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), a nationally normed instrument used to assess grade-level achievement.

The Tier I curriculum, for students who scored on the eleventh-grade achievement level in at least one area tested and were expected to pass the GED after one semester, focused on preparation for the GED and included reading comprehension, essay writing, language usage, social studies, science, and advanced mathematics. Tier II and III

students were expected to pass the GED in two and three semesters, respectively. Tier II students scored at the ninth-grade level in at least one area tested, and Tier III students scored at the seventh-grade level. There were two separate curricula for the two tiers, but both concentrated on improving skills and concepts in mathematics, reading, and writing.

Students in all three tiers also attended two other classes. The career/personal development class was designed to teach a broad range of non-academic skills; and the individualized computer-aided instruction class used a networked, individualized learning package called INVEST to reinforce concepts and skills taught in the other four classes.

Community colleges, as well as other institutions, have offered GED-preparation programs for a number of years. However, most programs offer only academic preparation and do not include a component that gives participants the opportunity to develop and implement the skills necessary to enjoy a productive life. Many of these life skills, such as decision making or effective parenting, can be learned by example in a healthy family. Additional skills, such as workplace ethic and goal setting, often are acquired from other sources as a child develops into a successful adult.

Designers of the EMERGE curriculum believed that many parents receiving AFDC reach adulthood without acquiring the necessary skills for productive living. Therefore, the

personal/career development class, an integral part of the EMERGE curriculum, was designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn these and similar skills. This class included the topics listed above as well as study skills, time management, oral communication, career exploration, job-search techniques, interview skills, parenting, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

#### Statement of the Problem

The traditional approach to measuring the success of a GED program (the approach taken by DHS) is to examine the time involved in preparation, the passing rate, and the scores earned by individual students on the GED examination. However, attainment of the GED does not necessarily equate with preparation for productive employment and economic self-sufficiency (Houseman, 1990). Therefore, because EMERGE was designed not only to prepare students for the GED but also to prepare them for post-secondary education and productive employment, the designers of EMERGE wished to determine what impact, in addition to academic preparation, the EMERGE experience had on students.

In Boys in White, a landmark study of medical students, the researchers assumed that students would leave medical school with a different perception of their world and themselves than when they entered (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961). The designers of EMERGE made a similar assumption. They assumed that students would leave EMERGE

with a different perception of their world and themselves than when they entered the program. The problem, therefore, is that the designers of EMERGE wanted to know if students believed that changes occurred in their perception of their world and themselves during the EMERGE experience.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which students perceived changes that occurred in their perception of their world and themselves during the EMERGE experience, and to what degree they believed EMERGE contributed to those changes. Furthermore, the research sought to identify what students believed the changes were and what elements in the program students believed contributed to the changes.

#### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding this study:

1. Students would change their perceptions of themselves during their initial semester in the EMERGE program.
2. Student interviews would be an accurate source of information to determine change in student perceptions.
3. The participants would be able to articulate their perceptions.



4. The interviewer's skill and experience in conducting student interviews after creating a relaxed atmosphere would ensure that students would share candid and truthful information.

#### Implications of the Study

A high school diploma or a GED certificate does not guarantee that a person will stay off the welfare rolls. In fact, forty-three percent of AFDC participants have graduated from high school or have earned the GED. Another ten percent have completed at least one year of college (Houseman, 1990).

However, a high school diploma or its equivalent is the essential first step toward gaining self-sufficiency in our society. If we are to break the welfare cycle, a new educational model is needed. This model should have a dual curriculum that addresses the affective domain as well as the cognitive domain. In addition to teaching the skills necessary for successful completion of the GED examination, the model should include a structured, significant personal- and career-development curriculum which has been designed to improve adult self-concept or self-esteem.

Recent studies by Bonnett (1991) and Sansone (1993) have revealed that self-esteem is positively correlated with AFDC participants' success in broad areas of their lives. Therefore, if the self-esteem of students can be improved at the same time they are preparing for the GED examination,

they may have acquired the tools to help them be more successful. If this research project found that students in the EMERGE program believed that their self-esteem had improved during the program and that EMERGE contributed to that improvement, EMERGE might serve as a model for urban community colleges.

The Family Support Act of 1988 required that state human services agencies provide JOBS services to a minimum of twenty percent of their caseload by 1995. Although not all of these persons will be capable of or interested in post-secondary college work, many will benefit from preparing for and earning the GED (Johnson, 1992). Training or educating the five million AFDC recipients could tap a new pool of human resources for the local community, the state, and, indeed, the United States. The number of AFDC recipients nationwide who could be served by community colleges in programs similar to EMERGE is significant: Thirty-five percent of AFDC recipients are high school dropouts, and twelve percent never attended high school (Houseman, 1992).

#### Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions apply:

*Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)* - Cash assistance program that provides state and federal funds to primarily single-parent families with dependent children.

**Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA)** - Federal welfare reform legislation designed to move recipients of AFDC from dependence to self-sufficiency. The FSA requires that all states provide educational opportunities for parents receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

**Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS)** - The enabling legislation of the FSA, which requires that states provide remedial education to individuals over twenty years of age who lack a high school diploma or the equivalent.

**Community College** - A public, two-year college, which offers educational programs that terminate with the associate degree.

**Academic worth** - Describes how the student perceives and values himself or herself academically.

**Social worth** - Describes how a student perceives and values himself or herself interpersonally.

**Society** - Describes the student's perception of those people and institutions that are outside his or her immediate circle.

**Self** - Describes how a student perceives and values himself or herself intrinsically.

#### Research Questions

The problem in this study is that the designers of EMERGE wanted to know if students believed that changes occurred in their perceptions of their world and themselves

during the EMERGE experience. To address the problem, the following questions were used as a guide:

1. At the *beginning of the pilot semester*, how did students in the EMERGE program perceive their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves?
2. At *mid-semester*, what changes, if any, did EMERGE students perceive had occurred as a result of their participation in the EMERGE program? What specific element of the program influenced the changes?
3. At the *end of the semester*, how did EMERGE students perceive their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves? What changes, if any, did EMERGE students perceive occurred during their participation in EMERGE? If they perceived changes, did EMERGE contribute to the changes? If so, what were the changes? What elements in the program contributed to the changes?
4. *One year after the conclusion of the pilot semester*, how did EMERGE graduates view the EMERGE program and themselves? If changes occurred in EMERGE graduates' perceptions of themselves during the pilot semester, and if students believed that EMERGE contributed to the changes, what changes persisted? If changes persisted, did EMERGE

contribute to the changes? If so, what were the changes? What elements in the program contributed to the changes?

#### Scope and Limitations

The following limitations were related to this study:

1. The initial and mid-semester interviews of EMERGE students were limited to forty minutes so that participants would miss only one class session. The final interviews and the follow-up interviews were limited to one hour.
2. Students in the EMERGE program were partly self-selected because only AFDC participants who chose to attend the orientation were eligible for the program.
3. Participants were aware they were part of a research study.
4. This study was limited to students enrolled in the pilot semester of the EMERGE program, a holistic, self-contained, educational program designed to prepare AFDC recipients for attainment of the GED, post-secondary education, and productive employment.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature related to this study. The chapter is organized into the following sections: Mission of Community Colleges, The Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA) and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Recipients in Community Colleges, and Self-Esteem and Self-Concept.

#### Mission of Community Colleges

When the history of higher education in the United States is examined, we find that two-year colleges are relatively young. The first junior college was established in 1892 as a part of the University of Chicago. In 1901, a junior college was established in Joliet, Illinois, as an extension of the local high school. The two-year college has significantly evolved from the turn of the century, as has its mission (Cohen & Brawer, 1989).

In 1920, a group of people attending a meeting called by the United States Commissioner of Education founded the

American Association of Junior Colleges, which provided a national forum for the fledgling institutions. In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education for American Democracy (The Truman Commission) reported that if America were to lead the world in democracy barriers to post-secondary educational opportunities must be eliminated. This stance complimented the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G. I. Bill), which had been passed by Congress in 1944 to provide scholarship funds for World War II veterans. The Truman Commission advocated establishing a network of community colleges across the United States, thus providing convenient, low-cost access for millions of Americans. These community colleges would be comprehensive, offering technical, general, and continuing education. They would serve as cultural centers and emphasize civic responsibilities. Most importantly, they would become a part of a statewide system of higher education (Vaughn, 1982).

Although the G. I. Bill and the Truman Commission introduced the belief that all Americans should have access to higher education, it was not until the 1960's that the United States, by making student financial aid widely available, made post-secondary education accessible to the masses (Cohen & Brawer, 1989).

The need for trained workers and the national emphasis on social equality contributed to the phenomenal growth of the community college movement. From 1965-1969, an average

of one community college per week opened in this country, and enrollment swelled from one-half million students in 1960 to over two million in 1970 (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). In 1993, there were approximately five million students enrolled in America's community colleges (Almanac of Higher Education, 1993).

Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., who led the two-year college organization then known as the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) from 1958-1981, did much to promote an expanded vision of the community college mission. He was a strong supporter of lifelong learning and believed community colleges should lead the way in finding solutions to social problems through their continuing education and community service functions (Vaughn, 1982). Dale Parnell, who took the helm of AACJC (now AACC) from 1981-1991, was equally concerned with the role of two-year colleges in solving social problems, specifically that of developing America economically by working with business and industry to assist in moving the at-risk population into the economic mainstream (Parnell, 1990). The current community college involvement with the federal JOBS program is an extension of the community college mission of economic development, remedial education, and community involvement.

The mission of Tulsa Junior College (TJC) is in accord with that mission. Three specific areas in TJC's mission statement support the creation of a GED program for AFDC recipients. The college is committed to provide "programs



of remedial and developmental education for those whose previous education may not have prepared them for college," "programs of economic development," and "programs relevant to the needs and interest of the greater Tulsa area" (Tulsa Junior College Catalog, 1993-94, p. 7).

The Family Support Act of 1988 and  
the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills  
Training Program

When the Family Support Act (FSA) was passed by Congress in 1988, a new chapter of welfare reform began. The philosophy of the FSA is that employment is a principal antidote to welfare dependency. To implement this philosophy, welfare recipients who are able must work or begin the necessary steps toward self-sufficiency. However, to facilitate individuals' leaving the welfare system, government has the responsibility of providing necessary services (Offner, 1992). For example, the FSA requires that transitional child care and Medicaid be provided to those who leave welfare for work. Additionally, the act strengthens child-support enforcement (FSA, 1988).

Title II of the FSA requires that all states establish a Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program to help strengthen the economic self-sufficiency of AFDC recipients. However, the legislation gives state and local human service agencies the tools and resources to do this. The FSA authorized approximately \$1 billion in annual

federal funds for the JOBS program, to be used for basic skills education, job-readiness training, and vocational skills training. In addition, for the first time in the history of welfare legislation, post-secondary education is an allowable expenditure if a state elects to use funds for that purpose. Funds are allocated to states based on their AFDC population. To obtain highest funding, states must serve a proportion of high-risk recipients known as the target group: young parents, long-term recipients, and families about to lose AFDC eligibility as the youngest child turns eighteen. Nationwide, an average of sixty-two percent of families in the JOBS program were from the target group. Oklahoma led the nation with eighty-nine percent participation from the target group (U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

The high percentage of target-group recipients participating in JOBS programs in Oklahoma is a result of DHS experience operating work and training programs before JOBS took effect. This high percentage of participation has helped the state meet the challenge of the increasing AFDC population. While the state allocations have remained at approximately the 1990 level, federal allocations have increased by nearly forty percent since that time. Fiscal year 1993 marked the seventh consecutive year that the number of persons on AFDC increased in Oklahoma. There were over 43,000 adults and nearly 93,000 children served (Oklahoma Department of Human Services, 1993). Even so,

AFDC does not serve all Oklahomans who live below the poverty level. Of the over 180,000 children under seventeen living in poverty in Oklahoma, only 51.7 percent receive AFDC benefits (Ingraham, 1994).

For states struggling to implement JOBS, Sherwood and Long (1991) provide a model for implementation, using the experience of New Jersey and California. Both of these states initiated major welfare-to-work programs before JOBS took effect. California's program, Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), and New Jersey's Realizing Economic Achievement (REACH) are often credited as forerunners of JOBS. In their article, Sherwood and Long discuss and analyze the problems and successes of both state programs.

The FSA and the JOBS program have many supporters. However, there are many detractors on both sides of the political aisle. In his article, A Pattern in the Planning Process of Welfare-to-Work Initiatives (1991), James Tierney, a practicing social worker, expresses his concern regarding the consensus on which the FSA was built:

The socio-political planning process picks up once again and charges forth with the next welfare-to-work initiative...without ever having dealt with the inherent value conflict: that of programs run by people who believe that recipients prefer to improve their situation and get off welfare, but designed by people who believe that welfare recipients are satisfied and wish to remain dependent on taxpayers' contributions throughout the years they raise their children and depend on Aid to Families with Dependent Children to do so (p. 469).

Even the FSA's most ardent supporters agree that it will be at least five years before its effectiveness can be determined. Since welfare reform continues to be debated, it is highly likely there will be changes or modifications before that time (Offner, 1992).

#### AFDC Recipients in Community Colleges

A review of the literature revealed a significant void in studies of community college GED-preparation programs designed for AFDC recipients and funded by federal JOBS money. Ray Manak, Director for Literacy Services at Cuyahoga Community College, speculated that programs using federal JOBS monies for funding of GED programs were so new and experimental that directors had not had time to reflect on their programs or to begin sharing information, except on a limited, informal basis (personal communication, February 10, 1993). Another reason could be that the federal government does not require states to reach full compliance (providing JOBS services to twenty percent of their caseload) until 1995 (Hagen & Lurie, 1992).

If the literature search is broadened to include studies of welfare mothers enrolled in college, there are several interesting studies available. As early as 1977, Young described a program for welfare mothers at Jefferson Community College in Louisville, Kentucky. She asserted that welfare mothers performed well in community colleges and that community colleges were the best source of training

for the welfare mother because these colleges were open-admission, inexpensive, and geared to give short training in technical fields. Young identified age as a factor in academic success. Mothers who were twenty-five years or older made up sixty-five percent of those with a "C" average or above, and mothers under twenty-five years of age made up sixty percent of those with less than a "C" average.

In 1984, Megerian discussed the ways colleges can help welfare mothers overcome dependence and improve their future lives and careers. Megerian argued that counseling of welfare mothers should concentrate on cultural factors and that financial aid and career counseling were important to welfare mothers.

Sansone's 1993 study of AFDC recipients indicated the need for social support whenever these individuals were involved in education or job training. He cited self-esteem support and social support as necessary parts of welfare reform programs. Self-esteem was significantly correlated to participant outcomes.

#### Self-Esteem and Self-Concept

If one wants realistic answers to questions about the welfare system, a discussion with professionals working with welfare recipients provides insight. If human services workers are asked what factors contribute to the future economic self-sufficiency of welfare recipients, most will say that, although job skills are important, a positive

self-concept is a determining factor in whether or not a person is successful in maintaining independence from public assistance.

This opinion of human services professionals would not be a surprise to reviewers of the literature on self-concept and self-esteem, much of which reflected that a positive self-image not only influences behavior but also, in many cases, determines it. In Measures of Self-Concept, Wylie (1989) determined that self-esteem plays a large role in accounting for human behavior. Fitts (1972) drew a similar conclusion. Additionally, Wylie stated that a person with high self-esteem "has self-respect [and] considers himself a person of worth" (p. 24). In Thompson's 1972 review of four hundred studies, using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, he found that good interpersonal communication is associated with a well-integrated self-concept. Hattie (1992) defends the fact that most self-concept and self-esteem measures are self-reported because the *subject's* perception is what researchers have interest in.

Can self-esteem be changed? Hattie conducted a meta-analysis and determined that adults have a much greater likelihood of changing self-esteem than do children.

In Superiority and Social Interest: A Collection of Later Writings (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, Eds., 1979), Alfred Adler defines more completely his theory of individual psychology (Adlerian theory). Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology makes six assumptions, two of which are related

to self-esteem. One related assumption is that human behavior (actions, motives, and emotions) is a result of the individual's perception of himself and the world. Another is that the greater the belief in self, the greater the feeling of *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, or a deep feeling of identification, sympathy, and affection for human beings in general.

The other four assumptions of the theory are that

1. individuals are unique,
2. individuals desire to strive for success in solving problems,
3. the personality has unity and self-consistency, and
4. individual life style is a result of the way each person "perceives the world and...what appears...[to him] as success" (p. 25).

Steffenhagen and Burns (1987) believed that Adler considered degree of activity and level of social interest to be paramount in goal setting and attainment. They equated Adler's individual psychology to a psychology of self-esteem because "all its concepts are concerned with the development of self-esteem and its impact on the emergence of the adjusted or maladjusted personality" (p. 19).

There are a number of terms used interchangeably with self-esteem in the literature, including self-worth and self-concept. Regardless of the term, self-esteem is the foundation for understanding human behavior. In order to

move AFDC recipients toward self-sufficiency, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the behavior of these individuals and how they perceive themselves (Steffenhagen & Burns, 1987).

When discussing self-esteem in today's world, Steffenhagen and Burns identify social status as an important factor. In addition, socio-economics is an important component of status. Therefore, individuals receiving AFDC who are limited in social status may be limited in self-esteem. They have few successful role performances, encounter many social barriers, and have inadequate opportunity to develop values beyond their own experience level.

Personality theorist Erik Erikson (1980) suggests that individuals face a specific psychosocial dilemma or "crisis" at each stage of life. Resolving each dilemma creates a balance between the individual and the world, and an unfavorable outcome makes it more difficult to deal with the later dilemmas. The first three dilemmas Erikson advanced were found in early childhood: trust vs. misconduct, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, and initiative vs. guilt.

Industry vs. inferiority, Erickson's fourth stage, is usually faced in middle childhood. Here the seeds of poor self-esteem are sown. Children learn a sense of industry if they are praised for their productive activities, but feelings of inferiority result if their efforts are regarded as inadequate.



Erikson's fifth stage, identity vs. role confusion, is commonly encountered in adolescence. Individuals must build an identity which is consistent with their self-perception and their relationships with others. If they fail to develop a sense of identity, they will be uncertain about who they are and where they are going. Many AFDC recipients appear to have had difficulty resolving dilemmas encountered in Erikson's fourth and fifth stages.

Various studies have attempted to look at the relationship between self-esteem and success in educational pursuits. In a study of traditional and returning community college students, Prager (1983) confirmed a positive relationship between self-esteem or self-concept and educational aspirations.

Research from Detroit's Operation Bridge concerned adult education in outreach centers. The thirteen adult volunteer advisors who were trained to assist in orientation and administration of coursework participated in the study. The results showed that the participants had increased positive feelings about themselves, their behavior, their social role, and the community (Bowers, 1983).

In a study of GED graduates in Oregon, Kilpatrick (1990) examined self-esteem, employment, and educational benefits gained from acquiring a GED certificate, and their relationship to the life-cycle phase. His findings revealed that one hundred percent of the GED graduate respondents

who were twenty-nine and older reported increased self-esteem.

Fifteen months after students completed a GED program, Seppanen (1991) gathered data from interviews with 182 students. The most frequently mentioned goal for enrolling in the GED program was to feel better about themselves (seventy-seven percent of the respondents). They also stated that their satisfaction with life improved after beginning the GED class.

In Goodwin's 1991 study, analysis of data concerning the impact of GED completion indicated that there were important changes in people's lives after earning the GED certificate. Respondents reported that they had more self-confidence and felt better about themselves. They also reported more family satisfaction and an increase in family literacy activities such as letter writing, helping children with homework, and reading.

In Pascarella's and Terenzini's How College Affects Students, the authors found that "as students become better learners, they also appear to...gain in their sense that they are in control of their world and what happens to them..." (1991, p. 562). The authors also found that "persuasive evidence exists to indicate that college attendance is reliably and positively related to increases in students' academic and social self-concepts, as well as their self-esteem" (p. 572). However, they concluded that the effects are small and indirect, rather than direct.

When reviewing the literature regarding the effect of different colleges have on self-esteem, Pascarella and Terenzini found that the type of college had no effect. However, they determined that the degree of involvement with peers and faculty is positively related to academic and social self-concept. There was no mention of self-esteem.

When considering Pascarella's and Terenzini's comprehensive review of the literature on college students, however, it is important to remember the differences between the population of EMERGE and that represented in the research reviewed. EMERGE students are non-residential, part-time, pre-college students of non-traditional age in a special program at a two-year college, while nearly all the research reviewed by Pascarella and Terenzini studied residential students of traditional ages who were full-time students attending four-year colleges.

The following literature discusses the importance of self-esteem to human growth and development, perceptions of self related to success in achievement, causes of low self-esteem, and implications for society regarding low self-esteem.

In a chapter of Self, Ego, and Identity, Greenwald examined the concept of self and its development. Specifically, this work looks at the establishment of self-worth as a cognitive process that determines human success. Three points cited support this thought. First, self-esteem is associated with good problem-solving skills and the

ability to integrate those skills into other situations. Second, positive self-image is tied to the idea that, if one is engaged in effective courses of action, one will succeed. Third, self-esteem is an attitude in itself; and, like all attitudes, it can affect success or the lack of it (Greenwald, in Lapsley & Power, 1988). Therefore, there appears to be a need to positively impact the self-image of welfare participants to assist them in leaving public assistance.

Frey & Carlock (1989) believed that the way adults relate to children influences self-esteem in childhood, an influence that continues into adulthood. If a person comes from a family in which poor parenting and multiple family stressors occurred, such an environment would strongly impede the development of positive self-concept. Additionally, repeated failures, procrastination, and lack of meaning or direction in life compound the condition of negative self-worth.

In Sirgy's Self-Congruity: Toward a Theory of Personality and Cybernetics (1987), achievement motivation is discussed. Low achievers tend to attribute their failures to their lack of ability, while high achievers do not necessarily see their abilities as any more important than other related assets and opportunities (Adler, 1980, & Fitch, 1970, in Sirgy, 1987). Additionally, "...high achievers tend to attribute success outcomes to internal factors (positive self-perception) and failure outcomes to

external factors, merely because these outcomes are consistent with their images of themselves" (p. 81). Therefore, low achievers believe that success comes only from external factors because success outcomes are not consistent with their perceptions of their abilities (Sirgy, 1987).

In Motivation to Learn (1988), Stipek discussed the importance of perceptions of ability and self-worth in relation to Covington's Self-Worth Theory as it applies to the education system. Self-Worth Theory is relevant to education because academic performance is the major criterion for student evaluation. Negative evaluation or the lack of any performance evaluation, therefore, affects self-esteem.

The Social Importance of Self-Esteem (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, Eds., 1989) is a compilation of works by the president of the University of California, his staff, and seven faculty members. The volume, a detailed review and summary of research relating self-esteem to social concerns, was prepared to support the work of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. The thesis of this volume is that the health of society depends on citizens who have a sense of well-being.

The legislation which established the task force was a result of data and testimony presented at public hearings. These hearings "built a consensus that a primary factor

affecting how well or how poorly an individual functions in society is self-esteem" (Mecca *et al.*, p. vii).

One of the chapters in the work cited above is "Self-Esteem and Failure in School: Analysis and Policy Interventions." The theme of this chapter was to establish a link between failure to learn and low self-esteem. It concluded by questioning the roles of achievements and competition in student success (Covington in Mecca *et al.*).

Another chapter from the Mecca *et al.* volume reviewed the literature linking self-esteem and chronic welfare dependency. The authors concluded that

self-esteem is an ambiguous and poorly defined construct in the literature. Numerous conceptualizations, operational definitions, and measurement methodologies exist and often vary depending on the theoretical orientation of the researcher, the context of measurement, and the research goals (Schneiderman, Furman, & Weber in Mecca *et al.*, p. 221).

The concepts Schneiderman, Furman, and Weber found were used interchangeably with self-esteem in the literature included self-acceptance, self-concept, self-regard, self-confidence, self-worth, self-appreciation, ego-acceptance, self-evaluation, and self-description. Even when the authors broadened their search of the literature to include these concepts, they found that the relationship between self-esteem and chronic welfare dependence was untested in the empirical literature. One of the most severe drawbacks is that although self-esteem is widely studied there is very little information available on adults, and information on

welfare recipients is practically non-existent. For this reason, the authors concluded that much additional research on the relationship between welfare dependency and self-esteem is needed and should depend on "improved measurement of psychological variables and adequate longitudinal data" (p. 235).

#### Summary

"The decade of the 1980's saw community colleges emerge as a major player in employment, training, and literacy programs" (Katsinas, 1994, p. 75). The current community college involvement with the federal JOBS program is an extension of the community college mission of economic development, remedial education, and community involvement.

The philosophy of the Family Service Act of 1988 (FSA) implies dual responsibility shared by welfare recipients and government. Recipients have a responsibility to move toward economic self-sufficiency, and government has a responsibility to provide the necessary services to make this possible (Offner, 1992). Title II of the FSA requires that states establish a JOBS training program to provide training or education and job-readiness training for AFDC recipients. Funds are allocated to the states based on their AFDC population and the percentage of target-group recipients served (FSA). Oklahoma leads the nation, with eighty-nine percent of those participating in JOBS programs being target-group recipients.

Oklahoma's AFDC population has increased for seven consecutive years to nearly 136,000 individuals (Oklahoma Department of Human Services, 1993). Yet only fifty-one percent of the children living in poverty in Oklahoma receive AFDC benefits (Ingraham, 1994).

The FSA has supporters and detractors, but even the most ardent supporters agree that the effectiveness of the act cannot be accurately measured for at least five years (Offner, 1992).

There are limited studies available of AFDC recipients in community colleges. Young (1977) found that community colleges were an ideal place for education or training of AFDC recipients because they were open-access, inexpensive, and geared to provide short-term training in technical fields. Megerian (1984) argued for cultural, financial aid, and career counseling for AFDC recipients. Sansone (1993) found that self-esteem and social support were necessary for AFDC recipients and that self-esteem was significantly correlated to participant outcomes.

Much of the literature on self-esteem and self-concept reflected that a positive self-image not only influenced behavior, but also, in many cases, determined it. Hattie's 1992 meta-analysis of self-esteem determined that adults have a greater likelihood of changing self-esteem than do children.

Adlerian theory assumes that human behavior is a result of the individual's perception of himself and the world.



Additionally, the theory assumes that the greater the belief in self, the greater the feeling of identification, sympathy, and affection for others. Steffenhagen and Burns (1987) equated Adlerian theory to a theory of self-esteem because "all of its concepts are concerned with the development of self-esteem..." (p. 19).

Personality theorist Erik Erikson suggests that individuals face a specific psychosocial dilemma at each stage of life. A dilemma commonly encountered in adolescence, if successfully resolved, allows individuals to develop an identity which is consistent with their self-perception and their relationships with others. If they fail to resolve this dilemma, they will be uncertain about who they are and their mission in life.

There are various studies regarding the relationship between self-esteem and success in educational pursuits. Prager (1983) confirmed a positive relationship between self-esteem and educational aspirations.

In a 1990 study of GED graduates in Oregon, Kilpatrick's findings revealed that one hundred percent of the graduate respondents who were twenty-nine and over reported increased self-esteem. Respondents in Goodwin's 1992 study of the impact of GED completion reported that they had more self-confidence and felt better about themselves.

Pascarella's and Terenzini's (1991) review of the past twenty years of research on the impact of college on

individual students at a residential, four-year college revealed that there was a small, indirect effect of college attendance on increases in students' academic self-concept and self-esteem. They also determined that the degree of student involvement with peers and faculty was positively related to academic and social self-concept.

Greenwald (1988) discussed the importance of establishing self-worth because of its relationship to human success. Frey and Carlock (1989) presented a strong case for the power of the influence of adults on children's self-concept, an influence that continues into adulthood. Sirgy (1987) discussed achievement motivation and its relationship to a positive self-perception.

The Social Importance of Self-Esteem (1989) is a compilation of works by scholars from the University of California. Each chapter is a detailed review of research relating self-esteem to social issues, which was prepared to support the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. The thesis of the volume is that the health of society depends on citizens who have a sense of well-being. Covington's chapter attempting to establish a link between failure to learn and low self-esteem was inconclusive, but the author concluded by questioning the role of competition in student success (Covington in Mecca *et al.*).

The authors of the chapter examining the literature linking self-esteem and chronic welfare dependency found

that there were at least ten terms used interchangeably with self-esteem. In addition, they found that there was very little literature available on self-esteem in adults, and that information on self-esteem among welfare recipients was practically non-existent (Schneiderman, Furman, & Weber in Mecca *et al.*, 1989).

The review of the literature indicates a need for research regarding AFDC recipients attending community colleges. Furthermore, there is a need for research on GED students in programs on community college campuses. And, finally, as concluded by Schneiderman, Furman, and Weber, there is a great need for information about the relationship between self-esteem and welfare recipients.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The EMERGE (*Encouraging More Education to Reach Graduation and Employment*) program was designed by a large, urban, comprehensive community college to provide educational opportunities for clients of a state human service agency who received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). It is a structured, on-campus GED-preparation program which includes a personal/career development class as well as traditional academic classes.

Primary funding for the program was provided by federal JOBS (Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills) legislation, a provision of the Family Support Act of 1988. Funds were administered by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) through a memorandum of understanding with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE).

The purpose of this research was to examine the extent to which EMERGE students perceived change that occurred in their perception of their world and themselves during the EMERGE experience, and to what degree they believed EMERGE contributed to those changes. Furthermore, the research sought to identify what students believed the changes were

and what elements in the program students believed contributed to the changes.

There was no better way to determine the perceptions of EMERGE students than to talk with individuals in a private, confidential setting. In an effort to determine perceptions, eighteen EMERGE students were interviewed three times during the pilot semester, and again one year later, in a semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions that enabled the researcher to examine the students' perceptions of themselves.

Kirk and Miller (1986) state that qualitative research has four phases.

*Invention* is a phase for preparation or producing a plan of action; research design.

*Discovery* is a phase of observation and measurement which produces information; data collection.

*Interpretation* is a phase of evaluation which produces understanding; analysis.

*Explanation* is a phase of communication which produces a message.

In qualitative research, all four of the phases must be completed, and in the proper sequence (Kirk & Miller). After describing the subjects and summarizing the selection process, this chapter will discuss the first two phases. The last two phases will be discussed in Chapters IV and V, respectively.

## Description of the Subjects

### EMERGE Participants

Recruitment. The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) retained the responsibility for recruiting and selecting sixty students for the EMERGE program.

Representatives of Tulsa County DHS mailed flyers (Appendix M) to approximately 400 Tulsa County AFDC recipients, who were indiscriminately selected. The flyers announced the program and a date for a testing session to be held on the community college campus approximately three weeks before classes began. Flyers also were posted at sites such as apartment complexes, grocery stores, and laundromats, which were located near concentrations of AFDC recipients.

The Qualifying Examination. The testing session gave the eighty-eight women who responded to the flyer an opportunity to visit the college, meet the coordinator of EMERGE, and ask questions about the program and DHS regulations and services. After questions were answered, the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), a nationally recognized and normed instrument, was administered to eighty-seven AFDC clients who, after learning more about EMERGE, wished to be considered for the program.

The Criterion. When the ABLE was scored, eighty-three women met the minimum criterion for the program. The minimum criterion established by DHS and the college was that an applicant score at the seventh-grade level or above

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in at least one of three areas tested: reading, mathematics, or language. Local DHS officials recommended the criterion because they believed that a seventh-grade reading level was necessary for participants to earn the GED in three semesters or less, the maximum period of time the Oklahoma Department of Human Services was willing to fund an EMERGE participant.

Selection and Placement. The DHS representatives and the EMERGE coordinator selected sixty students and six alternates from the eighty-three women who met the criterion for EMERGE, using ABLE grade-equivalency scores and DHS participants' files. After the students were selected, the EMERGE coordinator, relying upon the ABLE reading grade-equivalency scores as the criterion, placed the students in one of three academic tiers.

The college required that fifteen students be assigned to Tier III, thirty students be assigned to Tier II in two randomly selected sections of fifteen students each, and fifteen students be assigned to Tier I. However, eight of the sixty selected students did not participate for a variety of reasons. One expected a baby in a few weeks; one was scheduled for surgery; and three had not understood that EMERGE was a daily, four-and-one-half-month commitment. When three students did not attend class the first week, they were withdrawn and not considered as EMERGE participants. Since only six alternates had been chosen, two of the eight vacancies were not filled. Thus, there



were fifty-eight students in the pilot semester of EMERGE: fifteen in Tier III, twenty-nine in Tier II, and fourteen in Tier I.

Expectations. Students in Tier III entered EMERGE on approximately the seventh-grade level and were expected to pass the GED after three semesters. Students in Tier II entered EMERGE on approximately the ninth-grade level and were expected to pass the GED in two semesters. Students in Tier I began preparation for the GED with eleventh-grade learning materials and were expected to pass the GED at the completion of the initial semester. A copy of the EMERGE schedule is located in Appendix K.

Orientation. The selected students were contacted, told of their selection, and invited to attend a required EMERGE orientation a week before classes began. The orientation was planned jointly by DHS and the college. It was designed to give the women selected for EMERGE an opportunity to meet campus officials, student services personnel, and the EMERGE faculty and learn about the rights and responsibilities of being a student at a community college.

After a forty-five-minute informal orientation, prospective students were given an opportunity to ask further questions about EMERGE or DHS regulations and services. After all questions were answered, the EMERGE coordinator, the paraprofessional, and the faculty divided the students into small groups for a tour of the campus,

which included the Learning Resource Center, the Counseling & Assessment Department, the Campus Store, and the Student Center locations. The purpose of the tour was to lessen possible anxiety and to show them the locations of places they would probably frequent.

### Research Project Informants

During the first week of the semester, the researcher visited each of the four sections of the career/personal development class to invite students to participate in a research project which would be used to improve EMERGE. Students were told that if they decided to volunteer they would be asked to participate in a maximum of three confidential interviews, in which all records would be identified only by a number assigned by the researcher. They were assured that their participation or non-participation would not in any way affect their standing as EMERGE students and that they could refrain from answering any question in the interview. To allow sufficient time for an unpressured decision, the researcher told them she would return the next day.

The researcher returned the following day to talk with those who wanted to participate in the study. Eleven of the fourteen Tier I students volunteered for the study, along with eighteen of the twenty-nine students in Tier II and nine of the fifteen students in Tier III. The consent forms (Appendix G) were explained, and each of the returned forms

was given a number to insure student anonymity. Eighteen students (six students in each of the three tiers) were selected by lot to participate in confidential interviews at the beginning of the EMERGE experience, at mid-semester, and at the conclusion of the semester.

Confidentiality and anonymity are important considerations when conducting an interview as part of a qualitative study. Assuring informants that the verbatim transcripts of the interview will be identified only by pseudonyms does much to encourage rich responses (Merriam, 1988; McCracken, 1988).

#### Research Design

The problem was addressed by conducting a qualitative study in which variables were discovered as the study progressed and in which inductive, rather than deductive, thinking was emphasized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Merriam, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research methods are appropriate in this study for a number of reasons. Because the problem concerns the perceptions of students, a qualitative design allows them to be studied and described in a way that provides a different view of students' experiences than can be gained in a quantitative design. Additionally, qualitative methods are designed to examine perceptions, values, and feelings, which will allow others to more fully understand how students view the EMERGE experience.

In this study, the qualitative method used was a series of student interviews, conducted over a seventeen-month period. Interviewing over time is a reliable qualitative research design (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1980; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Kuh & Andreas, 1991). In fact, information gathered from student interviews contributed to the research reported in Chickering's (1969) classic, Education and Identity; and many student development theorists, such as Kohlberg and Perry, relied on student interviews to develop their theories (Kuh & Andreas, 1991).

Therefore, student interviews were conducted three times during the semester: at the beginning, at mid-term, and at the end of the semester. In addition, to examine the extent to which perceived changes persisted, a follow-up interview was conducted one year after the completion of the pilot semester.

Open-ended questions were designed for use in a semi-structured interview format that encouraged truthful, introspective responses. A semi-structured format was chosen because it allows for the interaction of the interviewer with the person being interviewed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

When considering the design of this study, the researcher was aware of a relationship that had a potential to confound the data. Although the researcher was not involved in the design of the EMERGE program or in the preparation of TJC's proposal to the Oklahoma State Regents,

after the funding was granted in October, 1992, the program was placed in the academic division chaired by the researcher.

This academic division was diverse, housing a variety of liberal arts disciplines, six technical/occupational programs, and one program for a special population. Because of the large number of disciplines and programs falling within the researcher's span of control, it seemed reasonable to assume that time constraints would not allow the researcher to be directly involved in EMERGE. In fact, the EMERGE coordinator joined Tulsa Junior College in November, 1992, and was given direct responsibility for managing the program, designing the curriculum for the career/personal development class, and hiring and training the EMERGE paraprofessional and adjunct faculty.

Nevertheless, the researcher was aware that disclosure of her position at the college and her relationship with EMERGE might influence the informants. For this reason, care was taken to avoid revealing any identity of the researcher except her status as a graduate student at Oklahoma State University (OSU). This care included the following actions and facts:

1. When the researcher visited the career/personal development class to tell the students about the research project, she introduced herself as an OSU student who was researching the EMERGE program, with no mention of any affiliation with Tulsa Junior College.

2. On the days that interviews were conducted, clothing worn was appropriate for student wear.
3. All interviews were conducted in a neutral place such as an empty classroom or a study room in the Communications Center, rather than in the office of the researcher or any location that might be intimidating to the informant.
4. The EMERGE classrooms were located at a sufficient distance from the researcher's office to avoid informants' seeing the researcher in that environment. It is not impossible, but certainly is improbable, that EMERGE students passed by the researcher's office because its location is not on the route from EMERGE classrooms to any campus student service.
5. It might be argued that those who volunteered to be informants might have originally thought that doing so would give them favored status in the program. However, it soon became apparent that they had nothing to gain or lose by their participation or the nature of their comments in the confidential interviews with the researcher.

Although extensive precautions were taken to prevent the informants from identifying or associating the researcher with the college or the EMERGE program, there remains the possibility that the students may have had some awareness of the researcher's relationship to EMERGE and may, therefore, have told the researcher what they thought

she wanted to hear. However, none of the informants indicated knowledge of this relationship either to the researcher or to the EMERGE coordinator. Therefore, it is the researcher's belief that informants did not learn of her connection to EMERGE until after the pilot semester was completed. This belief and the fact that the follow-up interviews were conducted by a person previously unknown to the researcher or the college combine to make the researcher confident of the veracity of the data.

#### Data Collection

The primary data collection method during this study consisted of three rounds of semi-structured private interviews with eighteen EMERGE students, six from each of the three academic tiers in the program. Additional data were obtained from a follow-up interview one year after the completion of the pilot semester.

Data from the three interviews conducted during the pilot semester were tape-recorded, and verbatim transcripts with numbered lines were produced. Because students varied in their ability to articulate and in their rate of speech, cumulative individual transcripts from the three interviews had as few as 1710 lines and as many as 2955 lines.

Transcripts indicated that the mid-semester interview began as early as line 614 and as late as line 1798. Transcripts from the interview conducted at the completion of the pilot semester indicated that the third interview

began as early as line 1181 and as late as line 2556. Therefore, interview data from different informants have differing line numbers, even though data were collected during the same interview series.

Data from the follow-up interviews begin with line 1 and conclude with as few as 947 lines and as many as 1604 lines.

### The Interviews

The first round of interviews consisted of twenty-four questions and established a baseline for subsequent interviews (Appendix B). The questions were designed to determine the students' perceptions of their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves, before they entered EMERGE.

The second round of confidential interviews consisted of three questions and was conducted at mid-semester (Appendix C). This interview was designed to determine if students perceived that changes had occurred as a result of their participation in EMERGE.

The third round of interviews was conducted during the last week of the pilot semester and consisted of twenty-seven questions (Appendix D). Students were asked questions similar to those used in the first round of interviews, except that the questions were designed to determine students' perception of their academic worth, social worth,



society, and themselves at the conclusion of the semester in EMERGE.

The follow-up interviews were conducted one year after the completion of the pilot semester of EMERGE. The interview guide (Appendix E) consisted of twenty-seven questions that were nearly identical to the questions asked in the third interview. The purpose of the interviews was to examine the extent to which perceived changes persisted.

### Interview Guide

The four semi-structured interviews were designed to be action/interactional (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The interviews used an interview guide, not strict interview questions. Most questions were deliberately open-ended because this type of question permits those interviewed to take whatever direction they wish and use whatever words they wish to express their thoughts, perceptions, or opinions (Patton, 1990). Interviews were tape-recorded by the researcher, and the tapes were used to provide written transcripts of each interview.

The wording of the questions in the interview guide was based on Patton's excellent chapter on qualitative interviewing in Qualitative Evaluation Methods (1980). Patton's "experience/behavior" questions focus on the participants' descriptions of behavior, action, and observable experiences. "Opinion/value" questions are related to what participants think about a specific event or

the world around them. Such questions are designed to reveal people's goals, desires, and values, and to help the interviewer understand the cognitive and interpretive processes of the students. "Feeling" questions explore the participants' emotions in regard to their thoughts and experience. These questions are designed to explore students' affective domains (Appendix F).

Content of the questions was determined after consulting several works on self-esteem and self-concept (Fitts, 1974; Hattie, 1992; Thompson, 1972; Wylie, 1989) and after reading critiques of nineteen self-concept and self-esteem instruments in the tenth and eleventh editions of the Buros Institute's Measurements Yearbook (1989, 1992). Additionally, other instruments were reviewed in Tests: A Comprehensive Reference for Assessment in Psychology, Education and Business (Sweetland & Keyser, 1986).

After initial construction of the questions, the interview guide was submitted for suggestions to three professionals with expertise in qualitative studies: a director of research at a community college, a community college psychology faculty member, and the dissertation advisor. The researcher met with each reviewer to discuss suggestions for revision. When the revision was completed, a pilot interview, using an interview guide (Appendix A) with questions designed to be used at the beginning of the term, was conducted with a student who had a background similar to students who would be enrolling in EMERGE. The

pilot interview helped the researcher clarify four questions and confirmed that the number of topics included could be investigated in approximately forty minutes (the length of one EMERGE class period).

### Interview Protocol

All interviews were conducted in a private room in close proximity to the EMERGE classrooms. The initial conversation was informal so that the students could become comfortable with the interviewer and have an opportunity to relax.

If a student hesitated when a question was asked or indicated in some way that the question was not understood, the researcher said something like, "I'll ask the question in a different way." If the answer was very brief, the researcher said something like, "Please tell me more about . . .," or, "Please tell me why. . . ." Probes such as these encouraged students to further explain or clarify their comments.

The protocol for the pilot interview (Appendix A) was as follows: After the researcher spent a few minutes informally talking with the volunteer subject, she was told that the purpose of the interview was to determine if the questions were clear enough to be used in a research project involving EMERGE students and to decide if the questions could be answered in a forty-minute interview. The subject

was assured that she could refrain from answering any question if she chose.

The protocol followed in the initial interview (Appendix B) was that the interviewer talked informally with the student for a few minutes and asked her to try to remember how she felt before starting the EMERGE program and to answer the questions as she would have answered them at that time. The student was reminded that the questions asked were part of a research project that would be used to improve EMERGE. The student was assured that it was permissible to choose to refrain from answering any question.

Similarly, the protocol for the mid-semester interview (Appendix C) called for a few minutes of informal conversation, followed by a reminder of the study's purpose and of the fact that the student could refrain from answering any question.

The interview protocol for the final interview in the pilot semester (Appendix D) followed the same pattern. In addition, the interviewer told the subject that many of the questions in this interview were similar to the ones that were asked at the beginning of the EMERGE program.

The follow-up interview protocol (Appendix E) followed a pattern similar to the three interviews conducted during the pilot semester.

## Data Analysis Procedure

Data for this study were collected from a series of three semi-structured interviews conducted at the beginning, at mid-semester, and at the conclusion of the pilot semester of the EMERGE program. Additional data were collected from a follow-up interview one year after the conclusion of the pilot semester. The interviews consisted primarily of open-ended questions which elicited conversational answers, similar to the style of Boys in White (Becker et al., 1961). The plan for data analysis for this study was a combination of the methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Merriam (1988). These researchers stressed that in a qualitative study, continuous analysis is necessary. As Merriam stated,

At the outset of a qualitative case study, the investigator knows what the problem is....But the researcher does not know what will be discovered, what or whom to concentrate on, or what the final analysis will be like. The final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Without ongoing analysis one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating (p. 124).

Qualitative studies use inductive analysis; the themes, patterns, and categories of analysis emerge from the data instead of being imposed upon them prior to the collection and analysis process. There are two methods of representing the themes emerging from data analysis. One method is to

organize the presentation of the data using the categories articulated by the program studied . The second method is to allow the analysis to be guided by the themes, patterns, and categories that naturally become apparent in the data. The researcher then develops terms (the computer codes) to describe these themes, patterns, or categories (Patton, 1990). The researcher chose the second method, using the naturally emerging categories, patterns, and themes to develop terms (the computer codes) to describe the themes, patterns, and categories.

It is important to remember that the researcher is the primary data analysis instrument in a qualitative study (Merriam, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Strauss and Corbin believe that the researcher should develop the following skills:

[the ability] to step back and critically analyze situations, to recognize and avoid bias, to obtain valid and reliable data, and to think abstractly. To do these things, a qualitative researcher requires theoretical and social sensitivity, the ability to maintain analytical distance while at the same time drawing on past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen, astute powers of observation, and good interactional skills (p. 18).

The researcher used a coding method similar to the ones suggested by Merriam and Strauss and Corbin. Data analysis was facilitated by using a set of interactive, menu-driven computer programs called The Ethnograph (Seidel et al., 1988), which was designed to be used in qualitative research studies. After verbatim transcripts of the tape-recorded

interviews were entered into the computer, a hard copy with numbered lines was produced and used to make notes, analyze data, and develop codes for patterns, themes, and categories. Using The Ethnograph, data files were sorted into analytic categories. Segments were sorted, displayed, and printed in a variety of sequences. Coding was revised several times with additions, deletions, and modifications. These sort names evolved after reading and rereading and coding and recoding approximately 750 single-spaced pages of verbatim interviews. Sort names allowed the research to be better indexed and cataloged and called up for subsequent use. The final coding used for this study can be found in Appendix I.

After the final sorting and coding were completed, the researcher approached each of the seventeen coded categories to determine which direct quotations would represent the dominant pattern of the clear majority of informants. It was important to represent common interview themes when direct quotes were used. Therefore, when selecting a quotation that represented the dominant pattern of the responses, an informant's ability to articulate the common themes was considered. Because of the need for clear and concise quotations, no effort was made to assure that informants were quoted equally.

In the isolated instances where a quote presented for emphasis did not represent the majority, that fact is clearly stated. Since the interviews were semi-structured

with open-ended questions, not all informants volunteered all themes in all interviews. However, there are no themes presented that are not general (Richardson, 1990).



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which EMERGE students perceived change that occurred in their world and themselves during the pilot semester of the EMERGE program, and to what degree they believed EMERGE contributed to the changes. The study sought to identify what students believed the changes were and what elements in the program students believed contributed to the changes.

The following questions served as a guide for the research:

1. At the *beginning of the pilot semester*, how did students in the EMERGE program perceive their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves?
2. At *mid-semester*, what changes, if any, did EMERGE students perceive had occurred as a result of their participation in the EMERGE program? What part of the program influenced the changes?
3. At the *end of the pilot semester*, how did EMERGE students perceive their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves? What

changes, if any, did EMERGE students perceive had occurred during their participation in EMERGE? If they perceived changes, did EMERGE contribute to the changes? If so, what were the changes? What elements in the program contributed to the changes?

To determine persistence of the findings, a fourth question served as a guide for research conducted one year after the conclusion of the pilot semester:

4. *One year after the conclusion of the pilot semester*, how did EMERGE graduates view the EMERGE program and themselves? If changes occurred in EMERGE graduates' perceptions of themselves during the pilot semester, and if students believed that EMERGE contributed to the changes, what changes persisted? If changes persisted, did EMERGE contribute to the changes? If so, what were the changes? What elements in the program contributed to the changes?

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section presents data from interviews with EMERGE informants during the pilot semester of EMERGE. The first sub-section presents a comparison of how EMERGE students perceived their academic worth, social worth, society, and themselves before they entered the EMERGE program and at the conclusion of the semester. Students' responses to semi-structured questions at the beginning of the semester were

organized to establish a baseline so that a comparison could be made with responses to the same or very similar questions at the conclusion of the study. By providing this comparison, this sub-section serves to ground the research.

The second sub-section presents EMERGE students describing how their perceptions of themselves changed during the pilot semester. The third sub-section identifies the elements in EMERGE that students believed contributed to the changes.

Interviews during the pilot semester were conducted during the following time periods:

1. Initial interviews - week of January 18, 1993.
2. Mid-semester interviews - week of March 8, 1993.
3. Concluding interviews - week of May 3, 1993.

The second section of the chapter presents data from interviews conducted more than one year after the conclusion of the pilot semester. These interviews present EMERGE students, during the weeks of June 20 and June 27, 1994, describing persistence of change in their perception of themselves and society. Additionally, the students identify the elements in EMERGE they persist in believing contributed to changes.

The third and final section will provide a summary and analysis of the data related to the four research questions presented in the introduction to this chapter. Each of the direct quotes presented in this chapter represents the dominant pattern of the clear majority of informants, with

isolated exceptions for emphasis, which are noted. The themes or patterns presented are those that became apparent to the researcher during the data analysis process.

### The Pilot Semester

#### A Comparison of Pre- and Post-EMERGE Perceptions

In this section, EMERGE student perceptions are presented, using direct quotes gained from interviews with the informants. It should be noted that, although eighteen students chosen by lot participated in the initial interview, only sixteen participated in the mid-semester interview. Two informants were no longer eligible for AFDC benefits, which made them ineligible for EMERGE. Two additional informants left the program before the interview at the conclusion of the pilot semester, leaving fourteen informants. Both of these women were victims of spousal abuse. One left the state out of fear for her life; and the other returned to her husband, who forbade her attendance.

Students' perceptions about their academic worth, social worth, society, and themselves are presented separately. This format, using quotes of students' perceptions of how they felt before they entered EMERGE as well as quotes from the end of the semester, allows comparisons of students' perceptions and serves to ground the study.

## Academic Worth

Learning Ability. When the informants were asked about their ability to learn when they first entered the EMERGE program, they replied that they believed they were able to learn, but they had little confidence that they would achieve in school, either because of time spent away from school or because of memories of failure in a traditional school setting. As one student graphically stated,

I knew I could learn, but it just seemed like I had....Do you play chess? ...It just seemed like I was at a stalemate. I didn't know what to do - which way to go, or anything. I just kept down and doubting myself and then when they put out those brochures about EMERGE, it was like a break (Student #5, Line 89-101).

Another had this to say: "I felt like there was too many hills I was going to have to climb. It was just....I felt like it was going to be a struggle."

And many students echoed the words of the student who said, "I felt like I wasn't too bright. I wasn't smart enough. I just felt like something was missing, and I couldn't pin it down" (#28, 453-456)

*Student*

Academic confidence had grown for most students by mid-semester and was expressed this way by one informant:

I've learned a lot since I've been here. Not knowing, I thought at one time I wouldn't make it, but now I know I will. ...It was a little hard at first, but I'm beginning to understand a lot more now. And I know I'm going to make it all the way, and I'm planning on pursuing a business career. And I know I'll be...going here...in the fall (#9, 999-1009).

At the conclusion of the semester, one student said this about her confidence in an EMERGE classroom:

Just being in the environment that I am, with the teachers and all.... They really help me, [they] make me feel that I am capable. I shouldn't let anything get in my way of doing what I want to do (#3, 1037-1042).

Career Goals. When students entered EMERGE, career goals generally were not focused or were not grounded with information about the education required or the length of preparation necessary to achieve the goals. Career goals were confined to fields normally associated with a high school diploma or vocational training, or they were unrealistic, indicating little or no knowledge of the amount of education required to enter a specific field. One of the responses was,

I guess I want to feel....You see all these business women walking around in their little suits and everything.... Because I go downtown every day, and I see them walking across the street with their little brief cases, and I know I can be like that when I get through, but it's going to take this to get to it. I try to think how they would think when they wake up every morning and say, "Well, I've got to do this. I've got to get this done and this." So I try to think like that now, and it makes me feel good (#33,461-475).

As the semester progressed, students became more specific when career goals were discussed. They mentioned a much broader range of occupations and were conscious of the ability, time, and effort that each required. At the semester's conclusion, this student had a clear goal:

I want to be a paralegal. I want to go to TJC for two years and then go to TU and finish up

there. I'm trying to apply for a job today at TU. In the mail room. If you work there a year, then you can go there free (#21, 1358-1363).

College Goals. College goals, which were unfocused when students first entered the program ("A college was like ...not even in my mind, because I was...needing the GED" [#17, 216-218].), became more specific by mid-semester and even more specific at the end of the semester. This was not a surprise to the researcher because the career/personal development class emphasized setting realistic goals and creating a plan to meet those goals. Furthermore, students completed a computerized interest inventory which gave them specific information about educational requirements and costs, federal financial aid, and available scholarships.

One student shared her concerns about deciding on a college major:

I keep going back and forth, deciding whether I'm going to go into counseling or into nursing. And one of the major drawbacks for me for nursing is, by the time I get a nursing degree, my daughter will be fourteen or fifteen. And, generally, when you are starting out you have to start out on a night shift. Well, at that time I believe a young girl needs a parent at home (#5, 1324-1334).

### Social Worth

Relationships. The informants reported that they related to others in two contrasting ways before they entered EMERGE. This student's expression about her relationships with others is typical of approximately half of the students:

I'm the only adult in my family, and when you get around a group of people that you do not know, and that time I did not conversate with nobody. So, I was always, even in school, when I was little, I stayed in that little corner. I did what the teacher told me to do and that was it. I didn't socialize. I'm socializing now in...EMERGE, but before I didn't socialize. I wouldn't conversate with the person down the street (#7, 525-537).

The other half of the informants' descriptions of the relationships to others were similar to this student's statement at the first of the semester:

Well, my mom and my sister and my boyfriend and everybody says I'm a crab apple. I wouldn't tell you what they actually called me because it's a rude name to call someone. But I'm a crab apple. I'm not a very easy person to get along with. I'm moody....I don't know how to express myself. I mean, I might be trying to say something to you like, "Would you mind throwing the trash out?" and I would say, "Well, you could at least carry the trash out!" (#14; 315, 345)

At the end of the semester, the interview transcripts indicated that students who were dependent or withdrawn in their relationships learned to be assertive and became more independent, and aggressive students began to be more moderate in their relationships. As one student who was "scared of life" when she entered EMERGE said,

I know now that I'm not scared to stand up for myself. You know, I can do it if the time comes. I just, before this program started, I had a situation going on with my son and [another] boy, and I let it go by without telling his parents or getting involved....Now I've come back again in baseball with my son and this little boy. And my son got held out of some of the games, and I took a stand. I went and I told that coach I didn't think it was fair, and me and him argued a while. He argued, he hollered, and I just explained to him. I went to the principal because it happened at school....I talked to her and told her about it. And she started going off on



something else. I told her, "That's not what I came here for. I came here to talk about this thing" (#24, 1742-1767).

Another student, who others thought had a "big mouth" at the first of the semester, said the following at the end of the semester:

I think I get along better with people now. And I've learned how to deal with myself better, so if, you know, if you don't like me, I do my best to try to make you like me. But if you don't, then it's not going to be my fault. Everybody's always telling me I had a big mouth. ...I've learned how to stop and think before I say things. I seem to be a lot quieter. I mean, you know, when I'm in my classes and I'm at school, I don't seem to want to have as much to say unless it's important (#14, 1601-1623).

Parenting. Although there was no question regarding parenting, most of the informants talked about their children in the interviews. At mid-semester, in reply to the question about a typical Saturday before starting the EMERGE program, one informant said,

The kids didn't do their chores. The house was just a mess all the time. Like, "You all need to clean." "Don't want to." ...Now the house stays clean. The kids are better every day. There is no argument of what they're going to wear because it's all planned a week.... You know, that weekend we plan everything - what we're wearing (#21, 572-578 & 630-638).

By the end of the semester, the informants had begun to consider the possibility that their children's behavior had improved because of changes in themselves.

I guess now we spend more time with each other. I mean, like out in the yard. Before, it was they were there and I was there, and if they needed anything I was there. We were always together, but now we're doing things together. I thought maybe it was just because they're getting

older and...I don't have to change diapers and hear them cry. But maybe it's because of my attitude and their attitude now (#24, 2087-2098).

Anger. As the semester progressed, several informants expressed changes in their ability to handle anger and conflict. It is interesting to note what one student said in each of the three interviews when discussing anger. At the first of the semester, when asked what she would do if she had a disagreement with someone, she said, "I'd probably punch them and ask questions later (#14, 390-391)."

Even though she answered this question with strong feeling, by the middle of the semester, when asked if she had made changes in her life since starting the EMERGE program, she offered,

I've learned how to control myself, anger. I don't seem to get as angry as before, and I've learned how to, to say how I feel, in the right words instead of all the wrong words. I get along with my family a lot easier. Just mainly, I enjoy learning (#14, 994-1001).

At the end of the semester, her statement indicated further change:

My dad and my mom have told me for years, and even my ex-husband and my boyfriend tell me, "It's not what you say, it's how you say it. You need to stop and think about what you're going to say before you say it." Where now, you know, I've kind of...with...learning how to talk properly and things like that, learning how to stop and weigh your situation out before you do something or say something. It helps a lot. And, I can express my anger towards my children in a lot nicer way than what I normally used to do (#14, 1280-1294).

Use of Time. When informants were asked about their typical day before they became students in the EMERGE program, most of their answers were similar to what one

woman said: "I sat home and watched soaps" (#21, 209).

Another provided a more detailed answer:

I would see my kids off, cleaning up my house or getting a dinner together. I guess after doing that for so long, it just seems like it wouldn't take any time to do it, and then the day would just be there. I would watch TV. Sometimes I would go for a walk, just maybe to get out of the house (#9, 447-454).

Several informants described experiencing bouts of depression before coming to EMERGE:

A typical day in November would be: Getting up, getting my daughter ready for school, make sure she's getting ready for school, send her off, and get back in bed. Get up around 2:30 or 3:00 so she wouldn't see me in bed and know that I've been in bed all day long. Get up and start doing something around the house so when she came in it would look like I'd been busy all day (#5, 693-703).

Later in the interview, this same informant talked about her mother: "I saw my mother be depressed like that. It's what I saw as a child, so I knew that if my daughter saw me like this she was going to do the same thing" (#5, 1025-1029).

And then she theorized about the reason her mother was depressed. "I think she let go of a lot of dreams. I always feel that when you stop dreaming you stop living. I think that's what happened to her" (#5, 1041-1045).

At the mid-semester interview, this same student stated,

I just don't wait for things to happen anymore. I get up and do it. A lot of times I would wait to the last minute to do something. But now I know that it needs to be done, and I have a time slot for the day. Sometimes it

doesn't get done and I just try to do it the next day. And I find that, the more I'm beginning to keep this agenda, the more it seems easier for me to do (#5, 1240-1249).

During the mid-semester interview, several other students shared that they had added structure to their lives. At the end of the semester, several more indicated that their lives were more planned and organized and their use of time was more efficient.

Loneliness. In the first interview, when informants were asked if they were lonely, many of them answered affirmatively and went on to say something similar to, "I'm lonely because I don't have any friends. I don't have anybody to talk to. When I go home in the evening it's just me and my kids. Nobody comes down..." (#30, 248-252).

However, by mid-semester, most students would agree with this informant's view:

Informant: I've got more friends than I've had before. And I don't even need family anymore because, you know, there's people around me that care, and it shows that they care. I gave my friend a card saying thank you for being a friend because if she wasn't around, you know, I would have been still back and forth on buses. So, no, I'll never be lonely.

Researcher: Okay. Now, is that different than before you came to EMERGE?

Informant: Yeah, because before I came to EMERGE it was just me and my three daughters. I wasn't alone, but I had no social life and no conversation. Because, it was like, they all know my business; and, if they know my business, then, you know, fear everything.

Researcher: And the fear is not there anymore?

Informant: No, I don't have no fears and I have no cares of what people think outside [in the] world (#17, 1939-1969).

### View of Society

Laws and Authority. Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher theorized that the EMERGE program would make a significant difference in the way students perceived society. However, data indicated that there was little change, from the beginning to the end of the semester, in the way students answered such questions as, "Tell me how you feel about rules and laws," and, "How do you feel about people who have authority over you?" Most informants believed that rules and laws are necessary in our society. Two of them believed laws should be more strictly enforced. (One was a stalking victim, and one was a victim of abuse.) Generally, the informants felt neutral about people with authority. One woman said, "It depends on how that authority is used!"

However, data did indicate change in the following areas:

Public Assistance. At the first of the semester, when asked how they felt about being on public assistance, students made remarks such as, "I'm embarrassed," or, "It's depressing," or "It's terrible." This informant expressed her feelings vividly:

To me it's embarrassing.... Just like when you go in a store and you spend food stamps. Sometimes I feel bad because I see older people spending their money, and I'm spending food

stamps. They'll have just a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and that bothers me a little bit because they are older. If anybody should be getting any kind of assistance, I think older people should because they've already contributed to society. So, that bothers me a lot. It's embarrassing (#5, 283-308).

At the end of the semester, several students volunteered that they were appreciative of the opportunity to receive public assistance and felt they would not have had the opportunity to attend the EMERGE program without it. One woman expressed her feelings this way:

When people look at you and they look down on you for being on welfare, that bothers you. But when I stop and think of what I'm gaining from being on welfare, then it doesn't bother me, because if it wasn't for welfare, I don't know if my kids would eat. I wouldn't be sitting here interviewing with you if I wasn't on welfare. I wouldn't be sitting here in this program (#14, 2116-2125).

Caring. At the first of the semester, some of the women expressed a lack of interest in people or things outside their immediate circle and a distrust of society or of other people. In contrast, by semester's end, these students had begun to care about others and to trust them. In the final interview, this informant shared her feelings about her changing perception of others.

Informant: ...When somebody wasn't feeling good we all talked, tried to insure the person, how they're feeling, or see if we could help them in any way, you know. Or just lend an ear or shoulder. Before, I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't have gave my ear. And now I cared what was happening to that person next to you.

Researcher: What is different? What made you start caring about other people?

Informant: I guess because there was enough caring people in the school to show the caring. You know...you see it, you'll have it.

Researcher: Okay, so you were able to give it back and take care of people after people cared about you?

Informant: Yeah. But, if the caring wasn't here, I wouldn't be here. Nobody else in the whole EMERGE project would be here. Because there's not just the teachers and the students that are caring about each other, there is higher people that cared enough to start the program and get us in here (#17, 2872-2907).

Group Support. When these women entered EMERGE, most of them had no support group. Some of them had friends they "[did] things with or [went] places with," but "no one [they could] really talk to."

At the end of the semester, most informants spoke enthusiastically about the support and caring they felt from their classmates, the faculty, or both. One student expressed her feelings about group support at the mid-semester interview by saying,

Well, it's the teachers. It's the students. And it's just a consideration that's being showed, the trust. Even the students will try to help each other. You know, bring each other along, if something we don't understand. Oh, but the teacher still explains things, but we just get together. We just talk about different things, and try to work out some of the things by ourselves. So, it's the consideration and the teachers and the students (#9, 1296-1308).

At the end of the semester, another student said,

We've developed a lot of group support. We don't look at ourself as singles anymore. We look at ourselves as a unit; and if a part of a unit's not working right, we all try to see what it is that's causing the problem (#8, 3721-3726).

## Perceptions of Self

Personality. When a student was asked to describe her personality at the first of the semester, she gave a typical response. "It was pretty drab, really. I didn't communicate too well with people. For a while there, I was just kind of alone" (#21, 895-898)

But, listen to this same student at the end of the semester: "I'm happy. I'm positive-thinking. You know, I'm more positive about how I see things. It's a lot better" (#21, 2184-2186)

In the first interview another student described her personality before entering the EMERGE program:

I had a bad attitude. I think the bad attitude interfered with my personality because I was afraid to be open with people. I really have a hard time talking with other people (#14, 949-953).

In the final interview, the same student described how she perceived her personality changed from the first of the EMERGE program to the end of the semester:

Informant: I've got a thoughtful personality now. I've cared about other people besides myself.

Researcher: Is that new?

Informant: Yeah, because before I only cared about my children, that's it. I didn't even care about my, my, the family, besides my grandma and my aunt. And my aunt had passed away long ago. But I'm saying I care about people around me now (#17, 2673-2688).

Esteem. At the beginning of the semester, one of the questions asked of the students was, "Before you heard about



the EMERGE program, how did you feel about yourself?" The following answers are typical responses from the initial interview, the mid-term interview, and the interview at the end of the semester:

Initial Interview:

I didn't feel too good about myself. I'm still kind of pushing myself... (#24, 680-681).

Mid-Semester Interview:

I just feel like, like I'm going to be somebody in life. I don't feel like a wild bird case, or something like that (#24, 879-882).

Final Interview:

I learned about my self-esteem. I just, I learned that I am an important person (#24, 1477-1479).

The perceptions expressed by the next student are more descriptive, but also typical.

Initial Interview:

Truthfully, I felt I was fat, ugly, and I needed to work on myself, my body, my mind. I was trying to work on all of it. And, the only thing my teacher could do was help me with the body part. And hand us books to work on our mind (#17, 928-934).

Mid-Semester Interview:

Before I was going to EMERGE, I didn't care how I looked, how I dressed. I'd be in some really raunchy clothes and look like I picked them off the street and put them on. Because I never cared. Now I care about what I have on, how I'm presenting myself, and all that (#17, 1258-1265).

Final Interview:

My esteem is so large that I can - I believe and know I can do things now that I was too scared to do before because I was too scared of what would happen next. I'm not fearing what's coming

next tomorrow. Bad things can come; bad things can go. I'm still going on to the next day for my next day (#17, 2014-2022).

Happiness. When informants were asked "What does happiness mean to you?" there was not much difference in the answers given by most informants at the beginning and the end of the semester. A common theme at the first of the semester was that happiness means having a job that covers basic needs. This student gave a typical answer:

The meaning of happiness...to me was my goal of trying to get off of public assistance and have a job that covers the house, the bills, the doctor's appointments, the prescriptions, you know. A job that covers...basic things. I would be so happy. And that's the goal. I get that, and I'll be the happiest person in the world. I'm still working on it (#17, 972-989).

At the close of the semester, the comments of most informants were very similar to those at the first of the semester.

I believe it would mean that I'd have enough money to live well. I don't care about being rich.... I mean, it would be nice, but it's nothing I've ever really just dreamed of. You know, having healthy kids and having things and necessities...and living well. And having a nice, happy family (#21, 2102-2110).

Two informants used a different measure for happiness at the end of the semester. One student explained why she is happy.

I'm happy because I've got knowledge.... Most of the welfare recipients...aren't getting this knowledge. Aren't experiencing learning, knowledge from information, textbooks. You know, they're just sitting back saying, "Well, okay, today's the fifth. We've got how many days before the first?" Who's happy there? (#17, 2569-2578)

Another student defined happiness this way:

Happiness is just being happy with yourself. If you're not happy with yourself, you cannot be happy, period. I'm learning these things a lot in the past four months. And it doesn't just have to do with the EMERGE program. It has to do with my personal life. If it wasn't for the program, I don't know if I'd be able to deal with what's been going on in my life, throughout the program. Like I said, a lot of road blocks have come up [on] this road (#14, 2311-2323).

When examining the data from the interviews, comparing the voice of EMERGE informants at the beginning of the semester with the voices at the end of the semester, one can clearly recognize that these students have experienced change in their perceptions of their academic worth, social worth, society, and themselves.

#### Students' Perceptions of Change

This section presents EMERGE informants, who describe in their own words how their perceptions of themselves changed during the EMERGE program. After interviewing the informants three times - at the beginning of the semester, at mid-term, and at the end of the semester - the researcher determined that the fourteen informants who completed the semester believed that there were significant changes in themselves. These students also believed that these changes were a result of the EMERGE program, and that the primary element of EMERGE that contributed to these changes was the personal/career development class. Even the two students who left the program after the second interview indicated change and believed the changes were because of EMERGE. The

two students who became ineligible for EMERGE after the first interview, but before the second, did not have an opportunity to discuss perception changes.

When the interviews for all the informants were reviewed, the most significant change voiced by students was the difference in the way they perceived themselves - their self-esteem. The concept of self-esteem certainly includes students' perceptions of academic worth, social worth, and themselves. Psychologists who subscribe to the Adlerian Theory argue that it also influences one's perception of society.

Although there was no question in the interview guide that directly asked students about their confidence, it was one of the most common areas brought up by the informants in the final interview when discussing the area in which they believed they experienced the most change.

Well, I don't see people differently. I think I present myself differently to people now. I have a little bit more confidence. Whereas it used to be that if something was said negative to me, I replied in a negative way...sometimes, or I would go, why [is] that person thinking like that, and it kind of made me feel bad. I don't do that anymore, most of the time. ...I just...a lot of times I just listen to them and say, well, they don't really know. You know, so it's reinforcing. I've always thought that I...was able to do that, but now that I'm in the EMERGE program I see I wasn't doing that. It's showing me something about myself, also. Things that I could change (#5, 1148-1168).

When asked about the most valuable thing she acquired in EMERGE, the informant replied,

Confidence. How to relate to people...the difference between aggressive and assertive, and believing in.... To me that was one of the most important deals. And I've learned also..., no matter what situation you're in, you're still a human being and you should present yourself that way to people. No one should make you feel like you're less than [that]. And, she made a point about...no one's opinion of you should become your reality (#5, 1798-1813).

Although all fourteen of the informants who completed the pilot semester of EMERGE stated that their perception of themselves had improved during EMERGE and believed that EMERGE contributed to the change, six students in addition to the one above mentioned self-confidence and self-esteem as the single most important change in their lives since they entered the EMERGE program. The following remarks represent a recurrent theme:

I learned all about myself...and how to deal with my kids. I learned how to write a resume...and how to...handle people. I wasn't a people person. I couldn't just go up to somebody and start talking to them. ...She opened my doors, and now I can just go up to anybody and start talking to them. It don't bother me. I always felt...ashamed of myself, or something. And now I can just talk to anybody, and it doesn't bother me (#24, 1487-1505).

And, from a different informant,

One most important thing that I've gained since I've been here...I guess my self-esteem more than anything. It was kind of low when I first came. I felt so out of place in my life (#28, 2124-2128).

In addition, several students discussed the control they now had over their lives and how much easier life seemed to be since they gained more control.

This student, after giving credit to EMERGE for helping her change her perception of herself and gain the confidence to control her life, gave this example in the third interview:

My son just got put in the hospital a week, two weeks ago because he had to have head surgery. [He] got hit in the head with a ball. And I was so strong. They told me twice that he could die. ...I was just...so calm with it, and before, I would have just totally freaked out. They would have had to put me in a bed and everything else. But I was just so...I don't know how, [but] I didn't really let out my feelings. I didn't freak out. I was just so calm through the whole thing.... I just knew that everything was going to be all right. I just knew, you know.... Nothing was going to make me fall back down that hill (#24, 2759-2779).

Pride and dignity are also a part of self-esteem. In the third interview, in response to a question dealing with the most important thing gained during EMERGE, one informant said,

Informant: My pride.

Researcher: Your pride. Okay. Can you explain to me what that means?

Informant: Because...I would sit home and do nothing, just eat and lay around. I was losing my dignity, and I got in this program. It kind of did my pride back up.

Researcher: How long do you think you had been losing your dignity?

Informant: Oh, about three or four years.

Researcher: Can you tell me why?

Informant: ...Just because I didn't want to do anything. It's just, like I said, I was a loner, and I didn't care. I just stayed in the house and eat and sleep. I didn't go outside or anything (#7, 2630-2659).

In response to the query of what made the difference, the informant said,

[EMERGE] made a whole lot of difference because, now, I go outside and I see people and I speak to them. I say, "Hi," and "How are you?" And they will speak back. They make me feel good about myself, make me stand up like I'm somebody. And when I come here it's the same way. People speak to you as they walk by (#7, 2666-2675).

### Elements of Change

In the mid-semester interview as well as in the interview at the conclusion of the pilot semester, if students said that they had gained from the EMERGE experience and described changes in their lives that were related to that gain, they were asked to discuss the elements of EMERGE that they believed helped them make those changes. Nearly all students interviewed mentioned the career/personal development class, which was taught by the project coordinator. Although the researcher anticipated a favorable response to this class, the degree of positive feeling was not expected. The subject of "personal development" is a sensitive one when dealing with adults. Many adults are of the opinion that they are already "developed" and don't want anyone telling them how to develop. However, the career/personal development class did not elicit any negative comments, and few neutral ones. The curriculum for the career/personal development class was designed by two people with extensive previous experience in teaching and counseling low-income adults. Care was taken

to provide students with learning experiences that they could apply to their lives. Students were frequently assessed to determine their interests so that special guests could be invited to address special topics and answer their questions. In the words of one student,

The personal development class was.... I think without that nobody could really get through [EMERGE]. I mean, the other teachers would talk to you and stuff, but they wouldn't tell you...how to deal with life outside those doors... (#24, 2507-2513).

After another student said that she learned to set goals in the personal/career development class, the researcher asked her to explain the process.

Well, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ gave us a paper, and we had to really sit down and think what are things that we want to change.... We need to really...put it on paper in front of us for us to see it every day....Someone can just say, "I'd like to be that way." But if nobody [else] knows about it, they may not do it. With that paper, I put it on my refrigerator. I'd write down what goal I need to do, what thing I want to do. ...And I'd put it up there. You're supposed to write...three things that you know that would help you do that, whether you like it or not. And do it. And it really works (#3, 1632-1649).

Another frequently mentioned element that the students believed contributed to their changes in perception was the caring and dedication of the faculty. Following are two of those remarks:

I think it's the personal relationship the teachers have with the students. It's like it's one of their family members, or something. It's trying to make it through. Seems like they really committed themselves to it. So...it makes me want to do good because, most time, strangers don't show an interest in you. They just there to get a check, and that's it (#5, 1476-1487).



And,

My English teacher, she's great. She is,...really. She'll call us at home if we don't go to school. Yes, she will. She thought I was at home, she'd call us. I mean, when it snowed, she called us. She called us all the time. If we're late coming back from our break, she'll tell us, "Now, you need this, I'm telling you." She makes it sound like it's really going to hurt her...if we don't... (#3, 1783-1794).

The sparkle in the eyes of the students, along with the intensity of emotion in their voices as they talked about these faculty members, will not be forgotten by this researcher. The words of the informants made it apparent that they believed that the faculty respected each of them and believed in their potential. As one informant said when asked why she thought the attitude of the faculty was so important to the students,

Because, most of the time, people who are receiving AFDC have low self-esteem. And they presented themselves, you know, like you are somebody. Because...you have this stigma concerning people who are recipients of AFDC. But they looked beyond all that and saw the potential, and that's what they [are] working on (#5, 1505-1512).

Other frequently discussed elements contributing to change were group support and the college atmosphere. One student described her feelings about group support by saying,

Everybody helped each other. If you didn't understand something, all you had to do was reach over to the person sitting next to you and say, "Hey, I don't understand this. Do you have the time to help me?" And they begin to help you (#14, 2593-2599).

The importance of the college atmosphere to the feeling of success was described by many.

I guess, just the idea of coming to TJC instead of just going to a regular, you know, place where you take GED classes. It just kind of does something to you (#28, 1343-1347).

Another informant said,

I know the GED is just the beginning, the first step for me to take. But I know once I've passed this, and [by] being around here, I can know more or less what I have to take. I don't have to be out of the school and into another school, and then have to come up here and find out "What do I do?" and be lost (#3, 92-100).

The coordinator of EMERGE, who also taught all sections of the personal/career development class, was mentioned in response to the question concerning what elements of EMERGE students believed contributed to the changes. There were similar comments about the coordinator in response to the item asking students to describe a person they admired and wished to emulate.

Below are typical comments from three different students about the coordinator:

Initial Interview:

I wrote about \_\_\_\_\_ because the first day I had her, I walked in there and she talked about attitude and problems and how to deal with them and what was more important. When I walked out of her class, I walked out...with a different outlook. I wrote about it in my journal. That woman inspires me, and I tell her that to her face (#14, 243-252).

Mid-Semester Interview:

Oh yes, she's...She just...She lets you know...it's okay and we're going to do it and don't let obstacles [get] in the way; you just go.

...You go get what you're going to get, and you do it. And they never think that just because we're on welfare and just because we've been down and out all our lives, that we can't be what anybody else is. You know, to reach for the stars, all the time (#3, 726-237).

Final Interview:

I think I would like to be like \_\_\_\_\_. She's...bright and she's intelligent. She knows how to control herself. And she knows how to talk to each person individually. And she's good at giving advice. She is excellent with advice. And...also, she can be fun. I want to be fun, but I want to be nice - and that's \_\_\_\_\_ (#14, 2183-2192).

One Year Later

Persistence of Change

This section presents the data from the follow-up interviews, which were conducted one year after the conclusion of the EMERGE pilot semester. The interviewer was a counselor who had experience relating to AFDC recipients and who was previously unknown to the researcher and the EMERGE program. The purpose of these interviews was to examine the extent to which perceived changes persisted one year after the conclusion of the pilot semester of EMERGE. Individuals participating in the follow-up interviews will be referred to as graduates.

Although the graduates' direct quotes presented in this section represent the dominant pattern of those interviewed, it is important to note that these quotes may not be representative of the graduates who could not be contacted to participate in this round of interviews. Of the fourteen

informants who completed the pilot semester, only ten were actually available for follow-up interviews. One informant is incarcerated, one is extremely ill, one has left the state, and one was killed in a car accident two weeks before the interviews were scheduled. During a two-week period, only six of the ten could be contacted by the coordinator of EMERGE and local DHS officials to ask if they would be willing to participate in interviews.

The six informants who were contacted were told by the EMERGE coordinator that, if they wished to participate in the follow-up interview, their child care expenses would be paid if necessary. Three of them left their children with friends or relatives, two asked for child care reimbursement, and one said that she did not wish to participate in the interviews because "it [was] just too hot to get out." The coordinator speculated that this informant might be embarrassed to come to the interview because she had failed the GED by only a few points when she was an EMERGE student and also was unsuccessful the second time she attempted the examination.

The fact that DHS officials and the EMERGE coordinator could not contact four of the participants is indicative of the circumstances under which AFDC recipients live. Many do not have telephones, and a high mobility rate is common. None of the four informants they were unable to contact had a telephone. Although messages were left with the person listed for emergency contact, there was no assurance that

the former EMERGE students received the messages. In fact, one emergency contact person refused to deliver a message that was not an emergency. An attempt was made to visit the home of this informant, but she no longer lived at the address of record.

After the interviews were completed, the written transcripts were analyzed and coded by the interviewer, who, prior to her engagement for this purpose, was unfamiliar with the research. The same codes used by the researcher to analyze the data from the three previous interviews were used by the interviewer to analyze the data from the follow-up interviews.

When the data from the follow-up interviews were sorted by the researcher, using The Ethnograph, it was apparent that the graduates persisted in their change of perception of their academic worth, social worth, society, and themselves. These data revealed that the change noted most frequently by the graduates participating in the follow-up interviews was the same as stated one year earlier. All of the graduates said that their perception of themselves had changed, their self-esteem had improved. Discussions about their continued improved self-esteem, self-confidence, or control over their lives as a result of the EMERGE program occurred throughout the interviews, even though there was no specific question about self-esteem, and there was no question about changes in their lives until the final section of questions.

As previously discussed, the concept of self-esteem includes a person's perceptions of academic worth, social worth, and themselves. Psychologists who subscribe to the Adlerian theory believe that self-esteem also influences one's perception of society.

One of the graduates described how she feels about herself:

Overall, I feel good about myself. I don't have any...bad feelings, or any feelings of worthlessness. ...I really feel good. I'm on my way somewhere, going somewhere; I'm advancing. I'm doing pretty good on the advancement thing. I've got some scholarships. I'm keeping my fee waiver. I feel good (#8, 1089-1098).

Another graduate described the change in her perception since she entered the EMERGE program:

I used to feel that, oh boy, you know, they look so much more than me. Or they dress so much better than me. Now I'm noticing that people are saying, oh, you got everything.... And I don't have to say anything. It really makes me feel better..., you know. I used to, like, worry about big crowds. I wouldn't...really like to go around big crowds. But now I'm a little bit more eased... (#24, 264-275).

This graduate explained why she feels good about herself:

I feel good about myself because...yeah, I'm struggling, but at least I have something to struggle with. You know,...I'm not existing, I'm living. I'd a lot rather be where I am and looking for an answer than be dumb to the fact that I need something done (#8, 1029-1035).

Another graduate described how she has learned to be assertive in the EMERGE program:

I deal better with [relationships] now. Although sometimes I do go back to my same role.

But most of the time I'm able to tell a person how I feel. I went through a stage, through most of my life [when I could not].... And then, when I went to the EMERGE program, they showed us...how to do it assertively (#5, 937-947)

This graduate reveals her positive feelings about society.

I feel that we all have hard times...some of the best people in the world. ...That's one thing I love about this program, how so many people came and talked to us and inspired us. Some of these people didn't have GED's. And now look at them. They're doctors and lawyers. They run DHS. All across this beautiful land, you know. That's one thing that I love about America. And I'm not saying that America is all perfect, or whatever, but at least you can start with humble beginnings (#24, 666-680).

Is there a correlation between happiness and high self-esteem? This graduate believes there is:

Happiness has a lot to do with your situation and yourself, really. ...If you have low self-esteem, I don't think you can be happy. And you can't look to other things to make you happy. It's something that's got to come from you. If you look to other things to make you happy then you're...co-dependent. ...When we first came into the program...I needed validation from an outside source. ...I guess happiness is realizing that you don't need validation. It's realizing that you're valid anyway. And that it's right there for you to take...if you get out there and get it. It's work. It's lots of work (#8, 1116-1137).

Even though there was no direct question about self-confidence, several described how their confidence had improved since they started the EMERGE program.

I think EMERGE paved the way, or helped pave the way for this transition.... And I'm still in the transition. Maybe it's confidence (#5, 711-714).

And,

Like,...my feelings...were negative about it. I was more upset; I didn't have enough confidence in myself.... I have more confidence than I did (#7, 816-820).

Several graduates were quite descriptive when they discussed the changes in their perception of having control of their lives.

Yes, I feel that I have control. I feel I have much more control over my life than ever before. Because I don't let other people's opinions of me become my destiny. And that's one thing I learned in this program. I was always worried about what people thought, even though I wanted them to say good things about me. But I know now that not everyone is going to say what you want them to say. And not everyone is going to agree with what you are doing. ...I've learned to have quality life with myself. Quality, not quantity. I'm living my dream. And when you're living your own dream, you're not so concerned about will you do this or ...do that, because you've already done what you wanted to do. So I think that's why I'm in control (#24, 942-979).

Another graduate said that she had more control over her life because,

I think where I go from here depends on me. ...I have control over whether I'm going to get an F or not, too. ...I feel real in control because I've got a charted plan, and I'm doing these things on my way to get there. I'm doing them, so I see progress. The only thing I didn't progress at is that F, and I did that myself. I mean, I don't have anyone to blame for it.... I did it. Assume responsibility for your F. Take it, and go on (#8, 1198-1211).

### Elements of Change

In the final interview of the pilot semester, nearly all of the EMERGE informants said that the personal/career development class contributed to their change in perception of themselves and their world. All of the graduates



participating in the follow-up interviews persisted in the belief that the career/personal development class contributed to the changes in their perception of themselves and society. Although they credited themselves for spending time and effort to work on the changes, they also believed that without this class there would have been no change in their self-perception.

This graduate describes one of the things she learned in the career/personal development class:

I learned that you are important. That you are capable of doing whatever you put your mind to doing. Like I said, \_\_\_\_\_ really worked on me because I was so shy. [Before EMERGE] I felt that if anything went wrong, I was to blame (#24, 129-134).

This graduate reveals how the personal/career development class helped improve her relationships:

I've always tried to be analytical and look at both sides of the situation. When somebody does something and it hurts my feelings, I try to think, "OK, did they mean to or ...are they not considering this?" And I always try and figure out, and look at things from different angles. And [the personal/career development class] helped me even with that, you know. Relationships with co-workers, or other students, ...or other people. My people relationships. It helped me open up a little more there. And look at things even more than I was. I always thought I did so well at that stuff. It helped me a lot all the way around. With just...communication skills. Attitude. It's 10% what happens to you and 90% how you look at it. I got a lot of that from that class (#8, 227-247).

This graduate remembers several things she learned in the career/personal development class.

We learned to...[not] let things defeat you. Don't let things get you down. Anybody, family

friends. We learned how to buy a used car. How to be conservative. ...Just to stay strong. We did a lot of booklets on personality, how to find our personalities. How to build our confidence. And how to make friends. And choose our friends. And how to say no to other people that want to bring you down. And tell them straight-faced, "I'm not going to let you bring me down." Stuff like that. That was a good class. That really was (#3, 224-251).

A year after the pilot semester was completed, EMERGE graduates continued to believe that the caring faculty was an element of EMERGE that contributed to their changes in self-perception. One graduate said,

The ladies were just...if we missed a day of school they'd call us at home. They'd give out awards, you know. All that stuff. All that just really helps. It really does. It helps support us. The whole staff support was great. All of them. And you know that they care, because they remember you. You know, I can come back up here and all of them know me. They remember, and I think that's real important. A teacher that can remember everybody's name. All the EMERGE people, you walk down the hall [and] they know who you are. It makes you feel good... (#3, 1381-1397).

And, another graduate expressed,

They were excellent because they were all along telling you, you can do it. I don't care if you made an F,...they would still say...I know you can do better. We're going to try again. ...OK, you got your...weakness in math, you've got your weakness. Oh, you're high in essay; you're high in English. OK, we're just going to deal with this math today. And all week. ...You work on this math, and I guarantee you are going to make good enough to take that GED. I think that really helped. Because they were behind your corner. They knew you could do it, even when you didn't know you could do it (#24, 1217-1234).

These graduates reflect representative sentiments of why the college environment was important to the EMERGE students' self-perception:

...My confidence was just like, "Wow! I'm here...!" ...I felt so important, like..."I was selected for this!" I mean, it really did bring, I can't even explain how much confidence that I got when I [came] up here (#3, 100-107).

And another graduate offered:

The environment in EMERGE helped prepare me for college. The class set-up, the instructional set-up, the way they handled the whole program. It was right there at TJC, so it's just like stepping out of one class and into another. Really, you're already in the environment. You already feel at home. There's no fear involved with the transition from GED student to college student (#8, 62-73).

The comments made by the graduates about the EMERGE elements which contributed to their changes in perception of themselves were similar to the remarks made during the third interview at the close of the pilot semester, with one exception. Only one graduate discussed the supportive behavior of classmates as being an element in EMERGE that contributed to her change in perception. This graduate, who is now a regular college student, stated that she missed the group support she enjoyed in EMERGE.

### Summary and Analysis

The following summary and analysis of the data relate to the four research questions presented in the introduction to this chapter.

#### Before EMERGE

At the beginning of the semester, when discussing their *academic worth* before they began the EMERGE program, the

informants believed in their innate ability to learn, but they needed someone to direct their learning because they had previously been unsuccessful in a self-directed GED preparation program. Their belief in their learning ability can be explained because many of them were self-selected and must have had some belief in their ability to learn or would not have chosen the EMERGE program. On the other hand, many of them stated that their reason for coming to the program was simply because it was on a college campus, which made them feel important or more like adults. In addition, attending classes at a college sounded a lot better than attending classes at a church or a school. Career goals or college goals were not clear at the beginning of the semester. Some students were able to state a goal, but they had no knowledge of how to reach the goal and no way to acquire information.

When discussing their *social worth*, they described troubled relationships with adult friends, problems with their children, lonely days with no structure and little accomplishment, and bouts of depression.

Still, the informants' perception of a somewhat impersonal *society* was fairly positive. They believed that rules and laws were necessary for an organized society, and they had no problem with the use of authority if it was used fairly.

Most informants were embarrassed to be on public assistance, and some expressed anger at the way the system

was administered. They showed no indication they understood the system or had any interest in understanding it.

When describing their typical day before EMERGE began or when answering the questions about what they did in their spare time or what they would do if they had a free Saturday, none of the informants mentioned any kind of activity that indicated interest in anything or anyone other than their very small circle of friends or family. On the contrary, in discussions of other questions, many talked of their lack of trust of others. Most referred to a bad experience with a spouse, acquaintance, or employer.

Before participating in EMERGE, most informants had no support group. Some had friends they went out with or spent time with, but "no one [they could] really talk to."

When the women talked about their perceptions of *themselves*, they said they did not feel they had control over life or over themselves, and many told stories of prolonged depression. Additionally, most had little self-confidence and had a negative view of themselves. Some described feeling dumb or ugly. Others said their personalities were drab, and still others confided they had a bad attitude.

When the study was in the design stage, the researcher expected that, due to the wording of the mid-semester questions, EMERGE participants would discuss changes in their lives that had occurred since they began the program. However, because the time between the initial and the mid-

semester interviews was only eight weeks, the changes were expected to be minor or not important to the study (e.g., arrangements for child care or transportation to the college). This was not the result. During the first interviews, which were conducted in the second week of the semester, the researcher began to suspect that important changes might occur before the mid-semester interviews. Informants' answers to the questions during the initial interview indicated that in less than two weeks EMERGE students were beginning to change their perceptions.

#### During EMERGE

When the informants were contacted for the mid-semester interviews, two informants were no longer in the EMERGE program. The coordinator informed the researcher that both students were no longer eligible for AFDC and, thus, were ineligible for EMERGE.

During the mid-semester interviews, the sixteen remaining informants stated that they had changed in a variety of ways since entering EMERGE and that the EMERGE program had contributed to these changes.

The change that was most frequently discussed by the informants was their use of time. Many were very animated as they described what and how much they were able to get done each day by learning to organize and manage time more wisely. Two informants volunteered that it seemed as if they had more time than they had before they began EMERGE,

when actually more than five hours a day was spent in EMERGE classes or in transit.

The second most frequently mentioned change was how the informants felt about themselves. Those who mentioned this change said that they were feeling better about themselves, had more confidence, had a better attitude, or had begun to care about their appearance.

Another area of change that was noted by informants was a positive change in their relationships. One said she had "learned to control [her] temper" (#21, 958), one said she had begun to "speak up" (#9, 1106), and one confided that "I get along better with people now" (#14, 1601).

When informants were asked what element of EMERGE contributed to the changes they believed they saw in their lives, most pointed out how much they had learned in the personal/career development class and how it helped them make needed changes in their lives. Several went into great detail describing how they practiced time management, goal setting, and other techniques they had learned. Several students volunteered that they had learned that committing plans to writing helps many people follow them so they were making daily lists and keeping a daily journal.

#### Conclusion of the Pilot Semester of EMERGE

When the sixteen informants were contacted for the interviews at the close of the semester, two additional students were no longer EMERGE students. The coordinator

informed the researcher that both were victims of domestic violence. One student believed her life was in danger and left the state for safety reasons. The other student returned to her husband after he stalked her for several weeks. When she returned, he forbade her attendance at EMERGE.

When the fourteen remaining informants discussed their *academic worth* during the interviews at the conclusion of the semester, they described many positive experiences. Most had qualified to take the GED examination by earning a prescribed score on the GED predictor. Although they did not yet know the results, they were committed to return to EMERGE for another semester if they did not receive a passing score. With the exception of one informant, those who did not qualify for the examination were not discouraged because they believed that, through EMERGE, they had learned more than they thought could be learned in just one semester. Additionally, their disappointment was eased because they knew that only students in Tier I were expected to pass the GED after one semester in EMERGE (and all the Tier I students had qualified for the examination).

Career and college goals were more specific at the end of the semester than they had been when the informants entered EMERGE. After investigating different careers in the college counseling center, listening to guest speakers, and discussing the results of career assessment instruments, their ideas about a career were much more concrete than at



the first of the semester. Most of the informants were planning to attend TJC for two years, but two planned to attend the local vocational/technical school. Of those who were planning to attend TJC, most had plans for a career that required an associate degree, but a few were planning to continue their education at a college or university because their career choice required a bachelor's degree.

At the close of the semester, when students discussed their *social worth*, the informants believed their relationships with others had improved. Most of those who had been withdrawn and quiet when they entered the EMERGE program said that they had become more assertive; they had learned how to tell people what they needed and could "stand up" for themselves. Informants who had described aggressive behavior in interactions with others, said that they had learned how to get along with people better by stopping to think before they spoke or took action.

Although there was no question about parenting, most informants talked about their children at some point in the interview. When they described their parenting activities, they said that they had a better attitude toward fulfilling the responsibilities of parenthood and spent more time with their children than before they entered EMERGE. The students also reported that, since they had learned how to communicate more effectively and plan family activities, their children's behavior had improved.

Learning to set goals and to organize time were skills that informants thought were especially valuable to them. They said that they were setting goals and using time management principles at home as well as in their school work. Many had taught or were in the process of teaching these skills to their children.

None of the informants said they were lonely at the end of the semester. They said that they had more positive interactions with people and believed that they had made good friends in their classes.

Although the informants had entered EMERGE with a fairly positive view of *society*, three areas had changed. When they talked about being on public assistance, most were still embarrassed that they were being supported by the government. However, several said that if they hadn't been on assistance, they would not have had the opportunity to be EMERGE students and study for the GED.

Those who had expressed a lack of interest in people or events outside their immediate circle and those who had a distrust of society had changed by the end of the semester. As their awareness and knowledge of society was broadened, they became more interested and caring about problems outside of their small world. As they learned more about themselves, they became more trusting of others.

When they entered the EMERGE program, most informants had no support group. At the end of the semester, most of them talked about how much support they felt they had

received from the other students in their classes, from the teachers, and from the other people they had met at TJC while using the college support services.

The area in which there was the most pronounced difference from the first of the semester to the end of the semester is when the informants described their perception of *themselves*. All fourteen of the informants who completed the pilot semester said that their perception of themselves had improved during the EMERGE program and that EMERGE had contributed to the change.

All of these changes were related to the concept of self-esteem. In fact, seven of the informants mentioned improved self-confidence or self-esteem as the single most important change in their lives since entering the EMERGE program and were eager to provide examples of how they had changed.

When they described their personalities, they not only used more positive words, but their gestures and facial expressions made it apparent they were pleased with their changes. They were detailed in their descriptions of how their confidence had improved and how much more control they had over their lives. Many talked about how their attitude had improved, and several students related that they had begun to care about their appearance during the semester. One student described why she believed the program had given her pride and dignity.

The changes documented in the interviews with the students were also noted by others. It is not a surprise that EMERGE faculty were aware of the changes. However, TJC support personnel, such as counselors and librarians, discussed changes in the students' attitude and appearance with the coordinator.

When the informants were asked what elements in EMERGE contributed to the changes in their perception of themselves and their world, nearly all of them discussed the personal/career development class. They gave a variety of examples of why this class was valuable to them, from learning techniques for self-assessment, problem solving, effective parenting, and goal setting to learning how to study more effectively and make better decisions. Additionally, many of the informants emphasized that the personal/career development teacher (who was also the program coordinator), contributed to their learning to perceive themselves and their world in a more positive manner.

The informants also frequently mentioned the caring attitude of the faculty as an element in the EMERGE program that contributed to their changes. Many gave detailed examples to describe what the teachers did to make them feel they were interested in them as individuals and how the teachers' belief in their potential for success helped them believe in themselves.

Many students also mentioned the importance of the support they felt from their classmates. They were not just friends, they were a support group for a new way of life.

Several students stated that the college atmosphere had contributed to the change in their self-perception. One of the reasons stated was that it made them feel good about themselves because they were preparing for the GED at a college instead of at a school or a church. Another reason given was that attending GED preparation classes on a college campus made them feel less apprehensive about making plans to attend college and helped them believe it could become a reality.

#### EMERGE Revisited: One Year Later

One year after the completion of the pilot semester of EMERGE, an outside interviewer who was experienced in relating to AFDC recipients conducted follow-up interviews with five of the original informants. After the interviews were completed, the interviewer did the preliminary analysis and coding of the verbatim transcripts before the data was provided to the researcher. The researcher used The Ethnograph to sort the analyzed and coded interview transcripts. Using the sorted and reduced data, the researcher found that the graduates' perception of their academic worth, social worth, society, and themselves was very similar to their perception at the completion of the pilot semester.

All of the graduates persisted in believing that their self-esteem had improved during the EMERGE program and that EMERGE had contributed to that improvement. The concept of self-esteem encompasses the graduates perception of academic worth, social worth, society, and themselves. The analysis of data from the follow-up interviews strongly leads one to conclude that the changes noted at the conclusion of the EMERGE experience persisted in the minds of the graduates during the ensuing year.

Additionally, analysis of data from the follow-up interview indicated that the graduates continued to believe that the personal/career development class, the caring attitude of the faculty, and the college environment were elements in EMERGE that contributed to the changes in their perception of themselves and society during the pilot semester. Although data from interviews conducted at the conclusion of the pilot semester indicated that the informants believed that group support was an important element of change at that time, data from the follow-up interviews did not indicate persistence in this area.

It is important to note that the informants who participated in the follow-up interviews may not be representative of the original informants. Of the fourteen informants who completed the pilot semester, only ten were available for the follow-up interviews. Only six of the ten could be contacted by DHS officials or the EMERGE coordinator. One declined to come to the college for the

follow-up interview because "it [was] just too hot...."  
This left a core of five to participate in the follow-up  
interview.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Today's news media is overflowing with questions, answers, and speculation about how to break the welfare cycle. Of particular concern are the five million families who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) at an annual cost of \$22.5 billion (Johnson, 1992).

In 1988, Congress enacted the Family Support Act (FSA). In doing so, it made a good first step toward reforming a welfare system that historically has bred dependence. The FSA was based upon a philosophy that implies dual responsibility between welfare recipients and government. Recipients have a responsibility to move toward economic self-sufficiency, and government has a responsibility to provide the necessary services to make that happen (Offner, 1992). Title II of the FSA provides federal funds to the states and requires that these funds be used to establish Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) training programs to provide education and job-related training for AFDC recipients.

Many authorities believe the community college is ideal for delivering needed education and auxiliary services to



AFDC recipients (Houseman, 1990). In a recent survey, Bliss (1994) found that 144 of 277 responding community colleges were currently operating JOBS programs.

In 1992, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education provided a unique opportunity for Oklahoma's community colleges to meet the community service tenet of their mission. When the federal JOBS legislation was implemented as a provision of the FSA, officials of the Oklahoma State Regents and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) forged a memorandum of understanding for a program that provided JOBS funds for selected colleges to provide educational opportunities for AFDC recipients.

Tulsa Junior College (TJC), a large, urban, multi-campus, comprehensive community college, prepared a proposal for a structured, three-tier education program, especially for AFDC recipients, called Encouraging More Education to Reach Graduation and Employment (EMERGE). The program had three goals: (1) Preparation for GED attainment; (2) Preparation for post-secondary education; and (3) Preparation for productive employment. In September, 1992, TJC's EMERGE program was chosen by the Oklahoma State Regents as one of five programs to receive federal JOBS monies.

Fifty-eight students were enrolled in EMERGE during the pilot semester, which began in January, 1993. EMERGE students had the same rights and responsibilities as other community college students. However, because they had not

earned a high school diploma, they were enrolled only in pre-college classes developed specifically for them. Students attended five classes each afternoon, which were constructed similar to college classes, for a total of twenty hours a week.

Community colleges, as well as other institutions, have offered GED-preparation programs for a number of years. However, most of these programs offer only academic preparation and do not include a component that gives participants the opportunity to develop and implement the skills necessary to enjoy a productive life. Therefore, the personal/career development class, an integral part of the EMERGE curriculum, was designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn such things as goal setting, decision making, study skills, time management, oral communication, career exploration, job-search techniques, interview skills, parenting, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

The traditional approach to measuring the success of a GED program (the approach taken by DHS) is to examine the time involved in preparation, the passing rate, and the scores earned by individual students on the GED examination. However, attainment of the GED does not necessarily equate with preparation for productive employment and economic self-sufficiency (Houseman, 1990). Therefore, because EMERGE was designed not only to prepare students for the GED, but also to prepare them for productive employment and post-secondary education, the designers of EMERGE wished to

determine what impact, in addition to academic preparation, the EMERGE experience had on students.

In Boys in White (Becker et al., 1961), a landmark study of medical students, the researchers assumed that students would leave medical school with a different perception of their world and of themselves than when they entered. The designers of EMERGE made a similar assumption. They assumed that students would leave EMERGE with a different perception of themselves and their world than when they entered the program. The problem, therefore, was that the designers of EMERGE wanted to know if students believed that changes occurred in their perception of their world and themselves during the EMERGE experience.

This study examined the extent to which students perceived changes that occurred in their perception of themselves and their world during the pilot semester, and to what degree they believed the program contributed to those changes. The study also identified what elements in EMERGE students believed contributed to the changes. In addition, the study examined the persistence of the informants' perceptions of themselves and their world one year after the completion of the pilot semester.

Subjects for the study were confined to the fifty-eight students enrolled in the pilot semester of EMERGE. Thirty-eight of these students elected to participate in the study after being informed that volunteers would participate in three confidential interviews during the semester. Students

were also told that the results of the study would be used to improve EMERGE and that their participation or non-participation would have no effect on their EMERGE status.

Eighteen subjects were chosen by lot from the pool of thirty-eight students. Private interviews were conducted with each participant at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the pilot semester of EMERGE. It should be noted that there were only fourteen informants at the conclusion of the semester. Three students were removed from AFDC participation, thus making them ineligible for EMERGE. The fourth student reunited with her husband, and he forbade her attendance.

The following questions served as a guide for the research:

1. At the *beginning of the pilot semester*, how did students in the EMERGE program perceive their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves?
2. At *mid-semester*, what changes, if any, did EMERGE students perceive had occurred as a result of their participation in the EMERGE program? What part of the program influenced the changes?
3. At the *end of the pilot semester*, how did EMERGE students perceive their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves? What changes, if any, did EMERGE students perceive had occurred during their participation in EMERGE? If

they perceived changes, did EMERGE contribute to the changes? If so, what were the changes? What elements in the program contributed to the changes?

In addition, five informants who completed all three interviews, and who could be contacted one year after the completion of the pilot semester, participated in a fourth interview. The purpose of this interview was to examine the extent to which perceived changes persisted.

As a guide for the analysis of data from this interview, a fourth question was developed:

4. *One year after the conclusion of the pilot semester, how did EMERGE graduates view the EMERGE program and themselves? If changes occurred in EMERGE students' perceptions of themselves during the pilot semester, and if students believed that EMERGE contributed to the changes, what changes persisted? If changes persisted, did EMERGE contribute to the changes? If so, what were the changes? What elements in the program contributed to the changes?*

### Findings

On the basis of the analysis in Chapter IV, the following findings are related to the research questions.

*At the conclusion of the pilot semester, the data indicated:*

1. The EMERGE informants believed that their perception of their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves improved during the pilot semester of EMERGE.

When the reader of Chapter IV compares the answers to questions asked of specific students at the beginning of the pilot semester with the same students' answers to the same questions at the conclusion of the semester, many answers have noticeably changed. Furthermore, there is congruence when the changes are compared with perceptions of change voiced by students.

2. The area of change most frequently discussed by the informants was increased self-esteem.

Self-esteem was discussed by most students at the mid-semester interview, as well as in the interviews at the conclusion of the semester. In those interviews, informants discussed their improving self-esteem in a variety of contexts, many discussing it several times. However, in the mid-semester interviews informants mentioned changes in the use of time slightly more frequently than changes in self-esteem. Informants described themselves as more organized and able to manage time more effectively. However, at the conclusion of the semester, there was minimal discussion of changes in the way informants used their time.

3. The informants believed that the personal/career development class was the most important element in EMERGE that contributed to the improved perception of

themselves and their world. They also believed that the caring attitude of the EMERGE faculty, the supportive behaviors of their fellow students, and the college atmosphere were important elements of change.

Although the primary purpose of the career/personal development class was to teach students principles, skills, and techniques for success in post-secondary education and a career, the designers of EMERGE hoped that mastering the information taught in this class, in addition to preparing students for the GED, would improve their self-esteem.

The faculty of EMERGE, all part-time except the coordinator and the paraprofessional, had prior experience with AFDC recipients and shared a student-centered educational philosophy.

Student comments about the importance of the college atmosphere in contributing to the change in their perception should be of interest to decision makers who are currently revising welfare policy.

*One year after the conclusion of the pilot semester,* informants indicated that:

1. EMERGE graduates' perception of their academic worth, their social worth, society, and themselves was very similar to their perception at the end of the pilot semester.
2. All of the graduates persisted in believing that their self-esteem had improved during EMERGE. They

also believed they continued to retain an improved self-esteem.

3. Graduates persisted in their belief that the personal/career development class, the caring attitude of the faculty, and the collegiate atmosphere were elements in EMERGE that contributed to their changed perception of themselves and their world. Supportive behaviors of fellow students did not persist as an important element of change.

It is important to note that the students who participated in the follow-up interviews may not be representative of the informants. Of the fourteen informants who completed the pilot semester, only ten were available for the follow-up interviews. Only six of the ten could be contacted by DHS officials or the EMERGE coordinator. One declined to come to the college for the follow-up interview because "it [was] just too hot...."

Analysis of data gathered from the interviews indicated that there was a synergistic relationship among the elements of EMERGE that students believed contributed to their improved perception of themselves and their world. Although the career/personal development class, the caring attitude of the faculty, the supportive behaviors of EMERGE students, and the college atmosphere were important individually, working in concert these elements were able to achieve an effect of which each was incapable alone, the essence of EMERGE. Although only one graduate mentioned the supportive



behaviors of EMERGE classmates during the interviews conducted one year after the completion of the pilot semester, the coordinator of EMERGE believes that since the graduates no longer have that support they simply forgot that it was once so important to them. She reports that many graduates have told EMERGE faculty that one of the things they miss in regular college classes is the feeling of group support they experienced in EMERGE.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

There are several areas suggested for further research as a result of the findings of this study.

First, a follow-up study of EMERGE graduates, three years after graduation, designed to assess economic self-sufficiency, would be valuable to policy makers who have the responsibility of deciding where to spend education dollars for AFDC recipients.

In recent studies, Bonnett (1991) and Sansone (1993) found that self-esteem is positively correlated with the success of AFDC recipients in a number of areas. Prager (1983) confirmed a positive relationship between self-esteem and aspirations in returning college students.

Second, research is needed to determine the correlation of the degree of self-esteem and success on the GED examination.

Although this study did not attempt to establish a relationship between self-esteem and success on the GED

examination, it is worth noting that twelve of the fourteen informants who completed the pilot semester of EMERGE attained the GED. One informant attempted the examination twice but was not successful on either occasion. She is currently a student at the local vocational/technical school. The other informant who did not pass the GED was arrested on the final day of class and is currently incarcerated. She attempted the GED examination a few days prior to the arrest, but EMERGE officials subsequently learned that she was not successful.

Third, a study that determines the impact of attending GED classes in a community college setting compared with that of attending classes in a public school or a church would be valuable to human service policy makers.

Informants indicated that attending EMERGE classes on a college campus helped eliminate fears they had previously held about going to college. As one graduate said, "It's just like stepping out of one class and into another.... You already feel at home...."

Fourth, a study that compares the achievement of students attending classes in a structured GED program with that of students in a self-paced program would be of assistance to policy makers who decide how education dollars should be spent.

There is a considerable cost differential between a self-paced GED program and a program with structured classes. However, if students in a structured program

attain the GED diploma with a greater rate of success or in a shorter amount of time, the overall costs may be reversed. One EMERGE student expressed her opinion about the self-paced program she had attended before coming to EMERGE:

...You were kind of spinning your wheels and working at your own pace.... There's nobody there to say, "OK, you did it!" You're constantly stressed, wondering if you're doing good enough, or how well you're doing, or what you should be doing.... If you've got somebody who pretty well knows where you're at, you've got the feedback as to somebody actually knowing...what you actually need... (#8, 2644-2676).

Fifth, there is a great need for additional studies of community college GED programs for AFDC recipients.

Although there are a number of community colleges providing GED programs for AFDC recipients, there are few studies available in the literature.

Sixth, a study that compares the changes in parents' self-esteem with changes in their children's self-esteem over the same period of time would be valuable to those studying the family, as well as to those studying self-esteem.

Informants in this study repeatedly described how their relationships with their children improved during the pilot semester because the children "behaved better." This issue is important to explore because those who subscribe to Adlerian Theory (Fitts, 1974; Wylie, 1989 ) believe that there is an essential relationship between self-esteem and human behavior. Frey and Carlock (1984), writing in Enhancing Self-Esteem, stated that the way in which adults

relate to children influences the children's self-esteem, often into adulthood.

### Recommendations to Practitioners

Based on the data obtained from the interviews in this study, the following recommendations are offered to practitioners:

1. Community college practitioners should investigate the possibility of establishing an on-campus GED program, using the "school within a college" concept.

Although students in the EMERGE program did not have classes with college students, they had all the rights and responsibilities of college students and were integrated into Tulsa Junior College in every other way. They went through the same registration and admission procedures as college students, used the college support services such as the library and the counseling and advisement center, and participated in student activities. In the words of the EMERGE coordinator, quoted by Graves in Welfare to Work (1994), "Inclusion does something for them."

2. When implementing a GED program, practitioners should assess the achievement levels of students before they enter the program and place them, by achievement level, in structured classes.

Although there were no questions in the interview guides that asked the informants about the three achievement tiers in EMERGE, most informants talked about the tiers at

least once during their interviews. Most informants who discussed the tiers remarked that they liked being placed in a tier with people who were at approximately the same achievement level. They also like the non-competitive atmosphere and the feeling of group support.

3. Faculty hired for GED programs should have experience with welfare recipients and should practice a student-centered teaching philosophy, as well as hold credentials in their teaching area and have experience teaching adults. The coordinator should foster a team spirit and encourage faculty to share esteem-building techniques.

Faculty for the EMERGE program shared the philosophy that human behavior is a result of a person's perception of himself (Adler). They concentrated on finding at least one thing each student could do well and complementing the student on it. As one of the informants confided, "\_\_\_\_\_ believed I could do it before I believed it myself!" Another student described how she thought faculty integrated esteem-building into their regular lessons. "You don't even know what they're going to be talking about because they're developing self-esteem. Until you realize that you are beginning to get some. It's kind of the sneak approach."

4. Practitioners planning a GED program should implement a daily career/personal development component as an integral part of the curriculum.

The designers of EMERGE believed that there were many skills, techniques, and strategies that prepared individuals for a productive life. Unfortunately, many AFDC recipients had not previously had the opportunity to learn these skills and techniques. The career/personal development class concentrated on basics such as personal assessment, organization skills, time management, goal setting, and decision making; proceeded to computer literacy and learning strategies; and concluded with career exploration, resume writing, interviewing skills, and job-search techniques.

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**APPENDIX A**

**PILOT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## PILOT INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Protocol for Pilot Interview

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED BY THE RESEARCHER DURING A PRIVATE INTERVIEW WITH A STUDENT VOLUNTEER. In order to raise the student's comfort level, the interviewer talked with her informally for a few minutes. Then, to set the stage for the interview, the student was asked to remember how she felt before she started college and asked to answer the questions as she would have answered them at that time. The student was assured that it was permissible to choose to refrain from answering any question.

### Pilot Interview Guide

Questions about student perception of academic worth:

1. What was it about this college that attracted you to it?
2. Share with me how you felt about your learning ability before you started college.
3. Tell me about your confidence level when you are in a classroom.
4. What were your goals or dreams about a career before started college?

5. What were your goals or dreams about college, before you started college?
6. How do you feel about being a student in college at the present time?

**Questions about student perception of social worth:**

1. Tell me about how you got along with other people before you started college.
2. Before you started college, what were your feelings about working in a group?
3. Suppose you had a conflict with someone before you started college. What would you do about it? Right away? Later on?
4. Tell me about how much influence your friends had over you before you started college.
5. Would you describe yourself as lonely before you started college? Why or why not?
6. Tell me about your typical day before you started college.

**Questions about student perception of society:**

1. Tell me how you felt about rules and laws before you came to college.
2. How did you feel about authority figures?
3. Describe how you felt about being on public assistance before you came to college.
4. Before you came to college, what did you think it meant to be successful?

5. What is your feeling about society in general?
6. Suppose you had a good job that allowed you to have a comfortable, but not extravagant lifestyle and that you had free baby-sitting every Saturday afternoon. What would you do with that time?.

**Questions about student perception of self:**

1. Describe a person you admire that you want to be like.
2. How did you feel about yourself before you started college?
3. What did happiness mean to you before you came to college?
4. Before you started college, did you feel you had control over your life? Why or why not?.
5. When you had spare time before you started college, what did you do?
6. What words would describe your personality?



**APPENDIX B**

**INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Protocol for Initial Interview

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED BY THE RESEARCHER DURING A PRIVATE INTERVIEW AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EMERGE PROGRAM. In order to raise each student's comfort level, the interviewer talked with her informally for a few minutes. Then, to set the stage for the interviews, the student was asked to remember how she felt before she started the EMERGE program and asked to answer the questions as she would have answered them at that time. Subjects were reminded that the interview was a part of a research project that would be used to improve EMERGE. The student was assured that it was permissible to choose to refrain from answering any question.

### Initial Interview Guide

Questions about student perception of academic worth:

1. What was it about the EMERGE program that attracted you to it?
2. Share with me how you felt about your learning ability before you started EMERGE.
3. Tell me about how confident you felt when you were in a classroom before you became a student in EMERGE.

4. What were your career goals before you started EMERGE?
5. What were your goals for college, if any, before you came to EMERGE?
6. How do you feel about being a student in the EMERGE program at the present time?

**Questions about student perception of social worth:**

1. Tell me about how you got along with other people before you started EMERGE.
2. Before you came to EMERGE, what were your feelings about working in a group?
3. Suppose you had a disagreement or a fight with someone before you started EMERGE. What would you do about it? Right away? Later on?
4. Tell me about how much influence your friends had over you before you came to EMERGE.
5. Would you describe yourself as lonely before you came to EMERGE? Why or why not?
6. Tell me about your typical day before you became a part of the EMERGE program.

**Questions about student perception of society:**

1. Tell me how you felt about rules and laws before you came to EMERGE?
2. How did you feel about people who had authority over you?
3. Describe how you felt about being on public assistance before you came to EMERGE.

4. Before you came to EMERGE, what did you think it meant to be successful?
5. Some people say it doesn't matter how hard you work, the world will still be against you. What would you have said to that person before you came to EMERGE?
6. Suppose you had a good job that allowed you to have a comfortable, but not extravagant lifestyle and that you had free baby-sitting every Saturday afternoon. What would you do with that time?.

**Questions about student perception of self:**

1. Describe a person you admire that you want to be like. How do you think the EMERGE program will help you to be like that person?
2. Before you heard about the EMERGE program, how did you feel about yourself?
3. What did happiness mean to you before you started this program?
4. Before EMERGE began, did you feel you had control over your life? Why or why not?.
5. When you had spare time before you started EMERGE, what did you do?
6. What words would describe your personality?

**APPENDIX C**

**MID-SEMESTER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## MID-SEMESTER INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Protocol for Mid-Semester Interview

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED BY THE RESEARCHER DURING A CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW AT MID-TERM. The interview session began with a few minutes of informal talk. After the subject appeared comfortable, she was reminded that the interview was part of a research project that would be used to improve EMERGE and assured that she could refrain from answering any question if she chose.

### Mid-Semester Interview Guide

1. Have you made any changes in your life since you started in the EMERGE program?

--If the answer is "no," the interviewer should go to question 3.

OR,

--If the answer is "yes," the interviewer should ask, "Why did you make these changes?"

--If the student answers "EMERGE," the interviewer should ask her to describe the changes she has made.

Then the interviewer should ask "What elements of the EMERGE program helped you to make the change."

OR,

If she gives an answer other than "EMERGE," the interviewer should go to question 3.

2. You said you have made changes as a result of EMERGE. What elements of the program helped you make those changes?
3. Is there anything you would like to tell me about the program that I have not asked?

**APPENDIX D**

**FINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE**



## FINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Protocol for Final Interview

SUBJECTS WERE ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN A PRIVATE INTERVIEW AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER. To ensure that each subject felt comfortable, the interviewer talked with her informally for a few minutes. The subject was reminded that the interview was part of a research project that would be used to improve EMERGE. The student was assured that it was permissible to refrain from answering any question. The interviewer then told the subject that many of the questions in this interview were similar to the ones that were asked at the beginning of the EMERGE program.

Sample follow-up questions were similar to "Do you think what you have just told me is different than when you started EMERGE?" If the answer was "yes," the question that followed would be, "Why do you think your answers have changed?"

### Final Interview Guide

Questions about student perception of academic worth:

1. Share with me how you feel about your ability to learn.
2. How do you feel about your confidence when you are in an EMERGE classroom?

3. What are your goals about a career?
4. What are your goals about college?
5. Tell me what you feel you learned in the academic classes in EMERGE.
6. Discuss some of the things you learned in the career/personal development class.

**Questions about student perception of social worth:**

1. Tell me about how you get along with other people.
2. Tell me about how you feel about working in a group.
3. Suppose you had a disagreement or a fight with someone. What would you do? Right away? Later on?
4. How much influence do your friends have over you? Tell me about it.
5. Would you describe yourself as lonely? Why or why not?
6. Tell me about your typical day.

**Questions about student perception of society:**

1. How do you feel about rules and laws?
2. How do you feel about people who have authority over you?
3. Describe how you feel about being on public assistance.
4. What do you think it means to be successful?
5. Some people say the world is out to get you. What would you say to that person?
6. Suppose you had a good job that allowed you to have a comfortable, but not extravagant lifestyle and that you

had free baby-sitting every Saturday afternoon. What would you do with that time?. .

**Questions about student perception of self:**

1. Describe a person you admire that you want to be like.
2. Tell me how you feel about yourself on an average day?
3. What does happiness mean to you?
4. Do you feel you have control over your life? Why or why not?
5. What do you do in your spare time?
6. What words would describe your personality?

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, SUBJECTS WERE ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Have any changes occurred in your life since you started in the EMERGE program?

--If the answer is "no," the interviewer should go on to question 3.

OR,

--If the answer is "yes," the interviewer should ask, "Why did you make those changes?"

--If the answer is something other than "EMERGE," the interviewer should proceed to question 3.

OR,

--If the answer is "EMERGE," the interviewer should ask, "Were these changes positive or negative?"

--If the answer is "negative," the interviewer should proceed to question 3.

OR,

--If the answer is "positive," the interviewer should ask, "What is the most important thing you changed?"

2. What elements of the program helped you make those changes?
3. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to share with me about the EMERGE program?

**APPENDIX E**

**FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Protocol for Follow-Up Interview

SUBJECTS WERE ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN A PRIVATE INTERVIEW ONE YEAR AFTER COMPLETION OF THE PILOT SEMESTER OF EMERGE. To ensure that each subject felt comfortable, the interviewer talked with her informally for a few minutes. The subject was reminded that the interview was part of a research project that would be used to improve EMERGE. The subject was assured that it was permissible to refrain from answering any question. The interviewer then told the subject that the questions in this interview were similar to the ones that were asked at the conclusion of the pilot semester of the EMERGE program.

### Follow-up Interview Guide

Questions about student perception of academic worth:

1. Share with me how you feel about your ability to learn.
2. How did you feel about your confidence when you were in an EMERGE classroom?
3. What are your goals about a career?
4. What are your goals about college?
5. Tell me what you feel you learned in the academic classes in EMERGE.

6. Discuss some of the things you learned in the career/personal development class.

**Questions about student perception of social worth:**

1. Tell me about how you get along with other people.
2. Tell me about how you feel about working in a group.
3. Suppose you had a disagreement or a fight with someone. What would you do? Right away? Later on?
4. How much influence do your friends have over you? Tell me about it.
5. Would you describe yourself as lonely? Why or why not?
6. Tell me about your typical day.

**Questions about student perception of society:**

1. How do you feel about rules and laws?
2. How do you feel about people who have authority over you?
3. Describe how you feel about being on public assistance.
4. What do you think it means to be successful?
5. Some people say the world is out to get you. What would you say to that person?
6. Suppose you had a good job that allowed you to have a comfortable, but not extravagant lifestyle and that you had free baby-sitting every Saturday afternoon. What would you do with that time? .

**Questions about student perception of self:**

1. Describe a person you admire that you want to be like.

2. Tell me how you feel about yourself on an average day?
3. What does happiness mean to you?
4. Do you feel you have control over your life? Why or why not?
5. What do you do in your spare time?
6. What words would describe your personality?

THEN, TO SET THE STAGE FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, STUDENTS WERE ASKED TO "THINK BACK TO BEFORE YOU STARTED THE EMERGE PROGRAM".

1. Have any changes occurred in your life since you started in the EMERGE program?

--If the answer is "no," the interviewer should go on to question 3.

OR,

--If the answer is "yes," the interviewer should ask, "Why did you make those changes?"

--If the answer is something other than "EMERGE," the interviewer should proceed to question 3.

OR,

--If the answer is "EMERGE," the interviewer should ask, "Were these changes positive or negative?"

--If the answer is "negative," the interviewer should proceed to question 3.



OR,

--If the answer is "positive," the interviewer should ask, "What is the most important thing you changed?"

2. You said that changes have occurred as a result of EMERGE. What parts of the program helped you make those changes?
3. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to share with me about the EMERGE program?

**APPENDIX F**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS USING  
PATTON'S FRAMEWORK**

### EXPERIENCE/BEHAVIOR QUESTIONS

What did you learn in the career/personal development class?

Tell me about how you got along with other people before you started EMERGE.

Suppose you had a disagreement or a fight with someone before you started EMERGE. What would you do about it? Right away? Later on?

Tell me about your typical day before you became a part of the EMERGE program.

Some people say it doesn't matter how hard you work, the world will still be against you. What would you have said to that person before you came to EMERGE?

Suppose you had a good job that allowed you to have a comfortable, but not extravagant, lifestyle and that you had free baby-sitting every Saturday afternoon. What would you do with that time?

When you had spare time before you started EMERGE, what did you do?

### OPINION/VALUE QUESTIONS

What was it about the EMERGE program that attracted you to it?

What were your career goals before you started EMERGE?

What were your goals for college, if any, before you came to EMERGE?

Tell me about how much influence your friends had over you before you came to EMERGE.

Would you describe yourself as lonely?

Tell me how you felt about rules and laws before you came to EMERGE.

Before you came to EMERGE, what did you think it meant to be successful?

Describe a person you admire that you want to be like. How do you think the EMERGE program will help you to be like that person?

What did happiness mean to you before you started this program?

What words would you use to describe your personality?

### FEELING QUESTIONS

Share with me how you felt about your learning ability before you started EMERGE.

Tell me about how confident you felt when you were in a classroom before you became a student in EMERGE.

How do you feel about being a student in the EMERGE program at the present time?

Before you came to EMERGE, what were your feelings about working in a group?

Would you describe yourself as lonely before you came to EMERGE? Why or why not?

How did you feel about people who had authority over you?

Describe how you felt about being on public assistance before you came to EMERGE.

Before you heard about the EMERGE program how did you feel about yourself?

Before EMERGE began, did you feel you had control over your life? Why or why not?

**APPENDIX G**

**CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS**

C O N S E N T F O R M

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
hereby authorize or direct \_\_\_\_\_,  
or associates or assistants of his or her choosing, to perform the  
following procedure:

The researcher will conduct no more than three  
interviews with each participant. The interviews are  
designed to explore changes in students' perceptions  
during one term of the EMERGE program at a community  
college. Interviews will be conducted at the beginning,  
the end, and possibly the middle of the term.

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed  
numerically so that changes in students' perceptions  
during the term can be noted. However, no list  
connecting names and numbers will be retained.

There are no discomforts or risks associated with  
this project. To insure that there are none,  
participants will be told that they may refrain from  
answering any question if they so choose.

This is done as part of an investigation entitled "The EMERGE  
Program: A Study of Student Perceptions."

The purpose of the procedure is to determine if factors in  
the EMERGE Program help students make changes in their  
perceptions of themselves.

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director.

I may contact Dr. Thomas Karman at (405) 744-6411, should I wish further information about the research. I may also contact Terry Maciula, University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Project Director or His/Her Authorized Representative)

**APPENDIX H**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**

**(OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY)**

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Date: 03-03-93

IRB#: ED-93-064

Proposal Title: THE EMERGE PROGRAM: A STUDY OF STUDENT  
PERCEPTIONS

Principal Investigator(s): Thomas A. Karman, Kathryn J. Purser

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW  
BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.  
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A  
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR  
BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO  
BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

---

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for  
Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:

*Maria S. Tilley*

Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: March 5, 1993



**APPENDIX I**

**ANALYSIS CODES FOR VERBATIM STUDENT  
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

**.ANALYSIS CODES FOR VERBATIM STUDENT INTERVIEWS**

ABIL - Academic ability  
GOALS - College goals, career coals  
PARENT - Relationships with own children, parenting  
RELATN - All other relationships  
ANGER - Anger, conflict  
ORG - Organization, time management  
LONELY - Loneliness  
PUBASSIS - Public Assistance  
CARING - Caring attitude shown to them, or the  
informants' caring attitude toward others  
GRPSUPP - Group support  
PERSONAL - Personality  
ESTEEM - Self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth  
CONTROL - Control over life  
HAPPY - Happiness  
DEPRESS - Depression  
MJRCHNG - Major change  
DIFF - Differences in EMERGE and other GED programs

**APPENDIX J**

**LETTER OF PERMISSION**

**TULSA JUNIOR COLLEGE**



## Tulsa Junior College

*Office of the President*

July 12, 1994

Ms. Kathryn J. Purser, Chairman  
Liberal Arts & Communications Technologies  
Tulsa Junior College  
3727 E. Apache  
Tulsa, OK 74115

Dear Ms. Purser:

This letter will serve to confirm permission granted to you in January 1993 to conduct a research study using a series of interviews with selected volunteer students in the EMERGE program.

I understand that the data and findings from these interviews will be used in your dissertation and that Tulsa Junior College will be identified as a partner in the EMERGE project.

Sincerely,

Dean P. VanTrease  
President

DVT/nb

(918) 631-7000

CENTRAL OFFICE  
600 East Shaly Drive  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135-6128

METRO CAMPUS  
908 South Boston Avenue  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119-2025

NORTHEAST CAMPUS  
3727 East Apache  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74115-3151

SOUTHEAST CAMPUS  
10000 East 61st Street  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74133-4513

*An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer*

**APPENDIX K**

**EMERGE CLASS SCHEDULE**

## Project Emerge Schedule

	Tier III Grade 7-8	Tier II Grade 9-10	Tier II Grade 9-10	Tier I Grade 11-12
1:00-1:40	<b>Reading</b> J. Collins ENG 0992 01110 Room # 2306	<b>Career/ Personal Development</b>  L. Mayes CAR 0992 0B675 Room # 2120	<b>Writing</b>  V. Venable ENG 0992 01111 Room # 2350	<b>Computer Assisted Instruction</b>  J. Whitney CSC 0992 0C208
1:50-2:30	<b>Writing</b>  V. Venable ENG 0992 01113 Room # 2350	<b>Reading</b>  J. Collins ENG 0992 01108 Room # 2306	<b>Computer Assisted Instruction</b>  J. Whitney CSC 0992 0C209 Room # 2319	<b>Career/ Personal Development</b>  L. Mayes CAR 0992 0B674 Room # 2120
2:40-3:20	<b>Mathematics</b>  B. Hunt MTH 0992 0N474 Room # 2363	<b>Writing</b>  V. Venable ENG 0992 01112 Room # 2350	<b>Reading</b>  J. Collins ENG 0992 01109 Room # 2306	<b>Skills Development</b>  • reading com- prehension • essay writing • language usage • advanced mathematics • social studies • science
3:30-4:10	<b>Computer Assisted Instruction</b>  J. Whitney CSC 0992 0C211 Room # 2319	<b>Mathematics</b>  R. Wilcox MTH 0992 0N472 Room # 2363	<b>Career/ Personal Development</b>  L. Mayes CAR 0992 0B676 Room # 2120	
4:20-5:00	<b>Career/ Personal Development</b>  L. Mayes CAR 0992 0B677 Room # 2120	<b>Computer Assisted Instruction</b>  J. Whitney CSC 0992 0C210 Room # 2319	<b>Mathematics</b>  R. Wilcox MTH 0992 0N473 Room # 2319	M. Neeley CAR 0996 0B678 Room # 2367

*Coordinator will teach Personal Development.  
Paraprofessional will teach Computer Assisted Instruction.*

**APPENDIX L**

**STUDY UNITS FOR CAREER/PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT CLASS**

**STUDY UNITS FOR THE CAREER/PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT CLASS**

Personal awareness and responsibility  
Self-assessment  
Motivation  
Goal setting  
Time management  
Stress reduction  
Problem solving  
Negotiation skills  
Decision making  
Conflict resolution  
Parenting  
Study skills  
Test-taking skills  
Computer literacy  
Preparation for post-secondary education  
Budgeting  
Career exploration  
Job search techniques  
Interviewing techniques  
Workplace ethics



**APPENDIX M**

**RECRUITMENT FLYER, DEPARTMENT**

**OF HUMAN SERVICES**

## EMERGE

EMERGE is a special program sponsored by Tulsa Junior College and DHS. It will enable you to get your GED and go on to get college or training.

There will be a special meeting to let you know more about the program. Some testing similar to the TABE will be involved.

The meeting will be at:

Tulsa Junior College  
Northeast Campus  
(Harvard & Apache)  
Auditorium

When: December 11, 1992  
9:00 AM to 3 PM

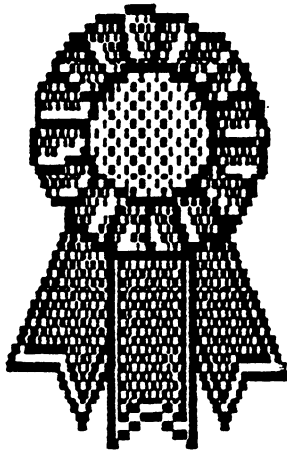
Day Care: Contact your Social Worker if you will need day care.

Lunch: Bring a lunch or eat in the cafeteria.

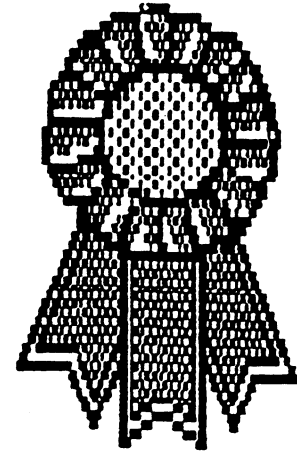
Contact:  
Gary Hornbostel - 428-0335  
Sharon Thomas - 428-0334

**APPENDIX N**

**NOTIFICATION LETTER, DEPARTMENT  
OF HUMAN SERVICES**



CONGRATULATIONS



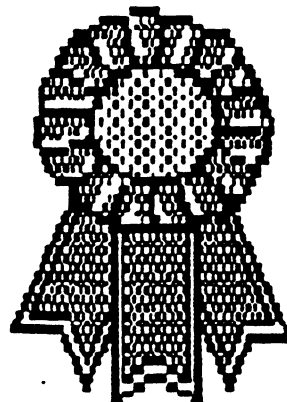
You have been selected as one of the Emerge participants.

There will be an orientation on January 5, 1993 from 9:00 - 12:00 in the TJC auditorium. Classes will begin on January 11, 1993.

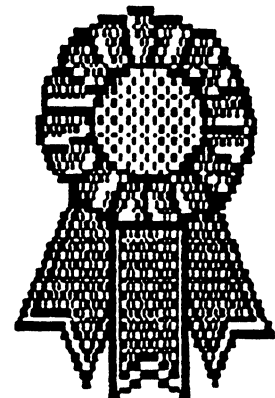
Please get your day care set up immediately with your social worker and plan to attend the orientation.

If for some reason you have decided not to participate, please call me immediately.

I'm looking forward to working with you in your education progress.



Sharon Thomas  
428-0334  
DHS North Office



## VITA

Kathryn J. Purser

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: EMERGING VOICES: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-  
CHANGE IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE GED PROGRAM

Major Field: Higher Education Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Alexandria, Louisiana, July 24, 1941, the daughter of Jim and Lavone French. Married to Charles A. Purser on August 25, 1962; mother of Craig and Michelle.

Education: Graduated from Liberal High School, Liberal, Kansas, 1959; received Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963; received the Master of Science in Adult Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1986; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, December 1994.

Professional Experience: Teacher, American Government, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1963-1966. Faculty member, Government, History, and Psychology, 1980-1982; Director of Education, 1982-1984; Dean of Academic Administration, 1984-1986; and Dean of Institutional Advancement, 1986-1988; Oklahoma Junior College of Business and Technology, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Division Chairman, Liberal Arts and Communications Technologies, Tulsa Junior College, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1988 to present.

Professional Honors and Organizations: Phi Kappa Phi; National Council of Instructional Administrators; Council of Universities and Colleges; Oklahoma Association of Community and Junior Colleges; Oklahoma Technical Society.