

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

A STUDY OF CULTURALLY STIMULATING EXPERIENCES  
OF A SELECTED GROUP OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN LIVING IN ENVIRONMENTALLY DEPRIVED  
AREAS OF WINNIPEG IN RELATION TO THEIR SCHOOL  
PERFORMANCE

Being a Report of a Research Project  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

by

W. C. Kenneth Cairnie



April, 1966

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express sincere appreciation to members of the Faculty of the University of Manitoba School of Social Work, for the interest they have shown and the help they have given in the completion of this project. Special gratitude is extended to Professor Patricia Woolley, Faculty Research Advisor, for her advice and instruction which enabled us to carry out the study.

The writer also wishes to acknowledge with appreciation the cooperation and assistance of Mr. Douglas C. Duncan, Director of Research, Winnipeg School Division No. I, who in collaboration with school principals of four elementary schools located in environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg, provided the names of the children and their families studied.

Appreciation is also extended to Mr. T. J. Haxby, Senior Planner, Planning Division, Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, for information pertaining to the four environmentally deprived areas included in the study; and to Mrs. Nadine Chidley, Director of Special Education, Winnipeg School Division No. I, and Mr. G. Newfield, Principal, Hugh John McDonald School, for their lectures on special education and on the culturally deprived child.

The writer is very grateful to the other students in the research group, who, together with the writer, shared information and knowledge in the planning of the study, compilation of data, and analysis of the findings. Appreciation is also expressed to all the writer's colleagues for help received in administering the schedule.

## ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in Winnipeg, Manitoba, between October, 1965 and May, 1966. It was a four-part study, focussing on educational and cultural factors in the home and community (apart from the school) of a selected group of elementary school children in Grades I to III living in four environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg. Our section of the study concentrated on the following cultural factors in the home: visually stimulating experiences, verbal and language experiences, activities in the home, and interaction with adults. We sought to identify variations in these four categories of culturally stimulating experiences in the home between those children whose school performance was considered by the classroom teacher to be satisfactory compared to those whose school performance was considered to be unsatisfactory.

Data was obtained by administration of a composite schedule in interviews with 47 families, 20 in the satisfactory group, and 27 in the unsatisfactory. Where possible both parents were interviewed.

Our findings indicated there are variations in the experiences in the home of the two groups of children studied, which are associated with the level of school performance. We found this variation to be the greatest in the category of positive interactions with adults, particularly in regard to homework, chores and recreation. We also found differences in the category of activities of children in the home, again in relation to homework and reading, and also in regard to participation in active games. In the category of verbal and language experiences we

found variations in the availability of reading material in the home and in the ability of the children to read and print before starting school. Our findings pertaining to visually stimulating experiences did not indicate differences in the two groups studied. In general, however, our study suggested that those children whose school performance was satisfactory had more opportunity for culturally stimulating experiences in the home than those children whose school performance was unsatisfactory.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In modern industrial society, with the occurrence of rapid technological change, there is a growing need for highly skilled individuals and education has therefore become one of the major values of society. As the number of jobs calling for unskilled labour decreases, the school is seen by society as the training ground for participation in our economy and children, generally, are expected to attend school well into the secondary level.

The fact is, however, that a major segment of our society, the economically and culturally deprived, has not benefitted from those educational opportunities which are available, and the problem seems to be increasing. In his book on the culturally deprived child, Frank Riessman comments that with the growth of large urban centres and the concomitant increase in the number of people living in urban slums, the proportion of children whom he designates as "culturally deprived" has increased from one in ten in 1950 to one in three in 1960.<sup>1</sup> There is a growing concern about the high incidence of school failure and drop-out amongst children from this lowest socio-economic group. Why has the educational system in large part failed to reach these children? Are there social and cultural factors in a child's home and community experiences which may adversely affect his school performance.

To answer this question the students at the School of Social Work, University of Manitoba, working toward the degree of Masters of Social

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<sup>1</sup>Riessman, Frank, The Culturally Deprived Child, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, p. 1.



Work, undertook a research study of families of a selected group of elementary school children who reside in environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg. The central concern of the study was to ascertain if socio-cultural and educational influences in the home and in the community (apart from the school) are related to whether a child's school performance is satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The project was divided into four sections. The students were grouped into the four sections, each group focussing on one of the following areas of concern: educational experiences of the parents of the children selected; educational experiences of the children apart from the school; culturally stimulating experiences in the home; and culturally stimulating activities outside the home.

The specific concern of our section of the study was in the area of culturally stimulating experiences in the home. The purpose of our study was to identify differences in life patterns of families living in environmentally deprived areas which may be associated with the level of school performance of elementary school children. We wanted to gain knowledge about possible variations in the social milieu in the homes of children from deprived areas which affect school performance. The intent of our study, therefore, was not operational and was not intended to show the need for specific social welfare services; rather, as basic research it was intended to indicate that what a child sees, hears and does in the home may influence the degree to which he is prepared for the demands of the learning process and the behavioral requirements of the classroom.

The study grew out of a general interest in the culturally deprived child. Much has been written and a number of studies have been done about the influence of social class factors on educational aspirations and

achievement. There has sometimes been a tendency to view the culturally deprived as a homogeneous group and there is little known about variations in socio-cultural factors within this group which affect school achievement. Through gaining more knowledge about children from marginal social and economic living conditions and socio-cultural factors which affect how children from deprived areas do in school, it is possible that changes in living conditions and in the educational system can be brought about which enable the disadvantaged child to realize his educational potential.

It was assumed that all children have the democratic right to realize their maximum educational potential in order to live a more productive life and to contribute more fully to society.

As students of Social Work we are concerned about the problems encountered by the culturally deprived child in the school setting as part of our broader concern about the phenomenon of poverty in an affluent society. Our awareness of the deleterious effects of poverty and the need for social remedies to break the cycle of poverty, gave impetus to our search for possible answers as to why many children from marginal social circumstances have so much difficulty at school.

To implement our study we focused on certain culturally stimulating experiences in the homes of elementary school children from environmentally deprived areas which may be associated with differences in school performance. We concentrated on four aspects: opportunities for visually stimulating experiences; opportunities for the development of verbal and language skills; the child's activities in the home; and the amount of positive interaction with adults in the home.

The study was undertaken with families residing in four areas of Winnipeg identified as environmentally deprived by the Planning Division of the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg and selected by the Research Committee of the School of Social Work in consultation with the Planning Division. The research project was started in September, 1965, and completed by April, 1966. In part the deprived areas were identified through census tracts on the basis of land and building assessments, income per family, number of household members and housing conditions. Within these deprived areas, four elementary schools were selected through collaboration between the Research Committee and the Director of Research for the Winnipeg School Division. The children selected for our study attended these schools.

The environmentally deprived areas were described as areas in transition which fall below the generally acceptable socio-economic standards of the total community. They are characterized by an absence or paucity of open-space parks and recreation areas, overcrowded housing and small lots, inadequate maintenance of property with poor housing and home conditions, mixed industrial and residential development, the presence of heavy traffic and main thoroughfares, and a limited number of churches and cultural facilities.

The theoretical basis of our study was that the child from the environmentally deprived areas may do poorly in school because he is deprived by conditions of poverty and resulting types of family life, of the kind of stimulating experiences early in life which are necessary if he is to develop his maturational potential. Children learn to distinguish shapes and colours and different sounds by the variety of objects in the

home and by interchange with their parents and others in the home. The interaction between a child and his environment plays the determinant role in the development of his potential. Deprived of a substantial portion of these experiences a child is likely to be deficient in the equipment required for learning.<sup>1</sup>

To carry out the project a sample of 74 families of a selected group of elementary school children was identified. The scope of the study included children in Grades I to III from the four environmentally deprived areas. Only one student was selected from each family. The children were selected by the classroom teachers in collaboration with the principals of each of the four schools located in the deprived areas. They were classified by the school authorities as having either satisfactory or unsatisfactory school performance with 35 in the former classification and 39 in the latter. A composite schedule was devised by the four research groups to be used in interviewing those families in the sample willing to participate in the study.

Within the limited duration of the study, no attempt was made to determine the possibility of differences in the school performances of particular students. It is conceivable that a particular student's performance may have differed significantly within the eight month duration of the study. A further limitation is indicated in the fact that only one child per family was selected. Thus the study does not take into account differences in school performance which may be present among other children

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<sup>1</sup>M. P. Deutsch, "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process", Mental Health and the Poor, London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964, p. 177.

of the same family. The study is also limited by the fact that the sample was selected on the basis of two criteria -- the families resided in environmentally deprived areas and had children in Grades I to III whose school performance was evaluated by the classroom teacher. The study is not necessarily applicable to those children who have gone beyond the third grade, or to those whose school performance falls within the average range. By definition, satisfactory and unsatisfactory designates extremes. Moreover, our findings may not be applicable to rural areas or to higher socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, since the sample was selected through the school system on the basis of school performance, our findings are applicable to the group studied only and we are not able to generalize to the total population living in the four environmentally deprived areas. To obtain a representative sample of the total population living in these areas it would be necessary to make a random selection.

Lastly, our section of the study is limited to a cross-sectional perspective of the families studied. Since we did not do a longitudinal study, our findings are applicable to the current family situation only.

To develop a researchable question within the scope and limitations of our study, we formulated the following major hypothesis:

There are variations in the culturally stimulating experiences provided within the homes of families of a selected group of elementary school children living in environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg whose school performance is satisfactory and a group from a similar area whose school performance is unsatisfactory.

We tested the major hypothesis in the following sub-hypotheses:

1. Those children whose school performance is satisfactory come from homes in which on the average there is a greater variety of opportunities for visually stimulating experiences than those children whose school performance is not satisfactory.  
Rationale: We postulated that a "child deprived of a substantial portion of a variety of visual stimuli which he is maturationally capable of responding to, is likely to be deficient in the equipment required for learning."<sup>1</sup>
2. Those children whose school performance is satisfactory come from homes in which on the average there is a greater variety of opportunities for the development of verbal and language skills than those children whose school performance is not satisfactory.  
Rationale: We would expect that verbal fluency is strongly related to reading skills and to other highly organized, integrative and conceptual processes demanded in the school situation. We would also expect that facility in the use of language is also related to good school performance.
3. Those children whose school performance is satisfactory come from homes in which on the average they engage in a greater variety of activities than those children whose school performance is not satisfactory.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 177

3... Rationale: We would expect that the more variations in experience with which the child has coped, the greater will be his capacity for adapting in school.

4. Those children who perform satisfactorily in school have on the average more positive interaction with adults in the home than those children who perform unsatisfactorily.

Rationale: "Related to the whole issue of the adult-child dynamic in establishing a basis for the later learning process is the ability of the child to use the adult as a source of information, correction and the reality testing involved in problem-solving and the absorption of new knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

Our terminology was defined as follows:

Culturally stimulating experiences -- those visual, verbal and language experiences, activities, and interactions with adults, which prepare the child for the demands of the learning process of the school and the behavioral requirements of the classroom.

Environmentally deprived areas -- those areas defined by the Planning Division of the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg as being in transition and as falling below the generally acceptable socio-economic standards of the larger community.

Satisfactory -- school performance which has been evaluated by the classroom teacher as being above average.

Unsatisfactory -- school performance characteristic of those children who are failing to meet the expectations of the school program or who

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

are achieving at a very minimal level, including repeaters, borderline achievers and pupils who are over the standard age for their grade level.

Variety -- number of different kinds of experiences a child has in his home.

Visually stimulating experiences -- perceptions of objects which are present in the home.

Verbal and language skills -- the ability to understand and communicate through the use of words, in written and spoken form.

Positive interaction -- those experiences between a child and an adult which lead to the child's use of an adult as a source of information, correction and knowledge.

To facilitate the research process the following assumptions were made:

1. Because the children studied were in standard classes and had been identified by the teacher as able to meet the demands of the standard school curriculum, we assumed that any differences in intellectual abilities would fall within the normal range of intelligence and would therefore not significantly affect the findings of our study.
2. We assumed that the school provides equal opportunities for all the children studied and that the quality of the classroom teaching would not significantly affect our findings. This assumption was made on the basis that the children selected were from the same classrooms in each of the four schools attended.
3. As our study was descriptive and did not attempt to control other



variables, it was assumed that all the factors other than the culturally stimulating experiences in the home which may affect a child's school performance, would not significantly affect the findings of our study.

We analysed the data obtained from the schedules by using two major classifications, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. We had four categories under each classification: visual experiences, verbal and language experiences, activities, and adult-child interaction. The results were compared in each category of experience in order to identify possible variations between the two classifications. To facilitate comparison we used sub-categories where indicated. We also examined additional information not directly related to the categories, to obtain more detail about the families studied.

A review of the literature and of previous studies leading to the development of our study is given in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### PART 1: A Review of the Literature

The question for study has been described in the Introduction as an examination of socio-cultural influences and educational stimulation in the family and community (excluding the school) which affect or appear to affect the school performance of a group of elementary school children from environmentally deprived areas in Winnipeg.

The study has impetus in the proliferation in recent years of writing and research about social class, particularly that literature related to those in our urban slums who have been variously referred to as the "culturally deprived", the "educationally deprived", the "under-privileged", the "disadvantaged", "lower-class", "lower socio-economic group",<sup>1</sup> and more simply, "the poor".<sup>2</sup>

There has been controversy and confusion in identifying and describing the poor. The controversy has developed out of different theoretical approaches, some sociological, others anthropological, with the result that some stress the impact of economic deprivation and others the influence of lower-class "culture". The confusion has arisen largely out of inadequacies in research studies in precisely defining and controlling the group studied, leading to spurious generalizations about factors influencing behavior. However, there seems to be increasing agreement, based on accumulating evidence, about the existence of a group within

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<sup>1</sup>Riessman, Frank, *The Culturally Deprived Child*, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Herzog, E., "Some Assumptions about the Poor", Social Service Review, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4 (December 1963), p. 389.

society, the economically and socially deprived, who exhibit characteristics which differ from the dominant socio-cultural patterns of our society.

One source of interest in the disadvantaged has developed out of social science theory and research on social class phenomena.

Harold M. Hodges states that social stratification is both universal and necessary. He says social class is, "a distinct reality which embraces the fact that people live, eat, play, mate, dress, work, and think at contrasting and dissimilar levels. These levels -- social classes -- are the blended product of shared and analogous occupational orientations, educational background, economic wherewithal, and life experiences."<sup>1</sup> The lower class person, says Hodges, is culturally deficient: he is not yet acculturated to middle-class norms. What he is and how he behaves is largely dictated by the predicament and cultural values which enmesh him.<sup>2</sup>

Hollingshead and Redlich in their New Haven studies, provide an exhaustive and definitive analysis of the relationship between social status and particular psychiatric disorders.<sup>3</sup> They found that the middle class is generally as prone to neurotic disorders as the lower is to psychotic. Further, they established direct relationships between class position and varying types of neuroses. The significance of their findings for the present study has been to demonstrate a link between social class and particular personality patterns.

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<sup>1</sup>Hodges, Harold M., Social Stratification, Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1964, pp. 9-13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Hollingshead, A. B. and Redlich, F. C., Social Class and Mental Illness, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1958, p. 230.

In his study on selected family factors as they affect educational and occupational aspirations of high school youth, Siemens asserts that a family's social position has an effect on the socialization of the child, "If---socialization involves for the child the learning of a set of behavior patterns functional for his parental home---it is reasonable that the children of parents with vastly different social roles would learn a somewhat different behavioral repertoire. . . . Social stratification (is) a reflection of role differentiation in society. It then follows that the socialization of children would likely differ considerably between different strata of society."<sup>1</sup> The lower-class child would seem to be subject to less parental supervision but more parental authority, more physical punishment and less use of reasoning as a disciplinary measure, more freedom to express aggression and less development of conscience, less stress toward achievement but less permissive upbringing.<sup>2</sup>

Frank E. Jones concludes that sociologists are in general agreement that in our society educational and occupational achievement are related to, "adherence to certain values and implied patterns of behaviour."<sup>3</sup> He sees three values as central in today's middle-class dominated society: these are firstly, success or achievement through competition; secondly, the right of the individual to chose and the responsibility of that choice; and thirdly, an emphasis on self-discipline involving the ability to post-

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<sup>1</sup>Siemens, L. B., The Influence of Selected Family Factors on the Educational and Occupational Aspiration Levels of High School Boys and Girls, Faculty of Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, June, 1965, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, F. E., The Social Bases of Education, Toronto: Canadian Conference on Children, 52 St. Clair Avenue E., 1965, p. 27.

pone ones immediate gratification. As achievement-oriented values are stronger in the middle class than in the lower socio-economic groups, the disadvantaged child lacks in motivation and patterns of behavior which enable him to use the educational system productively.

A second source of concern about the disadvantaged child has been generated by what might be called "social conscience". There has been increasing awareness of and concern about poverty and its deleterious effects. This concern has been heightened by those who recognize the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty and who realize that the poor, "are caught in a vicious circle."<sup>1</sup> This awareness of the apparent self-perpetuating attributes of poverty, coupled with a sensitivity about the plight of the poor, has led to the concept of a culture of poverty.

Walter B. Miller comments that the primary focus of the cultural approach is on the patterned ways of acting, perceiving and relating shared by a designated societal grouping. He stresses the danger of viewing the lower class from a middle-class bias and adds, "An alternative approach is to conceptualize lower-class culture as a cultural system in its own right, with an integrity of its own, with a characteristic set of practices, focal concerns, and ways of behaving that are meaningfully and systematically related . . ."<sup>2</sup> These practices include serial monogamy, strong out-group feelings (with teachers being on the "outside"), and an emphasis on toughness in contrast to the softness of the school.

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<sup>1</sup>Harrington, M., The Other America, Baltimore: A Penguin Special - S223, 1962, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, W. B., "Implications of Urban Lower Class Culture for Social Work", Social Service Review, XXXIII, No. 1, (September 1959), p. 223.

Examining the culture-of-poverty concept, Herzog states that reference to the poor does not mean the lower layer of a three way breakdown into upper, middle, and lower socio-economic groups.<sup>1</sup> She points out that evidence indicates different layers within the lower segment and that the very lowest layer differ from the others. By "the poor" Herzog means that group which lives at or below what is commonly regarded as the subsistence level. Money income is a major determinant of membership in the lowest layer and one of the few variables almost universally used in defining the poor.<sup>2</sup> A culture of poverty, however, implies that poverty is not only a state of economic deprivation; it also has a culture, a structure and pattern of its own by which the poor cope with their environment, a way of life passed on from generation to generation.

Herzog examines the characteristics attributed to the poor by investigators and supported by evidence, albeit inclusive, which tend to substantiate, qualify, or question the concept of a culture of poverty. In addition to having little money, poverty involves underemployment and sporadic employment, overcrowded dwellings and lack of privacy, lower levels of health -- physical and mental. Poverty also means low education associated with low school achievement, inadequate verbal skills, lack of intellectual stimulation, lack of motivation to education.<sup>3</sup> Psychological characteristics associated with poverty and supported by empirical evidence include ideas that the poor tend to be more authori-

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<sup>1</sup> Herzog, E., op. cit., p. 390.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 392.

tarian than the prosperous; more intolerant and anti-intellectual, more prone to action; more inclined to personal and concrete thinking; less developed in imaginative and logical powers, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

Herzog concludes that many of the above-mentioned variables are fairly accurate descriptions of the poor, and therefore, cultural differences do exist between the poor and the prosperous. However, she contends that a major aspect of culture is lacking, the basic core which gives a culture its identity and whereby its members feel they belong. Although the concept of culture is useful in describing the poor, it is important to remember that the way of life in the slums represents not a system of culturally evolved patterns; rather, a series of pragmatic adjustments to exigencies.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem, then, despite the qualifications placed on the concept of a culture of poverty, that society needs to be concerned about the cycle of poverty. Cultural differences between the poor and the prosperous do affect the child's chances in making use of the social opportunities to "better himself". Blanch D. Coll examines deprivation in the children of the poor which tends to perpetuate poverty. She argues that the ability of a child to profit from his right to an education is inseparably related to his having accorded to him other rights -- physical, emotional, and cultural.<sup>3</sup> She attacks the idea of "fixed" intelligence,

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<sup>1</sup>Herzog, E., *ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 394.

<sup>3</sup>Coll, Blanche D., "Deprivation in Childhood: Its Relation to the Cycle of Poverty", *Welfare in Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (March, 1965), p. 1.

substituting an interactional theory which says that within the boundaries of heredity, the continuous interaction which takes place between the child and his environment plays the determinant role in the development of a child's intellect. "The greater variety of stimuli to which the growing child is exposed, the more intelligent he becomes. New objects, new words, new sounds -- introduced into the child's world at the time appropriate to his stage of development ---- are the foods for nourishing intellectual growth."<sup>1</sup>

Coll feels action should not only be in the schools -- children must also be physically fit, mentally healthy, and culturally "set" for learning. The poor often live in unhealthy physical surroundings, crowded and unclean homes. Malnutrition is not uncommon. Poor children suffer more from visual and hearing defects, partly due to lack of medical attention. The child's general milieu, including a lack of visually stimulating objects in the home, significantly affect his learning abilities. The significance of mental health in relation to school functioning is obvious: the problem for the poor is an inadequate provision for treatment and prevention. Cultural deprivation is the third major factor in school failure. "The children of the poor are ill-prepared to assimilate the lessons which educators have geared to the child from the middle-class home. The child from the poor home enters school with a restricted (capacity for using) language."<sup>2</sup> In addition to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



inferior habits of learning, seeing, and thinking, the deprived child has fewer competitive feelings necessary to achieve in school.

Lawrence Rogin concludes that the school system has failed both the city and the rural poor. He adds, paradoxically, "A lack of education spells poverty and poverty in turn almost ensures a lack of education."<sup>1</sup>

## PART 2: A Report of Previous Studies

The four sections of this study focus on those experiences, cultural and educational, (apart from the school), which stimulate children toward satisfactory school performance. The specific emphasis in this section of the study, as noted in Chapter I, is on the culturally stimulating experiences in the family which may affect school performance.

Two studies shall be discussed. The first, a research study by Leonard B. Siemens,<sup>2</sup> relates to the specific topic of cultural experiences in the family. The second, an article by Martin Deutsch,<sup>3</sup> provides the theoretical base which this section of the present study has used to develop its hypotheses. Deutsch's theoretical considerations have developed out of studies and investigations by the Institute for Developmental Studies, Department of Psychiatry, New York Medical College, of which he is the head.

Siemens studied selected family factors as they influenced

<sup>1</sup> Rogin, Lawrence, "Education: A Way out of Poverty", The Federationalist, Vol. 72, No. 3, (March, 1965), pp. 1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Siemens, L. B., op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Deutsch, M. P., "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process", Mental Health and the Poor, London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.

educational and occupational aspiration levels of high school children. His analysis indicated that both educational and occupational aspiration levels (the dependent variables) related significantly, for both boys and girls, to the following family factors: size of community orientation, socio-economic status, father's occupational status, father's educational achievement, and the strength of both paternal and maternal encouragement for post-high school education.<sup>1</sup> The theoretical model for his study was that socialization is a function of social stratification. The purpose of the study was to identify those factors within the social structure of the family that influence the content and strength of attitudes related to the educational and occupational aspiration levels of high school youth.<sup>2</sup>

Siemens' rationale is summarized in the following quotation:

"Whether or not the skills and education necessary for adjustment in the new occupational environment will in fact be acquired depends upon the motivation level of individuals."<sup>3</sup> The family situation is the primary source of highly enduring attitudes and values.

Deutsch discusses the interaction of social and developmental factors of the intellectual growth and performance of the child, with particular reference to a large number of urban children from marginal social circumstances.<sup>4</sup> He notes a high proportion of failures and drop-

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<sup>1</sup>Siemens, L. B., op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Deutsch, Martin, op. cit., p. 172.

outs among disadvantaged children and relates this to a lack of preparation to produce what the school demands. "We know that children from the underprivileged environments tend to come to school with a qualitatively different preparation for the demands of both the learning process and the behavioral requirements of the classroom . . . . The culture of their environment is a different one from the culture that has molded the school and its educational techniques and theory."<sup>1</sup>

Deutsch describes significant environmental factors which tend to impair normal growth of the child. Firstly, the child experiences cultural discontinuities between the values of his background learned in the home and the value systems of the school. The latter are predicated on the assumption that effort will result in achievement. Secondly, the living conditions of the disadvantaged are characterized by much overcrowding in substandard housing resulting in little opportunity for privacy. Thirdly, there is a scarcity of objects of all types, including such items as books, toys, puzzles, etc., and a lack of adult guidance in using the objects. Deutsch feels many parents have high educational aspirations for their children, but they are unaware of the operational steps in helping the child to make optimal use of the school experience.

Of particular importance to the present study is the following statement: "A child from any circumstances who has been deprived of a substantial portion of the variety of stimuli which he is maturationally capable of responding to, is likely to be deficient in the equipment

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

required for learning."<sup>1</sup> This statement is based on the premise that the more new things a child has seen and heard, the more he is interested in seeing and hearing. Further, the more variations in reality with which he has coped, the better able he is to cope. Lack of variety in the environment means stimulus deprivation which, in turn, tends to retard the development of cognitive skills. These skills include perceptual discrimination, ability to sustain attention, expectations of reward from knowledge, task completion and the ability to delay gratification.<sup>2</sup> Cognitive skills also refer to verbal and language abilities.

The child who has experienced "poverty" of stimulation is likely to be retarded in his maturational potential.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The nature of analysis of the data and presentation of the findings in our section of the study have been briefly described at the end of Chapter I. It was noted that we analysed the data according to two major classifications, satisfactory and unsatisfactory school performance, with comparison of the results in each classification on the basis of four categories of culturally stimulating experiences.

To indicate how we arrived at this approach, the following is a description of how the study was developed and what methods were employed. It is hoped that this review will enable others to replicate the study and to improve on our methods, or to facilitate the development of other approaches.

To begin, the purpose of the total research project was to gain knowledge about educational and cultural patterns of families living in environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg. We were unable to find any previous research done locally on this topic. More specifically, the aim of the study was to gain information which might indicate variations in the family patterns of a selected group of elementary school children living in deprived areas of Winnipeg whose school performance is satisfactory as compared to a group from similar areas whose school performance is unsatisfactory. The study was descriptive; that is, it was intended to find possible differences between educational and cultural experiences of those children from deprived areas who are achieving satisfactorily in school and those who are achieving unsatisfactorily.

Within this general theoretical framework each of the four groups

of students focused on a major area of study, as noted in Chapter I. Our section, in concentrating on variations in the culturally stimulating experiences in the home, attempted to discover possible differences in the social environment of the homes of the two classifications of elementary school children. In arriving at the aspects of the home environment which we chose to study and eventually formulated into the four sub-hypotheses stated in Chapter I, the group met regularly each week to discuss planning and content. Individual members of the group were assigned certain books, articles, or previous studies to read, and reported back to the group. The group also attended two lectures, one on the topic of cultural deprivation with specific reference to the Higher Horison's approach in education, and the other on the exceptional child and special education. As noted in the Report of Previous Studies in Chapter II, the group eventually decided to use the concepts of Martin Deutsch, as the theoretical base on which to develop our particular study.<sup>1</sup>

To enable the four research groups to carry out the study, The Research Committee of the School of Social Work, in consultation with the Research Director of the Winnipeg School Division, obtained the names of elementary school children attending four schools located in four environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg. The families of these children were contacted and data obtained for the study through administration of a schedule in interviews with parents of the children willing and available to participate in the study.

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<sup>1</sup>Deutsch, M. P., "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process," Mental Health of the Poor, London: The Free Press of Glencoe, pp. 172-185.

The sample of elementary school children was identified by the Research Director of the Winnipeg School Division in collaboration with the principals and classroom teachers of the four schools. Students were selected by classroom teachers on the basis of criteria defining satisfactory and unsatisfactory school performance established by the Winnipeg School Division. Originally 88 children were selected from the four schools, ranging from Grades I to VI. Of the total number selected, the 14 in Grades IV to VI were chosen for a pre-test of the study. The remaining 74 in Grades I to III were chosen for the actual study.

The purpose of the pre-test study was to test our method of approach to the families, the nature and extent of response we could anticipate, and the efficacy of the schedule in obtaining pertinent data. To ensure a large enough pre-test sample, in addition to the 14 families selected through the schools, another 14 families residing in the four deprived areas were chosen at random, their names selected from the Henderson Directory. Of the 14 families selected through the schools, 8 were willing to participate and were interviewed. Only 3 families from the random sample had children in Grades IV to VI. All 3 participated in the study. In total, 11 out of a possible 17 families with children in Grades IV to VI participated in the pre-test. We therefore anticipated an adequate response from families in the sample chosen for the actual study in providing sufficient data to complete the study. Moreover, the results obtained in the pre-test suggested that our method of selection would enable us to identify possible differences in the two groups of families selected for the study.

In the sample of 74 families with children in Grades I to III, there were 39 in the unsatisfactory group and 35 in the satisfactory. Out of the

total number selected, 47 participated in the study. In the satisfactory group 20 interviews were completed, 1 family was eliminated, 2 families were not located, and 12 families were not interested in participating. In the unsatisfactory group 27 interviews were completed, 3 families were eliminated, 1 family was not located, and 8 families were not interested in participating. The 3 children eliminated from the unsatisfactory group were not living with their own parent(s). The child eliminated from the satisfactory group was not enrolled in Grade I, II or III, according to the parents, but in Kindergarten.

It had been anticipated that a portion of the 74 families selected would, for various reasons, be excluded from the sample. As the design of the study was descriptive and was intended only to identify possible differences in the families studied which may be associated with the level of school performance, we concluded that the remaining 47 families constituted an adequate sample for purposes of the project. Moreover, since the study was not intended to establish a statistical correlation between the two classifications, the disparity in the size of the two groups studied was not considered to be a limitation.

The major limitation arising out of the use of the sample pertains to nature of sample selection. The use of a non-random sample means that the families studied were not representative of the total population residing in the environmentally deprived areas. The method of selection, therefore, precluded the possibility of generalizing about children from deprived areas in relation to school performance.

To obtain information about the families selected, a composite schedule was devised for interviewing. The schedule was composed of four



parts, each part corresponding to the particular focus of each of the four research groups. A face sheet was prepared by the Research Committee. It was attached to the schedule and was designed to provide identifying information and additional details about the families of interest to the research groups. The schedule was tested in the pre-test study and revisions made by the research groups as indicated.

To ensure standardized application of the schedule, and consistency in approach, representatives from each research group met with the other groups to give instructions and answer questions regarding their particular section of the schedule. The students also received instructions from a representative of the Research Committee in how to approach the families and to explain the project. The students were given letters of introduction which were to be shown to the parent(s) at the time of initial contact. The letters contained a brief statement to the effect that the University of Manitoba is doing a study of school children. Families were not told that they were selected through the schools as this was considered unnecessary and detrimental to family-school relationships. Letters of thanks were sent out to those parents who participated in the study.

A copy of the schedule developed for our section of the study is attached in the Appendix. Questions 23 and 26 to 28 apply to our sub-hypothesis on visually stimulating experiences. Questions 22, 24 and 25 are related to the sub-hypothesis on activities. Questions 1 to 9, 11, 13 to 15, and 17 are related to the sub-hypothesis on verbal and language skills. Questions 10, 12, 16, 18, 20 to 22 and 25 apply to our sub-hypothesis regarding positive interaction.

The questions regarding visual experiences were designed to gain

information about the variety of objects in the home, their number and colour, in order to gauge the opportunities in the home for the child to experience a variety of visual stimuli. In Questions 27 and 28 interviewers were asked to make observations because this seemed to be the simplest and most appropriate method of obtaining the data desired. The questions pertaining to verbal and language skills were designed to obtain a broad range of details about opportunities for the child to develop these skills. It was felt that the variety of questions would provide a broad perspective on which to compare variations in the two classifications. The questions relating to activities were geared to getting a representative sample of the child's activity in the home. We found it useful to sub-categorize the activities into the three areas of homework, chores, and amusements. It was felt that this breakdown would facilitate analysis and ensure a more meaningful interpretation. Questions relating to the sub-hypothesis on interaction were asked wherever there was an opportunity to measure the amount of interaction between the child and other members of the household.

The limitation in using a composite schedule was that the interviewers were not familiar with the rationale behind all the questions. It was likely, therefore, that some of the questions were not asked in a consistent manner by all individuals. Although detailed instructions were given to all interviewers, it was evident in the schedules returned to our research group that questions were sometimes misunderstood or misinterpreted. A further limitation is suggested in the fact that the composite schedule was long and repetitive in places. Consequently it was likely more difficult to establish a positive rapport with the interviewees. Similarly, it was

difficult to arrange the questions in such a way as to enhance communication.

The plan of analysis of the findings were briefly noted at the end of Chapter I. To elaborate in more detail, our research group divided the completed schedules into two major classifications, satisfactory and unsatisfactory, in accordance with the way the children were identified. To compare the classifications we developed four categories corresponding to our four sub-hypotheses. We tabulated and analysed the data from the schedule related to each category, comparing the results in the two major classifications. To facilitate comparison of the results we developed sub-categories for the visual, verbal and language and activity categories. For the interaction category we compared specific items where it was indicated that this procedure illuminated variations.

In the category pertaining to visual experiences we tabulated the results by calculating the average number of responses according to mean. We compared the results in two sub-categories -- variety of objects and colour variations. The verbal and language category was sub-categorized into five parts -- language experiences, adult information, verbal experiences, availability of reading material, and reading and printing skills. We used percentage to compare all the verbal sub-categories. The category relating to activities of the child was sub-categorized into homework, chores, and recreation. We also compared results pertaining to specific activities to further identify differences. We analysed the results regarding homework by comparing the percentage of responses. We used both percentage and mean to analyse chore activities and recreation. For the interaction category we compared results by finding the mean for each aspect of interaction measured. We used a table to arrange and

analyse the answers which enabled us to compare the combined results as well as specific areas of interaction.

Information from the face sheet was examined in regard to marital status, family income, number of working mothers, number of children and number of adults. We decided not to use the data on family income because the information was too ambiguous. The data pertaining to marital status was contrasted with our results in the interaction and verbal categories. We also analysed details about the number of working mothers and the number of children and adults in relation to the interaction category.

Our analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings are presented in Chapter IV. Our conclusions are given in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents both our analysis of data from the schedules and our interpretation of the findings in each category of culturally stimulating experiences in the home. As noted in Chapter III, our research group analysed the data in the two classifications of satisfactory and unsatisfactory according to four categories of experience: visual, verbal and language activities, and adult-child interaction. The findings were tabulated and results compared in each category of experience in order to identify possible variations between the two classifications. We then interpreted the findings to see whether our results in each category support the corresponding sub-hypothesis. Our conclusions regarding the sub-hypotheses are presented in this chapter. A summary of these conclusions in relation to the main hypothesis is presented in Chapter V.

As our study was designed to identify differences in the culturally stimulating experiences in the homes of the two groups of children which suggest relationships between the social environment of the home and school performance, we did not deem it necessary to determine whether our results are statistically significant. We employed statistical methods only to facilitate tabulation and comparison.

To ascertain possible variations between the two classifications more clearly and precisely, we analysed the data in the visual, verbal, and activity categories according to sub-categories which had been anticipated in setting up the schedule. The interaction category did not require sub-categorization.

In addition to analysing the data and interpreting the findings re-

lated to each sub-hypothesis, we also examined additional material in the schedule and on the face sheet which although not directly related to the sub-hypotheses, provided additional information about the families enabling a fuller interpretation and suggesting areas for further study.

### The Visual Category

The data in this category was analysed according to two sub-categories: Variety of Objects, and Colour Variations.

#### a) Variety of Objects:

For those objects which a child in Grade I to III is most likely to handle (Question 23 -- See Appendix), we found that the average number of objects in the homes of the satisfactory group was 8.40 as compared to 8.11 in the unsatisfactory group. We did not find any particular articles to be more common in the satisfactory homes: for instance, the average number of homes in the satisfactory group in which pens or pencils were available for the child to see and use, was similar to the number of homes in the unsatisfactory.

For those objects which we classified as common household appliances (Question 26), we found the average number of such objects to be the same in both classifications -- 6.25. Again we found no particular articles to be more common in the satisfactory group.

Regarding objects which we classified as decorative -- (Question 27), we found that according to the interviewer's observations there seemed to be, on the average, slightly more decorative objects in the homes of the satisfactory group, as indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1

VARIATIONS IN DECORATIVE OBJECTS BETWEEN THE HOMES OF THE SATISFACTORY GROUP AND THE UNSATISFACTORY GROUP MEASURED BY MEAN

	Many	Several	Few	None	Total
Satisfactory	.63	.89	1.16	.32	3
Unsatisfactory	.62	.77	1.30	.30	3

The figures in the columns represent the average number of responses of the interviewers for each unit of observation out of a total of three responses for each schedule. Only one schedule in each classification did not provide information; the figures in the table, therefore, represent most of the sample and we were able to use the data to compare the results. The table indicates that the majority of responses in both groups of families were in the "Several" and "Few" columns with a preponderance in the latter. We had anticipated these results since the homes are located in environmentally deprived areas. The results also indicate, as we had anticipated, that the homes in the satisfactory classification tend to have more decorative objects generally. Contrary to our expectations, however, approximately the same number of homes in both groups had many or no decorative objects of a particular kind.

We concluded that the findings in the sub-category on variety of objects in the home, do not suggest differences between the two classifications which would support our sub-hypothesis on visually stimulating experiences. Our results do not reveal more than slight variation.

b) Colour Variations:

We analysed the data in this sub-category on the basis of intensity and variety of colour. We found, as indicated in Table 2,

TABLE 2

VARIATIONS IN THE INTENSITY AND VARIETY OF COLOUR BETWEEN THE HOMES OF THE SATISFACTORY GROUP AND THE UNSATISFACTORY GROUP MEASURED BY MEAN

PART "A"	INTENSITY		
	Dark	Average	Bright
Satisfactory	.21	.68	.11
Unsatisfactory	.36	.48	.16

  

PART "B"	VARIETY		
	Drab	Average	Much
Satisfactory	.26	.63	.11
Unsatisfactory	.39	.46	.15

that according to the interviewer's observations, the homes in the satisfactory classification tended to have more intensity and variety in colour. Only one schedule in the satisfactory group was not answered. Two in the unsatisfactory group were not answered for Part A, one for Part B. The figures, therefore, represent most of the sample and we were able to compare results. The table indicates that the colour schemes in the unsatisfactory group are more drab and dark and less average. Contrary to expectations, however, more homes in the unsatisfactory group have more variety of and brightness in colour. We concluded that since only about



fourteen per cent of the responses fall into the "Bright" and "Much" columns, the results in this sub-category tend to support the visual sub-hypothesis.

Our research group concluded that in general the findings in the visual category do not identify sufficient variation in the opportunity for visually stimulating experiences in the home between the two classifications of families, to support the sub-hypothesis.

### Verbal Category

The data pertaining to this category was analysed according to five sub-categories: Language Experiences, Adult Information, Verbal Experiences, Availability of Reading Material, and Reading and Printing Skills.

#### a) Language Experiences (Questions 1 to 4):

We had postulated that a greater percentage of the families in the satisfactory classification would speak either English and another language or English only than in the unsatisfactory classification. We found, however, that in the satisfactory group 40% spoke English and another language and 55% English only compared to 30% and 66% respectively in the unsatisfactory group. One family (4%) in the unsatisfactory group spoke another language only. Our results were inconclusive.

In analysing the use of language in the sub-systems of the family, we had postulated that more English would be spoken in the parent-child and child-child sub-systems of the families in the satisfactory group. We found, however, that in the satisfactory group 75% spoke English in the parent-child sub-system, 85% in the child-child, and 55% in the parent-parent compared to 89%, 100%, and 85% respectively in the unsatisfactory group. The results would seem to contradict our sub-hypothesis; however, since more of the families in the satisfactory group ~~spoke~~<sup>spok</sup> English and

another language, as previously noted, we decided the figures do not present a valid differentiation and are inconclusive.

We found from the data in Question 3 that of those families in both groups who spoke English and another language, 75% of the parents in the satisfactory group encouraged their children to speak English compared to 85% in the unsatisfactory. Question 4 indicated that the number of children in the sample who could speak English before starting school was 85% of the satisfactory group compared to 96% of the unsatisfactory.

We concluded that the findings in the language sub-category do not support our sub-hypothesis. Furthermore, answers in some of the schedules were inconsistent, suggesting some contamination in the responses which would limit the reliability of our results. We also questioned the validity of the sub-category in providing data which would clearly identify opportunities for the development of language skills.

b) Adult Information (Question 5):

In regard to parental correction of the child's use of language, we found that 75% of the parents in the satisfactory group claimed to correct the child's use of English compared to 93% in the unsatisfactory, and 57% in the satisfactory claimed to correct in another language as compared with 50% in the unsatisfactory. We concluded this sub-category tends to contradict the verbal sub-hypothesis.

c) Verbal Experiences (Questions 6 to 9 and 11):

As Questions 6 and 7 were not asked properly in some instances, it was necessary to exclude them from our analysis.

The remaining questions provided data which enabled us to identify differences in the opportunities for verbal stimulation between the two groups

of families. We found that 90% of the mothers and 89% of the fathers in the satisfactory group read in English as compared with 85% of the mothers and 81% of the fathers in the unsatisfactory. Of the twenty families in the satisfactory group one father was absent compared to eleven in the unsatisfactory. There were three other adults living in the satisfactory homes who read English and seven in the unsatisfactory. Our findings suggest that the satisfactory achievers have more opportunity for verbal stimulation in learning to read English than the unsatisfactory. As we had postulated, the level of literacy in English and the number of adults in the home who read English seem to be associated with good school performance. Our findings also suggest that in the one-parent homes, particularly if they are large families, the parent has less time to spend with the child.

Contrary to expectations we found that in only 80% of the satisfactory homes someone read to the child (Question 9) compared to 89% in the unsatisfactory. It is possible that the successful achievers are encouraged to read more on their own. It should also be noted that in the interaction category our findings indicated that more people read to the child in the satisfactory group. Similarly, our analysis of the data pertaining to verbal communication through story-telling indicated that 89% of the successful achievers are told stories compared to 63% of the unsatisfactory.

We concluded that generally our findings in the sub-category on verbal experience tend to support the verbal sub-hypothesis.

d) Availability of Reading Material (Questions 13 and 14):

Our findings, as noted in Tables 4 and 5, indicate more reading material available in the satisfactory homes.

TABLE 4

A COMPARISON OF THE AVAILABILITY OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE HOMES OF THE SATISFACTORY GROUP AND THE UNSATISFACTORY GROUP MEASURED BY PERCENTAGE

	Daily	Weekly	Periodically	Never
Satisfactory	75%	10%	10%	5%
Unsatisfactory	70%	4%	11%	15%

TABLE 5

A COMPARISON OF THE AVAILABILITY OF MAGAZINES AND BOOKS IN THE HOMES OF THE SATISFACTORY GROUP AND THE UNSATISFACTORY GROUP MEASURED BY PERCENTAGE

	Magazines	Books
Satisfactory	75%	70%
Unsatisfactory	70%	59%

The results in this sub-category tend to support the verbal sub-hypothesis that successful school achievers have more opportunity in the home for the development of verbal and language skills.

e) Reading and Printing Skills (Questions 15 and 17):

We found that according to the interviewees 50% of the successful achievers could read before starting Grade I and 80% could print, compared

to 33% and 74% respectively in the unsuccessful group. Although the schedule does not clearly designate what is meant by reading and printing, we concluded that the results nevertheless reflect variations which suggest that satisfactory performers have more opportunity in the home to develop verbal and language skills related to good school performance.

Our research group concluded that in general the findings in the verbal category tend to support our verbal sub-hypothesis.

### The Activities Category

The data pertaining to activities of the child in the home was analysed according to three sub-categories: Homework, Chores, and Recreation.

#### a) Homework (Question 19):

We found that 65% of the children in the satisfactory group did homework as compared to 48% in the unsatisfactory, indicating a significant variation which supports our sub-hypothesis that satisfactory school performers engage in a greater variety of activities than unsatisfactory performers. Our results also suggest that homework is directly related to school performance in developing good learning habits and increasing the child's understanding of class content.

#### b) Recreation (Question 22):

In analysing the data pertaining to fun activities we found that the average number of activities of successful achievers was 4.85 as compared to 4.22 for the unsuccessful achievers. Since these results did not suggest much variation or lend themselves to a full interpretation, we then analysed the data pertaining to specific recreational activities. We found that 95% of the satisfactory children read as compared to 67%, and

84% of the satisfactory participated in active games as compared to 52% of the unsatisfactory. We did not find much variation in regard to other specific activities in favour of either group. We concluded that our findings in this sub-category do not identify sufficient variation to support the sub-hypothesis on activities. Our results, however, suggest that reading at home is definitely associated with good school performance. Our results also suggest that the active child is more likely to perform well in school. Possibly the active child has learned to cope with more situations and has learned to be more competitive.

c) Chores (Questions 24 and 25):

We found that 90% of the satisfactory children do work at home as compared to 89% of the unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the average number of chores performed by the satisfactory group of children was 3.38 as compared to 3.08 in the unsatisfactory. We did not find any variation in relation to specific chores. We concluded that our findings in this sub-category do not identify any differences between the two groups. However, our results pertaining to chores in the interaction category suggest that successful achievers are given more encouragement to do chores.

We concluded that generally the findings in the activities category tend to support the sub-hypothesis, but that there was not much variation as we had expected.

The Interaction Category

Our findings for this category of experience are given in Table 3. In addition to the data about adult-child interaction in the home directly related to the sub-hypothesis regarding positive interactions with adults in the family, we also obtained details about interactions the child has

with siblings and other children in the home which might further illuminate possible differences in the two groups of families. The figures in the table represent the average number of responses of the interviewee(s) regarding interactions of the child with others in the home. The totals are the sum of the mean number of responses.

TABLE 3

VARIATIONS IN ADULT-CHILD AND CHILD-CHILD INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE HOMES OF THE SATISFACTORY GROUP AND THE UNSATISFACTORY GROUP MEASURED BY MEAN

Question	Content	Adult-Child Interaction		Child-Child Interaction	
		Sat.	Unsat.	Sat.	Unsat.
10	Persons Reading to the Children	.90	.77	.65	.59
12	Verbal Communication	1.00	.70	.35	.33
16	Teaching to Read	.40	.37	.15	.15
18	Teaching to Print	.50	.52	.25	.15
20	Homework	1.10	.59	.40	.41
21	Use of Others for Information	1.50	1.55	.50	.56
22	Recreation	3.40	1.93	5.15	3.18
25	Chores	1.40	.77	1.25	1.07
TOTALS		10.20	7.20	8.70	6.44

The results in the column on adult-child interactions are the average number of responses pertaining to the interaction of the children with his parent(s) and other adults in the home. The total for the satisfactory

group of 10.20 as compared to 7.20 for the unsatisfactory indicates more adult-child interactions in the families of the successful achievers.

Comparing the results regarding specific areas of interaction it was evident that the most variation is in the area of homework. We concluded that satisfactory performers receive more encouragement from adults in the home to do homework. Adult stimulation would seem to be a factor in a child's motivation and capacity to learn and to use the teacher as a source of information and knowledge. Since adult-child interaction in the area of chores indicates the second greatest degree of variation, we concluded that the willingness and ability of a child to complete a task and the reinforcement he receives from adults in the home to do so, would also seem to be a factor influencing good school performance. The findings pertaining to homework and chores, therefore, strongly support our interaction sub-hypothesis by indicating an association between positive interactions in the home and good learning skills and habits. The variation in regard to recreation also suggest that satisfactory performers have more positive interactions with adults in the home. The variation in verbal communication through reading and talking (Questions 10 and 12) suggest that successful achievers have more opportunity in the home to develop cognitive skills and to accumulate knowledge essential to good school performance.

The lack of variation in the question on the use of adults as a source of information, indicates that in both groups of families the children ask questions of their parents and others. It is conceivable that the difference in the two groups, as suggested in our findings in this category, is not in the amount of interaction per se, but in the content and character of the interactions -- in the amount of positive interactions.



We concluded that our findings in the interaction category strongly support our sub-hypothesis that the successful achievers experience more positive interactions in the home than the unsuccessful. We found that in the satisfactory group the character and content of the adult-child interactions, with the exception of teaching the child to read and print, appears more oriented to the values and expectations of the school system than similar interactions in the unsatisfactory group.

The additional material on child-child interaction also identifies differences which, generally, are consistent with our findings regarding adult-child dynamics. Our results suggest that the content of interaction amongst children in the home is a reflection of what transpires between the adults and the child. We concluded, therefore, that this consistency supports our conclusion that satisfactory performers experience more positive adult-child interactions in the home.

In Questions 16 and 18 we also obtained information about whether the child attended Kindergarten. We had anticipated the possibility that children who learn the rudiments of reading and printing before starting Grade I may have done so in Kindergarten rather than at home. Since, however, the variation was minimal it was decided that the information pertaining to Kindergarten could not be used to further elucidate our interpretation of the findings.

#### The Face Sheet

In looking at the identifying information on the face sheet of the composite schedule used by the four research groups, our group examined data pertaining to marital status, family income, number of working mothers, number of children and number of adults. We found that the data on family

income was too ambiguous to be useful. We discovered the most variation in the data on marital status. We found that approximately 40% of the unsatisfactory families were one-parent compared to 10% of the satisfactory. This difference we found to be significant in relation to our verbal and interaction categories. It suggested that the variations evident in these categories are related to structural differences in the families. To further support this postulation we also found that the number of adults in the satisfactory homes averages 2.15 compared to 1.96 in the unsatisfactory. The number of children, however, were the same in both groups. Also, the number of working mothers in the satisfactory group are 25% compared to only 15% in the unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, we concluded that structural differences in the two classifications seem to have a bearing on the opportunities available to the child in the home to develop motivation and capacity which have a positive influence on school performance.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

The combined study of the four research groups was designed to identify possible differences in cultural and educational experiences of a selected group of elementary school children living in four environmentally deprived areas of Winnipeg. Our group attempted to identify differences in the culturally stimulating experiences in the home which may affect school performance. We hypothesized that there are variations in the culturally stimulating experiences within the homes of a selected group of elementary school children whose school performance is satisfactory compared to a similar group whose school performance is unsatisfactory. The children selected were in Grades I to III.

To test this hypothesis we focused on four categories of experience -- visually stimulating experiences, verbal and language experiences, activities, and positive interactions with adults -- which we formulated into four sub-hypothesis. In effect we postulated that:

1. Those children whose school performance is satisfactory have more opportunity for visually stimulating experiences in the home than those children whose school performance is unsatisfactory.
2. Those children whose school performance is satisfactory have more opportunity for the development of verbal and language skills in the home than those children whose school performance is unsatisfactory.
3. The satisfactory performers engage in a greater variety of activities in the home than the unsatisfactory performers.
4. The satisfactory performers experience more positive interactions with adults in the home than the unsatisfactory performers.

In the category on visually stimulating experiences we found insufficient variation in our results to support our visual sub-hypothesis. The variety of objects in the home which we studied was similar in both groups. Although we found that according to the interviewers observations the homes in the satisfactory group tended to have slightly more variety and brightness in colour, the variations were insufficient to be conclusive.

Our findings relating to verbal and language skills, however, indicated differences which seem to be associated with the level of school performance. We found that the satisfactory school performers have more opportunity for the development of verbal and language skills in the availability of reading material in the home, in the encouragement and reinforcement they receive in learning to read and print, and generally, in the use of verbal communication. We did not find that the use of a particular language or more than one language in the home was related to school performance. We concluded that our findings tend to support the sub-hypothesis.

In regard to activities of the child in the home we found that more of the satisfactory performers do homework, read, and participate in active games, than the unsatisfactory. Our findings suggest that experiences in the home have an influence on whether a child develops good learning habits and skills. Our study indicated that the successful achievers are better prepared for the demands of the learning process. We concluded that our findings tend to support the activities sub-hypothesis.

Our study found the most variation between the two classifications in the category of positive adult-child interactions in the home, particularly in regard to interactions in connection with homework, chores,

recreation, and verbal communication through reading and telling stories. Our findings suggest that the amount of positive adult-child interactions in the home influences a child's motivation and capacity to learn, his willingness to use the teacher as a source of information, his ability to complete learning tasks, and his ability to adapt to the behavioral requirements of the classroom. We concluded that our results strongly support the interaction sub-hypothesis and that in the two groups studies the greatest variation in culturally stimulating experiences affecting school performance is in the content and character of adult-child dynamics in the home.

The additional information on the face sheet of our schedule suggested differences in the family structure of the two groups which tended to corroborate our conclusions in the sub-hypotheses regarding verbal experiences and interaction. Most significant was the fact that over a third of the families in the unsatisfactory group were female-based homes (father not in the home) compared to only two out of twenty in the satisfactory group. This structural deficit in the unsatisfactory homes supported our conclusions that satisfactory performers have more opportunity for positive interactions and verbal communications with adults. It would appear that in the unsatisfactory homes there is less opportunity for the child to experience the kind of interpersonal relationships with adults which facilitate adaptation to the classroom and the learning process.

We concluded that according to our findings there are variations in the culturally stimulating experiences in the homes of the two selected groups of children which are associated with school performance and that our findings support the major hypothesis. The design of the study was de-

scriptive and we attempted only to identify possible differences, not to establish significant statistical variations between the two classifications. Similarly, since the purpose of the study was to identify differences in the two groups studied, it was not considered necessary to use a random sample in order to generalize to the whole population or to all the families living in the four environmentally deprived areas. Our findings were thus conclusive in identifying variations in the family patterns of the two groups studied only.

It is possible that in our category of visually stimulating experiences we did not find variations because the questions in the schedule referred to objects which are too common and consequently did not adequately measure differences in the homes studied. It is conceivable that had a random sample been used and had one of the criteria for selection been the level of family income that we may have found variations in the variety of visually stimulating objects in the home. Similarly, more striking variations may have been apparent and Deutsch's concept of stimulus deprivation retarding the development of cognitive skills supported,<sup>1</sup> if a comparative study had been made between the so-called "slum dweller" and the "suburbanite".

In our category pertaining to verbal and language skills the results regarding languages used in the home were ambiguous and in some instances, inconsistent, and therefore did not provide information which would clearly identify opportunities for the development of language skills. It

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<sup>1</sup>Deutsch, M. P., "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process", Mental Health and the Poor, London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964, pp. 172-185.

appeared that the schedule did not adequately measure the level of verbal stimulation in the development of language skills, or the role of adults as a source of stimulation and correction in the child's use of language.

Our findings in the sub-category on language were consequently inconclusive.

The balance of the questions pertaining to verbal experiences and the parts of the schedule regarding activities and interactions appeared to adequately measure variations. Our findings are conclusive in identifying differences in the availability of reading material, the child's ability to read and print, the number of children who do homework, read, or participate in active games, and the amount of positive interactions with adults in the home.

Since no attempt was made to test the validity of our schedule other than through the use of the pre-test study and the standardization of the application of the schedule through group meetings with the research groups, our conclusions are only tentative and merely suggest variations related to school performance. The validity is further limited by the fact that our group did not make adequate use of the pre-test study in revising the schedule. Consequently the questions were not always clearly understood and did not always elicit the kind of information we wanted.

Similarly no attempt was made to test the reliability of the schedule. Reliability could only be established through the reapplication of the schedule to another sample population, larger and more representative of the children living in the environmentally deprived areas. This is not considered to be a limitation of our particular study which was intended only to identify differences in the two groups selected, but the fact that reliability was not tested makes our conclusions tentative.

It is recommended that should another study be done using the research methods employed in ours, more care should be taken in developing a precise and well organized schedule. Had this been done it is possible that our results would have been more conclusive. Despite the limitations of our instrument we were able to find variations. It is possible that had the schedule been more adequately devised we may have found a greater amount and variety of variation.

Nevertheless, our conclusions infer that there are variations in the cultural patterns of the families of the sample group. It is therefore recommended that more precise studies using a random sample of the total population living in the environmentally deprived areas be carried out. Our study suggests that family structure and the content and character of interpersonal relationships in the home may have a significant bearing on how children from deprived areas perform in school. Further studies on the development of verbal and language skills may also prove to be of value. The difficulty we encountered in devising a means of measuring variation in visually stimulating experiences within the scope of our study suggests the need for further study in this area and the desirability of using a different approach.



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APPENDIX

Part I

Interview Schedule

Research Project 1965-66

Schedule No. \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

Performance S U

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School A B C D

Family Members	Name	Age	Living In Home	
			Yes	No
Father	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mother	_____	_____	_____	_____
Children	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

Marital Status (if one parent family) Divorced \_\_\_ Separated \_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_

Others in Household:

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Origin - - - Father \_\_\_\_\_ Mother \_\_\_\_\_  
(Language spoken by male ancestor on arrival in Canada)

Length of Residence at present address \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Residence in Winnipeg \_\_\_\_\_

(If appropriate) Where else have you lived in Winnipeg during past 5 years?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Father's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Gross Family Income \_\_\_\_\_

Part B

1. What languages are spoken in the home? \* \_\_\_\_\_
2. (If more than one), what language is generally used?
  - a) between parent & child \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) between brothers & sisters \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) between adults \_\_\_\_\_
3. (If answer to question 2 is other than English), do you encourage your child to speak English? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ check (v)
4. Could your child speak English before he started Grade 1?
 

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. If your child were to use words or sentences incorrectly, would you try to tell him the right way?
  - a) in English Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) in other languages Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
6. Can all of the adults in your home read? (any language)
 

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
7. (If answer to No. 6 is No), which adults: Mother \_\_\_ Father \_\_\_
 

Others \_\_\_\_\_
8. Which adults in the home read English? Mother \_\_\_ Father \_\_\_ Others \_\_\_
 

(If more than one language used in home)
9. Does anyone read to the children? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
10. (If answer to No. 9 is Yes)
 

who reads to the child? M. F. S. O.A. O.C. \*\*

\_\_\_\_\_
11. Does anyone tell your children stories? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
12. (If the answer to No. 11 is Yes)
 

who tells the child stories? M. F. S. O.A. O.C.

\_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you read newspapers? Daily Weekly Periodically Never
14. Do you read
 

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a) magazines	_____	_____
b) books	_____	_____

\* Throughout schedule home refers to family living quarters and yard

\*\* Mother    Father    Sibling    Other Adult    Other Child

Part B - cont'd

- 2

15. Before your child started Grade I, could he read? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
16. (If answer to question 15 is yes)  
who taught him?                    M.        F.        S.        O.A.        O.C.        K.G.\*  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Before your child started Grade I, could he print? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
18. (If the answer to question 17 is  
yes), who taught him?                    M.        F.        S.        O.A.        O.C.        K.G.  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. Does your child do homework?    Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
20. If he needs help with schoolwork  
who does he ask?                    M.        F.        S.        O.A.        O.C.  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. Of whom does your child ask  
questions?                    M.        F.        S.        O.A.        O.C.  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. What does your child do for fun  
at home: (If so, with whom?)    M.        F.        S.        O.A.        O.C.  
a) watch T.V.                    \_\_\_\_\_  
b) read                                \_\_\_\_\_  
c) colour, draw, cut-out            \_\_\_\_\_  
d) cards or thinking games           \_\_\_\_\_  
e) active games & sports            \_\_\_\_\_  
f) hobbies (sewing,  
carpentry etc.)                    \_\_\_\_\_  
g) other                                \_\_\_\_\_
23. In the home do you have: -    check (v)  
a) paints or crayons                \_\_\_\_\_  
b) pens or pencils                    \_\_\_\_\_  
c) scissors                            \_\_\_\_\_  
d) paper (to write on)                \_\_\_\_\_  
e) paste                                \_\_\_\_\_  
f) T. V.                                \_\_\_\_\_  
g) radio                                \_\_\_\_\_

\* KG - Kindergarten

Part B - cont'd

23.- cont'd

- h) record player \_\_\_\_\_
- i) musical instruments \_\_\_\_\_
- j) toy(s) \_\_\_\_\_

24. Does your child do any work at home? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

25. (If the answer to No. 24 is yes), does he do: (If so with whom?) -

	check (v) -	<u>M.</u>	<u>F.</u>	<u>S.</u>	<u>O.A.</u>	<u>O.C.</u>
a) dishes	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b) taking out garbage	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c) running messages	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
d) baby-sitting	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
e) snow clearing or grass cutting -	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
f) other	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

26. Do you have the following in your home?

- a) telephone \_\_\_\_\_
- b) clock or watch \_\_\_\_\_
- c) calendar \_\_\_\_\_
- d) refrigerator \_\_\_\_\_
- e) washing machine \_\_\_\_\_
- f) iron \_\_\_\_\_
- g) toaster \_\_\_\_\_

27. Interviewer to observe	<u>Many</u>	<u>Several</u>	<u>Few</u>	<u>None</u>
a) decorative ornaments	_____	_____	_____	_____
b) lamps	_____	_____	_____	_____
c) pictures	_____	_____	_____	_____

Interviewer's Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Part B - cont'd

28. Interviewer to observe  
colour in home

- a) Brightness of Colour      Dark \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_ Bright \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Variety of Colour        Drab \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_ Much \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_