

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

A STUDY IN ENVIRONMENTALLY DEPRIVED AREAS  
OF WINNIPEG OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
THE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AND THE  
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF THEIR PARENTS

BEING A REPORT OF A STUDY SUBMITTED IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

by

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WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

May, 1966.



#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer of this study wishes to express sincere appreciation for the interest shown in the work by the members of the Faculty of the School of Social Work, University of Manitoba. Special gratitude is expressed for the guidance and direction given the research group and the writer as an individual by the research advisor, Miss P. Woolley.

The writer also wishes to acknowledge the cooperation and assistance given by Mr. L. Haxby, Chief Planner, Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, and Mr. D. Duncan, Research Director, Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

As well, the writer acknowledges the cooperation and contributions in time and effort by members of the research group which resulted in the completion of this study:

F. Andrusiak	D. Leibel
T. Belland	M. McIntyre
L. Enns	G. Pritchard
M. Gomori	J. Robson
N. Halyk	H. Sampson
K. Knight	B. Theissen
S. Kolt	M. Toews

And finally, the writer wishes to thank the parents of the children in the test sample and the pretest sample who so willingly participated in the study.

## ABSTRACT

This study was of a descriptive nature, designed to determine if there is a relationship between the school performance of children in environmentally deprived areas and the educational experience of their parents.

The study was conducted from September 1965 to April 1966, and was based on data obtained in face-to-face interviews with a population consisting of the parents of forty-seven school children in grades one through three residing in environmentally deprived areas in the City of Winnipeg and on data obtained through the Winnipeg School Division No.1 related to level of school performance of the forty-seven children. The focus of the research activities was to discover the grade level, the aspiration level for self, and the attitudes toward own education of parents, and if variations in these factors were related to the child's school performance.

Findings revealed that a higher proportion of the parents of children performing satisfactorily in school than the parents of children performing unsatisfactorily in school had a high education level, a high educational aspiration level, and a positive attitude toward their education. Further findings indicated that there was a higher incidence of mobility, broken homes and low incomes amongst families with a child performing unsatisfactorily in school than amongst families with children performing satisfactorily in school. Suggestions for intervention in education in environmentally deprived areas came out of the study findings.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

If we are learning anything from our experience, we are learning that it is time for us to go to work, and the first work of these times and the first work of our society is education.<sup>1</sup>

- Lyndon B. Johnson, July 28th, 1964.

One of the most dramatic features of this century in the field of the humanities has been the declaration of a "War on Poverty" by the Government of the United States of America. A main plank in policy aimed at the eradication of poverty was the passage of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 in the Congress of the United States of America in which one of the explicit goals was: "To strengthen elementary and secondary school programs for educationally deprived children in low income areas."<sup>2</sup>

There has been a growing awareness that one of the main avenues of upward mobility in this era is education. Those who do not possess adequate education to compete on the open labour market are penalized heavily both socially and economically, thus, limiting seriously their off-springs' access to a full participation in the rapidly escalating affluence in western society. The problem of providing education for children in low income and disadvantaged areas is a major concern of professionals and lay people in the educational field. The basis for

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<sup>1</sup>American Education, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Volume I, Number IV (April 1965).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

any form of interventive activity is knowledge, and it is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding of the differences amongst families in disadvantaged areas and how these differences may affect school performance, and in this way provide a knowledge base for activity in this area of concern.

This study is set in Winnipeg, a western Canadian city of approximately 500,000 population which is the capital city of the province of Manitoba.

The study was conducted by a group of fifteen students enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at the School of Social Work, University of Manitoba\*. It is one part of a total study involving four student groups and four related areas of concern. The study was initiated in September 1965 to extend to April 1966.

The original area of concern for the total study was dictated by the Research Committee of the School of Social Work - education in deprived areas and variations in educational motivation and cultural stimulation amongst satisfactory and unsatisfactory students. This concern was suggested by perusal of literature pertinent to education in depressed areas, awareness of differences among people in these areas, and the reality that some children perform satisfactorily in the school setting in depressed areas while others perform unsatisfactorily.

The Research Committee of the School of Social Work approached the Senior Planner, Planning Division, Metropolitan Corporation of Greater

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\*hereafter referred to as simply the School of Social Work.

Winnipeg who identified three areas in Winnipeg which are designated "environmentally deprived"<sup>1</sup>.

Subsequently, the cooperation of the Research Director of the Winnipeg School Division was elicited, and through this contact four schools within the "environmentally deprived" areas previously circumscribed were designated as appropriate for research and representative of the areas in which they were physically located. The Research Director of the Winnipeg School Division approached the principals of these four schools, and a sample of seventy-four children in grades one, two and three was provided. Children in these early school grades had been requested since the child's earliest contact in the school is often most indicative of maladjustments attributable to conflicting values or value orientations between home and school.

Of the seventy-four children provided as a sample, thirty-five were assessed as satisfactory performers and thirty-nine as unsatisfactory performers by the classroom teacher of the individual child.

The study was introduced to the participating researchers in September 1965 by the Project Director of the School of Social Work. The study area and preparations previously made with the Metropolitan Planning Corporation of Greater Winnipeg and the Winnipeg School Division were outlined, and four research groups were designated.

Two of the groups were to explore the motivation aspect of both satisfactory and unsatisfactory performers in the school. One of these

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<sup>1</sup> areas included in census tracts 11, 12, 19, 22, 23 - 1961 census of the Dominion of Canada.