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THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN.
MANUAL OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING
"SCHOOLS" QUESTION.

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THIS MANUAL DESCRIBES MEASURES USED IN "THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN" PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO. THE SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY CONSISTED OF 163 NEGRO MOTHER-CHILD PAIRS SELECTED FROM 3 SOCIOECONOMIC CLASSES BASED ON THE FATHER'S OCCUPATION AND THE PARENTS' EDUCATION. A FOURTH GROUP INCLUDED FATHER-ABSENT FAMILIES. THE MOTHERS WERE INTERVIEWED AT HOME AND THE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN WERE TESTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE 4 YEARS OLD. FOLLOW-UP DATA WERE OBTAINED WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE 6 AND AGAIN WHEN THEY WERE 7. THE "SCHOOLS" QUESTION ASKED OF THE MOTHER WAS WHAT SHE WOULD DO ABOUT THE SCHOOLS IF SHE COULD DO AS SHE WISHED. RESPONSES WERE TAPE RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED AND WERE SCORED BY THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF SUGGESTIONS IN EACH OF 9 CATEGORIES GROUPED ROUGHLY AS (1) CONVENTIONAL, (2) SOCIAL OR POLITICAL, OR (3) ESSENTIALLY NO SUGGESTIONS. THIS IS A PART OF THE HOME INTERVIEW DESCRIBED IN PS 000 475. (DR)

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THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Robert D. Hess, Principal Investigator

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The measures described in this manual were developed in the project, Cognitive Environments of Urban Pre-School Children, supported by: Research Grant #R-34 from the Children's Bureau, Social Security Administration, and the Early Education Research Center, National Laboratory in Early Education, Office of Education, both of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the Division of Research, Project Head Start, U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity; the Ford Foundation Fund for the Advancement of Learning; and grants-in-aid from the Social Science Research Committee of the Division of Social Sciences, University of Chicago.

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The research sample for the Cognitive Environment Study was composed of 163 pairs of Negro mothers and their four-year-old children, from three socioeconomic classes, defined by father's occupation and parents' education: upper-middle, professional and executive, with college education; upper-lower, skilled and blue collar, with high school education; lower-lower, semiskilled and unskilled, with no greater than tenth-grade education; a fourth group included father-absent families living on public assistance, otherwise identical to the lower-lower class group.

Subjects were interviewed in the home, and mothers and children were brought to the University of Chicago campus for testing, when the children were four years old. Follow-up data were obtained from both mother and child when the child was six years of age, and again at seven years.

Principal Investigator for the project is Professor Robert D. Hess, formerly Director, Urban Child Center, University of Chicago, now Lee Jacks Professor of Child Education, School of Education, Stanford University.

Co-Investigator for the follow-up study is Dr. Virginia C. Shipman, Research Associate (Associate Professor) and Lecturer, Committee on Human Development, and Director, Project Head Start Evaluation and Research Center, University of Chicago, who served as Project Director for the pre-school phase of the research.

Dr. Jere Edward Brophy, Research Associate (Assistant Professor), Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, was Project Director for the follow-up study and participated as a member of the research staff of the pre-school study.

Dr. Roberta Meyer Bear, Research Associate (Assistant Professor), Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, participated as a member of the research staff during the pre-school and follow-up phases of the project and was in charge of the manuscript preparation during the write-up phase of the research.

Other staff members who contributed greatly to the project include Dr. Ellis Olim, (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) who was responsible for the major analysis of Maternal language; Dr. David Jackson, (Toronto, Ontario) who was involved in early stages of development of categories for the analysis of mother-child interaction, and participated in the processing and analysis of data; Mrs. Dorothy Runner, who supervised the training and work of the home interviewers, acted as a liason with public agencies, and had primary responsibility for obtaining the sample of subjects; and Mrs. Susan Beal, computer programmer.

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During the home interview, as part of a section on "attitudes and values toward school, educational and occupational orientations and expectations," mothers were asked:

IF YOU HAD THE POWER TO DO AS YOU WISHED ABOUT EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Responses were recorded verbatim by the interviewer. The number of comments and suggestions varied from person to person; the total response was scored for presence or absence of suggestions in each of the following categories:

A. CONVENTIONAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Academic or Curriculum: Specific suggestions regarding academic aspects of the school; enrichment or acceleration of classes and curriculum; inclusion or addition of special classes or programs (e.g., classes for slow learners, more physical education, Negro history, etc.); special or improved textbooks; more homework.

2. Physical or Mechanical: Improvements dealing with the physical plant or with the mechanics of school administration (excepting those issues covered in the Social-Political category below): construction of new buildings and classrooms; staff increases or addition of special staff (e.g., psychologists, psychometricians); decrease in class size; special facilities (e.g., testing programs); longer or shorter school day or year; pay increases for teachers.

3. Discipline: An increase in the power which teachers and other school staff have to discipline children (e.g., "Be stricter on the kids").

4. Teacher: Specific mention of "improving" teachers: changes in teacher-training, raising standards for certification; improving teachers' attitudes, motivation, and dedication.

B. SOCIAL OR POLITICAL SUGGESTIONS

5. Social or Political: Improvement of the school system which involves social or political concerns and action. Politically, items

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include civil rights, integration, and changes in upper-level administrators. Socially, items include improving relations and communication between the school and the home, between parents and teachers, and between the school and the community.

C. ESSENTIALLY NO SUGGESTIONS

6. General or Vague: A response which suggests improvement but is not specific as to area or method, so that it cannot reasonably be scored in one of the first five categories: examples include "raise the level of education," "equalize standards," "prevent dropouts," etc., without accompanying notions of how these might be accomplished.

7. Personal: Any action which could be taken without any extra or special "power": getting better acquainted with teachers, returning to school, joining improvement organizations or the P.T.A.

8. No Change Necessary: Statements that the respondent doesn't believe schools need change or improvement: they are okay as they are now; they are better than they used to be.

9. No Suggestion: A "Don't know" response, or expression of a felt lack of effectiveness: "I don't know what I could do," or "I don't have any ideas, since my kids aren't in school yet," or "I don't keep up on that stuff."

Whether the respondent offered a single suggestion or more than one within any of the nine categories, she was scored only for presence or absence of suggestions in each category. The same procedure was used for assigning scores in the three broader categories: in the latter case, for example, a respondent who suggested both larger classrooms and better-trained teachers was scored simply for presence of conventional suggestions. Each respondent was, however, given a score for the number of different categories she used (of the nine specific types of suggestions).