

**McGILL UNIVERSITY**

**PARTICIPATION IN CITIZEN ACTION GROUPS**

**A Study of Participants and Non-Participants  
in Citizen Action in Pointe St. Charles**

**A Research Report Submitted to  
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**by**

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## **PARTICIPATION IN CITIZEN ACTION GROUPS**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study was an exploratory attempt at isolating some of the characteristics which distinguish participants in low-income citizens' groups from non-participants, when both groups are drawn from the same geographic and socio-economic population.

The rationale for this study was that low-income citizens' groups have emerged as a new force in Montreal, and have already made a noticeable impact upon the social welfare field. Community organization has been seen as a promising method of social intervention for social workers in Montreal to deal with citizens' groups and indigenous workers. Furthermore, there is a body of theory which suggests that personal growth and change, or rehabilitation, may best be realized through the medium of involvement in a goal-oriented group.

Nineteen residents of Pointe St. Charles were selected for a comparative study. Ten of the subjects were participants in citizens' groups; nine were non-participants. The data gathering was of two forms: an interview schedule

which categorized environmental points of contact, as well as attitudes toward social institutions; and the administration of a test to measure self esteem. The two sample groups - participants and non-participants - were then compared in terms of the variable self esteem, and in terms of the range of environmental points of contact, and expressed attitudes toward social institutions. The central hypothesis being tested was that participants would have higher self esteem than non-participants. The researcher also anticipated that participants would have a greater range of environmental contacts, and would express more questioning and challenging attitudes toward established institutions.

The findings of this study did not support the central hypothesis - that participants would have higher self esteem than non-participants. However, the small size of the sample groups precludes generalization, and no significance can be inferred from the results.

Participants did tend to have a greater range of environmental contacts, such as: involvement in community activities, excursions outside the Pointe St. Charles community, and interaction with professional social workers. Furthermore, they tended to verbalize more negative and challenging attitudes toward social institutions, such as social agencies and the educational system.

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of the data was the rather unfavourable regard in which social workers were held, by participants. Criticism centered on the "paternalistic" approach to poor people, and the lack of understanding of the realities of poverty, which participants perceived as characteristic of most social workers.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The broad aim of this research was to gain insight into citizens' group participants from a poverty area. A citizens' group can be described as a group which aspires to realize certain ideal aims and needs through collective organization.<sup>1</sup>

The central hypothesis being tested was that participants would have higher self-esteem than non-participants. The researcher also anticipated that participants would have a greater range of environmental contacts, and would express more questioning and challenging attitudes toward established institutions.

Two conceptual frameworks were used in evaluating the effects of citizens' groups. One was the concept of mental health in relation to poverty; the other was the theory of ego psychology.

#### Mental Health and the Poor

Hollingshead and Redlich, in their studies of the rates and severity of mental illness among all strata of society, documented the prevalence of mental illness among the poor. They found that the rate of treated psychiatric illness is about the same from the rich down through decently-paid workers, an average of 573 per 100,000.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, it was found

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Michels, Political Parties, Toronto, (Glencoe Free Press, 1949), p.21

<sup>2</sup> Dwight MacDonald, "Our Invisible Poor", in Poverty in America, ed. by Louis A. Fermon, et al., (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p.14



that with the bottom fifth of society, mental illness rose to 1,659 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the study concluded there exists a difference in the type of mental illness between social classes. For example, of the 4 per cent of the high-income earners, a proportion of 65 per cent had been treated for neurotic problems, and 35 per cent for psychotic disturbances; while of the bottom fifth of society, 90 per cent were treated for psychotic disturbances.<sup>2</sup> These statistics could be interpreted in two ways: either the poor cannot afford to go to psychiatrists, or cannot relate to treatment. Also, the poor that do finally go to a psychiatrist are usually unable to function, and thus are committed to a mental institution. Either way, the authors believed that their figures were an under-estimation when they stated that nearly three fold increase in mental disorder exists among the poor.<sup>3</sup>

#### Mental Health

Dr. Matthew P. Dumont has defined mental health quite simply as "freedom"<sup>4</sup>, a designation crucial to this study. More explicitly, Dumont has stated that: "Mental health is the widest conceivable range of choices in the face of internal

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight MacDonald, Poverty in America, P.14

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Matthew P. Dumont, M.D., The Absurd Healer, New York, (Science House, 1968), P.49

and external constraints".<sup>1</sup> Dumont elaborates through examples of neurotic and psychotic constraints. The neurotic is restricted by the internal constraints of repetition-compulsion, stereotyped perceptions and possible inordinate despair.<sup>2</sup>

The psychotic, on the other hand, is limited by his inability to distinguish between stimuli from within and those from without. The parallels can be extended to the constraints of the slum dweller who is limited by poverty, unemployment and segregation.<sup>3</sup> In all cases, the final common path is a restriction of opportunity, a narrowness of choice. Dumont believes that the purposes of psychotherapy and social change are to widen the range of possibilities and to increase the options of human behaviour - in short, to enhance freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Dumont has given an illustration of the slave owner who is no freer than his slaves because the range of his behaviour is limited by his role as the owner of men; the slave owner and his slave are in the same field of interaction, and that field restricts both of them - they are not free.<sup>5</sup> Their ability to choose and plan has definite constraints, therefore, disequilibrium exists. Dumont's concept of freedom

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew P. Dumont, M.D., The Absurd Healer, P.49

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, P.50

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, P.51

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, P.50

is not a personal freedom to do only as one wishes. It is significant that the freedom must exist in the realm of the potential rather than the actual. If freedom were a simple matter of will for the objective of action, then the Nazi's imposed will on six million Jews, from a mental health standpoint, could be legitimated. But, of course, it cannot.<sup>1</sup> Dumont has explicitly stated: "The freedom I write about is not a restricted individual initiative, but the shared aspirations of the widest range of possibilities for all men. I call this aspiration mental health".<sup>2</sup>

#### Poverty

Donald Whyte has pointed out that in advanced countries such as Canada and the United States, individuals and families whose resources over a period of time fall seriously short of the resources commanded by the average individual or family in the community in which they live, are in poverty.<sup>3</sup> He distinguishes between two types of poverty - subjective and objective.

Objective poverty exists when minimal needs, i.e., food, shelter and clothing are unable to be met. This means that the individual is unable to be involved in any normal occupational role, and as a result, leaves himself open to

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew P. Dumont, M.D., The Absurd Healer, P.50

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Robert Whyte, "Sociological Aspects of Poverty: A Conceptual Analysis", in Poverty, ed. by W.E. Mann (Montreal: Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1970), P.6

reliance on government and private agencies for his basic needs. The significance of objective poverty is that it is related to an objectively defined criterion of need, a criterion defined by society as opposed to being defined by the individual.<sup>1</sup> Dumont would conclude that the conditions of objective poverty would hardly allow mental health to prevail.

Subjective poverty refers to the sensation of individual deprivation.<sup>2</sup> Unlike objective poverty, it is not dependent on the absolute level of deprivation, but rather, results from a comparison of what an individual has, with what he would like to have. As Whyte has expressed, subjective poverty is related to the discrepancy between need satisfaction and need aspiration.<sup>3</sup> In mental health terms, subjective poverty is prevalent and is associated with poor mental health. Either subjectively or objectively, poverty means deprivation. How this deprivation affects an individual depends on his self-attitude in relation to his environment.

Some consequences which Whyte has noted are: the absence of voluntary associations in a community, weakening of friendships, high proportion of broken homes, low esteem for education, dim expectations and aspiration of stability and advancement in occupations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Whyte, Poverty, P.6

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

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, P.10

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, P.11

As a result of unpredictability of behaviour and lack of control of physical conditions, the desire for immediate gratification exists within deprived areas.<sup>1</sup> The deprived have an inability to foresee rewards, and consequently suffer from inadequate learning of roles, as well as chronic and severe disturbances. The deprived areas, as Dumont would explain, are conducive to poor mental health.

#### Ego Psychology

Ego psychology concerns itself totally with the individual and his levels of self esteem. It rests on the assumption of certain innate potentials of man. Through ego psychology, mental health concepts have evolved. As a result, mental health is correlated with levels of individual functioning and self esteem, which all relates to mobility and flexibility of one's environment.

The ego is the "I" concept of man. Cumming and Cumming discuss Hartmann's contribution to the field of ego psychology. Hartmann recognized that a conflict-free portion of the ego existed within an individual.<sup>2</sup> This conflict-free portion of the ego is seen as being the individual's native competence, as well as the many innate talents he can bring to bear on problem solving. Although potentials are innate, it is the environment that allows for their development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Whyte, Poverty, P.11

<sup>2</sup> John Cumming & Elaine Cumming, Ego & Milieu, New York, Atherton Press, 1962, P.13

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

It is important to realize that it is the environment and its significant effect on the individual that determines development of innate skills. Potentials are latent until right circumstances present themselves. There is reason to suspect from animal studies, that certain skills may sometimes be lost, if not developed at the propitious time.<sup>1</sup> A loss of such skills could result in a diminishing of man's potential options. As Dumont has stated, if these losses were severe enough, poor mental health would be a likely consequence.

Cumming and Cumming also examine Erikson's concept of the ego, which once again stresses the innate drive to do, but elaborates on the significance of the individual's mastery of the skills that enable "doing". To Erikson, the individual learns to master his environment through "identifiable crises".<sup>2</sup> For example, as the life experience of an individual increases, the integration and ability to adapt and exert some form of control over his environment results in the resolution of the crisis and hence, in a growth in ego strength. Failure results in ego diffusion.<sup>3</sup> Poverty, particularly objective poverty, sets definite limits on the skills which develop, thus leaving poor people with feelings of powerlessness and of constraint. Ego psychology would explain this phenomenon in terms of ego deprivation, and as Dumont has diagnosed, as

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<sup>1</sup> John Cumming & Elaine Cumming, Ego & Milieu, P.14

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, P.18

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, P.19

poor mental health.

In reference to the deprived mentally ill, Frank Riessman has stated:

The present-day institutional features of psychotherapy are primarily congenial to middle-class life-styles. Thus, middle-class patients are preferred by most treatment agents and are seen as more treatable; psychotherapy is more frequently a treatment of choice and diagnosed more helpful (with symptomatology held constant); conversely, as presently organized, is not congenial to low-income clients, is not concurrent with their tradition and expectations, is poorly understood by them. In essence, these clients are alienated from treatment. <sup>1</sup>

#### Historical Approaches in Social Welfare

Objective poverty has resulted in the poor being dependent on social welfare; in particular on the government and its policies.

Great Britain's Poor Law of 1601 established the pattern of public relief under government auspices. The implications of its policies stretch over more than 300 years of influence.<sup>2</sup> The Poor Law of 1601 did not permit the registration of a person in need of assistance as long as his relatives, husband or wife, parents or children were able to support him.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Riessman, New Approaches to Mental Health - Treatment for Labour & Low Income Groups, Illinois, (National Institute of Labour Education, 1964), P.2

<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Friedlander, Introduction to Social Welfare, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, (Prentice Hall, Inc., 3d Ed.), P.17

This policy attempted to place the burden of charity on the family as opposed to the state.<sup>1</sup>

The Law distinguished three classes of the poor:

The Able-Bodied Poor. These people were referred to as beggars and were forced to work in the 'house of correction' or 'work-houses', which were established and controlled by municipal government. Citizens were forbidden to give these individuals alms, and if an indigent individual arrived from another municipality, he was forced to return.<sup>2</sup>

The Impotent Poor. These constituted the various unfortunates suffering from the many handicaps plaguing man, i.e., blindness, deafness, etc. These individuals were placed in alms houses which were homes established specifically to house the indigent.<sup>3</sup>

Dependent Children. These were orphans, foundlings and children who had been deserted by their parents or whose parents were so poor that they could not support them. These children were to be placed with any citizen who was willing to take them without a charge. If no such "free home" was available, the child was to be given to the lowest bidder.<sup>4</sup>

While the Poor Law of 1601 accepted an obligation for the aid of people who could not provide for themselves, it

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<sup>1</sup> Walter A. Friedlander, Introduction to Social Welfare, P.17

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

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, P.17

<sup>4</sup> Ibid



led to deplorable conditions, which were somewhat reformed in the 19th century. Private charities emerged and began looking into the inhumane treatment of the poor. Public poor relief was still following the pattern of the Elizabethan Poor Law. This law elicited a spirit of resentment against the heavy tax burden. Under the influence of Herbert Spencer's "Social Darwinism", which linked economic prosperity and success with efficiency and virtue, there was much contempt for people unable to take care of themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the most cruel forms of treatment of the poor that previously had existed, such as the whipping, the posting of the poor roll at the market place, were gradually abandoned, but the spirit of unwillingness to recognize the aid for the poor as socially necessary and justified remained.<sup>2</sup>

Indigent families were subjected to much humiliation; for example, when a family was put into a poor farm, the husband would immediately leave in order that he might earn sufficient funds, such that his family would be permitted to leave.<sup>3</sup> The superintendent of the poor farm would bond out the children over eight years of age, negating all the rights of the

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan C. Cohen, Social Work in the American Tradition, (New York: Holt, 1958), Pp.22-32

<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Friedlander, Introduction to Social Welfare, P.17

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

natural parents. The parents then had no recourse, even through the legal courts, to get their children back.<sup>1</sup>

Private agencies proved to be no more humane than the government. One of the first private organizations, "New York Society For The Prevention of Pauperism", created in 1817, maintained that its aim was to determine scientifically what were the causes of poverty, and to develop means of rehabilitation, instead of the mere palliative of financial relief. In one of their studies, they listed the causes of poverty: ignorance, idleness, intemperance, lack of thrift, imprudent hasty marriages, lotteries, houses of prostitution, gambling, and the large number of charitable institutions.

It is noteworthy that many of the same statements are being made today in Canadian communities.

"On the average, the poor in the United States have bad reputations. They are regarded as responsible for much physical aggression and destruction of property; their support is alleged to be a heavy burden on the rest of the community; and, they are said not even to try very hard to meet community standards of behaviour or to be self supporting. Poverty, it is said, is little enough punishment for people so inferior and so lacking in virtue".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel T. McGelgan, Joseph Tuckerman, Pioneer in American Social Work, (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1940); Robert H. Bremner, From the Depths, The Discovery of Poverty in the United States (New York: New York University Press, 1956) and Pumphrey, The Heritage of American Social Work, Pp.71-79

<sup>2</sup> Warren G. Haggstrom, "Power of the Poor", in Mental Health of the Poor, ed. by Frank Riessman, et al., (New York: Free Press, 1964), P.205

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<sup>2</sup> Warren G. Haggstrom, "Power of the Poor", in Mental Health of the Poor, ed. by Frank Riessman, et al., (New York: Free Press, 1964), P.205

The trend was to create a dependency of the poor on the affluent, and this has literally left the poor without any options other than those provided by government or society, through social legislation policies. The implications of such attitudes, as can be seen throughout history, are representative of what Dumont would term a poor mental health approach.

#### Contemporary Alternatives

Riessman, who has concerned himself with the theme of dependency, has suggested that low income clients be educated and prepared for necessary aspects of treatment that are unknown to their present life experience. The objective of Riessman's approach is synonymous with Dumont's concept of mental health... "increases in the ability to make choices, and less constraints".<sup>1</sup>

Riessman believed that it is education rather than treatment which should predominate the client's involvement. He proceeded on the assumption that individual psychological difficulties frequently appear to diminish in importance when the individual becomes involved in some commitment, activity or social movement.<sup>2</sup>

More specifically, this involvement can entail participation in citizens' groups. It was found by Wittenberg, as early as 1948, that such participation led to a marked person-

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Riessman, New Approaches to Mental Health Treatment for Labour and Low Income Groups, P.12

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

ality development and growth among the participants.<sup>1</sup>

Wittenberg concludes that the participants he studied saw the group as having helped them in the following ways: growth, insight, and better understanding of their neighbours as well as their families. Some felt they were better able to express themselves; but of greater significance, many participants felt that they had developed more self confidence, which can be interpreted as better mental health.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. Wittenberg, Mental Health of the Poor, P.384

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEPRIVED AREA

The feasibility of exploring the phenomenon of low-income citizen groups limited the study to one geographic area. This area, Pointe St. Charles, contains the many characteristics of other poverty ghettos, and its citizen groups are representative of groups found in other parts of the city. The major concern of this study was not geographical distinctions, but rather the consequence of environmental constraints of poverty. Poverty, as opposed to being restricted territorially is, on the contrary, nationally extended in Canada.

#### Pointe St. Charles

The physical boundaries of Pointe St. Charles are easily defined; the Lachine Canal, the St. Lawrence River, the C.N.R. tracks and Riverside Street - but to the 23,000 citizens within the community, the life-style is far more complex.<sup>1</sup>

The Montreal Council of Social Agencies' report of sixty socio-economic profiles of areas in metropolitan Montreal, published in July 1968, included a statistical picture of the Pointe that highlighted its impoverished condition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

Each of the sixty communities was charted on a graph to illustrate community area ranking. The study's criteria were such factors as crowded housing, date of construction, home ownership, value of housing, state of repair of housing, rents, income of families, education, population density, fertility rate, unemployment and how many families lived in each household. The Pointe came out entirely on the unfavourable side of the chart, along with only six other so-called "gray areas".<sup>1</sup>

The statistical portrait of Pointe St. Charles revealed that 10.8% of all families have no member of the family in the labor force. Only 10% of all families have a total income of over \$7,000, 51% have an income of less than \$4,000 and 15% must live on \$2,000 annually, which is considerably below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup>

The area is over-crowded, with more than 37% of 6,155 households containing more than five persons. Other unfavourable factors are the fact that 26% of the homes have neither bathtub nor shower, 42% have cold water only, 75% are heated by some sort of stove and 85% were built prior to 1920.<sup>3</sup>

Monthly rents in the Pointe range between \$30 and \$50 for more than half of the homes and hardly anyone pays more

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

than \$80 a month.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, Pointe St. Charles is a small town rather than an extension of the city life found in Montreal. Quite possibly, this is due to the Pointe's very well-defined geographical boundaries. Some of the characteristics of the small-town feeling generated are found there. The citizens receive credit privileges at the corner grocer. Apparently, they shop there because they are familiar with the grocer and feel more at ease in his small homey store than in modern supermarkets where it is common knowledge that prices are cheaper and the quality of food better.

It has been stated that "The citizens of Pointe St. Charles tend to identify with the area. They are neighbourly and in the poorest tenements, they expect to help each other".<sup>2</sup> It is the small-town atmosphere which keeps many of the families who could afford better quarters elsewhere, in the Pointe, and also brings back some of those who previously had moved away.

To the rest of Montreal, the Pointe is a distinct homogenous small town, yet to the community itself, there are recognized sections within it which are better off than others.

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>2</sup> Zoe Bieler, "Portrait of a Gray Area, Pointe St. Charles", The Montreal Star, Nov. 8, 1969.



On one street, a slum tenement may exist, yet in contrast, a few streets over, a neat comfortable duplex with a well-kept lawn is maintained.<sup>1</sup>

Chronic ill health is the lot of many of the residents of Pointe St. Charles. One problem is malnutrition, due both to limited budgets and ignorance in regards to good nutrition. Faulty diets are believed to be the direct cause of obesity plaguing many residents, and these diets are probably an indirect cause of the high infant mortality in the district. Statistically, the area study states that the infant mortality rate in the Pointe is more than twice the average rate for the city as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics also show that in 1961, there were more than twice as many deaths from tuberculosis in the Pointe on a percentage basis, as compared with the rest of Montreal. Also, Impetigo, a skin disease which is highly infectious, but easily curable, is an epidemic in the Pointe. Untreated viral infections which lead to permanent disabilities are another serious medical problem.

A survey done early in 1968 by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Pointe St. Charles reported an almost total lack of medical

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

services in the Pointe.<sup>1</sup> The committee found that one doctor, two days a week, serves the French population, and in the English sector, there are two doctors with private practices, one of whom is part-time.<sup>2</sup>

There was some question in the study done by the Ad-Hoc Committee as to whether the citizens utilize hospital services outside the community. It was found that not only do Pointe St. Charles citizens dislike going to agencies outside the area, but they also often feel they cannot afford the transportation unless the need is so obvious it cannot be ignored. Most of the women with large families lack baby-sitters and do not like long trips by bus or metro when they have to take the entire family along. As a result, they are more inclined to seek treatment for their sick children than for themselves.<sup>3</sup>

In July of 1968, five McGill medical students opened a community health center and clinic in a store front on Charlevoix Street in Pointe St. Charles. It was decided from the first to charge patients fifty cents per clinic visit (if they could afford it), as opposed to any type of graded

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Pointe St. Charles Community Services, March 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>3</sup> Zoe Bieler, Portrait of a Gray Area, Nov. 10, 1969.

scale.<sup>1</sup> The expenses of the clinic included rent, some drugs, the salary of a part-time doctor who was on duty at the clinic every morning from 8:30 a.m. until noon, a public health nurse, and a receptionist. Since then, the health center has moved twice, each time into larger quarters. The staff has increased. Presently, two public health nurses are on full-time duty. The medical staff has increased from the initial involvement. Several services are offered. These include a psychiatric clinic with a doctor from the Douglas Hospital and clinics for gynecology and dermatology are available. An orthopedic specialist, a child psychologist and a physiotherapist have also volunteered free time for the clinic. At present, not only has the medical staff increased, but these clinics are scheduled also during the daytime.<sup>2</sup>

Also serving the Pointe St. Charles area is a community service center. The service center houses twelve different agencies representing both French and English languages as well as the Catholic and Protestant religions. The basis of service within the center is one of language rather than religion. As the center's policy pamphlet states "the two language agencies are housed in the same building to facilitate cooperation".<sup>3</sup> One agency of particular im-

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<sup>1</sup> Zoe Bieler, Portrait of a Gray Area, Nov. 10, 1969

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Pointe St. Charles' Community Services, March 1969.

portance located within the center is the Montreal City Welfare office because it is the "life-line" source of income to many.

#### Education

Approximately 50% of the population in Pointe St. Charles are French speaking and 35% English speaking. The remaining 15% belong to other ethnic groups and speak mostly English. The English-speaking are almost 70% of the Catholic faith.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of the English-speaking youngsters who start high school drop out prior to graduation. One of the reasons might quite well be that there is, at the moment, no English high school in the district.

A large secondary school has just been opened for French-speaking students but no high school is projected for either of the English-speaking groups in the near future.

Students graduating from Lorne School, an elementary school under the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, must now go to the High School of Montreal if they wish to continue their education. This causes much difficulty because in order to get to school they must take three buses. Furthermore, the necessary extra clothing and books continue to deplete limited budgets.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

At Lorne School, the program runs from kindergarten to Grade seven. At Grade seven, there is a 60% dropout rate. The authorities are attempting to combat this dropout rate with various projects. The National Film Board sponsored an audio-visual learning program with films and other aids at Lorne School.<sup>1</sup>

While many of the children come from homes that lack books, they almost all (91%) watch T.V.<sup>2</sup>, and thus share with more privileged children a visual language, and are prepared to learn by audio-visual methods.

Because of this project, Lorne School became better equipped with audio-visual teaching aids than any other elementary school in The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal system. There is a 16mm projector for every two classes, an 8mm loop projector for every primary grade, for kindergarten and the special education classes as well as 38mm machines for Grades four to seven.<sup>3</sup>

There are wall screens, and blackout curtains in every classroom, and a well-stocked library of films, filmstrips and slides. Tape recorders are available to help youngsters with speech difficulties. The Film Board made avail-

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Council of Social Agencies: Sixty Major Study Areas and their Comparative Socio-Economic Profiles in Metropolitan Montreal, July 1968, Area 30, Chart A.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Zoe Bieler, Portrait of a Gray Area, Nov. 10, 1969.

able about \$75,000 worth of equipment, which belongs to the School Board of Greater Montreal, not the school.<sup>1</sup>

The English-speaking Catholic students from St. Gabriel and Sarsfield schools are slightly better off regarding high school. They are sent to James Lyng School in Verdun, which is much closer geographically than the High School of Montreal.

Yet, still in 1969, only about 200 youngsters from Pointe St. Charles attended James Lyng - about 50% of all who had completed Grade seven in the last four years. Most of the 200 students while in the lower high school grades, dropped out prior to graduation.<sup>2</sup>

Various events took place during the summer of 1970, related to community dissatisfaction of conditions in Pointe St. Charles. The researcher was employed on June 1, 1970 as a social worker for one of the family and children's agencies in the Pointe St. Charles area. This particular agency was located within a community service center in the Pointe.

Within exactly one week of employment, contact with a welfare citizen group was established. The group, Community Anti-Poverty (C.A.P.) came not for consultation, but for confrontation. That week was the initiation point of what was to be a summer of welfare demonstrations through-

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<sup>1</sup> Zoe Bieler, Portrait of a Gray Area, Nov. 10, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

out Montreal. The main demand of the group was they be allowed to maintain a hospitality booth in the corridors utilized by the individuals seeking welfare. The group stated that because the building was the property of the city, they had legal rights to the booth. Their rationale was basically twofold.

Through various channels, they had obtained information from welfare offices on the Government's stated policy, as to what individuals seeking assistance are entitled to according to the law. Apparently official documents with these rates are impossible to obtain. This applies not only to the recipients of welfare, but also to the members of any professional body, social worker, lawyer, etc. The researcher, on two different occasions, had telephoned different city and provincial welfare offices, and on one occasion attempted a visit. Each time a request for a copy of the government rates was flatly refused. The author's reception at the welfare office that was visited could only be described as abrupt, tactless and impersonal. The researcher had gone to determine the rights of an elderly client. The welfare staff member stated that the rates were not available.

The citizens' group, through different tactics used over a period of several months, were able to compile a duplicate copy of the rates. Since the group's philosophy is "self help", instead of mailing copies of the rates to social workers, they decided that they wanted the booth established in order

that they, themselves, would be able to share the government rates with their neighbours who were seeking welfare. This would put the applicant in a position to evaluate if he was getting what was his right according to the law.

Another objective of the booth can be easily understood by its very name - "The Hospitality Booth". It was C.A.P.'s desire to turn the booth not only into an information bureau, but also a setting of warmth and familiarity. The Hospitality Booth very shortly did become an integral part of the center.



### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

In order to identify those characteristics which differentiated between those who participated in citizen groups and those who did not, two groups of residents of Pointe St. Charles were selected for a comparative study. The two groups consisted of those who refrained from any citizens' group involvement: non-participants; and those who participated in citizens' groups: participants.

On June 1, 1970, the researcher was employed as a social worker for one of the family and children agencies in the Pointe St. Charles area. As a result, contact with participants of welfare citizen groups as well as with non-participants was established. This enabled the researcher to secure the necessary samples for this study.<sup>1</sup>

Two samples totalling twenty residents of Pointe St. Charles were interviewed; ten participants and ten non-participants. The samples were further divided into categories of four male and six female participants, and then five male and five female non-participants. Just as the researcher was in the process of analyzing the accumulated data, one female non-participant requested not to be in the study. As a result, the sample decreased to nineteen, ten participants and nine non-participants. Time did not allow the interviewing of another respondent.

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<sup>1</sup> Supra, Pp.28-30

All interviews were administered either in the respondent's home, place of work, or the Pointe St. Charles community center. The respondents had a choice of where the interview took place.

The following table indicates where these interviews took place.

TABLE 1  
LOCATION OF INTERVIEWS

<u>Place of interview</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Non-Participants</u>
Home of respondent	1	6
Place of work of respondent	8	
Pointe St. Charles Community Center		3
Community bar	1	
	—	—
TOTAL	10	9

Of the respondents who were interviewed at their place of work, seven were employed within the community center, either by the center or the Hospitality Booth. Their appointments were easily scheduled and took place in their offices or in the conference room. Some of the respondents shared offices with others, disallowing complete privacy during the interview. The researcher was reluctant to ask the respondents to move, not wanting to offend their right to be interviewed in their own territory. He also did not want to lose the informality of the setting. The other individuals present

seemed to have no effect on the responses of the respondents, judging by their apparent honesty and frankness.

The interviews conducted in the respondents' homes were private, and only in two cases were younger children present. These interviews were no more informative than any of the others, except that the researcher was able to observe the respondents' homes.

Phase one of the interview was a schedule adapted from Betty Ann Affleck and Elizabeth Dohan's unpublished research report, "A Descriptive Analysis of the Youth Culture", which utilized George C. Homans' theory of groups.<sup>1</sup>

The rationale for the interview schedule, which looks at points of contact in the environment, rests on the assumption that the number and kind of environmental contacts an individual maintains is indicative of his interaction, which Dumont would regard as an aspect of mental health.

The researcher hypothesized that participants would have a greater variety of environmental contacts than non-participants. Furthermore, the researcher anticipated that participants would be more likely to express negative and challenging attitudes toward established institutions and professions.

The points of contact for this study were extracted, and in many cases modified, from the Affleck and Dohan explor-

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<sup>1</sup> Betty Ann Affleck & Elizabeth Dohan, A Descriptive Analysis of the Youth Culture, McGill University, unpublished research report, 1968.

atory study of the youth culture. The points of contact were divided into four categories.

- i) Institutional contacts
  - (1) Family
  - (2) Education
  - (3) Religion
  - (4) Social Agencies
- ii) Professional contacts
  - (1) Doctors and psychiatrists
  - (2) Religious officials
  - (3) Social workers
  - (4) Police officers
- iii) Environmental contacts
  - (1) Community; sentiments activity
  - (2) Community interaction
- iv) Politics
  - (1) Citizens' group activity, interaction  
and sentiments
  - (2) Social workers and social agencies

Homans' theory is that the four variables and their interdependence not only characterize the relation of variable within a group, but also the relations of that to its social environment. A way of studying the citizens' action group subculture is around these points of contact. The significance of utilizing these points of contact within this research was

to see whether participants of citizen groups and non-participants have differences. It was to determine if the dependency level expressed by participants and non-participants in reference to any of the four points of contact was high or low.

In phase two of the interview, the sample was administered, a test developed by Kuhn and McPartland, the "Who Am I" scale.<sup>1</sup> This device consists of a single sheet of paper headed by the following instructions.

"There are twenty blanks on the page below. Please write twenty answers to the simple question "Who Am I" in the blanks. Just give twenty different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in order that they occur to you. Don't worry about logic or importance."

The methodology of the test elicited responses which were dealt with by a form of content analysis. They were categorized dichotomously either as consensual references or as subconsensual references. These content categories distinguish between statements which refer to groups and classes whose limits and conditions of membership are matters of common knowledge, i.e., consensual, and those which refer to group classes, attributes, traits, or any other matters which would require interpretation by the respondent to be precise or to

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<sup>1</sup> Manford H. Kuhn & Thomas S. McPartland, An Empirical Investigation of Self Attitudes, American Sociological Review, Vol. 19. 1954.

place him relevant to other people, i.e., subconsensual.<sup>1</sup>

Kuhn and McPartland had found that from the ordering of response on the page, it was evident that respondents tended to exhaust all of the consensual references they would make before they made (if at all) any subconsensual ones, that is, having once begun to make subconsensual references, they tended to make no more consensual references. The authors stated that this ordering of responses held whether a respondent made as many as nineteen consensual references, or as few as one.<sup>2</sup>

The number of consensual references made by respondents varied from twenty to none; similarly, the number of subconsensual references made by respondents varied from twenty to none. However, the number of consensual and subconsensual references made by any given respondent did not stand in a simple arithmetic relation (such as the number of consensual references plus the number of subconsensual references equals twenty).<sup>3</sup> This resulted from the fact that many of their respondents made fewer than twenty statements; for example, a respondent might make ten consensual statements and then leave the remaining ten spaces blank, while another might make two consensual references, twelve subconsensual references, and then

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<sup>1</sup> H. H. Kuhn & T. S. McPartland, An Empirical Investigation of Self Attitudes, P.70

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

leave the last six spaces blank. An individual's "locus score" is simply the number of consensual references he makes on the "Who Am I" Scale.<sup>1</sup>

These characteristics of the responses to the "Who Am I" scale satisfy the definition of a Guttman scale, in that the "scalogram hypothesis is that the items have an order such that ideally, persons who answer a given question favourably all have higher ranks on the scale than persons who answer the same question unfavourably."<sup>2</sup>

The rationale behind this device as stated by Kuhn and McPartland is:

"If as we suppose, human behaviour is organized and directed, and if... the organization and direction are supplied by the individual's attitude toward himself, it ought to be of crucial importance to social psychology to be able to identify and measure self attitudes ... The social science views that people organize and direct their behaviour in terms of their subjectively defined identifications. These in turn, are seen as internalizations of the objective social status they occupy ..." 3

The scale considered as favourable responses those which referred to a statement with consensual reference, one

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<sup>1</sup> M. H. Kuhn & T. S. McPartland, An Empirical Investigation of Self Attitudes

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, P.70

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

that places the individual in a social system. Here, Kuhn and McPartland point out that "consensuality, or as they chose more explicitly to define it as the locus, refers to anchorage or self identification in a social system, a variable which is numerically cumulative. It is cumulative in that word responses can be produced by rank alone."<sup>1</sup>

The authors concluded that the consensual (more directly socially anchored) component of the self conception, is the more salient component. Stated differently, consensually supported self attitudes are at the top of the hierarchy of self attitudes. Persons vary over a rather wide range in the relative volume of consensual and subconsensual components in their self conceptions.<sup>2</sup>

#### Limitations

Due to the very small number of respondents interviewed in the two sample groups, findings in no way can be generalized to the population of Pointe St. Charles, much less to the population of poor people as a whole.

Further shortcomings of this study stem from the following: sparse literature on the exploratory nature of citizen groups allowed for only limited library research;

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<sup>1</sup> M. H. Kuhn & T. S. McPartland, An Empirical Investigation of Self Attitudes.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, P.70



there was no statistical data available concerning the extent or nature of the participants and non-participants and, therefore, the researcher could not say accurately if the sample was truly representative; subjects, participants and non-participants, were not randomly selected as only a small number of individuals eligible for testing were known to the researcher, and consequently, the sample was small; the interview schedule was extensive, and many delays occurred in setting up appointments.

No investigation was made of the validity or completeness of any information supplied by the respondents; rather, all information was accepted at face value.

## CHAPTER IV

### PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The following data on the personal, familial, and social characteristics of participants as compared to non-participants emerged from phase one of the interview schedule.

#### Family

##### Participants

Of the four male participants, three were separated from their wives. Each of the three stated that their wives did not approve of their participation in citizen groups, complaining about their absences during that time. The fourth male participant, in his second marriage, had his wife's full approval for his participation in this group. From the group of six female participants, two were married and one was in a common-law relationship. Two were separated and one was widowed. The female participants made no mention as to whether approval or disapproval was expressed by their husbands, concerning their participation in citizen groups. However the two that were separated did imply that their husbands drank too much and were irresponsible. Both women initiated the separation.

##### Non-Participants

All five male non-participants interviewed were married. Two of the four female non-participants were married. One female non-participant was a widow whose husband had committed suicide six years ago. One was separated and although she had suffered considerable physical abuse by her

husband, she refused to consider divorce, stating she was willing to attempt to save her marriage.

One female participant presented a picture noticeably different from other female participants. Her husband was steadily employed in a major company in Montreal. She pointed out that she remained in Pointe St. Charles because it enabled them to afford a country house. She is not a member of a welfare citizen group but rather a group attached to a church which concerns itself with helping in the same way that agencies do. Therefore, she is not really representative of the citizen welfare rights group.

#### Differences

Of the ten participants, three were married, in comparison to seven of the nine non-participants. Five of the ten participants had separated compared to only one of the nine non-participants. Participants in citizen groups had more children than the non-participants. Four of the ten participants had six children or more. Only one of the nine non-participants had six children or more. The entire sample of participants and non-participants was English speaking with one male member in each group brought up speaking both French and English.

#### Marital Status of Parents

#### Participants

Eight of the ten participants, three males and five

females came from families where the parents had maintained their marriage. Only one male and one female participant came from broken homes. Each of the participants from broken homes had been in foster care since their early years.

All male participants indicated negative feelings about their parental families. Only one male maintained contact with father and stated that he did so out of pity as a result of his father's old age. Five of the women participants stated positive parental feelings and only one indicated negative feelings. She was the only one that did not have contact with her extended family.

#### Non-Participants

Four of the six non-participants who were males came from homes in which their parents remained married. One male and two female non-participants came from broken homes but all remained with one of their natural parents.

In the non-participants' sample of five males, four indicated positive feelings and one indicated negative feelings about their parents. Interestingly, the only one who stated that he maintained no contact with his family was a member of the positive-oriented parental group. Of the four female non-participants, three stressed positive feelings and one negative towards their parents. Two members of the group, the negative one included, did not maintain contact with their extended family.

### Feelings Pertaining to Nuclear Family

The entire sample showed only three of the male participants with negative feelings pertaining to their nuclear family. All three men were separated. The rest of the entire sample had positive feelings in this area.

### Participants

All the male participants were working, although their employment, which was salaried, stemmed from their involvement in citizen groups. This was also true of two of the female participants. Only three out of ten participants were on welfare.

### Non-Participants

Five of the nine non-participants were on welfare - two males and three females. The three other male non-participants were involved in a manpower education course and this was their sole source of income. One female non-participant, who was also considered working, was employed as a foster mother. This was not her sole source of income as she was also receiving old age pension.

### Education

### Participants

The mean grade for male participants was 9.8, the grades ranging from seven to eleven. Of the four male participants, two graduated from high school. In the male participant group, one out of four had positive feelings about

education during their adolescence, while the rest had negative feelings. However, two males have positive feelings about education now, and two males are negative in attitude. Within the female participant group, the mean grade was 9.8, the grades ranging from nine to eleven. One extremely low grade, Grade two, found among the female participant group, was omitted in the calculation of the 9.8 average because the researcher felt it was not representative. If this was included in the score, the mean grade would be 8.5. Of the six female participants, one graduated from high school.

In the female participant group, two out of six had positive feelings about education during their adolescence, while the rest had negative feelings. Five female participants now have positive feelings about education, while one female has a negative feeling. The three participants who indicated negative feelings about education now, understood the importance of education but felt that the system was geared towards the middle class. Because of their poverty, it was a system, they felt, to which their children could not relate.

All three of the participants who had negative feelings about education now, stated that they understood the present educational system. Two other participants who felt positively about education also understood the system. Five of the ten participants indicated they had no understanding of the school system now, the major complaint being the drastic

change in present education not allowing them to be of any assistance to their children. In fact, they complained that they did not understand the assigned material even at the Grade two level.

### Non-Participants

The mean grade for male non-participants was 7.4, grades ranging between three and eight with no graduates. Of the male non-participants, one out of five had positive feelings about education during their school years, while the rest were negative. The female non-participants' mean grade was 6.8, grades ranging between five to eight, with no graduates. Out of four female non-participants, two had positive feelings towards education, while two felt negatively.

Significantly, of the total sample, all non-participants stated that while they had positive feelings about education, they did not understand the modern educational system.

### Differences

The total mean grade for all participants was 9.8 with a contrasting total of 7.1 for all non-participants. A total comparison of the two groups showed three out of ten participants had negative feelings about education and three out of nine non-participants had negative feelings.

All the male participants and two of the female participants had future educational plans although, in all cases, they placed no emphasis on diplomas, certificates or degrees, but rather on the value of knowledge for itself. These individuals were all involved in auditing university

courses, attending community lectures or, as one participant stated, "picking the brains" of those professionals who appeared to them as knowledgeable. Only three of the non-participants had any educational plans and these plans they connected with obtaining a certificate in which the possibility of employment would be enhanced.

### Educational Aspirations for Children

In analyzing the educational aspirations of participants and non-participants for their children, a total perspective was sufficient because of the similar attitude of both the males and females. The total sample had definite intentions for their children's completion of at least elementary school. All the parents in the sample attached more importance to the males continuing education than to the females. Of all the respondents, only one felt negatively about continuing education for his children. This individual, a participant in a citizen movement, felt the present educational system did not meet the needs of his children. He felt the system was unsatisfactory in its highly structured traditional approach. He wanted his children to learn according to the "university of the streets" which, as he described, meant to center around the child's ability to learn and be taught in the streets, not by the middle class, but by members of his community. This participant also felt that the time spent in class should be flexible, according to subject



matter, students' interest, and span of concentration. Of interest is the fact that this individual leads a citizen movement, involved in initiating change in the present educational system.

### Religion

#### Participants

Only one male out of four male participants had contact with a religious official. This was due to employment. Of the male participants, three of the four proved to have negative feelings pertaining to religious officials. All four males had no contact with any church. All the male participants stated that they were following the religion of their parents. Within the female participant group of six, three had no contact with any church. Four of the six chose the position of indifference to express their feelings pertaining to religious officials. Two female participants converted from Catholicism to Protestantism. They felt that the Catholic religion was too severe.

#### Non-Participants

Two male non-participants felt negatively about religious officials, two felt positively, and one was indifferent. Two of the four female non-participants felt indifferently about religious officials.

#### Differences

Even with this lack of church affiliation, the

majority of the sample, eleven out of nineteen respondents, considered themselves to be religious. Nine of the ten participants considered themselves religious, while only two of the non-participants thought of themselves as being religious. The participants defined religion in terms of their own moral values as opposed to the non-participants, whose definition derived from the traditional church concept. Eighteen respondents expressed a belief in God. One non-participant, a female, identified herself as an atheist.

#### Social Workers

##### Participants

Nine of the ten participants in citizen groups had contact with social workers; one female did not. The contact occurred for various reasons: placement of children, marital problems, and rehabilitation employment projects. Only one member of the participant group, who had any contact with a social worker, did so as a result of her work. She worked as an indigenous social worker, and her contact was that of case consultation.

One female participant had positive feelings about social workers, while one male was indifferent. Three male participants and five females had negative feelings. The respondents stating negative feelings showed no fear of social workers, but found them lacking in life experience and too textbook oriented. The participants particularly disliked what they labelled as the arrogance of social workers,

"do gooders", as they were defined. Some participants described social workers as "controlling" and "pimps of the poor". It was also felt that some social workers were helpful as long as they maintained the role of resource person, and created a situation where clients did not become dependent on them. The majority of the participants felt that the social workers were too questioning and provided little concrete assistance. Some examples of this were refusing aid when their welfare cheque depleted and helping them secure better housing. One participant argued indignantly that social workers had never helped the community secure an English-speaking high school. He stated that they would rather talk about why you do not have a job, than to help you get that job.

#### Social Agencies

All the four male participants and four of the six females had negative feelings about social agencies. Only one female participant had positive feelings and one was indifferent. The indifferent female explained that although employed by a social agency, she did not understand what it really consisted of. This individual was not a member of any of the citizen action groups, but was a member of a church group called the Rosary Group. It was through that group that she was able to take a social work indigenous training course and then secured employment with a family agency.

The eight participants who had negative feelings

felt that social agencies were too directed toward people having money. They claimed that the agencies had done nothing concrete to help alleviate poverty. On the contrary, they succeeded in maintaining people in poverty through the hiring of case workers who did not deal with social issues, but rather with personal problems.

One male participant stated that the money spent on agency interiors and salaries, if directed to the poor in evolving jobs, would be far more beneficial. One other complaint of participants was in terms of the agencies' boards of directors, whom they described as a social club, totally alienated from the community and its problems. Two participants were on one of the boards and were extremely resentful that they were being used in the spirit of tokenism, and for "entertainment". They sensed that their role was to be the deprived member on the board, illustrating to all an example of a poor person. The other participants who were members of the board, illustrating to all an example of a poor person. The other participants who were members of the board were totally infuriated and frustrated at the lack of the board's response to issues such as education and helping the Pointe get a high school.

#### Non-Participants

Eight non-participants in citizen groups had contact with social workers; one male had no contact. Seven non-participants had positive feelings toward social workers.

The remaining two were indifferent.

### Social Agencies

Five non-participants of whom three were male, had positive feelings about social agencies. They felt that they were useful institutions and doing a good job. Only one female non-participant had negative feelings and two males and one female non-participant were indifferent. The respondents who were positive toward social agencies either utilized them in obtaining personal help or in sending their children to the agencies' camps. One non-participant was a foster mother and for 25 years had been housing young infants until they were adopted. In general, the non-participants expressed the opinion that agencies were useful institutions to have in the community.

The author of the questionnaire wanted to know if the sample could differentiate between a social agency and a social worker. The author, at the onset, realized that the following questions would not be understood by all: Do you consider social workers and social agencies to be the same? Do you have individual feeling about each? If so, what are they? Therefore, the author asked each respondent if they understood the question. The rationale for this question was that if the respondents' answers as already stated pertaining to social workers and social agencies were to be valid, they should then be able to distinguish between the two.

### Participants

All the participants, excluding one, stated they understood the question. The female participant who did not was the indigenous social worker from the Rosary Group. In fact, during the interview, she expressed dislike for the philosophy of the citizen group. She felt that they have brought a bad name to the community because of their frequent demonstrations.

### Non-Participants

Three non-participants, two males and one female, stated they understood the question, while three male non-participants and three females did not.

### Medical

The entire sample, participants and non-participants, had yearly medical examinations and were all involved in a hospital, community clinic, or had a private doctor.

### Participants

Nine out of ten participants did not use the hospital out-patient department. Of the ten participants, five felt amicably toward doctors and five did not. All of the participants trusted doctors. Of the ten participants, five trusted psychiatrists and five did not.

### Non-Participants

Four out of nine non-participants did not use the hospital out-patient department. With the exception of one non-

participant, all felt amicably toward doctors. All the non-participants trusted doctors. Of the nine non-participants, five trusted their psychiatrists.

### Differences

The only distinct difference between participants and non-participants was their utilization of hospitals and clinics. The majority of participants utilized all medical facilities except outpatient departments as opposed to non-participants who made use of all medical facilities.

### Police

### Participants

All male participants had contact with the police. Three of the males had either served a prison term for "breaking and entering", "assault", or spent time as a youth in a reform institution for juvenile offenses. The other male participant, having once lived in a small town, had served as a volunteer policeman. Only one male participant had negative feelings about policemen. This male stated that once you had a record, as he had, you were more likely to be persecuted by the judicial system. He claimed that twice he had been picked up on suspicion of "breaking and entering", which he could not possibly have committed since he was in class at the time of the crimes. Yet, it took much effort and time on his part to prove his innocence. The rest, whether they stressed positive

or indifferent attitudes, felt that policemen were a necessity. Two female participants had direct contact with the police. One had been married to a policeman while the other one had been arrested during a citizen right group demonstration. Two others had indirect contact. One charged her husband with assault and the other respondent's son was arrested for setting fires in the neighbourhood. The other two had no contact with the police.

#### Non-Participants

No male non-participants served any prison term. Only one male in the sample had any charges laid against him and that was for non-support. Three of the four female non-participants had contact with the police. One had been arrested during her youth for running away from home. Another had charges laid against her for possession of stolen merchandise, but, as she stated, without her knowledge. The third female had no direct contact, but her husband had served a prison term for "breaking and entering".

#### Community Extension

This section of the questionnaire was included to see to what extent the activities were made use of in the community. It was also to find out about the usage of the mass media.

#### Participants

Two male participants read the newspaper while two do not. Of the six female participants, all read the newspaper. All participants use a clock or watch. Two male participants



frequent the tavern, two do not. Those who do, experience relaxation as opposed to a drinking spree. All of the participants, because of their community involvement, visit other areas of the city.

#### Non-Participants

Two male non-participants read the newspaper while three do not. Of the four females, three read the newspaper and one does not. Three of the five male non-participants stated they do not use a clock or a watch. Two male non-participants are not involved in any employment or educational course. Two of the five male non-participants go to a tavern. The bulk of non-participants now go to Chateaugay to play Bingo.

The following table indicates who went to community events and to which ones. As will be noticed, some respondents took part in more than one community event.

TABLE 2  
PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY EVENTS

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Bingo</u>	<u>Citizen Groups</u>	<u>Other</u>
Male	4	-	-	4	3
Female	6	-	4	6	1
	-	-	-	-	-
Total	10	-	4	10	4
<u>Non-Participants</u>					
Male	3	2	3	-	1
Female	3	1	3	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6	3	6	-	1

Both participants and non-participants tend to do most of their shopping, other than for groceries, in Verdun, the adjoining community.

### Differences

There was no significant difference between either group in the following categories - 1) go to movies; 2) read books; 3) listen to records; 4) watch television, and 5) use the telephone. The rationale each group gave for not reading the newspaper was quite different. The participant males felt the newspaper was oriented toward the middle class and against the poor. Both these individuals had tried to get newspaper coverage on some of the citizen movement activities, but what was eventually written, they commented, was heavily biased against the poor.

The non-participants, who did not read the paper, either could not read or stated they had no time to read it.

### Environmental Contact

#### Participants

Six of the ten participants moved more often than three times yearly. Seven participants had negative feelings about the housing conditions; one was indifferent and two were positive. All but one participant had friends living in Pointe St. Charles.

Non-Participants

Seven out of nine non-participants moved less than twice a year. Of the nine non-participants, five had negative feelings, one had positive feelings, and three were indifferent concerning the housing conditions in Pointe St. Charles. Except for one respondent, all had friends living in Pointe St. Charles.

TABLE 3

GENERAL FEELINGS OF RESPONDENTS  
LIVING IN POINTE ST. CHARLES

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Indifferent</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Male	1	3		
Female	2	4	NONE	
	—	—		—
	3	7		10
<u>Non-Participants</u>				
Male	2	2	1	
Female	2	2	—	
	—	—	—	—
	4	4	1	9

Differences

It was interesting to note that among the participants who had positive feelings about the community, their attempt at changing some of the conditions had much to do with the positive feelings they generated. During the interview, the researcher found that none of the non-participants had the

same feelings of concern about the community's conditions, as strongly stressed by the participants.

While the statistics have pointed out no significant difference between the two groups, analysis of their extended responses revealed that participants felt that if they could implement change in the community they would stay. Otherwise, if no change was foreseeable, they would have no desire to remain. Some participants felt the binding of family ties and could not imagine a change of location. Those who expressed a desire to leave, expected to live in a community similar to Pointe St. Charles and try to introduce change there. The non-participants who expressed the wish to remain in the community did so, they claimed, because they felt their "roots" were well entrenched and a move seemed unrealistic to them. Among the non-participants, the possibility of a change of location depended on their future financial standing. A move to them meant living in a neighbourhood of better economic status.

### Politics

#### Participants

Within the participant group, two of the four males and two of the six female participants learned about citizen groups through their friends. One male and three female participants learned of groups through a social worker. This social worker was not attached to any formal social agency;

rather, he was salaried by the Anglican Church and had "carte blanche" to help evolve an active citizen group in the Pointe. Two participants learned about the group through the community grapevine.

All participants, except for one, had positive feelings about citizen groups. The one female who did not, did not belong to any group but as already stated, had been involved with a church group and disliked citizen groups. She stated that their tactics were too unconventional for her. She explicitly informed the author that she thought demonstrations should be made illegal. She felt that social workers were doing the best possible job and that part of the problem of poverty was that citizens were having too many "sit-ins", spending too much money on beer and not looking hard enough for a job.

Some of the participants' feelings were passive. Two participants explained that by being involved in citizen groups, they were exposed to a multiplicity of problems and realized that their situation was not so difficult. Seven members felt themselves very committed to social change and saw that it could only emerge by practising the group's philosophy of "self help". These people, three males and four females, saw citizen groups as change agents. One participant female was more ambiguous in her definition of citizen groups. She saw herself only as a non-active member, and questioned whether the group could bring about change.

Of the participants, two males and one female had friends who did not belong to citizen groups. One male participant, who defined himself as being only peripherally involved, restricted his friends only to those sharing his interest in the ham radio. The other male described himself as a "loner" and stated that he preferred not to have any close attachments. The female participant was the individual who had belonged to a religious citizen group, and stated that most of her friends lived outside of Pointe St. Charles.

Four participants - three males and one female, saw themselves, if necessary, running for political office although they all expressed a distrust for the political system. They also saw the importance of citizen groups becoming politicized, in that citizen groups must become more recognized by society and in general, as possessing "power".

#### Non-Participants

The non-participants' attitudes pertaining to citizen groups were equally divided. Three had negative feelings, three felt indifferent and three had positive feelings. The non-participants who had negative feelings felt citizen groups were of no use. One individual expressed the conviction that he was poor and would die poor. Although he was involved in a manpower course, he saw his future to be dim.

Of all the three non-participants who had positive feelings about citizen groups, only one thought of them as con-

structive. This respondent, a female, stated: "I think citizen groups are wonderful. They bring people out of their homes in an attempt to solve some of the Pointe's problems". She stated that if she were not so old (over sixty-five), she would be out there. All of the non-participants saw themselves as having no interest in politics. Five of the nine non-participants indicated a desire for the old political system where the Member of Provincial Parliament was easily reachable.

#### Difference

All ten participants had contact with citizen groups and all nine non-participants had no contact with citizen groups. Nor did they have any desire to. There were four of the ten participants who felt that they could be politically involved in contrast to the non-participants, all of whom had absolutely no interest in politics.

#### "Who Am I" Scale

Both sample groups responded negatively to the administration of the "Who Am I" test. The respondents did not relish doing it, and needed a great deal of encouragement on the part of the researcher to attempt it. All, however, did the test, with the exception of one non-participant female who gave up. The mean time the non-participants took to complete the test was thirty minutes, as opposed to the participants, whose mean time was fifteen minutes.

Kuhn and McPartland indicated that the ordering of responses on the page tended to exhaust all the consensual references before they would make (if at all) any sub-consensual references. Having once begun to make sub-consensual references, they tended to make no more consensual references. The researcher found this not to be the case. In both groups, sub-consensual and consensual responses were interwoven throughout. As a result, the locus was calculated by the total number of consensual responses, regardless of whether a sub-consensual reference interrupted the consensual flow.

TABLE 4  
 CONSENSUAL AND SUB-CONSENSUAL REFERENCES AND  
 LOCUS SCORES OF THE PARTICIPANT GROUP

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Number of Consensual Responses</u>	<u>Number of Sub-Consensual Responses</u>	<u>Locus</u>
<u>Males</u>			
A	1	19	1
B	3	17	3
C	6	6	6
D	1	14	1
			<hr/>
Mean Score			2.8
<u>Females</u>			
E	9	11	9
F	5	15	5
G	4	11	4
H	1	19	1
I	5	15	5
J	8	12	8
			<hr/>
Mean Score			3.5



TABLE 5

CONSENSUAL AND SUB-CONSENSUAL REFERENCES AND  
LOCUS SCORES OF THE NON-PARTICIPANT GROUP

<u>Non-Participants</u>	<u>Number of Consensual Responses</u>	<u>Number of Sub-consensual Responses</u>	<u>Locus</u>
<u>Males</u>			
A	8	12	8
B	9	11	9
C	1	16	1
D	7	3	7
E	3	13	3
			—
Mean Score			5.3
<u>Females</u>			
F	2	18	2
G	10	2	10
H	1	1	1
I	5	11	5
			—
Mean Score			4.5

TABLE 6

MEANS OF LOCUS SCORES OF  
PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS

	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Non-Participants</u>
Male	2.8	5.3
Female	3.5	4.5
	—	—
Total Mean of Locus	3.2	4.9

There does appear to be a difference between participants and non-participants in terms of the variable self esteem as measured by the "Who Am I" Scale. Operationally, self esteem has been defined as the number of consensual statements each respondent made.<sup>1</sup> A high percentage of the consensual statements elicited by a respondent, according to Kuhn and McPartland, represents a high self esteem. The converse exists for low self esteem.<sup>2</sup>

Both groups, as was expected and indicated by the mental health statistics of the poor, have low self esteem, according to Kuhn and McPartland's terms of reference. It was interesting to note that the non-participants had the higher score of the two groups, although of course, this difference cannot be said to have any statistical significance.

Because of the small number and the non-randomness of the entire sample, the researcher did not apply any statistical test of the significance of this numerical difference. The majority of the responses in both groups were subconsensual, and indicated that the respondents understood the test. However, the validity of this test must be questioned. Subconsensual responses often provided a great deal of information as to a respondent's subjective sense of contentment, well being, and self attitudes. Possible ex-

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<sup>1</sup> M. H. Kuhn & T. S. McPartland, An Empirical Investigation of Self Attitudes, P.71

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

planation for this phenomenon might be that respondents tended to take as "given", the sort of factual identifying information which would be defined as consensual, e.g., I am white; I am male, I am Catholic, etc. It might be that the so-called sub-consensual responses are the more revealing in terms of the subjects' self perceptions and, therefore, the more meaningful in terms of self esteem.

The researcher has interpreted the participants' responses as being somewhat more articulate and introspective, but this is purely impressionistic, and may reflect the researcher's own bias about the positive value of citizen group participation.

The majority of participants were separated from their mates and all the male participants had severed relationships with their wives. Possibly these males were, for the first time, beginning to utilize some of their innate potential by leading citizen meetings, helping their neighbours secure more welfare and also getting involved in future-oriented programs, such as education. Here they attempted to force the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal to not only place a high school in the Pointe, but also to get them to try to make the educational program more relevant. As one individual said: "Teach the students about the slums, e.g., lanes, rats, sanitary conditions".

In contrast, the majority of non-participants not

only stated that they did not understand the educational system, but refrained from any involvement. Schools to them were "areas of change" out of their span of control and they accepted, although with hostility, the authority of the school.

As the researcher discovered, each male participant had mentioned that not only did his wife not want him to continue his involvement with the citizen group, but would have preferred him to accept any job. Significantly, they stated that their wives refused to recognize what they felt was the importance of their role in the fight for social improvement. The women participants who were separated had all been separated prior to joining the group. Since their involvement in citizen groups, they have been far more active in community concerns.

The majority of male participants had all, at one time, served prison terms, whereas now were directing their energy toward socially-approved goals, e.g., education and individual rights. They were finally recognizing their potential; some were becoming employees of social agencies as well as members of the boards of directors; others were attending Federal Government conferences on poverty.

The non-participants all trusted and respected doctors, who are symbolic of an established authority present in our social order. The majority of participants, while they realized that doctors were a necessity, distrusted them

and were able to differentiate between what they considered a good and an inadequate doctor. Furthermore, the majority of participants did not go to hospital outpatient clinics, but as opposed to non-participants, chose private doctors. In this way, the participants did not have to take the doctor that the hospital supplied, but rather they chose who they wanted. This indicates some control over their environment.

A growing sense of individual power and conviction can be inferred in their rationale for their negative feelings about social workers. What they were opposed to was that social workers refused the philosophy of citizen "self help". Social workers were seen as attempting to create situations of dependency by giving out clothing and maintenance casework. This practice was accepted by non-participants. The non-participants accepted social workers as authoritative figures, while participants called them such epithets as "pimps of the poor".

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study failed to support the researcher's main hypothesis: that participants in a citizens' group would have higher self esteem than non-participants. Since the limitations of the study preclude generalizations of any sort, the researcher will not attempt to draw any conclusions about the variable of self esteem in the two sample groups under study. However, it appears quite legitimate to question the validity of the "Who Am I" scale as an accurate measure of self esteem when applied to a lower-class population.

The Kuhn and McPartland "Who Am I" scale was chosen by the researcher to measure an individual's anchorage into the social system. This anchorage consisted of roles, and not of sentiments which could be left to interpretation. It was the participants who had lower scores than non-participants, although both groups ranked low in absolute terms.

The researcher cannot account for the fact that participants ranked even lower than non-participants, when the contrary was expected. If the instrument is a valid measure of self esteem, a larger study might yield different results. Or, it could be speculated that the participants had rejected their social roles to a greater extent than had non-participants, and thus saw no need to define them. If, in fact, these participants do have lower self esteem than the

non-participants, it might be this which has caused them to seek recognition and self-worth through community involvement.

The research question about the relative level of self esteem in citizens' group participants as compared to non-participants has not been answered. However, the researcher believes that this is a fruitful and necessary line of inquiry, which could be pursued in a larger study with a more suitable self-concept instrument.

The exploratory-descriptive aspect of this study categorized environmental points of contact, and expressed attitudes toward social institutions and authorities. The data at least suggested that participants have a wider range of environmental contacts, e.g., involvement in community activities, excursions outside the immediate area of Pointe St. Charles, interaction with professionals, etc. In the attitudinal realm, participants appeared to hold somewhat more negative, questioning and challenging views of established institutions and professions. The researcher advances this suggestion with due caution, recognizing that clear empirical evidence from the data cannot be marshalled in its support. In view of the ideology of the anti-poverty movement, which stresses the systemic causes of poverty and the concomitant necessity of challenging the status quo through social action and confrontation, it could be expected that participants would have a greater tendency to express "challenging attitudes". Participants definitely indicated throughout the interview schedule,

a greater interest in gaining control over their environment.

### Relevance For Social Work

Dumont believes that the purposes of psychotherapy and social change are to widen the range of possibilities and to increase the options of human behaviour. It is this philosophy which has great implications for social work practice.

As expressed within this research, Riessman's social therapeutic approach enables new trends in social work to evolve - getting clients to help themselves. Twenty-two years ago, Wittenberg was encouraging citizen self help groups, yet it is only recently that they are emerging as a force for social change as well as personal growth. If one looks back over the last six months, one must be very impressed by the change that has occurred in the Montreal context, particularly changes in welfare distribution, and the fact of hospital pharmacies being forced to remain open. Had citizens allowed the social workers to maintain a "parental" attitude, these changes might never have occurred. The reason for the change can be found in the citizen group ideology of self help.

Now that change is seen as a possibility, citizens are believing that they can exert some control over their physical and social environment. In the researcher's opinion, the most promising new trend in social work practice with low-income citizens, is that of working with groups which promote



both social change and individual mental health. The philosophy should be one of self help, which calls for the setting aside of the old "pathology model" in favour of an approach which is predicated upon the belief in the individual's own ability to grow and change.

On the assumption that social workers in Montreal will increasingly have contact with citizens' group participants, whose numbers and collective strength can be expected to grow, it would seem important that social workers reassess their role. The participants in this study regarded professional social workers in a less than favourable light, and the criticism centered on their "paternalistic" approach to the poor. Even when individual social workers were seen as sympathetic and aware of the realities of poverty, the feeling was expressed that the agencies for which they worked imposed restraints on their effectiveness in dealing with the problems.

These participants were unwilling to accept the traditional client role vis-a-vis social workers, but did find the concept of professionals as resource people acceptable. The researcher believes that these attitudes toward the social work profession may be more generally held by organized low income citizens, and that they should be heeded by professionals and educators.

The researcher is acutely aware of the limitations of this study, and hopes to extend it in the future, on a much larger scale. It is hoped that students and professionals alike will involve themselves in the phenomenon of citizens' groups, both as researchers and as committed supporters.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

This study was an exploratory attempt at isolating some of the characteristics which distinguish participants in low-income citizens' groups from non-participants, when both groups are drawn from the same geographic and socio-economic population.

The rationale for this study was that low-income citizens' groups have emerged as a new force in Montreal, and have already made a noticeable impact upon the social welfare field. Community organization has been seen as a promising method of social intervention for social workers in Montreal to deal with citizens' groups and indigenous workers. Furthermore, there is a body of theory which suggests that personal growth and change, or rehabilitation, may best be realized through the medium of involvement in a goal-oriented group.

Nineteen residents of Pointe St. Charles were selected for a comparative study. Ten of the subjects were participants in citizens' groups; nine were non-participants. The data gathering was of two forms: an interview schedule which categorized environmental points of contact, as well as attitudes toward social institutions; and the administration of a test to measure self esteem. The two sample groups - participants and non-participants - were then compared in

terms of the variable self esteem, and in terms of the range of environmental points of contact, and expressed attitudes toward social institutions. The central hypothesis being tested was that participants would have higher self esteem than non-participants. The researcher also anticipated that participants would have a greater range of environmental contacts, and would express more questioning and challenging attitudes toward established institutions.

The findings of this study did not support the central hypothesis - that participants would have higher self esteem than non-participants. However, the small size of the sample groups precludes generalization, and no significance can be inferred from the results.

Participants did tend to have a greater range of environmental contacts, such as: involvement in community activities, excursions outside the Pointe St. Charles community, and interaction with professional social workers. Furthermore, they tended to verbalize more negative and challenging attitudes toward social institutions, such as social agencies and the educational system.

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of the data was the rather unfavourable regard in which social workers were held, by participants. Criticism centered on the "paternalistic" approach to poor people, and the lack of understanding of the realities of poverty, which participants perceived as characteristic of most social workers.

## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW ADMINISTERED FOR POINTS OF CONTACT

#### Background

1. Code Number \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex \_\_\_\_\_
4. Marital Status:   Single  
                          Married  
                          Divorced  
                          Separated  
                          Common-law  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Children:  
    Number \_\_\_\_\_  
    Ages \_\_\_\_\_  
    In school \_\_\_\_\_  
    Working \_\_\_\_\_  
    Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Language (mother tongue) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Ethnic background \_\_\_\_\_
8. Family background:  
    a. Marital status of parents \_\_\_\_\_  
    b. Father's education \_\_\_\_\_  
    c. Father's occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
    d. Mother's education \_\_\_\_\_  
    e. Mother's occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
    f. Number of brothers \_\_\_\_\_

Number of sisters \_\_\_\_\_

g. Sibling position \_\_\_\_\_

h. Present residence of family \_\_\_\_\_

i. Number of times family has moved  
while you were still at home \_\_\_\_\_

j. At what age did you leave home \_\_\_\_\_

9. What are your main interests?

10. Present situation.

Future plans.

11. Brief physical description.

Family

Have you maintained contact with your family, extended family,  
e.g., father, mother, siblings, etc.

What feelings do you have about them?

What type of family life do you have now?

Problems

Other areas - closeness  
interests

Education

- A. What grade in school did you reach?
- B. Why did you leave school?
- C. How do you feel about the educational system?
- D. What type of educational plans do you have for yourself now?
- E. What type of educational plans do you have for your children  
(if you have any); if not, what would these plans consist of?

F. How do your friends feel about the educational system?

Doctors

A. When was the last time you or your family saw a doctor?

B. Why did you do so?

C. Where:

- 1. Private Doctor \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Clinic - within community \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Hospital Out-Patient Clinic \_\_\_\_\_

D. Frequency - How often do you go, etc.

E. Did you go on your own initiative or were you encouraged by someone else to go?

F. How do you feel about doctors?

- G. Have you ever been in contact with a psychiatrist (a doctor with whom you discussed your emotional problems)?
- H. For what reasons have you had contact with a psychiatrist?
- I. How frequently did you go?
- J. Who initiated or advised you to get in contact with a psychiatrist?
- K. How do you feel about talking about yourself to a (doctor) psychiatrist?

Religious Professionals

- A. What personal contact do you have with a religious official?
- B. Why did this contact occur?



C. Who initiated the contact - you, the minister, or your friends?

D. How do you feel about religious officials?

Religion

- What contact have you had with what you would consider a religious group or religious activity?

- How frequently do you have contact with religious groups or activities?

- Do you consider yourself a religious person in any sense?

- Are you following the religion of your parents; if not, what are you now and why did you change?

Social Workers

A. Have you ever had contact with a social worker?

For what reasons have you had contact?

Who initiated the contact?

B. How do you feel about social workers?

Social Agencies

A. What has been your contact, with what you would consider a social agency?

B. How do you feel about social agencies?

C. Do you consider social workers and social agencies to be the same, or do you have individual feelings about each? What are they?

Police

- 1) Have you or any member of your family/other, ever had contact with the police?
- 2) Reason for contact
- 3) Frequency of contact
- 4) What are your feelings pertaining to the police?

Environmental Contacts

Community

1. Do you live alone or with others?
2. How frequently do you move? Why?
3. What is the housing condition like in your community?

4. What is your general feeling about the area in which you live?
5. Do your friends and family live in this area?
6. Do you have plans of leaving the community in the near future (2 years)?
7. Do you have plans of leaving the community at any time in the future.

#### Politics

- A. Do you take an active part in any political activity, e.g., citizen groups or cause?
- B. How did you learn about this activity or cause?
- C. What do you feel generally about political activity or commitment?

D. Are your friends politically active in any group?

Communication Extension

A. Do you:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> go to movies                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> read newspapers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> read books                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> use a clock or  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> listen to records                             | <input type="checkbox"/> watch           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> watch television                              | <input type="checkbox"/> go to a tavern  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> use the telephone                             |  |
| <br><input type="checkbox"/> go to community events<br>(specify which) | <br><input type="checkbox"/> Bingo       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen group   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other           |
| <br><input type="checkbox"/> leave the community                       |  |
| <br><input type="checkbox"/> to go out of the neighbourhood            |  |

How frequently?

B. Have you ever travelled outside of

- ☐ Montreal
- ☐ Quebec
- ☐ Canada

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