

SMALL CONTRACT PROPOSAL

Submitted to the U. S. Commissioner of Education  
Under the Provisions of Public Law 531

Project Title: Collective Behavior Involving Problems of Race and  
the Public Schools

Submitted by: University of Chicago (Division of Social Sciences),  
5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637

Initiated by: Gerald A. McWorter, Graduate Student in Sociology,  
University of Chicago, and Research Assistant,  
National Opinion Research Center

Sponsored by: Peter H. Rossi, Professor, Department of Sociology,  
University of Chicago, and Director of the National  
Opinion Research Center  
Area Code 312, PLaza 2-6444

Approved by: D. Gale Johnson, Dean, Division of Social Sciences  
Area Code 312, MIDway 3-0800, Ext. 2941

Transmitted by: W. B. Harrell, Vice President for Special Projects  
Area Code 312, MIDway 3-0800, Ext. 3045

Date Transmitted:

## I. ABSTRACT

### A. Objectives

The readiness of the Negro community to respond to problems of public education through mass action continues to be a topic of major concern. This proposal is for the analysis of a particular situation directly related to collective behavior and social movements, public education, and the Negro. The critical problem to be discussed in the proposed analysis is the current relationship and interaction between public education and the Negro community. This will be developed by looking at those means by which the Negro community develops a point of view regarding public education, and those factors which account for a predisposition to act on the basis of a point of view.

### B. Procedure

Using data collected from 362 Negro parents in Chicago prior to a school boycott in February, 1964, how they arrived at and why they hold their position on both this and an earlier boycott (October, 1963) will be examined. While the major dependent variable is the respondents' position on the boycott, particular attention will be given to the climate within which the decision was made, the social roles of the respondents, their perception and evaluation of public education, and the respondents' possible interaction related to the boycott.

## II. PROBLEM

Demands for improved education for Negroes have sharply increased in the last decade, and both objectives and means of reaching these objectives have varied. From the time of the Civil War, Negroes have submitted petitions and filed legal suits, as well as taken more militant forms of action. During 1963, the school boycott became the method of militant northern civil rights groups demanding "quality integrated education." The root of such demands was de facto school segregation.

In October, 1963, there was a boycott of the Chicago schools during which 225,000 children stayed away from classes for one day. In early 1964, some of the more militant civil rights organizations felt another boycott was necessary in order to dramatize even more effectively their demands for improved education for Negroes in Chicago. While the first boycott had been supported by most Negro organizations in Chicago, the second, scheduled for February, 1964, met with considerable opposition. The organized opposition centered around conservative civil rights groups, as well as several Negro aldermen. The division within the Negro community ran deep--on the one side the militant organizations, and on the other conservative organizations and the political establishment.

Two questions raised just prior to the second boycott constitute the problem at hand: What aspects of public education aroused the Negro community? How would the Negro community react to conflicting demands by its leadership to do something about the boycott? Our central concern is to identify and measure the basic problems and precipitating factors generating mass mobilization in the form of a city-wide school boycott.

Both aspects are significant, given the importance of public education to the Negro community in general and education as an issue for minority group leadership. This analysis will specifically answer the following questions: What do Negro parents consider to be the function of public education? What do they perceive as problems? How do they formulate points of view about such problems? How do evaluative attitudes held by Negro parents relate and/or interact with issues as projected by leadership groups? What do Negro parents feel should be done to solve the problems? Who do they charge with this responsibilities?

What is at stake is the degree of acceptance and support a public school system must have from particular subpopulations. For most big northern industrial cities, like Chicago, this means relating to the Negro community and its leadership, since in many of these cities Negroes constitute nearly 50 per cent of the student population. One student of the problem has noted that "if public education cannot evolve toward its historic goal of universality, it cannot be maintained in its present form as a general municipal service. Much more than the question of racial segregation is involved in this conversation, but no other issue exposes the total dilemma so dramatically."<sup>1</sup>

### III. COMMENTS REVIEWING THE RELATED LITERATURE

The sociological literature on the involvement of the Negro

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Dentler, "Barriers to Northern School Desegregation," Daedalus, 1966, 95, No. 1, 45-63.

community in reform movements and public education is sparse despite the amount of attention given these topics in popular writing. A gleaning of this literature follows.

Conant,<sup>2</sup> Sexton,<sup>3</sup> and Passow<sup>4</sup> explore new approaches to understanding the problems of low-income families. These authors for the most part attempt to redefine these problems and thereby point out new directions for policy making. The analyses of Clark<sup>5</sup> and Silberman<sup>6</sup> develop the point that public education has added to the "cumulative pathology of the Negro ghetto." These authors chiefly describe and analyze basic problems experienced by low-income families, particularly problems concerning public education.

Researches on civil rights activity in local communities are best represented by the work of Burgess,<sup>7</sup> Thompson,<sup>8</sup> Walker,<sup>9</sup> and Killian.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>James B. Donant, Slums and Suburbs (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

<sup>3</sup>Patricia Sexton, Education and Income (New York: Viking Press, 1961).

<sup>4</sup>A. Harry Passow (ed.), Education in Depressed Areas (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

<sup>6</sup>Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in Black and White (New York: Random House, 1964).

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Elaine Burgess, Negro Leadership in a Southern City (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962).

<sup>8</sup>Daniel Thompson, The Negro Leadership Class (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

<sup>9</sup>A. Walker, "The Functions of Disunity: Negro Leadership in a Southern City," Journal of Negro Education, 1963, 32, 227-36.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis Killian, "Community Structure and the Role of the Negro Leader-Agent," Sociological Inquiry, 1965, 35, No. 1, 69-79; Killian and Charles Grigg, Racial Crisis in America: Leadership in Conflict (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964); Killian and D. Smith, "Negro Protest Leaders in a Southern Community," Social Forces, 1960, 38, 253-57.

These are empirical studies on civil rights leadership, and the Negro community, all concerned with southern localities. Thompson finds a functional pattern of Negro leadership in which Negro leaders are paired with white counterparts. Killian found a more categorical change from one kind of conservative leader to a more militant group of "new leaders." It is important to continue this kind of analysis as these generalizations, based usually on a case study, have not yet been systematically tested and organized into a body of coherent knowledge.

Williams and Ryan<sup>11</sup> and Campbell et al.<sup>12</sup> are most similar to the study proposed here. Both deal with the reaction of white communities to school integration. Campbell et al. studied white reaction to the closing of the public schools in Norfolk, Virginia, whereas Williams and Ryan present case studies describing how in general the white community has dealt with the situation. The problems confronting a Negro family when deciding whether to participate in desegregation efforts have not been extensively investigated. However, Weinstein and Geisel<sup>13</sup> present a preliminary discussion of these problems and some sociological correlates of participation.

Although not primarily research reports, the following are

---

<sup>11</sup>Robin Williams and Margaret W. Ryan, Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954).

<sup>12</sup>Ernest Campbell et al., When a City Closes Its Schools (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

<sup>13</sup>Eugene A. Weinstein and Paul Geisel, "Family Decision Making Over Desegregation," Sociometry, 1962, 25, 21-29; Weinstein and Geisel, "The Negro Family's Decision to Desegregate," Negro Educational Review, 1961, 12, 4-11.

particularly relevant to a study in Chicago. Hauser<sup>14</sup> and Havighurst,<sup>15</sup> as chairmen of committees set up by the board of education to analyze the problems of race and public education in Chicago, present extensive data on the Chicago public school system. Racial composition, achievement scores, school facilities, etc., are of interest here. Together they contain the most information available concerning Negroes in the Chicago public schools. Barron<sup>16</sup> presents a brief, though informative, historical sketch of the problems in Chicago and the ways in which people have attempted to solve them.

Wilson<sup>17</sup> spells out the dynamics of leadership in the Negro community of Chicago as of 1959. His concerns include the social organization of this leadership, its goals, and the development of issues as handled by it. This case study is important, for it is recent enough to be directly relevant to this study. Wilson deals principally with the political behavior of the Negro leadership, a focus directly built into the present research design.

---

<sup>14</sup>Philip M. Hauser, Chairman, "Report to the Board of Education, City of Chicago, by the Advisory Panel on Integration of the Public Schools," March 31, 1964.

<sup>15</sup>Robert J. Havighurst, "The Public Schools of Chicago: A Survey for the Board of Education of the City of Chicago," 1964.

<sup>16</sup>Harold Barron, "History of Chicago School Segregation to 1953," in Meyer Weinberg (ed.), Learning Together (Chicago: Teachers for Integrated Schools, 1964).

<sup>17</sup>James Q. Wilson, Negro Politics: The Search for Leadership (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960.)

#### IV. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are;

1. To investigate the attitudes of Negro parents toward public education and the Chicago public schools as related to their support of school boycotts. The writer's concern will be with the general problem of public education for minority groups in Chicago as viewed by our respondents.

2. To analyze the way in which parents approached the decision to support the boycott or not. The focus here will be on the factors weighed by our respondents in coming to a decision to keep their children home or send them to school on the day of the boycott.

3. To examine the patterns of stability and change in boycott position. This analysis will compare respondents' positions on the first boycott with their positions on the second boycott.

4. To analyze and describe the claims made on the Negro community by the civil rights movement and the political establishment. This will be concerned with the organizational campaigns urging parents to either support or reject the boycott.

#### V. PROCEDURE



3. Utilizing standard survey analysis techniques of cross-tabulations, those factors related to making a decision (dimensions of the issue as well as personal contacts with people) will be identified and weighted according to the degree of influence represented. A model of decision making will be developed.

4. The social integration (political participation, organizational membership and activity, etc.) of the respondents will be cross-tabulated with boycott position and the pattern of decision making.

5. The pattern of decision making and the degree and nature of social integration will be correlated with patterns of stability and change in boycott position. Our data allow for analysis of possible "cross-pressure" effects.

Though there was more support of the second boycott than we expected, two important things should be said in support of the research design. First, there were defectors from a pro-boycott position. By sampling group (see Table 1), the proportions supporting the first boycott ranged from roughly 75 to 90 per cent; support for the second boycott ranged from 56 to 70 per cent. Secondly, there are many variables contained in the data allowing for an analysis of how and why people made decisions. The first point suggests some differences between the support for the first and second boycotts, while the other allows for an analysis of the meaning of the respondents' position. It is possible that while there might have been nearly unanimous behavior, there was no single meaning for this action.

#### D. Time Schedule

Nine months devoted to analysis and the preparation of a report.

VI. PERSONNEL

Gerald A. McWorter

Date of birth: November 21, 1942

Place of birth: Chicago, Illinois

Family status: Single

Education: M.A. (Sociology), University of Chicago (Expected)  
March, 1966

B.A. (Sociology and Philosophy), Ottawa University,  
June, 1963

Research training: Research on decision making and public education  
(Comparative study of school desegregation controversies)  
under the supervision of Robert Crain, Senior Study  
Director, National Opinion Research Center, 1964 to  
present

Research Assistant to John Johnstone and Ramon Rivera,  
Senior Study Directors, National Opinion Research  
Center, on a study of adult education, 1963-64

Present activities: Graduate student in sociology, University of Chicago

Research Assistant, National Opinion Research Center

Master's thesis: "The Structure and Process of the Civil Rights Movement  
in 14 Cities"

The sponsor of this proposed project, Peter H. Rossi, is a professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, and Director of the National Opinion Research Center. He will serve in an advisory capacity for the proposed research.

## VII. FACILITIES

The National Opinion Research Center, which will conduct the activities described in this proposal, is an affiliate of the University of Chicago, experienced in the conduct of surveys on a wide variety of topics. In its twenty-three-year history it has conducted more than five hundred surveys, several of which have been concerned with education.

Supplies, clerical services, office space, and data processing facilities, including an IBM 1401 computer, will be available at the National Opinion Research Center.

## VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

There is no other support available for this project.

This proposal has been submitted to no other agencies.

This proposal has not been previously submitted to the Office of Education.

This study, originally supported by the National Opinion Research Center for the data collection, has not been supported by any other agency.