

**CHILDREN IN THE  
URBAN ENVIRONMENT**



Second Edition

# CHILDREN IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Linking Social Policy and Clinical Practice

*By*

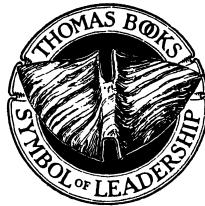
**NORMA KOLKO PHILLIPS, D.S.W.**

*Professor and Director  
Social Work Program  
Lehman College  
City University of New York  
New York, New York*

*and*

**SHULAMITH LALA ASHENBERG STRAUSSNER, D.S.W.**

*Professor and Director  
Post-Master's Certificate Program in the  
Clinical Approaches to Addictions  
Editor, Journal of Social Work Practice  
in the Addictions  
New York University School of Social Work  
New York, New York*



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## CONTRIBUTORS

**GREGORY ACEVEDO, PH.D.**

*Assistant Professor  
Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service*

**STEPHEN BURGHARDT, PH.D.**

*Professor  
Hunter College School of Social Work  
City University of New York*

**GRACIELA M. CASTEX, ED.D.**

*Associate Professor  
Social Work Program  
Lehman College  
City University of New York*

**JOHNNIE HAMILTON-MASON, PH.D.**

*Associate Professor and Director of Doctoral Program  
Simmons College School of Social Work*

**GLADYS GONZALEZ-RAMOS, PH.D.**

*Associate Professor  
New York University School of Social Work*

**RICHARD HOLODY, D.S.W.**

*Assistant Professor  
Social Work Program  
Lehman College  
City University of New York*

**SALLY HILL JONES, PH.D.**

*Assistant Professor  
School of Social Work  
Texas State University-San Marcos*

*Children in the Urban Environment***CHRISHANA M. LLOYD, PH.D.**

*Research Associate/Policy Analyst  
MDRC*

**CARL MAZZA, D.S.W.**

*Assistant Professor  
Social Work Program  
Lehman College  
City University of New York*

**DIANE M. MIRABITO, D.S.W.**

*Clinical Assistant Professor  
New York University School of Social Work*

**MERYL NADEL, D.S.W.**

*Associate Professor and Chair  
Social Work Department  
Iona College*

**DORINDA N. NOBLE, PH.D.**

*Professor and Director  
School of Social Work  
Texas State University-San Marcos*

**NORMA KOLKO PHILLIPS, D.S.W.**

*Professor and Director  
Social Work Program  
Lehman College  
City University of New York*

**DANIEL POLLACK, M.S.W., J.D.**

*Professor  
Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University  
Senior Fellow, Center for Adoption Research  
University of Massachusetts Medical School  
Worcester, Massachusetts*

**HILDA P. RIVERA, PH.D.**

*Assistant Professor  
Hunter College School of Social Work  
City University of New York*

**MARTHA G. RODITTI, PH.D.**  
*Assistant Professor and Field Coordinator*  
*School of Social Work*  
*New Mexico State University at Las Cruces*

**SHULAMITH LALA ASHENBERG STRAUSSNER, D.S.W.**  
*Professor and Director*  
*Post-Master's Certificate Program in the Clinical Approaches to Addictions*  
*Editor, Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*  
*New York University School of Social Work*

**ADELE WEINER, PH.D.**  
*Professor*  
*Metropolitan College of New York*  
*Audrey Cohen College of Human Services and Education*





## PREFACE

Since the first edition of this book was published ten years ago, the cities have been revitalized and enriched by the absorption of increasingly diverse immigrant groups from around the world. Urban communities continue to be the intellectual and artistic centers of this country, with an ever-increasing diversity of music, foods, and crafts representing their new populations. As in the past, the cities become home to those seeking new opportunities in life, while also harboring those suffering economic deprivation.

Yet, much has changed. Urban communities in the U.S. have witnessed great disasters, both man-made and natural, including the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and the devastation of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. The globalization of the marketplace has had serious impact on the job market, and critical resources have been diverted to various war efforts during the past decade. Further, 1996 brought with it welfare reform—new welfare policies that transformed how this country views public welfare and responds to the needs of its people. The gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” has grown wider than in many previous generations.

It is these changes that led us to do a second edition of this book. The 12 chapters in this edition address some of the current key social and economic factors impacting on urban children today, including poverty, immigration, health and mental health issues, and youth gangs. The book also focuses on familial factors affecting urban children, including: children in out-of-home placement, those in substance-abusing families, as well as children with incarcerated parents, urban teen parents, and urban street children, most of whom arrive in the cities in search of a better, or at least a different life. This second edition ends with an epilogue that discusses the critical role of the community in addressing the many issues confronting children in today's urban environments.

We wish to thank the chapter authors for their hard work in bridging the links between social policies and clinical practices with children and families. We also would like to thank our own children, Adam, David, Sarina, and Allie, for helping us in our understanding of the many and diverse needs of children and youth. We are grateful to our publisher, Mr. Michael Payne Thomas, for seeing the value of an updated edition of this book and waiting for it patiently. Finally, we are grateful for the friendship, support, and the intellectual stimulation that resulted from this endeavor.

Norma Kolko Phillips

S. Lala Ashenberg Straussner

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i> .....	ix

### *Chapter*

#### SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

1. GROWING UP IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES FOR CHILDREN .....	5
<i>Norma Kolko Phillips</i>	

#### SECTION II: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IMPACTING ON URBAN CHILDREN

2. URBAN CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY .....	29
<i>Johnnie Hamilton-Mason and Gladys Gonzalez-Ramos</i>	
3. IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES .	50
<i>Graciela M. Castex</i>	
4. HEALTH ISSUES AFFECTING URBAN CHILDREN . .	75
<i>Diane Mirabito and Chrishana Lloyd</i>	
5. MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AFFECTING URBAN CHILDREN .....	97
<i>Dorinda N. Noble and Sally Hill Jones</i>	

6. URBAN YOUTH GANGS .....	122
<i>Gregory Acevedo</i>	
<b>SECTION III: FAMILIAL FACTORS IMPACTING ON URBAN CHILDREN</b>	
7. CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS .....	145
<i>Richard Holody</i>	
8. CHILDREN IN SUBSTANCE-ABUSING FAMILIES ..	169
<i>Meryl Nadel and Shulamith L.A. Straussner</i>	
9. CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS .....	191
<i>Carl Mazza</i>	
10. URBAN TEEN PARENTS .....	216
<i>Martha G. Roditti</i>	
11. URBAN STREET YOUTH: SEX, DRUGS AND HIV ..	244
<i>Adele Weiner and Daniel Pollack</i>	
<b>EPILOGUE: THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY</b>	
12. IT TAKES A VILLAGE: MOBILIZING URBAN COMMUNITIES FOR IMPROVED CHILD WELFARE SERVICES .....	269
<i>Hilda Rivera and Stephen Burghardt</i>	
<i>Index</i> .....	281

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## **Section I**

# **INTRODUCTION**





## Chapter 1

# GROWING UP IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT—OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES FOR CHILDREN

NORMA KOLKO PHILLIPS

Social problems exist in every setting, whether urban, suburban, exurban, rural, or small towns, and present profound obstacles for children and youth as they attempt to cope with developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence. Yet, because of the population density and the pervasiveness of social problems in urban areas, particularly in the inner-cities, the consequences of these problems are most visible there, as is their negative impact on children and youth. It is not surprising then, that organized responses to social problems developed in the cities.

Some social problems, such as homelessness, family poverty, unemployment, crime, drug abuse, language barriers, and discrimination may be coincidental to the urban environment. Other social problems, such as violence in schools and on the streets, gang activity, noise in public spaces, and overcrowding in schools and housing may be exacerbated by population density. Whether the problems were coincidental to, or were a product of the cities, their high visibility and the frequency of social disruptions evoked responses from community and political groups, and from the helping professions. These responses took the form of direct services to individuals, families, groups, and communities, as well as political actions aimed at the creation of policies that would increase opportunities for children and youth to fulfill their potential. These approaches also served to protect the social order.

The opportunities and obstacles confronted by children and youth in urban areas in the United States can be understood within the context of processes such as migration, immigration, urbanization, dis-