A STUDY OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AS THESE ARE A PART OF SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

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A STUDY OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AS THESE ARE A PART OF SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

By

Edward Pfau

AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Edward Pfau AN ABSTRACT

This study was concerned with ways public school officials can communicate more effectively with lay citizens. Aspects selected for study included: 1) successful communication principles; 2) research findings pertinent to communication; and 3) a critical analysis of school public relations procedures.

The major emphasis of the study was on means or media, and agents used. Pertinent communications research was reviewed for the purpose of selecting basic principles of communication. The standards developed were applied to public school settings.

Conclusions

1. School public relations procedures are basically concerned with the transfer of meaning between two or more people, organized in some form of a spatial and social relationship, using some kind of a medium and using written or spoken language.

2. Pertinent factors limiting and structuring the act and effectiveness of communication are: a) the originator; b) the receiver; and c) the medium used.

3. The frequency and intensity of exposure to information materials is not an index of effectiveness.

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4. Information items from mass media are selected for perception on the basis of audience expectations. Methods for increasing the reward expected and a reduction of the effort required for perception were identified.

5. Information efforts designed to reach all groups requires diversified materials, since adults read on different levels.

6. Current mass information efforts for school public relations purposes tend to reach those already "friendly" or interested but fail to reach groups not interested, unfriendly or whose expectations have been violated.

7. The relatively standardized, specific information media in current school use adapt readily to production requirements for a heterogeneous audience and may become a most effective contribution to the information effort when the needed audience research is performed.

8. The most effective means for reaching groups or individuals are those involving face-to-face discourse. A promising but little known procedure consists of the identification and utilization of "opinion leaders" for school public relations purposes. The organization of groups for school public relations efforts at communication supplements the mass and specific media now available.

Recommendations

1. Audience and content analysis research is needed to determine the effectiveness of recommended procedures in school public relations efforts.

2. Identification of the groups which current efforts at communication are not reaching should be undertaken.

3. The development of easily administered, valid means for identification of the state of information, opinion, and attitudes possessed by the adult members of a local community is needed.

4. The moral implications of the use of "tricks" for attention getting, manipulative techniques, and the arousal of emotions in school public relations programs need to be explored.

5. The development of easily used means for the identification of the "opinion leaders" in a community and methods for incorporating these persons into the current schemes for organizing groups for school public relations purposes is needed.

6. The relationship between knowledge of and attitudes toward the public school is in need of further exploration. Tentative information now available indicates

that the belief that friendly attitudes toward the school increase as the extent of knowledge increases may not be valid.

A STUDY OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AS THESE ARE A PART OF SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

By

Edward Pfau

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This is a study in the area of school public relations. The study deals in part with the efforts of teachers and parents to understand each other with communication between the administrator, members of the board of education, and citizens. In short, the study is concerned with selected aspects of oral and written communication, as these are involved in the area of school public relations. That such a study is important should need little elaboration, witness the concern expressed in recent articles on the subject of schools and education appearing in popular magazines. Some of these are highly critical of phases of the public education program. Others, not necessarily critical, reflect popular confusion and misunderstanding. A theme common to all of them refers to the absence of basic understanding between professional school people and members of the school public. The articles appear in magazines with a national circulation, but refer to local educational problems of communication in local communities. Citizens of the school community are expected to, and do, exercise judgment on a wide variety of school issues ranging

from those involved in balloting to approval or disapproval of the latest report card. The wisdom of this judgment or of these decisions depends in part on whether or not communication took place, and whether at an effective level, i.e. with some measure of understanding. This study is concerned with the application of some of the factors known to be involved in communication to the area of school public relations as this represents an effort at communication.

Setting for the Study

American public schools are local social agencies at least partially financed in most areas by some form of local taxation, and because of their public nature are the focus of varying degrees of public concern. Local responsibility for making decisions, to hold opinions, and to possess information in the various areas involved in public education is an inherent part of the concept of local school district control. All of these acts, whether or not overt, involve communication of some kind and varying degrees of mutual understanding. In virtually all the states, certain local decisions relating to public education are required by law to be made by the electors of the

district.[1] These decisions by ballot involve such things as maximum indebtedness of the district, terms of bond issues, indebtedness for erecting and equipping school buildings, and votes for exceeding a given specific tax levy. In addition, decisions are implicit in school board elections, as expressions of approval or disapproval of past and future policies. Besides the legal requirements for voting, it is assumed that ballot decisions are made on the basis of mature, considered judgment, and that sufficient interest exists to motivate the persons involved to expend the effort required to cast their votes. This process requires that communication and some degree of understanding exists before this can occur.

School public relations is a relatively recent addition to the field of school administration, having developed almost entirely since the early 1920's. The present degree of professional educational concern with the topic may be partially assessed from the fact that volume eight of the Education Index (June 1950-May 1953) lists 177 separate entries on the subject, ranging from "Activities Program as a Public Relations Medium" by W. A. Bennie to "Your

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[1] Paul C. Mort and W. C. Reusser, Public School Finance, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1941), p. 67.

School on the Air" by N.J.Renne.[2] The articles are concerned primarily with methods for the production of all kinds and types of information about schools, effective means for dissemination, and the scope of the information area has been broadened to include all phases of school operation. Despite this relatively recent preoccupation with the subject, Mr. Barnas Sears wrote in 1849: "The people at large do not read what is published on the subject of education;"[3] and stated further that since people who should read about education do not, he planned to tell them about it personally. The basic problem remains today; else administrators and teachers would not be admonished continuously in their professional journals to "watch their public relations."

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[2] The current confusion in the relationship between "Publicity" and "Public Relations" is partially indicated by the fact that the first entry in the Education Index under the topic "Public Relations" is to be found in Vol. 3 (July 1935-June 1938). This issue contained 114 items under the heading "School Publicity." Vol. 8 listed above contains only 78 entries under the heading "Publicity."

[3] Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education, submitted to the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1848-49. Boston, 1850, Barnas Sears, Secretary, pp. 29.

Some Historical Changes Affecting School-Public Communication

Individual members of the school public have had some kind of contact with schools from the time that the first school was organized in America until today. Pupils have attended schools; school boards have been elected by residents of the local district; and tax rates have been set. In fact, a multitude of activities have taken place involving aspects of communication. From Colonial days to the present, schools have been located in some kind of a population aggregate, whether these be towns, villages, cities, or some form of a rural district, and it has been necessary for people to talk, to exchange ideas, and to have some common conception of the problems involved in those phases of the educational program under consideration. When located in small areas with a limited population, the school tended to be a center for education for the community, and the building served as important social function in that it was often the largest available in the community suitable for group gatherings, and such things as entertainment programs, spelling bees, and box socials served important social functions and as settings for communication on a face-to-face basis. The teacher often "boarded 'round" and during this intimate association, discussed

educational affairs with members of the families with whom he lived. Communication was not identified as a problem, for most everyone knew about things concerning the school, for these topics were discussed along with other local items of interest.

Special attention was given to school affairs on such governmental occasions as the New England Town Meeting, and at annual school meetings. Cubberley states:

> Everywhere, with us, the school arose as a distinctly local institution, and to meet local needs.[4]

> Wherever half a dozen families lived near enough together to make organization possible, they were permitted, by the early laws, to meet together and vote to form a school district and organize and maintain a school.[5]

The school program of activities was much simpler; the total venture closer to the people involved, most everyone understood what took place, and there was little problem of understanding what was expected of teachers. Cubberley states on this point:

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[4]Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public School Administration, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922), p. 2.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

> When the civil school first arose, and for some time afterward, during its infancy as a public institution, the people of towns, in town meeting, arranged all details relating to its control. As the schools grew and increased in size and importance, the first of the functions represented by the two early votes, namely that of voting support, remained with the towns; but the second function, namely, that of choosing the teacher, became complicated, differentiated itself into a number of more or less professional acts, and was gradually delegated by the people to those who could represent them better than they could act for themselves.[6]

Organized efforts for public relations were not required under these conditions, for the social and physical setting was such that an organized program designed to inform people about their schools was not necessary. Information was exchanged with little or no emphasis on the process itself.

Change of all kinds, new discoveries and inventions, and the increase in tempo of more enduring changes have characterized the growth of the United States from its agrarian beginnings to the highly technical, industrial, and largely urban setting of today. Communication at an earlier period involved few of the problems now discernable, for localized interests and the intimacy of face-to-face contacts provided people with sufficient information to make

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[6] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

the relatively simple decisions required at town and annual school meetings, in school elections of one form or another, and on general school matters. Cooley states:

> In the United States, for instance, at the close of the eighteenth century, public consciousness of any active kind was confined to small localities. Travel was slow, uncomfortable and costly, and people undertaking a considerable journey often made their wills beforehand. The newspapers, appearing weekly in the larger towns, were entirely lacking in what we should call news, and the number of letters sent during a year in all the thirteen states was much less than that now handled by the New York office in a single day. People are far more alive today to what is going on in China, if it happens to interest them, than they were then to events a hundred miles away. The isolation of even large towns from the rest of the world, and the consequent introversion of men's minds upon local concerns, was something we can hardly conceive. In the country, 'the environment of the farm was the neighborhood; the environment of the village was the encircling farms and the local tradition; ... few conventions assembled for discussion and common action; educational centres did not radiate the shock of a new intellectual life to every hamlet; federations and unions did not bind men, near and remote, into that fellowship that makes one composite type of many human sorts. It was an age of sects, intolerant from lack of acquaintance.'
>
> The change to the present regime of railroads, telegraphs, daily papers, telephones, and the rest has involved a revolution in every phase of life; in commerce, in politics, in education, even in more sociability and gossip--this revolution always consisted in an enlargement and quickening of the kind of life in question.[7]

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[7]Charles H. Cooley, "The Significance of Communication," Reader in Public Opinion and Communication, Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz, editors, (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1953), pp. 148-149.

These changes, resulting directly or indirectly from the growth of cities, the development of hard roads, the creation of graded schools enrolling large numbers of pupils, complex organizations and procedures, professional teacher and administrator education programs, and higher standards for entry into the teaching profession, served to create problems in communication, portions of which are the subject of this study. Individual community members were expected to understand, or at least accept, this changing social creation (the school), and to make decisions becoming continuously more complicated with respect to it, in the fact of increasing complexity and specialization not only in their own work area, but in all facets of life with which they were faced. Miller and Charles state:

> The development of public schools in our cities, especially in the last generation, has far outrun the development of wide-spread popular understanding of them.... Too often, indeed, teachers and school officials, through temperament or misconception or both, have been quite indifferent, even strongly opposed, to revealing to the public that knowledge essential to any real understanding.[8]

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[8] C. R. Miller and Fred Charles, Publicity and the Public Schools, (New York: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1924), p. vi.

The development of specialized teaching and administrative positions and the creation of a professional vocabulary used by persons in these positions tended to further complicate communication with lay members of the local community.

From the late twenties to date, school people have been increasingly preoccupied with school public relations procedures as a means of providing information for school community members, (often defining this as primarily concerned with parents). In most cases, the procedures of advertising and public relations originally developed for business were adapted for this purpose. Efforts were made to secure public approval for school actions by these procedures. Often the process was essentially one designed to obtain passive community approval and acquiescent public voting records. The mass communications media which have developed largely since the Civil War proved to be convenient vehicles for these "messages" directed at the school public, but the very nature of these changing media further complicated a most difficult problem, that of providing accurate, intelligent information as a basis for decision making on the subject of education in a democratic society.

The Problem

This is a study of selected aspects of oral and written communication that are a part of school public relations programs. The problem for study is how public school officials can communicate more effectively with citizens in communities. Aspects selected for study will include:

1. A summary of factors requisite for successful communication in a school public relations program, which are not now considered to be a part of the area of school public relations.

    a. Some of these factors are inherent in the process of communication itself, such as the use of language, perception, attitudes, and will be summarized as critical requirements necessary for successful communication.

    b. Others are concerned with the nature of the "audience" for communication, and become thereby additional limiting and structuring factors to communication.

2. The application to school public relations efforts of pertinent research findings concerned with the operation of mass information programs, as these findings indicate the need for modifications in school public relations goals and procedures.

3. An analysis of selected school public relations procedures in terms of the critical requirements for communication presented above. This analysis will indicate the need for revisions in the school public relations program, and these will be presented as they affect:

a. Mass media[9] presently used for school public relations purposes.

b. Selective media[10] presently used for school public relations purposes.

c. Face-to-face discourse[11] as now used for school public relations purposes.

4. Suggested problems in the area of school public relations in need of further study.

5. Summary and conclusions.

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[9] Mass media as used herein refers to information procedures given general distribution to individuals within a given geographical area, not directed to specific individuals by name, but produced for mass general distribution, i.e. newspapers, radio and television programs, et al.

[10] Selective media as used herein refers to information procedures produced for and distributed to specific individuals or groups. This would include such things as report cards, report card "stuffers," newsletters mailed to specific individuals, et al.

[11] Face-to-face discourse is used in this study to refer to communication which takes place on a face-to-face basis as this is a planned part of the information portion of a school public relations program. The limits applied are those which exclude incidental day-to-day contacts which are not a part of the planned program.

A Brief Analysis of the Problem

The concept of school public relations, as described in the literature, is limited largely to procedures, activities, and means for providing information about education and the schools to members of the profession and the local community. By this process, certain specific portions of the information available about schools are selected and presented in some organized form to the public and the profession. It is either assumed or specifically stated that this must be an honest process concerned with presenting all information in a truthful manner. On even superficial examination, this appears to be a somewhat naive approach to an extremely complicated process.

The objective stated or implied in the greater part of the literature devoted to school public relations refers to the need to develop practices and procedures which make possible communication between professional educators and members of the school public. Despite claims to the contrary, the literature devoted to school public relations is largely concerned with publicity procedures. These are usually procedures specifically designed to focus public attention in a favorable manner on certain selected aspects of the school and its operation. This is publicity, and the educator who understands and is sufficiently skilled

in using the "tricks of the trade" may be in a position to manipulate local public opinion. This tends to subvert the original concept of local control. Happily, this area is not now sufficiently well developed so that this represents the present state of affairs, but it is conceivable that it may become reality if the profession continues to borrow and develop continuously increasing skills for attracting public attention and for persuasion. Educators advocating the unrestricted adoption of these procedures are placed in a position whereby they may actually be in a position (by the selection of publicity and persuasive devices) to determine social ends for education.

As an area of understanding, the publicity procedures of school public relations have tended to ignore research in the area of communication. It is the purpose herein to analyze critically the school public relations area in terms of selected aspects of this research. Despite the interest and effort expended on school publicity procedures, the basic problem of informing individual members of the school public has not been solved, for research indicates that most members of the school community possess little valid knowledge of the school as it actually operates or as it should operate to adequately serve the needs of society. Public relations consists of various procedures designed to make communication possible; yet little effort

has been made to incorporate some of the basic findings of research in the process of communication itself or to apply to communication directed to the school community some of the findings of sociology and social psychology in the area of community structure and audience analysis.

The importance of an informed electorate has been elaborated on many times in connection with the problems of democratic government and the need for intelligent local decisions on matters concerned with schools. Vincent states:

> The character of education is directly related to the attitude of the public toward its schools and their expectation of what the school can do. Expectation and attitude in turn reflect what the public knows about education and what part the public plays in the specific community in forming public school policy.[12]

The basic problem involved in school public relations then is concerned with the need for all portions of the school public to possess correct, pertinent information for decision making in a democratic society, for the public to be informed about, interested in, and not apathetic toward this particular social institution, the school. The information provided by school public relations efforts

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[12] William S. Vincent, "Emerging Patterns of Public School Practice," Contributions to Education #910, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1945, p. 16.

has not reached lay members of the school public. As the effectiveness of attention-getting procedures is improved, the very process creates certain philosophical problems related to but not the subject of this study.

School Public Relations Defined

The activities which are directed toward providing the school public with information about the school are parts of what should be a mutually fruitful communication process and have been labeled "school public relations." To modify the impression created by the term "public relations" it has been suggested that "school community relations" be used. This term, however, has not had general acceptance, and the subject is indexed in the Education Index, and in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research under the heading "public relations." The two terms will be used interchangeably herein as referring to the same process.

School public relations has been defined with a variety of words, beginning in the early twenties with the suggestions by Alexander and Theisen[13] and Stevenson[14] for

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[13] Carter Alexander and W. W. Theisen, Publicity Campaigns for Better School Support, (New York: World Book Co., 1921), 164 pp. passim.

[14] P. R. Stevenson, Campaign Publicity for Schools, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1921), 59 pp. passim.

organizing short but intensive publicity campaigns for specific purposes to the present belief that the process must be all inclusive and continuous. Perhaps a representative current definition of school public relations is that found in the Twenty-Eighth Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators, wherein public relations is defined as the process that ". . . seeks to bring about a harmony of understanding between any group and the public it serves and upon whose good will it depends."[15] Other definitions to be found in the educational literature are not essentially different from the above. A little later in the same publication these tasks are stated in more specific terms:

> a) to inform the public about the work of the schools, b) to establish confidence in the schools, c) to rally support for proper maintenance of the educational program, d) to develop awareness of the importance of education in a democracy, e) to improve the partnership concept by uniting parents and teachers in meeting the educational needs of children, f) to integrate the home, the school, and the community in improving educational opportunities for all children, g) to evaluate the offerings of the schools in meeting the needs of the children in the community, and h) to correct misunderstandings as to the aims and objectives of the schools.[16]

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[15] _____ "Public Relations for America's Schools," Twenty-Eighth Yearbook, American Association of School Administrators, (Washington: National Education Association, 1950), p. 12.

[16] Ibid., p. 14.

The literature offered to the reader interested in the area consists largely of descriptions of methods by which these goals may be attained. On rare occasions the basic concept may involve a sound understanding of the psychology and sociology of communication, but more likely it will appear to be either advertising or some form of publicity. Perhaps one of the problems inherent in both concept and operating technique has to do with the fact that much that is considered to be school public relations originally was either borrowed or adapted from business. Thus Yeager states:

> Public relations in education have undoubtedly been tremendously influenced by the procedures of public relations in business. There are many points in common. The 'top management' in both has been probably the last to concede the importance of adequate public relations. The house organ was adapted from business use. Both have made extensive use of the public press. The radio, used early in business, is attracting the attention of public education for relations purposes. School campaigns have been patterned along business lines. The phrases 'selling the schools' and 'publicity' are definitely business terms applied to education. . . . The point which is stressed here is the influence public relations in business has had in the development of public school relations.[17]

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between definitions which are developed in publications frankly

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[17] W. A. Yeager, Home-School-Community Relations, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939), p. 6.

for business use and those developed for use by educational administrators. Thus Rex Harlow states that public relations activities:

> . . . must be honest, truthful, open, authoritative, and responsible. They must be fair and realistic, and they must be conducted in the public interest.[18]

Even the most sketchy comparison indicates the similarity in definitions used by persons concerned primarily with the promotion of private business objectives and those used to describe the school public relations which must be concerned with the social objectives of democratic society.

Delimitation of the Problem

Certain practical considerations tend to become delimiting factors in a study of this type. This study will present an overview of selected aspects of the present concept of school public relations as presented in the literature as a setting for the study. The literature has been summarized at other times.[19] The philosophical problems

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[18] Rex F. Harlow, Public Relations in War and Peace, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942), p. 73.

[19] See for example: James J. Jones, "An Analysis and Summary of the Significant Research Findings Concerning Some Problems and Issues of School-Community Relations," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University, 1952), 246 numb. leaves, or

F. W. Bainbridge, II, "The Growth and Development of

involved in the relationships between the school and the community have been explored by others,[20] but certain aspects of the problem tend to be inextricably intertwined with the entire area, as these relate to the operation of a school in a democratic society. This implies a particular concept of school public relations, and these philosophical problems provide an orientation to, but are not the subject of, this study.

The study is designed to select and present certain aspects of the area of community structure, the psychology of communication, as they contribute working hypotheses to the study of school community relations. The primary orientation is not toward these areas but to the process of communication as this is involved in school public relations. The summary of materials from the areas of community structure and audience analysis will not be complete, for the various aspects of mass media, persuasion, propaganda, and "face-to-face discourse" have been the subjects of a literature so vast as probably to defy any

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Public Relations in Public Secondary Schools of the United States, 1920-1948," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University, 1950), 298 numb. leaves.

[20] Milosh Muntyan, "Community School Concepts in Relation to Societal Determinants," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1948), 265 numb. leaves.

attempt at an exhaustive bibliography. Restricting themselves only to topics of "Public Opinion, Communication, and Propaganda," Smith, Lasswell, and Casey[21] and only to works of some academic standing and general interest have amassed a bibliography of some 3,000 titles. Sheer quantity of material available requires that some limits be established in this area. For this reason, the material presented on communication and attitudes is limited largely to established texts and several studies with academic standing. The term "pertinent literature" as used here is confessedly inexact and refers more precisely to "the literature examined which is deemed pertinent to this study."

The study is further concerned with group structure as it is involved in the process of communication and the operation of school advisory groups for school public relations efforts but is not designed to present a summary of the concepts and working hypotheses involved in what has been called "group dynamics."

The study is designed to analyze the role of specific media of communication and their place in the school public

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[21] Bruce L. Smith, Harold D. Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey, Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946), 435 pp.

relations program in terms of the hypotheses advanced above. It is intended, for example, to analyze the role of the newspaper as it is involved in school public relations and the communication phase of this portion of the program but not to include material such as "how to write for a newspaper," except as it contributes to the study as stated above. In the classic phrase, "who says what to whom, and with what effects," this study is concerned largely with the "whom" and the "effects." Thus it becomes largely "audience analysis" and only indirectly "content analysis."

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS AREA AND PERSONNEL FUNCTION AS DEFINED IN THE LITERATURE

The administrator and the reader interested in school public relations may select widely differing theses from a very large quantity of published material in professional education journals and texts. In this area of educational administration, the reader will not find a well organized body of concepts, procedures, or research, as Reeder demonstrated in 1940:

> Although much continues to be written on public school relations, only a small amount of the material can be called research. Every year sees the publication of dozens of magazine articles on such topics as the need for a public school relations program, standards for such a program, and how a certain school or school system is handling its program.[1]

Virtually all writers are now in agreement that the school must operate some kind of an organized program designed to produce a continuous flow of information directed to the school public. The need for public information is often not stated but assumed; sometimes implied in terms of the

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[1] W. G. Reeder, "Public Relations," Review of Educational Research, Vol. 10, #4, October 1940, p. 344.

need for the public to support the schools; at times stated in terms of fear of an uninformed public; and at other times, given a democratic orientation, with the need for an intelligent lay electorate.

Differences in Basic Approach to School Public Relations

As a consequence of this absence of uniformity with respect to the reasons for the need for information directed to the school public, basic differences in approach to the problem may be found scattered through the literature. These basic differences tend to determine the specific role that school personnel play in the program. The statements which follow form a pattern of contrasts and illustrate these differences:

> Any enterprise as important to the progress of society can flourish only through the understanding and active support of the patrons. . . . Complete and continuous interpretation must come. Lack of it is the crying deficiency in public school administration of today. Lack of it is the factor most responsible for the inadequate support that has crippled so many schools during the last few years. . . . Yet no service of the public school is older or more natural than interpretation. It has always existed. It will always exist. Call it public relations or by the commercially popular term, publicity, it is still informing the public of what takes place in the schools. . . .[2]

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[2] J. E. Grinnel, Interpreting the Public Schools, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1937), p. 4.

> It is a commonplace that few parents have a comprehensive picture of the methods and objectives of the schools as they are, let alone schools as educators agree they should be. In a highly industrialized town many parents were reported to look on the schools mainly as a place where the boys learn to become apprentices in the machine shops and the girls learn how to become housewives. In residential suburbs there is a very different picture, which is much more comprehensive but still stresses the college preparatory function. Whatever the stereotype, if it is narrow and specific, it is likely to lead quickly to the application of the 'fads and frills' label to new developments.[3]

> Intelligent judgments can be made by the people only to the extent to which the people have been completely and effectively informed. . . . People cannot be held responsible for their votes or for the votes whereby those opinions are expressed unless they have been thoroughly informed. A completely honest and continuous program of information regarding the schools is the means by which an intelligent public opinion may be developed.[4]

The authors cited above would justify a program of school public relations in terms of: 1) the need to support public education; 2) the fear that an uninformed public might label desirable educational activities "fads and frills" unless they are given the right kind of information; and 3) the need for an intelligent lay electorate to have information on which to base decisions. The statements

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[3] Paul R. Mort, and Francis G. Cornell, American Public Schools in Transition, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), p. 297.

[4] J. A. Van Zwell, "The Need for Public Relations," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 32, (February 1948), pp. 16-17.

are not necessarily representative nor well established points of view. They do illustrate the apparent lack of an over-all pattern in basic justification for school public relations. One might conclude that the quotations represent a certain shift in orientation over a period of time and hence the gradual evolution of a more rational approach to the problem. That others would differ with such a conclusion, however, is indicated by the following statement published in 1952, which apparently accepts a rationale which considers school public relations as primarily a publicity process designed to produce acquiescent public partners of the school system by virtue of a skillful publicity program.

> Educational public relations is rapidly taking its rightful place in the publicity and advertising profession of the nation. It has become a service to the people and a godsend to the schools of the United States.
>
> For more than six years, an average of 450 news releases have been issued annually to 145 news outlets in the metropolitan area of the Windy City. . . .
>
> These releases have gained the good will of citizens, students, parents, and tax payers, by making them a thoroughly informed partner in a publicly supported quarter-billion dollar educational campaign. By being so advised of educational needs, aims, plans, and purposes these public partners of the Chicago board of education became the 'shock troops' in the $50,000,000 campaign. They all but overwhelmed opposition to the rehabilitation and expansion of this public school system.[5]

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[5] J. F. Delaney, "Good Will in Education," American School Board Journal, Vol. 124, (January 1952), p. 59.

This would conceive of the process of school public relations as primarily an advertising and publicity procedure and constitute another type of basic justification for the program in addition to those listed in the preceding pages.

Bainbridge reviewed the literature on the subject of school public relations for the period 1920-1948 and concluded:

> This study of the literature indicates that investigators concerned themselves during the period between the end of the first World War and 1930 with techniques and methods of publicity. Such media as poster and exhibit programs, fund raising or vote-getting campaigns, and newspaper publicity were studied to learn how they might be adapted for school use.
>
> It seems clear, then, that increasing familiarity with methods, techniques and media associated with commercial and government agencies which dealt frankly with advertising, selling, and propaganda, would tend to transfer attitudes into school work not wholly in accord with educational practices and beliefs.
>
> There developed two schools of thought. The first acclaimed the theory and practice of 'drive' publicity. It advocated the mobilization of all school resources and many community resources in a widely-publicized campaign replete with torchlight parades, speeches, and exhibitions by students in an all-out effort to sway the emotions and obtain the votes of the community immediately before an election. The second school promoted the theory and practice of continuous publicity through all available media. Its followers were convinced that school news should be disseminated throughout the year.
>
> Both schools of thought, however, based their practices on publicity, or what came to be known as 'selling the schools.' Therefore, the efforts

> of the schools for a decade or more seem to have been devoted to publicising education with the chief objective that of gaining the support of the community.[6]

That school public relations must be considered a continuous process, however, does not eliminate the fact that many administrators conceive the need for periodic "drive" type publicity for special purposes, usually accompanying bond or tax programs, or changes in district organization. The literature contains frequent descriptions of successful campaigns in these areas. Hence, school public relations, as presented in the literature, is both a continuous process and composed of intermittent "drives" for special purposes as defined by educators and made operative as local conditions indicate a need.[7]

The literature proposes a variety of procedures for presenting this information about schools that seems to be limited only by the imagination or the ingenuity of the author.[8] The researcher analyzing this literature finds

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[6] Bainbridge, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

[7] See as examples: N. G. Fawcett, "Campaign Techniques that Paid," American School Board Journal, Vol.125, (August 1952), p. 47. or

L. L. Dickey, "Marion Sells School Building Program to Community," American School Board Journal, Vol. 126, (January 1953), pp. 61-63.

[8] See the Education Index under the heading: "Public Relations."

system or organization rather elusive. This apparent deficiency has been noticed by others. Hagman found, after an extensive survey of the literature in the area:

> Though modifications of practice occur, the principles governing business management, personnel management, building operation and maintenance, the relation of the superintendent of schools to the rest of the organization, and supervisory functions are seen by school administrators with sufficient clarity to permit evaluations of operation in the light of accepted principles.
>
> The one exception, among principal functioning activities of the school superintendent, to the rule of reasonably clear definition and patterning, is that of public relations. Nowhere in the professional literature, although considerable mention is made of the importance of school public relations, is there presented an over-all systemization of policies and practices. Treatment given in books on school administration varies from slight occasional mention to a chapter entitled variously but addressed to the general problem of school public relations. In most of the books on school administration, an interesting comparison is offered between the assured and competent discussion of other phases of administration and the less confident manner apparent in the discussion of the promotion and maintenance of satisfying relations of the school with the public.[9]

The literature reflects this lack of agreement as to basic accepted principles of school public relations, and since an information program must of necessity be concerned with selected news about schools and education (obviously all news about schools cannot be projected to the public), the

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[9] Harlan L. Hagman, "A Study of Theory and Some Present Practices in School Public Relations," (Doctoral Dissertation, Northwestern University, June 1947), pp. 1-2.

approach then reflects the personal concepts of the author and not the discipline exercised by an accepted group of principles for orientation and for operation.

The school public can and does arrive at decisions with a wide range of misinformation, lack of information, and correct information. Whether or not an information item on a school topic is misinformation or correct information will usually imply reference to a particular system of values, and in our culturally diverse society, these systems may differ widely. In the absence of accepted principles for orienting school public relations operations, and faced with the fact that the school public must have information about the schools in order to make the decisions required of them, the persons concerned often must of necessity resort to practices which can be characterized largely as publicity devices and procedures.

An Informed Electorate and School Public Relations

Much of the literature does, however, either imply or specifically state the case for an informed electorate, and this may be analyzed in terms of the contributions education can make to modern society or emphasizes the very wide differences in understanding of the role of education in society as between professional educators and the lay public. The latter situation is a logical outgrowth of the

continuous increase in total size and complexity of the school system, the competition for attention by the multitude of agencies both private and public using all communications media, and the continuous increase in diversity and complexity of modern living. The literature in the field concerned with the state of public knowledge on school matters indicates that the disparity between professional and lay understanding is increasing rather than diminishing.

In 1927 Todd stated:

> On the whole, citizens know just about fifty per cent of what is most desirable, even necessary, for them to know about their schools to enable them to give reasonably intelligent consideration to public school affairs.[10]

Jacobson expressed a similar concern in 1943:

> Today the American public school has become so large and complex with a highly technical, trained staff that not only does the average citizen in the community know little or nothing about it, but most of the employees in a typical educational system have little or no knowledge of what is occurring in the various departments. Good administration requires that the public must have an intelligent picture of the program of the public schools and the employees of any

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[10] Wm. H. Todd, "What Citizens Know About Their Schools," Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education #279, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1927), p. 6.

> given school system should also have a general knowledge of the activities of the various parts of the organization.[11]

That there is a need for the public to be informed on matters concerning education, there seems to be little disagreement, nor does there seem to be disagreement on the fact that the basic responsibility for implementing this information program rests with the school and those individuals charged with responsibility for its administration. Out of this concern for the need for a public relations program, there seems to have developed some degree of generalized agreement as to the role of some of the various individuals and groups concerned with the program.

This study is concerned primarily with selected aspects of oral and written communication in a school public relations program as these are involved in a deliberate, organized effort at communication, but these phases of the program cannot be intelligently discussed without some orientation to the total program itself. The program involves purposes, which provide the basic orientation for the total operation, and these purposes are concerned

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[11] E. W. Jacobson, "Focusing on Footlights," Today's Techniques, First Yearbook, School Public Relations Association, edited by Arthur H. Rice, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ann Arbor Press, 1943), pp. 159.

primarily with the reasons for this expenditure of effort. These have been mentioned in brief fashion in the preceding paragraphs. School public relations efforts involve certain means, or procedures and methods for achieving the results desired, and these include the media used in communication. This portion of the program will be discussed in considerable detail in the last part of this study. The program also involves agents,[12] or members of the school staff, organized in some manner to effectively accomplish the desired results. This might be stated more simply as the "who does what?" of the program. This rather arbitrary separation into purposes, means, and agents provides a means for organization and limitation in the interests of clarity. The section which follows presents in extremely brief fashion some of these roles that agents must play in any successful public relations program. The material presented is not intended to represent a complete analysis or description of the roles of the individuals involved as agents of the school public relations program but is required as a setting for the further analysis of certain aspects of communication in a school public relations program.

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[12] The term "agent" is used herein to refer to individuals connected with the public school in some manner who are specifically responsible for the initiation of the effort to communicate, as a portion of the school public relations program.

The Role of the School Board

The school board might at first glance appear to the casual reader not to be involved in communication aspects of school public relations. Even a sketchy listing of the role of the board in the local school district and individual responsibilities of board members quickly establishes the fact that the board is involved in a process of communication in virtually every portion of their role. School boards are elected from among the residents of a local school district and derive their authority from constitutional and state legislative sources and from decisions of the courts.

As a distinct legal entity it has a representative responsibility to the local constituency, as it acts as a corporate body. Boards of education have the ultimate responsibility for complying with the laws of the state and the regulations of state educational authorities for such areas as school elections, financing and construction of school buildings, purchase of school supplies and equipment, length of the school term, the selection of certified personnel, and other duties as specifically defined by either state laws or regulations.

The board of education acts as an agent of the state government for the operation of schools in the local school

district. The actual operation of the schools implies an executive function, which is usually delegated to a professional administrator, in school districts operating schools with sufficient pupils, teachers, and general size to require specialized administrative services. Ultimate responsibility for administrative execution rests with the board of education, however. This responsibility for execution is to the State and to the residents of the local community that they represent.

The board of education has a responsibility for the development of policies for the operation of the system of schools with which they are concerned, and these policies should consist of basic formal rules, regulations, directives, and authorizations to pupils, teachers, administrative officials, and the general public. These consist of formal statements which constitute guides for future actions taken in areas covered by these statements of policy.

The board of education also has a collective responsibility for continuous evaluation of the operation of the school, as the school interprets and places into operation those activities which are designed to meet the educational needs of the local community. This task involves accounting to the school public for the actions taken during their stewardship, and this is basically a public relations activity. The board of education's public relations

responsibility as a school board have been stated in the American Association of School Administrators Twenty-Eighth Yearbook:

1. Accepting responsibility for the initiation of a comprehensive program of school public relations and the provision of the means whereby this program may be maintained.

2. The adoption of a written policy on school public relations as a part of its official code, stating the objectives of the program, and committing the board to its execution.

3. The recognition that the first requirement of a public relations program is the maintenance of a good school program, and that no public relations program can either hide the deficiencies of a bad program or be an adequate substitute for this good school program.

4. The appointment of personnel to the school program must include a recognition of the need for them to have a sound understanding of the role they will play in a public relations program, and possess those understandings and skills which will make it possible for them to contribute to and participate in a public relations program.

5. To develop a program of systematic study of the school community to provide the backlog of information and ideas essential to sound school-community relations.

6. To scrutinize, amend, and reject or approve requests and proposals by the professional staff for working plans for activities, procedures, facilities, personnel, time and money, for carrying on a sound public relations program.

7. Include with the evaluation of all educational services by the professional staff, that of an evaluation of the public relations program.

8. The board of education will need to report from time to time on the conditions of the school

district and problems, needs, and progress of the schools, through their executive officer, the superintendent of schools.

9. The board of education should conduct its business in a manner which shall lend itself to the maintenance of proper relationships with those seeking a hearing. This will include a regular time and place for meetings, open to the public and the press, and the meeting itself conducted on the basis of sober deliberation.

10. School boards need to cooperate with a great many public and voluntary agencies, concerned with goals common to those involved in good education, and where good working relationships are mutually advantageous.

11. The provision of good working conditions and the maintenance of democratic and stimulating relationships are responsibilities of the board.[13]

The great majority of these activities involve various kinds and degrees of communication. The board of education is not only responsible for policies providing for the implementation of a public relations program as an official body, but they have undertaken responsibilities as individual members of the board. Members are specifically enjoined from individual action in lieu of official board action, and this applies in every field but that of communication. The very fact of public election usually means that board members are relatively respected and very often long-time residents of the community. By virtue of their period of residence and lay standing in the community, they are in

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[13] Adapted from: Twenty-Eighth Yearbook, American Association of School Administrators, op. cit., pp. 104-120.

a position to bring to the public relations program certain competencies of value to the program. This will include membership in a wide variety of groups in the community, acceptance of their competencies as members of the school board and thereby knowledge of school activities, with accompanying opportunities to speak publicly and privately of the actions of the board of education. Reeves states:

> Board members have many opportunities to help maintain good public relations by making addresses before community groups and private conversations. The public has many reasons to have confidence in board members' individual opinions, since they render service to the community without pay, are laymen with knowledge of the public schools, and are interested in the development of the community and its children . . . in his club, church, and business activities, the board member can often discuss school needs and obtain the opinions of others on the general effectiveness of the schools. However, the board member will have no right to speak for the board, except as authorized, nor to predict its actions in such contacts.[14]

Thus this is considered to be a two-way process, whereby the board member is in a position to speak for, explain, and place information about the schools before the portions of the public with whom they are in contact. The board member is also responsible for listening to individual

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[14]Charles E. Reeves, School Boards, Their Status, Functions, and Activities, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), pp. 287-288.

members of the school public and bringing to the attention of the school board itself those things which he deems worthy of or requiring their attention. These are communication tasks.

The individual as a member of a school board has a particular responsibility to understand his individual status by virtue of membership on that board. This problem has been stated in a National Education Association Research Bulletin:

> A school board must transact all of its business in a board meeting. No matter how urgent or how trivial a matter may be, the board cannot dispose of the case without meeting as a body, and taking regular action; that is, a board cannot legally act by each member merely giving his assent, one at his store, another at his office, one at his farm, another at his home. When the board is not in session, there is no board.[15]

The board member must carry out his public relations responsibilities as he explains and discusses school affairs as an individual private member of the community who is also a school board member and must not while in this role act for the board of education in an official capacity, for as stated above "when the board is not in session, there is no board." Board members have an official responsibility for creating the opportunity for the development of a school

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[15] "The School Board Members," Research Bulletin #11, Research Division, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., (January 1933), p. 30.

policy of public relations and an individual responsibility for carrying out that part of the program for which membership on the board of education makes them uniquely qualified.

Before being able to carry out their group and individual responsibilities, school board members will need to be informed not only on the subject of their own school system but also about education in general. They will need to know the characteristics of a good educational program and able to identify those characteristics present or absent in the program with which they are associated. They must understand what is involved in making it possible for the local schools to move in a direction which reduces the gap between the program as it is and as it should be. This will require that the individual school board member possess a considerable fund of information about the local school program and about school programs and education in general. As laymen much of this very naturally will lie outside of their particular area of competency, and the responsibility for making possible the understanding necessary will be that of the executive official selected by the school board, the superintendent of schools. Thus the board member becomes involved in communication at every turn. He must communicate by virtue of membership on the board so that he is provided a basis for further effective communication with the lay public which he represents and further with other board members and the professional staff.

The Role of the Administrator

The public school superintendent, the chief administrative officer selected by the board of education, has a most important role in the development of and furtherance of all areas of the communication aspects of school public relations. Boards of education are composed of laymen elected to office by periodic public ballot, tenure in office varies, i.e. for an indefinite period, and a school board frequently has new members. One of the significant responsibilities of the school superintendent is to assist in orienting new board members and to keep the board informed of all developments in the public schools so that they may in turn communicate more effectively. Equally important is to assist them in understanding the possibilities inherent in a good system of education. Reeves states:

> As the trained expert in school administration, the superintendent should fulfill the important functions of rendering his informed opinion and furnishing professional advice to the board on matters of policy that he believes need to be considered by it for adoption, modification, or repeal. His advice should grow out of his recognition of the needs of the school system, based on sound principles developed from his professional training and his professional experience.[16]

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[16] Reeves, op. cit., p. 266.

The school administrator has not only a reporting responsibility to board members as the professional representative to the school board, but he also had an educative task in assisting board members to know and understand what it might be possible to accomplish in the school system with which they are concerned. This not only requires communication to accomplish but also requires that communication skills be taught.

As stated earlier, in the discussion of school board public relations functions, the development of a school board policy on the subject of public relations may originate from either the superintendent or from the board, but the superintendent will, by virtue of his particular competency, provide technical assistance in the development of this policy. The process of developing a school board policy may or may not facilitate school board communication but will enable the professional administrator to establish a school public relations program.

Basic responsibility for the execution of school board policies (including those on school public relations) as these are translated into an educational program, and for the internal organization of the school to make possible the achievement of these objectives is that of the superintendent of schools. As the chief administrative officer of the school system, it is his responsibility to make

possible the development of a system and a plan that will result in an organized effort for school public relations. Jones states:

> While every school system should have some form of public relations, actual organized programs are far from universal. They are found principally in large administrative units. Where public relations programs are definitely organized, the superintendent of schools is most often the key figure. The school's chief executive officer is the person responsible for the public relations program. The basic machinery needed to do an acceptable job in school-community understanding usually exists in every school district. The superintendent is responsible to the board of education for all phases of the conduct of the schools. It is his task to organize the machinery for school-community relations toward unified operation. By good organization, the administrator, without relinquishing his responsibility for the program is able to delegate many public relations functions, and thus find the time to develop a comprehensive program.[17]

The primary responsibilities of the superintendent are those involved in the provision of leadership, technical services by virtue of his expert competency, and the organization of the human relations factors involved in a manner that produces a program of action moving toward a school public relations goal. These responsibilities revolve around and involve various communications procedures.

As a consequence of these activities, a definite relationship must emerge with regard to the staff, and this

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[17] James J. Jones, "Organize for Better Public Relations," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 34, #5, (February 1953), p. 167.

will be the result of an internal administrative program involving an in-service training program which includes teacher understanding of their roles in school public relations (a communication task), and the delegation of authority and responsibility to specified members of the school staff for the implementation of policies in this area. One of the criteria for the success of the school public relations program will be the operation of a good school with high staff and pupil morale. High morale will involve good administrative techniques, and the provision of the knowledge on which the required understanding of school operations are founded. Ashby states:

> . . . teachers who are made true co-workers in the educational enterprise of the secondary school have an entirely different attitude toward their work than can otherwise be possible. This attitude finds its way very quickly into the attitudes of the pupils and through them to their homes . . . teachers who are partners in the great educational enterprise of the secondary school have a much better attitude in their contacts as citizens in the community. . . .[18]

Before teachers can intelligently communicate on the subject of the school, they must be informed on a wide variety of subjects, and the provision of this information is one of the responsibilities of the superintendent or his

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[18]Lyle W. Ashby, "Preparing the Staff," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 32, #152, (February 1948), pp. 48-49.

administrative agent. The means to be used in this process have been developed and used for relatively long periods of time and consist of such things as faculty meetings, pre-school conferences, "house organs," conferences, etc. The entire teaching and non-teaching staff must be included in this program. They must be aware of their role as agents for communication and possess the knowledge and the skills necessary for fulfilling their portion of this task. The responsibility of the administrator will be that of implementing the organizational tasks necessary for the attainment of this goal.

The administrator also has a responsibility for school public relations to the pupils of the school for providing them first with the kind of an educational program which meets their needs and the needs of the community, and for providing them with opportunities for the understandings necessary.

The administrator has a professional and a personal responsibility to the school public and is frequently called upon for public appearances because of his expert capacity. These are personal communication challenges and opportunities to further implement the total school program and those school public relations objectives that the administrator has had such an intimate part in developing.

The Role of the Professional Staff

> Mama surveyed her brood--five youngsters, all in school, all in the same school.
>
> "And how was school today, children?" She asked that question every evening.
>
> "Terrible," grumbled age 8, "Sammy threw a spit ball when the teacher had her back turned, so she kept everyone in during recess."
>
> "That teacher, she's an unfair one. She makes my Johnny unhappy," said mama.
>
> Age 15 handed Mama the school paper. Mama read, "Whose green eyes are turning to cat's eyes every time she sees Mary S. with Bill T.?"
>
> "What is this high school," Mama demanded, "one big cupid's nest?"
>
> "And you, little one?" Mama asked her six year old.
>
> "I like school. We played post office all day."
>
> Mama wondered, post office with stamps, or the post office she used to play? By this time Mama was afraid to ask what the other two children learned.[19]

In low key humor a portion of the teacher's role in school public relations is illustrated above in a selection from a recent publication of the National School Public Relations Association. Every child attending public school is a continuous public relations agent but not always a consistent, competent interpreter of the public school because of his limited understanding and the fact that he is the subject of the educational process. It is generally agreed that the happy child is the best public relations agent and that good teaching tends to produce happy children.

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[19] "Teaming Up For Public Relations," National School Public Relations Association, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1952, p. 12.

Obviously, the bad teacher will have bad public relations and so also will the school which employs her. One of the obvious but nevertheless crucial public relations problems will be concerned with the quality of the professional staff and their understanding and participation in their public relations role. This then has certain implications for administration, as it refers to the selection of teaching staff, the provision of conditions which makes good teaching possible, and the inauguration of an in-service training program which includes among its goals teacher understanding of school public relations.

The teacher is in a key communication position with respect to the schools and the public, as she works with colleagues, pupils, parents, and citizens of the community. Obviously, success in this role will require that the teacher herself understand and have available sufficient information to perform this portion of her professional task. This implies again not only an administrative responsibility to provide this information but also the assumption of a professional attitude on the part of the teacher to work with, understand, and not only convey information at every opportunity but also to actually seek these kinds of opportunities. The Public Relations Committee of the NEA Department of Classroom Teachers assisted

in producing a booklet in cooperation with the National School Public Relations Association, which states in part:

> . . . public relations starts in the classroom. It is a major responsibility of every school employee. Industry recognizes this when it spends large sums to help every employee improve his contacts with the public.
>
> Because of their preparation and contacts, classroom teachers have a strategic role in interpreting the schools to the people. They are familiar with the history, philosophy, purposes, and methods of education. They are informed about psychology, child nature, and social processes. . . .
>
> Each day the classroom teacher has a multitude of individual personal contacts--with pupils, parents, fellow teachers, and others from nonschool walks of life. The members of this public or more accurately, these publics, are continuously forming and reforming their ideas about teachers and teaching. . . .[20]

The teaching assignment and membership in the professional fraternity of teachers implies a specific responsibility to carry to successful conclusion those communication aspects of the total teaching task that only the teacher can perform successfully.

Teachers are in continuous contact with the parents of the youngsters that they have in their classrooms. These contacts take place as the teacher holds parent-teacher conferences, works with Room Mothers, attends PTA

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[20] "It Starts in the Classroom," National School Public Relations Association, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1951, pp. 5-6.

meetings, in fact, through all organized efforts to bring teachers and parents together. These contacts can be based on a deliberate effort to promote friendly understanding and enhance the possibilities of achieving the goals desired by parents, teachers, and administrators, or they can be destructive relationships bringing only unhappiness to those involved in them. The teacher cannot avoid these responsibilities, as she works with parents and other groups in the community. The contacts made by teachers outnumber those made by administrators simply by virtue of numbers, for there are more teachers who work in more intimate contact with pupils and parents.

The Role of Other School Employees

While the communication role of the professional staff of a school system is important, the non-teaching employees are also involved in the school public relations problem and program. These persons represent the school to a considerable portion of the public, as they clean the buildings, drive the busses, answer the telephone, or visit homes in the capacity of attendance officers. The way in which these necessary tasks are performed and the knowledge about the school and school affairs they possess frequently provide the basis for discussion with portions of their public. Their information levels may be either a planned

or an accidental part of the school public relations program. This involves an administrative responsibility for the provision through planned coordinated efforts of the information necessary so that these members of the non-professional staff can discuss the public school with some degree of competency and intelligence.

The school secretary is far more than a bookkeeper or a voice on the telephone. She may personify the school to the person visiting the business office or calling on the telephone. This will require a mode of behavior and a businesslike operation in the management of the school office operations. Fromuth states:

> . . . the duties and responsibilities of the school secretary. . . occupies a strategic position as liaison officer in bringing about improved relations between the school and its community.[21]

Responsibility for selection and provision of the means whereby the school secretary is an informed member of the school communication team again rests with the administrative officials of the public school.

Other non-teaching personnel will include persons assigned to the buildings and grounds, bus drivers, the school nurse, and persons employed in the cafeteria.

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[21] Carl L. Fromuth, "Please Be Seated," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 32, (February 1948), p. 81.

These persons not only represent the school to various groups of people, but they also communicate about the school with various degrees of assurance, skill, and knowledge. There is again an administrative responsibility for selection of personnel, and the provision of the information which will make these persons informed members of the total school public relations team. They also have personal "publics" with which they communicate and represent the school to members of these "publics." Mr. Lutz states:

> The non-teaching staff members, excluding clerks and secretaries, of an adequately manned secondary school constitute approximately one fourth of the entire staff. Many of the members of this non-teaching group are as important in public relations as are members of the teaching staff. Their contact with the public, and certainly with certain segments of the public, may well make or break a public relations program.[22]

Each non-teaching employee plays an important part in the total operation of a successful educational program and must know and understand that he does have a share in the development of a good school. This role includes a share of the responsibility for good school public relations and the possession of the skills that enable him to communicate with some degree of success.

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[22] Charles D. Lutz, "Non-Teaching Personnel Are Important Too," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 32, (February 1948), p. 102.

The Role of Pupils

The most frequent contact agents between the school and the home are the pupils who pass between them each day carrying a continuous stream of information selected in terms of their passing interests and whims. Obviously, happy children from a good school tend to carry with them types of information which promote the school public relations program, and unhappy, unaccepted youngsters tend to select unpleasant incidents to relate to their most interested audiences their patents. Thus:

> Pupils are among the most effective of all the school's public relations agents. Much of the information which the general public has about the schools, and about the instruction given in them, reaches the parents by way of the children.[23]

Youngsters who are not adjusted to the school for any one of a large number of possible reasons tend often to have parents with similar negative attitudes toward the school. These same youngsters eventually become adults who may carry over to adult years their previous generalized feelings about the school. The school which meets the needs of youngsters, however, tends to produce happier youngsters, and the discovery that learning takes place best in a

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[23] Twenty-Eighth Yearbook, American Association of School Administrators, op. cit., p. 59.

pleasant environment tends to place a premium on the teaching process which creates this type of environment.

The school youngster is the key, the tie between the school and his home. Parent-school contacts, providing certain professional prerequisites as to teacher and school standards are met, are usually concerned with the mutual responsibility for the growth and the development of a youngster, and can provide the basis from which may grow a sound program of parent information and understanding with respect to the growth of this youngster and the role of the school in this growth. Moehlman states:

> The public school in the United States is an extension of the family and supplements the home's sphere of activity. As a social institution it has a responsibility not only to the child but to the group as well. . . . Generalized child and parental reactions grow out of the feeling of satisfaction derived from the totality of the program.[24]

This feeling of satisfaction may provide the foundation on which mutual understanding may be based.

The child is the subject and the reason for many other teacher-parent contacts. These include pre-school conferences, PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, child-study groups, written reports and communications to the home from the school, reports of one form or another, and others as occasions require them.

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[24]Arthur B. Moehlman, Social Interpretation, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938), p. 295.

The child at one time or another learns about many different portions of American life, history, et al., but often this omits mention of the contribution that education and the public school have made to America. He studies a unit on transportation, but not on the development of the public school, a unit on government and finance, but not on how his own school is financed. He is expected as an adult, however, to be able to exercise rational judgment on the subject of schools and education as well as in the areas of history, transportation, government, and finance. Some authorities have recommended including in the social studies program a unit on the development and the contribution of the school to the United States in order that the future adult might be better able to communicate on this subject. Farley states:

> If every pupil can be graduated with a profound sense of the significance of free and universal education as the basis for democratic government, a great part of the public relations program will be solved.
>
> There seems to be no good reason for permitting a pupil to go thru school without an understanding of what education is for, what it costs, what constitutes adequate school-housing and equipment, good teaching, and administration, etc., only to find it necessary to educate him in these matters after he becomes an adult citizen, through some kind of public relations program.[25]

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[25] B. M. Farley, "Interpreting the Secondary Schools to the Public," National Survey of Secondary Education, Bulletin, 1932, No. 17, Monograph 16, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., 1933, p. 59.

This exploitation of a "captive audience" as a deliberate school public relations technique has not had wide acceptance in educational circles. Hagman states on this subject:

> Most of the materials applicable to the discussion of pupils as agents in the school public relations program implied that the proper activity of the school with respect to the child would be concerned with providing the best possible education and care for him and not with his direct employment as an interpreter of the school program.[26]

The pupil is required while in school and as an adult to communicate on the subject of schools and education and needs some understanding of the role of education in this society. Exploitation of this area, however, involves problems and dangers for both the youngster and the teaching profession, and for these reasons formal programs oriented to this end have not been widely accepted. There is no research evidence as to fruitfulness of the area.

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[26] Hagman, op. cit., p. 290.

Summary

The literature in the area of school public relations indicates a degree of disorganization and lack of agreement as to the basic purposes of this program. These purposes have been implied or explicitly stated in a number of ways, but they seem to be: 1) publicity for either a program or a group of individuals; 2) the need for the public to support the school and to possess favorable attitudes toward this school; 3) the provision of financial support; 4) fear of an uninformed public and the actions which might be taken as a consequence of this lack of information; and 5) the need for an intelligent, informed lay electorate. As presented in the literature, the purposes presented above tend not to be societal purposes but those of school personnel as they define and defend their positions and the position of the school in society. This is basically a task whereby the school public is persuaded to support and to augment the program of a selected social agency, the public school.

The school public relations program involves purposes, or objectives; means or media for the accomplishment of the task implicit in the statement of purposes; and agents, or individual positions within an organizational structure

with these positions defined in a manner which makes possible the use of the means of school public relations to accomplish the original purposes of the program.

These agents consist of the school board, the administrative officers of the school, and the teaching and non-teaching personnel. The school board has a definite, strategic role in this process, both as a board and as individual members of the board. Responsibilities as a board involve making possible the development of a school board policy on school public relations, the provisions of facilities and personnel to make possible the attainment of a good school and the continuous evaluation of the school program. The school board has a responsibility for official reporting to the school public the results of their stewardship. They also have a responsibility for the provision of the means by which the public relations program may provide as much information as possible about what is being done in the school and what it is possible to accomplish with a good school program. School board members also have individual responsibilities by virtue of their membership on this school board for reporting, for discussion and for actually teaching other members of the school community those things which membership on the school board makes them particularly

competent. This will involve the establishment of a process by which the board itself will possess this information.

The administrative officers of the school have a responsibility for the provision of the information necessary for the successful accomplishment of the tasks of the board of education and the provision of the administrative organization and the facilities which will make operative a program of school public relations. The administrative officers of the school must provide the leadership and certain technical services as professional educators for this program. This will involve providing the school staff with the necessary information for the successful completion of their portion of the program and the provision of learning opportunities for all members of the staff so that they understand their role in the total program. One of the critical factors in the success of the program will be that which is concerned with the success of the entire educational endeavor, for no public relations program can hide or cover up an unsatisfactory program. The administrator has not only an internal function with respect to the school but also an external function in his contacts with the community in an official and a personal capacity.

The quality of the teaching staff and the educational program will be crucial to the success of the school public relations program. The teacher is in a key position to interpret the schools to the public by virtue of her continuous contacts with parents and other members of the school public. One requirement for success in her endeavors will be that she understand the educational program, the nature of children and the ways they grow and develop, and that she be informed on the subject of education in general, and the operation of the school in which she teaches. Membership in the professional fraternity of teachers implies understanding of and participation in the school public relations program. The teacher's professional and personal role in the program will do much to insure either its success or failure.

The non-teaching staff members also have a role in a public relations program, for they represent the school to a portion of the public, and indeed possess a good deal of information about school topics that are "picked up" as they go about their duties. There should be a deliberate effort, as part of the over-all program, to provide those staff members with the information and the understandings that will make it possible for them to contribute to an organized effort for school public relations.

The pupils attending a school move continuously between the home and the school, and the attitudes and the information of the pupils are presented daily to their parents and tend often to become the attitudes and the information of the parents. The happy, well adjusted youngster in a good school will be an effective, voluntary school public relations agent. The youngster is the basis for many home-school contacts, and as the home and the school share a task in the growth and development of this youngster, a sound program of understanding can be developed between the school and the home. This provides the basis for a great many home-school contacts. The child learns about the importance of and the development of many areas in his social studies program, and this is an area where the child may be taught something of the development, operation, and financing of the public school system in the United States. Sharp exception to this particular point is frequently taken, and the dangers of proseletyzing are obvious.

These then are the agents for school public relations and a very brief descriptive summary of their roles in this program as these roles are presented in the literature. The literature consists largely of descriptions of these roles, the relations between individuals within them,

and the procedures to be followed in implementing the role described. Rarely are these roles analyzed in terms of the actual relationships that exist as teachers and parents attempt to communicate with one another, and basic factors that may often prevent communication are ignored entirely. Public schools do have a problem in communication with the school public and are logically concerned with the problem, but the literature presently does not include information that has been developed in other fields that contains the possible key to the solution to some of the problems of communication in school public relations. Until these understandings are made a part of the school public relations area, the shrill crescendo of publicity can be expected to increase as the problem involved in the lack of basic understanding becomes more and more critical.

CHAPTER III

SELECTED ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION IN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS

> "A mere matter of words," we say contemptuously, forgetting that words have power to mould men's thinking, to canalize their feeling, to direct their willing and acting. Conduct and character are largely determined by the nature of the words we currently use to discuss ourselves and the world around us. Aldous Huxley, from Words and Their Meanings.[1]

School public relations involves by definition a concern with the relationship existing between professional teachers, administrators, and either individuals or groups from the school public, as this relationship becomes a deliberate organized effort for communication. There are many aspects to this relationship, but those of concern here are related to and involved in oral and written efforts at communication. The underlying reasons for this process are to be found in part in the concept of local school district control. Much of this is defined by the laws of the states, which refer to school district boundary changes, bonding and building procedures, and the election of school boards. This area, however, involves more than that of balloting on different items.

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[1]Cited in: S. I. Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), p. 163.

Further reasons for the existence of a program of school public relations are to be found in the individual school philosophy, as this is defined locally. An examination of this area of philosophy is not of concern here. This study is concerned with the process and the media of school public relations. The subjects or topics to be communicated again involve philosophy of school operation but for the purpose herein can be considered to consist primarily of the factors involved in an information program requisite for balloting on school issues, and the understandings required in the joint parental and school concern with the education of the youngsters of the community. Regardless of the educational philosophy involved, it is difficult to conceive of this educational task not requiring some forms of mutual effort, interest, and understanding. These require some kind of communication and shared knowledge before they can exist.

The act or the process of communication must be conceived of as involving two or more people organized in some form of a spatial and social relationship. This relationship may be relatively intimate, such as that in face-to-face conversation, or it may involve distances such that forms other than voice must be used. Communication may take place between two individuals; it may involve an individual and a group, or individuals as members of groups.

Groups do not communicate except as a spokesman acts for the group. Some kind of a medium is required for the transfer of meaning between the participants in the communication process, and this medium may be any one of those thus far discovered, whether it be smoke signals, a spoken and written language, or involve mechanical means for use over relatively long distances, or which allow a time lapse. The mechanical means consist of such things as letters, newspapers, telephones, et al. Many of the formal media used in school public relations are of the latter type, and special problems involved in the use of these will be considered later in some detail.

Implicit in the variety of procedures described in the literature devoted to school public relations, which describe means for structuring and organizing communication, is the assumption that as a consequence of these organized efforts initiated by agents acting for the school that meaning will be transferred with a consequent increase in the degree of understanding between the parties concerned. Obviously, this must not always have been the result of school public relations efforts, else the degree of understanding between school people and the general public would be relatively high in the areas with programs devoted to these ends, and school people would not be as concerned about the problem of school public relations as the

literature indicates they now are. Somewhere in this process a transfer of meaning must not have taken place to the extent desired and communication faulty because of this lack of transfer. Failure to transfer meaning when the effort has been made means that some one or more of the components of the process itself must not have taken place or have been effective. Care must be used to distinguish between failure to transfer meaning, and failure to produce an overt response of some form as a consequence of the effort to communicate. The transfer may or may not involve an overt response, and it must not be assumed that because an overt response does not occur, the transfer of meaning did not take place.

This study is concerned with those instances in school public relations in which the expected transfer of meaning did not take place or was only partial, and with an analysis of some of the factors involved to determine means whereby this transfer of meaning may be improved. As stated earlier, the wealth of current periodical literature available on the subject of school public relations is devoted almost entirely to descriptions of methods for the production of information items and/or means for dissemination. One of the purposes of this study is to demonstrate that fundamental factors in the nature of the process of communication and in the nature of the audience tend to structure the information

process as this is involved in school public relations. Efforts to improve the efficacy of communication must be planned in terms of these factors, some of which follow.

Communication

School public relations is concerned with efforts to provide members of the school public with information about schools and school activities in order that they may not only have some factual basis for the decisions they are expected to make, but also that they have a relatively large degree of understanding of the school task. This is communication. Wendell Johnson defines communication as being:

> An attempt on the part of one person to convey some of the products of his own abstracting to another person. He does this usually by speaking or writing--that is, by producing sound waves or light waves, or both. The other person 'receives' these sound waves or light waves and then proceeds to abstract from them evaluations of his own, which may or may not correspond to those which the speaker or writer intended to convey to him. Finally, he expresses those evaluations in words or deeds that may please or astonish the speaker or writer. In other words, communication consists of two processes of abstracting laid end to end. . . .[2]

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[2] Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), pp. 476-477.

The person initiating the process of communication (the teacher, administrator, or public relations director) begins by selecting from some aspect of reality those things which he has already perceived through his organs of perception (some fact or selection of facts available to him about the school, about education or about a pupil). This is translated to words or symbols from among those available to him (both known and considered proper for this occasion), and these words or symbols are arranged in an order which appears to be not only correct but adequate for the purpose. This translation to language introduces a series of abstractions, for the words selected represent with varying degrees of adequacy the thing so represented. The originator of the material to be communicated must use some degree of choice in the selection and the arrangement of the words or symbols used, and this involves varying degrees of accuracy and completeness, depending upon the skill of the selector. The process of abstraction to a language is by the very nature of the process one which introduces inaccuracies to the meaning to be communicated. The accuracy of the meaning transferred is affected also by the skill and knowledge of the receiver of the material. Hence, this process results in only a partial transfer of meaning and the limits are determined by the skill, knowledge, and experience of both of the

parties involved. This, when applied to school public relations situations, usually involves a relatively well educated but specialized person representing the public school, producing the material to be communicated with reception planned for a heteregeneous (as regards knowledge, skill, and previous experience) audience, the school public. These factors then tend to become limits to the process of communication as this is involved in school public relations. Communication is most effective when limited to those things or areas where the skill, knowledge, and previous experience of the individuals involved tend to be similar. Effectiveness is limited to the extent that these factors are dissimilar, and this must be considered when planning and structuring the process.

Next a medium must be selected from those available to be used to convey the material to be communicated. Selection will depend on what is available for use, the traditions involved, and the skills required for using and modifying this material to the requirements of the medium selected. A consideration of the media available is not sufficient, for the sender must proceed with some knowledge of the person to whom he wishes to direct this effort at communication. The person wishing to communicate must choose a medium in terms of his knowledge of the person or persons to be reached; thus, the communication process

is also limited by the knowledge possessed by the communicator of the media available, his skill in using them, and his knowledge of the receiver of the material to be transferred.

Whatever medium is chosen will involve sound waves or light waves, which will in turn stimulate the sense organs of the person receiving the communication if he is physically capable of perceiving the medium chosen and/or is physically present for the reception of a stimulus. The receiver then translates these stimuli into understandings, based perhaps on words, but this translation will be dependent upon those words and understandings which are available to the recipient and his interpretation of what was originally meant in terms of his own past experience. Katz states:

> Because language is symbolic in nature, it can only evoke meaning in the recipient if the recipient has experiences corresponding to the symbol.[3]

The transfer of meaning cannot be complete because of differences in experiential backgrounds of the individuals involved and the inaccuracies of the words selected for use in this transfer.

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[3]Daniel Katz, "Psychological Barriers to Communication," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Vol. 250, (March 1947), p. 19.

Since school public relations is essentially a communication process, it operates in terms of the limits established by three areas which make for only partial understanding or no understanding at all. These areas involve the originator of communication (teacher, administrator, or school public relations director), as this person attempts to translate the original concept to words or symbols, and his skill in so doing with the consequent inaccuracies that he intrudes. Another area involves the medium selected for communication and whether it is chosen with some knowledge of the person to be reached and the complications involved in the medium itself. The last area involves the recipient of the material communicated, the competency with which the stimuli used are translated to a likeness of that which originated in the mind of the person starting the process. The possibilities for misunderstanding grow as this is analyzed, and what began as a simple effort in school public relations can become extremely complicated when the factors are considered which make for lack of communication.

Language in Communication

The process of communication involves the use of language as a device to express preverbal tensions. The anthropologist would argue that language is more than

this, that words are also used as a means of identification by the way in which words are chosen and used. Speech, to be understood, cannot be isolated from the ways of doing things from the patterns of behavior of the persons involved. When language is used as a bridge between subgroups, another factor which further complicates communication is introduced, for the selection and the translation of the words used by the communicator and the receiver will vary with the experiential background of both, and with the groups of which they are members. As a consequence a professional person, tending to select words he is accustomed to use as a member of his subgroup and attempting to bridge the gap between his subgroup and that of which the receiver is a member, complicates the process of communication to the extent that he chooses words which identify him as a member of his own professional subgroup. This factor is a continuous problem in school public relations in that the school persons involved tend to use language chosen on the basis of their training and experiential background as a means of identification with their profession. To the extent that this takes place, to that degree is the professional person handicapped in his efforts to communicate with members of the school public. The solution to this problem, as regards school public

relations, is concerned with a deliberate effort on the part of the person initiating communication to use the terms known and in daily use by the subgroup to which communication is directed.

Language is composed of words arranged in some pattern which appears logical to the user. The single word is a simple finite unit for expression, which has some kind of a referent, and to be meaningful to the perceiver, both the word and the referent must be known. One of the common causes of lack of communication, beyond differences in experiential background, is ignorance of the terms available for use. Johnson states:

> The average individual does not use or readily understand as many as ten percent of the six hundred thousand words making up the English language. In a recent study . . . a total of thirty thousand words was obtained from a group of superior university freshmen, and the same size of speech sample was obtained from a group of mental hospital patients, diagnosed as schizophrenic. Each individual talked, interpreting fables, until he had produced a sample of three thousand words. For the freshmen just forty six different words made up half of the thirty thousand words in the total sample. For the schizophrenic patients, the comparable figure was thirty three words. . . .
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> Thus the magnitude of the discrepancy between reality and language, with respect to variability, is by no means adequately indicated by reference to the six hundred thousand words which make up the approximate total for the English language. The discrepancy is more

> meaningfully indicated by reference to the few hundred, at best, the few thousand words which make up the practical daily use vocabulary of an ordinary person.[4]

The English language offers a rich choice of words, but the very richness and variety of the choice available constitutes a problem in communication in that the words chosen must be known both to the communicator and the receiver.

Despite the richness of the English language, there are more things to speak about than there are words to use in describing them. This again required the individual selecting words to choose those available and known to him. To assure understanding, however, the words chosen must also be known by the receiver. Since the individuals involved may have widely differing experiential backgrounds, the words chosen must come from that portion of the total vocabulary available which is common to both of them. Where the words used may have possibly different shades of meaning and antecedents, they must be further clarified by additional detail so that the experiential antecedents can be identified. This poses a special problem in school public relations in the use of even such

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[4]Wendell Johnson, "The Communication Process and General Semantic Principles," Mass Communications, edited by Wilbur Schramm, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 266.

a simple word as "school." Presumably, most everyone will have some kind of an antecedent for the word school, but the variations possible will range from the relatively primitive possibilities inherent in a rural school to the complicated and sophisticated school to be found in wealthy urban subdivisions of large cities. Whorf states:

> . . . all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar . . .[5]

If communication is to take place, assuming the existence of different experiential and linguistic backgrounds, some indication of the antecedents of the terms selected for use must be given.

School public relations as a deliberate effort on the part of school personnel to communicate with members of the school public is limited and structured by factors inherent in the process itself. One of these limits is concerned with the fact that professional school people tend to select words with varying degrees of skill and to select those words which tend to identify them as members of their professional group. The process of translating a preverbal tension to words introduces a limit to effectiveness, for the word itself represents

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[5]Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Science and Linguistics," in Readings in Social Psychology, edited by Theodore M. Newcomb and Eugene L. Hartley, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1947), p. 215.

with varying degrees of accuracy, the thing to which reference is made. This abstraction, the word selected, represents to the receiver something which may or may not be identical to the intent of the originator of the effort to communicate. Whether or not it will be reasonably accurate depends on the experiences of the recipient. Communication directed to a large number of individuals as members of a school public must be phrased in terms of the words which have meanings which are similar for all those persons involved. The pattern of expression must not be that of selecting words which identify the selector as a member of a particular group, but in terms of the words which have meaning for the individuals to which the communication is directed. This means that the language of school public relations cannot be that of the profession of educators but that of the audience to which the communication is directed. Professional terms such as "bilateral lighting," "mental age," "reading readiness," etc., must be translated to terms having meaning for the non-professional recipient of the effort to communicate. This then must become one of the cardinal rules of school public relations.

Devices to Improve Written Communication in School Public Relations

A quick listing of school public relations efforts gives a cursory indication of the importance of writing and reading to the entire process. Reading is involved in many of the procedures used, such as news stories, annual reports, report cards, letters to parents, etc. The tendency of professional teachers and administrators to write for others as they have learned to read their own journals and communicate with each other is widely known. This is not a problem solely in school public relations, for government reports, income tax instructions, and other government publications are notorious for the often incomprehensible way in which they are written. The basic purpose of written communication is to make possible a transfer of meaning, but problems of literary style, grammar, and professional usage sometimes add such complicating factors that the material serves to make communication difficult, if not impossible. Graves and Hodge state:

> . . . The only relevant standard by which to judge any straightforward piece of prose is the ease with which it conveys its full intended sense to the readers to whom it is addressed, rather than its correctness by the laws of formal English grammar. A disadvantage of English grammar . . . is that it is not

> originally English, nor even Latin. It is Alexandrian-Greek grammar modified to serve a language of altogether different habits; and it is often inadequate to its task. . . .[6]

The original purpose behind the production of piece of material designed solely to increase public understanding may, because of the manner in which it is written, constitute an actual barrier to communication. When the material is analyzed in terms other than prose style but as it appears to readers with very different semantic backgrounds, it may only block and not facilitate communication. This variation in background is due in part to the professionalization and specialization commented on earlier but is also due to differences in educational levels and experiences, and is a special problem in the United States because of the migratory nature of the population.

The speaker can often judge by the blank look or lack of attention of the listener whether or not he is being understood. The listener can in turn supplement the spoken word by the gestures and expressions of the speaker. These helps or "keys" are not usually present in written communication. Helps are available in this area, since a number of students of language have attempted to devise

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[6]Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, The Reader Over Your Shoulder, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 21.

formulae to be used to obtain indices of reading ease. The formulae, while valuable, do not take into account all of the factors involved in reading ease. They do not take into account such things as quality of printing, paper, layouts, or the illustrations used. They do not consider basic motivation to read nor the problems involved in the use of specialized vocabularies in unique interest areas. A text in chemistry might have a relatively low reading ease score but be extremely difficult to one not versed in the special vocabulary of chemistry. The formulae do give the writer some understanding of whether or not he is using sentences that are too long or involved, or words that are too difficult to reach a general audience. These are "rough" indices and are valuable only as they provide the producer of public relations materials with an approximate measure of the extent to which the material being developed is suitable for distribution to a heterogeneous audience.

There are certain elements common to most readability formulae, which were deemed critical determinants of the ease of reading. Without using a specific formula, a knowledge of the elements used can provide the writer with a series of criteria for the determination of the reading

ease of his own writing developed as public relations materials. The major items used in readability formulae follow:

A. Vocabulary load

1. Relative number of different, uncommon words
2. Relative number of abstract words
3. Number of running words
4. Per cent of different words
5. Per cent of polysyllabic words
6. Vocabulary diversity (related to A-4)
7. Relative number of affixed morphomes (prefixes, suffices, inflectional endings, and foreign endings)
8. Number of syllables per 100 words

B. Sentence structure

1. Average sentence length
2. Relative number of prepositional phrases
3. Per cent of indeterminate clauses
4. Number of simple sentences

C. Human interest

1. Relative number of personal references
2. Number of personal pronouns
3. Number of words expressing human interest (like C-1)
4. Per cent of colorful words
5. Number of words representing fundamental life experiences
6. Number of words usually learned early in life (related to A-4)[7]

Obviously, the number of different, uncommon, and abstract words used will determine somewhat the ease of reading and the degree of comprehension for any specific individual.

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[7] _____ Public Relations Research Memo, May 1954, National School Public Relations Association, and The Research Division, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., May 1954, p. 7.

This analysis process can also be applied to various groups of people providing the writer has some knowledge of their educational and experiential background. In view of the problems inherent in the nature of the process of communication and the use of language to accomplish this, special precautions must be taken so that the transfer of meaning is facilitated and not impeded. The use of involved sentences also affects reading ease with the longer sentence more difficult to read. Since people tend to be interested in other people and their actions, the presence of "human interest" references will also influence reading ease.

One of the early formulae that was easy to apply was that of Irving Lorge, published first in 1939,[8] again in 1944,[9] and corrected in 1948.[10] This formula was based on average sentence length, relative number of prepositional phrases, and the relative number of hard words (based on the Dale list of 769 easy words to be eliminated in making the count). The formula has been used most widely in

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[8]Irving Lorge, "Predicting Readability of Selections for Children," Elementary English Review, Vol. 16 (October 1939), pp. 229-233.

[9]Irving Lorge, "Predicting Readability," Teachers College Record, Vol. 45, (March 1944), pp. 404-419.

[10]Irving Lorge, "The Lorge and Flesch Readability Formulas: A Correction," School and Society, Vol. 67, (February 21, 1948), pp. 141-142.

working with books written for the elementary grades. Word recognition is less important than the inclusion of abstract ideas for adult readers.

Rudolph Flesch[11] presented a formula in 1943 to be used in the analysis of writing as an index of the ease with which the material could be understood. This formula was based on a count of three language elements: 1) the average length of a sentence in words; 2) the number of affixes; and 3) the number of references to people. The formula was widely used in analyzing and revising such materials as newspaper reports, advertising copy, government publications, bulletins and leaflets for farmers, materials for adult education, and children's books. The formula did have certain shortcomings, however, and some of these were concerned with the fact that the formula did not always show the high readability of direct, conversational writing. Sentence length was the element with the heaviest weight, the easiest to compute, and was often overemphasized. The count of the number of affixes was difficult and laborious, and references to people as a standard of readability seemed arbitrary.

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[11] Rudolf Flesch, "Marks of Readable Style," Contributions to Education #897, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1943, 69 pp.

In 1948 Flesch developed revised formulae[12] in an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of the earlier formula and produce a more useful instrument. One of the factors in the revised formula was based on the measurement of word length, since this is indirectly a measurement of word complexity, and word complexity in turn is indirectly a measurement of abstraction. The formulae also included a measure of sentence length as a factor in sentence complexity, hence a measure of abstraction. One formula was designed as a measure of reading ease and another to provide a measure of human interest. Formula B attempts to provide some measure of the interest of people in other people as this is evidenced in reading. The less serious reader is apt to be somewhat dismayed by long close paragraphs of print, and a lack of personal references tends to make a story appear to be remote, without "life," and second hand. The reading ease scores obtained range from zero (almost unreadable) to one hundred (capable of being read by most any literate person). Flesch has published additional charts that make it easier to get readability and human interest scores.[13, 14]

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[12] Rudolf Flesch, "A New Readability Yardstick," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 32, (June 1948), pp. 226-230.

[13] Rudolf Flesch, Art of Readable Writing, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), p. 237.

[14] Rudolf Flesch, How To Test Readability, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), p. 56.

Dale and Chall, critical of the Flesch formulae of being arbitrary, and the Lorge list of easy words as not suitable for use with materials primarily for adults, published a readability formula in 1948.[15] This has been considered to be the easiest to use for determining readability after the list of easy words is known. The formula is based on the average length of sentences and a count of hard words. Klare published a table[16] for the determination of readability scores, whereby a readability raw score can be read directly from the table by entering the average sentence length and the Dale score values found by application of the formula. Dale and Chall were critical of the Flesch count of personal references, since personal words are occasionally used as a rhetorical device with no consequent improvement in readability. Social studies materials and histories may have many personal references without being easy to read. Since the Dale-Chall formula considers all names of people and places as familiar, this formula may also rate social studies materials as easier to read than they actually are.

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[15] Edgar Dale, and Jeanne S. Chall, "A Formula for Predicting Readability," Educational Research Bulletin, Vol. 27, (January), pp. 11-20; (February, 1948), pp. 37-54.

[16] George R. Klare, "A Table for Rapid Determination of Dale-Chall Readability Scores," Educational Research Bulletin, Vol. 31, (February 1952), pp. 43-47.

The nuances of disagreement over the construction and use of readability formulae are not of concern here except as they provide some measure of understanding of the factors involved in this area of communication. The formulae, while subject to dispute, may provide the person producing school public relations materials with a measure of readability somewhat more dependable than subjective judgment. The National Education Association Research Division developed an adaptation of the Dale-Chall formula that is somewhat easier to use and is claimed to be adequate to give a rough estimate of readability.[17]

Readability Formula (Dale-Chall)a/

Average sentence length	Hard words per 100 running words	Corrected grade level	Description
29	32 or more	16 and above (college graduate)	Very difficult
25	27-32 inclusive	13-15 (college)	Difficult
21	22-27 inclusive	11-12	Fairly difficult
17	16-22 inclusive	9-10	Standard
14	11-16 inclusive	7-8	Fairly easy
11	6-11 inclusive	5-6	Easy
8	6 or fewer	4 and below	Very easy

a/ Computed by NEA Research Division on the basis of the Dale-Chall formula

[17] Reproduced in "Public Relations Research Memo," for May, 1954, op. cit., p. 13.

The same average sentence length and hard words per one hundred running words are used above as in the Flesch formula. The table is designed to be used as a rough working guide in the development of materials suitable for public relations purposes.

Since most written school public relations efforts are directed to adult readers, the level of the program must be planned in terms of the reading skills of the groups to be reached. This must be assessed for each local community, for this level will vary widely within the community itself and between communities. Flesch has applied his formula to school grades completed, as this provides an index of reading skills.[18] Materials produced for general consumption in the U.S., with a reading ease score of 90-100, must have an average sentence length of eight or fewer words, and 123 or fewer syllables per one hundred words. This material could be read by about 93 per cent of the adults in the U.S. People usually do not read at the upper maximum of their ability if this is done for pleasure or as a leisure-time activity.[19] Flesch claims that the typical reader for each educational level will

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[18] Rudolf Flesch, op. cit., p. 149.

[19] Ibid., p. 150.

usually read with pleasure at the next lower bracket and sometimes lower. Time magazine, written in breezy high school English, boasts of its circulation among persons in top executive and administrative positions. Many of these people are also avid mystery story readers.

The various formulae available for the determination of "reading ease" have problems inherent in them, and these have in large part been given with the descriptions of the formulae in the previous pages. They are of value, however, in the production or the evaluation of materials for relatively heterogeneous audiences, and as such are useful additions to the "tools" available which are designed to assist in the transfer of meaning during the school public relations process. The formulae provide rough, mechanical devices for the improvement of writing designed for a mass audience, but have no value for the assessment of the literary merits of the material. However, one of the problems in school public relations stems from the attempt to apply literary forms to the production of materials to be used in furthering the process of communication. Writing clarity has long been a goal for teachers of English, and a portion of the solution to the problem is to be found in the process of up-grading writing skills. However, hopes for the attainment of this goal have little relevancy for the present problem in school

public relations, for adults are now producing these materials with a wide range of skills. Some measure of readability ease, having practical utility for the practitioner of school public relations, would appear to be a significant step in the direction of improving the written means for communication between school personnel and the community they serve.

Attitudes as a Factor in School Public Relations

Presumably, all stages of opinion and information may exist at the time that communication is initiated from a situation where every individual involved is completely informed and/or favorable to one where every individual is completely uninformed and/or unfavorable toward the topic. This implies that prior to communication some form of individual sentiment exists and that this variation will involve degrees of knowledge and sentiment toward the issue. The two factors are related and represent what has been called an attitude toward the subject of communication. Presumably, an attitude will exist with respect to the subject of communication, prior to the process, and by virtue of this existence will affect the process of communication. If an attitude does not exist, communication will presumably result in the development of an attitude.

The existence or the absence of an attitude toward either the subject of communication or the communicator affects the process of communication. Newcomb defines an attitude as:

> . . . a state of readiness for motivated behavior . . . his predisposition to perform, perceive, think, and feel in relation to it.[20]

This is not essentially different from the definition by Allport, cited by Britt:

> An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.[21]

Thus, an attitude is not overt behavior, nor is it perception, but is a state of readiness for behavior or for perception. An attitude refers to a relatively persistent, general orientation toward the environment of an individual. Materials produced as a part of the school public relations effort become a part of that environment when presented for perception. Individual perception of these materials does not take place in terms of the stimulus of the moment but is largely determined by the attitudes existing. The nature of attitudes, the manner in which they are acquired,

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[20] Newcomb, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

[21] Steuart H. Britt, Social Psychology of Modern Life, (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1949), p. 113.

changed, and/or reinforced become limiting and structuring factors in the communication process as this is involved in school public relations.

The common statement, "attitude toward school," refers to individual attitudes as these can be characterized as similar. As there is no public opinion but only private opinions, so also there is no collective attitude, but only collections of private attitudes. This does not prevent the existence of similar attitudes; in fact, it is common to find many individuals with attitudes which are approximately similar toward specific objects or factors which are common to the individuals involved. This similarity may provide the basis for group membership and for communication. An attitude common to a group is a close approximation to a folkway, which is a common or customary way of doing something or thinking about something.[22] The attitudes of concern to school public relations tend not to be common to the extent that they represent concensus or the status of folkways. If the majority of attitudes could be so classified, school public relations would present a different kind of a problem.

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[22] J. S. Roucek, Social Control, (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1947), p. 392.

The exact process by which individuals acquire attitudes has not been adequately studied. Queener describes the attitude-forming process in terms of propositions:

1. Attitudes are learned.
2. Attitudes are learned mainly from other people.
3. Attitudes are learned mainly from other people who have high or low prestige for us.
4. Once attitudes have been learned, they are reinforced by a variety of motives.[23]

That attitudes are learned should require little elaboration, for the alternative is that they are not learned, hence innate. A person tends to hold attitudes similar to his parents, siblings, spouse, class group, sex group, age group, et al., and has evidently learned these attitudes primarily from people and not from experiences, for attitudes are held by individuals on subjects with which they have had no previous experience. Attitudes are not learned from just any person but from persons whose ways are important to the learner, either encouraging him to hold attitudes similar to persons or groups with high prestige or to hold opposite attitudes from people with low prestige. Prestige is used here in the sense of cueing an imitator to either rewarding or punishing experiences. Once formed the attitude may serve a variety of personal and economic motives.

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[23] E. L. Queener, Introduction to Social Psychology, (New York: Wm. Sloan Associates, 1951), p. 337.

The acquisition and the development of attitudes is not of major consequence here except as this process is concerned with school public relations. Perception of school public relations materials takes place in terms of the attitudes existing. If attitudes are learned mainly from other people who hold either high or low prestige for the learner, then school public relations information materials in the forms usually presented would probably not change negative attitudes. The materials themselves will be perceived in terms of attitudes already formed, or if no attitude exists, development will be due to factors other than those presented by school public relations materials.

Change and Persistence of Attitudes

The description of an attitude as consisting of a favorable or unfavorable "set" toward something is not adequate, for the attitude may range in intensity from highly favorable to highly unfavorable, and vary in range or coverage. An attitude could be represented by a continuum, with a possible range from high positive to high negative. Obviously, intensity of feeling will vary with the position of the attitude on the continuum. Attitudes also vary in salience, i.e. the readiness with which the

attitude will affect behavior with a minimum of external stimulation. Thus, an attitude may range from highly favorable to one which represents a high state of opposition, may cover a relatively wide range with respect to the subject of the attitude and may vary in consistency, intensity, and salience. This, when applied to school public relations, may represent an individual attitude toward the school as being highly favorable or unfavorable, may involve a relatively specific attitude toward aspects of the school, or may be more or less generalized. The individual may feel very intensely on the subject, and the attitude becomes involved at the slightest stimulation. Care must be exercised to distinguish between "knowledge of a subject" and attitudes toward this subject. This confusion is frequently found in school public relations materials.

School public relations efforts to provide information for members of the school public are frequently stated in terms which imply that, if successful, changes will result in those attitudes which are negative as regards the school, or fail to the extent that negative attitudes toward the school do not change but persist. School public relations efforts must also serve to reinforce existing positive attitudes toward the school. Attitude persistence and attitude change would seem to be crucial areas of

concern for school public relations, if the presentation of facts in a truthful manner (a school public relations goal) will have any effect in these areas. Certainly, change and persistence of attitudes are involved in the process of communication, for the goal of communication, an increased area of joint understanding cannot occur with respect to many of the subjects of communication, unless some negative attitudes are changed. If the negative attitude persists, it constitutes a block to communication. Likewise, positive attitudes must be maintained or reinforced, for if allowed to change to negative attitudes, these will also become blocks to communication. The possibilities for attitudinal modification would seem to range from no change at all to a major change or reinforcement of the present state. A lack of change may be the consequence of a continuance of the original influences, which continue to influence or reinforce the present attitude.

School public relations efforts toward attitude change (presumably from negative to positive as regards the school) must be conducted in terms of what is known about the process. Newcomb summarized what is known on the subject after a review of the research:

> Attitudes toward things change when the frames of reference in which they are perceived change. This may occur because changing events have made the old frame of reference irrelevant or impossible. It may happen because individuals are encouraged by persuasion or prestige to try to look at things in new ways. It is particularly likely to occur when a person is attracted toward membership in new groups whose members share frames of reference new to that person. This condition is of great importance for attitude change, because most people are very strongly motivated to be responded to as group members by other group members, and because people come to be recognized as group members when they express attitudes common to that group.[24]

Hence, attitude change may take place because of changing events or as a result of personal influence. It may also take place as a consequence of group membership, readiness for or as a result of membership in new groups. This change may be the result of the individual's desire for identification with a group or because of group decision.[25] This (attitude change) has little or nothing to do with individual exposure to "correct facts," and that portion of the school public relations program devoted to the effort to change negative to positive attitudes (as regards the school) would appear to be relatively ineffective in terms of what is known of attitude change. Means for

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[24] Newcomb, op. cit., p. 243.

[25] Kurt Lewin, "Group Decision and Social Change," Readings in Social Psychology, edited by T. M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley, (New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1947), pp. 330-345.
Kurt Lewin, Resolving Social Conflicts, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1948), pp. 56-71.
Queener, op. cit., pp. 361-362.

attitude change in school public relations seem limited to those procedures involved in group action, in the formation of groups holding high prestige, and the attraction to membership of individuals holding attitudes which it is considered desirable to change. Information techniques then play little part in individual attitude change if this is an objective of the school public relations program. The method either implied or stated by researchers is that attitudinal modification can be accomplished largely through group action and personal influence and not by the dissemination of publicity materials.

School Public Relations and Attitudes

The individuals involved in the communication process, as this is a part of a deliberate organized school public relations effort, will presumably be adults often with some previous experience with the subjects of communication. As a consequence of this, they will have developed attitudes of one form or another toward the subject of communication or the individuals involved, and these attitudes will tend to structure perception and determine the future course of communication. Hence, the relationship between attitudes and communication is such that as the problems

of language and perception cannot be separated from the process of communication, so also communication cannot be considered without including also the attitudes of the individuals involved.

School public relations programs either state or imply that the wide dissemination of information about the school will affect the way the residents of the community think and feel about their schools. If this process is stated as one which attempts to modify existing attitudes, the procedure (that of the provision of information) would hardly seem adequate to the task at hand, for it tends to ignore much that is known about the process of communication and attitude change. Mention is often made of a variety of "school publics" but rarely is this treated in sufficient detail to determine: what publics? what are they like? how does one proceed from here? The roles of the individuals involved and the procedures for organization for the dissemination of the information would apparently have little relevance to the problem at hand. In terms of the analysis of this chapter, certain pertinent conclusions might be drawn on the subject of attitudes in school public relations.

The first of these conclusions might have to do with the fact that all individuals possess attitudes of varying

kinds. Since the United States has a compulsory education law, a well-developed system of transportation and communication, it would appear difficult to conceive of an individual who did not possess some kind of an attitude on the subject of school in general, and a school in particular, which would then affect further communication on school items. This attitude would not consist of overt behavior but of a tendency to possess a state of readiness for further perception. Hence,any act of communication is not a new process but begins on the basis of that which has taken place at an earlier time and proceeds in terms not entirely of the present stimulus but as a combination of both present and earlier stimuli.

The second of these conclusions might have to do with the possible range of existing attitudes involved in communication and the effect of further communication on these attitudes. If information is to be presented, what effect will this information have on existing attitudes? Since there is a variation possible if the material does have an effect, it would be difficult to conceive of it having the same effect on <u>all</u> the possible range of attitudes possessed by the various individuals concerned. If it does not have the same effect on all attitudes, then presumably the material may strengthen some attitudes,

weaken others, and have no effect on some attitudes. The problem is: which ones? What happens as a consequence of efforts to produce material on the issues in, for example, a school building campaign? Thus far there seems to be virtually no research having a direct bearing on the problem, and one is forced to generalize on the basis of research performed in other areas. On the basis of this research, it is difficult to conceive of the same school news release having an identical effect on all of the individuals who perceive this news release. Further generalization is impossible until more research is done in the area of school public relations concerned with the identification of specific effects of various types of information materials on the attitudes held by different community members.

The third of these conclusions is that individuals tend to perceive in terms of their attitudes toward the subject of perception, and as a consequence of this, an identical stimulus provided a number of individuals will be perceived in terms which represent the range of attitudes which exist. Thus, the problem of reaching all members of the school public has not so much to do with wide dissemination of the materials presented but that these be presented in terms of the possible variation in existing perceptual needs. The attitude includes a

readiness to perceive the issues in a particular frame of reference. Very often the individual will perceive in terms of his interests as these are related to the attitudes he has on a particular subject, and the same stimulus will affect different individuals in different ways. Hence, the person with a strong negative attitude toward the proposed bond issue will perceive the news story on the subject in an entirely different way than the person with a strong positive attitude toward the same project. By the same token one individual will tend to see only those things which tend to reinforce his existing attitudes on the subject. Thus, both may perceive the same news or information item in a manner which reinforces divergent attitudes.

The fourth conclusion is that individuals tend to perceive in frames of reference similar to those of the groups to which they belong or those with which they identify themselves. Since the individual receives varying degrees of satisfaction by virtue of membership in the group, a stimulus tends to be perceived to the extent that either the individual is dissatisfied with membership in the group and tends to gain satisfactions from those actions which prompt him to perhaps change group identifications, or the stimulus may be ignored, for acceptance would

require rejection of group membership. Hence, work in school public relations must consider the additional factors intruded by virtue of the fact that most individuals will be members of groups and the program planned not only in terms of the individuals but also in terms of what group membership means to those individuals.

A fifth conclusion has to do with those attitudes which are ego-involved, and the fact that any threat to these attitudes tends to arouse resistance to this threat to the extent that this tends to threaten the ego image that the individual has of himself. Further, attitude change, information, and logic do not have the causal relationship often claimed for them. Perhaps Queener states it best:

> Attitudes are not formed by logic . . . it is very difficult to find a single experiment in which attitude change is clearly a function of logical argument or information. Some simply report no change. . . . Others reporting changes in attitude by this method have consistently failed to hold constant such important variables as the prestige of the person presenting the logical arguments or imparting the information. . . . There is the general finding that attitudes acquired by logical argument do not behave very logically . . . not only is there little evidence that important attitudes are changed by logical-information instruction, but there is even some evidence that a great amount of information, particularly on controversial topics, may actually attenuate whatever attitude is already in the making. . . . Unselected

> information may well lead to confusion and apathy rather than to any particular attitude . . . the observation is hazarded that important attitudes are not much influenced by logic because in most cultures, including our own, logic is valued as a means but not as an end of life. . . . And now, having arrayed the evidence that logic and information have little to do with attitude formation, we must mention at least two special cases in which the opposite may be true: Attitudes may be formed by logic and information:
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> a) if the attitude to be formed is not in conflict with motives more powerful than the desire to be logical, or
> b) if the individual in whom the attitude is to be formed is one of those (extremely) rare persons to whom "having it right" is more important than "having it my way."[26]

School public relations information programs are frequently defined in terms which appeal to the persons forming the objectives of the program and the relationship between logical discourse and attitude change, while often having an appeal to academicians, frequently has little effect on attitude change. If necessary, the information will frequently be reinterpreted so that it does not contradict existing attitudes.

The sixth and perhaps one of the conclusions with many potentially fruitful but largely unexplored possibilities for school public relations is concerned with a process designed to produce attitude changes by means of group decisions. By this process, the individuals involved take part in the process of discovering the information necessary, the analysis of it, and as the

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[26] Ibid., pp. 351-353.

individual accepts belongingness to the group accepts the decisions of the group to the extent that a "we feeling" has been engendered among members of the group. As a consequence of this process, the facts become <u>their</u> facts rather than the facts of other people. Allport states:

> The group to which an individual belongs is the ground for his perceptions, his feelings, and his actions.[27]

This understanding has not had sufficient effect on school public relations concepts and procedures, and most of the efforts expended in this area have been rather incidental, as organizations have attained this type of a result by accident as they organized special work groups for the solution of school problems. This entire area remains as a fertile, virgin opportunity to develop concepts, procedures, and methods for the establishment of this kind of a situation as a deliberate school public relations effort.

Attitudes and Public Opinion

Public opinion, the apparent antithesis of private opinion, does not exist as such but consists of collections of private opinions as found in the multiplicity of possible publics. Doob defines public opinion in an attempt to be precise:

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[27] Gordon W. Allport, in the Foreword to <u>Resolving Social Conflicts</u>, Kurt Lewin, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1948), pp. vii.

> public opinion refers to people's attitudes on an issue when they are members of the same social group.[28]

In this sense public opinion exists whenever people have attitudes which tend to be more or less common as members of a social group. Doob[29] further distinguishes between internal public opinion as attitudes which are not expressed and external public opinion as those attitudes are manifested either in overt opinion or in overt behavior. Doob[30] further distinguishes between actual public opinion, based on attitudes which have been aroused and having some kind of an effect on behavior, and latent public opinion when the attitudes on an issue have not been aroused or are not affecting behavior but are more or less dormant at the moment. Latent in this sense is used as referring to probable or forceable influences on behavior. Thus, attitudes become the well springs of public opinion, and public opinion is involved in the operation of public schools in ways defined by the laws of the various state school systems and as individual members of the public school staff attempt to work with parents on subjects involving the education of youngsters. The nature of

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[28] Doob, op. cit., p. 35.

[29] Ibid., p. 39.

[30] Ibid., p. 49.

attitudes and attitude formation, persistence, and change cannot be separated from the process of communication, for this takes place within the content of the attitudes and the opinions which exist. These determine not only many of the difficulties of communication but also the nature of the process itself, the relative success or lack of it, and at times the ends of communication. The concept of the school public relations process as consisting of techniques for the production and dissemination of information items operates *in vacuo* without relationship to the actual situation as this is concerned with the nature of attitudes and public opinion.

Summary

School public relations efforts are largely devoted to efforts to communicate with individual and group members of the school public. The reasons for communication may involve a philosophical analysis of the role of the school in society, but the basic need for some kind of communication is to be found in the laws of the states which require public decision on various school matters and the responsibilities which school teachers and administrators share with parents from the school public for the provision of the conditions which make possible the education of

youngsters. These processes require that the agents concerned possess some kind of a common area of understanding, and this can be attained only to the extent that communication is successful.

The act or process of communication involves two or more people in some form of a spatial and social relationship and using some kind of a medium by means of which meaning can be transferred between them. This medium may be any one of those devised for use thus far, but basically these reduce to some form of spoken or written language. Many failures to transfer meaning result when some one or more of the components of the process are absent or inoperative. An overt response need not always result from a transfer of meaning, and the lack of an overt response does not imply failure to transfer meaning.

A transfer of meaning requires that the person initiating the transfer select some aspect of reality, abstract this to words or symbols, and arrange them in some logical and socially accepted form. This process complicates communication to the extent that the words selected represent the thing they refer to with varying degrees of accuracy. Once this is done, the words must be conveyed to the receiver of communication by the use of some kind of a medium. This must be done with some

knowledge of the receiver so that a form is selected which will expose him to the effort to communicate and where it will be physically possible for him to perceive the material.

The receiver of the material to be communicated will in turn translate this to understandings but always based on those understandings which he already possesses, and these will in turn be determined by his previous experience. Since they will tend to differ in varying degrees from the previous experiences of the person originating the act of communication, the translation will tend to be somewhat different from that originally anticipated by the sender. Hence, transfer is partial and incomplete to the extent that the individuals involved have different experiential backgrounds. Communication involves three areas which tend to limit effectiveness: 1) the originator of communication as he attempts with varying degrees of success to abstract his meaning and translate this to the words and symbols available to him; 2) the medium selected for communication, with the problems inherent in the use of the medium itself, and whether or not this was selected with some knowledge of the receiver of communication; and 3) the recipient of the material to be communicated as he reverses the process of changing words to partial understanding, doing so on the basis of his different experiential background.

The process of communication, as it involves language, is further complicated by problems inherent in the use of language. The use of words is not limited to transfer of meaning in communication but is also concerned with a way of living and identification of the user with that way of living. When language is used between social subgroups, the transfer of meaning is made difficult because of language and experience differences in these subgroups.

The individual choosing words to express himself is limited to those words that he knows, and it has been estimated that the average person can use or readily understand about 10 per cent of the six hundred thousand words making up the English language. Thus, two more types of limitations are placed on communication: 1) that limit established by the fact that the persons involved in communication will know but a small portion of the words available for use, and communication must be carried on by the use of the words common to the persons involved; and 2) the limits to communication established by the inaccuracies of language itself, i.e. the word is <u>not</u> the object, but represents the object with varying degrees of accuracy. Words have meaning in terms of some kind of an experiential background, and since these vary, the concept of word meaning will vary between individuals.

School public relations efforts depend largely on writing and reading, and the materials are produced by professional teachers and administrators, who often tend to write for the lay public as they write for each other. This complicates communication because of the tendency to use professional specialized terms and to follow the rules of grammar in the attempt to emulate various prose standards. To solve a portion of this problem, various readability formulae have been developed, which were devised to measure ease of reading and the appeal of the material in human interest terms. It is assumed that materials which are easier to read and have human interest appeal will be more likely to be read by members of the school public.

The major items used in readability formulae deal with vocabulary load (the number of difficult or abstract words), sentence structure and length, and the number of personal references, as these affect human interest. Reading ease formulae can be used to analyze the ease of reading of materials produced in the various areas of school public relations efforts in an effort to present them in a form more likely to be read by members of the school public. The formulae have an indirect effect in that as more people become familiar with the methods used and the criteria on which the formulae are based, their attention is drawn to the need to write with the factors of reading

ease and reader comprehension in mind. The formulae obviously do not measure literary merit, arrangement, logic of the presentation, and the other intangible factors of writing.

The three most widely used formulae are the Lorge, Flesch, and Dale-Chall formulae. The Lorge formula has not been used as widely as the others because it seems to be better adapted for use with children's literature. The Flesch formulae have been revised since the first one was introduced in 1943. Presently there are two Flesch formulae, one as a measure of reading ease, and the other to provide a measure of human interest. The Dale-Chall formula has been considered the easiest to use once the list of easy words is known. It has been further revised by the Research Division of the National Education Association to provide easily used, rough estimates of ease of readability. The formula, as adapted, is based on sentence length and hard words per one hundred running words. The formula is simple to use, and conceivably its use in the production of school public relations materials would improve their readability but not necessarily influence their literary merit.

A problem in the selection and presentation of school public relations information is concerned with the individuals

involved who possess attitudes which affect the process and the nature of communication. Attitudes are not overt behavior nor perception but a state of readiness for behavior or perception. Attitudes are learned primarily from other people who have high or low prestige for the learner, and once these attitudes are learned, they are reinforced by a variety of motives. Attitudes vary in intensity, whether specific or general, consistency, salience, and degree. Efforts at producing attitude change seem most likely to succeed when this process is attempted as a by-product of group decision. Attitudes may change as a consequence of changing events, or as a result of personal influence. These changes would then have little to do with exposure to school public relations "facts." Methods for producing attitudinal change as a deliberate school public relations effort would seem limited largely to the organization of groups for this process and the use of prestige factors in personal influence.

The relationship between attitudes might be partially summarized as follows:

1. Virtually all individuals in the school public possess attitudes of various kinds on the subject of schools, and a school in particular.

2. The same information item will not produce the same effect on all of the persons exposed to it. Little is known as to the nature of specific changes or effects.

3. Individuals tend to perceive materials in terms of their attitudes toward the subject of perception. The attitude includes a readiness to perceive the issues in a particular frame of reference, and the same information item may serve to reinforce entirely divergent attitudes.

4. Individuals tend to perceive in frames of reference similar to the groups to which they belong or identify themselves.

5. Threats to attitudes which are ego-involved tend to arouse resistance to this threat. Attitude change, information and logic do not have the causal relationship often claimed for them.

6. Attitudes may be changed by means of group decision, when the individuals share in the process of discovering information and arriving at conclusions.

Attitudes and public opinion are related to the extent that people have attitudes which tend to be more or less common among members of a social group, and this makes possible the development of opinions. Attitudes thus become the well-springs of public opinion, and public opinion is involved in school public relations efforts.

CHAPTER IV

SELECTED MASS INFORMATION PROGRAM FINDINGS SUGGESTING SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS

School public relations information programs designed, for example, to inform the school public on the issues involved in a school bonding campaign are frequently judged as successful or unsuccessful in terms of individual behavior at the polls. In the event the election is judged a failure (from the school standpoint), it is frequently assumed that there was insufficient "coverage" in the information program, that it did not reach enough people, that had the publicity been more intensive and extensive, the issue would have received favorable consideration at the polls. The counterpart of this is also frequently true in that successful bonding campaigns are described in terms of the extensiveness and intensiveness of the publicity program in order that other school systems may duplicate these procedures. It is obvious that information channeled to the public in an inadequate manner will not reach the public, but this is not the sole factor involved. The previous analysis indicates that as the individual participates in this process various communication factors

involved in language, semantics, and attitudes become important. Different mass information programs have been analyzed to determine the nature and problems inherent in dealing with mass groups. Some of these follow, as they suggest school public relations program modifications.

Physical Barriers and the Flow of Information

That part of the school public relations program which is concerned with communication originating from the school is primarily an information process in that it consists of efforts to produce and place this information in channels which will make public exposure to it possible. Much of the material available in professional education journals consists of descriptions of procedures to improve the physical aspects of the process, i.e. articles on how to write news stories which will be valued and used by newspaper editors, articles on how to "get along with" the editor, or how to produce radio shows, etc. The need for information in a local school district in order that residents of this district might exercise their franchise with some modicum of intelligence should need no elaboration here. However, preoccupation with procedures designed solely to reduce the physical barriers to communication ignores completely the more important psychological barriers to communication. Some of these have been stated earlier.

There is a great need to improve the physical barriers to the flow of information important to the public school communication process, but the solution to this part of the problem still leaves another and equally important portion of the problem unsolved. The physical barriers to communication impede the supply of information, and this supply needs to be increased, but exposure to information does not necessarily produce response to and understanding of this information. It might be theoretically possible to expose everyone to the fact that a school building is judged to be inadequate, but understanding and agreement does not necessarily follow from this exposure. Referring to the earlier discussion of the communication process, this exposure to information involves problems concerned with the nature of language and the various media used, but equally important, the nature of the attitudes and opinions held by the participants. The psychological nature of the individuals concerned determines to a large extent the results and the possible success of the efforts at communication. The earlier discussion of the nature of attitudes and factors involved in attitude change indicates that exposure to information on a subject does not change strongly held attitudes, and in fact, the attitudes held at the time of exposure even affect perception of the information presented.

The Chronic "Know Nothings" and Information Campaigns

It could be assumed that the existing ignorance of a subject to which an individual has been exposed may indicate that the nature of the attitude itself acts as a selective screen for perception. Studies have shown that a group exists that is relatively ignorant of many areas, i.e. if they are uninformed on one topic, they tend also to be uninformed on another.[1] Hyman and Sheatsley claim that "there exists a hard core of chronic 'know-nothings'." They state further:

> If all persons provided equal targets for exposure, and the sole determinant of public knowledge were the magnitude of the given information, there would be no reason for the same individuals always to show a relative lack of knowledge. Instead, there is something about the uninformed which makes them harder to reach, no matter what the level or nature of the information.[2]

The authors partially base this statement on a National Opinion Research Center survey conducted in May, 1946, to determine public knowledge of the report of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine and found that only 28 per cent of the national sample had any knowledge of this

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[1] Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, "Some Reasons Why Information Campaigns Fail," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 11, (Fall Issue, 1947), pp. 412-423.

[2] Ibid., p. 413.

report. It might be assumed that the other 72 per cent did not have access to media which conveyed this information. Yet, they found that this group tended consistently to have little information on other international affairs topics which had been widely reported in the mass media available locally. The topics were the Palestine report referred to above, the Acheson-Lillienthal report on atomic energy, the Paris meeting of the Big Four Foreign Ministers, the proposed loan to England then being debated in Congress, and the fact that Palestine was ruled by England. One person in seven had no awareness of any of the items, and one person in three had knowledge of no more than one of them. The lack of information possessed by this group is not entirely related to the relative inaccessibility of information, for a relationship between size of community and awareness of these items was found, but the differences were relatively small.

The importance of individual motivation to the teaching and learning process has been known for some period of time, particularly as this is involved in public school classroom situations. Many portions of school public information campaigns consist of teaching and learning procedures. Planning these programs in terms of what is known of individual motivation for perception tends to increase the possibilities that more

members of the local community will be reached by the program. Efforts designed to increase the scope and frequency of contact of a public information program tend to be ignored unless these are keyed to individual interest areas which stimulate the individual to perceive this material and pursue it with sufficient diligence to produce some measure of knowledge and understanding. In the same report by Hyman and Sheatsley[3] another poll conducted by the National Opinion Research Center is described, again taken in May, 1946, which attempted to measure the public's interest in eight different foreign affairs issues. These were: 1) our relations with Russia; 2) the atomic bomb; 3) our policy toward Germany; 4) the United Nations Organization; 5) the British loan; 6) the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Paris; 7) our relations with France and Spain; and 8) our policy toward Palestine. They found that public interest varied widely on these issues, that 11 per cent expressed no interest in any of them, and another 12 per cent were interested in only one or two of them. This indicates a considerable degree of apathy involving about one quarter of the population in enormously important areas, including the atomic bomb, the United Nations Organization, and our relations with Russia. These

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[3] Ibid., pp. 415-416.

topics were reported continuously in the press and radio, but irrespective of the frequency of contact with the information, it was not perceived by the individuals who were not so motivated. Some kind of a relationship between interest and state of knowledge exists, for as individuals have more information they tend to be more interested, but from the point of initiating a campaign where it can be assumed that the level of information is relatively low, large groups apparently exist with no interest or knowledge of the problem and as a consequence of this tend to be relatively impervious to efforts to communicate with them. Hyman and Sheatsley state:

> Scientific surveys are needed to determine who these people are, why they lack interest, and what approach can best succeed in reaching them.[4]

School public relations efforts at the dissemination of facts present them to an audience possessing a wide variety of prior knowledge and attitudes on the subject, and these attitudes will usually range from positive to negative as regards the subject of the presentation. The information presented can be expected to be in harmony with the attitudes and previous information of a portion of the public to be reached and can also be expected to represent a view contrary to the attitudes and information

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[4] Ibid., pp. 416-417.

of another portion of this public. This information will then tend to be perceived by this favorable public, i.e. an increase in the tempo will increase the frequency of contact with this favorable group, which is already "on your side." It will also tend to be contrary to the views held by the unfavorable portion of the public, and this group will tend to ignore the information, and an increase in the tempo of the information program will be relatively ineffective with this group unless means can be found to reach them.

Influence of Attitude Strata on Information Campaign Results

Hyman and Sheatsley state that "people seek information congenial to prior attitudes,"[5] and base this again on evidence accumulated in polling national samples. They found that people tended to seek information which confirmed and was congenial with their prior information and attitudes and to avoid information which tended to refute these prior attitudes toward the subject under consideration. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, in describing the exposure of a sample panel to political campaign propaganda, conclude that:

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[5] Ibid., pp. 417.

> People selected political material in accord with their own taste and bias. Even those who had not yet made a decision exposed themselves to propaganda which fit their not-yet-conscious political predispositions.[6]

This conclusion by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet confirms that of Hyman and Sheatsley. Increasing the tempo and the quantity of information efforts which tend to be selected by those already holding existing favorable attitudes as regards the subject of communication does not solve the problem of reaching those who tend not even to select this information for perception. Increasing the flow of information tends to reach more continuously those already on "your side," and if, as a consequence of this additional information, sufficient enthusiasm is generated in these persons, they may assist in spreading the information as a result of their additional enthusiasm. They may or may not, however, reach those holding unfavorable attitudes, and as noted in Chapter III, it is doubtful if they will be able to change unfavorable attitudes by either argumentative procedures or the presentation of their favorable "facts."

Star and Hughes[7] report a study of an informational campaign conducted in 1947 at Cincinnati, Ohio. An effort

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[6] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelsen, and Hazel Gaudet, The People's Choice, (New York: Duel, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), p. 80.

[7] Shirley A. Star and Helen MacGill Hughes, "Report on an Educational Campaign: The Cincinnati Plan for the United

was made during this campaign to inform the people of this city about the United Nations. A vast amount of information was channeled to the people of the city through the newspapers, the radio, and other available media. The intensiveness of the campaign is indicated by a summary of the activities carried out, a few of which are cited below:

> 12,868 people were reached through the Parent-Teachers Associations, . . . every school child was given literature on the United Nations to take home; the school teachers kept the subject constantly before their pupils; . . . Fourteen thousand children in the Weekday Church Schools held a World Community Day program; . . . 10,000 members of the Catholic Parent-Teachers Association were exhorted by their archbishop to support the United Nations; . . . In all, 59,588 pieces of literature were distributed and 2,800 clubs were reached by speakers supplied by a speakers' bureau and by circular, hundreds of documentary films were shown, and the slogan "Peace Begins with the United Nations--the United Nations Begins with You" was exhibited everywhere, in every imaginable form--blotters, matchbooks, streetcar cards, etc."[8]

Surveys taken just before and after the campaign were conducted by the National Opinion Research Center to determine whether or not public exposure to the information was increased and the effect this exposure had on individual attitudes and opinions. Some of their conclusions follow:

Nations," The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 55, (January 1950), pp. 389-400.

[8] Ibid., p. 390.

> About one third remained throughout, not interested in any of the issues, and "keen" interest was expressed in virtually the same measure at the end as was expressed at the beginning.[9]
>
> The inescapable conclusion is that in the six months the local level of information did not alter very much.[10]
>
> . . . the people reached by the campaign were those least in need of it and the people missed by it were the new audience the plan hoped to gain. . . . The most exposed were in general the most favorably disposed. . . the surveys indicate that people who have pre-existing favorable attitudes are the ones who will pay attention to publicity, that is, that people seek information which is congenial to their attitudes. . . . It can only be concluded, then, that in the six months at least, if there was an increase in exposure, it was their previous orientation which determined the extent to which people exposed themselves to further information about the United Nations.[11]
>
> The Cincinnati plan for the United Nations demonstrates that lack of interest is a psychological barrier to the spread of information. The understanding of the barrier should make it possible to cope with it, and this must be a first step, if the expensive enterprise of funneling material to the public is not to be merely an ineffectual gesture.[12]

Despite the intensive effort to inform the members of this city about the United Nations, the program must be judged relatively ineffective, for few attitudes were changed,

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[9] Ibid., p. 391.

[10] Ibid., p. 393.

[11] Ibid., pp. 397-398.

[12] Ibid., p. 399.

and changes in the information level included largely those persons already informed about and friendly to the information topic. Efforts at informing the public about the United Nations are not identical with the problems of informing the public on the subject of schools, since the U.N. is not a local social agency and the motivation for perception can be expected to differ somewhat. The finding does have implications for school public relations as it indicates that merely increasing the flow of information tends to reach most effectively those already most interested and possessing the most knowledge (but who need it least) and does not reach those least interested and possessing the least knowledge as a consequence of this low level of interest (but who need it most--in terms of the goals of the campaign, i.e. that knowledge of schools and school problems is desirable).

The relationships between attitudes and information were discussed in some detail in Chapter III. It was stated therein that information may or may not affect attitudes, and whether or not it does depends on the psychological factors involved in the nature of those attitudes. The assumption behind most information campaigns, which is either stated specifically or implied continuously in school public relations literature, is that more favorable attitudes will result as a consequence

of the flow of this information, or that an attitude will develop where none existed prior to the program. The findings reported herein indicate that this is not correct as stated. These findings are corroborated by others:

> A Bureau of Agricultural Economics survey "Home Makers' Acceptance of Nutrition Information in an Urban Community" showed in 1948 that after years of educational work half the homemakers in a selected urban community had little or no information on nutrition; only 4% had "adequate" information. The failure is the more significant because the purpose was so obviously in the homemakers' interests and the subject matter bore so directly on their everyday lives.[13]

Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield found that efforts during the past war by the United States Army orientation program in the use of films made almost no significant change in the more general opinion items designed to measure the effectiveness of the program. They state:

> . . . it is possible that the lack of effects may be due simply to the fact that the attitudes and motivations investigated in these studies cannot be appreciably affected by an information program which relies primarily upon "letting the facts speak for themselves." It may be that such a program will prove effective with only a small segment of the population whose attitudes are primarily determined by rational considerations. For

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[13] Cited in: J. A. Pimlott, "Public Relations Down to Earth," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 31, #5, (September-October, 1951), p. 58.

> most other individuals, motivations and attitudes may generally be acquired through nonrational channels and may be highly resistant to rational considerations.[14]

This hypothesis questions the frequent objective of school public relations programs stated earlier, which is concerned with an increase in the flow of information consisting primarily of a truthful, continuous distribution of factual information about schools, as an effort to strengthen favorable attitudes, change unfavorable attitudes, or assist in the formation of favorable attitudes where none existed previously.

Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield report some further results based on studies of communication of factual information presented in orientation films and training films again during the last war. They found:

> In the learning of factual material it was uniformly found that those with greater intellectual ability learned more, on the average, from a given exposure than those with less ability. This was true whether the index of intellectual ability was educational level attained or performance on the Army General Classification Test.[15]

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[14] Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine and Fred D. Sheffield, "Experiments on Mass Communication," Vol. III, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1949, pp. 255-256.

[15] Ibid, pp. 260-261.

> A very consistent finding. . . was that both the initial opinion held and the changes in opinion obtained were generally related to the men's educational level.[16]
>
> It seems highly probable that the effectiveness of a particular communication at changing opinions will depend in part on the initial opinions of the members of the audience. This consideration suggests two valuable ways of using research in developing effective communication methods. One is the continuing use of research in establishing general principles concerning how initial opinion affects the reaction to communications; the other is the use of opinion research prior to the preparation of a particular communication, as a means of providing information concerning the initial opinions of the intended audience so that the applications of principles to the design of a communication can be made in terms of the opinions actually held.[17]

Thus, school public relations efforts at communication must consider the educational level of the individuals involved in the communication process, for this level determines not only the effectiveness of the process of learning involved in communication but may also determine the opinions held at the beginning of the communication process. The studies also point out the need for prior knowledge of the actual opinions held by the subjects of communications efforts so that the effort to communicate may be structured in terms of these opinions, thus enhancing the possibility of success in communication.

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[16] Ibid., p. 266.

[17] Ibid., p. 268.

Information Campaigns as "Truthful" Presentations

School public relations materials frequently refer to the need to consider the "different publics" involved in communication, but the references are not usually specific and leave the reader to assume that these publics must be communicated with in different terms, but the terms are not specifically stated. The task of stating these terms is one which regrettably cannot be done with the desired detail at this time, for much of the research required still remains to be done. Of that available, fragments have been reported here sufficient to indicate that the task of communication is not simple and is relatively ineffective unless the specifics involved in communicating with these publics are considered in the development of this effort at communication. Reference has frequently been made in the process of this analysis to the statement that school public relations efforts must be "truthful" presentations of all of the information available. In any controversial issue there are two or more possible choices by virtue of the fact that the issue is controversial. If there is only one choice possible, the issue is not controversial. Should the school public relations effort present "both sides" or "all sides" of the topic under consideration? If so, what effect will

this have on the audience? Again there is not sufficient information to justify a valid, detailed statement, but the assumption that all information must be presented in a truthful manner cannot be judged except as a somewhat naive conception of the process involved and the nature of the audience to be communicated with. Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield attempted to determine the comparative effects of presenting all of the information (both sides) or selected portions of the information (one side) and concluded:

> It was found that a man was more likely to accept a new point of view, opposed to his initial point of view, if the case is made for his previous opinion as well as the case for adopting the new opinion. At the same time it was found that making the case for "both sides" of the issue was less likely to produce a change than a "one-sided" argument among those who initially had the same point of view as that endorsed by the communication. Here again both forms of presentation produced positive effects, but the effect was less if arguments for the other side were mentioned.[18]

The authors conclude that arguments for the "other side" need to be explicitly mentioned and state some of the rules for the process by which this is to be performed:

> 1) that all of the arguments for "the other side" should be mentioned at the very outset (in order to let the opposed members of the audience know at once that their arguments would not be ignored), and 2) that attempts

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[18] Ibid, p. 269.

> to refute opposing arguments should be made only when an obviously compelling and purely factual refutation is available (on the grounds that strong positive arguments are likely to be convincing whereas an attack on opposing arguments which have previously been accepted will tend to have mainly the effect of antagonizing those who hold them).[19]

This then becomes a much more sophisticated effort than one merely designed to present all the facts and "let them speak for themselves." The material cited has relevance primarily to a mass communication situation with a passive, nonparticipating audience. In a face-to-face situation, a somewhat different set of factors operate. The authors state:

> Members of the opposition should not be given a choice to identify themselves as such. . . . The basis for the principle is that a person is easier to change if he does not have his "ego" involved in supporting a particular point of view. If he feels that he belongs to a group that is being attacked by the communication, he is more likely to respond with aggressive resistance.[20]

Both mass communication and face-to-face situations prevail in school public relations efforts, and the citations have pertinence for both areas.

Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield found what they called a "sleeper" effect when audiences were tested after a period of not one but nine weeks. The original assumption

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[19] Ibid., p. 271.

[20] Ibid., p. 205.

was that the forgetting curve was such that the lasting effects of the films could be determined after a period of from four to seven days. They found that during the nine-week interval about 50 per cent of the factual material was forgotten, but items bearing on attitudes and opinions did not show this same decrement of effect. They state further:

> . . . with a high level of initial acceptance the mean long-time effects are larger than the mean short-time effects--indicating an increment with passage of time--whereas with low initial level of acceptance the mean short-time effects are the larger--indicating decrements. . . the above results. . . support the idea that degree of retention of opinion changes and the extent to which effects increase with lapse of time is in part a function of initial predisposition to accept the opinion affected.[21]

The investigators were unable fully to account for this "sleeper" effect which is unique in the area of opinion research, but if the findings are valid, have pertinency for opinion changes in school public relations efforts as the timing of publicity efforts is related to voting periods.

Heterogeneous Publics for Information Campaigns

Many words could be used to describe the heterogeneous publics and groups involved in an information program for public schools, and any description of the nature and types

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[21] Ibid., p. 196.

of public schools themselves would provide some index of the variety of publics to be found. A public school may be a one-room building standing on the open prairie, a modest structure in a small village or town, or resemble a large factory in a crowded city. Enrolled in these schools are a great many of the children from the community. The parents of these youngsters may be "living on relief," many of them will be earning some kind of a relatively modest wage or salary, and some of these parents will have incomes which provide most of the material things they desire. Their incomes will come from the vast variety of jobs available in the United States. Their interests will be as diverse as their jobs, hobbies, and ways of living make it possible to be, but the common denominator between the school and these parents will be the youngsters who attend school. Out of this common concern for the education of youngsters and the demands made on the parents and other residents of a school district that they exercise their legal responsibilities for the decisions required in school balloting procedures must develop public opinion on the subject of schools. Kernhauser states:

> Opinions are formed in the interplay of complex personalities in the course of infinitely varied relations of each person to the groups, institutions, individuals, and conditions of life that surround him, interact with him, provide his gratifications, and impose upon him his deprivations. The opinions

> that comprise public opinion are formed as other components of personality are formed--as parts of the total social learning situation. . . .[22]

Many of the determinants of attitudes and opinions and the problems involved in communication with this variety of individuals have been referred to elsewhere herein. These references have both implied and specifically stated some of the problems involved in efforts at communication with this heterogeneous assortment of publics, groups, and individuals.

The problem as regards school public relations can be viewed from several vantage points--from the view of types of administrative organization required for communication with the school public, the roles of the individuals involved, or the techniques for producing the media to be used in this process. This study has not been concerned primarily with efforts at analysis of these areas but of the nature of the audience itself and has stated some of the findings pertinent to this effort. Whether or not communication is to take place and result in an increased area of understanding will depend on the degree to which all of the factors involved in the problem are organized to the end that they contribute successfully

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[22] Arthur Kornhauser, "Public Opinion and Social Class," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 55, (January 1950), p. 343.

that part of the total effort required. Hence, communication can "break down" at any point where the parts to the program become ineffective. As the process is analyzed, it becomes complicated, and efforts to view the total process tend to become somewhat obscured by the mass of detail involved.

As the school public relations director attempts to visualize the group that he is expected to reach with efforts for communication, his total degree of confusion is not reduced by statements referring to the multiplicity of publics with which he must be concerned. The problem becomes one of defining: which publics? and how does one communicate with each of them? The importance of knowing the state of information, opinions, and attitudes possessed by these publics has been referred to earlier. Surveys of knowledge and opinion are one means by which this process of communication can be made more definite and specific. Stewart suggests a sociometric study to locate opinion leaders and their degree of influence, and concludes:

> Advertisers need[sociometric studies] to reveal the media offering the best value in terms of audience influentiality; public relations practitioners need them to point the way to a sharpshooting approach to the molding of public opinion.[23]

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[23]Frank A. Stewart, "A Sociometric Study of Influence in Southtown," Sociometry, Vol. X, #1, (February 1947), p. 31.

The technical problems of conducting a sociometric survey are such, however, that the public relations director might better conduct an opinion poll. The technical problems in opinion polling are no greater than those involved in a sociometric study.

As stated earlier, the core of people who know little about most public issues and who have no desire to be informed on these subjects is a most difficult group to reach with information media. However, each of the individuals meeting legal requirements for voting can, and may, vote on the issues presented by the information program. The problems involved in this are obvious, for ballots may not be cast on the basis of rational judgment but on most any other irrational basis. This group tends to be somewhat at the mercy of anyone who can reach them, for they lack the information necessary to judge the validity of future contacts. Sweitzer states:

> Hard to reach with information because of complete indifference, these people can, nevertheless, be reached by sensational or bizarre charges. Those whose support is complacent are not in a position to meet sudden radical and intemperate criticisms of the schools. A favorable attitude based on nothing more than the general attitude of goodwill cannot stand any distortion of the truth because it has no facts with which to meet such charges. Motivated by fear or

> other strong emotion because they are uninformed, the apathetic group can be influenced by the fanatical anti-social minority. . . .[24]

The school public relations director's problem becomes one which is concerned with identifying these people, their numbers, and the characteristics of the group. As stated earlier, communication takes place to the extent that the requirements necessary are identified and followed. In other words, communication may not take place because of the nature of the medium selected or the fact that the group is not exposed to this medium. It may not take place because of the nature of the attitudes and information possessed by the individuals involved prior to the effort to communicate, or it may not take place because the individuals belong to this "chronic hard core of know-nothings," described by Hyman and Sheatsley, and referred to earlier. Irrespective of the factors involved, the school public relations director needs some kind of a conceptual scheme for identifying the different groups involved in the communication process.

One Schema for Analysis of Diverse Publics

As stated many times thus far, school public relations consists primarily of a communication process, the exchange

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[24] Robert Sweitzer, "What They Don't Know Can Hurt You," Administrator's Notebook, Vol. 11, November 1953, Midwest Administration Center, Chicago, Illinois, p. 3.

of information between members of the school staff and the local public. This takes place under conditions predetermined by the basic attitudes of the individuals involved in the process. The effort to communicate must be developed in terms of these attitudes and also in terms of the extent to which the participants of the process are already informed. Some schema helpful in conceiving the initial stage of information and attitudes possessed by the lay public is necessary, else much of the effort at communication will tend to be more or less of the "shot-gun" type, directed in the general direction of the public in the hope that some portion of it may be effective. The evidence presented in previous chapters of this study should provide some general indication of the degree to which this process tends to be ineffective.

Any system of classification creates certain problems by the very nature of the process but frequently serves to identify portions of the total with sufficient clarity that future analyses and efforts at manipulation tend to be more successful because of the classification. A schema of value in school public relations efforts must be based on the quantity of information possessed by the individuals involved and their attitudes toward the subject of communication, in this case the school. The following

is proposed, based on the criteria of knowledge and attitudes.[25]

Friends (or in-group) consisting of:

a) Those who are convinced and informed.

b) Those who are convinced but uninformed.

c) The waverers, and the potential waverers.

Allies--who are sympathetic but not directly involved in the issue consisting of:

a) Those who are convinced and informed.

b) Those who are convinced but uninformed.

c) The waverers and the potential waverers.

Neutrals consisting of:

a) The uninterested and the uninformed.

b) The informed and neutral.

c) The waverers and potential waverers.

Allies of the Enemies consisting of:

a) Those who are convinced and informed.

b) Those who are convinced but uninformed.

c) The waverers and the potential waverers.

Enemies consisting of:

a) Those who are convinced and informed.

b) Those who are convinced but uninformed.

c) The waverers and the potential waverers.

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[25] Classification proposed by: Dr. Duane L. Gibson, Associate Professor, Sociology and Anthropology, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan.

This schema assumes that it is possible to group the various individual members of the school public into five large classes on the basis of their basic attitudes toward the school. As stated earlier, classification tends to introduce errors, and individuals can be found who do not exactly fit any of the above classifications, but presumably the majority of the members of the school public can be classified in general terms as belonging to one or the other of the groups. Examples of the friends and allies might be teachers, active "room mothers," Parent-Teachers Association members, school board members, etc. The major difference between the friends and allies groups would be concerned with the degree of intimacy of the contact, and this difference primarily one of degree of identification with the school. This to anyone who has worked with lay citizens groups is a relevant distinction. The group classed as neutrals would refer to those individuals who did not wish for a variety of reasons to be classed as friendly or allied, but neither are they enemies--just neutral on the subject. The group classed as enemies would include a wide variety of individuals ranging from those whose enmity was based on a fundamental disbelief in the cause of free, public education to those who happened to be possessed of a

temporary yet definite pique. Presumably this group would have allies of various sorts.

The subcategories under each group are based on the degree of information possessed by the individual members. The school has many friends, but the range of information possessed by these friends ranges from well informed to almost totally uninformed. In view of the analysis of the problem of attitude change as this is related to perception, members of the friends and allies groups who are uninformed are relatively uncomplicated "targets" of an information program in that strong negative attitudes presumably will not exist simply because they are either friends or allies. These groups possess attitudes which not only makes perception possible but which encourages them to perceive information on the subject to which they feel either friendly or allied. One of the basic assumptions underlying school public relations efforts is that as the individual increases his total store of information about the school, he will become more friendly and sympathetic as regards the school. This assumption remains to be demonstrated but until either proven or disproven must provide one of the basic working hypotheses of school public relations efforts as these are concerned with an informed electorate.

During the analysis of the factors involved in attitude change, it was demonstrated that attitudes might be changed if they were relatively weak because the forces tending to strengthen and weaken the attitudes were balanced at a relatively low level. Presumably, individuals possessing these kinds of attitudes will often belong to the subgroups classified as waverers and potential waverers, regardless of the major classification to which they belong. Again the procedure involved in school public relations efforts, in terms of the factors involved in attitude change, will be concerned with strengthening these tendencies which tend to increase the basic friendly attitude toward the school and reducing those which tend to sway the individuals to negative attitudes as regards the school. This process can depend only partially on an information process for success, however, and this particular group will tend to be a potentially rewarding group as they experience personal situations which tend to strengthen their friendly attitudes toward the school. These situations must be provided, in addition to the information program, if this is to take place.

As the school public relations program succeeds in increasing the scope and frequency of contact with members of the school public, little can be expected as a consequence

of this effort as regards the informed yet neutral group. The mere possession of additional information will presumably change this group little, and since basic motivations tend to determine what is perceived, their neutral state can be expected to produce a situation which discourages efforts at increasing this store of information. The enemies who are convinced and either informed or uninformed will again make up a group tending to be relatively difficult as regards efforts at communication. Basic attitudes, presumably strong, are such that the individuals are either motivated not to perceive school public relations efforts or to perceive these efforts in a manner which tends to strengthen their existing stereotypes. Further efforts at convincing members of these groups are likely to produce strong antagonistic feelings, as additional information tends to indicate that they might possibly be wrong. These groups are those referred to by Queener in the citation in Chapter III[26] which states that logic and information do not usually change negative attitudes.

This system of classification of the members of the school public on the basis of knowledge of and attitude toward the school makes possible the development of a varied information program designed to reach specific groups of

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[26] See Chapter III, p. 90.

individuals. The program cannot be presented in ways that, if perceived by "non-target" groups, will produce negative reactions in these "non-target" groups but must be designed so that the relative effectiveness is greatest with the "target" subgroup. The factors to be included in planning for an information program designed in terms of attitudes and extent of knowledge of the school must also be based on the following: 1) age; 2) sex; 3) economic level; 4) educational level; and 5) value and ideal systems of the target subgroup. Again application of these criteria should be obvious, for the production of a news story designed to reach men will have somewhat limited utility if placed on the "Women's Page" in the newspaper. The art, layout and design of the media to be used tend to vary in appeal. For example, the type of person accustomed to the art work and design featured by publications such as the New Yorker magazine will not find a similar appeal in the type of material labeled "funny books." Yet both reading types can be found in the usual school public relations audience. Perhaps the major modifications required in a school public relations program in the application of the criteria for audience classification is that the program be planned to reach all members of the school public and not merely those who happen to be reached

by an accident of production. This is frequently the case in school public relations efforts for communication, and the result is limited to only those individuals who happen to be reached because the vehicle for communication happened by accident to be directed at them. Further applications of this will be demonstrated in later portions of this study.

Selected Tentative Findings of the Michigan Communications Study

A partial application and demonstration of mass information program findings applied to the area of public school information is to be found in reports of the Michigan Communications Study. This was a cooperative project of the Midwest Administration Center, Michigan State College, and the Michigan Communications Council. A pilot study was conducted in a Michigan community during the summer of 1953 to determine the information and opinions of the citizens of this community with respect to their public schools. A 7 per cent sample was interviewed in the city and the contiguous trade territory served by the high school. The city had a population of about five thousand and was located in the central portion of the lower peninsula of Michigan. Portions of the data and some of

the tentative conclusions are reported here[27] because of their relevance to this study. The data assembled as a part of this pilot project apply to the Michigan community surveyed and may or may not apply to other communities.

The data are reported in two parts, with part one treating the community as a whole, and part two considering the community in terms of component statistical subgroups. Portions of the exploratory study of the relationship between information and opinions are reported below:

> Which group (the informed, the incorrectly informed, or the uninformed) has the highest percentage. . .[28]

Very well satisfied with schools in general?	Uninformed
Satisfied?	Incorrectly informed
Not satisfied?	Informed
Satisfied with discipline in the grades?	Incorrectly informed
Not satisfied?	Informed
Favorable opinion of teaching methods?	Informed
Unfavorable?	Incorrectly informed
Out of class activities over-emphasized?	Uninformed
Not overemphasized?	Incorrectly informed
Rate teachers high?	Incorrectly informed
Rate teachers low?	Informed

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[27] Lee A. Haak, "What Citizens Know and Think About Their Public Schools," Report #2 (General) conducted by the Social Research Service, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan, Copyright 1954, pp. 20, mimeographed.

[28] Ibid., p. 18.

Think costs too low?	Incorrectly informed
Satisfied with school costs?	Informed
Think costs too high?	Uninformed

[29]

The data are also summarized in a different way:

The informed checked most often

> Not satisfied with the schools in general
> Not satisfied with discipline in the grades
> Satisfied with the teaching methods
> Think teachers rate low
> Satisfied with school costs.
>
> In other words, the best informed may be more dissatisfied with their schools than satisfied.

The incorrectly informed checked most often

> Satisfied with schools in general
> Satisfied with discipline in the grades
> Not satisfied with teaching methods
> Satisfied with out of class activities
> Satisfied with teachers
> Satisfied with costs (costs are too low)
>
> From the above it appears that citizens who do not know the correct facts about their school may be the most satisfied with their schools.

The uninformed checked most often

> Very well satisfied with schools in general
> Dissatisfied with out of class activities
> Dissatisfied with costs (costs are too high)
>
> However, they checked "DK" (don't know) for most opinions. . . .

This study raises more questions than it provides answers, but as indicated earlier, tends to indicate needed modifications in the thesis that an adequate

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[29] Ibid., p. 19.

information program objective is the provision of "all truthful" facts to develop a friendly school public. One question might well be concerned with whether individual assimilation of additional information about the schools might change his views from uninformed but very well satisfied to informed but dissatisfied. Does this happen? Are the best informed dissatisfied because they know the facts, or informed because of this dissatisfaction? Are those best satisfied because they do not know the facts, or do they know the facts because of this satisfaction? At present, it is impossible to state definitely what the consequences are of providing an information program which is structured in such a manner that all individual members of the school public are informed at least to the greatest possible extent, with limits determined only by those psychological barriers which make complete communication impossible to achieve. It must not be concluded, however, that the state of dissatisfaction found in the study cited above represents an undesirable state of affairs.

One of the crucial factors in the determination of the quality of schools in a community has to do with the general public understanding of what it is possible to accomplish with good schools, and this group may represent

individuals who are dissatisfied because they have some conception of what it is possible to accomplish in the community in terms of education. The individuals who are dissatisfied and informed on the subject of the public school may well constitute the reservoir from which wise democratic action may follow on the subject of education. This, however, is a generalization which the present data do not now warrant. Much research remains to be done with respect to exactly how all portions of the school public can be provided with valid information and understanding on the subject of schools, and exactly what changes take place within the various statistical groups which this study indicates do exist. Sufficient information is available, however, to indicate that the school public relations information program can function far more effectively than at present and that the effectiveness of the program can be increased to the extent that the findings presently available are applied to procedures designed to expand public understanding of the public schools.

Summary

School public relations information programs are frequently judged as successful or unsuccessful, and this judgment is often rendered in terms of the extent to which

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individual members of the school public were provided contact with the information supplied. If the election failed, the assumption was frequently made that the program did not reach enough people, and the conclusion - reached that future programs must provide more intensive and extensive coverage.

Certain physical barriers to communication do exist, in that articles published in newspapers are not often read by non-subscribers. Much remains to be done with respect to reducing the limiting effects of the physical barriers. However, even removing all physical barriers to communication does not necessarily make communication possible.

There apparently exists a chronic core of "know nothings," and there is something about this group which makes them difficult to reach. Research is needed to provide some indication of who this group is and how they can be communicated with. Findings of the National Opinion Research Center indicate that this group tends to possess little information and have a low level of interest on many affairs of public concern. These same findings indicate that this group may be as large as one quarter of the total general population, but the findings are such that it is difficult to generalize on the subject.

People tend to seek information which is congenial to prior attitudes. This conclusion was reached in the analysis of the nature of attitudes in Chapter III and has been confirmed by analysis of the results of mass information campaigns. Those holding affirmative views tend to select information which is congenial with those views and to ignore opposing information. The obverse is also true, in that individuals holding negative views tend to select information which confirms those views. Increasing the flow of favorable information tends to reach largely those persons already "on your side" and to be relatively ineffective in reaching those in opposition to this view.

The principle behind most information campaigns that favorable attitudes will be reinforced, that unfavorable attitudes will be changed, and that favorable attitudes will be developed where none existed prior to the campaign has not been proven by research, and those studies which are available indicate that much of this does not take place in the simple terms stated. Some evidence is available which indicates that an information program which "lets the facts speak for themselves" will not appreciably affect attitudes.

The effectiveness of a particular effort at communication in changing opinions is determined by the nature of

the original opinions, and efforts at communication must be structured in terms of these opinions, else communication may not occur or may occur in a manner much different from that expected at the beginning of the information process.

The admonition frequently found in school public relations materials with respect to the fact that the "publics" to be communicated with differ from one another is inadequate as such. The differences between the information and attitudes possessed by these different publics are such that the information campaign must be defined in terms of the specific nature of these publics.

A systematic schema for classification of the "publics" referred to could be devised on the basis of a relatively large number of criteria. It would seem desirable that this schema be based on criteria involved in the school public relations program, and these would include the attitudes toward and information possessed about the school by the individuals who are the "targets" of the information program. The state of these attitudes and the extent of this knowledge can be determined either by sociometric surveys or surveys of attitude and knowledge. The variety of the knowledge and attitudes to be found with respect to the school are such that a general program designed to reach all groups with the same information can

hardly be expected to be effective. For this reason, some schema is necessary to structure these groups in a manner whereby the information director can visualize the status of these groups. A possible schema was suggested whereby individuals are grouped in classes based on the knowledge of and attitude toward the public school. This is a hypothetical grouping for the purpose of planning only and has no relationship to social groups which actually exist.

The grouping consists of classifying individuals into: friends, allies, neutrals, and enemies, and the basis for this grouping is their generalized attitude toward the school. Each of these groups is then further subdivided into those convinced and informed, those convinced but uninformed, and the waverers and potential waverers.

An information program based on efforts to reach different members of the groups suggested above would need to be planned not only in terms of the state of information and attitudes but also in terms of age, sex, economic level, educational level, and the value and ideal systems of the groups. Different kinds of communications efforts planned in specific terms tend to have a much greater chance of being perceived by the individuals to

whom the effort at communication is directed if specifically planned to reach the group. "Shotgun" efforts at communication which succeed do so by accident and not by planning.

The Michigan Communications Study discovered during a study of a Michigan community that there often was a definite difference between the degree of satisfaction with the school and the extent to which individuals were informed about the school. They found that the best informed persons may be more dissatisfied than satisfied with their schools. This finding is in opposition to the frequently expressed view that the more information people have about their schools the greater the degree of satisfaction. They also found that the persons who do not possess correct information may be the most satisfied with their schools, and that the uninformed tended to be very well satisfied with the schools in general. In this instance, the degree of satisfaction and state of accurate information expressed by members of the school community sometimes bore an inverse relationship to each other. An information program which correctly informs residents of the local community and produces dissatisfaction with the schools as a consequence of this effort may become a most

effective force for the changes which result in the production and development of a better system of schools. That leadership must be provided for this process is an obvious corollary to this.

CHAPTER V

MASS INFORMATION MEDIA FOR SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS

This study is concerned with selected aspects of the communication process as these indicate possible improvements in the effectiveness of school public relations procedures. The program was described in brief fashion in terms of the role of the agents involved. The study was limited in such fashion as to exclude a detailed analysis of the purposes of the program, except as these are involved in the need for an informed citizenry to participate in those legal responsibilities entailed in the operation of a local school district and to share with the school the responsibility for the education of the youngsters enrolled in that school. The analysis considered in some detail the factors involved in the process of communication with particular emphasis on the problems involved in perception, the selection and understanding of language terms, and the nature of attitude formation and attitude change. The means employed in the process of informing members of the local school district

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have been referred to often in indirect terms, as these are involved in perception, language, and attitudes.

The means ordinarily used for informing the members of the school public are those which are available in the local school district but which were not developed primarily for this purpose. Thus, the newspaper, the radio, etc., are not primarily for school public relations purposes, and the emphasis on the techniques and procedures involved in using them are for the purpose of adapting a portion of these instruments to achieve school public relations purposes. Most means have been borrowed or adapted from other sources. Thus, the news letter, the "house organ," the annual report, etc., have been borrowed from business. The limiting factors inherent in the nature of the means itself continue to operate when these are used for school public relations purposes.

The means employed for informing members of the school public as a consequence of school public relations efforts could be classified on the basis of type of public contact such as the provision of reading materials, listening opportunities, or participation in a discussion. The means could also be classified on the basis of type of distribution of the information, with one distribution type being general and unspecific, i.e. the newspaper or

radio; and another type of distribution being relatively specific, i.e. a personal letter or bulletin directed to specific individuals by one means or another. The classification employed here embodies a combination of these and is: 1) mass distributed media; 2) selective or specific media; and 3) the operation of groups organized for school community relations purposes. This is not content analysis, nor is it a procedure involving audience analysis in the sociological sense but merely a system of classification used for the purpose of analysis. Some of the findings in the areas of content analysis and audience analysis are summarized and applied to the area of school public relations, as these findings are deemed pertinent to the situation. Care must be used in interpretation, for the findings for the areas listed above are valid in the original research situation and may or may not be valid when applied to the school public relations area. These findings do, however, provide general indications and trends when applied to the school public relations area.

Mass Communication Efforts As School Public Relations

The term mass media is customarily used to denote those methods of communication devised to present identical messages to the persons comprising the audience at the time of perception, with the sole criterion for audience membership being exposure to the stimulus. This would include radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, in fact, all of the methods thus far developed for the production and dissemination of identical information to a large audience without regard for physical proximity.

The development and current importance of mass media is relatively recent, having taken place as a consequence of changes in and the development of technology. They are particularly important to and characteristic of rather highly industrialized societies, as contrasted to the relatively simple means for communication found in primitive societies. They are of concern here because of the part assigned to them in school public relations efforts. The mass media currently in use were not developed for school public relations purposes, but some of these means of communication include a public responsibility for reporting school news. School public relations procedures often devote considerable effort and emphasis to the

deliberate use of and adaptation of these means of communication to accomplish school public relations purposes. As a consequence of this deliberate effort to make use of these means, some of the problems and characteristics of them affect and determine the success of school public relations efforts.

Perhaps the crucial factor involved in the use of mass media for school public relations purposes is concerned with the fact that these reach masses of people in unstructured situations and not mass but individual behavior determines the relative effectiveness of the individual school story in the provision of information for members of the school public. Since this is individual behavior, it is possible to partially analyze the consequences of the production of a specific information item. The assumption is frequently made that the production of more and better school information automatically produces a better informed public. The partial fallacy of this has already been demonstrated in the sense that this information is perceived in terms of the knowledge and attitudes of the individual receiving the stimulus. The effectiveness of the production of a story for use in a mass medium is also determined by the reading and listening habits of the individuals comprising the audience. Some of these habits

are rather obvious, such as the fact that a story appearing in a newspaper which is predominantly Republican will not be perceived by those holding strong Democratic political views and who refuse to read a Republican paper. Some of the reading and listening habits of the public are known, others are pure conjecture. All of them, however, operate to determine the effectiveness of any given news story whether known or not. Most of those known have to do with the way in which the individual selects from the variety of materials offered in the mass media available to him. Schramm describes this as a "fraction of selection" and states it as: $\frac{\text{Expectation of Reward}}{\text{Effort Required}}$.[1]

The value of this fraction can be increased by either reducing the effort required for perception or increasing the reward resulting from perception, and the operation of either of these factors tends to be based largely on personal motivation. Thus, the description of a new method of preparing food will provide a reward for perusal in terms of the motivation existing, and whether this is

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[1] Wilbur Schramm, "Procedures and Effects of Mass Communication," in Mass Media and Education, Fifty-third Yearbook, National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, Nelson B. Henry, Editor, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 129.

high or low may be based on sex differences in that this society tends to regard food preparation as primarily a part of the female role. Even with a high expectation of reward, however, if the effort required is too great, the value of the fraction will remain relatively small. The same principle operates with respect to school public relations efforts. If the reward for perception is small or the effort relatively large, the item will tend to be ignored by large portions of the audience. Obvious corollaries for improvement of the effectiveness of school public relations efforts at communication refer to a reduction of the effort required, an increase in the expectation of reward as a consequence of this or both. The effort required may be reduced by wide distribution of the material using means accessible to most of the audience and produced in language which is easily understandable. The reward from perception can be increased by the production of information experiences based on existing interests of the individuals involved in perception, and these can be determined by one means or another. Public interest cannot, however, be the sole criterion for the inclusion of a particular item in an information program, for interest and knowledge tend to be related with a low level of interest found on subjects of which the individual has a low level of knowledge.

Individual perception of communication efforts is limited by the motivation existing at the time of perception. It is also limited in terms of available time, for the mass of material presented is such that the individual cannot perceive all that is offered and must select. Schramm states:

> The average American probably gives four or five hours a day to mass communication. If he lives in a big city, he gets a paper that would itself take half that time to read. He is offered the equivalent of two weeks of radio and television every day. . . he is offered a bewildering array of magazines and books and films. . . . Other attractive ways to spend leisure compete with communication.[2]

The reward and effort involved in the perception of a single school information item are not the only factors operating, for with the multiplicity of material available for perception and the fact that not all of it can be perceived because of the sheer quantity involved, the materials compete with each other for attention. The school information item then competes for inclusion in the media involved and further competes for attention when presented for perception. The school public relations procedure designed to make possible the production of more and better information items for use in the mass media available must do so in terms of the predetermined criteria

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[2] Ibid., p. 134.

established by this competition for use and for attention. The chance that an individual may select any particular item in one of the mass media available to him will depend on the motivation existing and the effectiveness with which the item competes for attention.

Mass media are more or less universally available throughout the United States, but individual frequency of contact with these media varies. Berelson states:

> About 25-30% of the adult population reads one or more books a month; about 45-50% of the adult population sees a motion picture once every two weeks or oftener; about 60-70% of the adult population reads one or more magazines more or less regularly; about 85-90% of the adult population reads one or more newspapers more or less regularly; about 90-95% of the adult population listen to the radio fifteen minutes a day or more. . . . 21% attended a speech or talk during the preceding year.[3]

For a variety of reasons, books and motion pictures are not especially feasible school public relations media; and if they were, would not reach large portions of the public. The newspaper and radio are available to most of the adult public. They present current material, and a single information effort is relatively inexpensive. The mass medium most often referred to in school public relations is the newspaper.

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[3] Bernard Berelson, "The Library's Public," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 6.

The Newspaper and School Public Relations

The literature in the area of school public relations abounds with references to the importance of the newspaper as a public relations medium and includes frequent descriptions of how to write news stories and references to studies of what parents want to have included in this portion of the information program. That the newspaper is important to the program of providing for an informed electorate there should be little question, for one of its functions is the provision of information on local, national and international topics of interest. The nature of the medium, however, adds complications to the problem of communication between the public school and the school public.

One of the functions of a newspaper is that of providing news, but obviously not all news can be printed. Basically, the task is one of providing the kind of news which tends to sell papers and build circulation, for the newspaper which people refuse to buy would soon disappear from the publishing field. This fact that the paper presents a commodity, news, in a way which gives the individual purchaser the privilege of determining first whether or not he will purchase the paper, and second the choice of selecting items in that paper for attention

tends to determine the nature of news itself. A quick glance at the headlines of any paper indicates that certain criteria must have been used in the selection and placement of news items on the various pages and the amount of space to be devoted to those items.

Unfortunately, the good news about schools tends to be concerned with the fact that many youngsters, taught by large numbers of capable teachers, go about the process of learning and teaching in a manner which is not "news." The school board quarrels, the sensational incident, in fact, the very things which by their rarity disturb the calm of an educational program, tend to be newsworthy because of this rarity. Rope states:

> In Pittsburgh, where three chain-owned newspapers are engaged in sharp competition for circulation, the news value and the social significance of an event are by no means synonymous. Managerial salaries are tied to circulation figures and the primary criterion for the allotment of space to an item is: "Will it help sell the paper?" Even when dealt with by a reporter with a flair for the human interest present in every classroom situation, normal educational procedures constitute rather heavy journalistic source material. Personal clashes between Board members, labor controversies, and attacks on Board policy are sensations and hence more "deserving" of news coverage.[4]

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[4] Frederick T. Rope, "Opinion Conflict and School Support," Contributions to Education #838, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1941, pp. 40-41.

Without deliberate direction from school personnel, it is conceivable that the information aspects of the newspaper program may be devoted entirely to those phases which tend to produce an unfortunate picture of the work of the public school.

The precedent has been long established for school agents to deliberately attempt to produce material for use in the various newspapers serving the school area. Miller and Charles stated in 1924:

> The newspaper, aside from the school system itself, is the most important avenue through which the public can be informed about its schools. . . . Educators . . . cannot have too much knowledge of what constitutes news, of newspaper methods, techniques and needs. Their lack of knowledge of the nature and ways of the public press, probably more than any other factor, explains lack of public understanding and support of the schools.[5]

The literature on the subject of school public relations contains many references to the basic thesis above that if educators understand the nature of news and how to write this material, it will be printed by the newspapers and increase understanding and support of the public schools. The literature further provides instruction as to what constitutes news and how to "get along" with the

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[5] C. R. Miller and Fred Charles, Publicity and the Public Schools, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), p. 15.

editor and the reporter to improve the chances for publication of this material.[6] Actually this is a further indication of the existence of a situation referred to above--the good things about schools may not be sufficiently newsworthy in and of themselves to receive the attention by the public press that is necessary if the school public is to be sufficiently informed on the subject of public schools.

This is not to deny the importance of school efforts to produce news designed for use in the local press but to emphasize the need for school assistance in the production of this material. Professional educational responsibilities involve an understanding of the role of education in this society, and the determination of the "news worthiness" of an item must be based on this understanding and not solely on whether or not the item will

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[6] See as illustrative examples:

_____, "Lights, Camera, Action," American Vocational Journal, Vol. 28, (March 1953), p. 27.

M. G. Ambler, "School Journalists Keep Community Informed," Nations Schools, Vol. 52, (October 1953), p. 64.

J. P. Benjamin, "Is Your School Message Being Told?" School Executive, Vol. 72 (September 1952), pp. 74-75.

P. F. Spraggs, "Give Them the Facts," Agricultural Education Magazine, Vol. 23, (February 1951), p. 186.

Wm. A. Yeager, op. cit., passim.

assist in the solution of the circulation problems of the newspaper. This then implies a deliberate effort at communcation at the production of information by the professional staff of the public school. The problem then becomes one of determining: what information? Which items lead to public understanding?

School News Topics

Numerous surveys have been made of what topics are usually included in news of schools. In general, the surveys indicate that the portion of the school program given most complete coverage is the extra-curricular activity program. Some time ago Farley found news coverage to be as follows:[7]

Area	Percent of total school news
Extra curricular activities	47
Teachers and school officers	9
Parent Teachers Association	7
Pupil Progress	7
Buildings	4
Finances	5
Health	3
Curriculum	5
All other items	13
Total	100%

[7] Belmont Farley, "What Newspapers Publish About Education," Nations Schools, Vol. 5, (April 1930), p. 32.

Luck completed a survey of a selected sample of Michigan daily and weekly newspapers. While limited to one state, the study is more recent than the one by Farley cited above.[8] His findings are as follows:

Total Content by Classifications
November, 1952, through October, 1953

Type of content	Per cent of grand total Daily papers	Weekly papers
Athletics	41.5	26.4
Student activities	14.7	23.5
Miscellaneous	7.4	14.5
General illustrations	7.3	4.8
Athletic illustrations	6.5	2.7
PTA	5.3	5.6
School board	4.3	5.1
Student activity illustrations	3.2	3.5
Social	2.4	2.4
Finance	2.3	4.9
Honor roll	1.1	1.7
Conferences and institutes	1.1	0.9
Safety	1.0	0.6
Curriculum	0.7	0.2
Adult education	0.5	1.1
Editorial comment	0.4	1.3
Transportation	0.2	0.3
Teaching methods	0.1	0.1
School operation	0.01	0.3
Total	100.0%	100.0%

[8] Adapted from: David J. Luck, "What Michigan Newspapers Tell About the Schools," for the Michigan Communications Study, Research Report No. 10, School of Business and Public Service, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan, 1954, pp. 15-16.

A logical question in terms of the justification of newspaper coverage of school news as a means of fostering an informed public has to do with the relationship between the space devoted to school news and its allocation among the items listed above. For example, was the relatively large percentage of the school news devoted to extra-curricular activities because of its importance in the production of an informed public? Or were other criteria used? Was the devotion of the very small percentage of the total to the topic of curriculum due to the relative lack of importance of this topic? Of concern to educators is the space devoted to high school athletics and the problem this produces for the youngsters involved and the relationships fostered with the informal "down-town coaches clubs." It would seem that again the criteria used in the selection of school news for public consumption were not based on the part that the publication of this news contributes to understanding of the public school but on other criteria.

It might be argued that the allocation of space to the various areas of the school is done on the basis of public interest. Other surveys have shown that this is not necessarily so. Hull and Bishop found, after tabulating the results of a questionnaire circulated in a town in

California, that parents expressed varying degrees of interest on school news topics.[9] The interest expressions were as follows:

Great interest in:

1. Pupil progress and achievement
2. Health of pupils
3. Classroom activities
4. Discipline and behavior
5. Methods of instruction

Medium interest in:

1. Course of study
2. Home reports
3. School regulations
4. Value of education
5. School philosophy

Least interest in:

1. Testing program
2. Teachers and school officers
3. Extra curricular activities
4. Parent-teacher association
5. Buildings and building program
6. Board of education and administration
7. Attendance
8. Business management and finance.

The results of this survey indicate gradations of interest in various school topics, and these gradations may be based on the current state of information and the desire for additional information on topics not already covered, or it may indicate a well defined desire for a change in the emphasis given to school news coverage. The problem

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[9] J. H. Hull and F. E. Bishop, "Give the Public an Opportunity to Express Itself," American School Board Journal, Vol. 103, (November 1941), p. 5.

in surveys of public interest such as these lies in the fact that the results encourage the concept that there is a single public with relatively similar interests, when actually a wide variety of publics exist representing a wide range of attitudes toward, and states of information about, the public school. Hence, an indication of little interest in terms of numbers of people involved may actually represent an intense degree of interest on the part of a small number of people. A partial solution to the problem is one of diversification of the news effort in terms of this range of interests.

Individual Selection of School News for Attention

This range of interests operates in the selection of types of news to be read. Schramm[10] classifies news in terms of the satisfaction to be derived from perusal into delayed reward and immediate reward news. He suggests that immediate reward news provides satisfactions at the time it is read, as the reader receives vicarious experiences without any of the dangers or stresses involved in the actual situation. Immediate reward news would consist then of items concerning social events, disasters, sports and recreation, crime and corruption, and human interest stories.

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[10] Wilbur Schramm, "The Nature of News," in Mass Communications, Wilbur Schramm, editor, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 290.

Delayed reward news would consist of information on public affairs, economic affairs, health, education and social problems. Immediate reward news would consist largely of efforts to entertain or provide a form of escape mechanism, and delayed reward news would require that the reader exert some effort for reading, understanding, and application to the present situation. The lines between the two are those based on individual motivation, and as these motives shift, the classification lines tend also to shift. For example, news of sports may be entertainment for the casual reader but delayed reward for the professional coach or scout searching for information on teams and players.

The classification is important to school public relations as it presents another understanding of the problem of informing the school public and as it suggests procedures by which this process may be improved.

Schramm provides some tentative experimental evidence on the relationship between reading the types of news referred to above and education and economic level. He summarized his findings:

> It would seem not only that there is an increase in delayed reward reading with more education, but also that there tends to be a decrease in immediate reward reading as we pass from the high-school-educated group of our population to

> the college-educated. . . . The high point of immediate reward reading seems to occur on the average about 15 years earlier than the high point of delayed reward reading. In the case of economic groups there is a steady increase in delayed reward reading from the lowest group to the highest, whereas reading in immediate reward news is relatively level or only slightly increasing.[11]

Support for this conclusion can be found in the Continuing Study of Newspaper Reading produced by the Advertising Research Foundation. This study does not analyze its audience by age and education but does provide evidences of sex and economic differences in reading habits. The 138-Study Summary classifies readers on the basis of sex and occupational groups, with group A consisting of Business and Professional, and comprising 10 per cent of the total; B, Salaried, 19 per cent; C, Skilled, 48 per cent; and D, Unskilled, 23 per cent. Reading by types of content:[12]

	Occupational Groups			
Men	A	B	C	D
Per cent of those interviewed who read any:				
Editorials	55%	50%	42%	36%
Comics	70	75	82	82
Radio programs or news	35	36	40	42
Society news or pictures	38	35	36	35
Sports news or pictures	72	73	76	76
Local advertising	64	71	74	75
Amusement advertising	33	37	43	47

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[11] Ibid., pp. 295-296.

[12] Adapted from: The Continuing Study of Newspaper Reading: 138-Study Summary Advertising Research Foundation, Inc., New York, 1951, p. 13.

Women Per cent of those interviewed who read any:	Occupational Groups A	B	C	D
Editorials	41	35	26	22
Comics	68	74	79	81
Radio programs or news	41	44	49	50
Society news or pictures	80	79	77	72
Sports news or pictures	37	39	38	39
Local advertising	91	92	94	93
Amusement advertising	50	56	58	58

There are differences in reading habits between occupational groups and between the sexes. The differences between sex reading choices were also found to operate in reader choices of news items. In a summary of reader interest in the 138 studies, it was found that of the ten general news stories receiving greatest reader interest, only three of the stories were most interesting for both men and women but were ranked in different positions.[13] The story ranking first for men on the end of the war in Europe ranked in seventh position for women, and a local news story on the death of a judge ranked first for women but seventh for men. The death of Hitler was accorded about the same degree of interest by both sexes. All other items appearing on either list appeared only on either the male or female interest list. These differences between the sexes also

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[13] Ibid., p. 48.

appear in choices of interesting pictures. Thus, men show the highest interest in pictures related to events, while women prefer pictures of people.[14]

There is evidence that indicates that reading of public affairs information items in newspapers tends to increase as age, education, and income increase and to be higher with men than women. Likewise, human interest type of stories tend to be read by more females and by persons in the lower age, educational, and income brackets. These persons, however, tend to be those most likely to have younger children either in school or about to attend school, and the females from this group are the most likely to be active Room Mothers, PTA members, and active in similar organizations. Much that is school news may be written in a form which would be classified as public affairs information and not to reach the very groups most logically involved in and requiring an understanding of this program. This implies that a deliberate effort is required for the production of news items in terms of reader interests and reading patterns.

It is difficult to assess what might be accomplished in terms of informing the public on the subject of schools and education if the newspaper portion of the program

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[14] Ibid., p. 52.

were operated in terms of all of the information presently available for improving it. The relative lack of information patrons now have on the subject of schools has been indicated earlier and further attested to by the emphasis placed on school public relations efforts in educational literature. Some of the deficiencies of the program have already been indicated, and others follow as corollaries to descriptions of the reading audience. The deficiencies too often found in present practices in the production of school news efforts are those which are concerned with a low level of technical understanding and proficiency in this area and the inability to plan a sufficiently diversified type of news program.

Increasing the Effectiveness of the School News Program

Problems concerning technical understanding and proficiency refer to practices in the production of news stories on school events. Moran, a former reporter, summarized school news as he watched this from the newspaper office. He refers to misspelled names, the absence of dates, and other technical omissions and continues:[15]

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[15] J. J. Moran, "School Publicity, a Reporter's Eye-View," School Executive, Vol. 72, (November 1952), p. 68.

> Correcting such faults would seem a rather mechanical matter of no great proportion, and one result ought to be a greater use of the material by the press. But often, in-so-far as interpreting school program and objectives to the community is concerned, it just does not matter very much whether the material received is used or not. As an education reporter, I continually sought school stories which would help explain to parents and other taxpayers of the community what the schools were doing in the classroom. Yet I do not recall one instance of a school's sending me a story of that kind or calling my attention to any. . . . Publicity . . . from the schools almost invariably had to do with special events, parties, and social gatherings of the PTA's. . . . Lists of names were the principal content of most stories. . . . Names make news. . . and a reasonable amount of this kind of publicity is of value, but with too many teachers it seems the only kind that comes to mind.

Moran points out additional ways in which the news program can be made more interesting and effective.[16] For example, prior to the holidays, elementary classes frequently produce and stage special plays and pagaents, which have genuine merit and are closely related to the teaching of the basic skills. Yet the news story too often is devoted wholly to a description of the special event itself and a list of the names of the pupil participants. He states further:

> A fairly typical school story of another kind read, "Miss Blank's fourth grade visited the Blank dairy farm recently. Pupils who took part in the trip were---------- They were accompanied by the following mothers--------"

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[16] Ibid., p. 69.

> The danger in such a story is that the experience it reports may be looked upon by laymen as purely recreational, when in fact these activities provide an excellent focal point for a wide range of classroom work in reading, writing, vocabulary building, arithmetic, and social studies.[17]

Moran is actually stating that there are a multitude of opportunities for the development of human interest type of news stories, which can be written in a manner which tends to contribute to public understanding of the public school. This is also the type of material which tends to be read by younger people who may not be inclined to read public affairs types of news stories.

Examples of this type of practice could be multiplied many times. For example:

> In Greenville, South Carolina, the newspaper presented a series of classroom-in-operation stories entitled variously "We Read," "Two and Two Does Make Four," "Let's Listen" (use of records in music appreciation). Actual comments of children and teacher as the class progressed were reported, along with explanations of the newer methods of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic.[18]

> The newspaper reporter (preferably with a photographer) "goes through school." They start in kindergarten or first grade with the earnest blockbuilders and fingerpainters, and advance in subsequent articles through to the high school's science and social studies. By recording and photographing observations, they give readers an

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[17] Ibid., p. 69.

[18] National School Public Relations Association, "Public Relations Leads for the Elementary School Principal," National Education Association, Washington, D. C., (January 1954), p. 4.

> almost first-hand look at what goes on in classrooms, covering not only the "exciting" schoolday events, but the hard daily work of books and drill. . . .[19]

These are examples of possible news stories with a human interest slant, which tend to have a greater chance of being read by a larger number of people than heavy "public affairs" types of news stories. Mere human interest, however, as the sole content of the news story ignores the opportunity presented by the relatively wide readership the story received, and the story may also provide a learning opportunity for a portion of the school public.

Ease of Reading School News

News stories require for individual understanding that the reader be able to read not only with ease but with pleasure, else he is likely to go on to some other more rewarding activity, for news reading is usually performed as a leisure time activity. Educators tend to be somewhat notorious for their tendency to write in a manner difficult to read, and a deliberate effort is required to eliminate this tendency in the production of news efforts, else the effort will be fruitless. A number

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[19] National School Public Relations Association, "It Starts in the Classroom," National Education Association, Washington, D. C., (January 1954), p. 1.

of surveys have indicated that reading ease affects not only what is read but how much of it and the understanding provided by reading.[20] Feld, Manager of the Research Department of the Birmingham News, used a survey of his paper by the Continuing Study of Newspaper Readership to analyze the relation between readership and readability. He found that 43 per cent more readers read stories with a better readability score.[21] Dr. Swanson ran a split-run test on an article in the Iowa Quest, an experimental student newspaper at the University of Iowa. He found an average readership gain of 85 per cent for the version with the better readability. Other researchers report similar findings.[22] The implications should be obvious: that a deliberate effort is required to produce news stories which have a good readability score. Many of the school news stories can be written in terms of people and youngsters.

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[20] Bernard Feld, "Empirical Test Proven Clarity Adds Readers," editor and publisher, Vol. 81, (April 17, 1948), p. 38.

[21] Charles E. Swanson, "Readability and Readership: A Controlled Experiment," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 25, (December 1948), pp. 339-343.

[22] Philip F. Griffin, "Reader Comprehension of News Stories: a Preliminary Study," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 26, #4 (December 1949), pp. 389-393.
Marvin Lestutter, "Some Critical Factors of Newspaper Readability," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 24, (December 1947), pp. 307-314.

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20 Bernard Weil, "Empirical Test Proven Clarity Adds Readers," editor and publisher, Vol. 81, (April 17, 1948), p. 30.

21 Charles E. Swanson, "Readability and Readership: A Controlled Experiment," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 25, (December 1948), pp. 339-343.

22 Philip P. Griffin, "Reader Comprehension of News Stories: a Preliminary Study," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 25, #4, (December 1948), pp. 389-393.

Marvin Leibouter, "Some Critical Factors of Newspaper Readability," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 24, (December 1947), pp. 307-311.

Not only do human interest stories tend to have high readership, but they also are easier to read and to understand. The public affairs type of news story, concerned with tax rates, bonding issues, and other similar stories, can be written from a "human interest angle," and deliberate efforts to improve reading ease will also help with readership.

Schramm[23] reports a study of depth of readership, i.e. concerned with how much of a story is read, and with the how, why, and when, the reader stops reading. This was based on a random sample with six hundred readership interviews, two hundred on a weekly newspaper with less than three thousand circulation, two hundred on a daily with less than ten thousand circulation, and two hundred on a daily with over three hundred thousand circulation. His conclusions follow:

1. A news story loses readers rapidly in the first few paragraphs. The rate of loss is higher for large papers, lower for weeklies.

2. The smaller the paper and the less its frequency up to once a week, the more likely it is to hold readers throughout a story. A weekly appears to hold its readers better than a daily, a small daily better than a large daily.

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[23] Wilbur Schramm, "Measuring Another Dimension of Newspaper Readership," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 24, (December 1947), pp. 293-306.

3. In general, the longer a story, the larger proportion of it likely to be omitted and the faster it loses readers. A story nine paragraphs long will lose three out of ten readers by the fifth paragraph; a shorter story will lose only two.

4. The average individual seems to read between a third and a tenth of the total news content of a paper. If he reads a weekly, he reads, on the average, about twice as large a proportion of the news content as he would read in a daily.

5. High initial readership is no guarantee that readers will stay longer with the story or read a larger proportion of it.

6. Greater stylistic readability. . . seems to encourage greater depth of reading.

7. A feature style story seems to hold readers better than a straight news (inverted pyramid) type of story.[24]

One of the major differences in readership would seem to refer to different reader behavior with a small weekly newspaper and a large daily. Schramm's findings give further evidence that the production of "human interest" type of news stories tend to be read widely and provide an opportunity to "tell the school's story" to a relatively larger audience than by the production of typical inverted type public affairs news stories.

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[24] Ibid., p. 295.

Tentative Generalizations

It would seem that some tentative generalizations could be drawn from the material presented thus far on newspapers, readers, and school public relations:

1. Newspapers are read more or less regularly by 85 to 90 per cent of the adult population.

2. The reader does not usually read all of the news presented but can and does select what he reads. News thus competes for attention.

3. The newspaper, as a mass medium, may be operated in a manner which results in the production of news which may harm or help the school public relations effort.

4. The precedent is well established for the production of news stories by school personnel for newspaper use.

5. Present news coverage tends to run heavily to news of extra-curricular activities, events and names of people. This does not present either a fair or an adequate picture of the operation of the school.

6. Surveys of parent interest indicate variations in these interests, and a desire for information on areas not always covered in school news, or else not covered adequately.

7. News may be classified as delayed or immediate reward news, with the major difference between them being the motive for reading.

8. Surveys indicate that delayed reward news reading is highest with adult males, and increases as age, income, and education increase. However, as these factors increase, the likelihood increases that the individual will be beyond the period of most active cooperation with school, i.e. children will have grown beyond school age.

9. Younger adults and more females tend to be more inclined to select "human interest" or immediate reward news. This indicates the need, if communication with this group is desired, of producing more "human interest" news stories and using this opportunity for deliberately teaching what the school is now doing.

10. Reading interests also vary between occupational groups, with a greater tendency to read "human interest" type news to be found in the skilled and unskilled groups. This again presents an opportunity for communication to be developed with a group tending to avoid public affairs types of news stories.

11. Present school practice in the production of news often lacks technical proficiency, an understanding of what is "news," and the nature of the reading audience.

12. Some school news may actually encourage an incorrect impression of school activities when names and events are stressed only, and these are not related to educational objectives.

13. Readability affects readership both as to depth of reading and understanding. "Human interest" factors tend to encourage readers to continue reading.

14. Initial readership, i.e. beginning a news story, does not necessarily imply that the entire story is read. In fact, surveys indicate that many people do not read beyond the first few paragraphs.

15. News readership tends to be higher for the small weekly and to decrease as the paper increases in size and frequency of publication.

16. Feature style stories seem to hold readers better than straight news stories.

17. Newspapers serve an important information function, but not all persons read newspapers; and those who do read them tend not to read all news stories, but to select from those stories presented.

18. The facts presented in news stories will probably not change strongly held attitudes on topics presented. In fact, stories will tend to be selected which tend to strengthen or reinforce present attitudes.

19. News stories on schools and education will probably receive the most favorable attention from those persons already holding favorable opinions on schools and education.

20. Other information methods must supplement the portion of the school public relations effort concerned with newspaper stories in an attempt to reach those persons who do not read the newspaper, who do not tend to select school news stories, or who hold attitudes which tend to encourage them to hold opposite views and who look only for information tending to reinforce these views.

Annual Reports

The annual report, a printed summary of school activities, has been both criticized and praised as an information medium. It is more often produced by larger systems than by small and is sometimes written in a form which makes it useful largely as an historical document suitable for library reference use. Cubberley stated some time ago:

> Practically the only means adopted by the schools in the past to inform and enlist the interest of the public has been the issuance of a printed school report. . . . Sometimes they contain but a few pages of report proper, the great bulk being given over to printing a course of study, or the rules and regulations of the school board. Sometimes these reports are issued biennially instead of annually, sometimes occasionally, and not

> infrequently, not at all. . . . No more effective means than an annual printed report can be employed for informing the public as to what is being done, or of stimulating a public interest in seeing that the needs of the schools are provided for. Such should serve as the chief means of communication between the superintendent and the board on the one hand and the public on the other. . . it can be made to form a most effective bulwark in support of continued requests for larger funds.[25]

Cubberley criticizes annual reports for infrequency and the fact that they are not developed specifically as an information means for reaching the general public. Cubberley examined hundreds of printed school reports and stated that they were usually a rather mechanical record of facts about the formal operation of the school system. Irons made a nationwide study of annual reports about twenty years later and sampled 55 per cent of the 1,176 school superintendents from cities with more than eight thousand population. He found that more than half of the city superintendents made no effort to publish a report. He found that a majority of the reports sampled were unsatisfactory and concluded:

> Because a general upward trend of improvement can be traced over the last 20 years in the majority of desirable characteristics of annual reports, it is concluded that these documents can be reformed and that the

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[25] Ellwood P. Cubberley, op. cit., pp. 425-426.

[25] Elwood P. Cubberley, op. cit., pp. 458-459.

> improvement will result in a very desirable agent in public school relations.
>
> Any school executive who does not publish an annual report is failing to make use of one of the best interpretive media available to school administrators. It is strongly recommended in this study that all city school superintendents make such an interpretive instrument the focal point of their reporting practices.[26]

The basic assumption of Cubberley, Irons and others[27] is that this printed effort at communication will be selected for leisure reading purposes by members of the school public, and as a consequence of these efforts, will result in increased public understanding of the school.

The printed annual report may be conceived of as being primarily for: 1) members of the school board; 2) members of the school staff; and 3) the general public. The trend is for distribution to the lay public, and as this becomes common practice, the annual report becomes another addition to the mass media available. As such, the factors tending to effect the various types of mass media also effect the annual report as an information

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[26] H. S. Irons, "The Development of Characteristics in Superintendent's Annual Report to the Board and to the Public," (Doctor's Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1942), 150 numb. leaves.

[27] See for example:
Carter Alexander, School Statistics and Publicity,

device. The very fact that it is printed and may consist largely of words involves public reading problems, both as to reading level and human interest choice of reading materials. Numerous suggestions have been made for changes in the annual report to make it more attractive for the general reader. Hunt[28] suggests as a means of dramatizing reports that: 1) it must present an attractive appearance, 2) be distributed at appropriate times; 3) present statistics in graphic form; 4) use photographs; 5) present a variety of materials; and 6) develop special interest features.

Certain advantages of the annual report are obvious in that this mass information effort as a school project is fully controlled by the school and can be developed specifically in terms of the task assigned for it. All of the limitations on newspaper stories as an information medium do not necessarily apply to the annual report. The

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(New York: Silver Burdet & Co., 1919), 332 pp., or Zenas R. Clark, "The Recognition of Merit in Superintendents' Reports to the Public," Contribution to Education #471, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1931, 123 pp.

[28] H. C. Hunt, "Dramatizing Reports in Today's Techniques," First Yearbook, School Public Relations Association, Arthur H. Rice, editor, Ann Arbor Press, 1943, p. 111.

advantages accruing to the school in terms of content control are accompanied by advantages for the reader in that he may control his own exposure. He may not only select, but he can read as rapidly or as slowly as he wishes and may repeat or skip if he wishes. He may expose himself to the report at such times and under the conditions that he chooses. Because this is a specialized publication, it may serve as a potentially powerful persuasive agent. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet found, for example:

> In Erie County in 1940, the Farm Journal was mentioned as a concrete influence upon changes in vote intention as frequently as Collier's despite their great difference in circulation, and the Townsend publication as frequently as Life or the Saturday Evening Post.[29]

The degree of persuasiveness obviously depends on the extent to which the annual report is produced in a manner which not only makes possible but encourages mass reading efforts.

Readership Problems

Irrespective of content and make-up, however, the annual report must be read, and reading is related to years of schooling. Those with more schooling tend to read more, understand more of what is read and remember

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[29] Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, op. cit., p. 136.

[29] Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, op. cit., p. 135.

longer. The annual report will tend to be more effective in communities with a higher average level of attainment in terms of years of school completed and will tend to be relatively ineffective as regards those portions of the community with little formal education. There is a relationship between education and the tendency to read or omit delayed reward and immediate reward types of materials. Life magazine, devoted largely to current affairs, and with a minimum of word content, has a readership related to the amount of education of its readers. Swanson states:

> . . . surveys of samples of the American population show that for every reader with four or fewer years of schooling, Life has more readers in the higher education brackets as follows: a) twice as many readers among those who have finished grade school; b) three times as many readers among those who have had one to three years of high school; c) four times as many readers among those who have finished high school; and d) five times as many readers among those who have one or more years of college.[30]

The tendency already noted to reduce reading content and increase picture content in the annual report does not entirely solve the problem. Life magazine has a higher circulation than other news periodicals consisting largely

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[30] Charles E. Swanson, "Procedures and Effects of the Printed Media," in Mass Media and Education, Fifty-third Yearbook, National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, edited by Nelson B. Henry, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 153.

of print, and much of this is frequently attributed to the use of pictures. Yet readership of this publication tends to be related to educational levels of the readers. Presumably, increasing the quantity of picture content in the annual report will also increase readership but still be related to reading attainment levels of the population to be reached. This then tends to omit a significant group of people among the school public, for there is obviously no direct relationship between reading ability and the number of youngsters from a family attending a school or between reading ability and the right to vote on school issues. An increase in the immediate reward quantity of materials in the annual report will tend to reach a larger portion of the adult audience.

The relationship between immediate reward content and readership has already been noted. Frequent suggestions that the content also include many pictures are often found. Picture subjects and reader interests also vary with readers tending to look at pictures with increasing frequency as the picture size increases. This is indicated by results of the 138-Study Summary of Newspaper Readership for median readership and size of pictures:[31]

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[31] 138-Study Summary: The Continuing Study of Newspaper Reading, op. cit., p. 52.

Picture Size	No. of Cases	Medians Men	Medians Women
One-column	1,195	35%	41%
Two-column	1,021	49	58
Three-column	733	60	65
Four-column (and over)	239	63	68

The largest change in readership was from the one-column size to two-column size with an increase in readership of 14 per cent for men and 17 per cent for women. A comparison of medians indicates that more women tend to look at pictures than men. Picture subjects and reader interest also varies with men showing highest interest in pictures related to events and women preferring pictures of people.

> Pictures linked to national defense, foreign war items, and accidents and disasters rank highest among men. Next most popular with men are human interest pictures and national and local crime photos.
>
> Pictures of children and babies are tops among women, with human interest photos a close second. . . .[32]

The factors common to both sexes are those concerned with picture size, and the high interest found in both sexes in human interest photographs. The implications for the annual report designed as an information medium for a mass audience are obvious.

Limitations of the Annual Report

The effectiveness of the annual report is also limited by the fact that, as with other printed media, it tends to be an "all or nothing" medium for a portion

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[32] Ibid., p. 52.

of the population in that some people read but others do not and will not then select any of the items included in the report. The effectiveness of the annual report is also determined by the reading levels of the group to be reached and these further determined by the educational attainment of these groups. The selective nature of exposure is such that individual members of the reading public tend to select and omit portions of the material presented. This omission may be the entire annual report, or just portions of it. The group to be reached may be enlarged, and larger portions of the report read by increasing the picture content of the report and an effort to write much of the report in terms of the "human interest" material available.

The annual report, produced in feature style, attractively printed, and using many large pictures, can serve as an excellent information device. However, this medium can be expected again because of the selective factor to reach most effectively those persons already tending to be most favorable toward the subject of the presentation. Again, as with news stories, the report will be selected as it tends to strengthen or reinforce present attitudes, and to have little, if any, effect on strongly held negative attitudes. As a communication medium developed

by school personnel, it can serve as a specific information item for school public relations purposes. However, statements which imply that the development of the "perfect" annual report will solve the problem of communication with the school public are obviously incorrect. The effort to develop the effectiveness of the annual report, while valuable to the extent that the present reports may be inadequate, still does not solve the problem of reaching persons with strong opposing attitudes, those who do not or cannot read, or whose interests are such that they do not generally devote any effort to the topics presented by the annual report.

Other Printed Mass Information Means

Implicit in the analysis of each of the media thus far has been the need to reach the public with information about the schools; the diversity of interest, knowledge and attitudes to be found among members of this public; and the fact that the media tend to reach all members of the public. The total effect can be increased by the use of all of the possible outlets for the presentation of portions of this information. The variety of possible occasions often presents an opportunity to reach portions of the public that cannot be contacted by other means.

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by the annual report.

Other Related Uses for Media Data

Implicit in the analysis of each of the media bins [illegible] has been the need to reach the public with information about the schools; the diversity of interest, knowledge and attitudes to be found among members of this public; and the fact that the media tend to reach all members of the public. The total effort can be increased by the use of all of the possible outlets for the presentation of portions of this information. The variety of possible occasions often presents an opportunity to reach portions of the public that cannot be contacted by other means.

For example, a certain portion of the athletic contest audience may not read printed material in the local newspapers or the annual report. The printed tickets, programs, and the "half-time shows" present limited opportunities to reach additional portions of the school public. The same situation applies to audiences for other special events and performances. This can be applied to all of the advertising media available, limited only by the funds, imagination, and ingenuity of the public relations personnel involved. The use of these materials makes the borderline between advertising and the information program difficult to locate.

Some authors frankly advocate the use of advertising. Kindred states:

> School programs in public relations should include institutional advertising--advertising that interprets simply and precisely what the school stands for in American life. If handled effectively, such advertising contributes to popular understanding and appreciation of the educational program and helps to establish confidence in the importance of the school as a democratic social institution.
>
> In planning institutional advertising, education can take a tip from big business. First, it can recognize that big business is shifting a good percentage of its advertising from the sale of goods and services to the public understanding of its policies and procedures. . . . Two questions only need to be asked:

> How much has been done to indoctrinate the public intelligently with regard to what the school stands for in American life, and what are the terms in which the public thinks of the schools today?[33]

While true that "big business" has often attempted to "sell" ideas rather than goods to the public, much of this was during World War II when goods were not available and the businesses did not wish to have their names forgotten by the public. The application of advertising findings to institutional advertising is not simple and often incorrect. For example, many items advertised for sale tend, by the nature of the item itself, to have a definite limited appeal, and the advertising program can be planned in terms of what is known about this audience. A pair of earrings for one dollar and another for a thousand dollars will appeal to select groups, and the possibility that the groups are identical is rather small. Hence, the advertisement for either item can be restricted to the rather specific factors involved in an effort to reach either group. This same situation does not prevail when ideas are advertised, for presumably idea advertising aims at reaching larger audiences than item advertising.

In general, advertising procedures applied to the "sale of ideas" tend to be frowned upon as school public

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[33] Leslie W. Kindred, "Let's Advertise," Education, Vol. 69 (December 1948), pp. 220-222.

relations procedures. Where used, advertising tends to be restricted to such things as advertising various specific activities, for the sale of items and for election notices. These tend to avoid both the moral implications involved in the "sale of ideas" and the problems involved in attempting to reach a generalized audience by this process.

Radio and Television in School Public Relations

Radio and its younger relative, television, are comparative newcomers to the mass media, having developed largely since the early nineteen twenties. Radio was not envisioned as a school public relations medium until the early thirties, but after that time, enthusiasts have made various kinds of claims for it in the public relations program. Grinnel stated in 1937:

> Radio is rapidly becoming one of the most popular of all means for reaching quickly into the entire community.[34]

Radio reaches virtually every community in America, and there are many relatively small stations with a local audience. Because of this extensive coverage, it is an important medium for communication, and school public

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[34] Grinnell, op. cit., p. 68.

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audience. Because of its extensive coverage, it is an

there are many relatively small stations with a local

Radio reaches virtually every community in America, and

of all means for reaching quickly into the entire

Radio is rapidly becoming one of the most popular

community."[34]

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[34] Grinnell, op. cit., p. 68.

relations materials devote considerable space to methods for the production of radio and television programs, justification for the use of radio and television, and the importance of these media to the school public relations program.

Radio and television programs designed to inform and/or to change or produce attitudes do so in terms of the nature of the medium itself and the nature of the listening or viewing audience. Radio and television programs are somewhat ephemeral in that their programs are presented at a rigidly scheduled hour and with but a single presentation. Thus, unlike reading, the pace is established by the program, and if the individual misunderstands or misses a portion of the program, he cannot repeat or return to the portion missed or misunderstood. Broadcasting a single program is thus limited to an immediate contact, and while long time effects may conceivably result from a single exposure, the nature of the program itself tends to become a limitation and structure the function of this for school public relations.

Limitations Due to the Nature of the Medium

Broadcasting derives most of its funds from advertising and one of the objectives of advertising is to reach an audience as large as possible. Since programs can be

Broadcasting derives most of its funds from advertising and one of the objectives of advertising is to reach an audience as large as possible. Since programs can be

selected or the listener change to another easily, the major fare provided tends to be that which will appeal to the greatest possible number of people. Baker analyzed radio programs for one week during November, 1946, for a sample of stations which were members of the National Association of Broadcasters. His summary follows:

> 1. Radio is predominantly musical. Nearly half of its time is consumed by programs which are essentially musical in nature. . . .
> 2. Over half of the musical time on the air is consumed by popular and dance music. . . .
> 3. . . .Sixteen per cent of radio's time is devoted to [dramatic programs] . . . of which about 6 per cent is made up of the time taken by the daytime serial.
> 4. In third place in terms of the amount of time consumed in radio programming are the programs of news and news commentators. . . .
> 5. All but about 10 per cent of the announcements carried by radio stations are commercially sponsored. When, however, the time consumed by these announcements is added to the time consumed by commercial messages in sponsored programs, the total time devoted to commercial messages and announcements amounts to about 14 per cent of radio's total time on the air from sign-on to sign-off. . . .[35]

The entertainment nature of radio is indicated above. Talks made up 3 per cent of the total time; farm programs, 2 per cent; forums and panels, 1 per cent; homemaking programs, 1 per cent; and miscellaneous, unclassified programs, 2 per cent. The balance of the broadcast time was devoted to

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[35] Kenneth Baker, "An Analysis of Radio's Programming," in Communications Research 1948-49, edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1949), pp. 71-72.

programs which were primarily entertainment.[36] Thus the listener tends to expect a certain type of result from his radio, that he be quite largely entertained, and studies have shown that he selects from the fare offered so that he is entertained. Lazarsfeld states:

> The conservative character of American radio programs is further explained by what one may call the self-selection of audiences. By and large people tend to listen only to programs with which they agree. Wherever a program might influence the opinions of certain sections of the population, the likelihood of such influence is reduced by their tendency to turn off the radio whenever this possibility becomes apparent.[37]

This feature of the radio audience, that they expect to be entertained and to listen to programs with which they agree, tends to establish limits to school public relations program types, and place them in competition for listeners with entertainment programs.

Audience Limitations

In this society most males work during the day, and few are available for radio listening until the evening hours. The evening hours then provide the largest

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[36] Ibid., p. 59.

[37] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "The Effects of Radio on Public Opinion," in Print, Radio, and Film in a Democracy, edited by Douglas Waples, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 68.

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potential listening audience, and this time is largely pre-empted by commercially sponsored programs. School public relations radio programs must usually be presented at times other than those which provide the largest potential number of listeners. Thus the effort to reach a large local audience tends to be limited to the evening hours which happen not to be filled with commercial programs, to late evening hours, or to programs during the day. If programs are scheduled during evening hours on the times that are not filled with commercial programs, a larger potential audience exists. However, unless the program is regularly scheduled, many members of the audience will tend to miss the program for a variety of reasons. School public relations programs during the late evening hours are obviously not usually feasible because of the limited audience available and the frequency with which youngsters are featured. If offered during the day, the audience tends to be limited largely to women and to non-employed men. However, this group is not entirely accessible to radio broadcasting, for a portion of the women do not listen for one reason or another, and a portion of them listen regularly during the morning hours to the so-called "soap operas." Lazarsfeld and Dinerman report on the basis of sample of listeners in the New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and Kansas City areas:

> . . . 34 per cent of these 2,650 women were "inaccessible" as potential members of the morning audience. This inaccessible group consisted of women employed during the morning hours (25 per cent) and others (9 per cent) who, although not employed, were prevented from listening. . . . (of the remaining 66 per cent) . . . the women were divided into three groups: Nonlisteners (37 per cent) . . . Story Audience (29 per cent) . . . and Other Listeners (34 per cent).[38]

The potential radio audience for school public relations efforts then tends to be limited largely to women. However, not all women can be considered available for 34 per cent of the audience is "inaccessible." Of the remaining 66 per cent, a little over one third of them do not customarily listen during the morning hours, and a little less than one third customarily listen to serial programs of one form or another. Thus school public relations efforts at radio programming are limited to the "other listeners" which make up about one third of the listening audience and must compete for attention with the serial listeners who make up another third of the available audience. Another study of the radio audience conducted by the National Opinion Research Center and reported by Lazarsfeld and Kendall finds:

> A radio fan in the morning is one in the afternoon and evening as well. Because of their

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[38] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Helen Dinerman, "Research for Action," in Communications Research 1948-49, edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), pp. 76-77.

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> psychological characteristics, their time schedules, and their lack of competing interests, women who are heavy listeners at one period of the day will tend to be radio fans throughout the day. Conversely, those women who cannot or do not want to listen much at one period will be light listeners consistently.[39]

The non-listener and the fan addicted to certain selected radio programs tend to be difficult to reach by school public relations efforts in the production of radio programs.

As with other media for communication, the objective is one concerned with successful efforts for the transfer of meaning, and a failure to communicate may be due to the nature of the medium selected for communication. Audience behavior with respect to radio may nullify the communication effort unless this is planned in terms of an understanding of the nature of this audience behavior. Klapper points out that suggestibility is higher among people on comparatively low cultural levels, and that these persons are proportionately more prevalent in the radio audience than in the newspaper audience.[40] Thus the potential radio listener tends to be more suggestible than the potential

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[39] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Patricia L. Kendall, Radio Listening in America, (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 16.

[40] Joseph T. Klapper, "The Effects of Mass Media," Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, New York, 1948, mimeographed, Chapter II, p. 20.

reader, and radio is the preferred medium of communication of the more suggestible man. The listener gets a sense of personal access from the radio which tends to approach that of a face-to-face contact.[41] Radio may be more effective as a communications device than print, but radio audience behavior is such that it definitely structures not only time of communication but type of communication as audiences "select" their listening fare. These tend to be both assets and limits to the relative effectiveness of efforts at communication in this area.

Television

This newcomer to the broadcasting field is growing so rapidly that audience studies are quickly outdated. Siepmann summarizes some of the material available on the nature of the television audience:

> Of all television-set owners, only 11% are in the top income group. The middle brackets account for 76%, and 13% of all set owners are in the lowest income group. . . . The well-to-do were initially the biggest purchasers; today they are the smallest. . . the relatively poor are not only the most enthusiastic purchasers but also the most enthusiastic viewers. . . . Television is further differentiated from radio in its appeal to the sexes. In radio women tend to predominate in the audience; in

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[41] Ibid., p. 21.

> television this situation is reversed . . . when we asked who in the family was most interested in television, men were indicated in 91% of the cases. . . . More recent tests suggest that as the television schedule expands, the proportion of women viewers in relation to men is tending to increase. By 1950 there were generally more women than men in the average program's audience.[42]

The television audience is changing as the medium changes, but it also considers viewing as primarily an entertainment process. Again the nature of audience selection and time for viewing determine not only program types but also the time when programs will be successful in reaching a wide audience.

The physical factors involved in the availability of program time, the nature of the work schedule, and the entertainment expectations of the audience for radio and television communication efforts tends to structure and predetermine not only the kind of effort but the relative success of these efforts. In addition to these physical factors, attitudes and information tend to determine the listening pattern. Klapper states:

> Every radio program. . . tends to become known to and attract those persons who already like such material, and to remain unknown or at least unattended by persons who either dislike such

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[42] Charles A. Siepmann, Radio, Television, and Society, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), adapted from pp. 336-341.

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Charles A. Siepmann, Radio, Television, and Society, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), adapted from pp. 238-241.

> material or, and perhaps more importantly, have had no experience with such material and no stimulus to develop the experience. Because the program . . . selects its own audience, it has little chance to affect the tastes or opinions of the uninterested or opposed.[43]

Thus radio and perhaps television tend to reach those who are already somewhat informed on the subject concerned, and tending usually to have a favorable attitude toward the presentation. This is the same factor that operates to limit the effectiveness of other mass media as school public relations means for informing the school public.

Contributions to School Public Relations

Despite the limiting factors present, radio and television can contribute to the information program, primarily through the various community service programs which provide donated time. Americans, however, have grown accustomed to high quality entertainment, and school efforts to provide similar entertainment place youngsters in competition with professionals possessing a skill difficult to match among youngsters. Schools are not often able to compete successfully in the entertainment field unless their unique assets are capitalized. School public relations efforts in the radio and television field

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[43] Klapper, op. cit., Introduction, pp. 12-13.

can be programmed in terms of the unique nature of the performers involved, however. Youngsters can do things on a program which are interesting because of the youthful charm possessed by the performers, and professionals cannot match this appeal. Some of the examples of desirable types of programs recommended by the National School Public Relations Association follow:

> An Eastern city system keyed its weekly TV show to the theme that "Teachers are People." It featured on one program, for example, a new principal, forced to discontinue his schooling at the age of 13 who didn't return to school until the age of 24. He started in the 8th grade, a married man and the father of two children, and continued straight through high school, college and his doctorate degree over a period of 20 years. Other teachers spotlighted on the same program included an outstanding former basketball star and a man who was widely traveled. . . .
>
> In its 15-minute weekly radio show, this New England city says to listeners: "Come Visit Our Class." In the program, a parent or community figure visits the class (it could be a kindergarten or a high school English group) to see what activities are going on. A western community produces half-hour television shows which interpret different phases of the schools' activities. Best program so far, . . . was an unrehearsed half hour in which the music teacher actually taught lessons to a little boy who didn't even know how to handle the instrument. Program wound up with a polished performance by a high school senior. . . .
>
> Operation Blackboard, a series of telecasts put on by the schools . . . included "R for 'Rithmetic," demonstrating new techniques of teaching first, second, or third grade arithmetic; "How's Your Social I.Q.?" teen-age problems discussed with experts--poise, grooming, use of family car,

> dating problems, baby-sitting, family relationships; "Everyone's an Artist" where art supervisors and pupils (elected by their class) showed how they worked in clay, wood, paint, chalk, and other artistic media.[44]

The examples cited, while obviously contributing to the school public relations information effort, must be judged as to effectiveness in terms of audience behavior as it selects for listening, and as these programs add to the information possessed by listeners and change or fail to change attitudes of the listeners.

The following activities are suggested:

> School radio broadcasts may have varied purposes; information about the school; instructional broadcasts for classroom use; orientation and other guidance broadcasts; seasonal and holiday broadcasts; sports broadcasts; public service and other community programs; special campaign broadcasts; school news broadcasts; and radio spot announcements. Well-planned school broadcasts are popular in the community and help to achieve the basic objective of the school's interpretation program.[45]

This view of the nature of the contribution to be made by radio to the school public relations information program represents a somewhat naive view of the nature of the medium and the listening habits of the radio audience.

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[44] _____, "It Starts in the Classroom," National School Public Relations Association Newsletter, Washington, D. C., March 1954, p. 2.

[45] Twenty-eighth Yearbook, American Association of School Administrators, op cit., p. 285.

Movies, Film Strips, and Slides

The medium of sight plus sound, produced as a part of the school public relations effort, is relatively effective as a teaching device. The medium, however, is limited by either cost factors involved in the production of films for public relations purposes by the fact that they may be quickly dated if concerned with topics which are timely and the frequent lack of the technical skills required for local production. Productions are available for rental purposes, but having been produced for general distribution tend to be relatively ineffective for specific portions of the information program.

Films procured for teaching purposes and shown to public groups are effective means for the presentation of factual material. The War Department studies during World War II indicate that there was a retention of factual material of about 50 per cent after nine weeks.[46] The army studies dealt with training films, with the primary purpose of purveying factual information. This is only partially comparable with school public relations efforts, as films are used to teach audiences with educational materials. The authors also compared the

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[46] Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield, op. cit., p. 184.

relative effectiveness of sound motion pictures and filmstrip presentations. They found that neither method of presentation was superior to the other.[47] Klapper reports that most children and many adults tend to accept unquestionably all presumably factual information in commercial films.[48] Thus, the nature of films is such that they are both an asset and a problem for school public relations. Films of this type are usually called documentary films, and there is comparatively little information on miscellaneous adult audience effects, most of it being restricted to results obtained when used for formal teaching purposes.

When films are used as formal teaching media for adult audiences, Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield report that the effectiveness of the film can be increased by supplementing with a face-to-face lecture.[49] The face-to-face supplement was effective whether presented as a review or an introduction with no significant difference between the two methods.[50] They state further that insofar

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[47] Ibid., p. 126.

[48] Klapper, op. cit., Chapter II, p. 23.

[49] Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield, op. cit., pp. 141-146.

[50] Ibid., p. 246.

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[47] Ibid., p. 126.

[48] Klapper, op. cit., Chapter II, p. 23.

[49] Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield, op. cit., pp. 143-146.

[50] Ibid., p. 246.

as possible the actual response to be learned should be practiced during the film showing, and that the film should duplicate as near as possible the actual situation in which the desired responses are to be produced. Much that school public relations media attempt to teach, however, consist of much more general types of situations and not the specific types of information and responses produced in the Army training program. This area is more or less still uncharted, and most of the information available tends to be speculation.

Contributions to School Public Relations

Movies and films, plus verbal descriptions, are apparently a desirable means for informing the public on how the schools of today operate. This is primarily a teaching process, for most adults attended schools much different than those of today, and their verbal stereotype of "school" is not correct. Much of this can be corrected by films, film strips, and slides. The problems in the production of films have been sketchily indicated, and cost of production and the absence of technical skills makes local production difficult or impractical for most schools. The development of a series of 35 mm slides in color is relatively inexpensive and extremely practical because of the fact that most

schools have someone on their teaching staff or available locally who already possesses the equipment and technical skills for the production of these slides. For example, the Richmond School in Salem, Oregon,[51] produced a 90-frame colored film-slide story of their school lunch program. The series was designed with a commentary which was tape recorded. The story described the lunch program, emphasized nutritional aspects of the program, and some of the problems involved in the fact that "needy" youngsters could not participate. The series was so successful that a second set was prepared to show to teachers and administrator groups throughout the state.

Some of the Limiting Factors

Films, film strips, and slides can make a contribution to the total information program and are another means for the diversification and the repetition of information items for the total program, thus increasing its total effectiveness. However, presentation by this method requires that an audience assemble, and this assembly process is voluntary and must be motivated. Thus, the basic motivation must be performed by other means and often for other purposes.

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[51] _____ Public Relations Leads for the Elementary School Principal, National School Public Relations Association, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., (April 1954), p. 1.

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If this motivation is sufficiently strong to stimulate a person to appear at a gathering at which he will be shown visual material, he probably already tends to be more or less friendly to the school. The process of audience selection operates with films, as with radio and the newspaper, in that the individual selects an activity and decides either to attend this showing or to engage in some other activity during this time. Audience selection operates even during the showing itself, for appearance at the showing does not necessarily also involve attention during the showing. The basic problem is one of motivation, and this motivation may be related to an attitude toward the subject of the presentation, and if favorable the store of information enlarged. If the attitude is unfavorable, the motivation will not exist to encourage the individual to even attend the showing.

Thus, films tend to reach those individuals already favorable toward the subject of the presentation, and while this may increase the supply of information possessed by those individuals, does not influence individuals already unfavorable because their unfavorable attitudes make them physically inaccessible. The Army research studies on the effectiveness of films in attitude change operated with a group where the total range of

attitudes could be expected to range from highly negative to highly positive as regards the subject of the presentation. Assembly as audience members, however, was not on a voluntary basis. Thus, even this data on the effect of films on an audience is not strictly comparable to the situation met in school public relations efforts using films as an information medium. The effectiveness of films in a school public relations effort is concerned with those aspects of the program which are provided by this medium with another opportunity to repeat and reinforce the use of other media. The limitations of this program are those concerned with the fact of audience selection for exposure to the medium and the fact that exposure tends to occur with those persons already most informed and most favorably disposed. This may be a means of reaching the favorable group which tends not to read public affairs information, however, the younger parents and the females.

Summary

School public relations efforts at the presentation of information involve the use of mass media, as identical messages are presented to an audience with the sole criterion for audience membership being exposure to the stimulus. This would include radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, etc. Since most mass media were not developed for school public relations but for other purposes, the nature of the media tends to affect the method of operation and the success of school public relations efforts in using these media.

The individual perceiving a stimulus in the mass media does so in terms of his habits in using this particular medium and the competition presented by other possible stimuli. These stimuli are so large in number that the individual cannot possibly perceive all of them and select particular ones for perception. This selection is done in terms of the effort required and the individual expectation of reward from perception. The effort required may be reduced by various means, and the possibilities of reward can be increased. These tend to be guiding factors for those activities designed to increase the effectiveness of the information effort. The individual perceives in terms of the motivation existing at the time of perception,

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and much of this lies outside the area of control of school public relations efforts.

The newspaper is often considered to be one of the most effective and the most widely used means of informing the public on the subject of the schools. Newspaper use, however, usually requires that the item contribute to the total effectiveness of the newspaper objective, one of which is concerned with selling papers, and sometimes good news for the paper is poor school public relations.

The precedent has been established for school agents to deliberately produce news stories for submission to the newspaper. There is a good deal of literature available on this subject, but most of it consists of descriptions of how to write, how to produce and recognize news, and how to get stories published. There is a dearth of information on audience effect and audience reaction to various types of school news stories.

There is some evidence available on the subject of current school news efforts in the papers, and these indicate that extra-curricular activities tend to be the subject of the larger proportion of school news. There are other studies which indicate that these are not the areas in which people tend to be most interested; that they are more interested in news stories concerned with

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pupils and classroom activities. However, these variations in interest patterns may represent not necessarily differences in real interest but expressions of desire for more information on subjects now given limited news coverage.

Schramm has classified news into delayed reward and immediate reward divisions with the difference between them based on the kind of satisfactions to be derived from perusal. Immediate reward news would consist of efforts to entertain, and delayed reward news would consist of information on such subjects as public affairs.

Individual members of the reading audience read differing amounts and kinds of news with more delayed reward reading among males, and an increase in this kind of reading as education, age, and economic wealth increases. There are marked differences in reading habits between occupational groups and between the sexes. There is evidence that females tend to read more immediate reward news and that this kind of news tends to be read more by persons in the lower age, educational, and income brackets. Much that is school news tends to be written in a form which is public affairs information and tends not to be read by the groups most logically involved, for the younger persons in the lower income levels tend to be more likely to have children, or be of

child bearing age, hence most active in PTA, room mother, and other school organizations.

Some of the improvements in school news practices follow as corollaries of descriptions of the reading audience. Other improvements have to do with changes in present practices in reporting news, and those are such things as the use of names, the recognition of areas for emphasis in reporting, and the use of activities as teaching devices to portray the work of the schools. Sometimes news stories actually produce an incorrect impression of the work of the schools because they are presented in a way which makes these incorrect impressions possible. Much that is involved is the development of news stories which emphasize the "human interest" angle of the story, and this is the type of story which tends to have the widest readership.

News stories, to provide understanding, must be written in a form which the adult can read, and this involves adult reading skills. Since these are beyond the control of the school, news efforts must be produced in terms of these reading skills. Stories which require too much effort or which cannot be understood because of the language used will not be read. This involves concern with readability, and again human interest tends to

increase readability. These kinds of stories tend to become immediate reward stories when written with these factors in mind.

Studies have shown that depth of readership varies with story type, with newspaper circulation and frequency of production. The smaller the paper, the lower the circulation, the more likely that a story will hold a reader for a longer period of time. Human interest stories, which do not use the usual inverted newspaper style for story presentation, are more likely to hold their reading audience longer and to have a relatively large initial reading audience.

The annual report, a printed summary of school activities, is more likely to be produced by large school systems than by small systems. It is a production by the school and one over which the school has control, unlike other mass media. The trend is for broad distribution for members of the lay public, and this tends to make operative the factors involved in mass reading patterns. As a specialized medium for information, it may serve as a most effective agent if developed in terms of the needs of the reading audience.

The annual report is a medium which must be read, and reading skill is related to education, and the tendency

to read or omit delayed reward and immediate reward types of materials. This involves the production of an annual report which tends to emphasize the story aspects and the human interest phases of the report and to present this with the use of much illustrative material in the form of pictures and drawings. Larger picture size and human interest photographs tend to attract more readers. The annual report involves audience selection factors, and unless these are considered, the report will receive relatively limited readership and tend to be relatively ineffective.

Other printed mass information media tend to either become or are similar to advertising. This can become another information medium but has not been widely used. Examples of this type of activity would include the use of printed programs, tickets, etc., to convey additional information to members of the audience at the events where these items are used. Other means would include billboards, posters, etc. Some authors have attempted to justify the entrance of the school into the formal advertising field but with little success. Much of the effort of the school in this area would be concerned with "ideas" which are difficult to convey by these means. Where used, advertising tends to be restricted to advertising specific activities such as plays, athletic contests, and the sale of specific items.

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Radio and television, as mass media, again involve analysis of audience behavior as this affects and determines the effectiveness of school public relations efforts. These kinds of programs, presented either to involve sound or both sight and sound, are presented but once. Hence, the pace of the audience is determined by the program, and audience members cannot repeat or slow down the perception required. Broadcasting derives most of its income from advertising, and one of the objectives is to reach as large an audience as possible. Hence, the common denominator of audiences is selected for program content. The listener can select and change programs based on his own whims, and most broadcasting programs attempt to entertain. Little time is devoted to educational or public affairs types of programming. Since the audience expects to be entertained, other efforts tend to have a relatively small audience.

The nature of the work day means that most males are not available during the day. The evening periods are largely pre-empted by commercial programs and not available usually for school public relations efforts. Thus, the day time period most often available tends to reach mostly females as an audience. Not all females, however, are available, for about one third cannot listen, and those

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Radio and television

who do listen have definite listening habits. Of those who can listen, a third do not choose to do so, and about a third listen by habit to various serial programs offered them. This leaves another third who listen to a variety of programs. School public relations programs then compete for attention with the serial programs offered and with other non-serial programs. If a person tends to be a radio fan in the morning, he can also be expected to be a radio fan during the rest of the day. Those who tend to listen little during the morning tend not to listen at other parts of the day. The non-listener and the person addicted to serial programs is difficult to reach by broadcasting efforts.

Television, as a broadcasting medium, is growing so rapidly that studies are quickly outdated. There is some evidence that the lower income groups tend to be the most enthusiastic purchasers and viewers. Men have tended to predominate in audience interest, but evidence indicates that as television programming expands, women form the greater portion of the audience. Again the nature of the work day presents more women with more possible hours for viewing than men.

Broadcast programs are likely to be selected by persons who already know and like such material, and new programs

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tend to be ignored because audience members have not had an opportunity to learn to like the material and no stimulus to develop the experience. Thus radio, and perhaps television, tend to reach those persons already somewhat informed, and tending usually to have favorable attitudes toward the subject of the presentations.

Radio and television can contribute to the information program, but the nature of the medium limits the effectiveness of the effort and to structure the kind of programs which can be relatively successful. Schools cannot usually compete in the entertainment field but can produce programs based on their unique assets which are concerned with such things as youngsters and the learning process.

Movies, film strips, and slides are another means for the presentation of information about the school. There is little evidence available on the effectiveness of the documentary film on an unstructured audience, other than those studies carried on during World War II. The effectiveness of this method of presentation depends for success on the existence of pre-program motivation, which will tend to encourage individuals to congregate for a showing. Thus, the media are most effective with those persons already sufficiently motivated to assemble, and the medium be unable to reach those persons with attitudes

such that they do not meet for viewing. Movies are expensive and somewhat difficult to produce. Documentaries can be rented or borrowed for showing but are somewhat limited in effectiveness because of the fact that they were produced for general and not specific use. Hence, a film on reading is not the story of how school A teaches reading but on reading in general. The film strip and slides in color can be produced locally at little expense and with little technical knowledge or equipment required. In addition to these advantages, they can be planned to emphasize and focus on the local scene and cover local needs. The medium has not been used a great deal, but users report great enthusiasm. The limitation to this means is the same one which affects the use of films in general, i.e. requires the assembly of an audience which already tends to be informed and friendly by virtue of the fact of assembly.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER MEDIA AND SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS

School public relations as an organized effort at communication with all adult members of the school public involves the use of the various media available. Much of this depends on the use of the mass media, and some of the problems associated with this were stated earlier. Many of these have to do with the fact that the persons reached tend usually to be those who are friendly, best informed, interested, etc. The mass audience tends to select from the media available those portions of it which are congenial with their present attitudes. The effects and the operation of some of the media tend to be related to and restricted by educational and occupational groupings, for certain groups tend to depend on selected types of media for information.

The mass media, however, are not the only means that have been developed for school public relations purposes. There are other means tending to be relatively specific productions designed for communication between the school as an institution and individuals within the community and

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between employees of the school and groups in the community. These are such things as report cards, letters, bulletins, which are usually written or printed means specially developed for communication purposes. For many both the content and structure of the means tend to be relatively standardized, for these have been used by school systems for some period of time. There seems to be virtually no valid research as to the comparative effectiveness of these means for communication, but a good deal of printed material is available consisting largely of opinions, speculations, directions for production, and generalizations on the subject of effectiveness with these based largely on the author's past experience. An examination of some of these is limited in scope by the comparative absence of communications research on these topics, but this may provide some indication of their relative effectiveness in terms of what is known as to the nature of the process of communication and some of the factors involved.

Referring to the process of communication described earlier, the act involves an effort at a transfer of meaning and an increase in the area of understanding between two or more people organized in some form of a spatial and social relationship. Some kind of a medium

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is required, and the process takes place by the use of words or symbols. The organization of words into a system of sentences is designed to make this transfer of meaning possible but does so in terms of the relative complexity of the organization, the experience of the individual receiving the material, and the selective nature of perception. The latter factors may encourage or make more difficult the transfer of meaning.

Reports to Parents

Virtually a universal practice in the public schools of the United States is the periodic submission to parents of some form of a report of pupil progress in school. The nature of the report varies from one school to another with some schools using numerical symbols to indicate pupil achievement in given subject matter areas, others using letters for the same purpose, and often check-list type of indications of status in areas other than just academic achievement. Much study has been devoted to efforts to improve the process of reporting to parents, and many variations are suggested in the literature. The major elements reported to parents, however, still consist primarily of letter or percentage grades indicating

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comparative pupil ranking.[1] The inadequacies of this and some of the problems involved are obvious, as parents attempt to read and interpret relatively simple reports of the nature of the growth and development of a complex organism spending the good portion of each school day in a complicated social situation. These reports are interpreted in terms of existing parental understandings and previous experiences, and very often these are inadequate to provide an understanding of the information purveyed. Parents, unless they have been given an opportunity to develop a different understanding, tend to conceive of marks as an index of the youngster's competitive standing in academic work, for in most cases this is the way in which they were "graded."

The current tendency is toward the development of a type of report which emphasizes the pupil's progress, growth, and development, and reporting then becomes a process of indicating these changes. This, of course, if contrary to parent expectations, often involves a failure in communication. Attempts are sometimes made to solve this problem by supplementing the formal report with more detailed letters and/or brochures. The subject

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[1] Harold G. Shane and Wilbur Yauch, Creative School Administration, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1954), p. 336.

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of the letter is usually the individual pupil concerned, and the success of the letter as a communications device is then determined by the skills of the teacher in this area. Some of the problems are those concerned with teacher work load, lack of skill in writing, and a failure to understand the nature of desirable parent-teacher relationships. For example:

> When narrative report cards are used classroom teachers have to be especially careful. The written word, if ill-chosen, can build up in a minute more resentment than years of pleasant experiences with schools can eradicate.
>
> A principal of a school using narrative report cards reads every card before it is issued. "I have to," she says, "because of the dangers that lie in emotionally colored words and expressions."
>
> If she finds a poorly phrased thought, she consults the classroom teacher so that together they can agree upon words telling the same story but not provoking parental ire.
>
> For example, when a teacher reported that "Yesterday John stole a book from the library," she suggested that the sentence read, "Yesterday John took a book from the library without the librarian's permission." . . .
>
> "I don't know why we often are so blunt with parents," declared the principal. "As educated people we ought to be outstandingly skilled at wording reports so as to encourage objective and dispassionate thinking, rather than to inspire the desire for retaliation."[2]

The nature of the communication taking place between individual parents and a series of teachers over a period up to twelve years may be such as to fix strong negative

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[2] _____ "It Starts in the Classroom," op. cit., pp. 36-37.

[5] _____ "It Starts in the Classroom," op. cit., pp. 36-37.

or positive attitudes. The direction of these attitudes may depend entirely on the kinds of contacts that parents have with teachers and the satisfactions or lack of them which ensues. The parent of the child who "does well," that is, receives good marks often tends to approve of and even strongly defend reporting practices, but for the parents of the child who does not "do well" the periodic report of competitive pupil standing may be a continuous source of unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

Report Card "Stuffers"

The report card may contain, in addition to or in place of a letter on the subject of the pupil, other materials. Written materials compete for attention and interest with other media presented to parents, and this would seem an opportune time to plan and produce a variety of materials which explain many other features of the school program. These may be prepared by teachers or by pupils, and on such topics as:

"How we try to help stutterers in class, and how homes can help"
"Suggestions for educational summertime recreation"
"Books suitable for your child as Christmas gifts"
"How Character is taught in our class"
"How our writing skills are developed"

"How we try to help stutterers in class, and how
    teams can help"
"Suggestions for educational summertime recreation"
"Books suitable for your child as Christmas gifts"
"How Character is taught in our class"
"How our writing skills are developed"

"Methods we use to improve our reading skills in the eighth grade"
"How art teaching is related to other subjects"
"Why diagramming sentences is not taught in our class"[3]

The list above does not exhaust the possibilities, but the primary purpose is one of using the reporting period and the parent attention which is aroused by the arrival of the report to inform parents on other subjects about the school which serve to enrich the total value of the parent report.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences between teachers and parents have been used with varying degrees of success, either to replace or supplement the periodic report. These are scheduled either in the afternoon or evening with the idea being that face-to-face discourse can provide an expanded opportunity for increased understanding. Conference topics are concerned with the welfare of the youngster, and the skilled teacher encourages a "we" feeling of responsibility for this youngster. Conferees at the 1954 Mid-Winter Conference of the National School Public Relations Association agreed that:

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[3] Ibid., p. 27.

> Report cards, alone, are inadequate. They should be reinforced by teacher-parent conferences. However, such conferences can fail unless teachers are trained in conference handling, something which actually calls for considerable skill. Objective should be not only to help parent understand the report but also to show how parent can use report to help his child.[4]

The conference provides an opportunity to explore other areas of mutual concern and interest. Sometimes this conference is in addition to small group meetings devoted to topics common to the group, but this is a supplementary device and not a substitute for the individual conference itself. The critical factors for success of the parent-teacher conference are those which are concerned with the human relations problems involved.

Changes in reporting practices, undertaken without the full understanding of the parents involved, have often resulted in conflict situations. Changes in reporting practice should be based on some kind of concensus involving both the school and the community, and new reporting practices should increase the possibilities and expand the area of communication with respect to both the individual child and the total school. Yeager states:

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[4] _____ "Public Relations Journey," Annual Report of the National School Public Relations Association, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1954, p. 29.

> Apart from improvement in reporting as a school responsibility, the following should be emphasized from the standpoint of the home. The report system should 1) promote understanding and good will; 2) state simply and clearly the school's philosophy and objectives; 3) assist in adjusting home and community living with school subjects; 4) provide adequate understanding of standards of work accomplished for its own sake rather than for marks or rewards; 5) be understandable to the child himself and promote understanding with his parents; 6) indicate measures of individual and social growth and development.[5]

The pupil report, based on the growth and development of the child, can be a most fruitful key to communication between the parent and the school if this report is made for communication purposes and not as an administrative, bookkeeping device.

Language Use Problems in Pupil Reports

The report involves problems in the use of language, for it is written by professional educators for a wide range of possible parent types as these represent differing interests, educational levels, and experience backgrounds. The problem of teacher-parent communication has received considerable attention. Shane and Yauch report an amusing news story from the Chicago Tribune illustrating this problem:

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[5] William A. Yeager, School-Community Relations, (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), p. 158.

> Parents, are you bewildered by those comments the teacher writes on your youngster's report card? With the help of college professors and the school janitor, I succeeded in translating them. Following are typical comments and their translation:
>
> Michael does not socialize well.
>
> This means Mike is always beating some other kid's brains out.
>
> John is progressing very well for him.
>
> Don't feel so happy, Pappy--this means Johnny is a dope. He's 12 years old and has just learned 2 and 2 make 4, which, as teacher points out, is progress--for him.
>
> Frank's personality evidences a lack of social integration.
>
> This is a nice way of saying Frank is a stinker.
>
> Oscar shows a regrettable lack of self-control.
>
> This means Oscar doesn't do what teacher wants. Self-control means how much control the teacher has over Oscar.
>
> . . .
>
> David does not harmonize well with his peer group.
>
> This has nothing to do with his voice. Teacher means that he can't get along with his classmates. Or, everybody in the class is out of step with Davey boy.
>
> Richard's work indicates a lack of mastery over the upper ranges of the fundamental combinations necessary for arithmetical computation.
>
> Don't rush to a psychiatrist, just teach Dick his 7, 8 and 9 tables--he doesn't know them.[6]

Some obvious corollaries to the example of the problem presented by the "teacher comments and translations" above refers to the use of "everyday" English, and the avoidance of technical terms, or educational words and the

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[6] Adapted from Shane and Yauch, op. cit., p. 337.

use of accurate meaningful words and sentences. Teacher comments should be based on the things which it is important that the parent know and that he needs to know in order to participate more adequately in the joint task involved in the education and the growth and development of the child. The comments should include specific recommendations for action to be taken where required.

Contributions to School Public Relations

The report to parents may be a source of difficulty, a hindrance to communication, or it can be a rich, satisfying experience for both the parent and the teacher. Which it is depends to a large extent on the teacher and on her skill in making this a real communication process. The report can be a part of a total process which enlarges the parent understanding of the role of the school in society, of the school problems, and can share a portion of the responsibility for the production of enthusiastic friends of the school with this enthusiasm based on knowledge. This can be done with the parents of the child who "does well" and if handled correctly, with the parents of the child who does not necessarily prove to be a complete academic success. It may also produce deep

seated negative attitudes with regard to the school on the part of parents of "drop outs" and may also be a part of the unhappy memories of the early school leaver. The development of informed friends of the school among the parent group has secondary consequences as they "talk school" with persons who may not have youngsters enrolled. Information is then spread beyond the confines of the parents receiving the report itself.

Parent Bulletins and Messages

Various kinds of bulletins and messages have been developed for distribution to parents. The subjects of these vary widely, but most are concerned with supplementary aspects of pupil progress, and other phases of the school program. Methods for the production and distribution of these means for communication determines somewhat the contribution to the total information effort. Many of the methods for effecting improvements in production and distribution of these kinds of information means are known. Since mimeographed material tends to be somewhat difficult to read, care must be used in cutting stencils to produce a high quality of reproduction. Short sentences,

short paragraphs, the use of subheads, underlining, and marginal indentations tend to make the material easier to read. The California Teachers Association suggests:

> A postscript is sometimes read even when the body of the letter is not.
>
> Reader response is greatest when form letters are delivered to recipients on Thursday. This is probably because on Thursday the washing and ironing are done and the baking and house cleanup for the week-end has not yet begun. In timing the arrival of mail material you should also check your local events calendar to be sure that your letters are not delivered on circus day or when some other community-wide event is scheduled.
>
> Return postcards are sometimes read when the covering letter in the same envelope is not. Return postcards should, therefore, tell a complete story.[7]

Ideas such as these, based on advertising "know-how," tend to be a part of the "tricks of the trade" of the advertising and the mass persuasion agents. If communication is desired, some of these "tricks of the trade" tend to increase the possibilities that the material will be brought to the attention of the recipient.

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[7] _____ "Freeways to Friendships," California Teachers Association, San Francisco, California, 1949, p. 25.

Various special publications have been developed by different schools to describe and explain their work. The Fort Dodge, Iowa, school system produces a quarterly publication for parents called "Fort Dodge Schools at Work."[8] This is written by different individuals within the system, printed by students in the school shop, and covers such topics as: teaching handwriting by the use of visual equipment, the use of a tape recorder as a teaching tool in the first grade, diagnosing spelling errors, etc. Copies are sent to parents by youngsters in school, and additional copies are sent to such places as beauty parlors, barber shops, the offices of dentists, doctors, lawyers and ministers. The Abington, Pennsylvania, school system produced a handbook for parents describing various school topics from supervision during the lunch period to the Saturday morning recreation program.[9] There is no newspaper in the rural community served by the Germantown Central School, Germantown, New York, and the

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[8] Reported in "Public Relations Leads," National School Public Relations Association, National Education Association, Newsletter for January, 1954, p. 1.

[9] Ibid., p. 2.

school system has developed a monthly School Report devoted to school news, articles on the teaching of reading and other fundamental subjects, and discussion of school problems.[10] The report is mailed to everyone in the community. The Santa Barbara, California, school system has worked out a system for having their printed bulletins addressed by youngsters to their own parents, and claim that the bulletin has more of a chance of being read when the parent notices that the address is in his own child's handwriting.[11] A new first grade teacher, taking over in midyear, sent a personally signed letter to all parents of the youngsters in her room, giving a brief sketch of her life history, a description of what she hoped to accomplish during the balance of the year, and ending with a cordial invitation to parents to visit the school and the class. Examples of practices like these could be multiplied many times.

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[10] Reported in "Public Relations Leads," Newsletter for April, 1954, op. cit., p. 2.

[11] Reported in "It Starts in the Classroom," Newsletter for January, 1954, op. cit., p. 2.

The parent sending his first youngster to kindergarten or the first grade is interested in the welfare of this youngster and often does not understand the changes that have taken place in schools since he last attended. Many schools attempt to produce a bulletin to supplement pre-school clinics and meetings devoted to this and other topics. This process is actively encouraged by the National School Public Relations Association, and this group in cooperation with the Department of Elementary School Principals and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers have published a bulletin on this subject. It is titled "Happy Journey, Preparing Your Child for School," and states that it is a handbook for parents whose child will soon enter kindergarten or first grade."[12] Published in May, 1953, 276,375 copies of this manual were reported sold by June, 1954.[13] The bulletin is attractively designed, uses color and line drawings throughout. It was published by national organizations, particularly the National School Public Relations Association, which recommends good practices, and contains this sentence:

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[12] _____ "Happy Journey," Department of Elementary School Principals, National School Public Relations Association of the National Education Association, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, Washington, D. C., 1953, 32 pp.

[13] _____ "Public Relations Journey," op. cit., p. 24.

> Picture yourself, a monolingual American seated before a blackboard covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics.[14]

This bulletin is designed for distribution to the general public, and it would seem probable that many members of the lay public might have difficulty with the words "monolingual" or "hieroglyphics." The last four paragraphs on page 22 of this same publication consist of five sentences with 57, 40, 24, 38, and 44 words respectively per sentence, with an average sentence length of 41 words. The reading formulas referred to earlier state that a sentence length of 29 or more words is difficult to read. Any bulletin must first compete for attention with other competing stimuli and must hold the interest of the reader long enough for him to receive additional understanding or information for having read the bulletin. Sentence length and word choice are factors in this process with longer sentences and more difficult words tending to be more difficult to read. A wide variety of parent bulletins and messages, planned to reach specific "audiences" and produced in terms of what is known to be effective practice, would seem to be one of the potentially fruitful school public relations areas. This is an area

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[14] _____ "Happy Journey," op. cit., p. 17.

where the problems inherent in the use of other media can be alleviated by deliberate efforts, providing these problems are understood.

Student Publications

Publications by students, intended primarily for students, are relatively common in public schools. These range from newspapers to student handbooks, and the amount of school staff direction ranges from the complete production of some handbooks to merely advisory assistance with the technical problems involved in the production of the newspaper. The values of publications of these types are those which are concerned with the development of student unity and morale and the provision of an information medium for students. A frequent source of parental information about school affairs is the student who returns to the home and not only volunteers but is sufficiently informed to be able to respond to parental requests for information on school topics. Student publications are a means for providing students with this information. Some of these publications may be read by some parents. Yeager states:

> Parents are interested in news stories, personals, athletics, alumni news, and class news. They seem to have little interest in

> literary attempts and humor and to prefer individual items about their own children in yearbooks, news about graduates, and stories about the classes in which their own children belong. Club activities and pictures are of most interest to parents.[15]

Student publications play both a direct and an indirect role in the information program for adults, as the pupil store of information is made available to adults and as they actually read the publications themselves.

The publication providing the most extensive coverage is the school newspaper, produced periodically during the school year. The school newspaper ranges in form from a small, mimeographed newsletter type of publication appearing irregularly, to the comparatively large paper printed in the school shop and resembling commercial dailies. Grinnell stated in 1937:

> No one, any more, will deny that a good school paper is as effective a means as can be found to interpret the school to the pupils. . . . The (school) newspaper that takes its rightful place in the school community explains school policy, recounts innovations in curriculum; marks changes of all sorts. . .; gives facts about new activities; honors pupils and teachers who achieve distinction; campaigns . . . for . . . a better school, and other ideals.[16]

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[15] Yeager, op. cit., p. 172.

[16] Grinnell, op. cit., pp. 168-169.

The student newspaper, according to Grinnell, would then be considerably more than the typical student humor effort so often encountered and would become a medium devoted not only to "news" but also an information medium for the school board and the general public. Student readers of the paper might then be provided with some understanding of the role of the school in society and presumably with some reasonably intelligent basis for future adult understanding. Much that Grinnell states as school newspaper purpose would need to be modified for use with papers produced by and for elementary school youngsters. The equivalent of the readership studies conducted by Schramm and the Advertising Research Foundation do not exist with respect to school newspaper readers, and most of the information on this area is sheer conjecture. In the absence of this research, it must be assumed that the major factor in determining readership of student newspapers is motivation, and that the paper may have a different total effect with regards to the student and the adult audience. Presumably, the same factors will not operate with both audiences, and the paper produced primarily for one group may have a limited appeal to the other group.

Students often produce School Annuals and special departmental or club newsletters and brochures. Objectives in publication vary widely from those concerned with efforts designed to "make a profit" for some group to the educational objectives of teachers. Some of the publications solicit paid advertising from business and professional concerns in order to finance partially or totally production and distribution costs, and others are subsidized by boards of education. The solicitation of paid advertising by student "pressure groups" is generally frowned upon, and a board of education subsidy solves this problem, if the venture involves sufficient educational advantages to merit this assistance. Again readership studies provide no evidence of "who reads what" with respect to these publications. Motivation would appear to determine whether or not the material is read, and this differs between student and adult groups.

Student handbooks, produced for the orientation of new students and as a source of information about the school for all students, are becoming relatively common in secondary schools. They often contain information on such items as school organizations, programs of studies, school songs and cheers, attendance regulations, directories, lunch room procedures, fire drills, use of the library,

and the history and traditions of the school. The student handbook, designed as an information and orientation item, is sometimes sold to students either to finance publication or as a source of revenue for the student council. This tends to defeat the purpose of the handbook, and the present trend is for this publication to be financed by sources other than the sale of the item. Reading problems for students tend to be those frequently encountered by teachers during formal class periods.

The assumption is often made that student authors produce material more likely to be read and understood by other students. For example, the following is from the student handbook for freshmen and new students at the Whitefish Bay High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was written by students:

> Whitefish Bay High students are expected to spend a certain amount of time on homework, although it is impossible to say just how much. If you or your parents find that you have too little (hmmmm) or too much homework, it would be a good idea to see the advisers. The amount of homework each student must do depends on his individual speed, ability and course of study. Often, the amount of time you must spend on your studies at home depends on the way you use your study halls. Most Bayites find it advantageous to really work during those study periods, thus having time to watch television or be with the gang after school.[17]

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[17] Cited in "Leads for the Secondary School Principal," newsletter for February, 1954, p. 2.

The above is cited as an example of communication material written by members of the audience that it is designed to reach, and by the nature of this process, tending to solve some of the problems added to this type of publication when these are produced by teachers or administrators. The students "eye-view" can be expected to be somewhat different from teachers and administrators, and if handbook content is described from the student position, logic would tend to substantiate the position that this is more likely to be read and understood by other students. A student production may be one produced by the "in-group" and hence more readily accepted. Contribution of the handbook to the information program is again primarily in terms of pupil information and understanding but has a secondary contribution as this information is received by adults either through reading the item itself or as students convey this to adults by means of conversation.

School "House-Organs"

Many schools publish some kind of a "house-organ" as an information medium for the school staff. The need for such a publication is based on a recognition of the contribution that the individual employee can make in his

personal contacts if informed on as much of the total school program as possible. The "house-organ" may be an administrative bulletin, an information bulletin, or a part of the function may be met by means of the supervisory bulletin. Reeder states:

> A school house-organ is a newspaper, magazine, bulletin, or similar publication which appears periodically and is designed to give the employees of a particular school system information calculated to improve their efficiency; it is another excellent agency for preparing employees in-service.[18]

The "house-organ," again adapted from business, obviously is most frequently found and most needed in larger school systems where face-to-face contacts between all staff members are virtually impossible. Frequency of publication varies from weekly to longer periods between appearances of the bulletin. Circulation is among the staff and the board of education, and there is a growing tendency to include the newspapers and other local community agencies on the mailing list. Some schools send this material to the homes of all of the pupils.

Topics included in the "house-organ" vary widely, and the choice of items depends largely on the local purposes of the medium and the time of the year. For example,

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[18] Ward G. Reeder, An Introduction to Public-School Relations, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1953), p. 123.

content of the first issue often includes topics related to the opening of school, and later issues devoted to other timely topics.

Sometimes the "house-organ" takes the place of the teacher's handbook, and at other times, supplements this handbook. Again content of the handbook varies widely, being determined by local conditions and local concepts of the function of the handbook. Sometimes the handbook is developed only for teachers, other times it is for both teaching and non-teaching members of the staff. Information on readership is limited, but Bracken cites a study made in the Chicago public schools which:

> led . . . to the conclusion that only about half the teachers gave even perfunctory notice to most bulletins from the principal's office--the only bulletin that claimed 100 percent readership was one describing changes in the salary schedule. There is reason to believe that bulletins in other cities fare little better.[19]

Administrators frequently feel that it is necessary to read portions of the handbook and bulletins at teachers' meetings. The handbook, whether designed for teaching, non-teaching, or all staff members, is another information medium designed to inform staff members on the subject of the school so that they might perform a portion of the

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[19] John M. Bracken, "Your Faculty, Too, Is a Public," School Executive, Vol. 72, #3, (November 1952), p. 80.

process of dissemination of school information with some modicum of competency. These media have utility for this purpose to the extent that they are produced in a manner which makes possible and encourages readership, and produces as a consequence of this, understanding.

Communication with Parents

It is possible to conceive of the parents of any school community as consisting of a group, providing that group membership is considered as being based only on child attendance at school and not in the sociological sense. The individual parent represents heterogeneous diversity as regards most every other social factor involved. The common factor, as regards this group of people, in school efforts at communication is the school child. The parent joins this group to which the school directs various efforts at communication when the youngster enrolls in public school, and they remain in this group as long as the youngster attends school. As a consequence of enrollment, the mother or father acquires a somewhat different basis for perception as regards the school, irrespective of the attitudes and information possessed prior to this process. During the period that the youngster is enrolled in school, this frame of reference

tends to be affected by the experiences of the child in school, and the experiences of the parent as a consequence of school directed efforts at communication. The media described previously assist in the development or change of this frame of references, providing that the process is carried out in terms and in words that are even comprehensible. The multiplicity of adult interests, experiences, and educational levels requires that the standardized efforts at communication be based on the factors common to all. Communication with specific individuals can be based on the factors involved with just this individual.

At the time the youngster first enrolls in school, the parent begins to acquire increased familiarity with the school, and this process continues during the entire school period. Attitudes existing at that time may be changed if parental school experiences tend to be predominantly favorable or unfavorable. They perceive school communication materials in a different fashion than prior to the time the youngster first enrolled, for the drive with respect to school information has changed. Consequently, the period just prior to and immediately after the first child is enrolled is crucial to the development of attitudes which determine the success of

future efforts at communication. The parent receives information and encounters efforts at communication from a wide variety of sources. Houseman[20] reports the results of a survey of the communities in southeastern Pennsylvania during which a sample of two hundred adults were interviewed. He found that citizens get their information primarily from: 1) students attending school; 2) newspapers; 3) teachers; and 4) other adults not connected with school. Only 2 per cent believed that the report card was a significant source of information. He summarized their opinions as follows:

> We as laymen receive our information largely in a hit or miss fashion; from students whose opinions, although often invalid, may be determined on the basis of personal likes and dislikes of classes, methods or subjects; from newspapers in which the preponderance of school news that reaches print centers around school athletic programs; from teachers, many of whom are overworked and underpaid; and from other adults in the community who have no official connection with the school, and no added sources of information other than active imagination.[21]

School efforts at communication can be improved considerably, providing the factors required for success are considered

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[20] Richard A. Houseman, "The People Speak," Bulletin, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 32, (February 1948), pp. 31-36.

[21] Ibid., p. 34.

in the development of these efforts. Some of these requirements are: language structure and terms must be comprehensible; the previous experience and present attitudes must be considered; the communication stimulus must be of sufficient intensity to be perceived and to receive attention in competition with other stimuli; the process must be extensive, for parental experience is such that few understand the nature of education today; and a wide variety of media must be developed to supplement those presently available. These criteria for communication tend to be generalized assumptions in the absence of valid data on the audience effects of communication. In terms of the variety of the audience that exists, the relatively standardized methods for communication now generally used would seem to be inadequate

Communication with Other Community Members

The media listed in this chapter are designed primarily for parents and have only secondary effects on non-parents, as parents communicate with them and repeat information they have received directly. Communication with parents begins with the youngster as the subject of communication, and since family ties tend to be strong, efforts at communication are likely to be perceived. This factor is

not present as regards nonparents, or parents whose youngsters are not of school age. The mass media tend to be relatively ineffective as regards a portion of the adult audience for communication, and specialized information efforts have not been developed by the public schools to reach this audience. Specialized information efforts, planned to reach these groups, presumably may be effective, but until the audience effects research is performed, conjecture must provide the "guide lines." Materials may be submitted for publication by various means such as commercial "house-organs," labor papers, in fact, in the total variety of specialized publications available locally. Some of this is being done on a national basis, but much more can be done locally. Special bulletins, designed as information media for specific groups, can be developed locally, and the effectiveness of these efforts will be determined by the skill with which these are designed to reach these groups. The present situation tends to omit large portions of the adult population from the school communication process. These are the uninformed (as regards the school) irrespective of the nature of their attitudes, who lack even the basic rudiments of school information necessary to exercise their franchise as regards the local school system.

Propaganda and School Public Relations

Almost universal among writers on the subject of school public relations and either stated or assumed is the disapproval of the use of propaganda as a school public relations device or procedure. The popular conception of the term "propagandize" refers to persuasion by means of "tricks" and devices which render the individual virtually helpless. This popular definition is commonly found in school public relations materials, and Moehlman apparently used this means when he said:

> Propaganda, even when good, is such a dangerous instrument that it should at no time be consciously employed by the public schools.[22]

The student of propaganda would employ a somewhat different definition of the term, avoiding this semantic problem with its judgment overtones by using the older definition. This word is derived from the Latin meaning "to sow" or "to propagate."[23] Doob defines propaganda as:

> the attempt to affect the personalities and to control the behavior of individuals toward ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time.[24]

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[22] Moehlman, op. cit., p. 59.

[23] Doob, op. cit., p. 232.

[24] Ibid., p. 240.

Doob would attach judgment to the process by considering propaganda as concerned with unscientific or ends of doubtful value and education to be concerned with knowledge or skills having scientific or survival value in a society. Whether or not a particular item would be considered to be propaganda would then depend upon the goals or objectives of the process with little regard for the process used to achieve these ends. Not all authors would accept the distinction made by Doob. Lee states:

> Propaganda is the use of symbols to forward or oppose something with a public.[25]

Irrespective of the definition accepted, the concept involves the use of communication means to persuade people to take a particular action. One might well ask whether this is not also school public relations?

Whether the school public relations process be considered education or propaganda, it is not difficult to find instances advocating in the professional journals procedures, which, in their zeal to accomplish purposes considered desirable by the authors, consist of propaganda in the most undesirable sense. Adoption of these processes cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered

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[25] Alfred McClung Lee, How to Understand Propaganda, (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1952), p. 18.

education, for they involve the suspension of the judgment process, and the acceptance of preconceived decisions. The end then determines the means, and one could conclude from much of the literature that the only things impeding the complete acceptance of the particular view espoused are the limits placed by the short comings of certain techniques of persuasion (or publications devices), for example, McAbeer states:

> . . . public relations in its best sense consists not in telling people what has happened, but in preparing them for future events. It conditions the adult mind. It paves the way for coming requests for funds, for buildings and improvements; and it can almost guarantee the desired result. . . . Let's have a public relations program, professionally directed, comparable to those of business and some professional associations, for example.[26]

Comment seems hardly necessary, but the above would produce, if successful, an assortment of automatons unable to resist educator's requests irrespective of the nature or wisdom of these requests.

The above is not an isolated instance, for if practitioners are not urged in similar general terms, they are intrigued and tempted by the procedures described. Thus Harrington describes a successful bonding campaign:

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[26] Frederick A. McAbeer, "Deliberate School Public Relations," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 34, (February 1953), p. 170.

> Stress was placed on providing a "decent" education to the boys and girls of the community; most taxpayers, especially if they don't have children, will accept this approach while they will violently oppose attempts to furnish the "best" educational facilities.[27]

> . . . were careful to talk about the needs of the school children in Los Angeles, not the needs of the schools themselves. This may seem like a minor point, but public-wise, it isn't. Opponents have more trouble refusing youngsters in the community than they do the board of education, principals, or teachers.[28]

These kinds of suggestions for operation lend some credence to Hayakawa's definition:

> public relations counsels who are simply highly paid craftsmen in the art of manipulating and reshaping our semantic environment in ways favorable to their clients.[29]

This kind of activity is hardly compatible with the frequent reference of school people to the application and practice of democratic procedures and that the school is an agent of democracy. Procedures must be developed which tend to solve these problems, and which do not create at the same time a situation whereby school people advocate democracy and practice persuasive techniques tending to be highly questionable.

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[27] J. R. Harrington, "Bond Issue Pays Off in Better Public Relations," Nations Schools, Vol. 52, (October 1953), p. 61.

[28] Ibid., p. 63.

[29] Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 31

The problem involves a moral dimension, which while not of major concern here constitutes a public relations problem remaining to be solved for the public schools. The problem has to do with continuous acceptance by school public relations persons of new communications devices as they are developed without an analysis of their total possible effects. In other words, the sole criterion used to determine whether or not they are added to the school public relations practitioners skills cannot be merely whether these new skills "work." The dimensions of this problem will tend to increase as additional "tricks for the bag" are discovered and made available. The difficulties of communication are such that it is doubtful that the audience may become a "captive audience" totally dependent for opinions on the persuader, but anything even remotely resembling this position must be avoided by the schools. Merton states on this point:

> The practitioner in propaganda is at once confronted by a dilemma; he must either forgo the use of certain techniques of persuasion which will help him obtain the immediate end in-view or violate prevailing moral codes. . . . The pressure of the immediate objective tends to push him toward the first of these alternatives. For when effective mass persuasion is sought, and when "effectiveness" is measured solely by the number of people who can be brought to the desired action or the desired frame of

> mind, then the choice of techniques of persuasion will be governed by a narrowly technical and amoral criterion. And this criterion exacts a price of the prevailing morality, for it expresses a manipulative attitude toward man and society. It inevitably pushes toward the use of whatsoever techniques "work." [30]

The latter situation is suggested by many of the school public relations "experts," (if expertness can be assumed by the fact of publication), yet consciousness of the moral factor is not evident from the nature of the discussion. Zeal for accomplishment must not allow this situation to become prevalent.

Summary

School public relations depends to a large extent on the use of mass media for communication as a part of the information program. There are, however, other media which have been developed for school use, and most of these tend to be relatively standardized, since they are widely used and have existed for some considerable period of time. Examination of these, however, is limited by the absence of audience effects research, and most of the determination of effectiveness is based on conjecture.

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[30] Robert K. Merton, Mass Persuasion, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 185.

Virtually universal in the public schools of the United States is some kind of a report to parents. In many cases these tend to consist of letter symbols indicating competitive standing in various academic achievement areas. Often these are supplemented by check-list types of indication of pupil status in areas other than academic. One of the major problems in the use of reporting procedures is that involved in the fact that parental experiences occurred in schools very different than those of today. The current tendency is toward the development of a type of report which provides some indication of the pupil's growth and development, with less emphasis on competitive academic understanding.

Often the formal report is supplemented with letters or various types of brochures. The letter is usually devoted to explaining the nature of pupil experiences and the way in which the individual concerned reacts to these experiences. The effectiveness of the letter and the narrative report card are largely determined by the skill, tact and understanding possessed by the teacher as she develops these.

The occasion for the pupil report is also an opportunity for the school to provide information on a wide variety of topics, and these supplemental efforts tend to be

perceived for the report itself arouses interest. These efforts may provide information on a wide variety of school subjects, providing the material is handled skillfully.

Conferences with parents have been used with varying degrees of success to supplement or take the place of the formal report. Many teachers feel that the report alone is insufficient and that the conference is a much more effective means for communication. The conference, however, requires considerable teacher skill in handling the human relations problems involved to be a success.

The report to parents may be a positive or a negative contribution to the total information program. The determination of the direction of this contribution rests largely with the teacher and her skill in reporting to parents. The development of enthusiastic, friendly patrons of the school may also produce secondary benefits to the information program, as these persons "talk school" with other members of the adult information audience who do not necessarily receive reports of pupil progress in school.

Various kinds of bulletins and messages have been developed for parents. The subjects of these vary widely, but most are concerned with various aspects of the school

and the school program. Effectiveness of these tends to be determined somewhat by the way in which they are produced and distributed. Many are concerned with the way in which the material is produced and consist of "tricks of the trade." Using these tends to increase the effectiveness of the effort. Subjects of the bulletins may be devoted to any area of the school program that is not well understood such as the teaching of reading, handwriting, arithmetical skills, et al.

Special information efforts at the time the youngster first enrolls in school tend to be relatively effective, since the parental drive for perception is different at this time. The National School Public Relations Association with other agencies has developed a bulletin for use with parents at this time that is well done, except for errors in sentence length and word choice.

Student publications may consist of newspapers, school annuals, student handbooks, or other media and are designed to inform students on a wide variety of topics as regards the school. Readership studies are lacking as to effectiveness, but there is a well developed tendency to have these materials produced by students. These media may provide information on a wide variety of school topics and may contribute to effectively informed students. It

would seem unlikely that a medium designed primarily for student reading would be very effective as a parent information medium other than incidental parent reading. Well informed students, however, may well be an effective information medium, but any statements on this subject tend to be pure conjecture.

Many schools produce some kind of a "house-organ" as an information medium for the school staff. This may be an administrative bulletin, an information bulletin, or a supervisory bulletin and is most often found in large school systems. The bulletin is designed to provide the staff with the information necessary so that they can discuss the school and its problems with some modicum of intelligence. Very often schools also provide a "handbook" for the staff, and this is another information medium. The effectiveness of this depends, of course, on whether or not the handbook is read by the staff, and one of the means of improving this portion of the program is concerned with efforts at improving the chances that the handbook is read.

Communication with parents involves the use of the factors common to the total because they do not constitute a social group but represent a vast variety of heterogeneity. The factor common to all is the child in attendance at

school. This provides the school with a basis for communication, and the future direction of this communication is determined by the kind of attitudes developed on the subject of the school as a consequence of child attendance. The media available and the skill with which they are used may make this a process which encourages the development of positive attitudes toward the school or may develop strong negative attitudes, providing it is conducted in language which is even comprehensible.

The fact of pupil enrollment tends to increase the total area of knowledge that the parent has about the school. School efforts at communication may succeed, providing that the factors involved are considered in this effort. The direction and the success of future efforts at communication takes place in terms of the relative success of past efforts and the knowledge and attitudes involved.

Most of the relatively specific media for communication have been developed for use with parents. Non-parents tend to receive most of their information from either the mass media or from secondary sources as they discuss school and school affairs with parents and other members of the community. The school has not developed a system

of communication with non-parents that is as effective as that developed for parents. Much remains to be done in this area.

Much of the material in print advocates techniques and procedures which tend to be considered "propaganda" by students of the subject, irrespective of the moral indignation aroused by the appellation of the term when applied to practitioners of school public relations. Yet much that is recommended consists of means which involve the suspension of judgment, the arousal of emotions, and the tendency for the development of a relatively helpless public able only to respond to stimuli produced by public relations directors. This kind of a process cannot be considered desirable and tends to obscure and impede rather than facilitate communication.

The adoption of any procedure which "works" in fact pressure for persuasion applied to school public relations as a communication process, involves the use of propaganda in its worst sense. This places the area in something of a dilemma, for democracy cannot operate under these conditions. The process must take place in terms of certain moral criteria, for the cause of public education cannot be promoted by procedures which tend to negate the values of democracy so highly prized by this society.

CHAPTER VII

FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION AND SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communication efforts, as involved in school public relations, produced in the mass media available and supplemented by various specialized information means developed by schools for this purpose, fail to reach portions of the school public and reaches other portions with limited effectiveness. Some of this failure can be attributed to the fact that the processes mentioned involve the use of relatively formal and somewhat inflexible media for communication, which tends to be selected for perception as this is congenial with information and attitudes already possessed by the receiver of communication. Increasing the tempo and intensity of the information effort tends to affect mostly those persons already favorably inclined toward the subject of communication and fails to be perceived by those unfavorably inclined. Hence, efforts designed to improve communication as involved in school public relations, and which are concentrated solely on the improvement of the media used, arrive at a point where further improvement merely increases the

frequency of contact with those already favorable. The unfriendly are then given more frequent opportunities to reject or to fail to select for perception this increasing flow of material, and the original situation remains relatively unaffected by the increase in communication efforts.

This would indicate a need, if it is deemed desirable to reach the group which is relatively unaffected by formal efforts at communication, to develop procedures specifically designed for areas where other attempts fail. The mere "letting the facts speak for themselves" fails to reach some groups, and rational considerations need to be supplemented by other procedures. Monopoly propaganda, or propaganda which exists in the absence of any counter-propaganda,[1] might conceivably succeed in reaching this group. However, this kind of a situation is rarely found outside of a totalitarian society. Examples of this were to be found in Hitler Germany and presumably in other countries where the government has complete control of all of the formal media of communication. This kind of a situation rarely exists in the United States and

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[1] Joseph T. Klapper, "Mass Media and the Engineering of Consent," The American Scholar, Vol. 17, #4, (Autumn, 1948), p. 426.

then only with respect to the handling of topics concerned with universal mores. Some occasions occur in the United States that involve monopoly propaganda such as Kate Smith's marathon war bond drive,[2] and the continuous reaffirmation of existing mores by the mass media.[3] A propaganda campaign with respect to the value of universal free education in our society could conceivably involve monopoly propaganda, for this is a part of our ethic. This, however, is not the situation with respect to most of the school public relations efforts.

A significant portion of the program involves the continuous production of information about specific portions of education and the operation of schools, with the expectation that this will facilitate judgment and lead to more intelligent exercise of the franchise. Klapper states:

> The successes of American mass media in their engineering of consent begin to take on a distinctly homogeneous character, and the limitations of the engineering began to come clear. Functioning in a democracy and under commercial control, the media are exquisitely fitted to turn the status quo into a social law. They have as yet revealed no power to work impressive change.[4]

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[2] Merton, op. cit., passim.

[3] Klapper, op. cit., p. 427.

[4] Ibid., p. 427.

The confusion of the possible total effects attained by dependence on mass media for the information function limits drastically the possible effectiveness of the information effort as a portion of school public relations efforts at communication.

The development of specific materials designed for individuals or specific groups tends to be limited in effectiveness by the "self selection" for perception process. Klapper states:

> The processes of self-selection . . . are also operative in regard to material which espouses a given view. Numerous researches . . . indicate that by and large people perceive only what they wish to perceive, that they read or listen to only such material as espouses or can be misinterpreted to espouse their existing views, and in general use controversial material to reinforce the opinions they already possess.
>
> That persons will deliberately or unconsciously avoid material which they know questions their existing opinions has been so clearly demonstrated as to be now axiomatic in the literature on communication.[5]

Again an increase in the frequency of production and scope of public relations materials tends to increase frequency of contact with those already most favorably disposed and to be either ignored or recast by these unfavorably disposed. The effectiveness of various information efforts tends to

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[5] Klapper, op. cit., Chapter IV, p. 29.

increase as these are planned in terms of the present state of information possessed by the group involved and "tailor made" for those groups as regards their educational, occupational levels and attitudes.

This does not exhaust the possibilities for school public relations efforts, however, for procedures are available which supplement both the mass media and the different special communication efforts presently used. Different kinds of face-to-face discourse are now used by school personnel but not always with a definite information procedure in mind. Specific adaptations of this, as a deliberate part of the information program, would seem to give much promise as a school public relations technique. Klapper states:

> That face-to-face discourse is a far more effectual instrument of pedagogy and persuasion than any impersonal medium is the heavy consensus of opinion among social scientists and public opinion experts. The unique advantages attributed to this mode of communication derive directly from the fact of inter-personal relationship and are therefore likely to be the stronger as the situation is more individual, the less as the situation becomes formal or involves a large audience.[6]

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[6] Ibid., Chapter II, p. 24.

The relative effectiveness of face-to-face discourse has been recognized for some time as a communications device supplementing the report card in working with parents.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

The parent-teacher conference, as a supplement to the report card, was mentioned in Chapter VI, and the fact that teachers agree that the report card alone is not an entirely satisfactory communication means was cited. The process of face-to-face discourse, with the child the primary subject, has important connotations as an information medium for school public relations. The conference itself can be flexible with discussion topics centered around the child and his adjustment to school. The process need not end there for this occasion is a most logical time for a discussion of various information items as these are involved in school public relations. The possibilities are limited, however, if this is merely incidental effort and not a planned part of the public relations program. This planning would involve the inclusion of the parent-teacher conference as a part of an over-all information program, and this situation be adapted by the teacher on the basis of her knowledge of the parents, their relative stage of information, and

attitudes on the topics of the conference. Yates expressed his view of parent-teacher conferences:

> Each elementary teacher scheduled at least two conferences of twenty to thirty minutes with one or both parents each year and found occasion to meet with parents two or three additional times per year. . . . The teachers and parents were enthusiastic about the closer relationship made possible by the series of contacts, each with the other. In the majority of cases parents have felt that they learned much more about their children's work from the conferences than from the traditional report card. In the conferences teachers have been able to give parents information on personality development and social growth that could not be effectively described on a report card.[7]

Parent-teacher conferences may represent face-to-face discourse at its best with the subject of the conference the child and usually operating with a relatively high degree of parental motivation for perception. Certain obvious factors are involved in a successful conference, as these have been developed as an interview process. These are concerned with the preparation for the conference, the establishment of rapport, the conduct of the conference, and the closing of the conference.[8] An unhappy parental

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[7] Benton Yates, "School and Community Cooperation Through a Visiting Teacher Service," in Practical Applications of Democratic Administration, Clyde M. Campbell, editor, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), p. 226.

[8] Shirley A. Hamrin and Clifford E. Erickson, Guidance in the Secondary School, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1949), p. 304.

experience as a result of a parent-teacher conference obviously has many unfortunate overtones for school public relations, for an attitude may be developed as a consequence of an unsuccessful or unpleasant conference which makes future efforts at communication extremely difficult.

Communication as a process involving an increase in the area of joint understanding among the participants takes place to the extent that differences in language usage, attitudes, frames of reference, and experiential background are understood. To the extent that this process involves communication between a person relatively expert in the process of teaching and lay members of the general public, the parent-teacher conference is made relatively difficult. The parent attending the conference may come from any stratum of the local society and represent any of the occupational interest groups which exist locally. Communication must be structured in these terms, which may vary widely between the different conferences held with the degree of variation related to the relative homogeneity or heterogeneity represented by the particular parents of the pupils that the teacher has in her room. Teacher experiences may be such that she has difficulty in finding the "common denominator" necessary to conduct a successful conference. In contrast to the wide range of parental

"types" involved, teachers represent a relatively homogeneous social group. They tend to be females, often young, with a lower marriage ratio than in the general population, white, from middle or upper lower class backgrounds, Protestant in religion, and conservative.[9] This relatively homogeneous (as regards teachers) but limited background may make it difficult to understand and communicate with all of the parents involved with the public schools. Skillful management of the conference would seem to require that teachers possess some understanding of not only the skills required for a successful conference but also of parent backgrounds and the possible limitations placed on the successful outcome by their own background. While not of primary concern here, this problem in communication based on different social conditions implies an administrative responsibility for the provision of those experiences in the in-service training program which will enable teachers to successfully conduct the parent-teacher conference.

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[9] Lloyd Allen Cook and Elaine F. Cook, A Sociological Approach to Education, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1950), pp. 435-436.

The Speakers Bureau and School Public Relations

As a type of face-to-face discourse, numerous authorities have recommended the organization of a speakers bureau, composed of teacher staff members interested in and capable of speaking to groups on various topics on request. Gleason cites four advantages of the speakers bureau:

> 1. It can provide continuous and direct approach to community organizations assisting the schools, thereby to establish and foster a closer relationship with the leaders and constituencies of every group.
> 2. It makes possible presentation of school information in terms of the individual needs and interests of any given group. A business group may require an economic interpretation of the services of the education program, while a parent-teacher group may desire a discussion from the viewpoint of family living.
> 3. It makes possible the personal touch in school interpretation. In publications, and articles, education usually is presented in somewhat formal dress, whereas in a talk education can more readily be presented in the everyday clothes of office, shop, and home.
> 4. It enables the schools to interpret their activities in terms of their own aims and objectives and methods.[10]

The speakers bureau provides an opportunity to "tailor make" a performance to the nature of and the information needs

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[10] Walter Gleason, "Speaking of School," in Today's Techniques, Arthur H. Rice, editor, First Yearbook, School Public Relations Association, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ann Arbor Press, 1943), p. 143.

of different audiences. The speakers bureau, where the performer is provided with or possesses some of the various visual devices available as movies, film strips, or slides, would appear to be a desirable process for the presentation of information. When presented as a lecture prior to the film, during the film, after the film, or coupled with audience participation of some form, this was found to be a relatively effective means for the presentation of information by Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield.[11]

The selection of teacher speakers with relatively high prestige tends to increase the acceptability of the material presented. When persons with relatively high local prestige serve as members of the speakers bureau, the prestige of the individual is transferred to the subject of the presentation. Klapper states:

> The proposition that persons are more susceptible to persuasion as they attach more prestige to the persuader is perhaps beyond the need of demonstration.[12]

When this is combined with individuals who have been accorded mention in some of the mass media available locally, this prestige factor is increased. Lazarsfeld and Merton state:

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[11] Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, op. cit., pp. 141-146 and 228-246.

[12] Klapper, op. cit., Chapter IV, p. 47.

> The mass media bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals and groups by legitimizing their status. Recognition by the press or radio or magazines or newsreels testifies that one has arrived, that one is important enough to have been singled out from the large anonymous masses, that one's behavior and opinions are significant enough to require public notice.[13]

If the use of a speaker with high prestige tends to encourage audiences to more readily accept the material presented, it would seem that the reverse is also true and that speakers with low prestige tend to find audience acceptance difficult or at a low level. This factor then tends to determine the relative effectiveness of the speakers bureau as a public relations medium, in addition to the obvious factors involved in speaking skill and presentation.

The contribution of the speakers bureau is limited largely to that of an information function, to the communication of information designed to enlarge a possible area of understanding as a consequence of this expanded area of information. Rarely will this succeed in changing attitudes, unless those involved are relatively weak, and

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[13] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," in The Communication of Ideas, edited by Lyman Bryson, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 101.

the logic and information forming the basis of the talk will not affect strongly held attitudes.[14] Perhaps the greatest limiting factor affecting the utility of the speakers bureau is that the process of self-selection operates during the course of the speaking event as audience attention is given or withheld, but also operates prior to the event as this determines the nature of the audience itself. Sufficient motivation must exist to stimulate each individual to attend the event, and the uninterested, the unfriendly, and the uninformed will tend to "stay away in droves." The effectiveness of the performers then is limited as a face-to-face contact to those persons in attendance, and the pre-existing motivation of those persons acts as a selective "screen" to determine the nature of the audience reached. Secondary information effects are, of course, produced, as an unusually good or bad presentation arouses discussion after the event with individuals not in attendance. These secondary effects and the way in which they operate tend to be somewhat tenuous, and discussion of them is sheer speculation in the absence of studies and data.

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[14] See Chapter III, pp. 91-95.

"Opinion Leaders" and School Public Relations

The gregarious nature of the individuals comprising the school community is such that they seek out other persons and as a consequence of this contact, discuss various topics of mutual interest. This process goes on continuously, involving both planned and incidental subjects for conversation. The topic of conversation may be concerned with various public issues, and presumably the process assists the individual to "make up his mind." The factors involved in this decision are many, but conversation with friends and acquaintances influences this process. These conversations involve varying degrees of influence on the participants with some persons possessing a relatively high degree of influence, either by virtue of their prestige position as regards the opinion process, or because of their interest and sense of involvement in the campaign. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet state:

> Common observation and many community studies show that in every area and for every public issue there are certain people who are most concerned about the issue as well as most articulate about it. We call them the "opinion leaders."
>
> The opinion leaders of a community could best be identified and studied by asking people to whom they turn for advice on the issue at hand and then investigating the interaction between the advisors and the advisees.[15]

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[15] Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, op. cit., p. 49.

They found that 21 per cent of the group comprising the panel observed had either tried to convince others on the subject of the election studied or had been asked for advice on this topic. The opinion leaders were not necessarily identical with the persons in the community who were socially prominent, wealthy, or civic leaders, and were found in all occupational groups.[16] This would indicate the existence in a community of a group of people possessing more than a one to one influence as regards the subject of an issue and relatively important as regards any information program efforts.

The selective nature of the effectiveness of the mass media and the specific information efforts has been noted.[17] The effects of these information efforts are more than a mass effect, for the "opinion leaders" role must be considered in any assessment of the total effect of this process. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet found that:

> ["Opinion leaders"] reported that the formal media were more effective as sources of influence than personal relationships. This suggests that ideas often flow <u>from</u> radio and print <u>to</u> the opinion leaders and <u>from</u> them to the less active sections of the population.

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[16] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[17] See Chapter V and VI.

> Occasionally, the more articulate people even pass on an article or point out the importance of a radio speech. Repeatedly, changers referred to reading or listening done under some personal influence.[18]

This process tends to add to the total effect of the mass media, as the "opinion leaders" use the mass media as an information source and further make use of the information received in personal persuasion among the persons comprising their own circle of influence.

Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, in a report of a study of a political campaign, described the role of opinion leaders. These individuals, found in most communities, exercise an influence in a variety of ways, which presumably would also include areas of concern to school public relations programs. This area of communication based on the personal relationships of the "opinion leaders" has not been understood nor applied to the area of school public relations. The "opinion leaders" tend to be effective because of their method of operation. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet describe these relations and mode of operation as follows:[19]

> 1. Non-purposiveness of Personal Contacts: The weight of personal contacts upon opinion lies. . . in their greater casualness and non-

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[18] Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, op. cit., p. 151.

[19] Ibid., adapted from pp. 152-157.

> purposiveness in political matters. . . . Personal influence is more pervasive and less self-selective than the formal media. . . .
>
> 2. Flexibility When Countering Resistance: . . . personal contact still has one great advantage compared with other media; the face-to-face contact can counter and dislodge such resistance, for it is much more flexible.
>
> 3. Rewards of Compliance: When someone yields to a personal influence in making a vote decision, the reward is immediate and personal. This is not the case in yielding to an argument via print or radio. . . a neighbor. . . can "punish" one immediately for being unimpressed or unyielding.
>
> 4. Trust in an Intimate Source: More people put reliance upon their personal contacts to help them pick out the arguments which are relevant for their own good in political affairs than they do in the more remote and impersonal newspaper and radio.
>
> 5. Persuasion Without Conviction: . . . personal contacts can get a voter to the polls without affecting at all his comprehension of the issues of the election--something the formal media can rarely do. The newspaper or magazine or radio must first be effective in changing attitudes related to the action.

This study was concerned with a political campaign, but the role of "opinion leaders" would appear to have validity in areas other than just politics, for the circle of influence once established would tend to operate in other areas of opinion. Opinion and information are involved in school public relations in many ways, including such topics as finance, re-districting, and bonding and building construction issues. The identification and utilization of opinion leaders would seem to be a most valuable contribution to school public relations, for these persons could provide

school people with some indication of the state of local information and attitudes on the subject at hand. The information program could be planned in terms of the knowledge gleaned from these persons. Once identified, these persons could be provided with specific information about the schools on subjects of information campaigns to the end that this is spread by means of their influence. Further, a survey of the information and attitudes possessed by the "opinion leaders" could provide some indication of the amount and kind of information that it was desirable to channel to the mass media on school topics.

The major problem in the utilization of opinion leaders as a part of a school public relations information program is that which is concerned with their identification. Some of the understandings necessary for this process are available. Kimball[20] analyzed a failure to achieve a township zoning regulation by means of a local election because of a failure to identify "opinion leaders" and a failure to consider the existing social organization or systems of relationships, as those are involved in communication. He states:

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[20] Solen T. Kimball, "A Case Study in Township Zoning," Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station Quarterly Bulletin, Vol. 28 #4, (May 1946), pp. 253-269.

> Within the township are a number of men who are called "leaders." These individuals play no active role in the formal affairs of the township, but they are looked up to as men with sound ideas and good advice. . . . The failure to win the support of these "leaders" was disastrous. . . the relationship of the leaders to others was the only one which could have played a decisive role and this one was never utilized.[21]

Miller and Beegle[22] describe a process for studying a neighborhood and for the identification of local leaders in the area by asking people, "In your opinion, who are the individuals and families in this neighborhood that have become the leaders, and have been accepted as such by the folks in the neighborhood?"[23] When the choices of all members of the area are plotted, certain individuals tend to be identified more often than others, and these persons of more than ordinary influence are known as "opinion leaders."[24] Among others Beegle and Loomis

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[21] Ibid., p. 263.

[22] Paul A. Miller and J. Allan Beegle, "The Farm People of Livingston County, Michigan," Michigan State College Extension Service, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, East Lansing, Michigan, 1947, 40 pp.

[23] Ibid., p. 35.

[24] J. Allan Beegle and C. P. Loomis, "The Social Context of Educational Leadership," in Practical Applications of Democratic Administration, Clyde M. Campbell, Editor, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), pp. 56-79.

describe this process in Charles County, Maryland, and in the hamlet of Cohootah in Livingston County, Michigan, as this is concerned with the identification of leadership choices. Moreno[25] describes the process of selection and rejection of individuals by other members of the group among school children. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet[26] identified "opinion leaders" in the Erie County, Ohio, study in 1940. Merton[27] describes a process of determining the areas of personal influence in a community for the research department of a national news magazine. These techniques have not been adapted for the determination of "opinion leaders" for school public relations purposes with the exception cited immediately below perhaps because of the arduous, time-consuming nature of the process.

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[25] J. L. Moreno, "Changes in Sex Groupings of School Children," in Readings in Social Psychology, Theodore M. Newcomb and Eugene L. Hartley, Editors, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1947), pp. 383-387.

[26] Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, op. cit., p. 49.

[27] Robert K. Merton, "Patterns of Influence: A Study of Interpersonal Influence and of Communications Behavior in a Local Community," in Communications Research, 1948-1949, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, Editors, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1949), pp. 180-219.

Jenson[28] attempted to develop an adaptation of this process for use in school district reorganization in Wisconsin. He developed an opinionaire and a procedure for locating opinion leaders in school districts to assess the present state of opinion with regard to school district changes. He found in developing the instrument that categories directed at financial problems and issues appeared to be the most discriminatory and evolved a 28 item instrument to be used as a basis for a personal interview with opinion leaders. He made a basic assumption that one quick means for discovering opinion leaders in a community would be to have them identified by key persons in the community, who know the people and the general social composition of the community. He sought information on opinion leaders by contacting government officials, leading bankers, school officials, members of the clergy, youth and service group executives, and leading industrialists. This basic assumption was not tested by actually determining the validity of the opinions of the individuals cited above as to the identification of actual opinion leaders. He states on this subject:

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[28] Theodore J. Jenson, "Identification and Utilization of Opinion Leaders in School District Reorganization," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1952), 257 numb. leaves.

> In contrast to methods for identifying opinion leaders which made it necessary to go to the people with questions about whom they believe to be their opinion leaders and from whom they seek advice on controversial community problems, the technique described here sought out opinion leaders by obtaining clues to their identity from key citizens of the community.[29]

When the opinion leaders were identified, they were interviewed to obtain their opinions and reactions to controversial issues and concerns. The County School Committee then planned an information program based on the attitudes and knowledge indicated by the opinion leaders. Opinion leaders also aided in the identification of opposition groups, and the County School Committee planned to inform and work with these opposition groups.

This same study provided the County School Committee with considerable information on rural-urban differences in understanding, attitudes and state of information. Some of the misunderstandings and areas of ignorance of the problem differed in the various areas involved, and the publicity program itself was understood with differing rates in different areas. The program involved group meetings and Jenson states:

> This investigation indicated that group discussion and social interaction has an effect of pulling extremists toward middle-ground positions . . . let the people discuss

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[29] Ibid., p. 100.

> problems, and let the interaction of the group take care of the extremists. The extremist will not find it easy to become angry at the large majority of a discussion group whereas he may find it easy to become angry at the leader who disagrees with him.[30]

This process of identification of opinion leaders, as a means of assessing the state of information and attitudes and a measure of the effectiveness of the information program, would seem a valid contribution to the school public relations problem providing the method of identification is valid. No information on this portion of this study is currently available, but it is possible that the individuals contacted for this identification might tend to identify visible leaders occupying status positions in the community. Merton states on this point:

> Some individuals of high status apparently wield little interpersonal influence, and some of low status have considerable influence.[31]

The occupation of high status positions or visible leadership positions, and opinion leadership are not necessarily synonymous.

This confusion of potency of opinion position with visible status position is not at all unusual in school public relations literature. There may be a high positive

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[30] Ibid., p. 251.

[31] Merton, op. cit., p. 183.

correlation to this relationship, but there may also be a high negative correlation existing. Borst describes a process which may or may not be valid:

> During the last decade, school administrators the country over have learned to talk glibly about the importance of public relations. . . . One important concept in the field of commercial selling has, however, been rather consistently ignored by those who direct school public relations programs--the concept of "key sales." . . . one of the best ways to develop an understanding of and interest in the school's objectives is to make certain that the more influential people know the facts. This suggestion is not put forward as a substitute for conventional public relations program aimed at reaching the mass of the people. . . . [32]

He describes a tour arranged by school officials to which were invited members of the County Board of Education, a Farm Bureau representative, the editor of the local paper, and other persons occupying similar local positions, and this group made a conducted tour of schools in session in the area. The individuals were selected on the basis of the visibility of their influence positions, and that this is an inadequate criterion has been indicated earlier. Had membership in the group been based on the degree to which these individuals represented "opinion leaders," the tour might have been more successful. This is not to indicate that the tour was unsuccessful, but that the

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[32] R. L. Borst, "Don't Ignore 'Private' Public Relations," School Executive, Vol. 72, (November 1952), p. 72.

effectiveness of procedures such as this as information devices is determined by the extent to which the individuals participating represent "opinion leaders."

Local Participation and School Public Relations

Increasingly, educators are becoming convinced that local citizen participation in the development of various areas of school policy, in the provision of assistance with some areas of school operation, and the development of lay advisory groups for problem solving and for local analysis is not only advisable from the school public relations standpoint but is also sound democratic administration, based on democratic ideologies. This concept is not new, for John Dewey said in 1916:

> A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms, and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life, is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder.[33]

This is not, however, a study of the philosophical concepts involved but concerned with the communication aspects of

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[33] John Dewey, Democracy and Education, (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1916), p. 115.

school public relations. It has already been noted that dependence solely on the mass media available and the development of specialized media for information purposes not only omits large portions of the school audience but also tends to be relatively ineffective in attitude change or even in being perceived by disinterested or unfavorably inclined persons. School public relations efforts to resolve this problem have sometimes resulted in rather strident efforts to "blanket" an area with media, ignoring all of the while, the basic problem involved. The efficacy of face-to-face discourse has already been noted, and participation by lay citizens in various areas of school operation is a form of face-to-face discourse and in addition consists often of study and learning procedures.

The growing tendency for the control of the mass media to be monopoly control of the sources of information and the development of "public relations skills" in the manipulation of ideas and people creates a problem in a democracy. The development of public opinion founded on free access to facts cannot take place in such an environment. The main stream of American propaganda has been commercial, designed to sell goods rather than ideas but the growing tendency to borrow these techniques for the sale of "ideas" has been of concern. Lasswell stated:

> The level of individual thought and observation may be high, and the competence of specialists upon intelligence may be exceptional; yet these factors are of little avail unless the collective methods of discussion favor the disciplined application of intelligence to public policy. Public opinion in the public interest is affected by some of the specific processes inseparably bound up with democracy, notably by the methods of public discussion.
>
> Democracy depends on talk. The methods of talk need to aid in the discovery of sound public policy. If the practice of discussion does not create a sense of achievement there is contempt for talk.[34]

This problem was noted by the School Public Relations Association:

> There is a growing conviction that the only way out of public education's "crisis" is through formation of citizens' groups on all levels to build public support for improved school systems. Although talked about in PR circles for many years and attempted in a few states and communities, little has been done to develop a comprehensive citizens' group approach to the problem.[35]

Citizens' groups have been inaugurated in different areas in the past with varying degrees of success, but often the criteria applied to determine success have not necessarily been those concerned with the ideology of democracy or

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[34] Harold D. Lasswell, Democracy Through Public Opinion, (Menascha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Co., Chi Omega Service Fund Study, 1941), p. 80.

[35] From Trends in School Public Relations newsletter for September, 1949, National School Public Relations Association, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., p. 1.

the efficacy of the communication process. Irrespective of the ideology involved, the creation of citizens' groups tends to approximate the earlier historical situation referred to in Chapter I wherein information on the subject of schools was not the problem it now is because of the frequency which face-to-face contacts provided for the exchange of information. As local participation is increased and provides the basis for an information sharing process, to that extent is the information problem solved, as this is involved in the use of mass and specific media as information procedures for these then become not the sole means for information.

Parent-Teacher Associations

Lay participation by citizens' groups as regards public school education is not new, for parent-teacher groups have existed for a long period of time as strictly local practice or on a national basis. Holbeck[36] found that parent-teacher associations began locally as early as 1855. The group was not always accepted by school administrators, however, and the information function of the organization limited by this view of the role of the organization. Waller stated in 1932:

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[36] Elmer S. Holbeck, "An Analysis of the Activities and Potentialities for the Achievement of the Parent-Teacher Association," Contributions to Education #601, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1934, pp. 3-19.

> Parent-teacher associations are both potential aids and potential trouble makers. We have instances from the experience of two superintendents in regard to the importance of providing good leadership and sufficiently interesting work for such organizations in order that they may be less disposed to interfere with those phases of public education which should be handled by the board and the executive officers.[37]

The individual skilled in working with Parent-Teacher Associations, as indicated by the view presented above, is one skilled in the provision of "busy work" which tends to keep these groups "out of trouble." This is not democratic idealism nor does it represent a very practical view of the potential information function of these groups. Much remains often to be done with respect to making many Parent-Teacher Associations effective, active and representative bodies. Ross states:

> The typical organization is often concerned with office-holding and red tape, or the members have some griping to do and feel that the PTA meeting is the best place to do it. There is little significant participation on the part of the parents. The general pattern of activity is to appoint a program committee which arranges a series of meetings designed to inform the parent what the schools are doing. These generally take the form of speakers, a short question period, and refreshments.[38]

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[37] J. F. Waller, "Outside Demands and Pressures on the Public Schools," Contributions to Education #542, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1932, p. 62.

[38] Donald H. Ross, Editor, "Administration for Adaptability," Metropolitan School Study Council, Teachers

Neither the vitalizing of the Parent-Teacher Association program nor the analysis of this is of concern here, except as this organization involves a potential for learning, discussion, and analysis of the operation of the school and contributes to citizen understanding. As this process is made effective and an "in-group" feeling is developed, the problems in promoting a "we" feeling facilitate the learning process as this is involved in and required for attitude change, and learning. This may become re-educative experience, as described by Lewin.[39]

Lay Advisory Groups

Acting as committees and councils for the assistance of public agencies, lay advisory groups are again not new practices. As groups organized for the specific purpose of assisting with the solution of school problems, they tend, however, to be relatively new. The American Association of School Administrators stated that in California only 10 per cent of the several hundred advisory committees found in 1949 had been in operation for ten years

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College, Columbia University, New York, 1951, Vol. 2, mimeographed, pp. 170-171.

[39] Lewin, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

or more, and 70 per cent had been organized for a period of less than five years.[40] Responsibility for the initiation of these groups may come from the local school board, from the local superintendent, or from agencies outside of formal school channels. Growth of citizens' advisory committees was given an important "boost" by the formation of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools under the chairmanship of Roy E. Larson, president of Time, Inc. The output of literature describing the operation and contributions to be made by these citizens' groups has been large during the past few years.

During the year 1953 there were some eight thousand citizens' committees in operation in the United States.[41] Activities of these groups extended to many areas, but many were concerned with school building and finance problems and working for solutions to relatively specific problems. Some of these groups are beginning to be concerned over areas which are more fundamental to education,

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[40] _____ "Lay Advisory Committees," American Association of School Administrators, National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1951, p. 6.

[41] Roy E. Larson, "Citizen Participation in 1953," School Executive, Vol. 73, #5, (January 1954), p. 52.

such as the role of the school in the community, or the relationship that should exist between general and special education. Roy Larson stated:

> As the citizen's approach to his schools grows broader and more profound, he must inform himself more and more about the philosophy and theory and practice of public education. There is obviously a vast difference between the problems faced by a group of citizens who are organized solely to get a bond issue passed, and the problems faced by a permanent group whose purpose is to discover an educational philosophy upon which the community can agree and then to build a strong school system which expresses this philosophy.[42]

This as a study and a learning process involves not only what takes place within the group itself, but as these individuals become more competent in the various areas under consideration, they become relatively potent educative influences within the community itself to the extent that the community accepts them in this role. Thus, the "in-group" is expanded, individual identification with the school is increased, and the sphere of face-to-face influence increased within the community. Total effectiveness is determined among other things by the number of individuals involved with this total increasing as the number of individuals increases, providing quality of participants and participation remains at a high level.

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[42] Ibid., p. 54.

The actual effectiveness of the group may be drastically reduced and in fact the effort "boomerang" if the group is appointed primarily as another technique for the manipulation of people to the end that they provide various types of goods and services for the schools, which educators cannot provide through normal finance channels.

Some success has been experienced with the operation of these groups when the problems of concern were either too large or too difficult for any single group to undertake. Some of these projects may involve community planning on a relatively large scale, such as the Community School Service Program sponsored by the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Michigan, and financed by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.[43] In each of the eight communities involved in this pilot project, the thesis was that the school was to serve as the focal point in a program of community self-improvement. Some of the projects involving largely local leadership included the following: 1) Rehabilitation of the County Library; 2) A Soil Conservation Campaign; 3) A Fire Prevention Campaign; 4) A County Park Project; 5) A Bridge and

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[43] Edgar L. Grim, "School and Community Development," in Practical Applications of Democratic Administration, Clyde M. Campbell, editor, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), pp. 115-136.

Entrance to the Village Project; 6) A Landscaping Project; 7) A Religious Survey; 8) An Adult Education Program; 9) A Crafts Cooperative; 10) A Quality Milk Program; 11) A Recreation Program; 12) A School Camp Program; 13) The Formation of an Artificial Breeders Association; 14) A School Curriculum Study Program; and 15) A Trade and Industry Survey.[44] While concerned not solely with educational problems, more than two hundred people were involved in the groups working on the problems listed above in one of the relatively small villages taking part in the project. Other projects concerned with relatively large areas often with economic and social implications have been reported.[45] Precedent has been established for the operation of lay community groups, and many of the skills and techniques involved have been discovered. Extended adaptations and application of these understandings to the communication process as this is involved in school public relations can be predicted with some measure of confidence, for much of the "pioneering" has been done.

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[44] Ibid., pp. 123-131.

[45] See for example: Richard W. Poston, Small Town Renaissance, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), 231 pp. or

Jean Ogden and Jess Ogden, Small Communities in Action, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), 244 pp.

Local Surveys and Study Procedures and School Public Relations

The study of and the accumulation of data about any given area may be conducted on an individual, informal basis, or may be an organized, systematic study. When organized and systematized, it may be called a survey, and this type of activity has been known and used for some time. Survey activities as involved in public education have been conducted at least since 1845 in the instructional field, but only since the 1920's has this activity been extended to include a study of the community itself.[46] Formerly, the survey was conducted by technicians employed for this purpose for a short period of time, who arrived on the scene, and after a whirlwind of activity, produced an exhaustive and highly technical report. After the report was submitted, the technician and his staff returned to their regular places of employment, and too often the report was relegated to the shelves as an object of curiosity which gathered thick layers of dust between infrequent, cursory examinations. Not all surveys, of course, received such treatment or lack of it, but many were of little value to the local

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[46] Moehlman, op. cit., p. 138.

community after completion. Perhaps because of these problems, the current trend is for the survey to be conducted largely by local people with only such technical assistance from the "outside" as cannot be secured locally. The survey process itself is one designed to produce technical accomplishment in a given area, but more than this, when performed by local people, it is a study and learning procedure.

Surveys are of many different types, as these are concerned with a wide variety of study procedures and subjects for study. Olsen has classified community surveys into five types, based on the subject of the survey:[47]

> 1. Community structure, according to local, regional, national, and international areas, and according to material, institutions, and psychological levels.
> 2. Community setting, according to its geography and its population.
> 3. Community processes, which include utilizing the environment.
> 4. Community time period--its historic past, contemporary living, and future outlook.
> 5. Community agencies, governmental, commercial, and private non-commercial.

Surveys may be initiated and/or sponsored by a variety of community agencies, but of concern here are those initiated

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[47] Edward G. Olsen, School and Community, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945), p. 172.

and sponsored by the school, as these are of concern to school public relations, and local participation, and often called "citizens surveys" to distinguish them from those performed by "outside experts."

Citizen participation in survey and study groups varies widely between individuals and between communities, as leadership available and individual competence varies. Campbell states some emerging principles or hypotheses of public participation:

> 1) Start where teachers, administrators, board members, and citizens are. Do not expect people to participate on levels they do not understand, and for which they have no preparation.
> 2) Work toward achieving public participation on a room, a school, a district, a state, and even on a national basis. This implies that teachers and principals, as well as superintendents are informed, competent, and responsible.[48]

Survey and study areas vary widely between communities, with the major differences related to the level and type of local problem areas and the competence level of the community. The relatively wide acceptance of the concept of citizen participation is beginning to provide some of the concepts necessary for the extension and continuance of these groups, as they extend the scope of their activities

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[48] Roald F. Campbell, "Public Participation Can Be More Constructive," Nations Schools, Vol. 51, #2, (February 1953), p. 60.

from the accomplishment of specific tasks to broader areas requiring continuity of effort. Citizens' groups are extending activities beyond those involved in financial problems to areas of activity requiring continuous and prolonged study. Some of this re-direction has been the result of conscious effort to provide for citizen participation as a means for increasing public understanding of the schools.

Numerous individuals have affirmed their belief that the most critical factor involved in the role of the school is that which is concerned with public understanding of what it is possible to accomplish by "good" schools. Vincent stated:

> Character of education is directly related to the attitude of the public toward its schools and their expectation of what the school can do. Expectation and attitude in turn reflect what the public knows about education and what part the public plays in the specific community in forming public school policy.[49]

As citizens' groups study their own area and school program, as this experience provides understandings of actual local practice as this is related to and compares with practices elsewhere, to that extent is the problem resolved of local understanding of what "good" schools are like. This

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[49] Vincent, op. cit., p. 16.

extensive first-hand study procedure, which takes place on an informal, face-to-face basis, provides a number of experiences which have values in terms of public understanding which extend beyond those experiences of the participants. These have to do largely with the influence that members of these groups have in the local community as individual foci of information. The so-called "attacks" on education have entirely different effects in communities where the level of local understanding is relatively high. This level of local understanding, however, is related to the characteristics of the local community.

The Legislature for the State of Michigan passed Act Number 225 during the 1949 session, which encourages units such as a county to study their educational program. This permissive state legislation encourages and makes possible local study of local conditions by local people. Thus, official state encouragement is provided for local resolution of local problems rather than the provision by a centralized governmental agency of these solutions. Official encouragement and guidance is provided by representatives of the State Department of Public Instruction and/or the colleges in the state, and study guides are available to assist in the definition of areas for

study and procedures for study.[50, 51, 52] The study areas suggested follow: 1) Prepare maps showing boundaries of political areas, school districts, and socio-economic boundaries. These provide information as to the location of children, pre-school, in-school, and out of school youngsters; present and future land use; employment areas; attendance areas; location of present and future school sites; and present and future school bus routes. 2) Personal data on pupils enrolled in school, pre-school and out of school youngsters. 3) Occupational status of youngsters after graduation or leaving school. 4) A definition of educational needs, in terms of buildings and programs. 5) Financial support, including all sources of income, showing previous history and future trends. 6) A community appraisal, involving analysis of the adequacies of the area as these are involved in desirable criteria for administrative units and attendance units. 7) Building and site survey showing present state, adequacy, and future needs. 8) Recommendations

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[50] _____ "Guide for Area Studies," Bulletin 1020, Department of Public Instruction, Lansing, Michigan, 1949, 12 pp.

[51] _____ "Area Study Suggestion Guide for Program and Curriculum Subcommittees," Department of Public

for approval, further discussion, and future action.[53] The procedures recommended for operation are such that a local citizens' study group cannot avoid completing the experience without a greatly enlarged understanding of the local educational situation and its comparative stage as regards other school systems.

Analysis of completed Area Study Reports does not provide any indication of the adequacy of the study process, but some of the reports do indicate that the groups must have given serious, studious thought to local problems. For example, the Grand Traverse Area Study Report states:

> WE HAVE SOME OF THE BEST SCHOOLS IN MICHIGAN
>
> Schools with good designs, . . . modern heating . . . careful plans for growth . . . pleasant rooms . . . office space . . . proper equipment for teachers. Not more than two grades per teacher, health services, lunch rooms or cafeteria, enough space, gymnasiums, libraries, good lighting, good curricula. And we found schools with none of these.

Instruction, Lansing, Michigan, 1952, 20 pp. mimeographed.

[52] _____ "Making an Area Study," School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, undated, 32 pp.

[53] Ibid, adapted from pp. 9-13.

WE ALSO HAVE SOME OF THE POOREST SCHOOLS IN MICHIGAN

> Many schools are overcrowded; old and ramshackle; poorly lighted; drab, unpleasant rooms; no all-weather playground; no lunchroom or cafeteria; no library; no gymnasium; have poorly paid teachers.[54]

The curriculum subcommittee conducted an opinion study of parents in the various districts of the county and then studied the programs offered in the schools. They found that less than one third of the pupils were provided instruction in music[55] but 100 per cent of the parents desired that this instruction be offered.[56] They studied the art and speech correction programs in addition to other academic areas, and related these problems to district size and financial ability to provide desirable educational experiences.

Other Area Study Reports, following similar procedures, arrive at similar findings based on local conditions. Most detail population problems, obsolescent and overcrowded buildings, and inadequate programs for the youngsters in attendance. The Macomb County group found that public

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[54] Adapted from: Ellis Wunsch, editor, Grand Traverse County Area Study Report, printed and distributed by the Grand Traverse County Board of Education, Grand Traverse County, Michigan, 1954, mimeographed, p. 5.

[55] Ibid., p. 9.

[56] Ibid., p. 6.

school enrollment increased by 39 per cent from 1948-1952, but the number of youngsters listed on the pre-school census for this same period increased by 57 per cent.[57] They were also concerned with the problem of student drop-outs, the provision of special services for children with special needs, and the extension of educational opportunities to the adult community.[58] The Eaton County Area Study Committee circulated questionnaires among parents and teachers of the county and on the basis of this information attempted to define the "Curricula of the Future," and developed a school checklist for parents to use to rate the school which their children attended.[59] The Washtenaw County Area Study Committee recommended among other things that a visiting teacher service and a county library with book-mobile service be provided.[60]

The importance of the area study reports is not necessarily the report itself, but the total process, as this represents a technique for citizen participation

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57 _____ "An Invitation to You People," Macomb County Area Study Committee Report, Macomb County, Michigan, undated, p. 2.

58 Ibid., pp. 9-13.

59 _____ "Our Schools," Eaton County Area Study Committee Report, Eaton County, Michigan, undated, pp 30 and 33.

60 _____ "School Improvement in Washtenaw

in the study of and the identification of solutions to local problems. The concept of citizen participation, while not new, has often been handicapped by an absence of suitable techniques and procedures. Skills and knowledge in this area are being developed continuously, as these procedures are tried in various areas of the United States. Individuals participating in the functions of these committees become information "carriers" for the school public relations communication process, and extend the influence of this committee to all of the areas represented by the members. The possibilities for citizen understanding of the public schools are increased by each new finding for this area of operation. To the extent that committee membership consists of "opinion leaders," that it develops an "in-group" and a "we" feeling, the influence of the group is increased.

Extent of Participation and School Public Relations

One of the common statements found in prescriptions for the development of participation schema for lay community groups is the precaution that these must

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County," Washtenaw County Area Study Committee Report, Washtenaw County, Michigan, undated, p. 17.

represent and include all segments of the community. Variations of the statement by Sumption which follows are found continuously in the literature on this topic:

> The committee must always represent the total educational community, never a segment of it. The committee should be as truly representative of the community as possible. Its membership should be drawn from the different geographic areas, cultural and economic levels, religious denominations, racial backgrounds, and vocational pursuits of the community. It should be a real cross-section of the community.[61]

This statement is very definite that groups must represent all portions of the community. The activity involved in the operation of most citizens' groups requires a relatively intimate, face-to-face association of the members for the period the group is in operation. The skill requirements for successful participation are those which are often associated with the relatively higher economic, educational and social levels. Despite the emphasis in the literature on the need for representation from all areas and all levels, it is very probable that membership in these groups tends to be weighted rather heavily on the side of the "middle class." That differences in social classes do exist in the United States, that these

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[61] Merle R. Sumption, How to Conduct a Citizens School Survey, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 6.

differences involve the selection of associates in terms of these differences, and further that these involve relatively rigidly defined patterns of activity which differ from one class to another has rather wide acceptance by sociologists.[62]

Lay participation in community study and survey groups adds another extremely important and effective process to the means for communication as this is involved in school public relations. The effectiveness of this participation as a communication process depends on the extent to which educators are successful in including representatives from all areas in these groups. The mass and the specific media tend to be relatively ineffective in reaching selected portions of the school public relations audience, and effective participation by "opinion leaders" selected from this portion of the audience might alleviate this problem considerably. The nature of the process is such that "self selection" tends to operate in that membership

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[62] See for example: Allison, Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, "The Class System of the White Caste," in Readings in Social Psychology, Guy E. Swanson, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugent L. Hartley, editors, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1952), pp. 280-288, or

W. Lloyd Warner, Democracy in Jonesville, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), 313 pp.

on these groups is on a voluntary basis, and those persons with strong negative attitudes on the subject of public education or the school involved in particular would logically tend either not to be chosen for membership, or to refuse membership if offered.

It is frequently suggested that appointment to these groups be made by the school board, by the administrator, or the selection of representation from existing formally organized groups, or similar modifications of these procedures. This process may or may not produce representation from the entire community. Doddy states:

> A community program must involve as many people as possible in order to achieve its goals. When the program is concentrated on formally organized groups alone, at least half the total population will be excluded from participation. While these informal groups may not protest their exclusion, they help to create the atmosphere in which the program must operate. When no attempt is made to involve them from the beginning, they become skeptical of the institutional efforts through lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of the program and to that extent become a block to total community cooperation. Under these circumstances, the efforts of institutional groups to improve the community are canceled out by the apathy of a larger group of the unaffiliated. They are at best indifferent, if not overtly hostile, to proposed community programs.[63]

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[63] Hurley H. Doddy, "Informal Groups and The Community," Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1952, p. 26.

The process then must involve not only participation by members of formally organized groups from all social levels but representatives from informal groups. This becomes more difficult as the size of the community involved increases, for the informally organized group is not a highly visible group, and identification is a problem. Many of these groups come from areas not normally reached by either the specific or the mass media of communication, and inclusion in the lay study or survey process is one method of including these groups in the communication process.

The effectiveness of participation of lay community members in the various advisory groups tends to be limited to the extent that these groups are not representative. The further extension of this effectiveness depends to a certain extent on the use of procedures tending to alleviate this situation and the development of techniques which not only make possible but encourage the inclusion of representatives from all areas. The development of these techniques makes possible another step in the direction of the realization of the objectives of democracy and provides an opportunity for school public relations procedures to become those furthering these objectives and not hindering them by the tendency toward manipulation of opinion and people.

Summary

The concentration of school public relations efforts on the development of mass and specific information techniques fails to reach selected portions of the audience, and further intensity of effort provides this group with additional opportunities to fail to perceive this material. The group which is reached by the first effort is contacted with increasing frequency by intensity of operation, but this group tends to be that which is already favorable toward the subject of communication. A monopoly propaganda campaign supplemented with local group organization for discussion purposes has been successful in other countries but neither possible nor desirable in the United States, except for relatively rare situations concerned with the reaffirmation of existing mores.

Numerous researches indicate that people tend to perceive that which they wish to perceive, or that which can be misinterpreted to support their existing views. The effectiveness of the media used can be increased to the extent that these can be "tailor made" to the audience it is desired to reach. The most effective means of reaching groups or individuals is that which involves

face-to-face discourse of one form or another. This adds the factor of interpersonal relationship to the process of communication.

The parent-teacher conference is a form of face-to-face discourse involving as a subject the child, and this provides the parent with a well developed motive for perception. This conference, which supplements the information provided by the report card or which replaces it, can be an information medium for the school public relations program. This means can be "tailor made" for each parent, since this is a very flexible medium. The skills required are rather high, however, and an unsuccessful conference can be equally effective in arousing enmity. The parents attending the conference may come from any of the social strata present in the community, and the teacher tends often to have had an experiential background sufficiently limited to provide a real problem in communication. This is made even more difficult to the extent that the teacher, representing "expertness" in a particular area, attempts to communicate with a person with little or no competency in this area. The very terminology used may present a serious problem.

Recommended by numerous authorities in the area of school public relations is the development of a speakers bureau composed of staff members competent in various areas.

This is another form of face-to-face discourse, which is again sufficiently flexible to be patterned in terms of the particular audience involved. As such it is a desirable information medium. The process can often be supplemented by the use of the various multisensory aids available to increase the total effectiveness. The selection of speakers with relatively high prestige tends to increase the effectiveness of the effort, and the reverse is also true in that persons of low prestige tend to have difficulty in the acceptance of their information by the audience. The contribution of the speakers bureau is limited largely to information purposes, for this involves groups of different individuals. Argumentation will not serve to modify unfavorable attitudes, and the process of "self selection" operates as these individuals are motivated to be in attendance. The speakers bureau has a secondary effect, as the individuals in attendance convey the information they received to friends and acquaintances through casual and directed conversation.

In each community or group, "opinion leaders" exist who have a good deal of influence with respect to other members of these groups. "Opinion leaders" may actively attempt to convince others or may be asked for opinions by persons still in the process of "making up their minds."

Often information from the mass media is selected for perception by "opinion leaders" and used in discussion or others are directed specifically to certain articles, speeches, et al. "Opinion leaders" tend to be relatively effective in persuasion because of the nature of face-to-face discourse, the fact that contacts are non-purposive and flexible. The individuals involved may be rewarded immediately for compliance. They tend to trust intimate sources and may even be persuaded to act without conviction. School public relations efforts at communication may be greatly enhanced if techniques were available for the identification of "opinion leaders." The techniques which are valid involve interviewing to identify the "opinion leaders." This is a laborious process requiring a great deal of time and skill, but the process is an accepted one used by sociologists. An attempt was made to simplify this process for the identification of opinion leaders by obtaining opinions as to identity from persons occupying visible status positions. This may be valid, but the method must be validated by actually interviewing the people of the community to determine whether or not real "opinion leaders" have been identified. "Opinion leadership" and visible status positions may or may not be related. The "opinion leaders" identified were then

interviewed, and the information secured used in planning the information program.

Local participation is recommended as a desirable school administration procedure and as a method for the improvement of the information portion of school public relations efforts. This is desirable in terms of democratic philosophy and effective as an information means. To this end, citizens' groups have been developed formed either for specific short term or more general long term projects. This provides a situation involving face-to-face relationships in the collection and dissemination of information, which supplements the mass and specific media available.

Parent-Teacher Associations have existed for some considerable period of time and are one example of a local participation group. The group has not always been well accepted by school administrators, and too often it has been kept "harmless" by the provision of "busy work" to occupy the time and energy of the members. This organization is one which has a great potential contribution to make to the information program, as this becomes a vehicle for genuine citizen participation.

Lay Advisory Groups, organized for the specific purpose of developing solutions to school problems, are relatively

new. The formation of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools gave this program a vigorous "boost." In 1953 some eight thousand citizens' committees were in operation in the United States, and their activities ranged from the consideration of immediate financial problems to long range activities. This is a study and learning process for the individual member, and the total effectiveness of the group itself is spread to the entire community to the extent that this group is representative. For this reason, these groups tend to involve relatively large numbers of persons.

Local survey and study procedures have been used by citizens' groups in the attempt to solve local social problems. The area involved may range from the entire community to specific portions of it and is frequently used in a study and analysis of the school, the program, building needs, districting problems, et al. This was often performed by "outsiders," but the present trend is for the operation to be carried out by local people with the provision of such technical assistance as is necessary. Survey and study areas vary widely between communities. One of the critical factors in the provision of adequate schools is concerned with public understanding of what it is possible to accomplish with "good schools." The local survey and study procedure, involving relatively large

numbers of people, provide these people with an opportunity to experience this kind of learning. This has also a secondary influence, as these persons transfer their experiences and understandings to their friends and acquaintances.

The Area Study Program presently in operation in Michigan is an example of a relatively specialized lay study program, wherein individuals within a county unit are encouraged to study their local school problems and attempt to develop acceptable local solutions. Technical assistance is available, as are study helps, as these provide "guide lines" for the operation. A survey of some of the reports indicate the comprehensiveness of the study process. Most are concerned with obsolescent buildings, population, and financial problems. Often the solution, developed locally, involves redistricting. The importance of the Area Study Program is due in no small measure to the fact that solutions are arrived at by local people, and to the extent that representatives on the study groups consist of "opinion leaders," these solutions are likely to be accepted and form the basis for local action. The common experience of "expert" solutions collecting dust is often cited as evidence that this process tends to be unacceptable locally. This may

only be a secondary factor with the major factor concerned with the absence of communication.

One of the problems involved in the development of lay groups for participation in procedures designed to develop solutions to school problems is concerned with the extent of this participation, so that all sections of the community are represented. That all sections should be represented is commonly agreed upon as a desirable goal, but often the skills demanded of participants are such that these tend to be found more often in the upper income, educational, and social groups. The voluntary nature of participation and local selection of group members may tend to weight membership rather heavily on the side of the "middle class." The procedures and means for identification of "opinion leaders" members and for methods for the operation of these groups which reduces the nature of this type of problem are crucial to the possible success of this procedure. This process may provide a means for reaching the portion of the school public that is not presently reached by the mass and specific media now available.

The appointment process itself may tend to "stack" membership of these groups, as this is commonly carried out by administrators, school board members, or selected

to represent formally organized groups within the community. There is evidence that this type of process tends to eliminate about half of the members of a community who are not reached by this process. As a consequence of this exclusion, they tend to be indifferent to or even hostile to the solutions arrived at by the study groups. Means must be developed for the inclusion of members from these informal groups and for communication with these persons. Until these are detailed and accepted as desirable practices, the effectiveness of lay participation groups tends to be limited.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The literature in the area of school public relations indicates an almost unanimous state of agreement as to the need for members of the school public to be informed about various aspects of their local schools. It is also generally agreed that individual members of the school public vary widely in the extent to which they are informed on this subject. The literature either states or implies that improving the school public relations effort by an increase in the scope and the intensity of the information effort will remedy this situation. These are the basic themes of much of the material available in the professional literature on this subject. Studies conducted in other areas indicate that this oversimplifies a very complicated problem. These studies, while not always providing final answers, do provide some information which may greatly improve the effectiveness of school public relations procedures.

Conclusions

The school public relations program involves agents, or individual positions within an organizational school structure, with each of these positions defined in a manner which makes possible the use of the means of school public relations to further the communications aspects of the total program. These agents include the school board as an official body, individual members of the board, the administrative and professional staff members, and all of the non-teaching staff members. The success of these agents depends to a large extent on the degree to which they are actually informed on the subject of the school, and further the extent to which they assume active responsibility for communication efforts as individual community members. This implies an administrative responsibility for the provision of information and an in-service training program for the development of communications skills and the understandings necessary.

The act or process of communication involves two or more people, in some form of a spatial and social relationship, using some kind of a medium by means of which meaning can be transferred between them. The medium used reduces basically to some form of a written or spoken language, and the symbols selected represent with varying degrees

of accuracy the meaning to be transferred. The symbols are abstractions, i.e. they are not the thing referred to, but abstractions representing the thing. The accuracy of selection of symbols varies with the skill and the experience of the selector. The accuracy of the transfer process also varies with the skill and the experience of the receiver. The medium selected adds certain structural problems to the transfer process and frequently determines the extent to which the transfer succeeds. The limits to the effectiveness of communication then tend to arise from three sources: 1) from the originator of communication; 2) the receiver of communication; and 3) the medium used. Efforts focused on the improvement of the transfer of meaning must then be focused on any one and/or all of the above areas.

Since words are most often used to make possible the transfer of meaning, school public relations efforts at communication can be improved to the extent to which the words selected and the manner in which they are arranged are common to the parties involved. Primary responsibility for implementation rests here with school agents, since school public relations efforts at communication most often are originated by school agents. This then requires that the professional agents acting for the school avoid the use of language as a means of professional identification

and communicate in terms defined by the characteristics of the groups to be reached. In any community the possible range of heterogeneity is probably sufficiently great to require the use of a wide variety of materials planned specifically for differing groups of individuals.

The specific understandings necessary for the resolution of this problem exist only in rather rudimentary form. Various readability formulae have been developed as solutions to this problem. These attempt to measure ease of reading and appeal in human interest terms. Successful application of the formulae requires in general that written material be produced with relatively short sentences, using uncomplicated words, and containing personal references to improve "human interest." The application of reading formula criteria to written communication efforts may possibly improve this material to the extent that the formula encourages the producer to consider the audience for whom it is designed. The use of the formulae does not help the producer to understand the specific requirements needed to effectively communicate with specific heterogeneous subgroups present in the community and does encourage the development of a standardized information commodity suitable for all. Knowledge in the area presently leaves much to be desired with some information

available with specific utility for the improvement of general efforts at communication but virtually no information to help the producer of school public relations materials to reach specific subgroups.

Informational materials produced as a consequence of a deliberate effort at communication as a part of a school public relations program must be perceived by the receiver of communication. This process of perception does not take place in vacuo but in terms of the attitudes of the individuals involved. At any given time and for any specific exposure to an effort at communication, the individuals involved possess attitudes which exist prior to exposure, and these determine to a considerable extent the consequences of exposure. The frequent school public relations assumption that exposure to "correct facts" or to "let the facts speak for themselves" tends to ignore or to oversimplify the nature of the audience for perception. Attitudes tend to structure the material perceived not in terms of the material itself but in terms of the attitude. Thus, the same facts can be perceived in a variety of ways and will actually produce not a single response but one which varies widely. Dependence on mass or specific information techniques appears to be relatively ineffective in terms of attitude change. There is some

evidence that further progress in the improvement of communication effectiveness in this area is dependent upon the development of group techniques for the organization of relatively homogenous groups of individuals for the purpose of discovering information and arriving at conclusions.

School public relations information programs are frequently judged as successful or unsuccessful in terms of the extent to which individual members of the school public are exposed to the information supplied. This vastly oversimplifies the communication effort and hinders the further improvement of this effort to the extent that efforts are limited largely to the production of additional materials, and the utilization of additional media to increase the frequency of these information contacts. Various mass information program findings indicate that people tend to seek information which is congenial with prior attitudes. Increasing the flow of information using the mass and specific media tends to reach largely those already "on your side" and to be relatively ineffective with those in opposition. Mass information program findings indicate that previously existing favorable attitudes structure the audience reached so that an increase in the intensity of the information effort serves to reach this group more often but does not reach those holding attitudes

not already favorable. This provides a further indication of the need to plan an information program in terms of the specific audiences to be reached and not solely restricted to efforts to increase the scope and the intensity of the program.

Communication efforts with the school public relations audience must be planned in terms of the attitudes and information already possessed by the persons to be reached if the effort is to have other than accidental success. The techniques for the determination of these attitudes and information have been developed but are not largely used because of technical difficulties and expense involved. Some schema for structuring these groups is necessary, and they can be classified in terms of their knowledge of and attitudes toward the school as allies, friends, neutrals, and enemies. These statistical subgroups, having no actual social existence, can then be further subdivided in terms of the extent to which they actually possess information, misinformation or no information on the subject. The information program would further need to be planned in terms of the age, sex, economic level, educational level, and the value and ideal systems of the groups to be reached.

The means used for information purposes for communication as a part of school public relations are frequently

those developed for other purposes, and utilization for school purposes takes place in terms of certain limiting factors inherent in the nature of the medium itself. Most of the means used have been borrowed or adapted from other areas or developed for another purpose. The mass media in use were not developed for school communication purposes, and the utilization of mass media complicates the communication process as this applies to schools in terms of the factors inherent in the nature of the medium itself. Utilization of these means for communication requires that the information effort be planned in terms of these factors. Further improvements in these areas depend on the extent to which findings from studies concerned with content analysis and audience analysis are isolated and applied. These generalizations also apply to areas other than mass media. The reading and the listening habits of the audience determine the effectiveness of the information effort. These must be known and form the basis for information program procedures.

The individual selects an information item for perception in terms of the reward that he expects and the effort required for perception. The individual thus selects, rejects, or ignores an item for perception, and the action taken depends on individual motivation. Certain obvious conclusions follow for the improvement of school

public relations efforts, as these are concerned with an increase in the possible reward for perception, a reduction in the effort required or both. The effort required may be reduced by increasing the scope of dissemination, using means easily accessible and produced in language which is appealing to the individual and easily understandable. The rewards for perception can be increased by the production of information experiences based on existing interests of the individuals involved. Selection for attention is based on existing motives for perception and on certain habits that the individual has developed. These factors must be known, and the information effort planned in these terms. Again this requires that the individual producing the material have some considerable knowledge of the audience to be reached. School public relations efforts focused solely on techniques of production may ignore entirely this critical factor for the improvement of the communication effort.

Current studies of content of school information items appearing in newspapers indicate that a selective process has been utilized that weights heavily the information items selected in favor of stories devoted to extra-curricular activities. Other studies indicate that these are not the areas in which people tend to be most interested. Improvement

in information effectiveness then requires that changes in item emphasis be made, and that these changes be based on some knowledge of reader interest. This does not indicate that news of extra-curricular activities are not desirable but does indicate a need to increase the scope of the information effort to include materials on such areas as pupil and classroom activities.

Studies of current adult reading habits indicate that differences exist in these reading habits, with differences based on factors such as sex, occupational and educational groups. Improvements in the effectiveness of communication are dependent on the extent that the production of materials is based on a knowledge of these differences. Much that is school news tends to be written in a manner that may not usually be read by the groups most logically concerned, i.e. females with children in the younger age groups and the lower income brackets. The obverse is also true, in that much that is considered to be school news seems designed for perusal by older males in the higher age and income groups. Some of the improvements necessary are concerned with technical aspects of journalism as this is applied to school news reporting. Other improvements follow as the audience involved is described. The "human interest" story, describing real

learning experiences of children, produced in language easily understandable, is the type of news story tending to have the widest readership. This type of news story is not now common practice in school news reporting.

The annual report, a printed summary of school activities produced and controlled by the school, contributes to the total communication effort to the extent that mass reading patterns are known and applied to production of the report. Some of these critical factors have to do with the language used with the extent that story aspects and human interest phases are developed and the extent to which illustrative material is used. Large picture size and human interest photographs tend to attract and hold readers. The annual report, like the news story, must be selected for perception from among other stimuli competing for attention. Reports produced in ignorance of the nature of the reading audience tend to be ineffective additions to the communication effort. Critical requirements for content established by commercial ventures do not operate with the annual report, for this is a non-profit venture produced by the school.

Radio and television, when utilized for school public relations purposes, tend to structure the relative effectiveness of the effort in terms of the nature of the medium

itself and the audience reached. Audience perception depends on the operation of self-selection, programs tend to be based on the common denominators of the audiences to be reached, and most broadcast efforts are devoted to efforts to entertain. Hence, audience expectation is for entertainment, usually of a relatively "light" nature. Programs produced for school public relations purposes which ignore this tend not to be selected for perception by the potential audience. The nature of the audience is further determined by the work day and the listening habits of the audience. Hence, the total audience available is not necessarily a potential audience, and program efforts must be based on a knowledge of these factors. Current public relations materials available in professional educational journals tend to ignore these factors. Since schools can hardly be expected to compete for attention with professional entertainers, information efforts utilizing broadcasting as a means must be based on the unique assets of schools, which are concerned with such things as youngsters and the learning process. Much that is printed advocates that schools produce programs similar to commercial ventures. These probably will contribute little to the effort. Programs based, for example, on the learning experiences of six year old children, however,

are unique and need not pretend to be patterned on commercial entertainment efforts.

Movies, film strips, and slides can make a contribution to the information effort, but effectiveness again is determined by the extent to which the nature of the medium itself and the nature of the audience is considered in the development of the material. The limitations to these efforts are those concerned with the fact that the medium requires an audience to assemble, and this fact of assembly requires that sufficient motivation exist to make attendance possible. Hence, these media tend to reach and work best with an already friendly audience. Film strips and slides would appear to be a most effective information means, for they can be developed locally and based on local concepts of need.

Relatively standardized, specific media for communication have been used by public schools for some considerable period of time, but little has been done in terms of audience effects research based on the use of these instruments. The area is characterized by continuous professional dissatisfaction and change, and little specific knowledge is available as to the relative effectiveness of the means involved. These would include such things as reports to parents, letters to school patrons, report card letter supplements, and special bulletins and

messages. The potential fruitfulness of the area as a contribution to the total communication effort depends upon the extent to which current research is applied and needed research performed. Many of the problems involved in the use of the mass media do not exist in this area. The drive for perception is relatively high among parents as a special community subgroup. Communication, to be effective, must compete for attention, offer rewards for perusal, and not require too great an effort for perception. Improvement in the effectiveness of communication when using some of the means given above follows from the application of the criteria listed above.

The need for heterogeneous information media, planned specifically in terms of the groups to be reached, can be met by school public relations efforts devoted to the development of specific media for this purpose. Some of these materials, referred to above, are already in use. Further efforts in this area for the development of means and materials for information purposes, planned in terms of the nature of the audience to be reached, offer some hopes for increasing the information level of the local community. Many of the limits which apply to the use of the mass media available for mass information purposes do not apply to the development of specific media planned

for local use. This does not reduce the importance of present efforts in this area but expands and increases the importance of this means of communication. "House organs," parental bulletins, brochures, letters, etc., are examples of special information efforts now in use. The system of communication now in use for reaching staff members, students, and parents can be expanded, and programs planned to reach the non-parent group that is now often reached only by the mass media and by secondary information sources.

Mass and specific information techniques now known fail to reach selected portions of the audience because of the individual process for "self selection" of materials for perception. The materials, based on the common denominators involved, may or may not be such that they are selected for perception, and since the medium used is inanimate, it cannot adjust to the needs of the individual involved. The most effective means of reaching groups or individuals is that which involves face-to-face discourse of one form or another. Face-to-face discourse can be tailor made for the individual or group and for the occasion and adds the factor of inter-personal relationship and persuasion to the event. One of the widely used examples of face-to-face discourse for planned communication

between members of the school staff and members of the school public is the parent-teacher conference. The success or failure of this type of information effort is dependent upon the skills of the individual teacher. Since the drive for parental perception is high (his own child), the occasion promises much as an information medium. Speakers bureaus have also been used by schools with some success as another means for face-to-face discourse. Other examples are those unorganized, unplanned contacts resulting from out-of-school relationships between members of the community and individuals from the school staff. Hence, this is another reason for the need for staff members to be informed on the subject of schools in general and their own school in particular. Much remains to be done with respect to developing planned organized efforts for face-to-face discourse as a supplement to the total information program.

The identification and utilization of "opinion leaders" in the school public relations communication effort promises much in terms of the improvement of efforts at communication. The techniques for identification are known but examples of practices for application to the school public relations area are virtually unknown. The development of techniques for identification and procedures for utilization of "opinion leaders" in the

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school public relations process promise much in terms of improvement of communications efforts. The mere identification of "opinion leaders" would provide some readily accessible means of determining the present state of knowledge and opinion on many school information areas and make possible realistic plans for an information program based on this knowledge. The single example found of this technique applied to the school public relations area involved equating visible status position and "opinion leader" position in the community. The feasibility of equating these two positions remains to be established. The process of identifying and utilizing "opinion leaders" as a part of a deliberate effort at communication promises to increase greatly its effectiveness.

The organization of groups from the local community for either short or long term projects provides a situation involving face-to-face discourse in the collection and dissemination of information, and this supplements the mass and specific media available. Groups of lay persons organized for purposes connected with the school are not new, but this process when applied to the discovery of information and the development of solutions to problems is new and promises to be an effective information and learning means for communication. Present information

indicates that local persons working on school problems tend to accept the solutions developed as a consequence of group action, for they are identified with these solutions and the verbalized solutions are much more likely to result in some kind of formal action than those provided by "outside experts." This total process results in communication and operates within limitations imposed by the type of persons and situations involved. These, however, are not identical with the limits established by depending solely on the use of mass and specific media for communication. One of the unsolved problems is concerned with the extent of this participation so that all portions of the community are represented and not merely selected portions of it. The voluntary nature of participation and local selection of group members may tend to weight membership in a manner which denies representation to some groups. Effective participation in this process requires that the base for participation be as broad as the community itself. When these groups include as members the "opinion leaders" from the community, many of the problems involved in the dissemination of school information are solved. Means must be developed for the identification of the informal groups present in the community and the inclusion of representatives from these groups.

Recommendations for Further Study

The present state of disorganization and disagreement in the area of communication in school public relations has been commented on earlier. Presumably, much of this is due to the absence of a well organized body of research in the area from which established principles of operation could be developed. The large body of professional literature, based largely on practical experiences, speculation, and philosophy, adds to rather than reduces the confusion. Hence, recommendations for further study tend to need to be all inclusive. For the purposes here, these recommendations will be limited to areas included in this study and will be stated not as final hypotheses suitable for research testing but as suggested problem areas. The order in which they are given is that determined by the order in which they appear in the chronology of this study and not in an order assigned by their importance.

1. The identification of the characteristics of the "chronic know-nothings" referred to in the study and the development of means for communication with them. This group, apparently present in every community, is not being reached by present communications efforts. Until they are identified, the reasons for their lack of interest and the

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1. The identification of the segment of the

establishment of procedures for communicating with them, a significant portion of the "audience" for communication is excluded from the process.

2. The development of easily administered, valid means for identification of the state of information, opinions, and attitudes possessed by the adult members of a local community. Present survey or sociometric procedures have not been widely used because of the time, expense, and technical difficulties encountered. Until such procedures are developed, much of the communication effort must remain of necessity of the "shotgun" variety.

3. The application of audience analysis procedures to the determination of audience effect and audience reaction to various types of school news stories. This might be called the "who reads what, and with what effect" portion of a study. Content analysis studies of school news stories indicate that extra-classroom activities receive considerably more attention than other portions of the school program. Surveys of parental interest in school news stories indicate a definite desire for information in other areas. However, no information is available as to whether this is the result of a well defined pattern of interest in these stories, or whether this interest is due to knowledge of the absence of news coverage in this

area. What would be a logical balance in news coverage? What is optimum news coverage? Many questions such as these could be raised, but the literature does not provide the answers.

4. The classification of news stories into "delayed reward" and "immediate reward," with the classification based on the kinds of satisfactions derived from perusal, raises some questions that need to be answered with respect to school public relations. Much of the improvement in news coverage indicated in item three above is based on the extension of school news coverage to include materials on the curriculum, on teaching methods, etc. Much of this material, if produced in standard news form, would become "delayed reward" news. Evidence from other studies indicate that this type of news material tends not to be read by females in the lower income levels. These, however, are the persons most likely to have children of school age, to be active members of PTA, room mothers groups, and similar school organizations. Means must be developed for the production of information items in a manner most likely to be read by the groups that it is desired to reach. Present indications are that much of this can be presented in "human interest" terms, which provide "immediate rewards," but this hypothesis has not been tested with regard to school public relations.

5. The audience for broadcasting means as these are utilized for school public relations efforts at communication has not been identified, nor have their listening habits been studied. Until this study has been made, efforts designed to improve the effectiveness of communication in this area rest on the rather shaky assumption that research performed in other areas is valid when applied to the school communication area or is based on pure conjecture and logic. That logic alone is hardly valid when applied to this area has been demonstrated by the fallacy of the frequently found public relations assumption of "letting the facts speak for themselves."

6. The determination of the relative effectiveness of the various specific means produced for communication between the school as an institution and individuals within the community. These would include such things as report cards, letters, bulletins, brochures, etc. Audience analysis procedures have not been applied to the use of these means for communication. Hence, present efforts at improvement of these means rest on opinions, speculation, and experience. The entire area is in need of searching examination before valid information is available. Despite professional and lay dissatisfaction with the formal report to parents and numerous studies designed to improve the

5. The audience for [illegible]
are multiple for [illegible]
communication has not [illegible]
literature public [illegible]
been made, efforts [illegible]
of communication in [illegible]
assumption that [illegible]
valid when applied [illegible]
is based on pure [illegible]
is hardly valid when [illegible]
documented by the [illegible]
tations assumption or "[illegible]
themselves."

6. The determination [illegible]
of the various specific [illegible]
between the school as an [illegible]
within the community. These [illegible]
report cards, letters, bulletins, [illegible]. Existing
analysis procedures have not been applied to the use of
these means for communication. Hence, content effects of
improvement of these means rest on opinions, speculation,
and experience. The entire area is in need of examining
to persons and numerous studies designed to improve the
professional and lay dissatisfaction with the formal report
examination before valid information is available. Despite

reporting process, communications research methods have not been applied to this area. Most of the means developed thus far in this area consist of materials primarily for parents and similar interested persons. Means are not presently available for similar communication with non-parents and with the less directly interested persons in the community. Other social agencies have developed communication means, but these have not been tested scientifically so that their utility for school purposes can be assessed.

7. The moral dilemma involved in the adoption of any "trick" for communication that promises to work (when work is defined as a transfer of meaning) is in need of exploration. The professional literature contains frequent references to the undesirable nature of "propaganda" techniques, yet this same literature often recommends information procedures which involve the suspension of judgment, the arousal of emotions, and the development of manipulative techniques. The distinction between information efforts as education or propaganda (the suspension of judgment) has not been drawn in the professional literature. Until this distinction is made, the practitioner of public relations techniques lacks a point of orientation and has little basis for the selection of the communications devices available other than on the pragmatic basis that "they work."

8. The development of easily administered methods for the identification of the "opinion leaders" in a school community. The methods presently available require a relatively high expenditure of time, money, and the possession of a high technical level of competence. These factors tend to restrict the use of the procedures to studies made where the above requirements are present. Such is not usually the case in the great majority of public schools. The single example found where this process was recommended as a public relations process equated visible status position and opinion leadership position. The validity of this position has yet to be demonstrated. The development of an easily administered procedure for the identification of "opinion leaders" would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the information effort as a part of the school public relations program and make the democratic goals frequently claimed for this portion of the program much more realistic.

9. The procedures presently available for local participation in groups organized by the school for school purposes are in need of study to develop means whereby potential membership can be extended to all segments of the community. This presently tends to be weighted rather heavily to middle class social groups, to persons tending to be the active "joiners," and to exclude those persons

6. The development of ...
for the identification of ...
school community. The ...
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equated viable standards for ...
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demonstrated. The developm...
procedure for the identif...
would improve the effectiveness ...
information effort as a part ...
program and make the democratic ...
for this portion of the program was ...

9. The procedures presently available and being ...
interviewing is thought created by the school for future ...
purposes are in need of study to develop means whereby ...
potential membership can be extended to all segments of ...
the community. This presently tends to be weighted rather ...
heavily to middle class social groups, to persons tending ...
to be the active "joiners," and to exclude those persons

not meeting these requirements. Justification for the organization of these citizens' groups is frequently made in terms of democratic objectives. To the extent that these groups are not representative, to that degree is the process not democratic, nor is the communication which results as effective as it might be.

10. The development of procedures for local participation in school organized groups so that actual existing interest is not the major criterion for membership. Present organizational techniques tend to reach largely those already classed as allies and friends and to omit or fail to reach those classed as neutrals or as enemies of the school. Presumably, a successful information program could change some of these persons to allies or friends if their present state is not based on deep-seated attitudes. In any case, a democratic orientation would indicate that persons in the above categories must also be included in the information program and the decision processes involved. Such tends not to be the case at present.

11. The relationship between extent of knowledge about the school and degree of friendliness toward the school is in need of exploration and clarification. Much of the professional literature either states or implies that as the extent of information possessed by the

individual increases, so also does his attitude of friendship toward the school. This is obviously an oversimplification, and what little research is available on the subject indicates that the two states do not necessarily follow one another. It is logically conceivable that the reverse may be true, that the friendly person may be the one relatively ignorant of the school. In any case, the relationship is in need of extensive exploration.

The problems suggested above for further study could be expanded indefinitely, for as suggested earlier, the entire area is in need of intense, scientific study, and the application of techniques and knowledge already available. Many studies have been made, but they have been weighted rather heavily on the side of chronologies of historical development, assessments of current practice, and the isolated development of new information techniques. Much of this has been carried out in isolation of ignoring developments in related fields. The application of research findings and research techniques from related fields gives promise that considerably more exactness and validated knowledge can be added to this area of communication in school public relations.

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