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The feedback factor in the communication process

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THESIS

THE FEEDBACK FACTOR
IN THE
COMMUNICATION PROCESS

by

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THE FEEDBACK FACTOR IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS
The ideas and concepts explored and advocated in this study were developed over a period of many years. These notions about public relations and its place in society were first encountered at Boston University in 1964, when the author was enrolled in graduate public relations study for two very busy months by the U. S. Air Force. There the wisdom of Dr. Albert J. Sullivan made a lasting impression, strong enough to bring the author back to complete the master of science degree in public relations in the fall of 1967.

The privilege of serving as graduate assistant to both Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Otto Lerbinger meant a rare opportunity to absorb their communications philosophy, and at the same time to assist Dr. Sullivan with the final preparations of his doctoral dissertation on public relations education, which is the prime source of the participation theory of public relations.

My appreciation for their confidence and patience will never wane.

Another who deserves sympathy as well as thanks is James W. Hunt, executive vice president of the Greater Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce. He took a long chance on letting a graduate student test a few uncertain ideas and stood firm when the pressures were severe to discontinue the participation
experiment.

The thirty students of Project Straight Talk were the key to the entire summer project in 1968, and the friendships that were made then have continued. Some of them have made tremendous use of that once-in-a-lifetime chance to reach beyond one's grasp and explore without fear of failure.

Finally, the best way to express my gratitude to my wife, Petri, for typing the thesis and for giving up many weekends is to admit that only after we married did I settle down to the research and writing and finish what began in the summer of 1968.

S.N.H., Jr.
February 1973
An abstract of a thesis entitled

THE FEEDBACK FACTOR
IN THE
COMMUNICATION PROCESS

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School of Public Communication
Division of Public Relations

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This thesis develops the proposition that the feedback activities of human communication processes must operate effectively if a society, a community, or any social unit survives this complex, fast-changing era.

The concept of feedback as described in this thesis has not been employed in the typical public relations function. The term is widely used in a rhetorical sense of a plea for institutions to "listen" better. As an essential factor in the communication process, it is as yet a little understood phenomenon of the times.

The argument is developed that the traditional literature of public relations does not embrace the feedback factor in sufficient depth and that a change in the concept of the public relations function is required if the function is to become a profession that holds the public interest uppermost even as it serves private interests.
The thesis is limited in its scope primarily to an examination of one type of feedback at work in a specific urban area. If the findings and conclusions are valid, then the operational concept of feedback should be transferable to cross-cultural communication, to any economic, religious or social institution, and to any definable grouping of individuals.

The feedback function is exemplified in the current efforts to develop active, effective citizen and employee participation in the processes of decision making on policies and laws that affect their lives. This could well become the dominant social issue for many decades to come.

This right of "participation" is the central focus of the thesis argument that the largely unknown social force of feedback must be fully functional in the communication process. First, the problem is defined and then relevant theoretical findings are summarized. A broad range of examples of feedback and participation is summarized, and a detailed case study of an actual participation experiment is provided. Finally, a broader value system for public relations is proposed and a specific new "participation" theory of public relations is advocated.

The thesis assumes, based upon opinion survey evidence, that a basic value shift is underway within the American society, and also assumes that this shift is grounded on the principle of individual participation in decisions that affect the individual, which is an
expansion of the "consent of the governed" concept.

The participation theory of public relations is stated thusly: "Public relations is the societal function that maintains effective, efficient participation processes among all constituent groups of any institution, within communities, and among nations by means of all known forms of human communication, including both message output and message input processes."

A participation/feedback concept means the public relations practitioner has a new expanded role in the institution, within the community, and throughout society in general. Practitioners must understand the actual communication process. This would make the public relations, or communications function, directly responsible for maintaining the interaction process between organizational leaders and relevant publics.

The ultimate purpose of this approach to the study of human behavior is the need for mankind to ultimately free itself from distorted mental pictures of social and physical reality in order to assure psychological adaptation and evolution with the accelerated, changing nature of the information environment and technological age.
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INTRODUCTION

During the 1960s, several social forces developed that can be studied as an expression of "feedback," or reaction to the actions of powerful social, economic and political institutions. Participatory democracy, civil rights, consumerism, student protest, citizen participation—all are forms of feedback in the human communication process. It is not surprising that the public relations profession was thrust directly into contact with the conflicting forces that brought the "protest" decade to a crashing close. Much of the feedback from various segments of the public had its maximum impact on institutions through their public relations department. The unaware, insensitive public relations manager who ignored the breaking tidal waves of public opinion during the early Sixties soon found himself on the boss' carpet explaining why certain trends that proved very costly to stockholders were not anticipated. Who during that time could foresee how enduring would be the powerful forces pressing for racial minority employment and housing, environmental clean up, product safety, voting rights, university reform, and, of course, an end to the Vietnam War? All too often, the first sign of the strength of the "feedback" phenomenon was a gathering of angry students, or rock-throwing young blacks, a consumer boycott,
militant teachers, upset neighborhood delegations, and dedicated conservationists. This active feedback of social protest has been one of the primary sources of news and certainly one of the most visible developments in the American society, and even in other industrial societies. These forces of social feedback were in part a reaction to unresponsive institutions and in part an enduring characteristic of human behavior that only now is beginning to be considered a fundamental factor in social change.

The "feedback factor" is a basic aspect of any technologically advanced society today; its rise and impact can be analyzed as a new force that has not yet been seen in its full development. For example, why have there been riots, unrest and disorders in such prosperous, democratic countries as France, the U. S., West Germany, Japan, and others? Parade magazine reported in July, 1968, that Edward Luttwak, a young economist, claimed that it all fits a pattern:

It happened in France because the traditional dialogue between public and government broke down. Because De Gaulle's power was strong and highly personal, the middle institutions disintegrated, and De Gaulle could not hear what people were saying. He was not getting any feedback...

In the U. S., many political scientists attribute the revolt of students and Negroes to a similar lack of dialogue between those in power and those in petition. ... The Negro riots in the cities, ... are the result in many cases of frustration by men who feel they have been excommunicated from any real, truthful, honest, meaningful dialogue with the powers that be.

In most unstable countries, coups are generally started and successfully engineered by rightist elements because these elements include the officers...
who control the Army. In stable, democratic countries, however, riots can be prevented by the maintenance of dialogue and hope. It is only when people stop talking to each other that they start fighting.1

As with any social phenomenon, the full significance of a trend is seldom fully apparent until the crest of the behavioral change has passed. The difference in the late Sixties and the early Seventies in terms of violence, social protest and other forms of feedback drew the attention of newspaper columnist Roscoe Drummond, writing in January, 1971:

Until a nation has passed through a grave crisis we are often not aware of how near it came to calamity. We have been on the brink of such calamity for at least three years and the outcome has been breathlessly uncertain. I believe that today as a nation we have passed through one of the most perilous periods in our entire history. The worst is over. It is not an overstatement to say that 1968 to 1971 were among the darkest days of the republic, comparable to Valley Forge and the Civil War. . . . Lyndon Johnson was almost literally driven from office, denied the opportunity to seek re-election. He knew that if he did so he could not govern the nation. . . . During this period we were to the point of destroying the democratic process of peaceful change.

Free speech was becoming a national shouting match; many wanted to be heard but few wanted to listen to anyone but themselves . . . the picketers . . . were really attacking and undermining the peaceful political process by which alone just grievances could be redressed. The crisis which the United States was experiencing was nothing less than a crisis of governance—a crisis of our will and capacity to govern ourselves democratically. . . . Some will continue to practice violence, but most of the worst is back of us and now is the time to get on with the unfinished business of making democratic government do its job better "for the people, of the

people and by the people.\textsuperscript{2}

It was in 1968 that the feedback, or "upward, two-way communication" concept of this thesis was suggested to the author by Dr. Albert J. Sullivan, professor of public relations at Boston University's School of Public Communication. Now, in late 1972, the forces at work and the events of the day can be studied with sufficient detachment to consider an explaining theory of these behavioral patterns, a theory that possesses a useful level of generality and can shed light on many diverse activities. It is the rich concept of feedback that explains many of the events that occurred during the late Sixties and carried into the early Seventies. In fact, the quality and quantity of the feedback processes may be a constant factor in the unfolding story of human development. Its rise is related to forces of urbanization and information technology, but its well-spring is found in the communicative nature of man and the structure of the inadequate institutions he created.

This thesis will develop the proposition that the feedback activities of human communication processes must operate effectively if a society, a community or any social unit survives this complex, fast-changing era.

Both fictional and non-fictional literature of recent years is rich in examples of the feedback factor as a powerful source of social change: the "Power to the
People" slogan is typical. The rhetoric varies widely but descriptions of all these social trends have one constant characteristic: expression of public opinion outside the normal channels of communication by atypical modes of expression. The argument will be developed that the traditional literature of public relations does not embrace the feedback factor in sufficient depth and that a change in the concept of the public relations function is required if the function is to become a profession that holds the public interest uppermost even as it serves private interests. To the author's knowledge, the concept of feedback as described in this thesis has not been employed in the typical public relations function. The term is widely used in a rhetorical sense of a plea for institutions to "listen" better. As an essential factor of the communication process, it is as yet a little understood phenomenon of the times.

However, extensive research on the nature of certain types of feedback has been published. Although this study will summarize some of the more relevant findings, much necessarily will be left without direct examination. It is significant that most works of political science, sociology, social psychology, urbanology, management, and public relations comment on the importance of feedback in the communication process. Typically, however, much less attention is given to the actual mechanisms involved in feedback.

The feedback factor has application to all forms of human communication--within the family, a business, church,
association, nation, or any social unit held together by common bonds—but this thesis is limited in its scope primarily to an examination of one type of feedback at work in a specific urban area. If the findings and conclusions are valid, then the operational concept of feedback should be transferable to cross-cultural communication, to any economic, religious or social institution, and to any definable grouping of individuals. The feedback function is exemplified in the current efforts to develop active, effective citizen participation in the processes of decision making on policies and laws that affect their lives. This could well become the dominant social issue for many decades to come.

It is only in recent years that this historic political question, that is, the degree of individual participation in and expression on the affairs of society, has emerged as a central philosophical problem for society. To cite "information technology" or "mass education" or "urbanization" as causes is far too simplistic an analysis. The nature of man and his interaction with his fellow man in the interest of survival in an era totally unlike any other in history is a larger need to which the feedback/participation issue must be related.

This thesis will focus on the most narrow aspect of feedback that can be isolated and studied on the basis of current experience and present research. This is the participation process referred to above. In a political sense, the participation concept very roughly can be traced from
small prehistoric tribes to the "democratic" societies of Athens and Rome--from the rise of the English lords and development of Parliament to invention of the printing press--from the origins of American representative government to modern participatory democracy, which apparently is a philosophy that undergirds the continuing protest movement. The functioning of the feedback mechanism as a means of expressing reaction to actions by political leaders and powerful institutions has an apparent relationship to the steady advance of civilization. However, only with the advent of the electronic information age, when feedback--communicative actions and reactions--can travel at the speed of light, were new conditions created. These changes brought about a radical change in the power and influence of feedback through individual participation in advocating, approving, and supporting the great decisions before society.

The principal concept to be examined in this thesis was formulated by Dr. Albert J. Sullivan in the mid-Sixties:

There are two rights of peculiar significance to public relations as the disseminator of information; the ensuring of these rights constitutes the mutual values of public relations: insofar as public relations devotes itself, on the level of personal responsibility, to these values, it may be said to be emerging as a profession.

These two rights derive from the nature of man as a rational being and as a free being. They may be stated: (1) Each person has a right to true information in matters which affect him.

(2) Each person has a right to participate in decisions which affect him.

The right to true information is inherent in the
reason of a person; the right to participate is inherent in the freedom of a person.

How is public relations involved in this free participation in decisions? In this wise, public relations is charged with the exchange of ideas between the groups involved with the institution. These groups are formed of persons, each one of whom, by definition, has some measure of interest in the institution. Just because the right to free participation in decisions involving the person exists, the obligation lies upon the communication specialist to ensure free discussion so that he may transmit true information.

The principle is perfectly clear: everyone is entitled to speak, just because the right is personal and inalienable. Everyone does not have to exercise that right, but the opportunity must be offered to his choice. He may also entrust his right to a representative—and this is perhaps the path over this obstacle—but there is hardly any structure yet devised whereby every person in every group to which he belongs has the chance to get representation before institutional management. 3

This "right of participation" is the central focus of the thesis argument that the largely unknown social force of feedback must be fully functional in the communication process. Chapter I, "The Emerging Participant Society," explores the factors underlying the need for more and better participation in the decision-making processes of institutions and society; summarizes the increasing call for improvement of social communication processes and for a workable theory and reform of public relations. Chapter II, "Theoretical Aspects of the Participant Society," brings together several general theories of modernization.

communication, feedback, and other concepts relevant to an investigation into the nature of the feedback factor in the communication process. Chapter III, "Citizen Participation and Other Forms of Feedback," summarizes contemporary arguments for and against participatory democracy and management; provides selected examples of several predominant forms of active and passive feedback. Chapter IV, "Case Study of a Participation Experiment," describes an experimental urban communication project conducted in 1968; it provides an example of the feedback factor at work in the communication process and social change. The experiment indicates the striking difference between "downward" and "upward" communication and suggests feedback concepts and techniques for further investigation. Chapter V, "Toward a Participation Theory of Public Relations," analyzes Sullivan's broader value system for the practice of public relations and outlines specific principles and procedures supporting a participation model of public relations.

The significance of this analysis to the field of public relations lies in the expanded role of the practitioner, who today must understand the essentiality of the feedback factor if his efforts are to lead to improved communication processes in general. The danger of creating abstract "cobwebs of the mind" in search of a useful theory of public relations hopefully is avoided by submission of concrete evidence that the feedback factor in the communication process exists but has been long ignored. The
literature of public relations—the only organizational function likely to be responsible for seeking institutional feedback and maintaining social communication processes—has left the factor unexplored for the most part.

Nearly five years passed since the author first entered Boston University's graduate school of public relations and encountered these philosophical concepts of communication. During this period, more than one hundred books, articles and newspaper clippings that commented on feedback and demonstrated participation were assembled. These years have been spent in the practice of public relations briefly for a Chamber of Commerce, then for a very large oil company, a medical school and presently a city government. Daily public relations experience and observation during this period also strongly supports the need for increased participation and other forms of feedback in the institutional and societal information flow.
CHAPTER I

THE EMERGING PARTICIPANT SOCIETY

Nature of the Problem

"Our existence depends on communication in more ways than one can easily enumerate,"¹ said communications satellite creator Dr. John R. Pierce in the opening statement of a series of essays on social and technical developments in communication. They were published September, 1972 in Scientific American. The fact that this leading intellectual journal devoted most of its entire September issue of more than 200 pages to "communications" is a strong indication that society is paying closer attention to this aspect of human existence. Pierce, an electrical engineering professor at California Institute of Technology, was for thirty-five years with Bell Telephone Laboratories, where from 1965 to 1971 he was executive director for research in the communications sciences division. His work led to the successful operation of the Echo and Telstar communication satellites. He is an engineer, accustomed to viewing problems from an empirical, measurable viewpoint. It is unusual, therefore, that his concluding statement would pinpoint a fundamental societal problem in such

philosophical terms: "The world that communication and transportation have built is exceedingly complex and very difficult to govern wisely."²

After reviewing the probing essays in this special issue of *Scientific American* and after reviewing several dozen books and articles by students of contemporary society and human communication, written in recent years, it is apparent that an unusual search is underway—a search for value and principles and behavioral practices by which man can better cope with the "exceedingly difficult" world built by communication.

Yet, problems must be clearly defined—even by an engineer/philosopher. Says Polaroid camera inventor Dr. Edwin Land, also an engineer/philosopher:

> If you are able to state a problem—any problem—and it is important enough, then the problem can be solved . . . If the problem is clearly very important, then time dwindles and all sorts of resources which have evolved to help you handle complex situations seem to fall into place letting you solve problems you never dreamed you could solve.³

The assumption here is that a problem can be stated in a language meaningful to those with a common interest in it. In this instance the problem revolves around improving the communication processes within society, but the rhetoric of public relations literature, for example, is insufficient. In fact, the term "public relations" is not used

²Ibid., p. 41.
once in the entire communication issue of *Scientific American*. The reason for this omission is apparently because the contemporary function of public relations is viewed as "one-way" or "downward" communication designed to influence the receiver of the message. The response desired profits the sender in some way; therefore, the public interest of "improved communication" is of lesser value than "profitable" feedback in the form of purchases, votes, agreement, and so on.

The professional public relations practitioner is skilled at communicating these messages from sender to receiver. Why then should not society look to this expert "communicator" when it is in need of better communication processes? Should and can the "P. R. man" become equally adept at transmitting messages from receiver to sender—and just as systematically?

The general problem to which Pierce directs society is twofold: first, a world of complexity, implying difficulties for the poorly educated and those uninformed about the reality of conditions in this world; second, a complex world even for those leaders who must govern wisely. Here is the hint of a difficulty in modern society. If our existence "depends on communication," then when the communicative and interactive processes are faulty or inadequate, especially in times of stress, logically our very existence is threatened. Further, if transportation can be considered a special form of communication (since
travel brings people and things together), then a case can be made that "communication" warrants consideration as an "important enough" problem that can be solved, as Land puts it.

The case for recognition and implementation of the feedback factor in human communication rests on an analysis of present and projected communication techniques and processes. The need for reform of current practices must be better documented, however, before a theoretical analysis of participation and other forms of feedback in the human communication processes can be developed and before an updated theory of public relations can be proposed.

The Call for Communication Improvement

Selected examples offer convincing evidence that a wide variety of thinkers see the need for reform and improvement of the communication processes among people and their institutions of government, business, education, religion, unions, associations, and so on. Communications processes include elements in the universal communications system proposed by Claude E. Shannon in his influential 1948 paper, "The Mathematical Theory of Communication."4 Shannon's model consists of an information source from which the message flows through a transmitter via a signal over a channel in which noise may obscure the message to a receiver and finally a message destination. Yet Shannon left

out the feedback cycle in his model, which, it is submitted, created a subsequent theoretical misunderstanding of actual communication processes. Linear communication, as outlined by Shannon, was useful in directing engineers to quantitative measurement of the effectiveness of their systems. But, as several of the following comments on communication theory will indicate, one-way communication was a false picture of reality. Later writers would argue that without passive or active feedback, communication does not occur.

Frank E. X. Dance, writing in *Human Communication Theory*, summarized this feedback concept:

"Feedback" became especially popular and justly so. The feedback concept has proved to be invaluable in clarifying many areas of human interaction that until its availability had been shadowily felt but inaccurately understood. In the area of human communication, the impact of the concept of feedback was most notable in the early fifties, when there was great propagation and support for the notion of the circularity of the communication process. Today, it seems probable that most people, if given a choice between describing the communication process as linear or as circular, would opt in favor of circularity. One plausible inference is that at some time people generally felt that communication was probably linear. Now, both linearity and circularity suggest process, and either is in keeping with the general conviction that communication is a process. However, the geometrical analogy of the two choices is quite different. The feedback principle allowing for analysis of present behavior so as to alter future behavior on the basis of the success or failure of current behavior is the seeming basis for the popularity of the circular model. . . .5

This concept is the basic foundation for analysis of contemporary communication difficulties. It will be developed in context with other theoretical views in Chapter II, "Theoretical Aspects of the Participant Society." As will be suggested, communication problems are directly related to an inaccurate conception of the communication process. Dance goes further to develop a diagram he considers more suitable to observed processes:

The circular communication image does an excellent job of making the point that what and how one communicates has an effect that may alter future communication. The main shortcoming of this model is that if accurately understood, it also suggests that communication comes back, full-circle, to exactly the same point from which it started. This . . . is manifestly erroneous and could be damaging in increasing an understanding of the communication process and in predicting any constraints for a communicative event.

The linear model does well in directing our attention to the forward direction of communication and to the fact that a word once uttered cannot be recalled . . . the linear image betrays reality in not providing for a modification of communicative behavior in the future based upon communicative success or shortcomings in the past.

The helix combines the desirable features of the straight line and of the circle while avoiding the weaknesses of either. /A helix is a continually upward spiraling line, expanding in ever larger circles outward and upward./ At any and all times, the helix gives geometrical testimony to the concept that communication, while moving forward is at the same moment coming back upon itself and being affected by the curve from which it emerges. Yet, even though slowly, the helix can gradually free itself from its lower-level distortions.6

Essentially this is the feedback factor, expressed

6 Ibid., pp. 295-296.
in terms of effective individual and collective participation in the communication processes, that shows promise of an understanding of how to cope with the "complex" world of communication. It is suggested that one-way, or linear, communication practices by social institutions and political leaders have created the societal conditions in which the cry for reform is heard so consistently—and occasionally—so violently.

From the world of business, Max Ways, writing in the lead article of Fortune magazine (September, 1972), demonstrates the problem in the headline: "Business Needs To Do a Better Job of Explaining Itself." Not only business but every other institution, he could have added, which would have unnecessarily lengthened this excellent ten-word summary of "one-way communication." He provided a crisp summary of the communications problem from the traditional public relations viewpoint, something akin to Moses as a "P. R. man" reading from the stone tablets to the masses huddled below:

For decades business has been underestimating the gravity and the nature of its public relations problem. The truth is that there has never been a wide and solid understanding of the business system. As it becomes more complex [strong support for Pierce's position], as it gets more deeply involved in such questions as the tax structure or environmental protection, the public's inadequate understanding of business will cause more and more trouble. [Trouble for whom? Those who govern, in Pierce's view.] The defect lies more in the quality than in the quantity of the corporate messages. Despite torrents of advertisements, press releases, and internal corporate communications, misunderstanding and ignorance of the
business scene remain widespread.7 Ways is aware of a communications problem between business and the public, but Dance would not agree that the defect lies in either the quantity or quality of the corporate messages. Ways' problem definition, which is not at all accurate in terms of the helix model of communication process, then is expanded to include critical public feedback:

The public needs to know more than it does about business—about its products, its processes, its performance, its profits, its motivations, its internal relations, and the ways all these are changing. From this premise a basic strategy of public relations emerges: business should do a better job of explaining itself. Until it does, it will not be able to defend itself, much less to counterattack its critics. A strategy of explanation would influence the handling of many day-to-day matters—the way ads are written, the way queries from the press are handled. . . .

Current anti-business sentiment is no summer squall, no mere election-year flap, no recession-born disenchantment, no transient hostility stirred up by a few malcontents. It would be unwise, for instance, to assume that Ralph Nader created the wave of consumer resistance; he vocalized feelings already present in the public. . . .8

Clearly, Ways doesn't care for this negative feedback from the public. He also notes that business is not alone in receiving heavy criticism, pointing out that "Among today's intellectuals, government has become almost as dirty a word as business. Indeed, the intellectuals have communicated to large sections of the public, especially the young, an abhorrence of all institutions larger or more complex than

8Ibid.
a rock combo."9 Again, that referral to a more "complex world." And a new element, the size alone of the institution, has been added as a cause of negative feedback. Apparently some of society's messages—intended and unintended—are getting through to the business audience through this writer.

However, Ways doesn't merely recommend more lucid explanations. He urges business to extend one of its new management practices, called "participatory management," from employees to the general public. That is, he gives lip service to this type of improvement in the communication process but finally concludes in favor of "cleaning up messages, intended and unintended, that it [business] sends"10 and also explaining "more about what it does and how it works."11 About participatory management, Ways says:

Managers already understand this challenge in so far as it applies to life inside a corporation; they need to extend to public relations the practices they use internally. Within the corporation, top managers are less and less inclined to view themselves as the prime fonts of judgment, decision, and policy. The men at the top are more and more concerned with encouraging horizontal flows of information among the parts of the organization so that the left hand will know when the right hand's thumb is in a wringer.

... The old kind of management is hierarchical in attitude and practice...

There are two important lessons about public relations to be drawn from the contrast between old and new styles of corporate coordination. The first is that business has failed to get over to the public the extent to which the new internal style now prevails... Many managers actually behave in the new

9Ibid., p. 87. 10Ibid., p. 198. 11Ibid.
way yet continue to explain their organization in
the old, hierarchical way. This anachronism can
be important because a significant part of the
public's resistance to business is based on the
belief that it operates, as it did fifty years
ago, mainly by a chain of command, with all sig-
nificant decisions made at the top.

The second lesson on an updated theory of
business public relations means that just as internal coherence between the parts
of a corporation can no longer be mandated from the
top down, so the relation between any corporation
and its multiple "publics" must now be achieved
through a flow of information and persuasion.

What this indicates is that the foundation of
a sound business public-relations policy lies in
recognition of the public need for an understanding
of business. This is not the same as "the
public's right to know. . . ." A few public rights
to corporate disclosures have been formulated in
recent decades by the SEC and other bodies. Many
more rights will be formulated, notably in the field
of consumer protection. But a "right" in this sense
takes a while to harden to the point where it can
be clearly defined and legally tested against other
rights, such as privacy.

The quality of public relations, like every
other function of a large corporation, is determined
mainly by behavior of personnel other than top manage-
ment. The responsibility of top management for
improving public relations is in changing the cor-
porate atmosphere in which public relations decisions
are made, whether at high levels or low. As long as
management as a whole believes that the only "safe"
disclosure, other than those required by law, are
messages that give unstinting praise to the corpora-
tion or its products, so long will the day be post-
poned when the public understands and trusts busi-
ness.12

Then Ways comes to grips with one of the basic problems con-
fronting society today: that is, the manner in which an
institution relates to the general society:

Most specific public relations decisions will

12 Ibid., p. 196.
involve difficult questions of balance among conflicting values. One of these values is the genuine need for privacy. Under today's conditions, corporate privacy cannot logically be derived—as many businessmen think it can—from the right of private property.

At this point in time, however, it can be said that business—along with the Pentagon and the Vatican—tends to err on the side of disclosing too little rather than too much of what goes on inside them. In their public relations policies, few contemporary institutions have caught up with the implications of Ken Holtzman's principle: the new type of ball player has to be informed, not commanded.

What effect would an improved public relations policy have upon the actual behavior of business? No effect, if by public relations we mean a mere front. But there's a well-known difference between improving one's looks by cosmetics and improving them by better health.

Suppose a company adopts a course of action, honestly believing it harmless or even beneficial to the public. Suppose it finds that this policy "looks bad" and is hard to explain. Instead of bulling ahead in the face of public disapproval, this might be the point to put more thought on the quality of the explanation. And if it still appears unlikely that the public can be persuaded that the policy in question is socially right, then perhaps the corporation should back off.

He still does not advocate a "right to participate" in forming corporate policies, but suggests:

If business took a positive lead in this great change/environmental protection/, it might accomplish the following objectives: (1) condition its own middle managers to a more alert sensitivity to environmental factors; (2) improve the quality of environmental laws and their enforcement; (3) begin to persuade the public that business has, indeed, concerns that go beyond making goods and making money.

The young—and not they alone—say they don't want to work in organizations where all the significant decisions are made at the top. Good, replies

—13 Ibid.
modern business. Organizations, it says truthfully, aren't like that nowadays. The pyramid of influence on the formation of policy has flattened; hundreds of people now have significant roles in shaping the corporate course. The chief executive officer, no longer a monarch, is now merely one voice among many.14

Although many would disagree with a picture of the corporate chief as having only one voice among many, this lengthy summary of the argument for a new theory and different practice of public relations by Max Ways has deep significance for building an "updated theory of public relations." First, the article suggests what would be a radical departure from current business practice in advocating increased public participation (one form of feedback) in the affairs of a corporation. Second, the article can be expected to cause more questioning about current assumptions of public relations theory and practice. Third, the article analyzes the nature of modern business organizations in terms of communication behavior, even suggesting that unintended as well as intended messages play a critical role in determining how well the organization fits its ecology. Fourth, the article lends strong support for an helixical model of communication processes, which is necessary to support the feedback/participation model of public relations. Finally, it offers evidence of a basic value change in the general society toward mutual rights, a value shift from one-way communication to two-way communication in the interest

14Ibid., p. 198.
of continuous organizational improvement, and by implication, continuous social progress through improved communication processes.

However, Ways fails to show how this public participation should be carried out, except for the impact of "mediators," such as intellectuals who criticize the corporation. He cites the consumerism and protest movements but neglects to come to grips with just how public relations has a role and obligation to add to the output communication flow by improving the quality and quantity of input, or public feedback and participation in the corporate decision-making process.

Yet Ways' call for reform of both public relations theory and corporate practice is well documented and logical. Whether public relations as a profession can meet this new social responsibility remains doubtful, unless the stress on one-way communication to influence the audience is balanced with the necessity of maintaining interaction and dialogue between the organization and its constituent interest groups.

Nevertheless, Ways suggests that a positive solution to the need for mutual understanding and trust between business and the public can be found in the function of public relations. It was the serious public criticism of business in the early 1900's that led to the creation of the modern public relations/publicity function. Early public relations techniques were a defensive reaction to strong "negative feedback" from "muckraking journalists" and a few public
officials. Traditionally, the "P.R. man" has explained away criticism and typically defended the status quo in the interest of his client. Thus, the common interest of high-quality, two-way (helixical) information flow between clients and critics to achieve "gradual freedom from lower level distortions," as Dance puts it, was sacrificed to the client's private interest and legitimate need to "explain" why the status quo should be maintained.

What is this new role for the public relations practitioner? Ways comes close to articulating a new theory of public relations but finally concludes that business merely should "recognize" the public's "need" for an understanding of business. He does not suggest that a public "right" is involved, although he clearly indicates that such a "right to know" more about a private business may yet emerge.

The second major voice in the search for a new theory of public relations is that of Dr. Albert J. Sullivan, professor of public relations at Boston University's School of Public Communication. His call for public relations reform was described in his unpublished doctoral dissertation: "Professional Education for Public Relations." Sullivan's analysis of contemporary public relations problems and his suggestions for specific reform will be summarized in Chapter V, "Toward a New Theory of Public Relations." For the present, his presentation of the need for a broader philosophy of public relations and communication spotlights an important problem confronting society today. At the
beginning of this chapter, it was suggested that "an unusual search is underway for values, principles and behavioral practices" to cope with the new communication society. As Dr. Sullivan puts it:

The next phase of public relations will be far more challenging than its first one. Because society will demand it, it will round out many other dimensions beyond legitimate advocacy and creative salesmanship; its "press relations" will develop beyond special truths. Exactly how is not known, but the need is known.15

Again, the need is suggested; the function certainly must be important if society "demands" a new kind of public relations; but still no clear solution is advocated at this stage of his study.

Gerhart Wiebe, Dean of Boston University's School of Public Communication, said in 1965, seeing the problem much the same:

No powerful institution can any longer deny that in addition to its legitimate partisan interests, it is also involved in each and all of the important public problems. This involvement constitutes a large and relatively unexplored area of additional activity that challenges public relations men. . . .

But . . . we are not concerned now with assigning the PR men to the task of solving public problems. We are concerned only that he and his institutions accept the obligation of responsible participation in rational attempts to cope with public problems. . . .

If corporations . . . accept the obligation of responsible involvement in public problems, then the requirement of full participation is that they assess and fully disclose their impact on society as it relates to the problems at issue. . . .

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Blatent dishonesty is no more a problem among PR men than it is among other occupational groups. But there is a defect that robs the PR man of credibility in public dialogue and that will continue to compromise his aspirations for professionalism until it is corrected. That is the practice of biased advocacy based on partial disclosure of relevant facts.16

The concept of "participation," in this case, by institutions, appears over and over again in connection with the role of public relations and social progress, that is, solution of public problems. Again, the "one-way" communication role is stressed, now as a negative factor. Yet Weibe points out the difficulty of achieving competence in maintaining a communication process between an institution and its constituent groups. He asks:

What does one do under such a broad mandate? How does a PR man come to grips with this additional assignment of effectively relating a corporation to the public and the formidable gamut of public problems? At first glance the assignment seems impossible.17

An "impossible" assignment does not deter other more entrepreneurial souls. Dr. Chandler Harrison Stevens, holder of an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering and a doctorate in economics, has formed a company called Participation Systems, Inc. of Concord, Massachusetts. He served as a citizen participation consultant for the governor of Puerto Rico. In 1970, he told a New England regional conference on Science and Technology for Public Programs:


the Communications Revolution seems to be creating a new culture, less elitist than the old, less dependent for communication on the hierarchical channels of bureaucracy, less susceptible to manipulation by corporate managers and paternalistic experts, less likely to be herded along in great urban masses. Big Brother is an extrapolation of the bureaucratic-corporate-urban culture which begot the Communications Revolution. Citizen feedback (or society control by Little Brothers) is a concept more consistent with the participatory culture which seems in turn to have been begotten by the Communications Revolution. It might help turn the Communications Revolution into what Governor Ferre (of Puerto Rico) calls a "revolution of human understanding."18

The key phrase here is "participatory culture."

Apparently, the powerful little machines--"Cyclops," as one writer termed them--of the communication society have created conditions under which new forms of communicative behavior are called for. Dr. Stevens probably lacks the traditional credentials of the professional public relations man; yet his expertise lies in the same area--improving the societal information flow. He even has formed a profit-oriented company to serve this new client he labels "Little Brothers." A sceptic might question the unbiased interest of the Puerto Rican governor but the citizen participation movement is new enough to interest governments in the feedback processes. Chapter III, "Citizen Participation and Other Forms of Feedback," will be devoted to this new development. Its implications for the public relations profession is relatively unexplored in literature of the field.

One point, in the context of attempting to clearly state

the problem of this thesis, should be made: that is, another communication-related profession may be emerging—the one serving interests of institutional leaders and their set of interests and needs and the other serving as a counter-balancing force by serving interests of "little brothers," as citizens, employees, students, consumers, and so on. It may prove impossible in a capitalistic society to mediate between institutions or groups by maintaining the communication processes at peak efficiency; if so, the public relations function will remain what it actually is today, i.e., in Weibe's words, "the practice of biased advocacy based on partial disclosure of relevant facts." The arguments for and against this new force of participation as group and societal feedback will be summarized in Chapter III. An actual project of "upward communication" in a city will be described in Chapter IV, "Case Study of a Participation Experiment."

The unique social function of public relations has been described by Dr. Otto Lerbinger, chairman of the public relations division of Boston University's School of Public Communication, as:

... both a philosophy and a process. It is a philosophy which recognizes the need to balance private and public motives, and it is a process which mediates between people and between organizations. It is this "in-between" role which constitutes the focus of public relations. Since these links which connect people, groups, and society are the concern of many professional fields, public relations must confine itself to some limited aspect. Many terms have been used to describe this aspect: the creation of understanding, the establishment and maintenance of favorable attitudes, and so on. No
few words of definition, however, adequately describe the complex nature of public relations.

Public relations is a reflection of our society's concern with public opinion. When another person's attitude toward us becomes important, half of the public relations equation is present. The other half is there when we set out deliberately to create a desired impression. This two-way process is part of practically every human interaction. Patterns of these links characterize the groups that form our society.

The role of public relations, then, is to help establish, define, and regulate the relationship between one social unit and others. The public relations man is an "in-between" man—one of those people who help society to run more smoothly. His particular function, however, is to work in the interests of a particular organization. He may try to do one or more of three things: help clarify and strengthen its status and power, enhance the value of its products by developing favorable attitudes toward them, and act as a social bookkeeper who helps adjust the inequities that arise in our economic system.19

Again, the concept of two-way process, balancing, mediating, in-between functioning characterizes the practice of public relations. Lerbinger specifically limits the public relations practitioner to working "in the interests of a particular organization," although he places equal importance on the "need to balance private and public motives."

At the beginning of his essay on "The Social Function of Public Relations," Lerbinger notes:

Public relations is one of the newer specialized fields which reflect the growing importance of public opinion in the management of all kinds of groups and organizations.20

20 Ibid., p. 53.
Here again is support for the concept of the emerging participant society, in which all social units interact to a much greater degree than ever in history. Lerbinger then immediately points to the nature of the value shift in contemporary society, which has been labeled the "Participant Society" by political scientist Daniel Lerner.\(^{21}\) Says Lerbinger:

> The trend which in the past century has made government more responsive to the will of the people is being repeated by other institutions of society. This is true of more and more businesses, which have become less and less private; it is true of non-profit institutions, which must appeal to the general public rather than to a few philanthropists for support; it is true of virtually every organization which finds it advantageous to be understood and, preferably, to be liked.\(^{22}\)

This trend to which he refers is most likely a consequence of the spread of the idea of universal, free education, whose American exponent was Horace Mann of Massachusetts. As men became more educated and better informed about the natural laws and enduring philosophical questions, the idea took hold that conditions actually could be improved. The notion that a man could expect something better than poor health and backbreaking labor has been labeled in recent years the "revolution of rising expectations." The powerful role of education and the mass media is now considered to be


a direct cause of the creation of an expressed "will of the people" that demanded "more responsive" government. As the Boston Tea Party symbolized it, man wanted a voice in decisions that concerned him most deeply, such as taxation.

Those professional communicators who "mediated" were required to become highly skilled information interpreters and translators, as Dr. Robert F. Bundy put it in the June, 1972 issue of the Public Relations Journal. His essay on the changing role of the professional communicator spotlights the importance of the feedback factor in the communication process, and thus the need for reform of present practices to keep up with the forces at work within the emerging information and participation society. Says Bundy:

There is much talk today about the changing role of the professional communicator. In large part this re-examination has resulted from the turbulent decade of the '60s. The professional communicator emerged intact from this period, but somewhat unsure of himself. What he had learned was that in moments of organizational crisis caused by powerful conflicts in the larger society, top management had frequently not turned to him for guidance.

This was disquieting and prompted many professional communicators to ask what their organizational position was or should be, and what skills they would need to be a professional in the future.23

His analysis of the deep changes engulfing modern man will be discussed in the next chapter; yet his conclusions about the proper function of the professional communicator provide

the final evidence that the Participant Society is emerg­
ing—not with a whimper but a bang—inaugurated not by a
questioning Socrates or an inspired Rousseau but by a real
clash of ideas at the police barricades. As Bundy sees it:

The professional communicator must be highly
skilled as an information interpreter and translator.
This is not a new idea but needs to be strongly re-
vised. The role of interpreter should emphasize
response to consumer demand and public judgment more
than activities designed to influence and mold public
opinion regarding the philosophy and programs of
management or clients.

In short, the sensitive interpretation and move-
ment of information about public issues, opinions and
demands into the organization, should consume the
major energy of the professional communicator.

The forces prompting social change are demanding
that organizations show forceful leadership in dealing
with complex social problems. These forces are less
interested in what an organization says it is doing
than in what the organization is in fact doing. . . .

In our information rich society information of all
kinds is readily available. But lacking are people
who have the ability to organize and analyze this
information; the ability to give coherence and meaning
to the streams of data pouring in on us incessantly.

No professional group has a monopoly on all the
skills implied here, but the professional communicator
has one edge. He is at home with information, knows
the sources of information, has expertise with the
techniques for organizing and communicating information
and understands how to judge the impact of information
on others.

The professional communicator is thus not just a
passive transmitting channel, although he often has
played this role in the past. He must combine his
communication techniques with the skills required to
Understand, judge and translate what he believes is
important to communicate to his management or clients.

To accomplish this he will have to establish new
information systems and communication channels within
and outside the organization. Ultimately, the criteria
of success will be the degree to which he is perceived
as able to influence policy decisions within his
Mankind is at a great juncture point in human history. The possible implications for the future extend beyond anything our limited foresight can currently envision. Nevertheless, the future will arise from human choice and action. There will be an urgent need for courageous interpreters and translators of information in a changing social order.\textsuperscript{24}

Here are the directions for the changes in the public relations profession that will be explored more thoroughly in the final chapter on the emerging outlines of a new theory of public relations.

One final aspect of the emerging participation society, a paradox that has been implied but not yet made explicit, lends credence to the call for institutional public relations reform from linear to helixical communication processes. Briefly, as the relationship between social units becomes more complex and interdependent, and as political and economic institutions become larger and more powerful in our daily lives, it becomes correspondingly more difficult to gain access to the knowledge and information needed to participate effectively in the decision-making processes. Consequently, it is in the Participant Society that participation is most necessary yet most difficult. Studies of the Participant Society must recognize the difference between pre-industrial man living in relative isolation and post-industrial man existing in Marshall McLuhan's "electric information" environment, realizing that man acting

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., pp. 10-12.
alone and aggregate man acting in and through institutions are quite different forces. As Dr. Bundy puts it:

A knowledge-based economy emerges; power shifts to institutions producing knowledge and intellectual innovation. The traditional product oriented business firm ceases to be the major source of innovation in society.

To borrow from Peter Drucker, we have become a society of institutional pluralism in which organizations carry out our important social tasks, are the vehicles through which social change occurs, and are primarily designed to make knowledge productive. Organizations have become the environment for man as land and nature were the primary environment for pre-modern man. Much of our social, economic and political theories of the past have become inadequate for understanding the society of organizations.25

Yet, to avoid the "alternative future of horrible dehumanization as mass man, . . . . a more desirable future can be invented only if man becomes the basic unit of social and moral analysis--not mass man, but each individual as a thinking, feeling person with a biography capable of dignity and distinction."26

Why look to the profession of public relations particularly to protect the dignity of the individual? Why not law or journalism or education or the ministry? Why look to public relations practitioners to contribute anything significant to the needs and problems of the complex "world that communication and transportation have built"? How can the professional communicators of the public relations function add anything lasting to the "unusual search underway for

25 Ibid., p. 10.
26 Ibid.
values, principles and behavioral practices" by which man can better participate in the "exceedingly complex" world of communications? Concludes Sullivan:

The mutual values peculiar to public relations light up the road to professionhood. They are based, as every profession must be based, on human rights sacred to the person. And the particular rights, to know and to be free, are among the richest gifts given to the human person; to respect the mutuality inherent in them is public relations' privilege.

Partisan values are not enough; commitment to a corporate person, or to a managerial group, or for that matter to any single person or single group, is a noble thing, but wanting; each and every person's rights must be protected. Partisanship can never support a profession.

Someday, then, when public relations has fought its revolution for mutual values and won, when it has mastered imagery--then there will be no more confusion about just what it is, or just what it does, about whether it is an art or a science or a matter of degree. It will be the profession of human communication.27

Summary

The quality of life depends on the quality of individual and institutional participation in an emerging kind of "participant society" in which the new forms of communication have created conditions that make the inalienable right to participate very difficult to preserve. Controlled and uncontrolled forms of feedback constitute an essential factor in the struggle to preserve human rights, to balance public and private sectors in solution of complex common problems, and to maintain basic communication processes of

human existence. A wide variety of thinkers call for reform of the practice of public relations to provide for effective feedback processes with all the sensitivity, talent and skill of the professional communicator. Extension of traditional, one-way, partisan, persuasive information programs is suggested for upward communication, multi-channel interaction processes among institutions and their constituent elements. The public relations practitioner can help provide opportunities for all to participate in the communication process.

Broad agreement exists that a new theory of public relations—a new explaining principle of human communicative behavior—is needed to focus reform efforts on specific changes in contemporary values, principles and behavioral practices. The helixical model of human communication holds promise as a workable visual representation of the emerging participation theory of social progress, which studies society through actual and preferred information interaction patterns of communicative action, feedback reaction, communicative action and so on. The ultimate purpose of this approach to the study of human behavior is the need for mankind to ultimately free itself from distorted mental pictures of social and physical reality in order to assure psychological adaptation and evolution with the accelerated, changing nature of the information environment and technological age.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE PARTICIPANT SOCIETY

"Participation is the key," say Cutlip and Center in *Effective Public Relations*.1 Discussing the employee public, they conclude, in the only reference to participation in the entire text:

An ounce of meaningful participation can be worth a ton of pamphlets. Organizations are learning this. There is a consequent shift to group discussions. An affiliate company in the Bell System made a study of its presentation of a rate-increase request to its employees. This affiliate found that participation-type meetings were the most effective in getting this complex story to employees. The company's researchers found that "belief and knowledge were best in situations where employees said they had a 'whole lot' of discussion." Straight presentations with little or no discussion were much less effective.

Situations in which employees can fully participate can: (1) provide means of two-way communication, including feedback of employee questions, mistaken notions, and so forth; (2) provide individuals with means of self-expression and tap the creative ideas latent in any group; (3) uncover opposition and obstacles to plans before they are put into effect; (4) encourage a sense of responsibility for the decisions made and thus pave the way for a change.

. . . . Participation of employee representatives in the actual conduct of management-level affairs, although outside the PR orbit, is another vehicle. This area, long considered sacrosanct, has had some

test invasions. Committees without power are common. . . But the most provocative development in industrial relations in employee-management participation is the Scanlon Plan . . . in which union members get bonuses for tangible savings in labor costs. Its supporters hold that the Scanlon Plan's success is due to the fact that workers participate in the real thing. Participation must be used with sincerity and not as a manipulative device.

"Feedback" thus is useful both in a negative and positive sense. Feedback, it is suggested, is useful in determining whether the communicator's message "got through" and in detecting "opposition and obstacles." It is also useful as a device for self-expression and encouragement of responsibility in order to "thus pave the way for a change." One legitimately should question the true motives behind such employee participation; certainly if the feedback to any proposed change were highly negative (such as the probable reaction to longer working hours or fewer vacation days), then such feedback would be a mere "manipulative device" for management. If, on the other hand, the survival of the organization depended on active employee commitment to its goals, it is probable that management would include an employee representative on the board of directors and would provide numerous opportunities for employees to participate in goal-setting processes. Feedback as "self-expression" would be valued for its own sake as an individual right to participate in relevant decisions.

Therefore, if "participation is the key," as Cutlip

\[2\text{Ibid., pp. 235-236.}\]
and Center advocate, one would expect much, much more coverage in a student textbook of actual case studies and descriptions of feedback/participation techniques. But the authors place these participation activities "outside the PR orbit," thus effectively limiting "Effective Public Relations" basically to a one-way message process.

A broader interpretation of the feedback factor is essential but, apparently, not likely to be found in this most popular standard public relations text or other such standard works except as a device to gain "understanding and acceptance" for predetermined institutional objectives. Yet the role of feedback in the processes of change is acknowledged. It may be that by the end of the Seventies it will be the public relations executive who is responsible for communication staffs that include specialists in employee or consumer participation procedures—specialists who in a governmental setting would be skilled in citizen participation processes.

Support for this trend is found in Daniel Lerner's essay, "Toward a Communication Theory of Modernization."³ Placing his concept of the "Participant Society" in terms of undeveloped nations and programs for modernization, Lerner also notes the need for a new theory of communication:

"What is needed in the years ahead he was writing in the early Sixties is a new conception of public

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communication as the crucial instrument which can promote psychic mobility, political stability under conditions of societal equilibirum. The mass media can be used to mobilize the energies of living persons (without creating insatiable expectations) by the rational articulation of new interests. Flanked by the schools and community leaders, the mass media can simultaneously induce a new process of socialization among the rising generation that will, among other effects, recruit new participants into political life.4

Lerner describes this type of development as the "Participant Society" and provides a major focus for this thesis. Lerner was unusually prophetic about coming upheavals of the Sixties, noting:

The decade of the 1950's witnessed the spread of economic development projects around much of the world. This process of reviving cultures, emerging nations, and new states was widely characterized as a "revolution of rising expectations." . . . A great forward surge of expectancy was awakened during the past decade among peoples who for centuries had remained hopeless and inert.

A significantly different mood characterizes our thinking about the decade before us. While rising expectations continue to spread around the underdeveloped world, those of us who retain our interest in comprehending or programming rapid growth have learned that the ways of progress are hard to find, that aspirations are more easily aroused than satisfied. There is a new concern that the 1960's may witness a radical counter-formation: a revolution of rising frustrations. There is a seasoned concern with maintenance of equilibirum in societies undergoing rapid change . . . The political function in this process is to maintain stable controls over these rapid changes—i.e., to preside over a dynamic equilibrium.5

Little did he know that his comments would apply to coming developments in most societies, developed and underdeveloped, and that the affluent nations held concealed

5Ibid., p. 331.
pockets of poverty and injustice that would express most dramatically the fact of "rising frustrations." Lerner saw in the mass media the primary source of modernization and social progress, stating:

Communication is . . . the main instrument of socialization, as socialization is, in turn, the main agency of social change . . . The modernization process begins with new public communication—the diffusion of new ideas and new information which stimulate people to want to behave in new ways. To parallel the economist's model of the growth cycle, we may represent the conditions for an expanding polity and modernizing society as follows:

![Diagram of socialization process]

This model stimulates the peasant to want to be freeholding farmer, the farmer's son to want to learn to read so that he can work in the town, the farmer's wife to want to stop bearing children, the farmer's daughter to want to wear a dress and do her hair. In this way new public communication leads directly to new articulation of private interests . . . the farmer's son who wants literacy and a town job is likely to raise a son who wants a diploma and a white collar. Socialization thus produces, ideally, the new man with new ideas in sufficient quality and quantity to stabilize innovation over time.6

He sees communication as the primary source of the modernizing process; it is a continuing cycle dependent on feedback from new interest aggregates and political recruits—a continuous flow of information throughout a society in which journalists and professional communicators logically perform

6Ibid., p. 348.
a key role. This role of mass media was a major change in national life, and Lerner saw a serious world-wide threat emerging early in the Sixties:

Our understanding begins with recognition that the revolution of rising expectations has been a major casualty of the past decade. In its place has risen a potential revolution of rising frustrations. This represents a deep danger to the growth of democratic polity in the world. People who do not aspire do not achieve; people who do not achieve do not prosper. Frustration produces aggression or regression. Neither process is compatible with the dynamic equilibrium that promotes modernization... Communication is the crux... to recruiting new participants into political life.7

Finally, Lerner expands the concept of the Participant Society in terms of the relationship between mass media and democracy:

Democratic governance comes late historically and typically appears as a crowning institution of the participant society... The connection between mass media and political democracy is especially close. Both audiences and constituencies are composed of participant individuals. People participate in the public life of their country mainly by having opinions about many matters which in the isolation of traditional society did not concern them. Participant persons have opinions on a variety of issues and situations which they may never have experienced directly—such as what the government should do about irrigation or armies to Israel, and so on. By having and expressing opinions on such matters a person participates in the network of public communication as well as in political decision... The governed develop the habit of having opinions, and expressing them, because they expect to be heeded by their governors. The governors, who had been shaped by this expectation and share it, in turn expect the expression of "vox populi" on current issues of public policy. This mechanism which links public opinion so intimately with political democracy is reciprocal expectation.8

7Ibid., pp. 349-350.
8Ibid., pp. 342-343.
Lerner points out an example of what it means to actually participate for the first time. He tells of Egyptian villagers who were completely isolated until radio came to their remote villages. "For the first time in their experience, these isolated villagers were invited (and by none less than their rulers!) to participate in the public affairs of their nation." Yet, he notes, nothing else changed in their daily round of life except the structure of expectations—the typical situation that has been producing the revolution of rising frustrations. Leadership is crucial at all times, and Lerner suggests:

... the statesman of an enlarging polity and modernizing society will seek to expand opportunities for people to get what they want. He will seek above all to maintain a tolerable balance between levels of aspiration and achievement. In guiding the society out of the vicious circle toward a growth cycle his conception of the role of public communication is likely to be crucial.

This is a brief summary of Lerner's communication theory of modernization; its stress on improved communications processes and its accurate anticipation of the social tensions of the Sixties support the urgency of better understanding of the true nature of the feedback factor in these societal processes. A key phrase in Lerner's theory is "expectation"; both the governed and the governors "expect" expression of public opinion; this "expectation" is the central attitude which fosters and encourages democratic

9 Ibid., p. 344.
10 Ibid., p. 345.
processes of more open, continuous information flow patterns.

A better understanding about the nature of "expectation" is necessary in attempting to explain the powerful role of feedback in the communication process. There is a provocative theory from the literature of music that has very direct application. Formulated by Leonard B. Meyer in *Emotion and Meaning in Music* in 1956, the theorem states: "Emotion or affect is aroused when a tendency to respond is arrested or inhibited."\(^\text{11}\) Termed the General Theory of Expectancy, it argues that the longer uncertainty persists in a musical composition (or in a social situation, such as a demand by Negro students for university reform on selection criteria), the greater the feeling of suspense to be aroused. Consequently, the greater will be the build-up of tension, and the greater the emotional release will be upon resolution.

Applying this theory to the communication processes, we would predict that where the "governed" expect their expression of opinions to affect public policy, tension would be created if this feedback to institutional actions were inhibited by a suspension of democratic processes in favor of, for example, military rule. The normal communication processes would have been "arrested" and thus the "tendency to respond" in the form of voting or free expression

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of opinions would have been inhibited, thus arousing intense emotion and a high probability of riots. The key factor is whether or not participation is expected; if the democratic idea of "consent of the governed" as a national right is not expected to apply in certain institutions, such as the military or modern corporations, then no expectation for participation in the decision-making processes exists and consequently conditions supporting a "tendency to respond" are absent from the situation.

However, the mass media create expectancy by holding up to audiences the idea of natural rights, such as Sullivan's "right to participate in decisions that affect" us. In street language, this translates into wanting a "piece of the action." Extending the concept, if employees nominated and voted on a corporate board chairman, as they do in their role as citizens for government leaders, then the idea of "consent of the governed" would have finally found its way into society's powerful economic institutions. As Ways suggests in the Fortune magazine article quoted in Chapter I, and as will be shown in Chapter III, there is a strong trend in this direction that is fueled by universal education and the mass media.

Another way of examining the powerful role of expectancy as it relates to feedback elements in the communication process is to look at the role of the mass media in creating "expectations" in the minds of men. As previously suggested, only when the governed expect their consent to make a
significant difference, such as in the choice of a leader, and only when the governors expect "vox populi" to be the deciding factor in their continued occupation of high office, does the principle of "reciprocal expectancy" become operative. Thus, as Louis Wirth suggests below in a discussion of "Consensus and Mass Communication" in Mass Communications:

... people may never know that they are exploited and oppressed until they see their own humble status juxtaposed to an actual condition of relative freedom and opportunity that exists in some other society with which they are in contact, or unless there is held out to them some ideal condition which is possible of achievement and to which they consider themselves entitled. The idea of natural rights is an example of projecting into the minds of men an ideology which serves as an ideal against which they can measure their actual condition, and the experience with this kind of ideology in recent times shows that it has made dictatorship of any kind untenable in the long run.

It is the consensual basis that already exists in society which lends to mass communication its effectiveness. It is upon these mass media, however, that to an ever increasing degree the human race depends to hold it together. Mass communication is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, the main framework of the web of social life. If it is consensus that makes an aggregate of men into a society, and consensus is increasingly at the mercy of the function of the mass communication agencies as it is in a democratic world, then control over these instrumentalities becomes one of the principle sources of political, economic and social power. The harnessing of this power is an infinitely more complex and vital problem than any previous challenge that the human race has had to meet. In mass communication, we have unlocked a new social force of as yet incalculable magnitude.\textsuperscript{11}

Wirth was writing at the beginning of the Cold War era, the

late Forties. He was preoccupied with the argument over whether democratic forms of government could prevail against authoritarian forms. It is now apparent, several decades later, that every industrial society has similar problems and the role of the mass media, to a large extent, serves a similar function in shaping attitudes and reciprocal expectations. This is a function of the universal character of the "mass society," which Wirth defines as:

... aggregations of people who participate to a much greater degree in the common life, and, at least in democratic parts of the world, comprise people whose attitudes, sentiments, and opinions have some bearing upon the policies pursued by their governments. In this sense mass societies are a creation of the modern age and are the product of the division of labor, of mass communication, and a more or less democratically achieved consensus. 12

Then Wirth comes to the heart of the participation theory of public relations, first noting that the development of numerous giant organizations in business and industry, professions, government and social life seem to dominate our existence and to characterize our civilization13:

Many of these organizations have become so colossal that they themselves come to approximate masses. The sense of belonging and of participation which smaller and more compactly organized groups are able to generate is hence largely frustrated by the very size of the typical organizations of our time. This is perhaps a price we must be willing to pay for living in an interdependent and technologically highly advanced world. But it also should constitute a major challenge to the analytical skill and the inventive imagination of social scientists, especially sociologists, for it is to a large extent upon the ability to maintain effective contact between the leaders and the membership of the giant structures that the future of democracy rests.14

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Here, then, is a clear charge to a functional profession that can improve societal and institutional communication processes. Here, long before the publication of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The New Industrial State*, which analyzed the gargantuan power of these huge economic and social institutions, is an attempt to define a problem that remains unsolved despite a host of sociologists and professional communicators. When the processes finally almost completely broke down in the Sixties, a climate for reform and innovation was created in which major advances in the public communication arts and sciences could be proposed and undertaken. Chapter I demonstrated the serious scientific and corporate attention now being given to societal communication needs. That the skills of professional communicators are required is evident from Wirth's definition of "consensus in mass democracies":

... not so much agreement on all issues, or even on the most essential substantive issues, among all the members of society, as it is the established habit of intercommunication, of discussion, debate, negotiation, and compromise, and the toleration of harasses, or even of indifference, up to the point of "clear and present danger" which threatens the life of the society itself. Rather than resting upon unanimity, it rests upon a sense of group identification and participation in the life of a society, ... 15

Because our institutions are too large for personal intercommunication, because our cities are sprawling urban megalopolises, the need for practical, effective techniques of participation is increasingly urgent. The theoretical foundation for a participation theory of public relations is

15 Ibid., p. 574.
almost in place; there is strong support for the idea that effective "participation in the life of a society," as Wirth put it, is a cornerstone in the societal structure of any nation.

Given the proper theoretical model of communication, an analysis of effective and ineffective social structures could be undertaken in order to diagnose and remedy the social ills resulting from these inadequate communication patterns. One possible model is that proposed by Frank E. X. Dance in Human Communication Theory. He suggested an helical model (see Figure 1) of the communication process, which was summarized in Chapter I. Dance notes:

... the helix presents a rather fascinating variety of possibilities for representing pathologies of communication. If you take an helically coiled spring, such as the child's toy that tumbles down stairs by coiling in upon itself, and pull it full out in the vertical position, you can call to your imagination an entirely different kind of communication than that represented by compressing the spring as close as possible upon itself. If you extend the spring halfway and then compress just one side of the helix, you can envision a communicative process open in one dimension but closed in another. At any and all times, the helix gives geometrical testimony to the concept that communication while moving forward is at the same moment coming back upon itself and being affected by its past behavior, for the coming curve of the helix is fundamentally affected by the curve from which it emerges. Yet, even though slowly, the helix can gradually free itself from lower-level distortions.16

Dance comments in passing that this geometric form crops up as a descriptive device in a number of disciplines, specifically as a model of the DNA molecule, which is the key

genetical molecule and has been called the "spiral of life." The scope of this thesis does not permit further development of this approach to the study of communication pathology; however, it does strongly suggest the desirability of open rather than closed communication processes and also the need for the feedback aspect to be considered.

Fig. 1.—Dance's helical spiral as a representation of human communication. 17

One principle aspect of this theoretical analysis of the Participant Society is its emphasis on achieving more accurate symbolic representations of the communication process, as opposed to specific communicative acts. This approach is based on the same line of thought developed by Wirth and other sociologists interested in the formation of

17 Ibid., p. 296.
a social theory of communication. An excellent summary of these efforts is found in "The Search for a Social Theory of Communication" by Hugh Dalziel Duncan. He makes an important point about the nature of efforts to examine communication on a theoretical basis:

Many disciplines are now beginning to concern themselves with communication theory as a social theory, and with social theory as a communication theory. Emphases differ, but however different their emphases, and however various their contexts of observation, modern students of communication theory agree that the symbolic forms constitute social reality. They hold in common the belief that how we communicate determines how we relate, just as how we relate determines how we communicate. 18

Duncan suggests that we can only know reality through symbols of reality, a centuries-old philosophical argument convincingly proved by Albert Einstein. Duncan argues that:

... communication theory, as a sociological theory, must be concerned with how symbols are used to create and sustain social order. It is no longer enough to say society exists in communication. It is necessary to show how society exists in communication. The first step toward such a statement is the most difficult. It requires us to believe that symbols constitute social order. The kind of symbols we have, the ways in which they are used, for what purposes, by what kinds of men, and in what kinds of acts, will determine how we relate to each other.

As a result of the belief in the power of symbols to mediate between man and the gods, those who become "professional masters of symbolism" can use "their status within the community to impart vigor and intellectual elaboration to their beliefs." Symbol-makers, through their magical power, become very powerful in shaping the "distinctive character of the economy."... as well as the political organization of the state.

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Man creates the significant symbols he uses in communication. Symbols are not "given" by God, "evoked" by natural needs, "forged" in the class struggle, or "perfected" in the "pure realms" of art. They are used to relate, and when we have new needs in relationships, we need new symbols.19

"Symbolic forms constitute social reality," he argues. Thus, logically, changing symbolic forms constitute changing social reality. The stage is now set for a deeper inquiry into the nature of the communicative process; if those who create new symbols to represent new relationships do not understand the significance and consequences of their actions, then their impact on society could have unintended yet disastrous effects. For example, what are the true effects of false advertising, of misleading symbols about a politician's philosophy, of misleading advocacy? Can it be proven that "symbolic forms constitute social reality?"

Surprisingly, support for this viewpoint is found in the philosophic insights of Albert Einstein, whose famous equations penetrated long standing mysteries of the universe and disclosed some fundamental truths of physical reality. His equations were symbols for new relationships and thus he was the originator of a major philosophic system that comprises past and future, creation and the universe—a philosopher who formulated laws of relativity, gravitation and even the photoelectric law which made television possible.20

19Ibid., pp. 250, 239, 252.

What can a cosmic physicist say about mere human concerns? For one thing, he can offer useful symbolic representations which perhaps can be useful in explaining complex social relationships, such as the relationship between feedback and social progress. It has been stated by many that the practice of public relations lacks a coherent explanatory theory; this may be because there is no commonly accepted philosophy of human communication which explains the myriad activities we call communication. Yet the transfer of meaning from one person to another depends primarily on symbolic representations of perceived reality; because Einstein perceived a new reality of physical relationships and conceptualized his vision by means of appropriate symbols, others were able to share his insights and release the energies of the atom and mass media. Einstein changed physical reality by changing mankind's perception of reality from that of a world of absolute, final truths to one of relative, uncertain truths. In so doing, he opened the door for further questioning of so-called "self-evident" truths, encouraging questions about the dangers of a communication process, for example, in which feedback, or reaction forces, are interrupted or inhibited. He also provided support for the helical model of communication, which suggests that social progress depends on the ability of mankind to gradually free itself from inaccurate symbolic representations of reality.

After Einstein had shown how the amazingly accurate
laws of Galileo and Newton could not account for certain slight deviations, the whole edifice of Newton's machine-like universe began to topple. Scientists finally had concrete proof for the centuries-old philosophical argument that since every object is simply the sum of its qualities, and since qualities exist only in the mind, the whole objective universe of matter and energy, atoms and stars, does not exist except as a construction of the consciousness, an edifice of conventional symbols shaped by the senses of man.

Einstein carried this train of logic to its ultimate limits by showing that even space and time are forms of intuition, which can no more be divorced from consciousness than can our concepts of color, shape or size. These philosophical subtleties had a profound bearing on modern science as scientists became aware of the alarming limitations of man's senses. The sun, for example, emits many other kinds of radiation which the eye cannot detect; it is evident, therefore, that the human eye fails to respond to most of the "lights" in the world, and that what man can perceive of the reality around him is distorted and enfeebled by the limitations of his sensory organs. Realization that our whole knowledge of the universe is clouded by our imperfect senses makes the quest for reality seem hopeless. If nothing has existence save in its being perceived, the world should dissolve into an anarchy of individual perceptions. But a curious order—even a contradictory order—runs through
our perceptions, as if indeed there might be an underlayer of objective reality which our senses translate.

For example, more than two centuries of experiment and theory asserted that light must consist of waves. Yet Einstein's photoelectric law shows that light must consist of photons, or innumerable particles of radiant energy. He had uncovered one of the deepest and most troubling enigmas of nature. This fundamental question—is light waves or is it particles—has been answered only by asserting that it must be both. Yet no instrument of science could help man see a particle of light because, as Heisenberg stated in 1927 in the Principle of Uncertainty, even with a huge microscope the physicist can "illuminate" his subject only by using radiation that, no matter how short in wave length, exerts a violent force on electrons. Therefore, by the very act of observing the electron's position, its position is changed—and always uncertain. Called quantum physics, this theory shakes two pillars of the old Newtonian science of absolutes, causality and determinism. For by dealing in terms of statistics and probabilities it abandons all idea that nature exhibits an inexorable sequence of cause and effect between individual happenings. By its required margins of uncertainty it yields up the ancient hope that science, given all relevant facts and data, can eventually precisely forecast future physical events based on logical cause and effect. One by-product of this surrender to uncertainty is new evidence for the existence of free will. For if physical events are indeterminate and the future is unpredictable,
then perhaps the unknown quantity called "mind" may yet
guide man's destiny along the infinite uncertainties of a
capricious universe. Another conclusion is that wherever
a man attempts to penetrate and spy on the "real" objective
world, he changes and distorts its workings by the very
process of his observation.

As Einstein developed the special and general theo­
ries of relativity, he explained their meaning partially
with an example of one of their basic laws: that the
velocity of light is the top limiting velocity in the uni­
verse. He explained that a yardstick moving with ninety
per cent of the velocity of light would shrink to about
half its length; thereafter, the rate of contraction
becomes more rapid. And if the stick should attain the
velocity of light, it would shrink away to nothing at all--
becoming pure energy. It is because of Einstein's unwil­
ingness ever to accept any unproven principle as self-evi­
dent that he was able to penetrate closer to the underlying
forces of nature than any scientist before him and probably
after him. Yet relativity did not contradict classical
physics, which based its theories on the fact that man in
his everyday experience never encounters velocities great
enough to make these changes manifest. Relativity simply
regards the old concepts as limiting cases that apply solely
to the familiar experiences of man. Einstein thus surmounted
the barrier raised by man's impulse to define reality solely
as he perceives it through the screen of his senses. By
further deduction from his principle of the relativity of mass, Einstein in a few short mathematical steps showed with his famous equation, "E=mc^2," that the property called mass is simply concentrated energy—the distinction is simply one of temporary state.

Einstein's theoretical edifice provokes numerous questions and a few possible answers for the student of human communication. Are we truly free to participate, as Sullivan advocates? In all likelihood, the answer is yes because of the strong evidence against a mechanistic, behavioral world of cause and effect. Do we have a right to true information? Yes, we have the right because we are free to participate in the search for true information, or reality, which probably is impossible to determine but the search must be attempted in exercising our natural right. A more accurate symbolic representation is the most we can hope for. Does the principle of uncertainty explain certain aspects of human communicative behavior? Perhaps so, because if to study an electron or even an individual person is to change it or him, then perhaps probability techniques are the best methods by which to study the nature of man through analysis of aggregate behavior instead of individual behavior.

There is no reason why Einstein's symbolic representation of reality, as expressed in his relativity theory, cannot be useful in the construction of a parallel symbolic representation of the actual human communication processes in
contemporary society. For example, this thesis basically concerns relationships between individuals and the powerful institutions which either employ them or affect their lives so deeply. Just as an individual finds it difficult to exist today without the support of his institutions, so also are institutions strongly affected by the collective opinions of the individuals who make up these institutions.

What then can we learn from a relativistic approach to a conception of the universe that is helpful in understanding more about the forces that bond individual and institution? We find that our focus should be neither on the institution nor on the individual exclusively--no more than we can consider the moon detached from the earth. Contrary to popular belief, the moon does not revolve around the earth; they revolve around each other--or more precisely, around a common center of gravity. Einstein ultimately was more concerned with the invisible forces that hold these two units together. He was unwilling to accept the popular belief that the moon revolved around the earth as self-evident. In the physical world, he asked, why is it any more strange to assume that very fast moving yardsticks contract, than to assume that they don't? In the "mysterious" world of human affairs, we could ask why is it any more strange to assume that social change is a function of feedback between institutions and individuals?

In summary, it is apparent that Einstein himself was the major source of energy--the creative, energizing human mind--acting out of free will which led to television and
atomic power, the two most powerful forces confronting man today. Out of Einstein's probing and speculation was born an idea that literally transformed "reality" in less than half a century. There is sufficient reason, then, that Pierce, as noted at the beginning of Chapter I, would direct society to the problems of a world of complexity and difficulty for those poorly educated and uninformed about the reality of contemporary conditions and also direct it to the difficulty of governing the inhabitants of such a changing, capricious civilization. Einstein not only freed society from a distorted perception of reality, he also participated in changing the very nature of the universe which he described by observations that in themselves modified the previous reality.

Einstein applied his theories to the forces that hold solar systems and the universe together; another profoundly influential scientist/philosopher examined the forces that bind society. Norbert Wiener's book, Cybernetics: Control and Communication in the Animal and Machine, was published in 1948, the same year as Shannon's Mathematical Theory of Communication—both highly influential works. As indicated below, Weiner would agree indirectly with Wirth that "The harnessing of this power [mass media] is an infinitely more complex and vital problem than any previous challenge that the human race has had to meet."21

As stated elsewhere in this chapter, there is a need for useful symbolic representations of the communication process, especially of the relationship between feedback and social progress and institutional survival. Weiner's concept of "homeostasis" adds more evidence for the need for improved feedback processes within society and its institutions. As Pierce summarizes Weiner's idea of "homeostasis":

... homeostasis: the functioning of an organism or a system so as to correct for adverse disturbances. Homeostasis involves two processes: the detection of deviation from the desired state, and negative feedback, by which the discrepancy between the desired state and the present observed state is corrected. The processes of homeostasis may fail in many ways.

For the overall process to function, we must satisfactorily sense that some correction needs to be made. Beyond that, however, negative feedback may itself result in instability. This happens when there is too much negative feedback, or when it acts too quickly in a system in which some responses are necessarily slow. ...

... "small, closely knit communities have a very considerable measure of homeostasis; and this, whether they are highly literate communities in a civilized country, or villages of primitive savages... It is only in the large community, where the Lords of Things as They Are protect themselves from hunger by wealth, from public opinion by privacy and anonymity, from private criticism by the laws of libel and the possession of the means of communication, that ruthlessness can reach its most sublime levels. Of all these antihomeostatic factors in society, the control of the means of communication is the most effective and most important."22

"Control of the means of communication" in society

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apparently is the focus of Weiner's analysis, as it was for Wirth, who noted that "control over these instrumentali-
ties [the mass communication agencies] becomes one of the principle sources of political, economic and social power."23

Here emerges the critical role of the mass media as a central mechanism of the feedback processes; yet clearly a problem is inherent in the institutionalization of the mass media of television, radio, telephone, newspaper, film, and so on. As Pierce puts it, reacting to Weiner's comments:

No doubt greed, self-interest and callousness do account for failures of communication in our overall community of interest. We may observe, however, that the world in which we live and which affects our daily lives has become overwhelmingly complex. We cannot possibly understand it in the sense that we might understand a small, closely knit community. If we do not disregard the larger world, we must perceive it as it is represented by the media of mass communication. Is this, however, a real world, or is it a myth that stands in the place of something we cannot possibly understand?24

Pierce is suggesting that the media present symbols of reality, that what we perceive and know beyond our immediate experience has its source primarily in the powerful mass media of communication. What if those who control the mass media contribute instead to "antihomeostatic" conditions? What if they are protected from public opinion, from private criticism? What if negative feedback is blocked out, except in the form of audience ratings for a given program or publication? We face a paradox: the effective functioning of

society depends on negative feedback from the mass media—the "mediators"—but most institutions of the media, whether profit or state controlled, are unable to carry out this critical, evaluative function for the society as a whole. Therefore, if individuals are to freely participate in the decision-making processes of society, new forms of societal feedback must be discovered and perfected. Conversely, when an institution or society understands and protects the processes which create homeostasis, or equilibrium, then the helical model of the communication process describes the corrective actions of institutions in response to societal feedback in many forms. This would suggest that Dance's helical concept and Weiner's homeostasis concept are useful representations of the actual communication process. Further, these concepts provide additional evidence that the practice of "one-way" message transmittal is a form of social control; if negative feedback were permitted open expression, institutions necessarily would be forced to receive these messages and thus perhaps change direction. Logically, the traditional practice of public relations is designed specifically to preserve the status quo for public and private institutions which employ its practitioners. Traditional public relations, then, is for the most part an "antihomeostatic factor in society," since "control of the means of communication is the most effective and important."

Yet, homeostasis involves two processes: detection of deviation from the desired state, and negative feedback,
by which the discrepancy in the desired and actual state is
adjusted. Weiner suggests that too much and too fast nega-
tive feedback results in instability. This concept will be
directly examined in the case study of a participation
experiment in Chapter IV, in which expression of Negro
demands for equal treatment, housing, jobs and education
can be seen as a form of negative feedback to the institu-
tions of one Southern community. According to Weiner, the
higher the measure of homeostasis, the better an organism
or a system corrects for adverse disturbances. For example,
a specific application of homeostasis was the negative feed-
back of the civil rights protest and racial rioting in the
cities during the Sixties, with the consequent blue-ribbon
commission reports and ensuing national civil rights legis-
lation as a form of correction in the direction of the
social system. Thus, the capacity of the federal, state and
local governments to maintain homeostasis, or stable commu-
nication processes, throughout a period of rapid changes in
attitudes and values, is a function of whether a society
can respond quickly enough to the perceived inequities in
its system of social justice. This concept will be examined
in more detail in Chapter IV, in which the "upward communi-
cation" or "feedback" processes are tested.

Galbraith's analysis of the contemporary industrial
state in 1967 provides another useful model of the communica-
tion processes, with particular application to the large cor-
poration. He notes in The New Industrial State:
It is more useful to think of the mature corporation as a series of concentric circles /instead of a formal, hierarchical structure of command/. The band within each pair of circles represents a group of participants with a different motivational system. In the more spacious bands at the outer reaches are the most numerous groups. Such in general is their motivational system that they are the most loosely attached. At the center is what is now called top management. Theirs is the firmest attachment. Between are the others. With this image in mind the motivational system of the various participants in the corporation can be much more intelligently considered.25

A graphic representation of Galbraith's model would look like this:

![Diagram of Galbraith's model](image)

Fig. 2—Representation of Galbraith's institutional motivational system.

The "motivational system" would be similar to a solar system's gravitational forces; it is not insignificant that Galbraith's concentric rings of an organization have their origin in our solar system, suggesting further study of the forces that hold a system together. Apparently, there has been a significant change in the symbols used to describe the communication process and also a social unit of organization. A consistent parallel is evident: from absolute to relative truths, from straight line to helixical communication models, from hierarchical to concentric organizational structure. Participation, then, in the unit's decision-making process would be increasingly difficult if participants were in the outer rings and increasingly easier where participants communicate within the inner rings. Factors of space and time, therefore, have a quantitative effect on the degree and kind of participation possible; a participation theory of public relations would have to consider these factors as much as factors of symbol accuracy and appropriateness.

Finally, we conclude this discussion of selected theoretical research with the basic ideas raised by Dr. Robert F. Bundy in Chapter I. He sees far-reaching changes engulfing modern man; in light of the ideas presented earlier in this chapter, his five propositions regarding social change are helpful in sketching a framework for understanding our recent past and alternative futures which may be emerging. Dr. Bundy suggests:
Proposition 1: Because of rapid social and technological change modern man has no assurance his current knowledge will be valid in the future.

Proposition 2: Technology offers new opportunities and problems and expands the range of choices open to man.

Proposition 3: Many of our new choices can't be made on the basis of traditional values.

Proposition 4: Expanded choices lead to expanded conflict.

Proposition 5: Management of a technological society requires the systematic organization of intelligence and an intelligent system of organizations.26

In effect, he is saying, the old symbols have lost their power and new symbols of the changing social and physical reality are taking their place. He suggests:

... the need for the professional communicator to extend his professional role beyond the routinized technical skills normally associated with communications and public relations. Technicians will be able to handle most of the things that consume the time and energies of the professional communicator today.

In short supply, however, will be those who understand the power and limitations of communications and communication techniques; those who see the context for professional communications in a technological society; those who can sift through, organize and interpret symbolically information and can bring meaning to this information in ways the technician can't.27

Bundy's five propositions focus on what is changing rather than on what is remaining constant. Expanded choices and expectations for an increased number of participants

27 Ibid., p. 12.
requires new techniques of arbitrating conflict among the participants, whose symbols of this changing reality are less than adequate for coping with the stresses and strains of the emerging participation society.

Summary

As Cutlip and Center put it in their popular textbook, "An ounce of meaningful participation can be worth a ton of pamphlets." This type of feedback completes the communication process and gradually the interaction between institutions and constituent groups frees a society from distorted, inaccurate symbolic representations of reality.

Public communication through the mass media can promote societal equilibrium in which rising expectations and frustrations must be balanced. The modernization process begins with new public communication; thus, communication is the main agency of social change. When expected participation in the communication processes is arrested or inhibited, social tension is created and ultimately results in social protest or violent expression of group attitudes. Democratic government is based on "reciprocal expectancy" between governors and those governed on the role of "consent of the governed." The mass media maintain this expectancy relationship and thus become one of the principle sources of political, economic and social power. Therefore,

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28 Center and Cutlip, Effective Public Relations, p. 235.
the future of democracy rests on the ability to maintain effective contact and intercommunication among society's giant institutions and between these institutions and their members.

Problems in the communication processes can be approached with the aid of the helical model and the concentric circle model. Since symbols are used to create and sustain social order, and actually constitute social order, those who are professional masters of symbolism are very powerful in shaping the economy and the state. Yet new symbols are created to express new relationships, such as the raised fist of the black power movement, and "Ms." of the women's rights movement. Man's perception of reality is a changing kaleidoscope of relative relationships dimly perceived through always distorted symbols of underlying reality. Choices are inevitable because of the evidence against determinism and a mechanistic universe. Assumption of free will supports the right to participate and even the obligation to participate in society's affairs. Prediction of man's behavior in the aggregate is based on probability theory but the uncertain nature of the single individual makes it impossible to draw conclusions from the study of one individual.

When a society or any organization is in a condition of homeostasis, it functions so as to correct for adverse disturbances; the feedback processes are essential in maintaining a state of equilibrium so that correction can be
made between the desired state and the observed state. Control of the means of communication is the most effective means of preventing and creating change and modernization, since our perception of the larger world is formed by symbols presented through the mass media. One-way communication is in actuality a device to maintain status-quo conditions. A participation theory of public relations relates symbol analysis, space/time positioning of participants, homeostasis conditions, and social change.
CHAPTER III

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND OTHER FORMS OF FEEDBACK

Several different aspects of feedback as an essential factor in the communication process have been investigated in the first two chapters. The analysis has been primarily conceptual and theoretical up to this point. However, before a workable participation theory of public relations can be proposed and developed, it is necessary to demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that new forms of feedback are increasingly influential as forces of social change. The most dominant of these new forms of feedback is found within the urban setting. Lewis Mumford has described the modern city as primarily a machine for storing and processing information. Since urbanization, or the population shift from farm to city, is a world-wide phenomenon, the quality of urban communication processes becomes of primary importance to the future of civilization. What is a city? For some, it is where the action is. For others, it's where the jobs are. For all, it is a tight, complex mass of humanity—a mass of communicative behavior and symbolic activity. The 1970 census indicated that approximately three-fourths of the

American population lives in metropolitan areas. This continuing population shift has created what is commonly called the "urban crisis," and with the majority of the American population living in these urban areas there is some justification for considering the problems of America's cities to be the nation's number one domestic problem. A city has its multitude of individuals somehow making the difficult decisions between a desire for identity and the absolute necessity to accommodate to the organization and discipline required for coexistence in close living conditions. The challenge in urban planning is no longer how to make cities larger, but rather how to make them more livable and efficient in performing functions useful to their inhabitants. Arnold Toynbee and others argue that the large cities must create a social setting for inhabitants on no larger a scale than that of a rural village.² This suggests that conditions of homeostasis are better maintained in smaller rather than larger social units. Since communication processes are the instruments of social control and change, the nature of these information mechanisms within the urban area is of critical importance.

Daniel Lerner, in his discussion of the Participant Society (as outlined in Chapter II), called attention to the dangers of political apathy and non-participation in democratic societies.

Yet as American society presented the world with its most developed model of modernity, certain flaws in the operation of the system became apparent. I speak of a deep flaw in the participant system as a whole, i.e., the emergence of non-voting as a political phenomenon. In recent years an alarmed David Reisman has generalized this phenomenon to the larger menace of political apathy. If Americans were really suffering from widespread apathy about their public life, then a cornerstone of our media-opinion system would be crumbling—namely, in our terms, the cornerstone of motivation.3

Reportedly, about half of eligible Americans voted in the 1972 presidential election. This low degree of citizen participation in the affairs of society probably should be interpreted as a dangerous warning sign. Yet voting may be only one useful indicator of apathy. As a form of feedback, voting is important but not necessarily the most important. The number of citizens volunteering to work at solutions to urban problems is another indicator of apathy and non-participation. For comparative purposes, a report from London on volunteer activity is useful. Christian Science Monitor reporter, John Allan May, reported in the December 6, 1972 issue from London, England that "there has been a sudden, and very powerful, increase in 'citizen involvement' throughout England."4 May continued:

Wherever you go—and wherever you stay—there are street groups, community groups, civic groups, county groups, campaigning for houses, objecting to roads, building community centers, demanding inquiries, suing for compensation, insisting on consultation.

The British, a nation traditionally working on the slogan "never volunteer," suddenly seem to have become instead a country of 50 million volunteers.

An official report published this year for the Ministry for the Environment underlined another new trend, too. Whereas in the past volunteers have tended to "plug the gaps" in government programs, the role of the government now quite often is to plug the gaps in voluntary community efforts, so great are they, and to help train and even pay local community leaders.

Even the rate of growth of membership of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds by now is 30 percent per annum.

Almost every county has a County Naturalist Trust. There the rate of recruitment is increasing by 35 percent.

The Trust for Conservation Volunteers is recruiting more than 1,000 new members a year.

More than 1,000 local amenity societies are registered with the Civic Trust. More than 200 affiliated voluntary groups and 40 associated trusts now lend muscle to the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

Other volunteers these days effectively tell the planners where airports are to go, and reservoirs, and motorways.

This now has quite dramatically become "the island of involvement."5

In America, the Christian Science Monitor reported on December 1, 1972, that since 1969 two housewives had joined with eleven other aroused citizens to form what today is a 600 dues-paying membership of the Cherry Hill League, a non-partisan citizens' action group. The accomplishments of this league demonstrate the powerful force of citizen participation

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5Ibid., pp. 1, 16.
as feedback in the communication process. The article reported that the Cherry Hill League: (1) published a list of $1.7 million in delinquent tax accounts resulting in collection of two-thirds of this amount in one month; (2) halted building of a high rise apartment that would have overloaded traffic and sewage facilities; (3) publicized an inflated $25 million school budget with specific waste in administration and forced town officials to make drastic cuts; (4) won adoption of an ethics code to prevent conflict of interest between town officials and industries conducting business with the township. According to the article, the League's first president said that the most serious obstacle to overcome was public apathy. She said the group's major goal is public awareness and laying the facts before the people, feeling that once they know what's going on, reform is just around the corner. When the local press was fearful of political reprisals for printing news released by the crusading group, the Cherry Hill Leaguers overcame the problem by distributing their own newsletter in shopping centers and neighborhoods, reaching about 4,000 people. These two examples indicate first the powerful impact of collective individual participation on public affairs and second the growing role of citizen participation-type feedback in maintaining both stability and needed change. Another note of interest is the application of public relations techniques of message preparation and distribution such as the League

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The need for more feedback and more citizen participation was recently expressed at the nation's highest political levels. In his State of the Union message on January 22, 1971, Richard M. Nixon said, "Let us give the people a chance, a bigger voice for themselves in deciding for themselves those questions that so greatly affect their lives." He urged a return to local government, noting that "local government is the government closest to the people and most responsive to the individual person." He also pointed out that "most Americans today are simply fed up with government at all levels." Knowledge of the election results for just about any municipal election will reveal astonishingly low percentages of voter participation at the local level, suggesting confirmation of contemporary, apathetic, American voter attitudes. Voting, then, is not sufficient feedback, especially at the local level of government, to maintain the communication processes that must exist before community action can be taken on pressing problems of urban decay.

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8Ibid.
9Ibid.
racial strife, education, poverty, crime, and pollution.

The problem of lack of feedback was defined in another way by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in its January, 1972 report entitled, The New Grass Roots Government? Decentralization and Citizen Participation in Urban Areas. The report stated:

The 1960's witnessed a widening physical and psychological gap between governments at all levels and the people they serve. As a consequence, decentralization of services and citizen participation in program planning and administration have become critical public policy issues confronting American federalism in the 1970's. Particularly in cities and counties, these approaches are receiving growing attention as means of increasing bureaucratic responsiveness, improving service delivery effectiveness, reducing citizen alienation, and restoring grass roots government.11

The report also pointed out in its introduction that:

Many citizens, especially the poor and minorities, felt they were unable to gain access to the "system" and to influence decisions affecting their lives either through the bureaucracy or the ballot box. In the wake of declining services and persisting bureaucratic remoteness, they became more and more apathetic and alienated.12

Noting that traditional forms of citizen participation, such as voting, holding office, belonging to professional and civic groups, and so on, and also that decentralization mechanisms have been unsuccessful in opening two-way city hall-neighborhood communication channels in many cities, the report stated that reformers have called for various innovations in


12Ibid., p. 1.
Their new approaches reject many of the tenets of the municipal reform movement during the first half of the 20th century—including centralization of authority under the chief executive, professionalism, efficiency, economy, nonpartisanship, and at-large elections—and substitute in their place such values as devolution of power, citizen control, responsiveness, effectiveness, and neighborhood-based political responsibility.

In 1967, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission) recommended the establishment of effective grievance-response mechanisms, neighborhood city halls, and multiservice centers as ways to increase the proximity and accountability of local government to the community. Also, in 1968, the National Commission on Urban Problems (Douglas Commission) recommended that municipalities over 250,000 establish neighborhood city halls to administer certain decentralized services—health and welfare, police, recreation, employment, and code inspection.

In the years following these national commission recommendations, several observers have advocated similar and other reforms designed to narrow the gap between city hall and neighborhood. The most common proposals deal with complaint handling machinery, little city halls and multiservice centers, neighborhood or community development corporations, and community control of such functions as education and police.

In 1977, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations surveyed all cities and counties over 25,000 population. The questionnaire dealt with a wide range of decentralization-participation devices which can be classified under three progressively greater degrees of decentralization: territorial, administrative, and political.13

The results of the questionnaire suggested that:

... several cities and a few counties are making progress in decentralizing services and involving citizens in decision-making concerning their delivery. Yet most

13Ibid., pp. 1-3.
of the activity to date can be classified as territorial or administrative decentralization, with citizens playing an advisory and, to a lesser extent, a policy-making role. The degree of authority, responsibility, and discretion devolved to subordinate organizational levels or citizen groups varies widely in accordance with jurisdictional size, location, type, form of government, and other factors, such as the availability of federal community action or model cities funds. With respect to political decentralization or community control, the survey results suggest that it will take quite a while for reality to catch up with rhetoric.  

The Center for Governmental Studies, in a report issued in 1971, stated that "Most mayors, city councilmen, and administrators, particularly in this past decade, have been faced with the challenge of creating more meaningful communication with citizens and . . . [have] a strong feeling for the need to adopt new approaches to problems." This report examined decentralization programs in twelve American cities and concluded:

. . . in almost all neighborhood programs where citizens have had a voice in the type of programs and in the selection of key staff persons, the programs were substantially more successful. The mere delivery of services to residents, even if of high quality, has not significantly improved the image of government, voter appeal on bond issues, or a reduction of citizen alienation. Some level of citizen involvement seems to be necessary.

If the mayor and City Council decide to create citizen councils and if they are serious about their permanency and effectiveness, they must give them some responsible decision-making authority in order to maintain the interest of members and to create a true sense

14 Ibid., p. 21.

of participation. Anything less is bound to end in failure.

... little city halls, citizen councils, community corporations, and other techniques can provide the necessary link between the administration of resources and the citizen so that he truly has some control over his environment and destiny.

Additionally, the mayor and other city officials must develop a style and temperament that register their community concerns with sincerity. It is this motivating atmosphere which may move a community and help to establish a "sense of community," which some feel is even more important than structural changes. It is the development of a basic trust between governmental officials and citizens, and it involves the proper distribution of resources to accomplish goals. It can be facilitated by the development of some acceptable channel of communication between government and citizens. It can hardly exist without it.16

Finally, additional documentation on the increasing influence of citizen participation in governmental affairs is found in a 1970 report entitled, "Local Government Modernization Study" for Salt Lake City, Utah. The study does not merely mention the need for citizen awareness and participation in government. It states:

We recommend a broadened concept of local government responsibility to its citizens. This concept accepts and acts upon the obligation of local government to provide an adequate means of two-way communications between the citizens and government, and to provide a continuing flow of meaningful information about their government to the citizens.17

Public debate for and against the concepts and activities of citizen participation has emerged in recent years.

16 Ibid., pp. 31-33.
17 "Local Government Modernization Study" (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah, 1970), Report No. 2, p. 3.
Some say citizen participation is nothing new; others see citizen participation as a pathway toward more political power for the disenfranchised poor, minorities, and other groups. A handbook on citizens' organizations published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in its Management Assistance Program series (1971) identifies four separate theories of citizen participation: cooption, consultation, education/social therapy, and community power. These approaches are goal-oriented; each aims at achieving a different end as the result of citizen participation. More than one strategy can be and usually is followed by an individual HUD program at a given point in time. First, cooption is a strategy based upon the premise that citizen participation is a necessary condition for a success of a given program. This aims to keep projects from being killed because of opposition within the target area through building a constituency. Second, the consultation strategy is based on the premise that educational background and lifestyle of many planners and policy makers tend to make them incapable of comprehending problems of low income people. Consultation relies on three processes: informing area residents about options available to them, marshalling citizen opinion, and incorporating community ideas into the final plan or program. But no formal redistribution of governmental power is involved. It is possible to manipulate information flowing to citizens.

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or to select "representative" citizens who will merely confirm previously prepared plans. Third, the education/social therapy approach is based on the assumption that only by actively involving residents of the target area in programs affecting them can they actually gain the ability to improve their conditions. Participation becomes a form of citizenship training and a means of developing self-confidence and thereby overcoming the deep-rooted distrust and alienation of many low-income individuals. The realization that attitudes of people and not just goods and services are the answer to many urban problems is the foundation of this approach and perhaps its greatest contribution. Finally, the community power strategy consists of a fundamental redistribution of governmental power in order to allow those normally excluded from political and economic processes to gain some influence over these forces. This means inclusion of the poor, by means of community organization efforts, in political processes that affect their lives. One approach aims at making local governmental institutions more responsive and democratic by including citizens on joint policy boards. The other approach aims at establishing independent political power bases of low-income areas by placing complete authority in the hands of those persons formerly without any voice in allocating resources. The handbook states:

Clearly HUD had in mind a partnership and cooperative agreement between the city and the community.

^19^Ibid., pp. 1-3.
although it refrained from determining the "ideal" organizational structure and relationships... 

While Model Cities Legislation and HUD guidelines rule out the possibility of "citizen control" of the program... they do not define to what extent citizen participation should exist, and agreements and understanding must be reached separately in each program... 20

The case for more and better citizen feedback, that is, citizen's response to and involvement in government policies and programs was made in an unusual forum in the January, 1971 issue of Technology Review, published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Entitled "Citizen Feedback: The Need and the Response," it argues that new methods of communication—which amount to a communications revolution—have made it easy for leaders to communicate to their constituencies but have comparatively weakened the voices of the people in reaching their governments. Its author, Chandler H. Stevens, who is a lecturer at the MIT Sloan School of Management, notes that direct forms of citizen response to government include voting, applause, individual expression, and political organization. He adds that indirect forms of citizen feedback are derived simply from what individuals do from day to day and that this indirect feedback includes a myriad of statistics and social indicators which is better referred to as "societal feedback" rather than "citizen feedback," since the individual citizen is less consciously in

20Ibid., p. 3.
direct control of this information. Stevens argues that the development of television, radio, and newspaper wire services has made dissemination of centralized information very easy. He asks whether new systems of citizen feedback capitalizing on our new technologies, such as the time-shared remotely accessible computer, can be used to help redress the imbalance in political communications. He says:

If indeed this can be done, the Communications Revolution could come to have as great a significance as the Industrial Revolution. For just as the Industrial Revolution diminished the power of the economic elite that had been most concentrated under the Feudal System, so also should the Communications Revolution diminish the power of today's "knowledge elite" - the so-called Establishment. In other words, the Communications Revolution should yield a more even distribution of knowledge power, just as the ongoing Industrial Revolution has been yielding a more even distribution of economic power.

... Not only has television stimulated social consciousness; the colleges and universities, bulging with children of an increasingly large middle class, are helping to create a "knowledge middle class," suspicious of the old knowledge elite, of the Establishment, which is of privileged experts in government, of paternalistic specialists who continue to look down on what they once knew as the "ignorant masses." This new knowledge middle class does indeed have something to say.

Stevens cites the price mechanism of the market place and the voting process as traditional but inadequate forms of feedback. "What seems to be needed," he says, "is an overall citizen-feedback system to provide a bridge between the price mechanism and the voting process, thus spanning an increasingly broad and turbulent information stream." He

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 40.
Yet, while there has been considerable speed-up of communication from the center of society out to the citizen, there has yet been little done to increase the speed of communications back in to the center from the citizen; he is still expected to "go through channels" with his inquiries, requests, complaints, suggestions, and opinions.

However, certain resourceful citizens who felt strongly about issues during the decade of the 1960's found a way to be heard—the mass demonstration. Unlike applause, which shows approval, the demonstrations of the 1960's tended to focus on strong disapproval—disapproval of such things as war, prejudice, poverty, housing conditions, university policies, environmental pollution, urban highways, various neighborhood conditions, police actions, and judicial decisions.

In the 1950's political analysts often complained of public apathy. Others proposed that public inaction was due more to feelings of alienation than to feelings of apathy. Later in the 1960's this alienation gave way in certain quarters to action in the form of protest, particularly with the development of the civil rights movement, and indeed the 1960's can be characterized by this transition from apathy to alienation to protest. These young people had been exposed to a dramatic speed-up in communications from the center out, and they completed the feedback loop when they learned to use the same medium—television—as a weapon (and I use the term "weapon" advisedly) for communication back to the center.

The change has been so complete that now—in 1970—complaints about public apathy are seldom heard.

Street protests may not seem a desirable form of citizen feedback even to many who participate in them. But what other forms of feedback are available, in what many citizens now see as a crisis situation? Are other forms of citizen feedback—the telegram campaigns, petition drives, teach-outs, door-to-door canvasses used extensively during the Kent-Cambodia crisis of the spring of 1970—rapid and effective enough to keep pace with the present rate of change within our society and with the speed-up in communications from the center out?

Developing a comprehensive system for citizen feedback on governmental policies cannot exactly be viewed as searching for the modern equivalent of the New England open town meeting, unless one recognizes that rarely have
all citizens participated in decisions on all issues at such town meetings. . . . It is only because modern communications make it feasible for all citizens to have easy access to inexpensive receivers and transmitters of information that any citizens who in fact have a stake in, some experience on, or a deep concern about particular societal problems can then make real contributions to the solution of such problems.

The contribution of the individual citizen need not be a well-articulated opinion or suggestion. A personal complaint, or even a well directed inquiry by a citizen, can help trigger a change in government policy—if only government will listen.24

Stevens cites a number of recent innovations in and out of government that he feels may help government and other societal institutions listen to the citizen, recognizing the need for discussion of specific information mechanisms. These innovations include the establishment of an ombudsman, or a government official who investigates citizen complaints against government agencies, neighborhood city halls, which include staff members and use of an information and referral service information file. Outside of government, he includes political parties with their traditional award system as another citizen feedback system. Two new projects of the Republican National Committee are listed: first, Republican Action Centers, which are basically telephone answering services in Negro neighborhoods of large cities but whose personnel help citizens in dealings with government and which by skillful management of press releases do have the power of publicity, which he says in theory is the ultimate weapon possessed by most ombudsmen, who are also similarly buffered from the

24 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
bureaucracy. The second project mentioned is Listening Posts, meetings for a wide variety of individuals which are designed to provide in-depth information on important problems to Republican leaders at the state and national level. For each problem area discussed by various Listening Posts, a thirty-minute presentation is prepared for national party leaders, including the president. He also cites letters to the editor columns and in major daily newspapers, action-line columns which handle complaints mailed or phoned in by readers. He also notes regular reporting of opinion polls, but suggests that these do not include the measure of intensity of feeling that is needed for effective citizen feedback. Another citizen feedback form noted is the increasingly popular radio talk show and a new television show, "The Advocates," which has experimented with various mail, telephone and button pushing arrangements for viewers and members of the studio audience to cast their "vote" for or against whatever specific proposal is under discussion. 25

What about the mass media? Stevens says that:

... no matter how much they come to report citizen feedback, the mass media will probably always be primarily oriented towards reporting societal feedback (what's happening, more than what people think) and feedforward (information projected both forward from the center of society to the citizens, and forward in time so as to suggest what consequences will likely occur if various choices are made by individual citizens and by the society as a whole). 26

Terming Ralph Nader the number one ombudsman in the

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25 Ibid., pp. 42-43.  
26 Ibid., p. 43.
United States today, who, as a self-appointed individual has no more than the power of the law and public opinion at his disposal, Stevens suggests that Nader's effectiveness means that the Communications Revolution may well be tipping the balance of power in favor of such individuals and against large corporations. This is another form of feedback, bearing the label "consumerism," and Stevens notes that big corporations and big unions as well as big government are attacked by Nader for allowing health hazards, monopoly practices, deception, and the like to persist. Noting that not one of the thirty-nine Harvard Law Review editors who graduated in June, 1970, according to Time magazine, intend to join a Wall Street law firm and instead plan to enter neighborhood agencies or governmental service and represent the individual against the institutions, Stevens asks:

Will a similar transformation take place in the scientific community? While it takes a good lawyer to use hard facts to prove a point, more often than not it takes a good scientist to produce such facts and to produce the information systems needed.

A citizen-feedback system should not be viewed as simply feeding back opinions already formulated by citizens acting independently of the system. The word feedback implies a closed loop where citizens affect policies (and projections) which in turn affect citizens, etc. Scientists . . . often fail to provide for continuous adjustment of plans in accordance with partial results and on the basis of opinions from persons directly affected by such plans.27

Stevens points out an important difference in the role of feedforward, or information that suggests what will happen

27 Ibid.
if a proposed action is taken, and in feedback, which indicates what has happened as a result of actions. He notes that scientists not only should produce feedforward but also interpret feedback.

Yet there is today no well-developed academic discipline concerned in broad terms with the design and development of more rational social systems.

... economics is involved with the price mechanism and political science with the voting process, but neither is likely to be too concerned with the application of new communications technology to citizen feedback systems, ... .

... several applied disciplines, including urban planning, public administration, business administration, management science, operations research, and industrial engineering ... focus on the design not of general societal systems but of subsystems, ... .

What seems to be needed in our universities, particularly in our technological universities, is a new discipline, perhaps even a new school, of societal systems -- systems for societal communication, decision making, and development -- drawing upon or even integrating elements of social science and humanities (the latter because societal feedforward must in the best sense be both informative and entertaining); ... .

Stevens outlines a citizen feedback system which he helped develop in Puerto Rico. This system takes an overall view of the needs of the citizen to communicate with government with inquiries, requests, complaints, suggestions, opinions, and volunteering. He says, "The resulting information system is flexible and not dependent upon fixed facilities, as are neighborhood city hall systems, nor upon single personalities, as are ombudsman systems." How does the Puerto Rican system work?

28 Ibid., p. 44. 29 Ibid.
The principal components of the Puerto Rican system are: a group of nonpolitical, easily accessible, specially trained citizen aides whose job is to serve individual citizens in the system by handling letters, phone calls, personal visits; a public service handbook which gives details about whom a citizen approaches and how he proceeds on any of about 800 government programs; and a feedback reporting system which gives the Governor, his cabinet, and his aides summaries and examples of cases in a manner which may suggest improvements in various government services and programs.

The citizen aides were initially located in the Governor's office and in certain San Juan fire stations, but the system is now being expanded on an islandwide basis so that numerous feedback stations manned by citizen aides are being located in fire stations in heavily populated neighborhoods.30

Stevens notes that a telephone system connects every neighborhood fire station directly to citizen aides in the Governor's office and that a mobile unit is used in rural areas. He adds:

Further experiments are being undertaken to develop other possible components of the system such as a talent bank, information retrieval to supplement the handbook, a tickler file on open cases, an opinion feedback questionnaire, listening-post experiments to seek reasons behind opinions, and various feedback presentation techniques to be employed in the Governor's Information Room . . . and in public media.31

How can a citizen feedback system be developed for use elsewhere? First, says Stevens, existing feedback mechanisms must be inventoried and evaluated and these differ among cultures, states, and metropolitan areas. Second is a step to design an overall communications system which both improves upon existing components (laws, regulations, administrative procedures, application forms, reports, civil service attitudes, policy review techniques, etc.) and adds new components
such as telephone networks, decision models and computer programs, citizen aides and ombudsmen, interactive television and so on. The political leader who can handle this type of process is probably rare indeed. However, the points in these various feedback systems and activities at which public relations/communications skills and techniques can be applied are sufficiently plentiful to make the potential role of public relations practitioners and concepts apparent. Clearly, these sophisticated citizen feedback systems will require a new team of communication experts; the communications generalist known as the "public relations man" has much to learn about these new, emerging participation processes.

A more negative view of increased citizen participation and of the principles of a more active, participatory democratic society is held by some scholars. Two political scientists argue:

... Whenever a democratic system falters or even seems to, somebody prescribes more democracy. These days, not any old kind of democracy will do: "participatory" democracy is the miracle drug that idealists like.

To the degree that mass representative institutions—political parties, legislatures, elected executives—are denigrated in favor of more direct modes of activity to that degree the majority of the people will be without the means of participation through which they can most effectively make their will felt. In short, to impose requirements of direct participation on those desiring a voice in decisions would be to insure that the incessant few rather than the sporadic many would rule; thus the slogan "power to the people" really proposes to replace a representative few, who are elected, with an unrepresentative few, who are self-appointed.
We raise this issue not because we are opposed in principle to the idea of an active, participatory democratic society. . . . We do not favor efforts to implement ideal goals when the preconditions and the means of achieving these goals do not exist.

More importantly, we do not favor actions which in the name of democracy (or under any other disguise) restrict the ability of most of the people to have their political say.\textsuperscript{32}

A negative view of citizen participation is also held by a director of a regional planning commission, who suggests:

\textit{... some of my counterparts around the nation ... have suggested} the creation of a "forum" for discussion and deliberation, hopefully structured to assist the planning agency in formulating a series of goals statements.

\textit{... My concern is that the "forum" soon overshadows the planning and administrative agencies, and energies are thereby so dispersed and dissipated in seeking universal agreement on a specific issue that the entire battle may well be lost.}

Stated differently, care must be taken to assure that citizen participation and citizen dissent are kept in equilibrium. It is all too easy to let emotional involvement overtake rational dialogue, to the detriment of citizen concern and rational planning and development programs. When this situation develops, we serve neither our local governments, our citizens, or our planning objectives.\textsuperscript{33}

A veteran of the urban renewal wars finds that the application of "participatory democracy" to urban programs has been a positive force overall, but suggests that it take new forms. A former director of redevelopment agencies in


New Haven, Connecticut and Washington, D.C., Thomas Appleby notes that:

"Participatory democracy" became the catchword of the '60s. Participation oftentimes degenerated into unreasonable and anarchic insistence on total "citizen control" accompanied by "nonnegotiable demands." In its most extreme form the rhetoric, taken literally, was antidemocratic and violative of processes established to conduct the public's business in a responsible fashion. Nevertheless, a few would dispute the validity of the essence of the complaint—that people affected by governmental actions should and could be involved more intimately in the decision-making process.

What should government now be doing to stimulate or discourage citizen participation as a movement for enlarged involvement in governmental decision-making?

American political stability has been achieved in the context of two dominant parties. Funneling local citizen participation efforts through party machinery could help preserve inherited political values.

Appleby asks, "Are these forces still at work, or does the relative quiet today represent a more or less permanent condition?" He answers:

The ultimate expression of the past decade's anger—the riots—continues to cast a long shadow as the patience of the black man is again tested in the extreme. The potential for riots is everywhere ... most of the causes ... persist: the belief that you can't fight city hall is still widespread; blacks still feel outside the system; big government gets bigger, national priorities haven't been reordered noticeably ... 

Yet it would not be accurate or sufficient to prognosticate a mere repetition of recent history. The

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34 Thomas Appleby, "Citizen Participation in the '70s: The Need to Turn to Politics," City, May-June, 1971, pp. 52, 55.

35 Ibid., p. 52.
riots, which cannot be divorced from the aggressiveness of the citizen movement in general, were to some extent cathartic, and their futility is apparent to all but the revolutionaries. Citizens are more sophisticated and therefore more willing to accept the limitations imposed on their bureaucratic partners, who are now more willing to negotiate decisions with citizen representatives.

So the outcome for the '70s is unclear. Above all the answer lies in the way government will respond to demands for involvement.

Surely it is the mandate of a democratic society to constantly readjust the relationship between the citizen and his sovereign. The objective is, of course, to improve conditions, not to disrupt the political and administrative systems, as sometimes happened as a result of the tactics of confrontation. 36

It is apparent that citizen participation processes are now a fundamental part of the American political and social process. Where angry blacks and left-out whites can use processes available to them for making their voices heard on their needs and opinions, this is, in effect, building up the processes of public opinion creation and change that are at the center of a democracy. Where public opinion is a negligible force in the affairs of government or in the affairs of any economic organization or association, then there likely will soon be a real question of organizational survival. If public relations practitioners are "workers in public opinion" then this role would make the public relations function directly responsible for maintaining communication processes between organizational leaders and the institution's public which are of most importance to them. This would then place

36 Ibid., p. 53.
the public relations executive in the role of favoring increased citizen participation, consumerism, labor union involvement in the affairs of the business organization, and in general in support of any activity that brings its individuals and institutions toward a more common understanding rather than toward conflict.

The foregoing discussion of citizen participation as a form of feedback in the societal communication processes was limited, of course, to analyses of individual behavioral activity in the role of voter and citizen in relation to the government. The other forms of feedback which will be mentioned very briefly portray the individual in his roles as consumer, employee, and so on. A study also could be made, although it is not within the scope of this thesis, of the feedback factor in international relations, national and state political structures, military forces, corporations, unions, schools, churches, and the family. However, the scope and variety of feedback forms in various individual roles can best be sensed by random examples taken from various newspaper articles, magazine essays and other such sources. This technique relies on the power of the specific example to suggest new patterns of societal feedback.

We read about the Chicago construction worker who watched the Democratic convention riots on television, and the more he watched, the angrier he grew: "Those kids... they were trying to tell us something, to get a message across. The thing is, they could've done it a little
The job of corporate director is no longer a pleasant sinecure. Directors are getting on more committees, meeting more often, and feeling freer to put tough questions to management. Institutional investors need to be more widely represented. One promising idea is for the institutions to establish a foundation that would provide directors to speak for the institutions and their shareholders. The interest of society—or various segments of it—are increasingly being represented by new kinds of directors, such as women, young people, and blacks. The demand for still greater recognition of the public interest is likely to be an important question for years to come, and will create further changes in the way corporations are run. Some of these new directors serve the function of broadening management's perspective, to be management's "window to the world." Other types of these new, atypical directors serve as monitors for the public at large, as the public's "window into the corporation." If they are representatives, should the constituencies represented have some say in choosing them? Building up in the society are a variety of measures for the inclusion of public interests or group interests into the decision-making of corporations. Questions arise about how far such tendencies can go without fundamentally altering the nature of the corporation and of the business system in which it

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functions. Unless countervailing tendencies set in to offset the increasing pressures for outside control, the present currents of change in corporate board rooms will prove to be only harbingers of much greater changes to come. Already, General Motors has a public policy committee which monitors the corporation's performance in a wide range of public matters, including minority employment and pollution control.\(^38\)

That the poor have no one to lobby for them is not quite true. Many strong legislators of conscience and many organizations do so. It is true, however, that few of the sophisticated techniques used in 1968 to influence Congress and the White House, by persons secure in their ability to scorn the business of bodily presence, are available to the poor. The right of poor people to be in Washington today is therefore the more evident. A large and impressive demonstration now having been given, the marchers should get back to the places where their concern can be most effective: the constituencies of the Congress.\(^39\)

For better or worse, the generation of the 1950s, the American men and women now in their 30s who graduated from college in the so-called "silent generation" occupy the middle ground in the war of the generations. They are the only ones who understand both languages, the only ones who can explain the young to the old, the old to the young. This job, in the

\(^{38}\)Peter Vanderwicken, "Change Invades the Boardroom," \textit{Fortune}, May, 1972, p. 156.

end, may be only that of translator, but this may now be the most important job of all. They may not be loud, and their voices may be muted even now. But they are no longer silent --if only because they now have reason to speak.  

The business and industrial organizations of Japan follow many practices that are very different from those of Western countries. Among the most striking is that of decision-making, in which process a decision gets made in a Japanese company and somehow communicated. In Japan, lower units materially participate in the process of business decision-making. The implicit function of a formal, written planning document, called "Ringisho" is to involve all related departments in a decision-making process so that they fall in line smoothly. Decisions are not made on the basis of any explicit recognition of the functions of individuals, but on the basis of a complicated interaction between corporate management, which retains the right to authorize, and administrative units, which exercise initiatives of planning. Although some inefficiency has resulted from the process, it has apparently been more than offset by a countervailing efficiency of execution gained through consensus and willing participation within organizations.  

Since the consumer movement and its legislative product do not make the consumer better off, an explanation of

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this phenomenon in terms of economic theory is rather difficult. To require a seller to disclose information that is not useful to the consumer is to impose a cost without a corresponding benefit. What is hard to explain is why consumerism can get such a large amount of steam behind diffuse complaints, and its imperviousness to evidence that it is not producing positive benefits. The reason probably is righteous wrath. Ralph Nader is a brand name, a franchising operation, like Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken. Consumerism ignores balancing of costs and benefits; its evidence is anecdotal and unsystematic. It is motivated by a deep prejudice against big business and assumes that large corporations prefer hazardous products over safe ones.42

The United States was founded on a complaint. It was, as the framers of the Declaration of Independence were at pains to point out, a reasonable complaint and one that took time to ripen. That complaint got action. Department stores, city governments, and auto companies all have complaint bureaus, but most are designed to blunt the complainer's anger, calm him down and send him away with the vague sense that he made himself heard. Complaining may be important to the American spirit. The republic was founded on the principle that the common man can be heard. To give up on complaint is to give in to the feeling that the distant and the impersonal state or corporation has taken away a bit of the American dream.

Every complaining man or woman is reasserting that value—the refusal to accept what is given from above, a reassertion that the common man has his rights, and all else is only to serve him. 43

Finally, the system of management of objectives has been hailed by the advocates of "power equalization" because of the possibilities it holds for the exercise of participative management. Now it's true that participative management is perfectly acceptable as one method of goal setting in the management by objective system. As a system, however, management by objective works also by autocratic or top down goal setting. The choice of which method to use, or when to mix them, is determined more by the demands of the situation, especially the expectations of subordinates [italics mine] than by the basic nature of the system itself. Douglas McGregor, a leading exponent of participative management, says that genuine commitment is seldom achieved when objectives are externally imposed and passive acceptance is the most that can be expected; indifference or resistance are the more likely consequences. Participation is really a middle class value and grows out of the prior expectations of those being supervised. There are two distinctions in the definition of participation: the first is psychological, or the person thinking that he is participating in the decisions that affect him; and the second is objective, or actually participating strongly

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in the decisions that affect him whether he knows it or not. There is conflicting data on employee performance under conditions of high or low participation. The conflicting data is explained because we like things that meet our needs. If a person likes participation, participation is what meets his expectations and needs. But some people, unfortunately, have never been led to expect that they will be asked to participate in the decisions affecting them. For the company making a profit or in a sound market position, the idea of using participation for the purpose of creating a stronger society is not perhaps so outlandish as many social scientists apparently expected business men to think. The modern corporate manager, in fact, is often the leader in such matters as race relations, participation in government and civic affairs, the hiring of the handicapped, and the strengthening of the free institutions of our society. The conclusion to be reached is that neither tightness of supervision nor looseness is a sole controlling variable, and that participation of itself has no claim to being the core of a new pattern of managing that will guarantee high productivity if universally adopted by managers. There is some evidence, however, that a strong orientation toward goals, coupled with leader enthusiasm, ampler rewards for achieving them, and the uniting of people in moving toward 44

Summary

Beyond any reasonable doubt, these many different forms of feedback in the communication process provide specific evidence that feedback plays a powerful role in social change and institutional behavior. Due to the nature of the urban crisis, considerable research and actual experimentation is concerned with citizen feedback as it can bring about governmental and social reform and institutional renewal. New forms of information technology, such as mass media and computer software, have raised the level of citizen knowledge and brought about a significant increase in the numbers of individuals capable of providing feedback to governmental policies and actions.

Techniques of the communication arts and sciences and the special skills of public relations are needed to transmit messages from individuals as citizens, consumers, employees, and so on just as much as these talents are needed to transmit messages from political leaders, business executives, union leaders and so on.

Feedback may be categorized as active and passive, direct and indirect. Active, direct feedback occurs when the individual citizen is consciously in direct control of the messages he is directing toward a receiver. Passive, indirect feedback is referred to as "societal feedback" and typically includes statistics and social indicators based on what individuals do from day to day. These feedback forces suggest the desirability of more rather than less individual participation in relevant decisions and strongly suggest the need
for improved communication processes between individuals and institutions. Disagreement with the citizen participation activities typically is based on questions of technique rather than questions of goals and thus provides further evidence for the need of a participation theory of public relations, which implies improvement in participation techniques.
CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY OF A PARTICIPATION EXPERIMENT

In the introduction to this thesis, newspaper columnist Roscoe Drummond was quoted as saying: "I believe that... as a nation we have passed through one of the most perilous periods in our entire history. The worst is over. It is not an overstatement to say that 1968 to 1971 were among the darkest days of the republic, comparable to Valley Forge and the Civil War..." Drummond was not the only newspaperman who saw 1968 as a turning point in American history. On January 1, 1969, the Houston Chronicle editorialized:

By any measure, 1968 was a year to remember. It had its triumphs, of course, but we suspect it will be remembered more for its troubles... Around the world, it was a year in which the young and the alienated demanded to be heard. They took to the streets in protest and too often found themselves in bloody confrontation with police. In the United States, we saw crime continue to rise, rebellion on our campuses, political restlessness and--most appalling of all--assassination. In a year of change, two leading apostles of change, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, were murdered. We saw the emergence of a "new morality," short skirts, nudity, and a new frankness in movies and literature which bewildered those who cling to traditional values. Even such a strong hold of conservatism as the Catholic Church was in the vortex of change.

What can we learn from 1968? Maybe that we should be more patient, that we shouldn't expect too much in the way of quick solutions to highly complex social and

1 Supra, p. 3.
political problems, that we must persevere and work
and hope for the best--and not be surprised when our
carefully laid plans don't work out.2

This chapter describes a case study of a participa-
tion experiment during the summer of 1968 in which the author
was personally involved, and a certain amount of first person
experience is necessary to adequately document subjective
aspects of the experiment. While a student at Boston Univer-
sity's School of Public Communication, my most vivid memory
of 1968 was the black smoke hovering over the black neighbor-
hoods of Boston's inner city for several days after Martin
Luther King was killed. Certainly, the rioting and burning
were dramatic forms of feedback in the black community to
King's death at the hand of a white assassin, but the paradox
of such self-destructive feedback was difficult to comprehend.
As a reporter that previous year for the Chattanooga Times, I
had written about urban problems and was aware of extreme
black hostility, but the magnitude of the reaction to King's
death was beyond imagination. That event spurred many white
citizens to search their minds and hearts for answers to
America's dilemma but it is doubtful that any white could
relate to the grief of black citizens over the loss of a leader
who had won the Nobel Peace Prize. The event set off a series
of chain reactions on national and local levels and in Chat-
tanooga, Tennessee, the participation experiment described in
this chapter was a result of a discussion on the Friday

2 Editorial, The Houston Chronicle, January 1, 1969,
Section 5, p. 2.
afternoon after King's death between Chamber of Commerce leaders and a large group of young blacks. According to John C. Stophel, a leading tax attorney who was president of the Greater Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce in 1968:

Our most recent project has grown out of a meeting recently where a few of us sat down with a large group of young Negroes and listened to them for a good part of an afternoon. In fact, it was the Friday afternoon after Martin Luther King's death. The need for communication was discussed at length. The phrase "tell it like it is" was used. Later the Mayor's Human Relations Committee discussed the same problem and recommended the project that we call "Straight Talk."

John Holloway, a relatively new member of the Human Relations Committee, has told us of a need for understanding of "how the system works." He explained that in his neighborhood a group of citizens were complaining about racial discrimination because the city public works department was not picking up their trash. It was reported to him that in the neighborhoods where they worked, trash was picked up by the city but not in their neighborhood. He explained "how the system works," saying that it is necessary to call city hall switchboard and make a request that other than garbage in containers be picked up after residents have been involved as these people were in a clean up campaign. When the facts were known, tension was eased.

In a similar way, another group of citizens were up in arms about urban renewal in the Orchard Knob area. As they put it, they had been bulldozed out of their homes in the west side. When they heard about the Orchard Knob urban renewal, they had visions of being forcibly uprooted again. After a tour of Highland Park and its rehabilitative type urban renewal, these people understood the system and were pleased with it.

These are two concrete examples of what's involved in the Chamber's "Project Straight Talk." In a more formal way, our five objectives are:

(1) To open up a new channel of communication between the general public and top community leadership;

(2) To establish a better climate in which racial relations will improve without recourse to more violent means of expression;
(3) To provide an educational experience for 20 to 30 college and high school students which will involve them in a program aimed at improving the Chattanooga community;

(4) To inform disadvantaged citizens, many of whom are "functionally illiterate," about community resources and programs set up to help these citizens help themselves; and

(5) Finally, to begin to narrow the vast communication gap which presently exists between the white and Negro communities by establishing an administrative structure which will allow old fears and prejudices to be discussed freely and publicly.3

As can be seen, these five objectives expressed inherently contradictory communication functions that included both institutional and feedback message activity. The Chamber president, however, as would be expected, interpreted them primarily as one-way communication in the traditional sense. It could be concluded that sufficient listening on the part of chamber leaders had occurred that Friday afternoon and that the problems described could be solved by a sufficient amount of communication designed to inform those "poor" citizens who did not comprehend the "system."

These objectives were written by the author and they grew out of the thesis prospectus prepared for the School of Public Communication in May, 1968. The author had been employed as a communication consultant by the Chamber of Commerce for the summer of 1968. On May 31, 1968, by unanimous vote, the board of directors of the Greater Chattanooga

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Chamber of Commerce authorized the experimental urban communications program for the summer of 1968 and committed the services of the management of the Chamber and other administrative services. Both the five objectives and the full "Project Straight Talk" proposal, which is summarized below, were approved by this unanimous vote. The full proposal, which is on file at the Chamber, said in part:

The Chattanooga Mayor's Human Relations Committee has judged the matter of human communication between the races to be one of the more complex and important problems which exist in the Chattanooga community. It is apparent that the city will remain two separate and distinct groups of people composing a fragmented, weakened community until the mental health problem that is racism is overcome. And it is obvious that this is no local problem, but a regional, national, and international dilemma, pointing towards serious consequences if steps are not taken to reduce racial tensions. Social and economic gaps are of equal importance, but the blatant unfairness of racism needs no other reason for concerted community action to rectify this social injustice. The Board of Directors of the Greater Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, representing the financial and professional leadership of the community, has recognized the nature of the problem. With this willingness to see the situation as it is, to "tell it like it is," discussion can move from general objectives to more concrete goals, tasks, and action. About 30 college and high school students will be employed during the summer months to implement the primary purpose of Project Straight Talk. Under the general leadership of the executive director of the Greater Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, they will listen to the views, opinions, problems, and attitudes of the primarily disadvantaged citizens and publish their reports for the benefit of the top leadership cadre in the Chattanooga area.

The students have been selected for their communicative experience and potential. They will be divided into two groups--survey and editorial. The survey teams

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composed of equal numbers of both races, will be trained in proper interviewing techniques. An effort will be made to have the students do survey work in their own neighborhoods, where they are known and trusted by the residents, if at all feasible. The IBM branch office in Chattanooga has agreed to participate in the program as a pilot project to demonstrate the value of data-processing techniques for social problem-solving.

The editorial group, composed of students experienced in creative writing, journalism, drawing, and photography, will prepare a series of reports for those individuals normally considered to be community leaders. The reports will be carefully designed to accurately inform top administrators about public opinion and "tell it like it is." This publication, one of the most unique aspects of the project, will attempt to complete the "listening" channel from the general public to so-called power structure. It will allow those who would burn their city another, more constructive avenue for getting action.

Many of the articulate, sensitive, intelligent students will emerge as future civic leaders in all fields. It is highly likely that the three months spent "listening and reporting" will develop that first requirement of a leader: knowledge of those he leads.5

As was stated in the prospectus for this thesis, the aim was to apply some of the advanced concepts outlined in the unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Professional Education for Public Relations," by Dr. Albert J. Sullivan of Boston University. It was hoped that the case study would provide additional evidence to support Sullivan's proposed definition of public relations: "The function responsible for the processes of communication within and between the organizations of society; and one which fosters good will and mutual cooperation for the solution of common problems."6


I had hoped that a communications structure, which I called in the thesis prospectus the "Chattanooga Information Service" would result from the summer project. As will be seen, such a structure was proposed by the end of the project and received strong student support but did not become a reality under the Chamber's sponsorship, nor under any other private or public sponsorship. We learned it was one thing to inform the poor about how the system works, but quite another to inform those responsible for the workings of the system just how the citizens, especially poor and black citizens, feel about the situation. Thus, the dramatic difference between "downward" and "upward" communication, or, in other words, communication from Galbraith's outer rings of institutional participants was vividly illustrated by the reaction of Chamber leaders toward the end of the three-month project. However, before discussing these and other reactions, it is necessary to discuss the contradiction within the five objectives and then to summarize the feedback mechanisms that were operative throughout the summer project.

These objectives, which were written hastily and approved by the Chamber Board even more hastily, were in fact designed to prevent a "long, hot summer" in Chattanooga. The Chamber leadership feared the possibility of racial violence and, without saying so publicly, made it clear to the author that Project Straight Talk would be successful if racial violence was avoided for that summer. This was at a time when the previous year had seen many major American cities
with race riots and burning in the black ghettos. Therefore, objective number two was the primary need toward which all other efforts were directed. I felt the only way to avoid violent means of expression from the black community was to create and establish "non-violent" means of expression about black poverty conditions. Thus, this need took precedence over the lesser need expressed in objective number four, to inform disadvantaged citizens. Those who saw the fourth objective as uppermost in importance were disappointed because the thirty students could not carry out this task. However, for those who defined the problem as ignorance and a distorted image of reality on the part of top community leadership, the thirty students of Project Straight Talk represented the fifth objective's "administrative structure" designed to begin to narrow the vast communication gap between white and black communities. Thus, students and project advisors were at the same time expected to learn about community resources and programs and communicate this information to poor citizens, and also learn about the views and opinions of these poor citizens and communicate this information to top community leadership. From the very beginning, therefore, public perception of Project Straight Talk was confused between the two conflicting directions of the communication flow.

What were the feedback mechanisms employed to open a new channel of communication from the "have-nots" to the "haves"? These mechanisms fell into three separate categories:
collection of information, preparation of information, and distribution of information.

Before the students could collect information from citizens, a certain amount of student orientation and education was necessary. A sociologist at the black Chattanooga City College conducted a twenty-five hour course in urban sociology during the first three weeks. At the same time, a psychologist and a survey design expert, both at the University of Chattanooga, volunteered to help the Chamber with this project by teaching two-thirds of the students how to interview and conduct a random sample. An IBM executive worked with the survey design expert in creating a format which the survey group of students could use in structuring interviews. Citizens were asked for five basic socio-economic factors (age, race, income, education, and sex) and then were asked to comment on nine community problems: law enforcement, employment, housing, education, race relations, government services, welfare, city government, and legislation/regulation. (See Appendix A for sample interview form and sample responses.) In addition to instruction in urban sociology and interviewing techniques, a selected cross-section of community leaders were invited to discuss community problems and answer questions during the three-week orientation period. These speakers included the managing editor of the morning daily newspaper, president of the Jaycees, several "militant" black leaders, a racist white lawyer, a minister, a "radical" history professor, an aide to a
congressman, a welfare official, a juvenile court worker, a Chamber official, and a black Muslim. To establish a habit pattern of responding to various unfamiliar philosophical viewpoints, each student was asked to write a one-page summary that would in some manner express a reaction to the speaker's viewpoint. A sampling of reactions to the white racist lawyer is found in Appendix B. Since the students, (some of whom were sons and daughters of the "power structure"), were to be the message carriers from the poor to the "power structure," these three approaches were used to raise their level of awareness of problems and of individual differences in approaching both definition and solution of these problems. Another approach that proved highly effective was an exercise in perceptual framework disparities. After an urban sociology lecture on the County Courthouse lawn, students were asked to walk from the Courthouse across some half-dozen blocks to a beautiful art gallery on the river bluff and then to return to the Courthouse lawn where a discussion would be held on what each had seen. Some of the city's worst slums lay in between. The group was surprised to learn that the very poor black students noticed little out of the ordinary, but that the high income white students were dismayed at the contrast between the dirty slums and the beautiful art gallery only one block away. Gradually, the thirty students, several of whom were exceptionally bright and creative, absorbed an unusually large amount of first-hand information about their community, its problems and the feelings
of its citizens. Thus, the first step in the feedback mechanism was the collection of information through these various approaches, which included interaction among the students, who were of varying economic, educational, and racial backgrounds. Thus, after about one month, the brightest of these students were ready to begin preparation of the information they were collecting from many sources. Although they were made aware that their function was one of neutrality, it was, of course, exceedingly difficult for concerned, enthusiastic college and high school students to maintain such an attitude. A poem by one talented girl expressed this feeling very well:

Assignment 1

Mr. Middle-Income
Chattanooga, I've tried reporting
I've gotten in your door today
even sat on your new couch
You content man
Of this city that's doing you well
your kids are fed and
go to 1.3% integrated schools
And I asked to hear your problems.
I asked you for a problem.
Secure Mr. Chattanooga, I've tried reporting.
I can't write down the silences
or the
'Well, there really aren't
any important issues'
Yet I've seen the house next door,
and I've tried reporting.
You need a problem?

Touch the hands of your inner-inhabitants,
the grumbling stomach of this city,
Hear one voice say
'I hurt so terrible bad.'

by Terri Hume
July, 1968

The second step in the feedback process was the preparation of the information, which, because most students were selected for communicative skills and interests, resulted in a wide variety of techniques. It was not possible to publish one single publication due to lack of time and resources, and a continuing process of message output occurred. The students themselves became the primary vehicle of information; several presented what they were learning in a skit before a Chamber of Commerce Board meeting, and a newspaper article the following day termed Project Straight Talk "a major current project of the Chamber designed to give community leadership an idea of problems that exist." 7

By August, the third month of the project, the students had been exposed to articulate community leaders, dissenters, each other, the Chamber staff, newspaper reporters, administrative advisors, university professors, and, of course, several hundred citizens through at-home interviews. Students in the survey group had heard first-hand how a cross-section of Chattanooga felt about the community and its problems,

7The Chattanooga Times, June 27, 1968, p. 3.
because the survey advisors had recommended a random sampling of all income and all educational levels and not just the poor citizens. It was believed this would give a more accurate statistical representation of attitudes than an effort to select poor citizens alone. Some five hundred interviews were collected but unfortunately not analyzed nor interpreted; by the end of the summer, survey advisors had determined that the percentage of error by using these students would be too high to assure validity and thus considerable reluctance was expressed about the ethical advisability of publishing survey results that probably would be accepted as valid by those who found the results to match their self-interests and prejudices. In more theoretical terms, there was justifiable fear that the statistical representation of community attitudes and socio-economic groupings would be a "distortion of reality." However, human nature seems to function on the best available information whether complete or not and this professional resistance did not deter students from making known what they had learned in a variety of ways.

This involved the third step in the feedback process of Project Straight Talk: distribution of information. The students wrote articles for the newspapers, discussed what they were learning on radio and television, wrote reports for the Chamber of Commerce magazine, created a photographic display in their office (which was located at a busy downtown intersection), spoke to church groups, persuaded newspaper
reporters to write stories about their experiences, and sum-
med it all up in an one-hour film entitled "Dead End Street."
Samples of these feedback messages are included in Appendix 
C. Some of the information that was being made public created 
such controversy within the Chamber and the community that 
one radio station broadcast a discussion by five of the stu-
dents but explained in a subsequent newspaper article that 
"participants on the program were not identified to protect 
them from any possible reprisals."8 The most lasting result 
of Project Straight Talk was the one-hour film on the poverty 
cycle's interrelated problems of housing, education, and 
jobs; "Dead End Street" was made available on request (it was 
never promoted) by the Chamber of Commerce for church groups 
and other such organizations interested in learning more about 
community problems.

It is not the usual "all is good news" production 
of a typical Chamber of Commerce project. The film sums up 
many of the complaints that the poor, especially the black 
poor, have about the "system" and the Chattanooga "establish-
ment." It was written completely by students, interviews 
taped by students, filmed by students, and edited by students. 
It is an excellent example of the need for professional com-
munications skills in the distribution of citizen feedback 
information to the total community and especially to the top 
community leadership, who have the power to change conditions 
in many cases.

8 "Youths Discuss Racial Problems," Chattanooga Times, 
August 22, 1968, p. 3. See Appendix C for a copy of the 
article.
A brief sampling of the reactions by various individuals and institutional leaders to Project Straight Talk indicates the influence of the feedback process and also indicates the need for effective communication approaches to the feedback mechanisms involved. Since it is necessary for purposes of project analysis to read the actual comments of evaluation by various individuals, the written reports at the end of the project are included in Appendix D. One point should be noted: because the author was personally involved in the creation and management of Project Straight Talk, it is considered appropriate to include evaluations of the project and its accomplishments by a variety of individuals so that a better, more objective perspective can be obtained on the results of the participation experiment. In reviewing the evaluations in Appendix D, two points should be noted: first is that the Chamber president, John C. Stophel, held a very negative attitude toward student participation in setting goals and publishing information; and second is that students and others who actively participated in creating the project were highly supportive in urging that it be continued permanently in a modified format. It was not continued by the Chamber; in fact, what Stophel termed the Chamber’s major project at the beginning of the summer was only slightly mentioned in the Chamber’s annual report to members at its annual dinner in January, 1969.

One black leader, Johnny Holloway, who was instrumental in serving as a member of the Mayor's Human Relations Committee
that persuaded the Chamber to sponsor Project Straight Talk, was quoted as saying on a popular television public affairs program: "One major effort underway to bring the city's problems before the people is Project Straight Talk. . . . There are too many people in this town that are asleep. . . . And there is only a small group of people working to improve this town. I hope that Straight Talk can wake up some others." 9

Finally, from outside Chattanooga came a delayed reaction to Project Straight Talk. James W. Hunt, the Chamber's executive vice president, told the author in June, 1971 that Mr. Mahlon Griffith, who is a staff member of the Department of Justice's Community Relations Division in Atlanta, told him on June 23, 1971, that Project Straight Talk was a significant success during its short duration in "venting potentially violent expressions of discontent in the black community." Mr. Griffith, at the time of the conversation, was visiting Chattanooga just one month after a week of rioting and burning in black neighborhoods after which the state national guard had had to called in to the city to restore order.

Summary and Conclusions

The urban crisis has been termed the nation's leading domestic problem. Racism and street crime, housing and pollution, education and employment, modernization of government—there seems to be no end to the problems of America's cities.

The concerned citizen has been frustrated by a lack of knowledge about what he can do in attacking these seemingly impossible problems. Yet, action is necessary and vital—for the consequences of a fragmented community are clear to all thoughtful observers: racism, slums, illiteracy, and eventually, the breakdown of the natural processes of society.

Methods and procedures which were adequate for rural towns or peaceful neighborhoods in past decades no longer suit the rapid social and technological pace of modern society. The average citizen apparently lacks a sense of involvement and participation in the affairs of his community. A prominent banker, speaking to the nation's business and professional men at the 1968 United States Chamber of Commerce meeting in Washington, D.C., said: "Today there is a paramount need for truth; we are blinded by a fog of prejudice and the values of our society are warped beyond recognition. Examine your hearts and conscience; decide what you must do in your cities and how soon you must do it."¹⁰ He was speaking at an emergency workshop, entitled "Tell It Like It Is," and speaker after speaker urged the business community to become more and more involved in social problem solving. These top administrators were demanding more reliable knowledge of public opinion. They were placing increased value upon new methods of the social sciences, which can accurately describe the opinions and attitudes of both employees and citizens. In short,

¹⁰ Dr. Hideya Kumata, in a speech given before United States Chamber of Commerce meeting in April, 1968.
administrators were beginning to demand a better "listening" channel as well as a better "telling" channel. This means that, in the words of the above "Tell It Like It Is" workshop speaker:

... links for receiving messages, some of them painful, must be established which will take into account the complex power structures which exist in communities. The translation of this knowledge into action requires a view of the world which takes into account what people are saying and doing—to lead people into seeing the world as it is, not as we want to see it.\[11\]

Project Straight Talk and its concept of "upward" communication created intense reactions in almost all who came in contact with it during that summer of 1968. One conclusion is certain from the materials available for review in the Appendices: that is, an active reversal of the normal communications flow from institutions to individuals threatens the status quo conditions because a condition of reciprocal expectancy of participation is established. Project Straight Talk certainly did not accomplish any of its five objectives; several halting steps were made toward these goals but even these small achievements created intense reactions that did not exist prior to the opening of these new communication channels of feedback.

One unexpected result was the unanimous recommendations of students and advisors that the Chamber continue Project Straight Talk through the winter and begin preparing for "Project Straight Talk - '69." This was not done and one can only speculate, after reviewing the evaluation comments...\[11\] Ibid.
by Chamber leaders, about the reason "Straight Talk" was not continued.

What then was accomplished? Perhaps the best answer came from John Popham, managing editor for the Chattanooga Times, when asked for his evaluation of the summer project by the author: "Only good can come from allowing intelligent students to ask relevant questions throughout the community. At least, questions have been raised to which the older generation must discover answers."
CHAPTER V

TOWARD A PARTICIPATION THEORY
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

This thesis opened with the statement that "an unusual search is underway--a search for values and principles and behavioral patterns by which man can better cope with the exceedingly difficult world built by communication." The argument was advanced that a basic value shift was under­way within the American society, and perhaps in any society heavily influenced by the new electronic information tech­nology and media. This value shift, this basic change in the modes of thought that shape a society, this philosophical undercurrent--whatever the appropriate label for this social phenomenon, we have suggested to be grounded on the principle of "individual participation in decisions that affect the individual," or in other words, an expansion of the "consent of the governed" concept.

Supporting evidence for this emerging social phe­nomenon is found in a book published January 8, 1973. Enti­tled, State of the Nation, its authors concluded, after their second in a series of in-depth public opinion research reports, that:

... the American people, whether they yet realize it or not, seem to us to be searching for a new
political, social, and economic philosophy, one that will infuse them with new purpose. They want a philosophy that will lay out, explain, and rationally what must be done through governmental, social, and individual action to raise the quality of life in the United States, and perhaps outside it as well. They need a new ideological framework that will encompass basic changes in outlooks and approaches rather than the customary assortments of hastily-put-together programs deriving from almost total reliance on the problem-solving approach. They want a philosophy that will help provide an answer to the clear and insistent question, "Quo Vadis, America?"

One can speculate whether the torrent of advertising, publicity, and other institutional messages has not begun to create an equal and opposite reaction, a message from the "people" not yet articulated but emerging as a ship at sea comes out of the foggy mists. Thus, social protest and other such feedback of the Sixties was the loud shout of an information-inundated society determined to "talk back" to a vague and unseen "establishment voice." This is not a new tradition in the American society; in fact, it is the essence of the principle of "reciprocal expectancy" of the right to participate. This new philosophy may, as some are suggesting after the 1972 presidential election, augur a return to more conservative traditions—not to contemporary status quo tenets but to values of older times in the Republic's history. Increasingly, the Boston Tea Party symbolizes the actual concept of participatory democracy, the kind of political philosophy that equates "no taxation without representation" with "make no decision affecting me unless

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either I, or my representative, participates in making that decision." The Boston Tea Party expressed an immediate need for effective communication behavior, which then as well as today, involved violence and other destructive symbolic behavior—as well as loss of precious blood and even valuable tea. Certainly, more effective and efficient feedback processes would avoid such loss of life and property.

This thesis was intended to provide sufficient evidence to prove the validity of Albert J. Sullivan’s concept of a participation value system for public relations. Its conclusion is that beyond any reasonable doubt Sullivan’s concepts should become basic to the growing body of public relations theory and practice. Few changes in the present institutional public relations practices are proposed; the only added element is that of responsibility for constituent participation and other feedback processes, thus creating an helical communication process.

A participation theory of public relations is therefore proposed, one that builds on present concepts as necessary foundations yet provides more explaining power in its assumption of the true nature of societal communication processes as previously described. Most public relations practitioners function under somewhat different concepts of public relations, yet few of these possess sufficient generality to serve as predictive principles. For example, the textbook Effective Public Relations uses the term "public relations" to "encompass the performance and communications
used to build profitable relationships with the public. Contrasted with a participation definition, Cutlip and Center's definition hangs on "profitable" relationships—not fair, not truthful, not just, not open, but "profitable." This is the institutional self-serving approach referred to by Wiebe in Chapter I as "advocacy based on partial disclosure of relevant facts." Nothing would be communicated to the public, in Cutlip and Center's view, that was not profitable in terms of votes, money, membership, and other such support for the given institution or cause. The same reasoning applies to the popular "Public Relations News" definition:

Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.

Implicit in this and similar advocacy definitions is primary emphasis on earning "understanding and acceptance" for an institution's particular objectives; no consideration to actual societal communication processes is given and "identification with the public interest" conflicts in actual practice with "acceptance." No attention is given to feedback processes. Finally, this advocacy definition was described by Otto Lerbinger in the mid-Sixties thusly: "The

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2 Allen H. Center and Scott M. Cutlip, Effective Public Relations, p. 3.
4 Center and Cutlip, Effective Public Relations, p. 4.
public relations man is an 'in-between' man--one of those people who help society to run more smoothly. His particular function, however, is to work in the interests of a particular organization.\(^5\) Recently, however, a suggestion of a change in thinking, or of a broadened definition, was suggested in Lerbinger's new book, *Designs for Persuasive Communication*, published in 1972. According to a quotation published in *Public Relations Journal*, Lerbinger says: "As democratic values spread from the political sphere to the offices and shops where people work, this feature of consent of those governed will grow in importance."\(^6\) "Consent of the governed" is the traditional way of saying "participatory democracy," or another way of expressing the fundamental human right to participate in decision-making processes. He suggests that this trend is spreading, confirming other similar viewpoints, and lends support to the transferability of citizen participation concepts and techniques to employee and union participation, for example.

Sullivan's definition of public relations goes beyond these views to include feedback and participation functions:

> Public relations is the organizational function which, by appropriate means of communication, fosters relationships among groups based on cooperation, with the view of solving problems of common concern.\(^7\)

He notes that this concept "is not the old emphasis; it

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\(^5\) Supra, p. 29.


\(^7\) Albert J. Sullivan, "Toward a New Definition of Public Relations," p. 63.
deliberately broadens public relations' base from publicity and persuasion and 'getting credit for doing good'; it broadens it in a human direction, toward responsibility for the communications which should bind society together."8

He adds, "'appropriate means of communication' includes not only the usual media, but also behavioral patterns reflecting attitudes and values and planned methods of feedback. . . ."9

This definition, he says:

... asks public relations to become more than a 'hired persuader'; responsible rather for the human relationships, forged by communications, that hold society's groups together in dignity; and to undertake the task of educating those groups who deny any common responsibility or who prefer violence to consensus.10

Yet he leaves out of his extensive study the theory and practice of citizen participation, as do Cutlip and Center. Both works strongly indicate that, as the Cutlip and Center textbook merely states, "participation is the key,"11 but they offer little information on techniques of small group dynamics or use of new information technology as described in preceding chapters. As was described in Chapters III and IV, various volunteer and special interest groups as well as individuals like Ralph Nader are not hesitating to use the techniques of public relations to make their voice heard through the mass media.

Thus, a participation theory of public relations is reasonably simple in its statement: "Public relations is the

8 Ibid. 9 Ibid. 10 Ibid.
11 Supra, p. 37.
societal function that maintains effective, efficient participation processes among all constituent groups of any institution, within communities, and among nations by means of all known forms of human communication, including both message output and input processes."

As seen in previous chapters, such a concept is extremely difficult to execute, primarily because so little is known about actual societal communication processes. If the concept of circular, helixical communication flow is an accurate portrayal of reality, then feedback behavior must be acknowledged as essential.

A useful theory often has direct application to practical human needs, such as those in the "developing" nations. According to an article in the Christian Science Monitor:

...the benefits of modernization too often do not filter down to the people in most developing countries. The reason: local citizens are not involved in the decisions that affect them nor do they have access to the money, skills, and information they need to take advantage of local resources. 12

The article summarizes a new book on the subject that makes:

...a formidable case for a new kind of development. It goes to the heart of any economy, to its people. And while they [the authors] argue that jobs are the important thing (since jobs create purchasing power and raise the lot of the average man), they say that something else comes even before jobs. And that is the organization of a country so that (1) the proper decisions are made at the right levels of government, (2) as many people as possible are involved in decisions that affect their own lives, and (3) there are effective

Many of the techniques required to put into actual practice a participation theory of public relations have been described in the previous two chapters; theoretical support for such homeostasis activity was summarized in the second chapter; and the problem of inadequate communication was defined in the first chapter. There is strong evidence that more and more major institutions are aware of the need for feedback on their policies and practices; Ford Motor Company in 1972 heavily advertised its "We Listen Better" campaign, which was conceived and conducted by the marketing instead of the public relations department. Obviously, a "profitable" relationship is the goal. Ford even defines consumerism, already cited as a major form of social feedback, as: "A twentieth century citizen's revolt against the unresponsiveness of both public and private institutions," according to a speaker whom the author heard in Detroit at the Ford plant in November, 1972. Space does not permit a full description of a new feedback technology available, such as cable TV, in-home computer terminals with keyboard, special telephone devices, cassette TV, and so on. But the concept of the "wired city" is being studied by the federal government and specific procedures to improve the urban communication processes were recommended to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in June, 1971. Entitled

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13 Ibid.
Communications Technology for Urban Improvement, the report concluded:

The Committee of the National Academy of Engineering has focused on the problems which have developed within our cities today and has sought the means to alleviate these problems. We maintain that many of the cities' problems are caused by high density living conditions in an era of increasingly rapid change. Communications technology, imaginatively applied, could offset the trend in which the vast majority of Americans today, and more in the future, live on a small percentage of the available land.

We suggest an exploratory program to examine how broadband communications technology could be applied to business, government, education, health care, and entertainment to stimulate the development of existing small communities, or new communities, in rural areas. As a result, people would have a viable option of settling in either urban or rural America.

The above proposals should be of great concern and interest to public relations professionals; greatly increased input and output messages will be the natural consequence—the great information machines must be fed. New careers in communications are opened up by a participation theory of public relations.

In conclusion, a participation/feedback concept means the public relations practitioner has a new expanded role in the institution, within the community, and throughout society in general. Practitioners must understand the actual communication process. This would make the public relations, or communications function, directly responsible for maintaining the interaction process between organizational leaders and

relevant publics.

This thesis has attempted to provide factual and theoretical support for the opening statement made by John Pierce: "Our existence depends on communication in more ways than one can easily enumerate."¹5 No certain answers can be given, but a specific direction in which to search for better solutions is advocated. We would close with the viewpoint of Albert J. Sullivan, who in 1967 first introduced this concept to the author. He said in the mid-Sixties, describing the right to participate:

... The persons in whose wills we posited this gift of freedom are hardly conscious they possess it. They take for granted political freedom; they take for granted institutional nonfreedom.

... If persons do not believe they have the right to free participation, institutional managers do not believe they possess it either.

... The right to participate involves the practical matter of getting information—including judgments, criticisms, decisions, votes before policy, as well as opinions and attitudes after it—from the many groups affected by institutional decisions.

It is remarkably easy to beam information from a single, controlled source—the institution—and hit with some degree of accuracy and penetration a multiple group, that is the virtue of our present media. How can you reverse the process and get a multitude of beams to bounce back and forth, first within a group, then between groups, and finally back to the institution?

Obviously there is no answer possible yet; and it will be an electronic, and administrative, miracle when one is found. For it is not merely a matter of uncontrolled feedback, where a relatively few members

¹5 Supra, p. 11.
of a group react either before or after the event; nor of controlled feedback, when surveys of one sort or another are used on a statistical sample, again before or after.

The principle is perfectly clear: everyone is entitled to speak, just because the right is personal and inalienable. Everyone does not have to exercise that right, but the opportunity must be offered to his choice. He may also entrust his right to a representative—and this is perhaps the path over this obstacle—but there is hardly any structure yet devised whereby every person in every group to which he belongs has the chance to get representation before institutional management. 16

He concludes:

Someday, then, when public relations has fought its revolution for mutual values and won, when it has mastered imagery—then there will be no more confusion about just what it is, or just what it does, about whether it is an art or a science or a matter of degree. It will be the institutional segment of the profession of human communication. 17


17 Ibid., p. 437.
APPENDIX A
Interviewer: [Signature]

Address: 1302 Olive Street

 Interviews of Town: East Side

Sex: F Female

Race: W White

Age Group: 30-60

Marital Status: Not Married

Persons in Dwelling: 1 (explained: Lady, Child)

Occupation and Sources of Income: Work

Poverty Class: Lower Class

Religion: Baptist

Education: Years Complete: 12th (explain type of education)

Political Affiliation: Democrat
EDUCATION - III

"I think that anybody can get an education if they only applied themselves. People now days just don't care wheather or not they get an education or not. All they care about is goint out every night, drinking, smoking, and taking dope. If we as Negroes or Blacks would value more important things in life we could get a lot further. No, I don't think that we are being discriminated against, we can now go to any school we want to and get the best education possible, that's why I don't understand why people would say that getting a good education is impossible. We are now living in a day and age where everything is possible."

RACE RELATIONS - IV

"I think that the people of Chattanooga get along well, it could be better, of course, but it could be worse also. As for as I'm concerned, they can go their way and I can go mine, just as long as the white man doesn't get in my way we are alright. But all in all I think that the race relation in Chattanooga is alright."

HOUSING -II

"I think that the housing in Chattanooga is very poor, we can really improve in this area. The Flyn Street area, Ninth Street area, and all around in there is in very poor condition. I think that they should build more low rent houses for the lower income group. I just can't understand why something isn't done about the conditions in this area. But there is still another side to the story, some people just don't give a damn about where or how they live, they just live. If these people get out and try to find them jobs they can do a lot better, and probably find better places to live."
Law Enforcement
0 bad leadership/administration
1 too few policemen in area
2 corruption (bribes, etc.)
3 need better pay
4 too lenient on lawbreakers
5 racially prejudiced - pro-white
6 racially prejudiced - pro-black

Employment
0 satisfactory
1 discrimination - pro-white
2 discrimination - pro-black
3 too much hiring of "outsiders"; should hire local men
4 need improved job training programs
5 the best-trained people leave Chattanooga to work elsewhere

Housing
0 satisfactory
1 need more/better black housing (private)
2 Negroes don't keep up public housing
3 Negroes should help themselves (more cleanup committees, etc.)
4 need more slum clearance/urban renewal/public housing
5 need to enforce housing codes
6 rents unfair/too high
7 should open suburbs to Negroes
8 should not integrate housing

Education
0 satisfactory
1 should keep races in separate schools
2 integration proceeding too slow
3 Negroes have poorer facilities/teachers
4 facilities are about equal
5 all teachers are underpaid
6 all facilities need improvement
Race Relations

0 satisfactory
1 not good, but no trouble anticipated
2 potentially explosive situation
3 races should be kept apart
4 all people should have an equal opportunity
5 mildly racist (anti-Negro) - "they're lazy," etc.
6 strongly racist (anti-Negro) - "nigger," other derogatory terms
7 mildly racist (anti-white) - "Whites keeping Blacks down," etc.
8 strongly racist (anti-white) - "Get those honkies," etc.

Government Services

0 adequate
1 need more/better lighting
2 need improved street & sidewalks
3 need improved garbage collection
4 need better recreational facilities
5 sewage service/treatment inadequate
6 health services (shots, etc.) inadequate

Welfare

0 satisfactory/"O.K."/etc.
1 a giveaway - should be discontinued
2 too much red tape/delay
3 needs closer supervision - the wrong people are getting it
4 too strict - people who need it aren't getting it
5 wrong approach - should train for jobs, not give charity
6 benefits too low
7 too lenient (should keep unwed mothers off, etc.)

City Government

0 satisfactory
1 too much haggling/bickering, etc.
2 corruption
3 poor communication/response (aloof from people, etc.)
4 pro-metro
5 anti-metro
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Legislation / Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>should pass liquor by the drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>need better enforcement of blue laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>should repeal blue laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>need better pollution control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B
The screen door was between us; We talked—through the door.

"The way I see it
God
he made us all
and he loves us all.
But he made us separate
and different
we should stay that way.

He made red birds and blue birds
they don't mix
why should we?

Integration only causes trouble."

Black and white we walked away
The door stayed closed.

--Pat Younger
Raulston Schoolfield is not a racist, even in his own estimation. Mr. Schoolfield is a master politician. With his manner of pseudo-religious intonation, it is easy to see how he influences people who basically agree with his views.

On the basis of the Caucasoid construction of Western civilization, Mr. Schoolfield simply states that his race is superior to any other. Mr. Schoolfield merely contends that the "Lord God Almighty" created the races separate and that they should remain that way.

However, he fails to acknowledge the success of African and Asian civilizations in attaining inward growth. Mr. Schoolfield sees only outward appearances. He sees only whether skin is black, yellow or white. If, on rare occasion, he sees anything else, it is what he reads into it because of the color of skin.

Mr. Schoolfield strongly affirms his belief that God is a segregationist. (He probably is. If he sends me to heaven, our fine Christian friend Brother Raulston, practitioner of the Christian doctrine of brotherly love, will grace hell's well-worn gates, just on general principles.)

After making such strong statements, Brother Raulston would make equally emphatic contradictory statements denying that he is a white supremacist.

Brother Raulston is a brilliant man. Had he not been so provincial, he could have gone far in either governmental or political hierarchy.

After listening to Brother Raulston expound the crux of his most intelligent beliefs, I realized that he is not a racist.

Brother Raulston is a brilliant, politically astute, obnoxious bastard.
APPENDIX C
"TELL IT LIKE IT IS"

TONIGHT AT 7:30 P.M.

HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CHATTANOOGA . . . FIVE BLACK AND FIVE WHITE YOUTHS GET TOGETHER AND "TELL IT LIKE IT IS" . . . NO HOLDS BARRED. SCHOOLS, SLUM LANDLORDS, THE POWER STRUCTURE, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, THE NEGRO HISTORY VACUUM IN OUR SCHOOLS, AND OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY ARE FREELY VOICED ON THIS ONE-HOUR PROGRAM. THE OBJECT OF THIS PROGRAM IS NOT TO CONDEMN . . . BUT TO ENLIGHTEN . . . NOT TO DAMN . . . BUT TO SCOLD . . . NOT TO SLEEP . . . BUT TO WAKE UP AND MAKE AMERICA AVAILABLE TO ALL ON AN EQUAL BASIS.

W-NOO RADIO  DIAL  1260
The group agreed that multi-ethnic history should be taught in the city school curriculum. History that showed not only the white patriots, explorers, soldiers, inventors, and etc., but that showed blacks, whites, Indians, and all ethnic groups in true prospective, as one of the youth stated. The youth were divided when asked by the moderator who’s responsibility it should be to see to it that black history be included in the schools curriculum. Some seemed to think that it was the responsibility of city government to make it mandatory. Others believe that the board of education should be charged.

Discussing school integration in the city, it was observed that tokenism has been the approach. One youth pointed out that at the high school level two high schools are still referred to as “Negro schools,” and named Howard and Riverside High Schools.

Equality Called “Tie-in”

The participants agreed that educational equality is a “tie-in” in these schools. One male panelist said:

“The younger generation has the opportunity to speak out on these problems because we have not acquired anything which can be taken away by speaking out. Older people can’t be blamed because they feel they have a lot to lose. You can’t expect a man 50 years old who is established in his business to step on many toes.”

At the conclusion of the program, Webb asked each individual to offer an opinion on how both black and white people can make this American city a better place to live.

Among the suggestions offered by the youth were less talk and more action, increased interest of civic groups in the area of race relations, stricter enforcement of housing codes, concern of church groups, and one girl, emotionally stated:

“We can have a better community and a better country, and a better world if we find the meaning of love. Not just between black and white people but all people everywhere. People just don’t care enough about each other.”

Fred Webb admonished.

“Give a Damn.” The read is up to all the Americans in Chattanooga.
A View of Our Urban Wasteland

By Steve Brooks

commenccent to: and the need for the  
project Straight Talk  
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evolved. This article by Steve Brooks, a  
and the need for the Baylor School's Straight  
student, is published in the  
evolved. This article by Steve Brooks, a  
student, is published in the  
magazine, presents his view of  
magazine, presents his view of  
three most complex problems — employment,  
three most complex problems — employment,  
education, and housing. His analysis helps to clarify  
education, and housing. His analysis helps to clarify  
the intricate interaction among these three human  
the intricate interaction among these three human  
needs. And his effort suggests that perhaps the  
needs. And his effort suggests that perhaps the  
older generation too quickly forgets some of those  
older generation too quickly forgets some of those  
rival forces of youth — energy, zeal, and  
rival forces of youth — energy, zeal, and  
idealistc commitment.

Sidney Hetzler
Communication Manager
Project Straight Talk
The belief that America can succeed in creating a single, integrated nation has been shaken by a recent report from the National Commission on Urban Problems. The report, a product of highly specialized research, concludes that the trend in the United States today not, as some may believe, toward an increasingly unified society, but toward the diametrically opposite concept of an apartheid style society.

White Exodus

The physical manifestation of this trend may be observed daily as, on one hand, the white exodus to suburban areas, and on the other hand, as the inner or core + vacuum created by the white migration is rapidly filled in by the influx of poor non-whites. Once the former, so-called “city-dweller” is safely ensconced in suburban comfort, he all too often chooses to forget the fostering situation in the city he left behind. It is, of course, impossible for the suburbanite to totally “forget” the core, for in most cases the site of his employment is still within the urban center. Yet in spite of the fact that he drives into the inner city at nine and out again five, the middle class suburbanite has conditioned himself to see no further than the walls of his office and interior of his building. Meanwhile the city gates around him, and the nation’s urban complexes transformed into vast wastelands of concrete and steel.

Chattanooga will not profit by our attempts to exclude it from urban generalities. The same conditions exist, a necessary further reality, in our city that have challenged the survival of larger urban areas throughout the nation. For instance, the non-white population of the city has increased at a phenomenal rate from 30% to 53% in the period of eight years. It is on this fact that the massive burden of urban decay weighs most heavily. These are the citizens whose social and economic mobility prohibited from escaping their conditions by virtue of the fact that the white population is in the process of doing. In a very real sense the non-white city population is trapped in a rapidly deteriorating situation which no one seems interested in or capable of solving.

the Hard Core Issues and The secondary Conditions

The extremely complex interrelationship of the problems of the core city poor is often enough to discourage even the most concerned parties. Too often have interested citizens attempted to deal with a certain aspect of the urban problem only to find that the solution for which they were searching is inextricably bound to a dy of further problems which must also be treated for any separate issue can be solved. Lacking the funds or the knowledge to handle the problem on the scale required, these parties retreat from action in despair.

The specific problems most often cited fall into two basic categories: the hard core issues and the various secondary conditions which serve to aggravate the first problems. The Kerner report on civil disorders labeled the problems of housing, employment and education as basic matters requiring immediate action if the tide of urban decay is to be halted.

53% of County’s Negroes Eligible for Public Housing

The housing situation in Chattanooga is in a critical state. In a survey published by Chattanooga Progress Incorporation the core city’s deteriorating dwellings classified as substandard. In 1963 the County Planning Commission and the Hamilton County Health Department picked the literacy: income figures of Negroes in the eight blocks of Eighth Street, Market, North and Ninth Streets and the houses in accordance with the standards laid down by the Health Department.

It was found that over 70% of the Negroes in the area had a family income of under $3000 per year. The Commission also found that over 90% of the Negroes in the area lacked a complete toilet and that only about one in every ten to twenty people in the Commission’s area possesses the means to condemn a dwelling in substandard condition even if an owner continually refuses to bring his property up to minimum standards.

Yet the condemnation procedure is not a perplexing dilemma. The BHIC is faced with the question of whether it is better to allow a family to remain in a dilapidated dwelling or to condemn and demolish the structure, thus leaving the family at the mercy of an acute housing shortage. Even if the house is condemned and destroyed, the economic strictures on a ghetto family merely place them into a different house which is likely to be equally deplorable. According to the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Planning Commission fully 53% of the Negroes in the County are now eligible for public housing; there is simply not enough space to accommodate all of those in need.

Moderate Rent Housing Needed

Even those who are fortunate enough to have been admitted into a public housing project have a special
emma all their own. Each one of the projects in Chattanooga has a ceiling income set on a graduated scale for their renters. For instance, if the income of a family with three children exceeds $4,100, they are no longer eligible for public housing. The result is that the only is once again in the inner city slums, chiefly caused by their efforts to raise their economic status.

It is obvious that under present conditions a self-defeating cycle of poverty is created within which is undeniably safer to remain poor.

One proposed solution to this dilemma is the creation of the so-called moderate rent public housing, or 221D3. Under the conditions of the government's moderate rent program, the ceilings for family income are substantially increased, thus allowing economic growth without the consequences which now follow. No such programs have been initiated in Chattanooga, although accurate reports estimate that 51% of the inner city poor could qualify for this form of housing. With the advent of moderate rent housing it would be possible for a family to exceed income ceiling of public housing and move on to operate rent housing rather than back into the slums.

Even if we accept the inaccurate assumption that the Negro job applicant from the inner city is invariably unqualified, there are federal programs in operation which are designed to assist plant owners in a variety of retraining and apprenticeship plans. There are the dual goals of providing the plant owner with needed skilled labor and of imparting the mastery of a valuable skill to a formerly unskilled member of the labor force. The Manpower Training Act and its sub-agencies coordinate most efforts in the field of training. Unfortunately, many of the programs initiated by Manpower suffer from a lack of suitable and effective publicity. In many instances the most qualified for assistance remain unqualified about the very programs designed to aid them.

"Anybody That Wants A Job Can Find One?"

It is simply inaccurate to claim that "anybody that really wants a job can find one." One King Street Can (between Ninth & Tenth Streets) may provide one brief example of the over-simplification of the previous statement which is so often parroted. Among the men who wait at the Can are those who possess important working skills. Interviews at the Can reveal strong feeling that union discrimination has in many cases prevented these men from gaining professional status. Yet the knowledge of a skill is not something which can be granted or revoked by a union. The men at the Can, for one reason or another, lack the economic stability to survive or a regular job until pay day. Since they simply do not have enough money to hold them over between pay periods, they are forced into the hand-to-mouth existence of "catching out" — waiting at the Can for a job (usually manual labor) which will last no longer than a day or two. It is also a commonly held belief that employers who draw upon labor from the Can know of the men's economic vulnerability, and often prey upon this weakness by offering lower wages than usual.

Discrimination in hiring is also a contributive agent in the urban employment problem. No individual, with a realistic eye to the situation can fail to admit that discriminatory hiring practices continue to exist in the Chattanooga area. Since Section 1 of the Fair Labor Standards Act has been outlawed, other sub-agencies of the N.L.R.B. relatively have not developed. It will therefore suffice for a manufacturer to declare to employees that all applicants for his personnel division continue to turn away unqualified Negroes without questions asked on the basis of sheer racism. The lack of response to the training programs in existence would also suggest that these businessmen in a hiring capacity are simply not interested in providing any efforts toward alleviating the unemployment situation or ending job discrimination.

Curriculum Is At Best Irrelevant

A look at the chart illustrating the relationship of
education and income according to race is compelling evidence of several facts and should elicit many disturbing questions. Why does a white high school dropout earn a larger income—just over $1,000 annually—than a Negro college graduate? What is the reaction of a Negro who realizes that his educational endeavors will not bear an economic return comparable with that of similarly educated white man? If the reaction is often one of lILITY and disgust with the economic value of education, may be added to a long list of forces acting to circumscribe the urban Negro from obtaining adequate education. Even if a pupil manages to overcome the pressures drop out, the Chattanooga school system has little for him. The curriculum offered in the city’s schools, according to Dr. Charles E. Martin, superintendent, is distinctly geared toward the white middle class. The majority of urban pupils may by no means be considered to belong to this group. Such a study program which is to consider the educational needs of those it hopes each is at best irrelevant and cannot hope to hold the rest of most students.

Another serious fallacy in the local education program is the training offered is predominately college prep nature. Given the fact that the majority of urban Negroes will not attend college, a college prep education is to be absurd. For the Negro student even the limited vocational training available is a seeming dead end for once he is trained racial bars often prevent him from joining a union.

The urban schools have also failed to utilize fully their roles for the overall betterment of the community; the average community school plays no substantial part and forfeits its local potential by non-involvement. A concept of the “community school,” which is the aim of experimentation in the Community Schools program formerly under Mr. Lou Piotrowski is attempting to change this situation and to involve the neighborhood pool with a new relevance to the community. Among plans of this experiment have been the opening of schools during the summer months for a variety of recreational and educational purposes. Adult education another field into which Community Schools is probing; Mr. Piotrowski contends that the city schools all ignore all citizens under 6 and over 18. He feels that other groups should also become the object of continuing education programs.

Mecone Must Take Steps To Break the Cycle

In this article only three major urban problems have been touched upon. Even then the limitations of space and time have permitted only a most cursory overview designed to provoke thought rather than to offer solutions. This writer does not have at his disposal the means of solving he problems; he has only the realization that they must be solved if the process of urban decay is not to devour America’s cities. The problems are not insoluble if wide-scale action is taken to break the interlocking chain of problems which are strangling our urban centers today; yet someone must step in soon.
Project Straight Talk

Public Now Has to 'Listen and Change'

KAREN HILMES

The statement Sandy summed up his feelings of value of Straight Talk, an example of community service, was

Out of the interviews, Sandy observed, "The program taught me to listen and to be aware of the people around me."

The program was established to improve community relations by providing a forum for residents to express their opinions and concerns. It involved the use of documentaries and interviews to increase public awareness of the needs and issues of the community.

Sandy observed, "I learned that people are different and have different experiences. It was enriching to listen to other people's stories and points of view."

Kirk described the interviews as a session in communication rather than cut-and-dried answers to the same type of questions.

"We would just talk with the residents and ask them such questions as how long had they lived there, did they have proper public services (such as mail pick-up and garbage service), was their street in good repair, how would they feel if a colored family moved next door?"

"By the end of the interview, we knew them, really knew them. We had been honest with each other."

Sandy talked of the personal value of the program; how he felt it was as enriching for him as it was important to compile the reports.

"I was in a rut and knew it, but could not have cared less," he said. "But now I am aware and do care. My attitudes and way of thinking have been affected and I have become more involved with what is happening around me."

Kirk feels as if this program has given him the chance to communicate with people and with other races. For the first time in his life he is actually aware of the problems around him and has viewed it firsthand.

"I don't think that I could ever react as I once did," he said. "It isn't really possible to go back to my former self after working in a program such as this."

These "involved" youths are establishing the basis upon which better racial relations will improve without recourse to violent means of expression.

Project Straight Talk has opened a new channel of communication between the public and the top community leaders.

The honesty coupled with freshness and candor which only youth can transmit is contained in these reports.

The young people know what has to be done and are now asking help of the older generation and the "power structure" to do it.
Complacency in Suburbia

Sandy Weinberg Has Phone Interview While Kirk Walker Listens.

Weinberg is a 1958 graduate of Baylor University while at Baylor, he was involved with Project Straight and Taylor Notes, and later founded and involved with Project Straight. He is a summary of interviews with colleagues of residents of Chattanooga.

The most dangerous situation is found with middle-class Chattanoogans. This class symbolically forms a ring around the inner city—Lookout Mountain, Signal Mountain, Missionary Ridge, Brainerd, East Ridge. My interviews in these areas have revealed the so-called "complacency" of white suburbia. In many cases the people could find no problems with Chattanooga. Many actually believe the city has "the best racial atmosphere in the South."

These are the people that work from 8 to 5 in Chattanooga and then return to the security of suburban life to leave Chattanooga's problems at the office.

Specifically, the most disconcerting section to me is Lookout Mountain. The mountain is composed of middle-class to upper-class families (median income is $17,000 on 1959 census). Many of these people carry a great responsibility in Chattanooga. Yet it is here that the apathy is most evident.

Too often I was turned down when the questions about housing, employment, and education were asked. Too often a facade of concern was put on by the interviewee.

The feeling of prejudice is interwoven deeply there. The people are attempting to overcome this attitude, but it has been instilled deeply. Too many of the citizens try to justify their alienation from the inner city with concern for their mountain community.

They are tremendously proud of their small "colored" community on the Mountain. They have "surprised" everybody and have had effective integration of their elementary school. They have all chipped in and helped finance a new Negro church.

Yes! Why can't Chattanooga be like this, they say. We have a wonderful "colored" community up here. And yet one lady told me that all the property had been bought up around this community by a mountain citizen.

(It must be taken into consideration that over 75 per cent of the people interviewed were housewives. They, however, should reflect to a certain extent their husband's opinions.)

This should not be taken as an indictment of just Lookout Mountain citizens. They just represent the best examples of an increasing problem of "middle class complacency."

In contrast, the most interesting and encouraging segment of Chattanooga I came in contact with is the "Black Bottom" element.

These people are indeed poor, but they are intensely proud. These are the people who feel isolated from our middle-class society. They feel so alienated from our community that most have almost forgotten that they are a part of it.
COMPLACENCY IN SUBURBIA
(continued)

...are an integral part of our community. People can carry the force of an election BY NOT VOTE. They DO NOT VOTE because they feel an "invisible structure" will not listen to problems or suggestions, they feel stranded in a land of poverty. Encouragement located in hopelessness is the perception. They are not the poor God fearing, walking "poor white" people often think they are individuals. Sure re Wallace people and rollers," but there are Rockefeller, Nixon, Hum- and even Stassen people. The Chamber of Commerce, through Project Straight Talk, hopes to open this channel and permit a truly important part of our community to participate equally.

This is Lookout Mountain, "Black Bottom" ... Chattanooga.

'Clouds of Dust Fire My Lungs'

Kirk Walker, a participant in Project Straight Talk, expresses his impressions of his interviews through poetry. Kirk will be a senior at McCallie and is 17 years old.

PART I:
White-washed walls
And grimy-faced children
Rusted Coke signs
That gleam in a sultry sun
Sidewalk cracks
And hot-pitched tar.

A small, dirty girl
Who clutches a ragged doll
That drinks, eats, and cries
And finds shelter from the street
In those sweaty fingers.

On the pavement people move by.
I stand and stare up
At the tenant windows,
But only soot-stained panes

PART II:
Clouds of dust fire my lungs
And crowd the street
And choke the air
Like dirty coal bins on a sultry day.

But now the dirt is gone
And rotten shacks do not belong
Among these straight white columns.

New-mown lawns
And painted gates
And bright red swings
Revolve before my eyes.

And now I watch a man encased
In new silk tie and fresh-pressed suit
Tell me, "Son, I have no problems."

But I wonder.

-KIRK WALKER.
Flynn Street Could Be Breeding Ground of Rodents and Disease

Chattanooga's housing problem can be linked to two major factors: The first is the construction of multi-million-dollar urban renewal projects. The construction of such projects requires large tracts of land. This requisition has usually been filled by demolishing slum areas, which has resulted in the displacement of hundreds of families.

The second factor is that the families forced to relocate were placed in the market for emergency shelter. For many low-income white and Negro families this meant a migration from "slum to slum" thus creating a higher concentration of families in existing slum areas.

A recent survey disclosed that 53 per cent of the city's Negro population and 24 per cent of the city's white population could qualify for public housing if it were available. Overall, housing conditions in Chattanooga are relatively good, when compared to isolated areas scattered about the city.

In the Flynn Street area, five blocks from the heart of the city, the substandard and dilapidated dwellings are among the worst in the city. Several of the alleys are called "streets."

Upon entering these alleys you are greeted by unpaved roads, neglected housing units and an occasional pile of refuse, which is the breeding ground of rats and roaches.

The outward appearance of the units is deplorable. The usage of cheap second-hand building materials is obvious. The units are inadequately ventilated and the air inside smells of a rank dampness, caused by unevaporated water under the structures.

Floors have weakened under years of traffic. Leaky roofs have caused ceilings to fall and hang loosely. Walls softened by moisture have holes and stains. Toilet and kitchen facilities are not adequate enough to meet the needs of the five to eight inhabitants crowded into the three and four-room apartments. Wiring is faulty and current shortages are commonplace.

It is extremely difficult to heat these "units," because walls have holes and the doors and windows don't fit flush with the casings. In many of the units wood and coal is used for heating and cooking purposes.

Unbelievably high rent is charged for these units that are often unsafe and unsanitary and generally unfit for human habitation. Frequently, rent consumes one third of a family's income. When the units are repaired which is seldom, rent is increased.

This is understandable, but in one apartment building rent increased by 10 per cent.

The families suffering most from slum conditions are the ones receiving public assistance, usually women and children. Mothers on welfare are forced to accept the most neglected units because rental agents generally refuse to rent to families with children.
Families with limited income usually lack necessary food and clothing because the high-rent slum dwelling syphons a large percentage of its dollar.

There is a great deal of unnecessary suffering taking place daily in Chattanooga. We have allowed many of our citizens to live in the demoralizing and degrading environment of the slums. Our neglect and their ignorance has rendered many of them socially deficient and economically insecure.

Experience has proven that the housing problem can precipitate violence. This fact was exemplified in Los Angeles, Newark, Detroit and a score of other American cities. The housing problem poses a lethal threat to any city that is not conscious enough to recognize the housing problem as a "potentially inflammatory situation."

The upward trend of urban blight can be reversed, but first we must realize that the urban crisis is an evil that has beset the entire nation.

We must realize also that, "the infectious sting of urban deterioration is contagious."
who cares?

By: Shannon L. Horton
APPENDIX D
MEMO FOR: File
FROM: Sidney Hetzler
DATE: September 25, 1968
SUBJECT: Interview with John Stophel on results of Project "Straight Talk"

Mr. Stophel, President of the Greater Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, was asked to appraise progress made toward reaching the five objectives of Project Straight Talk which were approved by the Chamber Board of Directors in May. He said:

1. The first goal of opening up a new channel of communication was partially accomplished. I think the word "open" was not precise; certainly a channel was dredged, that is to say, we created a bigger channel than before. The Human Relations Committee, of course, had established lines of communication before the Chamber became involved in Project Straight Talk.

2. The objective of establishing a better climate of race relations was accomplished, I think; "better" is the key word here. Regardless of how much you hate you must communicate and maintain a climate for dialogue.

3. An educational experience for students was definitely provided and achieved.

4. I am uninformed about achievement toward goal number 4, "informing disadvantaged citizens." I felt more stress should have been placed on this aim. The project did better in defining problems. And the reporting of the need for community resources was better than feeding back the information needed by those citizens.

5. I believe that a communication gap between black and white members of Project Straight Talk was narrowed but not so much in the rest of the community. I think the lessons learned by viewing Project Straight Talk as a representative microcosm of Chattanooga could be helpful.

My overall evaluation is that the Project has been helpful to the Chamber. I feel too much attention was given to the opinion of the students, who as teenagers, were not mature enough and therefore tended to view solutions to community problems on superficial terms, such as tearing down slums and simply getting jobs for the poor. A better understanding of difficulties involved in solving community problems was an accomplishment.

SH:mm
MEMO FOR: File

FROM: Sidney Hetzler

DATE: September 27, 1968

SUBJECT: Interview with Blackwell Smith, Jr., on Results of Project Straight Talk

Mr. Blackwell Smith, Jr., first vice president of the Greater Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, was asked to appraise progress made toward reaching the five objectives of Project Straight Talk which were approved by the Chamber Board of Directors in May. He said:

1. Very definitely a step was made toward opening up a new channel of communication. Also a step was made toward showing the concern of the community power structure through the Chamber of Commerce. However, I just don't know precisely how to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

2. I think a better climate for racial relations was very definitely an accomplishment but again I don't know to what degree. For example, many people have told me that their opinion of the Chamber has risen because of its willingness to get into this. Also, I know that several student members of Project Straight Talk helped Jim Hunt in understanding a potentially serious situation in Avondale.

3. An educational experience for the students was a definite accomplishment in the area of better race relations as well as in gaining practical experience in dealing indirectly with community leadership through the Chamber of Commerce. I think the students got a very clear picture of the leadership situation as it is in Chattanooga today.

4. I feel that we did not accomplish the goal of informing disadvantaged citizens. Actually, I don't know how you would go about doing that; if you just go to a house and sit down and talk it looks like indoctrination. I think that the students, earlier in the summer, saw that there was more a need to point out the problems which were being created by the fact that many of the poor did not know the agencies which should be helping them.
5. I continue to feel that the Human Relations Committee is the best agency for maintaining communication between the races, although the Chamber can be very helpful in working with this very effective committee and others.

In general, I feel that Project Straight Talk was very worthwhile and I am glad the Chamber did it, but we went into it loosely and did not provide enough guidance. The Executive Committee didn't know what to expect and could not give any guidance. I personally would like to see it done again but I don't know if the funds will be available.
Mr. Hunt opened the discussion by stating the purpose of the meeting which was to attain views of the students in regard to what the Chamber should do in accordance with the information they had acquired during the summer through the Project. He asked whether or not the students felt it necessary or profitable for the Project to continue, and on what basis--year-round, summer only, etc. Mr. Hunt explained that no one person has the authority to say whether or not it will be continued, but at the Board of Directors must agree. In order to decide, they must be presented suggestions and specific comments from the students themselves in order to determine whether or not they feel it beneficial enough to solicit funds for the continuation. Many of the students felt that the Project had been in operation long enough to select a route or plan of action and gather reactions of the community to Project Straight Talk. Therefore, they felt that stopping altogether at a certain date would be futile. The prevailing attitude concerning the Project was that the summer had been mainly an experimental period, and since the five original goals had not been reached, the Project should be continued and the goals reevaluated on the basis of experience and knowledge gained during the summer. The main question was with and through whom the Project would be continued.

There was discussion on the history of Project Straight Talk and the amount of preliminary planning and organization that went into it. Mr. Hunt explained briefly the history of the Chamber and its part in race relations. He then stated that the Chamber took the responsibility of the Project on an experimental basis only, therefore they did not have any plans or organized procedures. Members of the Chamber's Human Resources Committee along with Mr. Hunt, sought advice and information from other Chambers, the NAACP, and other sources; however, no concrete answers or suggestions could be found. Therefore, information and suggestions must come from the students after they have the experience and the knowledge from their studies and interviews this summer.

Discussing both the good and bad points of Project Straight Talk, Mark McDade and Anthony Jones felt that without frank conversation and criticism there could be improvement over the present Project. Mr. Jones strongly felt that there was need for black leaders and advisors, whereas predominately white men occupied such positions this summer. While some of the students felt that attacks on the project were unnecessary, Mr. McDade pointed out that unless they were made aware of the mistakes made during this experimental period, there could be no future improvements.

The question was brought up of exactly what the Chamber's original ideas were in regard to the students' duties. Mr. Hunt again stated that since this was experimental, they did not really know--they were primarily interested in getting them to communicate with all classes in the city, especially the illiterate. In discussing what would be done
ith the material collected from interviews, etc., it was made clear that this material should be presented to the people undistorted and exactly as it is. Mr. Stewart explained that different people understand things in different language, and that the information must be presented in a way each individual can digest. There will be no changes made in what is said in the information, only in how it is discussed with the different people and classes. Martha Anderson stressed the fact that the interviews gave a good indication of attitudes and feelings throughout communities in Chattanooga, but they are not exactly accurate. In changing the presentation of the material it was made clear that those who did the changing should be both black and white, because of possible prejudices or attitudes on the part of entirely one or the other. Mr. Hunt stated that as a result of this information, opportunities and educational facilities may be made available to the illiterate, but no one could motivate them to take advantage of these facilities unless they truly desired to do so. Then the point was brought up that the older people would not benefit particularly from any findings of the students because they were "set in their ways" and perhaps would resist any change. Clark White felt that they should appeal to the younger generation in solving racial problems because it was from the younger people that most of the trouble stemmed.

was stated that the results of the interviews would be processed through computers to be published. Mr. Jones felt that there was no need for the computers because the problems were already known to the students and leaders, and they could communicate them to the people. However, Mr. Stewart explained that some people understand computer language and others do not. This involves the previous assertion of changing the presentation of the information gathered. Mr. Stewart continued that the financial support for the continuation of Project Straight Talk could only be gained through presentation of statistics and figures to the men who could help with the funds. These particular men will want and expect such statistics to prove that the Project is worthwhile, therefore deserving their financial support. was emphasized that the material to be presented must be communicated downward and upward, depending upon the ability of the people to understand. Thus, when communicating " upward," there must be a tool of communication, such as statistics.

ark McDade gave the example of the film as language that everyone can understand. Anthony Jones stated that the "rich white kids" within the Project had taken production of the film into their own hands, and left no room for his own help. Mr. McDade said that since these students had some technical skills, they were more qualified to do the film work, and that Mr. Jones had been given the chance to participate in the film production, but seemed disinterested. Mr. Stewart said certain white people and skills as well as black people, therefore, the person possessing the skill to do a particular thing should do it, regardless of whether he is black or white. Jimmy Howard said that the film was not being run by only the white students, and that Mr. Jones could have stayed in the film production if he had desired to do so. Mr. Stewart cited the example of the all-white photographers of the Project. He said they are all better qualified to take pictures than other members of the Project, therefore, they are doing so, with no attention paid to the fact that they are all white.

Mr. Hunt stressed the importance of obtaining specific suggestions from the students, preferably in writing, so they could be presented to the Board. He emphasized that they should suggest new, definite ideas, rather than repeating something that is read or heard by the Board as well as everyone in the community day after day. Some of the Board members will recommend that the Project be continued; however, there
is not been enough time for communication between the students and the Chamber to
tell them all the facts. They will need "ammunition" to sell the Project to some of
e members in order to continue it. Mr. Hunt explained that he must have sugge-
tions and comments from the students in order to have some kind of tool from them
sell to the Board. He said that once he has this material from the students them-
elves, he can go to the Board, members of the Chamber, and any and all leaders
the community and solicit their help in keeping Project Straight Talk on into the
ll. It will take funds to do this, and those who are in a position to contribute, must
ve specifics and statistics to prove it is worthwhile. He asked the students to tell
m, in written form, who, if not the Chamber, is in their opinion, the establishment
sponsor the Project. He wanted to be told seriously what they thought should be
ne by the Chamber.

show of hands indicated that all desired to continue Project Straight Talk in some
anner. Roger Castleberry discussed a tentative format for the continuation of the
ject. His plan is to establish an information center--gathering and distributing
formation--on a nine month basis. He said they could operate on somewhat of a
clic aid basis--giving help to those people who sincerely wanted and needed it. He
id several other students cited examples of help they had given to people who
anced to come into the Project Straight Talk office this summer. They explained
at these people wanted and what they did to help them. In some cases, this involved
ecting them to rehabilitation centers, employment offices, housing information,
c. Mr. Castleberry went on to suggest that they have a Director of Activities with
om the students could consult, a full time secretary to organize files on the
formation gathered. He said this plan did not include interviews during the winter
onths. It was said that they could operate this Project on a budget of $800-1200 per
onth. Mr. Hetzler pointed out that if this could be done, it probably would be the
rst such establishment in the United States. He said that some other cities are
tempting such operations, but have not done so yet. Mr. Hunt said there would be
problem of staying out of the department of other organizations, and asked the
estion of whether or not other agencies doing similar services were successful.

r. Stewart explained that the job the students took in Project Straight Talk allowed
em to express opinions to the people in charge rather than having to listen to them
stantly. This is the process of change, and he pointed out that the students had
perienced the beginning of it this summer.

was decided that written suggestions, comments, and ideas be submitted to Mr. Hunt
Monday, August 19. The meeting was adjourned.
It is difficult to stand back from a situation that has the intensity to involve everyone that comes in contact with it. Consequently, the price of being objective and honest is often costly to a person's idealism and integrity.

Project Straight Talk has been a learning process that will be invaluable to all the people connected with it. To me, this has been the project's strong point, for thirty people have learned more about life and today's society in three months' time than is often possible to learn in one lifetime. As a whole group, we were a microcosmic society. We all experienced frustration with the so-called power structure, with our advisors, and with each other. Sometimes the frustration came as a product of finding the truth and not being able to use it, or because of faulty communications, or by being stifled in our attempts to reach other people. But the frustration was good and drove home many ideas that otherwise would have been ignored. This learning process will have more effect than any other objective of the present project.

This learning process in itself will do as much to reach the public as any publication. The thirty of us have a great deal of understanding about the problems of the modern city and the forces that shape a community. We actually know more of what it's "really like" than any businessman that sits behind a desk all day. But it would be wrong to totally condemn all businessmen because the only difference between them and us is that we have "been there" and they haven't. This is not apathy—it is naive ignorance—that we are so quick to condemn. The people in Chattanooga, and possibly the United States, are only concerned about the situations that directly affect them or the ones that the news media forces upon them. The thirty of us understand and are of a present minority that, in a few years, will grow in numbers. We will be part of the trend to break down racial barriers because, with this project, we have learned to see people as individuals, not on superficial standards.

By word of mouth, we have reached the public—by talking to friends, parents, and every person we interview. In my interviews, I have run into
more people who really appreciated the chance to voice their opinions. This only brought the lack of communication between the power structure and the people into sharper contrast for me. I have talked to many prejudiced people who have become more bitter after laws were passed. This made me realize that laws cannot regulate attitudes, although they were very necessary.

However, after learning all these things and a myriad of others that are only feelings now and in time will be sorted into my own ideas, I am not disillusioned with people. People are not stereotyped groups in reality--they are individuals--they are unique; this is so fascinating because one can learn something from everyone regardless of lines of agreement. This summer has served to reinforce my own views and has taught me to sit and listen--sometimes patiently and sometimes with interest. I have retained my personal conservatism and personality, although I wondered whether my enthusiasm would die in the process. I have learned many priceless things that will help me later and, through all the struggles with frustration, I am stronger.
My learning process began with the first meeting that Sidney, some others and myself had in which we discussed the sound framework of the program.

It was from this meeting that I sat out to seek the real truth about White and Black Chattanooga.

The sensitivity lab was an eye opener to my knowing how to really be aware of others as humans and not as a so called "superior or an inferior race". The lab uncovered my heart and made it more sensitive to humans who are just victims of being indoctrinated with old ideals of how the world should be operated.

Another learning process began when the members of Project Straight Talk were honored with the presence of leading business men. They really gave us food for thought when they confessed of their not knowing the problems of their fair city, Chattanooga. This shocked me greatly when they confessed this in so many words. This showed me that the power structure was uninformed about their American City and that I really could relate to them the core of the major problems by listening to the poor, the oppressed and the so called "informed" public opinions about what their problems were.

The major learning was in the field. Indeed the field work was the most important work because this is where the data and verbal facts were compiled. The expressions that showed boredom were the faces of the people who I encountered in work. These faces expressed the feelings of a people who were fed up with dirt, poverty, ignorance, and living in a ghetto society that only offered them an uncertain future.
These expressions taught me the real truth of our city and possibly the truth about other cities in the United States.

To sum it up, the true learning is being aware of the naive attitudes of the rich who really are not aware of the city's problem and the oppressed attitude of the poor who really know what is the problem of this city but just can't communicate with each other to find a reasonable solution to these major problems that our city faces.
FINAL REPORT ON PROJECT STRAIGHT TALK

by Tom Geraghty, University of Chattanooga
Advisor on Survey Design and Statistical Analysis

This will be based on what should be done if continued in the future.
The overall evaluation of certain limited objectives is excellent on employment and training of a number of mixed students; it provided some information of value to the community in a documentary film and some public relations information of value to the Chamber.

In the future the project, if continued should embrace the following characteristics: (1) A better selection of personnel, drawn from all socio-economic levels of the community. There was too heavy a bias of middle and upper whites. The lack of lower income whites was serious deficiency; needed more redneck variety of people. (2) Clearly structure the project and get advisors involved early in the program, such as, sociologist, psychologist, statistician, economist, and persons experienced in youth activities. A formal organization is needed, not enough time in this project to achieve goals and have the students structure themselves. Need a structure for persons of limited experience, regardless of intelligence level involved. The group of advisors should be in constant contact with the project, reviewing the progress weekly and making what comments and criticisms are required as we go along. The difficulty is that too often we waited until too far into the project and corrections needed resulted in frustrations, even though we recognized
that this would have an adverse effect on the students ego. This would also prevent the changes in direction which took place and were disruptive in the project as it went along.

I have an idea that some of the students looked upon this as a "make work" project. I think a closer understanding of work habits and a closer recording of time spent on efforts leading to project objectives would be helpful.

On the whole, I think the project was extremely worthwhile. I would hope that the same thing could be done next summer, and suggest the organization start as early as March or April to structure this. The personnel should be selected before summer came, well-indoctrinated, and on their way. That would take pressure of time off us and useless time to structure, since we only had 10 to 12 weeks to accomplish objectives.

Concerning an on going project - take those students in town and build this cadre on a skeleton basis for the next nine months. The advisory group should be selected immediately, and begin making plans for technical help. New students and advisors could be fed into existing structure. An indept survey of some of white poverty areas is needed, not well-examined at this time. We should look at areas of racial tension which will exist, such as changing neighborhoods and the changing power structure and attitudes there. With reference to educational programs, there should be follow-up interviews with dropouts to find motivation. We should quantify more our conclusions, which are intuitively felt at present time, on employment descrimination and see what can be done to engage the social
and economically deprived Negro in the employment field. We should
investigate the employer attitude and more important, the employee
attitude in this part of the population segment. Do Negroes, for
example, not apply for work because they are afraid of the employment
application, or because of disrupting work pattern established, or
because of a need for immediate payment versus time between pay periods?
Do they take casual work because payday is immediate as against steady
work where payday is somewhat deferred and they don't have the means to
tide themselves over this period of time? I think one of the interesting
things to come out of this project is the fact that this is a major
problem.

Another area to investigate, with aid of trained sociologists, is
informal power structure surveys in various neighborhoods and within
different social-economic groups. Too often it is assumed that the
political and economical power structure is the actual power structure,
or the obvious power structure as it exists in the community. We all
know of the power wielded by a certain Dodds Avenue funeral director; he
can be duplicated many times and frequently this kind of power structure
is below the surface and often few of decision making levels are aware of
this structure. This information would be helpful if governmental
consolidation took place.

Another area is to lay ground work for investigation of community
schools, are these a detriment or not? Also, an area is supplementing
efforts of the Housing Authority to upgrade housing and the solution of
problems involved in this. We'll have a problem in 1970-71 with the
dislocations near UTC. We need to know attitudes of people near the
college who do not see university as other than a possible threat that
would do a lot to prevent the Columbia University situation.

Any number of these areas could be carried on during the winter months with adequate supervision. I would like to concentrate on two or more techniques than just one, so this cadre of youths could be used when the next summer program is effectuated.

My comments imply a high degree of satisfaction for what we've done so far, considering the fact that there was a substantially nebulous approach to it. Of necessity, it had to be since it was developmental. I think the results have been excellent, but could have been even better had a continuing review program such as I suggested been instituted. If we could have started the films and comments at the same time, a substantial amount of editing could have been done. Very few students, even highly creative and intelligent, have the breadth and depth of understanding of community reaction to see some of the pitfalls inherent in some of the comments. Continual rapport with the students makes for a more smooth flowing organization and enhances the educational benefit accruing to the student. After all, this is a classroom to an extent, and people in this are students and have much to learn, and I think if we involve our proper people at the steering level, this would improve the educational benefit.

Jim Hunt: "I’ve learned we must let the young students, even if they continue to disagree with adult judgement, speak. And we should release Chamber comments simultaneously with voice of youth." Geraghty: I certainly want students to call shots as they see them, but must make sure that other viewpoints are brought out for students consideration. Students must connect problems and solutions and consequences, such as people displaced.
by elimination of slum housing. The advisory committee must raise these questions and make students probe more deeply. I don't think under any circumstances there should be a censorship situation. But be sure that students have thought out attitudes and suggested solutions. The Socratic method should always be used, i.e., never tell students anything unless there is a direct misapplication of a fact, or something inaccurate or untrue. From this point, the Socratic method must be used. Ask the right question, and continue to ask the right question, and let the student come up with the answers that are applicable to the broad aspects. Then we would accomplish the broad objectives of the program.

It is my recommendation concerning the release of information or the film to the public that it be handled as follows: that it be presented to the Chamber by Traylor and Geraghty, as the communication subcommittee, as the result of Project Straight Talk. The Chamber can or cannot take any position on it as it desires. But this is what we think has been accomplished, we are proud of it and will stand behind. I'm not trying to get the Chamber to disavow it but I think it's a lot cleaner structure.

Hunt: "If you are asked for advice by members of the Chamber board, would you recommend the release of the advisory committee report with whatever comments it decided to make?" Geraghty: I certainly would, unequivocably. I may disagree with some of the views, as I do, but considering the constraints of time and personnel and other things, I think what we've done is nothing to be ashamed. I'd be willing to stick my neck out, and I don't think I'd be very far stuck out.
MEMO TO: John Stophel
Blackwell Smith, Jr.
James W. Hunt
Tom Geraghty
Jan Printz
Roger Castleberry
Johnny Holloway

FROM: Sidney Hetzler

DATE: September 25, 1968

SUBJECT: A Professional View of Project "Straight Talk"

The following comments were taken from a letter which I received this week from Dr. Otto Lerbinger, an economist who is chairman of the Public Relations Division, School of Public Communication, Boston University.

"I finally got a chance to look through the material you sent me on Project 'Straight Talk'. I am certainly impressed with the Chamber of Commerce that has the courage and foresight to undertake this kind of summer project and I feel that the fruits of the project should be clearly displayed. ...I feel that the impact of the study on those who participated and on those who read the newspaper articles and other material must be enormous. In other words, the positive result of the study has been to change the attitudes of the citizens of Chattanooga and to train future workers in the area of community development and public affairs. Any information you have on attitude change along these lines would be very helpful. The danger now is that the momentum which is so important in obtaining a community change will be lost during the long winter months. There is a possibility of saving some of the impact by scheduling meetings throughout the year where various committees of the Chamber discuss action that should be taken on the basis of the findings. The information should not be allowed to die but must serve as an input to the community decision-making process."

Although I read these comments to the Board of Directors on September 24, I felt that your interest in and concern for the purposes of Project Straight Talk warranted sending these thoughts to each of you who have been involved in the evolution of our experiment into the urban communication process.
BOOKS


REPORTS


ARTICLES IN JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS


ARTICLES IN MAGAZINES

Appleby, Thomas. "Citizen Participation in the '70s: the Need to Turn to Politics." City, (May-June, 1971).


"Dr. Land's Latest Bit of Magic." Life, (October, 1972).


ARTICLES IN NEWSPAPERS


UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

"Project Straight Talk." All materials relating to Project Straight Talk, including the "Dead End Street" film, are on file at the Greater Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce, 819 Broad Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37401. All documents and materials referred to in Chapter IV, "Case Study of a Participation Experiment," as Appendixes I-VIII are on file at the School of Public Communication, Public Relations Division, Boston University.
