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ABSTRACT
        The task confronting this nation is to use our
communications technology in an effort to effectively eliminate
racist and other undemocratic attitudes in American life. The media
and those who control them must be willing to run the risk of losing
profits to engage in facilitating positive attitudes towards
emotional issues such as poverty and race. (SP)

Racism and Attitude Change: The Role of
Mass Media and Instructional
Technology

by Robert L. Green and Richard Thomas*

The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders[1]
(Kerner Report), concluded that centuries of white American racism were
responsible for the conditions that led to open rebellions in the black
communities of Newark and Detroit, during the summer of 1968. Racial
discrimination in education, housing, and employment were listed as
major factors that led to distrust, hopelessness, and finally to re-
taliation against a system that favored whites and abused blacks. But
in addition to the indictment of those "unAmerican" practices directed
at black Americans, the National Advisory Commission also cited the
role that the mass media have played in urban disorders, and their in-
direct role in perpetuating white racism:

> Important segments of the media failed to report adequately
> on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and on
> the underlying problems of race relations. They have not
> communicated to the majority of their audience -- which is
> white -- a sense of the degradation, misery, and hoplessness
> of life in the ghetto.[2]

Specifically the mass media have failed to use their communica-
tive skills to educate white Americans regarding the role that white-

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1   Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,
New York: Bantam Books, 1968, p. 10.

2   Ibid., p. 20.

controlled institutions have played in planting the seeds of discontent

in black communities throughout the nation. The Kerner Report states:

> What white Americans have never fully understood -- but what
> the Negro can never forget -- is that white society is deep-
> ly implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it,
> white institutions maintain it, and white society condones
> it.[3]

If, as indicated by the Kerner Report, the major obstacle facing

the black community in its efforts to become a viable force in American

life is the negative practices directed at it by the white community,

what role can mass media and instructional technology play in changing

the undemocratic attitudes and behaviors of the white community?

The power of the mass media in shaping public opinion and direct-

ing action toward problems by governments and by citizens is well recog-

nized. "Books, telephones, telegrams, newspapers, and more recently

radio and television are man's formalized information processing and

distribution institutions."[4] Political aspirants are well aware of the

important role played by various forms of media in shaping the attitudes

of the voting population. Indeed, President Nixon used a mass medium,

namely television, most effectively during his second and successful

effort to reach the White House. The image offered to the American

public during Mr. Nixon's first presidential campaign was greatly

modified through the use of television in 1968.

Mass media and its offspring, instructional technology, can

be rightly viewed as very powerful forms of social control, and can

be used to shape the attitudes and values of a given citizenry for

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3   Ibid., p. 2.

4   John P. McIntyre, "Mass Media -- Alternative to Schooling?" Ed-
ucational Leadership, 25 (April, 1968), p. 637.

constructive or destructive purposes. Adolph Hitler used mass media to convince millions of Germans that its Jewish residents were morally corrupt and inherently inferior and thus paved the way for the destruction of human life. Through the use of masa media, the United States assisted millions of Americans during the after World War II in developing first hostile, then very positive attitudes toward the country of Japan, all within a span of ten years. Radio, movies, film strips and eventually television were used concomitantly in order to shape the views of Americans toward the Japanese. More recently, the medium of television was used very effectively during the early 1960's in order to portray white southerners (such as the police commissioner of Birmingham, Alabama, Bull Connor) as violent and brutal men who oppress black people. Yet this same technological tool several years later portrayed black people as rampaging citizens, lacking in inner control, who burned cities to the ground.

These examples might be multiplied many times to indicate the very important role that media can play in shaping the attitudes and values of people towards issues that vitally affect the direction this country might take regarding its political life. In fact, it might be said that the mass media have played a very important role in supporting the attitudes of Americans about a number of institutions -- institutions such as education, the welfare system, employment, and the defense system (witness the manner in which the media, particularly radio and television, supported with little question the war in Vietnam).

In discussing the mass media and instructional technology, we should perhaps explore the power arrangements in American life since these are

the arrangements which are usually supported by the media. Most societies are held together by very specific interacting belief systems. Such belief systems need not be objectively valid, as long as they perform functions deemed to be important by those who hold power positions within that given society. These belief systems are a very significant aspect of social cohesion. When a given belief system is threatened by forces within its society, the system reacts to that external threat. It may draw together or it may begin to disintegrate, precipitating chaos in other systems that interact with it.

American society has several belief systems that perform certain highly selective functions for the white majority. Racism is a very important belief system that appears to be functional for the white majority. Its tenets are rationales developed to perpetuate the status quo and explain away the oppressed circumstances of minority groups. We would need only to examine our political, legal, and social history to confirm the latter statement. American society has yet to deal effectively with the issue of eliminating racism as a major belief system operative throughout our culture. It may be argued that the belief system of racism is a major construct which weaves together other belief systems in our society, e.g., "Indians and Blacks are unemployed not because of racial discrimination, but because they lazy."

The media have been used as a very effective set of technological tools to maintain and perpetuate the racist belief system. Minorities have been portrayed by the media with just those traits that the system allows them to possess. Thus, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy is created and upheld.

At first, this was accomplished by newspapers -- the printed word. Today, however, radio and television can do in an hour what print or word of

mouth take years to do. Attitudes toward racism can be piped thousands of miles, hour after hour into the living room or shanty of any white American wither to reinforce his belief system regarding poor people, Indians or black people, or to counteract basic attitudes operative within that belief system.

In essence, television is a powerful medium of communications. It exposes us to a world which at times might be strange and frightening. It can bring into the most remote white rural living room the death moans of a black child dying of rat bites in Harlem. It can, for a moment, force a tear from a black nationalist viewing an unemployed white worker looking helplessly into the face of his starving young pregnant wife. It can move mountains of raw emotions to fever pitch, hatred, or even tender love. It could make us one family, if it would.

With the advent of radio, television, film strips, programmed learning materials, computers, and other communication tools into the area of formal instruction, the young field of instructional technology has developed rapidly. Some planners, recognizing the effectiveness of mass media, have suggested that the mass media become the educational institutions of our generation.[5] Thus, the order of business now is to determine how instructional technology with its great capacities might assist in developing democratic attitudes toward all people in American life.

Attitude development theorists argue that the attitudes of young children can be shaped more quickly than those of adults. If we are to assist large segments of the American public in developing democratic attitudes,

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5   Ibid., p. 638.

then, our chances of success are much greater if we begin with young

children. In addition, it has been found that the perceived prestige of

the individual who conveys certain information significantly affects the

amount of attitude change. "The higher the perceived prestige, trust-

worthiness, or expertness of the communicator, the greater the attitude

change toward the position advocated in the message. Further, studies

have indicated that attitude change is independent of the amount of fact-

ual information absorbed from the message."[6] So both the time at which

information is conveyed and the prestige of the individual presenting

this information are important factors in changing attitudes.

First, let's dwell on the age factor. Schramm provides data which

indicate that "more than 1/3 of all children in television communities are

watching the picture tube by the time they are three."[7] He further indi-

cates that four out of five children view television by the time they

come to school. "Almost all of them are regular television viewers before

they begin to read the newspaper."[8]

How much time do children spend watching television? Schramm finds

that small children tend to view television a little more than two hours each

day. As children approach their early teens, their TV watching time exceeds

three hours each day. "This means that from the child's third year of life

until sometime near the end of high school, television comes near to filling

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6   Hideya Kumata, "Attitude Change and Learning as a Function of Prestige
of Instructor and Mode of Presentation," The Impact of Educational Television,
Ed. by Wilbur Schramm. University of Illinois Press, 1960, p. 157.

7   Wilbur Schramm, "A Note on Children's Use of Television," The Institute
for Communication Research at Stanford University, pp. 214-223.

8   Ibid.

nearly one-sixth of all the child's waking hours. It absorbs from one-half to three-fourth of all media time."[9] This suggest that TV is a very important mode of communication for pre-school and early elementary school children.

Considering the amount of time spent in watching televison, a unique opportunity exists for providing children with educational programs that are related to developing positive attitudes toward social justice. Cartoons are certainly powerful reinforcers for children and could be made enjoyable, funny, and at the same time carry a humanistic theme and/or some educational content. Yet, this has not been done on a wide scale. At present, many of the cartoons that are currently being watched have come under fire from citizens' groups around the country. Parents complain that the days of the Donald Duck cartoons have vanished. Modern cartoons are saturated with agression and outright violence.

A promising innovation is the Children's Television Workshop; the main objective of this program is to provide pre-school children with basic education and to develop healthy attitudes toward learning and toward their fellow men. Within the next year, 130 programs will be presented, directed mainly at poor children in the cities. Efforts are being made to make these Children's Workshop programs a series of creative, innovative presentations that will attain their goals.

The Children's Television Workshop, however, is only one small but important approach oriented toward positive attitudes through the use of

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9   Ibid.

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instructional technology. Let us focus specifically on the general American

population. There is much evidence to support the point of view that many

white Americans still hold non-democratic attitudes toward minorities -- e.g.,

the Kerner Report. The white community has historically held unhealthy

attitudes toward black and other minorities, and minority groups have in

turn developed unhealthy attitudes toward the white majority as a function

of the mistreatment they have received. It must be asserted that attitude

change will not come about unless conditions in our society are basically

change. Blacks will not change their attitudes about mistreatment in the

area of employment until employers stop discriminating against black people

who are tyring to secure employment. However, even if rapid and basic

changes could be brought about in American institutions today, attitudes

developed as a function of historical facts may yet need changing. This

change will not come about unless there is a major commitment by those who

control media in America to deliberatly present information that will

assist in developing "Democratic Attitudes." Both the government and

private industry, i.e., those who financially support mass media, can

play a very important role in encouraging the communicators of infor-

mation to take this approach. Whitney Young, in a recent speech to the

National Association of Broadcasters, also reiterated this idea. He in-

dicited the networks for rigidly preserving the status quo by their strict

enforcement of regulations which permit only network personnel to plan

programs for American audiences. It was stated earlier that when the

government feels that its best interests lie in assisting all American

to develop positive or negative attitudes toward other world powers, it

does this through radio, television, films and newspapers readily and

swiftly. This same kind of massive commitment must be made by the media

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in an effort to assist the white majority in developing positive attitudes toward black Americans.

In the past, the opposite has been true; witness Stepin Fetchit, Amos and Andy, and other caricatures of black people, where they have been portrayed as being not just ignorant, but also stupid or, at best, with what shrewdness they had, being directed to prolonging a lazy and shiftless way of life. Although blacks are not necessarily portrayed as Amos and Andy types in 1969, the mass media have not yet taken a strong enough approach to presenting blacks in a positive manner. There have been some first steps taken of late regarding the portrayal of black Americans, which are promising. Prominent entertainers such as Bill Cosby and Sammy Davis, Jr., have been presented in major shows watched by millions of Americans. Of late, such programs as "Black Journal," which focuses on the positive aspects of life in black America, has been piped into millions of white and black homes. And just recently, a major television show ("The Today Show") has presented the viewing public with a black newscaster. Portraying blacks in favorable roles such as this can lead to positive views of this major American minority, but much more can be done, particularly by the medium of television.

All over the country universities are starting black studies programs or installing in established departments certain black courses. From coast to coast, Harvard, Michigan State University, University of Illinois, and Stanford, black studies are being developed for the benefit of exposing the university community to the cultural life of black people, both domestically and internationally. Yet what is strongly lacking is a coordinating body that can make available to the non-univ-

sity audience, e.g., high schools, adult education, religious groups, the benefits of this new body of knowledge.

Some universitites can better afford black studies programs than others, and unless interested parties can afford to hop from school to school, they will obviously miss a lot. However, this can be remedied by a closed-circuit TV network and a team of university and non-university coordinators, structuring a program where each university with a focus on a special area of black studies could televise that area.[10]

Many people, both black and white, in the non-university public are greatly interested in black studies. However, they have to wait until the national broadcasting companies decide to find room or sufficient monetary motives. Black people, in particular, of the non-university public are starving for all the black studies programs they can get. This need can be met again by setting up mobile television units in places which would be located in the black community (almost like the Christian Science reading rooms.) The viewing audience could view these programs during the day when the universities broadcast them or later at night and on weekends. A coordinating body could help the universities to develop schedules that would benefit the work schedules of as many non-university viewers as possible.

High schools, too, could be plugged into the national network and would be spared the expense of searching for and recruiting teachers for black studies programs. Instead, the history or social studies teacher could assist the program by leading the discussion groups in classes, after the viewing. The class would be exposed to the very best in black studies, from

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10   Mr. Ron Lee, former Assistant Provost, Michigan State University, suggested that Fisk University could be the site of this national coordinating body, where a center computer system could be established on tapes; and flown out from the various special interested schools.

experts in special areas the nation over.

Such developments are presently being effected for industry and medicine.
They are not futuristic ideas, by any means. Western Union is presently
creating a nationwide utility which will gather, store process, retrieve, and
then distribute information through connected computers. And the General
Electric Company has already designed a system for the National Library of
Medicine which not only locates articles of interest to students or indivi-
duals at dial-access terminals, but will also produce an offset film posi-
tive of it for printing.[11] Again, it only seems a matter of priorities in
terms of the nation's needs; such systems can be established in areas of
information distribution about attitudes, but the power structure will need
to support them.

The public school system as well as colleges and universities throughout
America have available to them a captive audience, an audience that can be
presented with information that can lead to the development of very positive
attitudes through the use of instructional technology. The Children's Tele-
vision Workshop was used as an example of what can be done to assist pre-
school children in developing positive attitudes.

In reviewing the literature in the area of technology, most of the data
indicates that instructional technology is used on limited basis in urban,
predominately black schools, and is most widely used in very affluent suburban
school districts throughout the country. Several reason may account for this:
(1) Suburban school communities can often afford the expensive costs of specific
technologies, such as computers, 8 m.m. loop projectors, and other forms of
technology. (2) Urban teachers often complain that they are so heavily in-
volved in matters related to upgrading the educational status of their children

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11   McIntyre, op. cit., p. 640.

that they "do not have the time to experiment" with technology.

However, since instructional technology is so widely used in suburban schools, that population which may most negatively or positively affect poor communities can be readily reached. This is where educators have a positive impact on the developing attitudes of junior high school and high school students. Films related to human relations, film strips and 8 m.m. films focusing on poverty and welfare conditions in America can be used to offset the attitude that people are poor because they are lazy. The interrelatedness of discrimination, lack of education, and poor health can be vividly portrayed through the use of film strips. Dial-A-Computer can be used to pump in statistics regarding the negative effects of poverty and discrimination in American life (many individuals will accept the data presented objectively in statistical form in contrast to the spoken word).

Another program could be in the area of a dialogue via closed-circuit television between inner-city black and suburban white students. Over a telephone-television system, black and white students could discuss various subjects which both would be studying simultaneously in their classrooms. After-school centers could be created to continue the dialogues, but in other areas of interst to the students. In the home economics department, black as well as white housewives could discuss preparation of certain meals via closed-circuit television, and these discussions could then be televised to home economics classes at all levels of education. In these suburban school communities, due to their already wide use of educational technology, educators have an opportunity to develop programs that are specifically aimed at eliminating racist attitudes and to channel them into suburban classrooms throughout the country.

Ira J. Singer, in a recent article, indicates that instructional technology is used on a limited basis in urban school communities with large minority populations.[12] It is here that instructional technology can be used to good advantage to assist disadvantaged youth in making more rapid progress in efforts to overcome the effects of a past disadvantaging background and to improve attitudes toward work, government, and self. For example, computer-based dial access systems, film strips, movies, all can be used to inform minority youth of new opportunities that are recently available to them in America. Many minority youth, as a function of their own personal experiences and historical information, develop low levels of aspiration regarding their potential achievement in American life. Instructional technology can be specifically used to motivate youngsters to engage in tasks of an academic nature. Research findings indicate that students who participate in courses which use instructional media, such as programmed learning and classroom television, show a significantly more favorable attitude to the course than those taught through the typical lecture method.[13] It might be added that instructional technology could also be used to increase the actual learning ability of disadvantaged youth. The "Talking Typewriter," a computerized teaching machine using a number of media simultaneously, produced by the Responsive Environments Corporation, has shown remarkable success with disadvantaged students and illiterate adults.

In the area of community relations and attitude change, technology can also be very helpful. Dial-Access Information Retrieval Systems can quickly transmit information to any individual or group and can choose information

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12   Ira J. Singer, "Media and the Ghetto School," Audio-Visual Instruction, (October, 1968), pp. 861-864.

13   C. O. Neidt and D. D. Sjogren, "Changes in Student Attitudes during a Course in Relation to Instructional Media," AV Communication Review, 16 (Fall, 1968), pp. 268-279.   13

which is tailor-made for a particular audience. Singer[14] points out that
technology can be used to assist urban children and their parents in
effectively utilizing community resources available to them. For example,
"an expectant mother needs advice on prenatal care; an unemployed family
head requires guidance for the receipt of welfare benefits; a police suspect
seeks legal aid; a high school student needs information concerning availa-
bility of after-school employment -- in short, information basic to life
itself but generally unavailable in convenient form to the ghetto resident
can be electronically dialed and transmitted in video and audio modes."

The dial-access system can also be used for teaching skills, when
audio and video modes are combined. Such a system would be most useful in
job training centers and school situations, in addition to pre-school pro-
grams.

Another area for technological assistance would be community-police
relations. The report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disor-
ders offers a number of suggestions, one of which was: "Establish fair and
effective mechanisms for the redress of grievances against the police and other
municipal employes."[15] What kind of mechanisms? A centrally located in-
formation center could be established where black people in the community
could check daily on the behavior of the police, i.e., their arresting
patterns, patrols, etc. If it is suspected that someone is being harassed,
responsible people could go to the center and not only report it, but demand
that the officer question the suspect in front of a closed-circuit television
camera for later viewing. The community could then demand a viewing of any
questionable procedures.

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14   Singer, op. cit.

15   Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders: Summary
of Report, p. 17.

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Ethnic groups could develop closer ties in their communities by
setting up closed-circuit television to inform people about daily events
related to social justice. Community organizers could work with various
segments of the community by channeling information pertaining to race
relations to community residents from centrally based offices. Tutorial
programs in race relations could be extended through television to
millions of homes throughout America. All of these proposed approaches
can positively affect and shape the development of democratic attitudes.

The task still confronting this nation is to use our communications
technology in an effort to effectively eliminate racist attitudes in
American life. However, there must be a major commitment to build a
new ethic regarding fair treatment of the individual regardless of race,
religion, or national orgin. Mass media are controlled by moneyed people
in our society. But the media and those who control them must be willing
to run the risk of losing a bit of their profit for some period of time
in order to engage in the business of facilitating positive attitudes to-
ward such emotional issues as poverty and race. They must be willing to
use subtle forms of attitude modifiers in order to infiltrate certain
rigid belief systems.

Schools, churches and civic organizations would have to be organized
to support the efforts of opinion-makers when such attempts toward attitude
improvement are made. These community groups must watch and discuss their
programs. Trained observers would have to be available to record or relay
to policy-makers the positive or negative effects of new approaches.

Typically, a flurry of activity begins when a major distrubance, such
as a riot, occurs in our society. We must not wait for riots and other
forms of social disruption in order to begin to develop the kind of society

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in which all men can feel as though they are accepted. If we are to live,
out the democratic creed, this change should come about in an orderly demo-
cratic manner.