The purpose of this document is to review the growing body of literature focusing on poverty and communication, assess it, and posit directions for future work. In all, some 4000 different studies are examined to develop an overview of the communication environment of the urban poor. No more than 200 had some relevance to poverty-communication; only some 30 studies were directly related to the issue, and most of these were research products of the last four or five years. The work available provides an adequate baseline picture of the communication behaviors of the poor and shows surprising agreement on findings. In addition, this document includes original findings from a recent large-scale study of the communication behaviors of low-income black adults. The study, conducted by Greenberg, Dervin, and Bowes, consisted of interviews with 366 low-income black adults in Cleveland. This study provides the most comprehensive evidence available on the use of information sources by the poor. The use of sources for information was approached from two perspectives. The first asked respondents what sources they had used for help or information in any area in the past. The second asked respondents to name potential sources in ten hypothetical problem areas. This review documents the fact that there is now a sizeable body of evidence available describing the communication behaviors of the poor, and demonstrates that these differ from those of the middle class. (Author/JM)
Project CUP

THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT OF THE URBAN POOR

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THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT OF THE URBAN POOR

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THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT OF THE URBAN POOR

By Brenda Dervin and Bradley S. Greenberg

The social scientist often is caught running in an attempt to keep up with his society. When the "war on poverty" was joined in the 1960's, little empirical ammunition was available to guide the poverty worker. This was particularly true in the area of communication. While there was a large volume of research available on communication per se and on poverty per se, the intersect of the two was almost nil. Yet, one of the major "war cries" of the poverty practitioner was for evidence on which to plan action strategies.

By the early 1970's, the situation has improved somewhat. A growing body of literature focuses on poverty and communication jointly. The purpose of this chapter is to review that literature, assess it and posit directions for future work. In all, some 4000 different studies were examined to develop an overview of the communication environment of the urban poor. No more than 200 had some relevance to poverty-communication; only some 30 studies were directly related to the issue, and most of these were research products of the last four or five years. The work available provides an adequate baseline picture of the communication behaviours of the poor and shows surprising agreement on findings.

Let us place the recent emergence of a poverty-communication focus within the context of research on poverty as it has been conducted in the past decade.
Research on defining "poverty"

Prior to and during the early 1950's, a large and tedious volume of literature focused on defining the poor and their demographic characteristics. While some researchers still continue to belabor the general issue of defining poverty, most social scientists have come to accept a relativistic definition: The poor are those with low incomes. More specifically, the poor are that one-fifth of the nation's families living below income standards developed by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

What does poverty mean in terms of money? For a non-farm family of four, the poverty income level in 1959 was just under $3000, and in 1970, the figure was $3800. OEO estimates that 40 million people lived at or below such levels in 1959, and 26 million in 1970.

Using this relativistic definition of poverty, considerable literature agrees on a strongly-supported capsule picture of the demographic context of poverty (81; 105). The urban poor are more likely than the non-poor to be: 1) unskilled and unprepared for jobs; 2) low in education; 3) living in large, often extended families; 4) living in split families; 5) living in one parent only households, often matriarchal; 6) unemployed or employed in low-paying, hard labor jobs; and 7) highly mobile. The individuals within this group called "poor" are of all racial and ethnic groups. However, Blacks, Puerto Ricans and similar minority groups are more likely to be poor and, indeed, to be poorer on any available measures of poverty.

In this first stage of poverty research, communication received only incidental focus.
Research on poverty life styles

When talking about the poor, both scientific and lay literature bandy about two key cliches—the "vicious cycle of poverty" and "the dysfunctional sub-culture of poverty." The second stage of poverty research during the early 1960's focused almost solely on documenting this cyclical nature of poverty. Briefly, the research suggested that the poor remain poor because of environmental and psychological factors which deter the possibility of escape and inhibit meaningful life style changes.

Some social scientists and much of the non-poor public tended to attribute cause and effect to such findings. The poor remained poor because they were lazy. The poor lacked achievement. The poor emphasized family and friends over work. Increasingly, however, researchers began to acknowledge the problems of their own middle-class biases and the poverty life style was re-interpreted from a "vicious, dysfunctional trap" to a "functional response."

The American poor more currently are portrayed as being poor in an affluent, middle-class oriented society. The society assumes skill, literacy, motivation, education and information-seeking abilities. The cycle of poverty has received a second interpretation. In this re-interpretation the poor are seen as badly equipped to deal with a highly educated, affluent society. The society is poorly prepared to deal with its poor. In response, the poor have developed a sub-culture and psychological orientations which middle-class observers agree are dysfunctional to operation in the major society. The sub-culture empha-
sizes family, friendship and kin relationships. It is less achievement-oriented. It is, in many respects, a closed system. Yet, it appears to be a functional response to the realities of a life of poverty.

The major portion of the available poverty-communication research has this life-style emphasis. The typical methodology is to compare the communication behaviors of the poor to the non-poor and then to interpret these behaviors within the context of the "poverty life style."

The research in this stage has been descriptive primarily. It has intended to fully describe the poverty life style and differentiate it from the middle-class life style. Built solely on field surveys, this research emphasizes statistical averages and statistical differences between the poor and non-poor. Its weakness, of course, is that statistical portraits cloak many differences. Little of this research has differentiated between sub-groups of the poor. In addition, while such enquiry has acknowledged poverty life styles as a response to a societal context, only recently have studies begun to focus on the society portion of the problem.

Research on the total society

Underlying most early work was an implicit assumption that if somehow the poor could be changed, poverty could be eliminated. A growing number of investigators (77; 83; 87; 88) are suggesting a shift in concentration to the social system and how that system must be altered. Thus, while we have learned that the poor lack achievement in the middle-class sense, recent research is beginning to ask what the society is doing to prevent achievement. Although communication scholars have
demonstrated that the poor lack information on which to base decisions, recent research is beginning to ask whether the society prevents the poor from getting certain kinds of information.

It would be useful, if, at this point, we could synthesize the major theoretical strains in the poverty-communication area. However, the first interest of most studies has been to describe the unknown, to compare the poor to the non-poor, and not to exceed greatly that level of explication. Little theory has yet come about, although that complaint is not confined to this area of communication research. Perhaps the material in this chapter can serve to evoke theoretical insights about poverty and communication.

The major portion of this chapter reviews and analyzes the work of the past decade on poverty-communication, with particular emphasis on adults. Some interesting areas are excluded for lack of space, e.g., communication during riots, analyses of media content, and others are omitted because they are dealt with comprehensively elsewhere, e.g., language and poverty.

In addition, this chapter includes original findings from a recent large-scale study of the communication behaviors of low-income black adults. The study, conducted by Greenberg, Dervin and Bowes (39) consisted of interviews with 366 low-income black adults in Cleveland. Data on the communication and information processing behaviors of that sample will be presented, in part.
Mass Media availability

All studies agree on one point: while the poor may be poor in dollars, they are not poor in media access. Media levels are generally high across all sampled low-income groups (1; 6; 10; 30; 40; 100; 101). A capsule picture of the media availability of low-income urban families as drawn from these studies suggests:

* 95% of low-income households have at least one TV set. 40% of the Cleveland low-income black sample owned two or more TV sets.

* Almost 100% of the households have at least one radio with most having multiple sets. The average number of radios owned, however, is less than that of the general population.

* 50-75% of the households have at least one daily newspaper regularly available. In general the poor have less newspaper availability than the non-poor. One study also found that low-income whites were significantly more likely than low-income blacks to have a daily newspaper available.

* Movie attendance is rare according to the few studies which have assessed this behavior. In one, 70% of the low-income adults last went to a movie over a month ago.

* At least 75% of the households own at least one phonograph with one study showing higher phonograph ownership among low-income blacks than low-income whites. Phonograph ownership by the poor is significantly less than that of the non-poor.

* The average low-income black family has two black periodicals available regularly.

Some researchers have been surprised at these high media availability levels, particularly with such durable media products as TV sets, phonographs, and radios. Two researchers (0;32) inferred that these high ownership levels are a symptom of "conspicuous" or "compensatory
consumption" - an attempt to compensate for other deprivations. Others (10; 104) suggest that such consumption is a necessity in our highly media-oriented society.

Mass media exposure

Marshall McLuhan's "electronic village" (71) is, perhaps, the best descriptive term of the media environment of the poor. The available studies all agree: the poor are heavy users of television and radio and, in comparison with the non-poor, low users of magazines and newspapers. While the studies vary on absolute media use levels, a general picture of media use by the poor can be drawn from the intersections of the evidence.6

- Most low-income adults watch television from 4 to 6 hours a day. Low-income blacks watch more TV than low-income whites. One study indicated an average of 2.0 hours of TV viewing on a weekday for general population adults, 4.8 for low-income whites and 5.7 for low-income blacks. That study tapped TV viewing during winter and spring months in the mid-west. Recent evidence shows an average of 2.9 hours viewing on a weekday for low-income blacks during the hottest part of July.

- At any given time of the day, the low-income population has a higher proportion of viewers than the general population. In fact, during some morning and afternoon hours when general population viewing ranges at around 5-10%, low-income viewing is at 25-40%.

- The poor listen to the radio as much or more than the general population with the average adult listening about two hours. Most evidence agrees on this level of radio use. One study found considerably higher radio usage with low-income black adults listening an average of 5 1/2 hours on a weekday.

- The low-income population uses newspapers less than the general population and generally reads less of all print media. Low-income blacks make less use of daily newspapers than low-income whites. The specific newspaper use figures vary, although these generalizations hold regardless of usage level. As examples one researcher found that 40% of his low-income adult sample read less than one hour a week in
any print medium. A recent study of low-income blacks found the average respondent scanned or read three sections of the daily newspaper every day.

* The poor read fewer magazines than the non-poor. Non-magazine reader figures among the poor range from 10% in one study to 33% in another. Low-income blacks, however, show more use of magazines than low-income whites. This difference is accounted for by the reading of black periodicals.

* Low-income families are significantly higher users of phonographs than general population respondents (despite lower ownership of phonograph sets). For example, 59% of low-income adults used phonographs yesterday compared to 23% of general population adults. Low-income blacks reported significantly higher usage than low-income whites (71% compared to 46%).

* The average low-income adult spends almost one-half a 16-hour waking day on electronic media compared to one-fourth a waking day for general population respondents.

The major force of these findings centers on the high use of the electronic media by the poor. The findings also pin-point some essential differences in the media environments of low-income blacks and whites. Blacks use newspapers less but black periodicals and phonographs more.

Low-income blacks are going to specialized media to get sub-cultural materials which are not available to them in the majority media.

Reasons for watching TV

Why does one person watch more TV than another? Given that the poor watch more TV, researchers are addressing this general question specifically to that sub-group.

Early (pre-poverty era) research tended to focus on alienation, anxiety, and self-images as possible predictors of greater television exposure. The findings were an anomaly. Most found no relationship. Some found the more alienated used TV more, others obtained the opposite.
turned their attention to the content of television viewing, there was more parsimony. A sizeable set of studies found some basis for agreement. The more under stress an individual (the more frustrated, the more fatalistic, the more isolated, the more alienated), the more likely he is to turn to media content which is high in fantasy orientation. Since the poor are higher on any of these measures, one reason for greater television use is identified—if we accept the premise that TV fare fills a high fantasy viewing function.

Meyersohn (80) summarized previous approaches to the general issue of "Why more TV?" into two propositions:

- the less, the more theory which states that the fewer the resources an individual has and the more isolated he is, the more his viewing; and
- the less, the less theory which states that the fewer the resources an individual has and the more isolated he is, the less his viewing.

Using national sample data, he found that the first proposal fit best for middle-class respondents. However, for low-income respondents, both theories fit depending on what resources were used as the predictor of TV viewing. Respondents with less leisure time equipment (e.g., games) available to them, watched TV more. Respondents with less other mass media available to them, watched TV less. He concluded that one cannot make the general statement that the poor watch more TV because they lack resources.

Further explanation is offered by some recent work which looks not so much at personality and resource predictors of television viewing but at uses made of television. These studies generally agree that the poor use TV for different reasons than the non-poor. Results in-
dicate the poor use TV for stimulation (because it's exciting) and as a school of life (to learn how to solve problems, to learn about people, to learn things not learned in school). The middle-class, on the other hand, use TV more to overcome boredom. For children and teenagers, these three dimensions of TV usage order by race and class. Low-income blacks say that it is more exciting, more is learned, and less use is to relieve boredom than do low-income whites. Middle-class respondents label it least exciting, least instructive, and more for relief (42;43). While these last findings have not yet been replicated with adult respondents, a recent study asked a sample of 366 low-income black adults why "people watch TV".

Results in Table 1 indicate that from 52% to 73% of the respondents agreed that "excitement" and "school of life" statements were reasons why people watch TV. In contrast, only 39% agreed that people watch TV because they "have nothing better to do".

Another aspect not much researched is the use of TV as a basis for post exposure social interaction. Bogart (7) suggested that the media provide an impersonal means of developing bonds between people. Two recent studies (39; 40) suggest that television content is a major topic of conversation among the poor. For example, 57% of a low-income black adult sample talked with others about TV two or more times a week with 37% indicating regular talk about soap operas and 23% regular talk about shows which feature black stars. The function of such talk about TV in social relations is not understood, nor are parallel data available from the non-poor.
TABLE 1

Reasons for watching TV given by Cleveland low-income black adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People watch TV because</th>
<th>Percent of respondents who agreed with this item (n=366)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... it's exciting</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... they can learn from the mistakes of others</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... it shows how other people solve the same problems they have</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... it shows what life is really like</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... it keeps their minds off other things</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... they can learn a lot</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... they have nothing better to do</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mass Media Content Preferences

One of the most active areas of attention in the poverty-communication focus has been the media content preferences of the poor. Particular emphasis has been placed on the viewing preferences of blacks as compared to whites. Much of this work is confounded by lack of adequate controls for economic status, varying use of sample controls, and differing variable operationalizations. However, from some 18 studies on this question, it is possible to extract certain generalizations. They will be presented by medium.

Television content preferences

The most documented of the content preference research areas, this issue is also the most contradictory. Given the higher overall viewing of the poor, a natural consequence is that for any one type of television content their viewing is higher than that of the general population. Thus, for example, 59% of the low-income adults in the Greenberg and Dervin (40) study regularly watched five or more of the 12 top-rated shows compared with 42% of the general population. Because of overall higher low-income viewing, it is fruitless to try to make general statements on the order of "the poor watch more soap operas". The answer will always be "yes". The poor watch more soap operas and more of almost every entertainment content category.

More meaningful insights came, however, from answers to questions such as "what are your favourite TV programs." The data here suggest the the poor, particularly women (who, unfortunately, constitute a far too great proportion of most poverty study samples), name "soap operas" or "my stories" as their favourites. Also frequently named by both...
males and females are westerns, mysteries, and suspense dramas.  

The most recent evidence on favourite TV shows comes from our study of low-income black adults as summarized in Table 2. Of the 366 respondents, 57% named favourite TV shows that were "mystery or suspense dramas", 46% named "soap operas", 36% named "westerns" and 36% named "situation comedies".

Another meaningful question is whether the television preferences of the poor are the same or different from those of the general population. Most of the evidence on this question is confounded by lack of control for overall viewing. Greenberg and Dervin (40) converted the proportion of low-income and general population viewers for the 12 top-rated TV shows of the season to ranks (thereby controlling for differential amounts of viewing). The correlation (Rho) between low-income and general population preferences was .03, indicating almost no agreement in those TV show preferences.

More attention has been focused on black versus white viewer program preferences. Unfortunately, many of these data are confounded by lack of control for the lower income of blacks. Thus, Carey (11) found little correlation between black and white viewer program preferences. When income controls were introduced, results were contradictory. Fletcher (39) found little correlation between the program preferences of black and white children. Greenberg and Dervin (40), however, found a high and significant correlation between the program preferences of low-income black and low-income white adults.

From the entire group of 18 studies in this area come some indications of what might be the kinds of program preference differences
TABLE 2

Types of favorite TV shows named by Cleveland low-income black adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Television show type</th>
<th>Percent of respondents who named one or more favorite TV shows in this category(^a) (n = 366)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mystery and suspense drama</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap operas</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westerns</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation comedies</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News, information, and education</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience participation (quiz) shows</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk and variety shows</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical shows</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature films and movies</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science fiction</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Each respondent was asked to name all of his favorite TV shows. Only 3% of the respondents named seven or more shows. This analysis is derived from a content analysis of the first six shows named by all respondents. The content analysis scheme is based on the categorization of TV shows used by A.C. Nielsen (1969). The average respondent named 4 favorite TV shows.
of blacks and whites without an income control. The findings suggest that blacks like and view comedy and general variety shows less than whites. Blacks choose country music, middle-class romantic music shows (e.g. Lawrence Welk) and news less than whites. However, blacks prefer conflict drama shows, shows depicting the life of family units, and shows with a central hero without a mate. In addition, the most recent evidence (39) found that the four most popular shows for a sample of low-income black adults all featured a black actor or actress. "Mod Squad" and "Julia" were the top shows for those respondents.

Newspaper content preferences.

Far fewer studies have focused on this question. The four available (1, 39, 40, 66) generally agree that the breadth of low-income readership within a newspaper is low. Greenberg and Dervin, for example, found that only 17% of their adult, poor respondents reported reading "all" of the newspaper compared with 39% of the general population respondents. Top rated sections of the newspaper for low-income readers included headlines, classified ads, and ads in general. In comparison with general population adults, the low-income adult respondents less frequently reported regular readership of the front page, comics, and sports. As with television content preferences, no correlation was found between general population and low-income newspaper section preferences. However there was found a high correlation (as with TV preferences) between black and white low-income newspaper content preferences for adults.

Radio content preferences

Five studies (1; 43; 58; 66; 97) give information on radio content preferences. Generally, findings show that the preferred radio content
is music, which is what radio mainly offers. Little has been done, yet, on use of radio stations directed to black audiences. Larson found that in his sample of Chicago adults, radio stations appealing to black audiences drew more black listeners than those appealing to mass audiences.

Magazine content preferences

Little attention has been focused on the content of magazines preferred by low-income readers. Again, most of the focus has been on black and white reader differences. Two semi-quantitative studies (36; 88) suggest that among lower-income women, confessional or True Story type magazines are the most popular. This lead is supported by Allen (1) who found three confessional magazines among the favourites of his black low-income adult sample.

In those studies focusing on blacks, the preferred magazines from the "establishment" are Readers Digest (read by 80% of Detroit blacks according to Ingram [51]), Life, and Look. Of the black magazines, Ebony is the top favourite, cited by 50% of both Lyle's and Allen's black samples. The most recent evidence from a low-income black sample (39) supports this finding. More than 58% of their respondents indicated they read Ebony. The Ingram study found more blacks reading Ebony than its "establishment" counterpart, Life. In addition, Jet was named by 30% of Lyle's Los Angeles sample and 48% of Greenberg's Cleveland sample as a magazine getting regular readership.

Allen (1) and Ingram (51) give the only evidence of actual content preferences within magazines. They found their low-income black re-
spondents preferred reading about personalities, particularly in black magazines. Non-quantitative observations by other social scientists (32) support this finding.

Perceptions of the media

A growing number of studies have gone beyond a concern with the amount and content of viewership and have begun to look at perceptions of the media by the poor.

Media Credibility

In one of the classic media research traditions, a number of studies have asked "which medium" is most credible? And, from the preferences of the poor they get a resounding and almost unanimous "TV" as the answer, no matter how or by whom the question is phrased. TV comes out on top as the most reliable medium, the most important, the most preferred for world news, and the most believable. As would be expected, the poor are much more favourable to TV than the non-poor, who more often cite newspapers as their most credible medium. And, as would be predicted from the media trends cited earlier, low-income blacks are more favourable to television than low-income whites.11

These studies do show some interesting exceptions, however. When asked what is the preferred source for local news, most low-income respondents cited radio and television about equally (30% for each). Whereas 7% of the low-income whites cited people, 22% of the blacks made that their first choice.

Such findings as these suggest, as did the Kerner Commission Report (105), that television does less to serve the needs of isolated individuals in our society. The poor (blacks in particular) must go to inter-
personal and non-establishment channels for a substantial portion of the local news they need or find interesting.

**Specific criticism of the media**

A number of studies have attempted to tap specific criticisms of the media made by the poor. These studies have dealt mainly with black perceptions of the media and, not surprisingly, find blacks critical. 12

At one extreme, the Kerner Commission charged that ghetto blacks distrust the mass media, particularly the press, and see the media as instruments of the white power structure and the police. Most blacks (regardless of income) agree that the majority media do not give enough attention to blacks. In a recent study, about 25% of the low-income black adults sampled thought blacks were treated fairly on TV or in the newspapers "most" or "all of the time", and a similar proportion said "rarely" or "never." Specific criticisms by the respondents were that the media featured too few blacks or featured blacks in "bad" images. In addition, the respondents saw the press as giving too much emphasis to ghetto crimes.

The two studies which have dealt with criticisms of the black print media (51; 66) present an interesting paradox. Ingram found that while militant blacks charged that Ebony was aimed at middle class blacks, poor black respondents said they liked reading about the glamour and accomplishments of blacks in Ebony. Lyle reported that the highest readers of the black newspaper (blacks living in the ghetto) saw themselves as less represented by the paper; they saw the black paper as covering news of more educated blacks.
Perceptions of the reality of media content.

"TV tells it like it is" fairly well sums up low-income respondent perceptions of the "reality" of TV content according to the findings of four studies (39; 42; 43; 44) which have explored a relatively un-tapped area of media behavior. Using a series of agree-disagree statements on the order of "The people I see on TV are like those I see in real life", the studies found a consistent trend across three age levels - childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Poor blacks saw TV as more real than poor whites. The poor, in general, saw TV as more real-to-life than the general population. In the most recent study more than 50% of 366 low-income black respondents agreed with all four statements indicating that TV presents an accurate portrayal of reality. These are in Table 3.

An extension of this work (44) makes an interesting intersection between actual changes in television treatment of blacks (as validated by content analysis) and viewer perceptions of those changes. They found that in a recent viewing season, blacks were more likely than whites to view the five top-rated shows which featured black actors in central roles. However, they found no difference between the races in perceptions of the frequency of minority group appearance on television.

When they separated white viewers in terms of their degree of antagonism toward black militants, they found that the more antagonistic the whites, the more likely they were to watch shows without blacks as central characters, to see TV as fairer to minorities, and to see TV as less realistic in its portrayal of minority group members.
TABLE 3

Belief in reality as portrayed by TV of Cleveland low-income black adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of respondents who said this item was &quot;true&quot; (n = 366)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your favorite TV show tells about life the way it really is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people in your favorite TV show are like people you meet in real life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same things that happen on TV often happen to you in real life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families on your favorite TV shows are pretty much like families you see in real life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Such studies raise the general (and little researched) issue of the correspondence between viewer perceptions of media content, media portrayal of reality, and descriptive data on "reality" itself. Singer (101) asked the question when he reported that his sample of participants in the Detroit riot saw much more violence in television reports of the riot than content analysis suggested was actually in the TV coverage.

THE SOCIAL COMMUNICATION MATRIX

This section outlines the social matrix of the low-income community - the relationship of the low-income adult to the environment outside his family. This is the context of friends, neighbors, school, job, merchants, social welfare agencies, and the establishment. Much of the literature is confusing if not contradictory, particularly when attempts are made to mesh findings from different geographic regions. Nevertheless, we shall suggest, from these data, that the state of being poor makes that person's social communication world more alike than racial, ethnic, or regional characteristics make for differences. This section highlights the generalizations which appear to hold despite sub-group differences.

Peers and friends: the inter-personal network

Energy in the low-income community is little focused on individual activities. Indeed, the very concept of individual achievement is somewhat meaningless since the poor typically see little or no possibility for individual gain or improvement. The important center of low-income life is the kinship and peer network and group life. Whatever the low-income person's racial or ethnic background, this generalization appears to hold.
Frequent studies show that visiting family and friends, gossiping, talking about neighborhood and family events are among the major activities in the low-income community. While contacts extend to employer, landlord, teacher, policeman, and so on, the kinship and peer contacts form the major (for some, the entire) portion of the low-income person's interpersonal ties. Within these informal limits, gregariousness is high.

The most comprehensive and most recent data on the nature of low-income inter-personal contacts comes from our study of 366 low-income black adults in Cleveland (39). An in-depth analysis of the characteristics of all inter-personal contacts made "yesterday" by these respondents supports the generalization of a tight kin-peer network in the ghetto. Table 4 summarizes these findings.

Of all interpersonal contacts "yesterday", 85% were with people in the peer-kinship network (family or friends). In addition, 93% of the contacts were black and 56% of the contacts took place in the respondents' homes. Only 18% of the topics talked about in these contacts were related to subjects other than home, family or friends.

Such findings suggest that the inter-personal contacts within the low-income community are highly homogeneous. Social scientists with a psychological bent have suggested that this strong emphasis on the kin-peer net is a means of raising self-esteem which has been deterred by lack of success in the major society. While individual achievement may be the criterion for success in middle-class society, the low-income kinship and peer network is a strong mutual aid society where the criterion for success is not such achievement.
TABLE 4

Description of people talked to yesterday by sample of Cleveland low-income adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of people talked to yesterday</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total contacts yesterday for entire sample (n=366)</td>
<td>1266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total contacts on whom characteristic data were gathered</td>
<td>1020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of contacts who...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lived outside respondent home</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>met with respondent in respondent's home</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were of the opposite sex</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were in the peer-kinship set (friends or family)</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had jobs</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were black</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of topics of conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average topics talked about with each contact</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # of topics talked about with all contacts</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of different topics talked about by each respondent which were not related to home, family, friends</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(a\) Detailed background information was collected on only six of the contacts made by each respondent "yesterday." This procedure meant that 13% of the contacts "yesterday" were not analyzed.

\(b\) In all, the 366 respondents talked about 111 different topics "yesterday." These topics were content analyzed into categories. The categories which were judged as not relating solely to home, family, and friends were: jobs and employment, crime, education, mass media, news, city and neighborhood problems, welfare, black unity, prejudice, race hatred, politics and government.
Despite the strength of this kinship and peer network, however, researchers agree on an underlying core of weakness. Ghetto life is such that emergencies are frequent and interpersonal mistrust is high. The idealized image of a tight-knit lower-class community may have applied to communities of several decades ago. Contemporary lower-class communities have high mobility caused by job lay-offs, home repossession, and other frequent economic crises. Friendships have little depth or history and are uprooted frequently.

Unfortunately, the strength of the interpersonal network in the low-income community also provides the grounds for exploitation of the poor by outsiders. Caplovitz (10) documented well how the seller of shoddy merchandise on high credit terms uses the strong interpersonal net to his advantage. Caplovitz also found some evidence suggesting that peddlers are passed from family member to family member and friend to friend.

The nature of the low-income interpersonal net, therefore, is pointed to by researchers as part of the poverty cycle. Lack of individual success means greater emphasis on group life. In turn, this means that the low-income person places less importance on individual achievement and has less opportunity to develop an expansive repertoire of role behaviors and more flexible social skills. Several studies have suggested that this lack of role flexibility leaves the low-income person unprepared for dealing in the primarily middle-class oriented job world (35; 48; 92).
Voluntary Organizations and Leadership

Beyond the informal kinship-peer system, the research agrees that low-income communities show little organization. Participation in voluntary organizations is low, club-going is considered a middle-class and, often, snobbish activity. Little gain is seen to be had from participation. This generalization cuts across ethnic and racial groups.

Given minor participation in voluntary organizations, indigenous formal leadership is also weak. The poor have few bargaining agents. Those that they do have often lack power within the major society. This seems particularly true, the research suggests, of black communities (14; 32). Leaders, on the other hand, who gain influence in the major society do so at the cost of losing influence within the low-income community.

Unfortunately, virtually no research has been done on opinion leadership within U.S. low-income communities. As will be indicated later in the section on sources of information, most poor people get most of their information on most topics either from television or from family and friends.

Yet, the large body of opinion leadership research in other societies and in U.S. rural areas would suggest opinion leadership as a lucrative area for study.16

Despite the general picture presented above of low involvement and participation, recent studies suggest a potential for involvement and leadership. Kurtz (57) found a cluster of poor people actively serving a Spanish-American community with information for solving housing, health, and other problems. The characteristics of these "opinion leaders"
were not disclosed. A recent nationwide study by O'Shea and Gray (82) supported the general picture of low involvement for low-income adults. But, they found that 16% of their very lowest income respondents considered themselves leaders or active non-leaders in community activities, and 30% indicated they had been involved in some type of community activity such as signing petitions or collecting money. These data suggest a core of potential leadership. One study (16) found that involvement did bring a pay-off. Low-income parents in his study who were more active in the PTA expressed higher value for education but more dissatisfaction toward the actual practices of the schools and teachers. This dissatisfaction, the researchers suggested, might lead to involvement.

Another study compared the use of indigenous leaders in welfare programs to that of professionals (46) and found that indigenous leaders were better able to predict the views of clients toward the current state of affairs in the community and the possibilities for improvement. Only 26% of the professionals got high prediction scores compared to 52% of the indigenous leaders. Interestingly, however, the indigenous leader responses were still closer to those of the professionals than they were to the clients. That suggests the "opinion leaders wear out" notion expressed by two observers of black ghettos (14; 32) and often shown by classic opinion leadership research.

A key to community involvement for the poor seems to relate back to the strength of the family and peer group. While participation in non-family and establishment-connected organizations (labor unions, political parties, etc.) is low across all studies, participation in
organizations based on the peer-family linkage is higher. Thus, the
church and school organizations receive stronger support in low-income
communities and, in particular, low-income black communities (32; 35;
39; 57). 40% of 366 Cleveland low-income black adults reported mem-
berships in church groups, 30% in school organizations. These two types of
organizations received highest membership mentions. Others were: unions,
25%; political groups, 20%; civil rights and community action groups,
18%; social groups, 11%; neighborhood groups 10%; and sports groups,
6%.

Caretakers, establishment, and information sources

In addition to the electronic media (the low-income person's major
sources of information on the outside world), the low-income community
is also serviced by a number of establishment representatives -
"caretakers" as Gans (35) called them. The brunt of the research evidence
suggests that these caretakers (social workers, teachers, policemen,
politicians) are underused and little trusted by low-income residents.17
While middle-class respondents use professionals and the print media more
often as their sources of information and help, the poor more often use
inter-personal, in-ghetto contacts. The evidence also suggests that
low-income blacks put even greater emphasis on these personal sources
than low-income whites.

The most comprehensive evidence available on the use of information
sources by the poor comes from our recent study of low-income black
Cleveland adults. The use of sources for information was approached
from two perspectives. The first asked respondents what sources they
had used for help or information in any area in the past. The second asked respondents to name potential sources in 10 hypothetical problem areas.

Responses as to general sources approached indicated higher usage of non-family and friends than prior research suggested. Table 5 shows that the most frequently used source type was lawyers or the legal aid society, mentioned by 64% of the 366 respondents. Relatives received the next highest mention (55%). All other source types were named by less than half the respondents. Teachers, for example, were used by 25%, civil rights leaders by 16%, social workers by 30%, and the public housing agency by 30%. There is, unfortunately, no such comprehensive evidence available on the middle-class for comparison purposes. These recent data, however, suggest that the gloomy picture of almost no establishment source use, as attested to by prior work, is not quite so prevalent.

More telling, perhaps, are the respondent answers to what sources they would go to for help or information in 10 hypothetical problem areas. Tables 6 and 7 summarize the results.

Across these 10 problem areas, the typical respondent named only one source for each problem. Of the total sources named, 17% were in-ghetto sources (family, friends, or relatives), 28% were service organizations (non-profit help organizations) or professionals, and 9% were print media sources. The remaining 46% of the sources named were commercial sellers or "I'd do it myself" responses.

An analysis of the sources named for specific problems provides some insights. For the six areas concerned with specific consumer
TABLE 5

Use of sources for help or information in the past by a sample of Cleveland low-income black adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Percent of respondents (n = 366) who used sources at least a little in the past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives not living in home</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors or preachers</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights or black leaders</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers or legal aid society</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing agency</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker/welfare dept.</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow employee</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health/dental clinic</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 6

Sources of help or information named in 10 problem areas by Cleveland low-income black adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem area</th>
<th>Average # of sources named</th>
<th>Percentage of the total sources named who were...</th>
<th>in-ghetto network sources</th>
<th>service organizations and professionals</th>
<th>print media sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying a TV set</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a car fixed</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a place to live</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a good place to buy groceries</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding the best place to borrow money</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a stove</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a new doctor</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping a friend who was picked up by police</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping a family whose father is out of work</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ACROSS PROBLEMS</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages do not add to 100 because this analysis focused only on specific classes of responses. Omitted were answers designating commercial sellers as sources and all references to "I'd do it myself." See Table 7 for the former.*
**TABLE 7**

Most frequently named sources of help or information in 10 problem areas by Cleveland low-income black adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem area</th>
<th>Sources named by 10% or more of the 366 respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents who named this source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying a TV set</td>
<td>Store or salesman</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a car fixed</td>
<td>Garage or car dealer or service station</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a place to live</td>
<td>Realtor</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a good place to buy groceries</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grocery or supermarket</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison shopping</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding the best place to borrow money</td>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friend or relative</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance company</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job</td>
<td>Employment service</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a stove</td>
<td>Store</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 7 (con't)

Most frequently named sources of help or information in 10 problem areas by Cleveland low-income black adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem area</th>
<th>Sources named by</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents who named this source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding a new doctor</td>
<td>Friend or relative</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical association</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping a friend who was picked up by police</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Councilman</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friend or relative</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping a family whose father is out of work</td>
<td>Give material help myself</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welfare department</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
behavior (buying a TV set, getting a car fixed, finding a place to live, finding a place to buy groceries, finding a place to borrow money, and buying a stove), the major source types named were commercial sellers, in-ghetto friends and neighbors, or "I'd do it myself responses". For three of these problems - a place to live, borrow money and groceries - was a substantial mention given to the media or service organization sources. For finding a place to live, 25% mentioned the print media, for finding a place to buy groceries, 31% mentioned the print media. In both cases, newspapers were the chosen medium.

For the remaining four problem areas (finding a job, finding a doctor, helping a friend who was picked up by the police, and helping a family whose father is out of work) the most frequently mentioned source (50% to 80%) was a service or professional organization. Interestingly, each of these involved naming a very specific source: the employment service, hospitals or the medical association, lawyers or legal aid, and the welfare department.

Again, there are no comprehensive data available on the middle-class for comparison. These findings do suggest, however, that for crisis problems (such as finding a job or helping a friend picked up by the police), very specific establishment sources are well-known and sought out.

On non-crisis problems (consumer buying), the major source type named is commercial sellers with the in-ghetto network also having an important role. (See Table 7). Non-profit service organization receive very few mentions for these problem types.
Perhaps, the major import of these findings is that in most problem areas, 50% or more of the respondents indicated they would use only commercial or in-ghetto sources or their own resources in problem solving. This evidence agrees with findings from prior work. Mendelsohn (74) found that 60% of his low-income respondents lacked information on where to get help for everyday problems. Block (6) found that 60% of his respondents would not ask anyone for advice on where to buy a television set.

Much of the emphasis in recent poverty programs has been to reach clients on a fuller range of their life problems than only crisis issues. However, evidence suggests that a major reason for the low use of "establishment" and professional sources in the ghetto is the viewing of these sources with suspicion and hostility.

The poor often believe that the social service agencies simply attempt to get their clients to adjust to the status quo (14). The law, police, and government agencies are viewed as exploiters of the low-income community (35; 64; 69; 106). Welfare recipients in one study (69) had only a vague idea of the purpose of regular caseworker visits. The most usual reaction was that caseworkers visited in order to verify that the family was still eligible for welfare. The perception of the caseworker as a resource for problem solving was rare. And, the high turnover in caseworkers meant the worker was seen as one of a long line of middle-class people tramping to the doors of the poor. Another study (23) found that clients erroneously saw job-training centers only as employment agencies and not as possible sources of skill-improvement
help. The researchers suggested inadequate communication by the caretakers as the reason for these faulty perceptions.

Several studies suggest that the caretaker system is inefficient. These establishment agencies were developed by the middle-class and are based on the premise of client self-help and motivation for improvement. Thus, the caretakers share a kind of colonialistic view towards their clients, judging them through middle-class values, approaching them through middle-class orientations. Gleanings from the literature, for example, suggest the caretakers assume their clients understand bureaucratic operation and work on middle-class time schedules. Few poverty programmes have used advertising in order to reach their clients, assuming that the very existence of an available resource will bring people to that resource. Yet, evidence shows, the poor often do not know that caretaking agencies exist and have little if any available means for getting the information that would lead them to these resources.

Other research presents an even dimmer picture by suggesting that even those agencies established with the explicit objective of serving the poor often neglect those clients with the greatest need for services.

Thus, for example, Levin and Taube (63) found that of 452 female public housing tenants who were black, less educated, on welfare, or without male adults at home were less likely to obtain adequate housing services. These same tenants were also less knowledgeable about the bureaucratic power structure of the housing authority. Levin and Taube (among others, e.g. 99; 102) suggest that bureaucratic service agencies are concerned primarily with self-maintenance. The problems of their
hard-core clients are not easily solved. In order to mai
of successes, the agencies not only may ignore the most r
they also may prevent those clients from obtaining inform
bureaucratic structure.

Some experimental caretaking programs have been laur
data on the success of such programs are not readily avai
(5) reported on the success of job opportunity TV program
cities, finding generally low turn-out and response. Anm
lems he uncovered were incapability of the resource agenc
employment centers) to handle responses from the program
ficient job-referral procedures leading to failures to hi
of the TV programs, and too middle-class TV formats. The
ful of the programs (in terms of response) combined ente
with information-giving and were aired just before sports
on Saturday afternoons.

Another television information-giving experiment tes
of different incentives to get the poor to watch a series
vision programs giving information on every-day problems.
to be the best incentive, the one used by 44% of the view
personal communication was used by 17% of the viewers and
lets by 16%.

Communication and Development

Surprisingly, few studies have looked at the relatio
communication variables and development in U.S. urban set
a large body of research on development in peasant societ
strong relationship. Modernization - the improvement o
maintain a record
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ams in four
mong the prob-
encies (state
ams, inef-
hire, bad timing
the most success-
tainment
ets events

ested the use
es of eight tele-
s. Money proved
ewers. Inter-
nd printed leaf-

ionship between
ettings. Yet,
eties confirms a
of life con-
ditions - is an interactive behavioral system in which improvement must occur simultaneously in a number of areas for progress to be made, the research suggests. Increased media use leads to increased vicarious participation in society. This indirect participation, in turn, leads to increased actual participation and more media use. Inter-personal communication also plays a major role in development through opinion leadership processes. Most studies agree that the mass media are more important in creating awareness of possible societal changes while inter-personal communication is more important in persuasion and actual change. Many development efforts abroad are trying to make judicious use via television clubs and radio forums of combining both mass media and inter-personal channels.

But what role does communication play in the "modernization" of the U.S. urban poor?

The available evidence suggests an interesting paradox. For the urban poor in the U.S., communication - both media and inter-personal - may be dysfunctional to development. The one hard-data study available deals with the Appalachian poor (21; 22) and finds the most isolated persons were the higher adopters of poverty program services. The mass media users were not high adopters. Indeed, while they showed higher aspirations than other poverty types, they also showed more social isolation and a greater sense of powerlessness.

This study concurs with leads from other social scientists. These researchers give some hints that the high use of television (with its homogeneous, non-means oriented content) and the high use of in-ghetto inter-personal ties (also homogeneous and non-achievement oriented) leave the American urban poor in an information void.
Wade and Schramm (10?) suggest that television and radio are not the media in our society which impart understanding, new concepts, and interpretive ability to people. Rather, the print media do this task. Thus, they found general population respondents had more accurate information in a number of areas if they were print media users. Block (6) confirms this by finding that his low-income respondents had more functional criteria for shopping (prices more important than convenience) if they were higher readers.

Thus, it appears, that given high TV viewing and high in-ghetto contacts as the main information sources, the resulting information may turn out to be little information. Several development theorists (25; 27; 33) term this situation an information imbalance.

One study explicitly asked about the relationship of the communication behaviors of the poor to their use of information ("information control") in solving problems. Dervin (20) posited that there are varying levels or types of information needed if an individual is to make better decisions in the "nitty-gritty" problem areas of modern society. These problem areas include consumer activities (buying goods and services), employment, education, and community action.

Taking the area of consumer credit as an example, it was posited that an individual needs five types of information in order to make a "better" decision on where to get credit:

1) He needs to be aware of sources of information in the problem area;

2) He needs to be aware of means of getting credit;

3) He needs to be aware of criteria on which means could be evaluated;
4) He needs data which allow him to use the criteria in evaluating means; and

5) He needs to have information which allows him to implement the results of his decision making.

Respondents were 366 low-income black adults. The relationship of four communication variables to these types or levels of information control were analysed. The communication variables were: use and dependency on television; use and dependency on newspapers; gregariousness; and diversity of inter-personal contacts. The last variable tapped the extent to which the respondent belonged to different organizations, the extent to which the respondent's daily contacts showed differentness from the ghetto-norm, and his daily life took him outside the ghetto.

All four communication behaviors predicted awareness of sources of information and awareness of means to achieve outcomes. Respondents who were higher TV users, higher newspaper users, high in gregariousness, and high in diversity of contacts were all more likely to be aware of sources of information. High gregarious respondents were more aware of all types of sources - both in-ghetto and out, both expert and non-expert, both professional and non-professional. Respondents who were either high TV or high newspaper users were more aware of professional, institutional, and media sources. Respondents who were high in inter-personal diversity also were more aware of professional sources.

At the more complex levels of information control, however, the picture changed somewhat. While gregariousness related to better control at the "awareness of source" level, at higher levels it related
to less expert use of information in decision-making. More gregarious respondents, for example, used less expert criteria for evaluating means. At these more complex levels, television seemed to play no role, either functional or dysfunctional. High use of newspapers and diversity of contact related to more expert use of information.

Three major inferences come from these findings. First, while some research suggested that high television use was "dysfunctional" to the ghetto resident, these findings show TV use related to greater awareness of more expert sources. Secondly, the findings posit that an "information mix" is at work. While all four communication variables relate to greater awareness of information sources, each variable predicts best those sources most relevant to that variable. Gregariousness predicts the use of in-ghetto sources; newspapers and television the use of institutional and media sources. This suggests the "information control" mix might necessarily involve some optimum combination of exposure to various information systems. Thirdly, the respondents who achieved the highest level of information control were those who were more diverse in their inter-personal contacts, who had more opportunity to make contacts outside the closed ghetto system. If verified in future work, these results should have great impact on the kinds of recommendations made for poverty programs by the communication researcher.
DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The preceding review well documents the fact that there is now a sizeable body of evidence available describing the communication behaviors of the poor and demonstrates that these behaviors differ from those of the middle-class and that these behaviors may, indeed, be part of the cycle of poverty. The review also shows that most of the work has emphasized the poor rather than the society. Research is needed which is more theoretical in intent. Also required is research on the major society and its relationship to the problems of poverty. Given space limitation, let us focus here on theoretical questions which center on the latter issue.

A conceptualization is required which relates such descriptive media behaviors as amount of mass media use, television content preferences, and television attitudes to other kinds of behaviors. These would most certainly include information processing, inter-personal relationships, and psychological orientations. This is not to suggest the descriptive task is done. The area of "why the poor use the media" still remains open.

In addition, little has been done on the issue of dissemination of information, particularly the diffusion of news, within ghetto communities. Diffusion studies based on general populations offer some data about the poor, but studies designed particularly to examine the diffusion of specific news or specific consumer information would offer an opportunity to examine inter-personal communication processes in greater detail. It would also serve as a model in which rumor in-
formation could be examined. Indeed, working with some poverty organi-
izations, experimental studies of information diffusion should be
possible to supplement the typical survey motif in which this area
of research has been more customarily examined.

There is a significant need for descriptions of the media and their
content to compare individual perceptions of media content and the
actual content. In addition, the whole issue of the role of black
media remains murky.

One may study such questions as: To what aspects of television
content are viewers responding? What happens when a high believer
in TV reality receives information on problem solving from television
which directly conflicts with information given by family and peers?
Do the poor adapt the modes of conflict resolution seen in television
drama to their own lives?

What kinds of information are received by high TV viewers? What
about the increased role of radio stations aimed at black audiences?
What do blacks think of the new "black" heroes on television? Are
those "heroes" seen as "Uncle Tom-ish"? What about white perceptions
of these blacks? Would increased television surveillance of the
environment (reporting on the problems of the poor) make the poor more
or less frustrated? Are the "black" TV heroes boosting black self-
images and serving as role models? Does vicarious integration via
television make actual integration seem more natural to now isolated
whites?

Perhaps this last set of questions can fit most conveniently into
the framework of norm acquisition and socialization concepts. For the
question is what is being learned from the media by the poor. What social values are picked up here and nowhere else to the same extent? Do children and adolescents learn about family behavior and interaction that is foreign to them? Are the models of interpersonal interaction imitable? What is learned or capable of being learned about conflict, marriage, crime, authority, etc.?

While considerable research supports the general notion of the strength of the family and peer system within the poor community, only sparse data are available on information gathering and processing within the ghetto. Little is known about sources of information across a wide range of topics, criteria for evaluating sources, and the nature of innovators. Little is known about communication between the majority system power structure and the ghetto. Little is known about the nature of the caretaker-client interaction and, indeed, about caretaker behavior in general. Little is known about different caretaking strategies.

As one specific issue, what is the basis for obtaining 'source credibility' in the ghetto? Is it as neatly parceled into trust and expert dimensions as it appears to be for the general public? Probably not is the best suggestion from extant studies, but more positive statements must be made as to its components and its origin within this sub-culture.

Little has been done on the general process of "modernization" in our already modern society. The traditional questions of the diffusion of innovations and the role of opinion leadership have been ignored,
largely. And, little has been done in the development of differential communication strategies for different problem situations. How can the poverty practitioner capitalize on the high television and inner-city network use of the poor? Could tele-clubs work in the U.S.? What communication strategies merely raise motivation levels and which ones actually stimulate change?

The word "little" permeates this final section. But after a review of any body of readings, one is usually left with the impact of what has yet to be done, of the geometric generation of new questions from existing data. Surely the issue of poverty remains a crucial and perhaps overwhelming social question. Attention by communication researchers is overdue, for the problem will not go away.
FOOTNOTES

1. Professor Dervin is on the faculty of Syracuse University, and a former member of the CUP Project staff. Professor Greenberg is Director of the CUP Project.

2. This paper emerges from a six year research project on communication and poverty conducted in the Department of Communication at Michigan State University. For readers who want a longer overview of the area, see "Use of the Mass Media by the Urban Poor" (40), and 14 research monographs, some of which are available from that department.

3. References cited in this chapter include only the more relevant ones. For a more complete annotated bibliography, see Greenberg and Dervin (40).

4. See, for example, references 10, 14, 24, 35, 49, 52, 64, 92, 104.

5. Readers interested in more complete findings from this comprehensive study are directed to references 9, 20, 39.

6. See for example, 1, 6, 34, 35, 39, 40, 45, 56, 68, 74, 97, 100.

7. References: 2, 47, 55, 67, 70, 76, 83, 91, 97, 98.

8. References 12, 37, 39, 42, 43, 74.

9. See, in particular, 1, 6, 11, 20, 30, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 51 58, 66, 74, 95, 97, 100, 101, 109.

10. A caution is necessary in interpreting these findings. The general content preferences of the poor, given their overall high viewing, might simply reflect what the networks offer. If westerns occupy more TV hours, westerns may more frequently be cited as "favorite TV shows." This point needs to be studied.

11. References 1, 6, 40, 42, 43, 66, 108.

12. References 19, 29, 39, 44, 66, 100, 106.

13. In one of the studies, the questions were worded negatively for a sub-sample of the respondents. It was concluded that the results reported were not a function of an acquiescence set by the respondents.

14. See for example, 10, 13, 17, 35, 38, 48, 52, 64, 65, 78, 79, 88, 90.


16. References 54, 55, 60, 75, 94.

17. See, for example, 1, 6, 17, 21, 23, 39, 40, 50, 74, 100, 101, 104, 106.
18. See 16, 17, 18, 23, 26, 46, 52, 73, 89.

19. See, for example, 3, 4, 8, 28, 61, 62, 72, 85, 93, 94.

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