THE RELEVANCE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ITS TECHNOLOGY TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY

By

Carol Dees

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Signature of Author. . . . . .
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Certified by . . . . . .
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by. . . . . .
Chairman, Departmental Committee on Theses

Archives

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ABSTRACT

The Relevance of Communication
and its Technology to the Black Community

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For many years, television has been the dominant technology in the mass media system. It has done a lot in terms of education, information, and entertainment. However, there are complaints with television.

Blacks, in particular, feel television has and continues to neglect them. This thesis deals with the issues of what the television industry, in particular, is not doing. It analyzes these complaints and asks the reader to ask himself or herself, "Are these complaints valid?"

We find children's programming is a very important issue when you talk about television and the effects it may have on the mind of its viewers. Are these effects real or imagined? good or bad? Is this something we should be concerned about?

The reader should think about this work as it is read and then question it. The questions may not necessarily be answered here, but this will encourage the reader to look for answers elsewhere because this issue needs to be looked into by many more persons, from many different perspectives.

Thesis Supervisor: Kent W. Colton
Title: Assistant Professor of Urban Studies and Planning

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

> If large segments of our population lose confidence in their formal systems of information, they will invent their own. When we talk about race relations this constitutes the only measure the ghetto dweller has of how much he can trust our accuracy. If in the things he knows best, the news is false or inaccurate, he may later be unreachable in more fundamental ways.[1]

There is no other technology in the world that influences and shapes our lives and institutions like that of communications. In this nation, our binding element is communication and America has developed one of the finest and most saturated in the world. However, for minorities, whether they be in ghettos, slums, and barrios, or have integrated suburbia, the benefits of this pervasive communications system are questionable. The question which I feel should be posed is do any benefits exist? How valid or of value is the mass media, in particular television, to the black community? Are minority communities being served by our present system of communication? And what is the influence - good or bad - of this service? This is my main question and I hope to answer it before I close.

Planners are generally more concerned with questions like how can leaders or governors better understand their society so they can improve their predictions about what they feel will happen, and therefore perform the more desired alternatives? Another question which they address themselves to is how can the masses participate in their decision making?

This is all well and good, but in order to promote public understanding, you are going to have to deal directly with the masses. Everyone knows that leaders are leaders because they say what people want to hear. If they try to get out of line, that is, say something that, although it may be true, is not necessarily pleasing to the ears, rosy

to the eyes and sweet to the mouth, they become ex-leaders. If America does not look rose-colored to Americans, if instead of a bed of roses, there is a bed of thorns, then American government, not American people, is at fault. No, leaders will not do. They change with the weather. We must go to the people. I, as a future planner, am more interested in how can people get to know people when they have separated themselves; racial barriers, religious barriers, sexual barriers, age barriers? I don't want to ask how can people get to know people better because better implies present knowledge about a situation and I really don't think knowing about people, anything about them, outside of what has divided them, exists.

I would like to know how you can imagine what it is like to be black if you are not, or to be chicano if you are not, or to live on a reservation, if you do not, or to be middle-class and white when you will never be? Can knowing what this is like change conflicts to complements?

I strongly believe one of the purposes of this thesis will be to give insight to people outside of the black community about how some of the people within the community view the media. This sample, obviously, is imperfect and therefore, will not necessarily tell you how the "black community" feels, but it does get into individual opinions. Often, it is misleading to presume a survey taken involving black people represents the ideas of the black community because this community is a lot more heterogeneous than some people

seem to feel. I have always thought this and talking to people while researching this paper has not changed my mind.

Definitions

Before I get too far, I guess some definitions are in order. I will constantly make references to the "black community". Well then, what is the "black community"? Physically, the black community is a neighborhood, black people living within a certain proximity of each other. However, the black community transcends physical boundaries. If you move out of the neighborhood, you are still a part of that community, although you may also become a member of a new neighborhood. Blacks in most large cities are often concentrated in more than one area. Because there exists more than one black neighborhood, which is a physical environment, does not mean that there is more than one black community. Blacks in different parts of the city may not know anything about each other. They may not even think they care about each other. There may be some who think themselves superior to others, but at the same time, they know they have links with all blacks. The essence of the black community is a position - mental and physical. The physical is more than just a "down" complexion. The physical is more than gait, more than rhythm, more than athletes and studs. And the physical is important, but even more important and not nearly as obvious is the mental link among black neighborhoods.

Some people contend there is no link between different economic classes within the black community. There are such people as black millionaires and there is an ever increasing black middle class and these groups, I've been told, have nothing in common with ghetto residents. Well, Bert Williams said it well when he said "A man born of a dark woman Is bound to see dark days." It is sad to say but no blacks have it made. "Making it" is a privilege reserved for people who can be assimilated into American society it seems..."The only thing wrong with Jews is that they just ain't Jewish enough.... If they wore fur hats and beards and long coats and spoke Jewish then they'd know what the honky will do to you."[2]

Blacks and whites have different worlds and this is what makes "visible" black people everywhere, with rare exception, members of A black community; the only one. We are all in this together...sink or swim.

Another definition:

"val·id \val-əd\ adj...2: founded on truth or fact: capable of being justified or defended: SOUND"[3]

I'd like to thank Merriam and Webster because I think they did a better than usual job in defining this word, and this word did have to be defined because that is the issue in this paper - validity. It is my hope that this will not only prove to be a valid approach to a controversial subject, but will be useful to people in ongoing research projects and future work in this

area.

Television, what is it? First of all, it is a technology, but even more important, it is the most pervasive medium of communication that exists in America today. It is the most influential information system that America has and as such, it has an important function: to portray America objectively and accurately to Americans. As I compile my data in an attempt to get past these subjective pages that you read now and into the data and what I hope to be an objective discussion of this issue, I see no reason not to let you read the words of first, Dick Gregory:

> People underestimate the power and influence of television. Many folks are upset about crime in the streets and rioters looting television sets. They ought to see it as retribution, since television is largely responsible for such acts in the first place.[4]

and then, William Grier and Price Cobbs, both black psychiatrists:

> People say, among other things, that whites are shattered as well as blacks; they say that while housing is poor for blacks, it is inadequate for ninety percent of the nation's families, black or white.
>
> White people add that not only blacks are discriminated against in employment; they say that ALL poor people face degrading mistreatment in the area of employment.
>
> Finally, they say while there is no doubt that racial prejudice is rampant in America, the primary problem is CLASS

> discrimination. The conflict, they say, is between haves and have-nots and since blacks rarely have anything, then...
>
> The logical conclusion to be drawn from this line of reasoning is that we have been mistaken. They would have us believe that there is no difference in the way that black and white fare in America and we simply ought to be more precise in our social criticism.
>
> While such reasoning is obviously garbage, it is quantitatively important because it is indulged in by so many otherwise reasonable people who look for similarities and close their eyes to disparities.
>
> One important difference lies in the inhibitory pressure applied on blacks by the white community and transmitted through parents to children. The children grow up in an environment in which efforts to master the world are actively discouraged. The sharpening of man's essential weapon, the mind, is discouraged and inhibited....
>
> America is a powerful nation, with a sophisticated technology, gigantic corporations, and staggering wealth.
>
> Standing thus at the height of its powers, its details etched clear, it is on public view. That vicious strain of racial hatred which might have been excused in a rapidly growing youth looks ugly and ominous in the mature giant.[5]

"People underestimate the power and influence of television." And who suffers? Let's assume for the time being that only our children suffer. All of them? No! We'll say that the only ones that could possibly be affected adversely are the ones that watch TV, or listen to the radio, or read newspapers, magazines...only the ones that communicate! In an article in the New York Times, John O'Connor argued that in terms of commercials, they are vile and non-sensical, but because you are bombarded with them, you stop fighting

back. You just accept them. You become a passive viewer. Unfortunately, as Mr. O'Connor points out, this passivity does not stop with commercials; it spills over into television content. Television demands according to Mr. O'Connor, "not just the suspension but the obliteration of disbelief." He was speaking about adults when he made these remarks and I assume that this would be even more true for children.

How do we measure the effect of this on our children? Do we use them as guinea pigs and test emotional and/or intellectual and/or whatever kind of differences you want, say ten years later? Do we support programs that we feel are good for them? There will be some discussion that reflects on some of these questions in Chapter III.

I want to get a lot out of this thesis. I had lots of ideas when I started this paper, but I did not expect everything to be touched on completely, and I expect even less of what I anticipated will come true. I expected the older people, more than 65, to be less interested in what I had to say about the media and its relationship to blacks, but some of them turned out to be the biggest detractors of the media.

I wanted to learn a lot about the attitudes and habits of the community as far as their interest in the media goes: how much TV they watch, what they watch, why they watch it? Aside from the assumptions I made and the questions I raised about children, I assumed I'd find out

that there is a lot of TV watching and though the people may not be satisfied with what they see, they are not dissatisfied; at least, not vocally. The community is more or less detached about programming, it seems to me, because they don't think they have any input. They know, or they think they know, that they cannot effectively "change the system". As a matter of fact, I expect many will be bored by the thought. Changing the system has just become a rhetorical cliché, a way to turn off your most ardent listener.

I want to get into alternative situations, in particular, cable television. It's success will be heavily dependent on how you try to sell the idea. No person in their right mind is going to pay for something when they can obtain the same service for free. I mean if cable just wants to rebroadcast network programs, it will not be a viable alternative for anyone but rural dwellers, and then only if it improves their reception and there is a demand for that.

My objective is to tie together several different types of research - reading, interviews, and watching television/listening to the radio - to yield a coherent, easy-flowing document that will be easy to read and digest also. I plan to use cases, that is, "interviews" is some instances where they may be demonstrative and helpful to the ideas trying to be expressed.

The next section is "Methodology". It includes explanations of what types of research I did and how I did it

with information on the types of people I interviewed. This section is followed by "Discussion and Findings" where, hopefully you will get a thorough understanding of what the people I talked to think. There is information on specific answers to some questions I asked and I offer discussion to tie together the findings in an effort to keep the reader's interest. The "Conclusions" follow the "Discussion and Findings" and it is here where I attempt to bring together everything and analyze the results of my research in light of the questions I've posed. The final section, the "Bibliography" will list the more important books I've read.

FOOTNOTES

1. Nicholas Johnson, How To Talk Back To Your Television Set, Little, Brown & Company, New York, 1970

2. Drs. William Grier and Price Cobbs, The Jesus Bag, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1971

3. The New Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary, G. & C. Merriam Company, New York, 1964

4. Dick Gregory, No More Lies, The Myth and Reality of American History, Harper & Row, New York, 1971

5. Drs. William Grier and Price Cobbs, The Jesus Bag, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1971

CHAPTER II - METHODOLOGY

Writing a thesis, at least this thesis, is quite a hard task; if you want it to be more than an editorial, if you want it to tie together neatly. I have used several different methods to accumulate data while doing my research. I will expand on each later, but first I will list them:

1. conducted "informal interviews" with community residents
2. conducted formal interviews with black media personnel
3. watched television
4. listened to the radio
5. read various resource material, including books, journals, newspapers, and magazines

"Informal Interviews"

A total of 73 informal interviews were conducted, and these, represented 82% of all the people I interviewed. Thirty three males and 40 females were interviewed, with the large majority of these being black. For a complete breakdown in terms of race, sex, and perceived age, please consult Exhibits 1 and 2 below.

Exhibit 1: Male Respondents

Race ↓ / Age →	≤10	11-17	18-21	22-29	30-45	46-65	>65	TOTAL
BLACK	3	2	10	8	4	2	1	30
WHITE	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3

Exhibit 2: Female Respondents

Race ↓ / Age →	≤10	11-17	18-21	22-29	30-45	46-65	>65	TOTAL
BLACK	3	1	10	4	11	6	2	37
WHITE	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	3

Whites were interviewed on the spur of the moment when I was in a conversation with them and it yielded itself to questions that might have some bearing on my research. I did not set out to interview any whites.

My respondents are a function of where I did iy interviewing. Since quite a bit of my interviewing was done during working hours, say 9 - 5, and at supermarkets, it makes sense that most of the respondents would be females in the 18-45 age groups. Most of the males I talked to, whether in libraries, supermarkets, subways or whatever, were students in the 18-29 age groups.

When I first started doing my research for my thesis, I was talking to the older black people (>30). It was necessary to go looking for them. I had to "make" conversation - at supermarkets, at busstops, on busses - anywhere I thought feasible. In the supermarket it was very difficult to get these people to talk about anything but the outrageously high prices. Not only did they want to talk about the prices, they wanted to talk about this at length. Generally I let them talk for a few minutes, blow off some steam and then asked their advice on something. That generally bolstered their ego and they were more willing to listen to me. I might ask a lady buying chicken "What's the best way to cook chicken?" Generally they fell right into my trap. "Can you eat fried foods?" or "What do you like?" I'd say something like I like it anyway. I find it's convenient to eat

while I'm watching television. Then before they got a chance to say anything else I might ask "Do you watch television?" That was generally sufficient to get me into my thing.

Oh you're probably wondering how I'd approach a man. That was even harder, but to ignore them would be ignoring a substantial part of the black community. There were some general rules I observed when approaching a man. First, I never talked to a man that had tried to talk to me first. Second, if a man looked at me more than in passing, I passed him by. I never talked to a man that was with his wife, or a female companion because I didn't want to start trouble and I wasn't sure I could deal with two people at one time. Lastly, I didn't talk to men if I had a bad feeling about them. Generally, a guy had to pass all of these criterion before I approached him. It wasn't as hard as you might expect to find these guys, or maybe it just didn't seem hard because I was not at all anxious to approach these guys. Well on with it. Say a guy is buying a steak. I'd ask "Is that a good cut of meat?" Depending on the age, it seemed, I'd get "I don't know I just wanted some steak. You should be telling me." (That was generally a younger dude, say less than 30.) Or I'd get "It's okay I guess. This is what I generally buy." (over 30) If the guy was friendly but not too friendly I generally kept the conversation going. "You eat steak often?" "How do you eat yours: medium, rare?" "If you don't know what you're buying why are you spending all that money?"

I might say anyone of these. After we'd gotten into what they liked to eat with this steak, we'd talk about what they liked to do while they ate it. Most wanted to know what could you do while you were eating, but after I explained what I was talking about in the way of diversions, the majority commented they preferred music. Then I could ask "Why not television?" so either way I'd get around to what I wanted.

Younger people were much easier to talk to because I didn't have to go looking for them. I'd run into them all the time - at the library, shopping for clothes and just hanging around.

The questions I asked, of both young and old, were not uniform (See Exhibit 6 in Chapter III for details on questions and responses.), only because I could not always remember to ask them or their answers did not call for additional questions in that particular area. Some excerpts from individual case interviews will be sprinkled throughout the discussion if they are considered as helpful to the ongoing analysis.

Formal Interviews

I distinguish a formal interview from an informal interview in three areas: (1) In a formal interview, I was talking to someone that was employed by the media - newscasters, producers, disc jockeys. (2) They were aware of what my position was, that is, they knew I was a student

writing a thesis. (3) I had a list of questions I asked them (See Exhibit 3); not real long because I talked to these people during business hours, or I got in touch with those I couldn't reach in person, through the mail. I figured I'd get more consideration if my questionnaire was brief. Different individuals were asked questions that were a function of sex, and perceived job situation. Some of these questions are in the discussion and findings section.

A profile of the people interviewed is found in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4:

	TV newscaster	TV producer	TV sportscaster	radio newsman	newspaper reporter	TOTAL
BLACK MALE	2	—	1	2	1	6
BLACK FEMALE	—	1	—	1	—	2
WHITE MALE	—	1	—	—	—	1

I think it is important to mention that these are the only people that I could contact, either via phone or direct mail. They were not specifically picked for this purpose. I tried to contact most of the blacks that I was aware of in the media, but I only got a 30% feedback rate from those I did contact via mail. I got initial leads from people who had worked with people in the media and people I knew in the media.

There was basically no difference between the questions asked in phone interviews and the questions on the survey that was mailed out.

Television Viewing

I had watched very little TV prior to researching this project, but I considerably increased my viewing in proportion to the amount of time I had. I did not

EXHIBIT 3

For the most part, these questions were all asked, but in the case where one might refer specifically to a sex or a position, or a race, then they were asked only if they were pertinent to the person being questioned.

1. Why did you choose a career in the communications industry?

2. How did you get your initial assignment? Where? Doing what?

3. Do you think being black has imposed extra limitations on you? How? When?

4. Could being black possibly have been a help in any circumstance? When? Where?

5. Is the black community being adequately served by our present communications system? If no, what do you think should be done to improve the situation?

6. Do you foresee a significant increase in the number of blacks employed by the television industry? When?

7. Do you foresee the ownership of a commercial television station by blacks in the near future? Why?

8. What possibilities do you see for cable television that might significantly affect the black community? Will cable be a viable medium for blacks?

9. Do you think being female has imposed extra limitations on you? If so, what kind? If not, do you think that your experience is unique? Why?

10. Is there anything in particular you'd like to say, anything you'd like to add to what you've already said?

11. Do you feel being a sportscaster allows you to make significant contributions to the community and if so what kind?

do it so much to be able to indulge in my own criticism of the media as to be able to carry on a half-way knowledgeable conversation with people and to try to see what some of their complaints were. I did not do too much regular viewing of series in an effort to see as many of them as possible, but I did view regularly the ones whose names kept popping up. I realize this makes it hard to evaluate a program since content can vary from week to week but again, I just wanted to get a basic understanding of what the shows were about. The people I interviewed evaluated the programming but I do feel qualified to have an opinion when the time comes.

I estimate I watched over 75 different programs in doing research for this. Exhibit 5 lists the ones that people mentioned most, in order of how often they were mentioned; good or bad.

Exhibit 5:

1. The Flip Wilson Show - 49 times
2. Sanford & Son - 45 times
3. All In The Family - 43 times
4. Good Times - 30 times
5. Maude - 30 times

The count following the programs indicates the number of times they were mentioned, with some people making references to more than one program.

The same five programs were mentioned constantly with insignificant mention given to Dean Martin, the

Tonight Show, Mod Squad and Ironside as they jockeyed for sixth place. None were mentioned more than five times.

Radio listening

Mainly I listened to the radio to check out different approaches in advertising. Was it significantly different from products advertised for blacks? What kinds of public service announcements were broadcast? I listened to WILD, WRKO, WROR, WNBC (New York City), WUFO and WBLK (both in Buffalo, New York.)

Readings

The books I read fall into two major categories - social and technical. The technical reading was strictly on communications technology and the vast majority of that covered cable television with some on satellites.

I did a lot of reading in non-technical areas, not only on communications issues, but on things that tried to deal with black people and their overall lifestyles.

Being a black person and from a black community, it is so easy to sit back and say "I know what it is like. I know what's happening in the ghetto. Nobody white can tell me about how blacks feel." I'd agree with this but for one thing. I've seen black leaders say things that I didn't agree with and they purported to be speaking for me. Like I said previously, the black community is not homogeneous.

So what I tried to do was read books by blacks and whites who are "experts" in their fields. I read books by those who have spent years and had had money enough to pursue research in these areas and have a much more reflective survey than myself. This included readings in such fields as history, psychology, sociology and autobiography.

The television section of newspapers was interesting, not because it had racial overtones or anything but because it often evaluated the previous night's programming in terms of moral value. There, for example, was an article by a white author on "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittmann" one Sunday and a couple of weeks later, there was a response by a black author.

The newspapers gave information on what the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was up to and often they had interesting articles on cable television, children's programming, or something else in which I was interested.

Of all my reading, I think some of the best reading was in "TV Guide" and why shouldn't it be! Not only did you get insight into television programming, you read what TV viewers had to say in the letters section and you heard from the actors, actresses, producers, directors, and the critics.

My newspaper research included data from the New York Times, Boston Globe, Boston Herald American, Bay State Banner, Buffalo Evening News, Buffalo Courier Express

and the Challenger.*

The reader will find a bibliography at the end of this work which lists the various references consulted.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This section deals largely with Exhibit 6, which starts on the next page. It discusses exactly what the respondents said. Some of the questions are discussed specifically because they touch on fundamental issues. Others may be mentioned in passing, but nevertheless, the questions and answers are there for you to analyze yourself.

Also, I will want to give attention to the news media because that is, I assume, one of the first places the black community would go to for facts on what's happening in the world, in the city, and maybe in their neighborhood.

Children's programming will be discussed in terms of how much it supports education and moral development. Does the programming for this market encourage growth - mental and physical?

This section will end with a discussion on cable television and whether or not it provides a viable alternative for services to the black community.

Exhibit 6 Findings

One of the first things I asked practically everyone I talked to was how much they thought what they saw on television reflected their own lifestyles; was it an adequate amount? Sixty of sixty-four people said "no" and when I asked various people to define adequacy, I regularly got a variation on this quote from Mr. Farnum, one of the people I interviewed:

EXHIBIT 6

1. Do you think what you see on television adequately reflects the lifestyles of black people?
   NO: 60; YES: 0; I DON'T KNOW: 4

2. What do you like about television? Why do you watch it?

Males:	Females:
Sports - 29	Diversion - 35
News - 27	News - 34
Diversion - 20	Soap Operas - 27
Comedies - 10	Comedies - 20
Education - 10	Game shows - 15
	Education - 12

3. What don't you like about television?
   Males: over 30, soap operas; under 30, situation comedies dealing with racial issues
   Females: sports

4. How much time do you spend watching television? (avg. hrs.)
   Males: ≤10, 5½; 11-17, 5; 18-21, 3; 22-29, 3½; 30-45, 4; 46-65, 4½; >65, 6
   Females: ≤10, 5½, 11-17, 5; 18-21, 5; 22-29, 4; 30-45, 4½; 46-65, 4½; >65, 6

5. Do you spend most of your leisure time watching TV?
   Males: 23/30 said NO; Females: 30/38 said YES

6. Do you think programs on television like "Sanford and Son" and "All in the Family" are detrimental to blacks, their children and the way they see themselves and others see them? 50/68 said YES; 10/68 said NO; 8 uncertain

7. Do you think television has improved in any way since the early 60's? 59/68 YES; 9 not asked because of age

8. What areas? more visible blacks on TV - series, movies, commercials and blacks aren't only playing maids and janitors anymore; TV specials

9. What areas do you feel TV is most deficient?
   good (realistic) black programs
   factual news reporting
   promotes stereotypes in current programs
   children's programs
   overall quality programming - black/white/other
   too commercial

10. What do you feel can be done to improve television?
    hire more blacks
    portray black in more realistic roles, i.e., not as "Julia," or "Tenafly"

10. cancel programs that play on racial issues

11. What program(s) do you feel have the worst influence on a positive self-image for blacks? See Exhibit 8.

12. What is your favorite program? Why? See Exhibit 7 for answer to first part. Most people basically said they liked the show they picked because it was funny.

13. What program do you like least? Why? See Exhibit 8 for answer to first part. Most people here felt the shows were "racist" and the black characters were more often than not referred to as "Toms."

14. Do you think the news coverage on blacks is good?
59/60 NO; 1 YES

15. Do you think that you can do anything to change the media? 45/60 NO; 5/60 YES; 8 DON'T KNOW; 2 DON'T CARE

16. What do you think you can do? Of the five that said they could do something, only one seemed to have any idea of what to do. He was a graduate student at Columbia majoring in journalism and wanted to get more blacks who still have roots in the community into television and newspapers especially.

17. If there was something you could do, would you do it?
10/58 YES; 12/58 NO; 30/58 DEPENDS

18. Do you think writing letters to key people would help?
27/58 YES; 12/58 NO; 19/58 MAYBE

19. What do you think would be the most effective means of getting your point across to concerned parties?
50/58 DON'T KNOW; 3/58 Get more blacks into the mass media; 5/58 lobby in local communities and wherever programming originates

20. Would you be willing to work with other people to investigate issues such as license renewal and public service programming? 40/58 NO; 10/58 YES; 8/58 DEPENDS

21. If no why? 1 - don't have time; 2 - everybody would want to do their own thing; nobody would listen to anyone else; 3 - not good at things like community action

22. What does it depend on? (To those 8 who responded thusly)
1 - how much time it takes
2 - who I'd be working with
3 - what and why we were investigating

EXHIBIT 6 continued - page 3

23. Are you satisfied with TV overall? NO 60/60

24. Does that mean you are dissatisfied, that you don't like the overall quality of what you see on television?
NO 8/60; YES 52/60

25. What is your biggest gripe about television overall? (These are listed with the ones that were specified as more important heading the list.)
1 - not enough blacks on television
2 - stereotypes reinforced
3 - news coverage is all bad, never good
4 - too much violence in children's programming
5 - too many commercials

Me: What would you consider an adequate amount of programming if it realistically portrayed your lifestyle and that of your friends?

Mr. Farnum: If just once they'd put someone black in a role that I could believe, that I knew somebody like that, then I'd say that would be adequate, and THAT'S compromising! I should ask for more, but I haven't seen any show in more than 50 years where I could say "Black people live like that." This is indeed unfortunate but it must be true. I couldn't find anyone, not even in the media, who was willing to state otherwise.

In terms of the programs that were liked best, they were the same five programs that received the most mention. Exhibit 7 demonstrates that the order of the shows have now changed with number one being the most liked and so on through five. Everyone was encouraged to name only one for both their most liked and least liked, but if they couldn't make up their mind, exceptions were made, so the numbers following the shows, which is an indicator of, say "votes" received, may bear slight discrepancies in terms of the other statistics.

Exhibit 7:

1.	Sanford and Son - 15
2.	The Flip Wilson Show - 12
3.	All in the Family - 6
4.	Good Times - 3
5.	Maude - 1

Exhibit 8 gives the information on the least liked programs and as I said, this information was obtained in the same way as the information for Exhibit 7. You will notice that again the same programs come up.

Exhibit 8:

1.	All in the Family - 20
2.	Maude - 20
3.	The Flip Wilson Show - 7
4.	Sanford and Son - 5
5.	Good Times - 2

This is interesting that 70 people will give you these results but when you look at who likes what it may make more sense. The children <17 and adults >30 liked these shows where the young adults, 18-29, cared very little for these same shows. The biggest reason is that most of the 18-29 year olds were college students, on a predominantly white campus, and they were very aware of racial issues. This is not to say that the other age groups are not as well-educated as this age group, but they maintain constant contact, in most instances, with their own neighborhood. College students on white campuses are oftentimes isolated from their neighborhoods and more prone to think of things in terms of blacks and whites.

These programs are popular because they're funny. Blacks in their neighborhoods can just view it as they viewed "Amos 'n Andy". Sanford has an innocence about him for some people. On the other hand, these programs are not liked because they play on racial issues and many people feel that as long as you laugh and joke about these issues, people will

never look at this as a serious problem and race relations will never improve.

The overwhelming majority, 59/60 people, said news coverage was not good. When asked if they wanted to work toward improving this situation, less than 20% of the people said they were willing to help. More than half said it depended on what you were going to do, why, and how much time it would take. What I got out of it though, really, is that people resist efforts to organize within the community because (1) it has militant overtones and militancy turns lots of people off, and (2) people want results but they don't want to work at getting them.

Eighty-seven percent of the people I interviewed were dissatisfied with TV overall. Question 25 of this exhibit lists them in order of what their biggest gripes were and from that, it can be seen that blacks want to see more blacks on TV. Granted, the ones that are on aren't portraying realistic roles, but to paraphrase Nikki Giovanni, cops are bad but if you gotta have them, black cops are more valid and Diahann Carroll is more beautiful and also more valid than Doris Day will ever be.

One thing which may interest the reader is the result found in question 5 which finds that females spend more of their leisure time watching television than do males. The way it appears to work in the black community is while you're young, parents let their sons stay out later than their daugh-

ters, therefore, the female spend more time inside which leads to watching more TV. When the females get older, the guys are still going out and the females are waiting for the guys to call. After marriage, if only one parent is at home, it is usually the mother at home with the children and here again, there would be an increase in the amount of TV time possible. Therefore, what it boils down to is that females are in the home for more of their leisure time than are males and thus have more opportunity to spend this time watching television.

Exhibit 9 gives the information breakdown in terms of age, with no significant differences due to sex, on the information supplied in Exhibits 7 and 8.

≤10	11-17	18-21	22-29	30-45	46-65	>65
6/6	2/3	1/20	2/13	8/15	4/8	2/3

↓ 1- no favorite

Exhibit 9: liked programs in Exhibit 7; named one of them as a favorite

2- no least liked ↑ 1-no least liked ↑ 1-no least liked ↑

≤10	11-17	18-21	22-29	30-45	46-65	>65
0/6	1/3	19/20	11/13	5/15	2/8	0/3

listed programs in Exhibit 8 as those liked least

As I said, some people responded in terms of individual programs, but all did not and I saw no reason to press this issue. Their point, as far as I was concerned, had been well-taken. These programs were therefore put together in the exhibits because to give the results of the indivdual samplings would be very misleading in terms of my study.

The News Media

Originally, I was not going to get specifically into a discussion of the news media. After talking to some of the young people and a couple of the older people the question was posed - Why is it that all you ever see is the bad? People felt they were being exploited by the news media, that it was responsible for the lowly position in which many Americans seem to regard blacks. "By their own claim, the networks

> accelerated the 'civil-rights revolution' and turned the American home front against a war in which half a million American troops were engaged.
>
> That is power.
>
> How the networks use that power - to advance some issues, ideas and men, and discredit others - is what produces the continuing alienation."[1]

I wrote a black newscaster from one of the network affiliated stations. He said he had worked in the industry for 15 years and he had seen changes, improvements in terms of more blacks hired, more programming aimed at black audiences and more support being given to blacks in the media. However, he seemed to view the situation rather optimistically, even as he said more must be done. I talked to a producer at a television station and a news reporter on a radio station and they seemed to share this particular view on the necessity to do more.

Some of the questions I asked were: Why did you choose a profession in the media? Do you feel the black community gets good, objective information from the news media? What do you feel would be the best way to make the

media less biased and more sensitive to the needs of the community? And is there anything about your job that you don't like, that is, limitations, frustrations, etc? They agreed on many of the answers. They felt that there was a need for a black perspective on the news media because the news media is so biased; white news. It was felt that not only was this a problem for blacks, but a problem for all minorities. They could not speak from personal experiences, but they said that it appeared white people were getting accurate news on their communities from the media. Neither felt the media supplied objective informational news, but both expressed beliefs that the media is moving forward. This process could be reinforced with the hiring of more blacks as writers, reporters, editors, etc. The brother from WILD felt the media would be less biased if it would report hard core facts. He also said there are limitations and frustrations but he didn't let them hassle him too much. The sister from "Black News" said there are plenty of limitations and she cited sex and race as a couple. She said getting some deserved recognition was also a problem. So why are they sticking? The brother said the media was the only outlet to get the facts out to the people. The sister? She feels that people in news, particularly, consider themselves journalists and one purpose of journalism is to give the people a clear interpretation of what's happening.

"60 Minutes" did a show on the news. "Mike

> Wallace, taking note on CBS of the local-news rating wars being waged among urban television stations considers the question 'How far do you go to attract an audience?' The answer, judging from some of the evidence already compiled: far enough to demand serious scrutiny.
>
> News, especially local news, has experienced a dramatic turnabout in the last several years going from a public service, something of a 'loss leader', to a highly saleable commodity with marketable 'personalities'. As Mr. Wallace says, it's an axiom in the trade that if a station leads in news ratings, 'it leads the pack over-all.'"[2]

People who are involved in this ratings war argue that "you don't save souls in an empty church."

> "Two years ago in casual conversation, Walter Cronkite observed that ratings can be important but must not become too important. The obvious and easy snare, he warned, would be tabloid journalism. Fueled by the huckstering of independent 'consultants', the race for showbusiness and sensationalism and ratings is turning ominous."[3]

Under these circumstances, I must conclude that the news media has fallen short of its goal as I perceive it: to provide good, objective coverage of all facets of the American community. We all suffer from misrepresentation; not just underexposure which is the situation for blacks, but there is such a thing as overexposure. Watergate is an example of this.

Children's Television

Television: A medium so called because so little of it is rare or well done. - Mrs. Deane Binder[4]

Action for Children's Television began as a

small group of very angry parents. They were "challenging the assumptions of a number of vested interests: the commercial networks with their Saturday morning 'ghetto' of children's programs; sponsors and advertising agencies with their impressionable audiences; and producers with carbon-copy assembly lines of dumb shoddy cartoons."[5] This group of ladies analyzed children's programs and found them not only wanting but dangerous. Their complaints included "the glut of inane cartoons, the hard-sell techniques and frequency of the commercials, the lack of research, experimentation and evaluation."[6]

I watched some of the pictures in the Saturday morning "ghetto" and there was really only one I liked - "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids". I really like this program; not only because it has dark people-blacks - but because it has something to offer. It teaches. The program deals with braggarts, showoffs, fat kids, skinny kids, ethics and values. "Do the messages get across? A recent study, involving five episodes of the show, found that nine out of ten children interviewed received one or more pro-social messages from the episode they viewed. (CBS has made the results of this study public, but at the time of this writing, I had not had access to them.)

> "Fat Albert, then, is an extraordinary experiment in television education, created under the direct, detailed supervision of a panel of noted scholars and educators. It is also very funny."[7]

Children's programming should have this purpose: "to expand the child's understanding of self and world, through the imaginative unorthodox use of television.

Children's television has the unequaled potential for combining education with genuine entertainment: in short, for making learning fun."[8]

Children are our most precious resource. America's future depends on them. How can we expect them to be individuals, making their own moral judgements, without indoctrinating them? Can we? The networks are going to try. Starting in September, their Saturday morning programming will have more live-action (non-animated) programs and they will introduce several new programs developed in cooperation with educators. Educators are seeing the need to move toward what they call "affective education" andaway from cognitive learning like "Sesame Street". Though "Sesame Street", "Electric Company" and "Zoom" have a following, they are not well financed, nor are they seen as the best possible form of children's programming. The forerunner in the category of "affective education" , "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids", is one of the highest rated Saturday morning programs, and not only does it have the meaty content of something like "Sesame Street", it is seen as more entertaining by the experts who are supposed to know. The idea is to set up real life situations, "with emphasis on those in which young persons would have an opportunity to make value judgements and in

which solutions would be realistically in their power....

The key idea is to be entertaining and, at the same time, teach values and value conflicts."[9]

If teach means enabling them to learn, as opposed to indoctrinating them, then television in the area of children's programs will be better...this fall. My nephews will be watching. They'll let me know.

The question may have entered your mind as to why networks are now trying to do something about this area of programming. Well rumor has it that they want to preserve one of their largest profit centers. Parents groups have been making a stir loud enough to arouse the FCC. In an effort to maintain this revenue, they want to enhance their programming. CBS has earned $10 million from Saturday morning programs because its ratings far exceeded its competitors.[10]

For whatever the reason, don't you think the networks deserve a chance to show us that television can be rare, entertaining and educational for our children?

James Duffy, President of ABC said:

> The highly competitive nature of Saturday morning, no different in the marketplace from any other day part, is at the heart of our difficulty. During those specific hours when our chief concern must be for the welfare of our children, we are far too concerned with outrating the competition....No matter how brilliant we may be in other areas of our programming day, if we are not superior here - when our children are held captive, so to speak - then we are crippled in our superiority everywhere.[11]

In all fairness to the advertising media since they are responsible for the "glutton of commercials" broadcast on Saturday morning, they are doing research. They do care about our children. The advertising industry admits that youth comprise a special market. Research has been done on the effects of commercials on youth from 6-15 and how entertaining and truthful they see them as being. Eugene Reilly is head of his own company that does qualitative behavioral research on children. He points out that the young are an unusual advertising subject because they want to grow up fast, and they feel threatened and alienated by the adult world.

Children's programming, as it is today is... poor at best. There is not much on, outside of "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids" and "Sesame Street", that serves any constructive purpose in terms of raising our children to be "fine and upstanding" citizens. If our next generation of leaders is going to be equipped to handle the problems of America in an effective, peaceful way, then we'd better start giving them the tools now. Take the "crap" on Saturday morning off and give us something as creative and all-around sound as "Fat Albert" and let's not forget "Sesame Street" because it's following is substantial enough to warrant serious consideration.

Some of the Technology Behind the Media

I want to talk about cable TV because it is a potential source of power and wealth for the black community. Blacks have been severely neglected by the commercial broadcast system so it would appear. Therefore, they may need to develop their own communications system to satisfy their own needs. Cable, if developed to its full potential, could be a terribly effective medium.

What is cable television? Why does it exist? Where is it?

Cable television is a method of transmitting television signals through what else, cables, as opposed to broadcasting where the signals are transmitted through the air. This coaxial cable is strung much like telephone wiring and has amplifiers along it to maintain signal strength and couplers which allow branching and isolation. This cable is capable of carrying about 20 channels without interference. Some systems have two-way operation but this is not a necessity and it's also more expensive.

Why does it exist? Well like I said one cable can carry 20 distinct channels. This provides unlimited technological channel potential, but economics and politics have very strong roles in what the future of cable will be. Cable can give minority viewpoints an opportunity to be heard. You would have public access channels where communities and individuals can present their own programs. It expands the

public services that can be offered. Cable expands everything. It can offer shopping at home service. It can be the teacher or give you instant weather reports. What you want, technologically, it will be able to offer. It has been said that cable, if used fully, could mean you only leave your home for leisure activities.

Where is cable? In the 1940's it was introduced into rural and mountainous areas to reinforce weak broadcasts signals. Cable was wired into these homes for a fee and as a result the residents received improved reception. However, cable is no longer limited to rural areas. The largest cities in the country have taken an interest in cable; many such as Manhattan, to improve television reception since the tall buildings interfere with broadcast signals. However, cable in Manhattan has another plus. It offers Knicks and Rangers home games. This probably is the most attractive feature in terms of cities. It increases your options of what to watch.

To maintain what could be maximum effectiveness there are many things we need to be aware of; ownership is the most important thing at this time. "At least two parties

> have been watching the unfolding drama of the Wired Nation with more than detached interest. One is the present commercial broadcasting industry, whose own interests - and survival - are threatened. The other is the television company, whose relationship to cable TV and the broadband communications revolution is problematic and complex...Newspapers and other communications media also began to buy in, so that half the cable systems in the United States are now owned by other media and communications

> interests. If the trend is not stopped and reversed, the new technology will be largely the property of old interests that may find themselves with strong motives for abridging or not developing its full potential.
>
> CATV is by its nature a monopoly..."[12]

The people that own cable will control its output. Cable is very definitely one medium that could be used to serve local programming needs. However, "(the) autonomous locally owned cable system appears to be going the way of the buffalo."[13]

The biggest fear is that broadcasting stations will be put out of business by cable since cable can technically import distant signals. This was brought to the FCC which prompted some people to wonder why the FCC was at all involved if there was no "positive showing" of harm to a local TV station. And Commissioner Johnson of the FCC asked "Suppose...worst came to worst and a few marginal TV stations were put out of business by the cable. Why was this such a high price to pay for the advent of a new communications medium that offered so many benefits to the public?

Such approaches of course have no chance politically."[14] The commercial television industry is going to protect its own. It is rich enough and powerful enough to have full-time, professional lobbyists in Washington. The industry, I am told by people in the know, has pull in Congress and at the FCC. It would be hard for competitors to gain enough political support to do any harm to any broadcast sta-

tion, possibly due to a belief of the falling domino theory.

As I've said, cable has great potential. However, it "is unlikely...that the future of cable television

> will turn out to be as splendid as all this, either in terms of economic reward for the industry or, most important, in terms of social gain for the public. Its fate is now being determined in a grim political and economic struggle with the giant interests whose prosperity and power it has challenged - the broadcast industry and the telephone companies. As this battle unfolds, only the CATV industry is there to speak for its own economic interests. Almost no one speaks for the public."[15]

There has been some regulation of cable, most in the interest of the broadcast industry, to regulate cable. In December 1968 the FCC put into effect interim procedures that forbid the importing of distant signals within a 35-mile radius of a central point if that market was in the top 100 television markets. Then they said a system with more than 3500 subscribers has to do some original programming. At the last minute, before it was put into effect, the FCC did allow waivers to systems with less than 10,000 subscribers.

The Supreme Court made its own decision on March 4, 1974. "The high court held 6 to 3 that cable comanies importing network broadcasts and rechanneling them to paid subscribers over a CATV system were not required to pay fees for the use of copyrighted material on those broadcast."[16] This gives cable an opportunity to make money off of programs

they do not have to pay for and, thus should aid in the growth of the industry. This ended ten years of litigation on the copyright issue.

FOOTNOTES

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2. "TV: Battle Behind the News," by John J. O'Connor, New York Times, March 8, 1974, p. 59

3. Ibid.

4. Thursday newspaper from M. I. T. community, March 4, 1974

5. "A. C. T. Festival Shows Children's Programs," by John J. O'Connor, New York Times, April 2, 1974

6. Ibid.

7. Advertisement, New York Times, April 1, 1974, p. 56

8. Ibid.

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10. Ibid.

11. "A. B.C.C. Officials Assail Ratings of Children's Shows," Les Brown, New York Times, March 6, 1974

12. Ralph Lee Smith, The Wired Nation, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1972, pp. 22-23

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16. New York Times, April 3, 1974

CHAPTER IV - CONCLUSIONS

Old people, children, low-income families and blacks watch more TV than higher-income whites. Children are very impressionable and blacks believe more of what they see on television to be real than do whites. Nikki once said "We watched Angela's face as she stepped from the motel. And she had one of those yes-I-know looks on her face as if to say, this too must be gotten through; and as if life, which I think she values is all that's left and she must hold on to it. And we feel this is a clear violation of her right to her opinion. All you people who said, 'Bring the oppression on down,' where are you? It can't get much higher. And all you people who wanted her to shoot it out with the police ought to quit watching TV. It's affecting your minds, in a dangerous way."[1]

And that's what I hope this thesis has gotten across. I don't want you to take everything I say and believe it or not believe it. I want you to think about what television may be doing to the minds of Americans.

I tried to get people's opinions and if they didn't have one, I wanted to find that out too. The discussion was not my opinion, but what I found out from people.

One of the things asked most often by blacks was why aren't there nore blacks in the media and on TV? In March, 1968 Michael Dunn, Vice-President of CBS programming, explained "TV was unwilling to use Negroes in TV programming because TV, for the most part, likes to deal with life in

America as it really is. And since there are, for the most part, no Negro judges, or Governors, or Senators, portraying Negroes in such a manner would represent an unreal picture of American life."[2] He made this comment at a time when programs like "I Dream of Jeannie" and "Bewitched" were part of the TV log. I thought a more honest statement of the situation was this one. "Certain concerns soon were expressed. The first dealt with how the new Negro actors were to be characterized. Maloney mentioned three alternatives. For one, TV could revert to presenting the old black-face "Amos 'n Andy" stereotypes. This, said Maloney, was unthinkable in 1968. Second, TV could develop new and original stories about blacks dealing with uniquely black problems. This alternative, according to Maloney, would require originality and creativity that is rare in TV. Finally, blacks could be cast in essentially 'white' roles in 'white' stories -- ready-made characters in familiar plots. Maloney felt that this last was the most likely alternative."[3]

Why is this so? What would be so hard about hiring blacks or other minorities to help interpret the life-styles of their people; to write and direct blacks on television? Does TV not want to be creative and original if that is what it would take? Ivan Dixon said "The industry feels a need to project black images, but they are really not sure of how to do it. It's kind of confusing...basically because they still don't really comprehend what and where we really

are,"[4] Would it be so hard to hire blacks to tell them, or at least give them guidance?

Basically, black people are asking for that originality and creativity that Maloney described as rare. No one I spoke with said they were satisfied with television, though not all expressed dissatisfaction. Most of the people I talked to were dissatisfied, however, with one facet or another. Most dissatisfaction was found in the situation comedies which played on racial issues.

Blacks want to see more blacks as newscasters and reporters. They are tired of the attention paid to bad things in the community and want to see more attention paid to human interest and community deveopment issues. They feel television has improved since the early 60's. Most admitted they were not expertly qualified to judge how much progress had been made but agreed it had not been enough.

Advertising executives, marketing managers, and PR men have acknowledged for quite a few years that there is such a phenomenon as a black market. You can read past issues of their trade journals and see that they are trying to deal with this market as the market wants to be dealt with. There has been research done to find out how the black market wants to be served by advertisers and marketers. Blacks have been hired to develop sound relationships with the black community. Radio, has for years, had black-oriented stations in large cities and cities where there is a significant number of

blacks. The newspaper and magazine industries have had individual attempts to serve the black community (Bay State Banner, Amsterdam News, Challenger, Ebony, Jet). Television has been the exception and that's where we need to focus our efforts. As I tdd people when I talked to them if you really don't like what you see on TV do something. You sit there and say I can't change anything. Well you sure can't if you make no effort. Why not try to organize a small group, maybe just some friends and write the FCC? Write your congressmen.

So blacks have almost beem left completely out of the mass communications system in this country...temporarily. I say this because communications technology is changing so rapidly that there are always new openings arising. Cable, at one time looked to be the new technology with the greatest potential. It's questionable how effective it will be with all the politicking and compromising, but it is a beginning. The recent decision in Boston not to issue a franchise immediately improves the chances of a group not affiliated with the present media industry for obtaining that franchise. Get your capital together now, though admittedly, it will take more than capital. In a nation where television took over the radio market in 30 years, who is to say what will happen tomorrow, but whatever it is blacks should be right in there, hanging tough? We should not stop present efforts to integrate the existing structure, but it is, by far, easier to get in at the beginning than it is to try to change the existing

structure. Our best hope may lie in the immediate future. Good things are supposed to come to those who wait..., but don't wait too long! We have more than passed our ninth month. Labor must set in soon!

Now is as good a time as any to conclude. And I guess it's also time for me to answer my major question. Are blacks being served by our present system? My answer...not really. You can't say no, out and out, because every now and then you see a black face - "Julia", "Sanford and Son" and "All in the Family". However, I feel I can say "not really" as long as I qualify it. Service to me is providing something of value. When I asked, "Is there anything you get from television that you would consider valuable, whether morally, information-wise, education-wise, or any other way?", 62% answered "NO." Every now and then you get a documentary, but are they relevant?

In terms of future research, I think the most solid idea would be going into the community and talking to the people. Maybe we could get into the ratings war by checking the ratings of different programs among blacks. From this information, you could not only find out what blacks watch, but how much TV they watch and then ask them...why? That is an important question if television is going to prove to be more real. There is some information on how people outside the black community think the media serves the community. There

is some statistical information on blacks and there is some statistical information on TV. I could not find much on blacks and TV, at least not in the same book. The media, government and private sources should all consider funding some research in this area. What we need is solid information from the source! This should be carried out with the understanding that this sort of research will need money and will take a considerable amount of time. Therefore, this should be carried out on a full-time basis, over a rather lengthy period of time, in a locale(s) that has been given considerable thought in terms of overall resemblance to the total black community in the United States. You should try to find out how much blacks believe what they see on TV and how they feel about it. A participant observer study might be the best approach and in that case, a black person might be the best person to do it.

In terms of planners, I think they need to give government a shove in the right direction. I mentioned cable before and I think that one way to open up the media is with honest competition. Unfortunately, "The Federal government remains firmly committed to preventing cable from overcoming the inequities in the United States commercial system of broadcasting."[5]

Half of the present cable systems are owned by companies affiliated with the commercial broadcasting system. The fault belongs to someone. Who's gonna take the weight?

I recommend that citizens become involved in

the local communications media. Write station managers. Let them know what you like, what you don't like. Write your newspapers. Be critical, but not absurd. Try to be objective. If you see something you like, don't think "I liked that," write the same people you would criticize because they also deserve a pat on the back if they do a good job. Learn about communications and how you can change the media, but also learn how to use the media for social, political and educational reasons. Know when to use pressure and when to "deal" because in dealing with some people, there is only one way to get through to them, and in all cases, there is a best way. Find out what they are. Find out when station licenses are up for RENEWAL and evaluate them honestly. If you've got gripes, certainly the FCC should be aware of them. If you like what's been done, it's just as important to support them so they will maintain a high level of service. Make the media earn its reputation as the lifeline of America or America will die. And when America dies, we all take a final bow.

FOOTNOTES

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3. Ibid.

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5. Ralph Lee Smith, The Wired Nation, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., New York, 1972

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