

RADIO  
and the  
PRINTED PAGE

*An Introduction to the Study of Radio and  
Its Role in the Communication of Ideas*

PAUL F. LAZARFELD  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF RADIO RESEARCH,  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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*To Robert and Helen Lynd*

## *Foreword*

IN the fall of 1937 the Rockefeller Foundation allocated a grant to Princeton University with the assignment of studying the role played by radio for different groups of listeners in the United States. An Office of Radio Research was set up with the author as director, Frank Stanton and Hadley Cantril as associate directors. A series of investigations covering a rather wide range of problems was undertaken.

One group of studies which seemed of obvious importance related radio to other media of communication such as newspapers and books. In June 1939, when the first general progress report was due, these studies formed a natural unit for summary. The volume on "Radio and the Printed Page" in its present form grew out of discussions of this first report.

The field headquarters of the Princeton Radio Project have been in New York City, and as the work advanced it became clear to the directors that the research would be expedited if the Project were transferred to a university located in New York City, the center of radio activities. In the spring of 1940 the Office of Radio Research was therefore transferred to Columbia University.

The entire series of studies to which the present book belongs was originally sponsored by the Federal Radio Education Committee.

One feels quite reluctant to sign his own name as author of a book which is so much the product of the co-operative efforts of a group of associates. Thus nothing is more urgent than to give proper acknowledgment where it is due.

The greatest indebtedness is to Professor Samuel Stouffer of the University of Chicago. Professor Stouffer analyzed the material pertaining to news in this book; the first three sections of the fifth chapter and the first section of the sixth chapter are almost entirely his contribution. Many times as this work progressed Dr. Stouffer's ideas proved helpful to other parts of the book as well. It is a pleasure to acknowledge how greatly his thinking has enriched the author's own ideas about social research. Only Dr. Stouffer's over-modest insistence has prevented his name from appearing as co-author of the present volume.

Dr. Frank Stanton, Research Director of the Columbia Broadcasting System, has also been decisive for the progress of this piece of work. It was he who guided the author in his first orientation in the field of American broadcasting. Many an invaluable source of material was tapped, and many a research idea initiated through Dr. Stanton's advice. There is scarcely a conclusion in this volume which has not profited somehow from Dr. Stanton's co-operation.

So many other people have helped in the various phases of the present text that only a few can be singled out for a special word of thanks. Mr. H. M. Beville of the National Broadcasting Company; Professor Hadley Cantril of Princeton University; Mrs. Mary Duncan Carter of the School of

Library Science of the University of Southern California; Dr. George Gallup of the American Institute of Public Opinion; Professor Harold G. Lasswell; Mr. Theodore Malcolm; Dr. Leonard Power, Research Co-ordinator of the Federal Radio Education Committee; Mr. S. Spivak of the Columbia Broadcasting System; Professor H. B. Summers of Kansas State College; Miss Miriam Thompkins of the Library School of Columbia University; and Professor Douglas Waples of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago.

Mr. John Marshall, Associate Director of the Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation, has given encouragement and constructive advice far beyond the duties of his office.

Wherever any of the material in this book has been handled by a member of the regular staff of the Office of Radio Research, this contribution has been acknowledged in a footnote. However, certain staff members worked so closely with the author that it is impossible to trace all their help. As an expression of thanks a list of these staff members follows:

LLOYD FREE, who is now managing editor of *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, was assistant director of the Office of Radio Research for a half-year. His competent and loyal interest in the progress of the work helped it through some of the most difficult phases.

FREDA BRIM was assistant to Dr. Stouffer in the elaborate analysis of data which was necessary for Dr. Stouffer's part

of this book. She also collected valuable information on the background of the press-radio conflict which will be published in another context.

ALBERTA CURTIS, who is now with the New York Public Library, was in charge of the general survey of book programs on the air and made the special studies in Iowa which are incorporated in the text.

HAZEL GAUDET supervised the administration of the statistical material and analyzed a great part of the general survey material contributed by other agencies.

DR. HERTA HERZOG contributed the study of the Professor Quiz program which she conducted and wrote under the direction of Dr. Cantril.

ROSE KOHN as secretary of the Office of Radio Research bore the burden of keeping the great variety of source material, and saw this text through the many revisions it has undergone.

EDWARD SUCHMAN was in charge of the study done jointly with the Book-of-the-Month Club and the research director of that organization, Mr. Theodore Malcolm. This investigation contributed basic information to the present publication, as well as to others.

Other staff members, such as Marjorie Fleiss, Boyd McCandless, John Dean and Jeanette Sayre were helpful whenever their duties in the field permitted them to return to the office.

## *Introduction*

MUCH has been said recently regarding the increasing complexity of our social life. On the one hand, we cherish democratic traditions, which are based essentially on the idea that the citizenry themselves will make, and are competent to make, all the major decisions regarding life in the community. There is on the other hand this ever-increasing centralization of economic production, with the result that most issues which pertain to our jobs and hence to the well-spring of our social existence are being decided by specialized technical or business experts far away from the scene of our own activities. The United States points with pride to its small and declining illiteracy rate. But at the same time science makes such rapid progress that the proportion of what a person does not know to what he knows is probably much greater nowadays than it was when very few knew how to write or to read. In fact, if literacy is defined as competence to understand the problems confronting us, there is ground for suggesting that we are becoming progressively illiterate today in handling life's options. And since it is no longer possible to make major decisions in local town meetings, the future of democracy depends upon whether we can find new ways for the formation and expression of public



will without impairing our democratic form of government.

It becomes of increasingly grave importance, then, how the existing media of communication are used and misused, and what can and cannot be done with their help is a most vital topic for social investigation. The recent establishment of an organization for the study of such problems in radio broadcasting was a first step to meet the need. This book on radio and the printed page is one of the publications reporting on the work of that office.

It has seemed advisable to confront an old, established medium, print, with a newly developed instrument, radio, partly because such a comparison is a well-tested research device and seemed likely to reveal some of the changes occurring in modern communication. For instance, everyone has heard about "government by mail order." Political decisions were influenced by a hundred thousand telegrams and letters which recently poured into Washington as a result of a few radio speeches. The effect of these letters and telegrams was great only because government officials still thought in terms of a time when print held the monopoly in the dissemination of ideas. If legislators had known that it is not difficult for a commercial advertiser to get a million letters by offering a sewing kit for a dime, the hundred thousand political letters would not have been so impressive. The mere knowledge of how prone are American radio listeners to "write in" might dispel some of the dangers of radio demagogues. By generalizing this example, one will see how important it is to study what new social and psycho-

logical factors have to be reckoned with, since radio has broken the monopoly that print once held on the communication of ideas.

The first three chapters of this volume deal with what one might call the educational aspect of radio. The first chapter starts with an investigation of whether today's serious broadcasts really reach strata of the population which have not, so far, been reached by print. The answer, by and large, is negative. The second chapter goes on to show that radio disseminates information to broad masses of the people, but through programs which are not considered educational by educators. Without taking sides as to which way of disseminating information is desirable, the third chapter discusses the conditions under which serious listening could be increased. All three chapters point to audience building as an essential in the socially desirable use of radio.

These three chapters also acquaint the reader with more general facts about listener research, and so form a background against which all the further studies can be discussed more easily. The fourth chapter surveys the conditions under which people choose to read or to listen. Reading skill, interest, accessibility, and a series of other factors are investigated as to how they influence preferences for different media. The findings are developed and applied to news broadcasts in the fifth chapter. There the structure of the news audience is analyzed in detail, and the social significance of a new type of news consumer is examined. The sixth chapter, finally, deals with some of the effects which radio has,

or can have, upon the reading of newspapers and books. The chapter ends with a number of speculations on some of radio's social consequences.

All through the book the author has been greatly concerned with the question which is now paramount in the social sciences: "Knowledge for what?"<sup>1</sup> There are a number of points on which the data reported here should suggest action.

Those who want to promote reading through radio will find, in the last chapter, a number of procedures which would seem promising for their purpose. For those who think that radio's cultural function is to get information directly to population groups which are not likely to read, the whole third chapter deals with the question of how to build audiences for serious broadcasts among people on lower cultural levels. The necessity of "institutionalizing" radio is stressed, and some specific suggestions as to the future role of radio as a cultural agent are presented. The comparison in Chapters IV and V between the reading and the listening sector of the population will, it is hoped, correct current assumptions about the role of radio in the fight for democracy. Characteristically enough, the same results are closely linked to the competition of radio and magazines for the advertising accounts of business companies. The study of program appeals reported in Chapter I should be helpful for readers interested in production of broadcasts. Some

<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Lynd, *Knowledge for What?* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1939.

material is especially included to give the general public a better picture of how radio works—for instance, the material in Chapter IV on the accessibility of radio. Many suggestions as to research methods and more profitable utilization of existing data are made all through the text.

Of course the research student cannot foresee all the situations in which his results might be put to practice. Research is the more valuable insofar as further applications of findings are discovered after the findings have been made public. Whether the present piece of research is valuable in this sense only the future can show. It is up to the reader to ask how, given these facts and their interpretation, any present features in communications could be changed for the better.

We could not avoid some arbitrariness in the way the different subject matters are matched against the problems for which they serve as examples. In the first chapter, for instance, a close analysis of the audience for serious programs will be found, but no investigation was made of the gratifications which people felt in listening to such programs; on the other hand, an elaborate description of the appeals implied in a contest program was made, without a thorough examination of its audience's characteristics. In the fifth chapter the effect of radio upon newspaper circulation is investigated without any attempt to study how an individual's newspaper reading might be affected by news listening; immediately following this is an elaborate study of individual book reading stimulated by listening to different radio programs, but only a few paragraphs on book sales

and library circulation. Similarly, the reader will find comparisons of the content of newspapers and news programs, but no comparison of other corresponding contents—for instance, of books and radio programs on self-improvement—has been made. By and large, as many methodological approaches as possible have been used, but each has been used only once.<sup>2</sup>

Emphasis was laid upon the close relationship between broad statistical studies, based on mass data, and small detailed case studies placed in the frame of reference provided by the statistical data. We have attempted to show that both kinds of studies are indispensable and are ultimately intertwined. There was one limit, however, beyond which effort could not go. Anyone who knows what large sums of money are necessary for a single piece of statistical mass research will be surprised at the amount of data presented here. Only through the generosity of many agencies, especially the American Institute of Public Opinion, the Book-of-the-Month Club, the Psychological Corporation, the major broadcasting companies, could the enterprise be undertaken at all. The procedure consisted very often in re-analyzing existing studies for our purposes or in sharing the expenses, labor, and findings of other studies already in progress. Then, when the general tie-ups of the major variables were clear, special small case studies were made for a final analysis at crucial points. Theoretically these case studies should

<sup>2</sup> A new Rockefeller Foundation grant is now used to study the effects of radio and the printed page in the Presidential Campaign of 1940.

have been made with a subgroup of the same people who were included in the greater count, but for financial reasons this was not often possible, and the inconsistency sometimes proved quite a handicap.<sup>3</sup> It is clear, on the other hand, that just this kind of co-operation will prove more and more necessary in radio research.

Originally this introduction ended on an apologetic note. Until quite recently social psychologists were interested primarily in problems of propaganda and as the greater part of this book does not deal with the effect of radio we felt impelled to explain why any large-scale research program in the field of communications has to start by studying who listens to what and why. The events of the last few months, however, have been so decisive in themselves that the way they were presented became of minor importance. The role of radio as a tool of propaganda has receded to the background because not what to do but how to do it has become the problem of the day.

By the grace of history this country has been left time to solve some of the problems which have precipitated chaos

<sup>3</sup> It should be stressed that the re-analysis of a study made by another agency is not at all equivalent to quoting a published result. Such an analysis may be as laborious as the original, and may be more difficult because the material has been collected for other purposes. Refined means of analysis, which would have been unnecessary if the field work had been done for the immediate problem in question, must sometimes be used. The difference is merely financial, inasmuch as the field work does not have to be paid for again. Wherever such a re-analysis is reported here, therefore, the reader will have to dissociate the responsibility for the field work, which lies with the co-operating agency, from the responsibility for the analysis and interpretation, which rests with the Office of Radio Research. In the one or two cases where the final results of another agency have been used directly, these results are acknowledged in the text.

in Europe. We ought to use this time to understand what social forces are operating and to adapt our thinking and our way of life to a greatly changed situation. The best service will be rendered by those who are able to anticipate the problems of the next months and to bring them to our attention so that we are not taken by surprise. We can expect moments of aggressive panic as well as of passive discouragement. Major economic dislocations may happen for which governmental help will be asked as fervently as it might be rejected in other phases of increased planning of our economic resources. If these problems are discussed in time before the different interest groups make emotional appeals for a last-minute solution this country may be the only one to accept the impending social changes peacefully and with the preservation of individual liberties. Those who correctly anticipate the decisions which each single individual will have to make will naturally turn to the radio to discuss the different possibilities in time and facilitate rational behavior. The advantages and limitations of using the radio for the communication of ideas has thus become especially timely since this manuscript was finished.

## Contents

	PAGE
<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
I. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST	
A RECONNAISSANCE OF THE PROBLEM	3
<i>The Idea of Serious Listening; Radio Programs Comparable to Print; Putting the Question in Terms of Research</i>	
RADIO LISTENING ON DIFFERENT CULTURAL LEVELS	15
<i>Frequency of Listening; Serious Listening and the Cultural Level (Inferential Evidence); Serious Listening and Cultural Level (Direct Evidence); Level of Reading and Serious Listening; Summary and Interpretation</i>	
II. WHY DO PEOPLE LIKE A PROGRAM?	
PROGRAMS WITH WIDE POPULAR APPEAL	48
<i>The Audience for Service Programs; Strange Sources to Learn From</i>	
HOW TO STUDY THE APPEAL OF PROGRAMS	55
<i>The Analysis of Content; The Listeners' Characteristics; Gratification Studies</i>	
PROFESSOR QUIZ—A GRATIFICATION STUDY	64
<i>The Source of Information; The Diversified Appeal of the Quiz Program: The Competitive Appeal, The Edu-</i>	



*cational Appeal, The Self-rating Appeal, The Sporting Appeal; The Quiz Listener; A Challenge to Research*

### III. THE FUTURE OF SERIOUS LISTENING

GIVING TO THOSE WHO HAVE	94
<i>Is Serious Broadcasting Enough?; Age and Cultural Background; The Story of Two Rural Counties; The Little Fellow Likes the Little Station</i>	
TWO FACILITATING FACTORS IN SERIOUS LISTENING	105
<i>What Is a Frame of Reference?; Devotion to a Cause and Serious Listening; Knowledge of Speakers as Frame of Reference; Institutional Promotion</i>	
AUDIENCE BUILDING	118
<i>The Idea of Audience Building; Techniques of Audience Building; The Ulterior Social Value of Audience Building</i>	

### IV. TO READ OR NOT TO READ

THE PLACE OF READING SKILL IN RADIO LISTENING	133
<i>How Radio Selects Its Audiences; Medium Preference and Cultural Level; The Experience of Effective Communication: A Psychological Interpretation</i>	
INTEREST AND LISTENING	145
<i>The Kind of Communication; The Joint Role of Reading Skill and Interest</i>	
A PROCEDURE FOR COMPARING RADIO AND PRINT IN THEIR MEANINGS TO PEOPLE	154
<i>The Technique of Comparative Case Studies; The Concept of a Standard of Reading; The Four Steps in a Typical Comparative Study (Home-economics Advice)</i>	

CONTENTS

xxi  
PAGE

SOME ADDITIONAL REASONS WHY PEOPLE PREFER ONE  
MEDIUM TO ANOTHER 170

*Other People Around—Other Things to Do; A Second  
Chance; The "Directive" Role of Radio; Four Other  
Reasons for Medium Preferences; Does "Radio-  
mindedness" Exist?*

THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RADIO 183

*The Limited Supply of Programs; The Limited Avail-  
ability of the Listener; How Accessibility Determines  
Audience Stratification*

A CHALLENGE TO THE MAN OF ACTION 194

*They Do What They Prefer; Research Analysis and  
Constructive Action*

V. RADIO AND THE PRINTED PAGE AS SOURCES  
OF NEWS

THE SCOPE OF NEWS BROADCASTS 200

*One Week's News Programs; The Popularity of News  
Programs; The Content of News Programs and of  
Newspapers*

PREFERENCE FOR THE RADIO OR FOR THE NEWSPAPER AS  
A NEWS SOURCE 214

*A Preliminary Speculation; Medium Preferences of  
Various Population Groups*

MEDIUM PREFERENCE AND ACTUAL CONSUMPTION OF  
NEWS 222

*How Many People Read and Listen to the News?;  
People Do What They Prefer; The Universal Appeal  
of News Programs*

	PAGE
SOME FURTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RADIO-NEWS LISTENING AUDIENCE	235
<i>Two Types of Radio-news Listeners; Inferential Evidence: The News Commentator's Audience; A Method of Testing the Intensity of News Interest; News Interest Among Young People</i>	
THE NEW COHORTS OF NEWS CONSUMERS	254
VI. "FOR FURTHER DETAILS . . ."	
THE EFFECTS OF THE RADIO UPON NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION	258
<i>The Importance of Radio in a Time of Crisis; Reading in Spite of Listening; The Changing Function of the Newspaper; The Long-term Trend in Newspaper Circulation; Newspaper Advertising and the Press-radio Conflict</i>	
EFFORTS TO PROMOTE READING THROUGH BROADCASTING	277
<i>Radio Book Programs; The Effect of Book Programs on Book Sales and Library Circulation</i>	
READING UNDERTAKEN AS A RESULT OF RADIO LISTENING	302
<i>A Survey and Its Method; What Factors Determine Follow-up Reading?; The Reading Pull of Various Radio Programs; Why Do People Follow Up Radio Programs by Reading?; A Practical Conclusion</i>	
THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF RADIO	329
<i>Appendices</i>	335
<i>List of Tables</i>	341
<i>List of Charts</i>	347
<i>Index</i>	349

RADIO  
and the  
PRINTED PAGE



# I. *The Importance of Being Earnest*

## A RECONNAISSANCE OF THE PROBLEM

### *The Idea of Serious Listening*

IF a group of librarians and teachers were asked why they think reading an important pursuit, many of them might view the question as sacrilegious and too irreverent to merit reply; others might quote some of the old saws, such as "Reading maketh a full man," or "Books are the repositories of the wisdom of the ages." And many undoubtedly would be unable to offer a very clear-cut answer. But most of them would probably, if they tried hard to express what they thought about the question, give primacy to something that might be called "seriousness" in reading.

Reading is a way of passing leisure time, and is generally considered more civilized than gambling or fighting. It helps to impart skills useful in getting ahead in the world, and gives other information of a specific character. But these considerations probably do not strike directly at what people generally have in mind when they speak of the social and cultural importance of reading "serious" books. Such reading involves going to the root of things, becoming a "richer" person, being able to see the world more fully than other, less well-read people. It is this that seems to distinguish the

reader of "serious" books in the minds of those who are charged with keeping the habit of reading alive.

It would be worth while to follow up the role this notion of seriousness has played in different phases of history. The Protestant, at the time of the Reformation, felt that the Catholic did not take religion seriously enough, just as the radical of today despises the liberal for not being serious enough about political matters. Overtly or tacitly, the notion of seriousness has always been a flag waved by reformers, and the attraction of fascism for some people stems from it. For another last example, wherever a "youth movement" has occurred, as in Russia at the beginning of the present century, or in Central Europe after the World War, the younger generation prided itself on taking matters more seriously than did its elders.

There are many ways to communicate serious ideas: among others, the sermon, the lecture, the public forum, the private discussion. But in the literate Western World reading has come to occupy a place of peculiar primacy and virtue in the world of ideas. Print is the lever, we have come to feel, that can move the world. Whatever other media of communication we may use, we tend to fall back upon reading as the inescapably necessary supplement.

It can easily be explained why reading holds such a position in serious communication. Subject matters above a certain degree of difficulty can be mastered only by studying a printed text. Emotion, which is so likely to color judgment, can best be overcome if one returns repeatedly to the cold

explicitness with which the printed page can present all arguments on both sides. One can imagine propaganda, but not disinterested study, without print.

This close kinship between print and attention to serious subject matter has great social shortcomings. Students of reading tell us that a considerable part of the public has not developed sufficient reading skill, nor enough of a habit of reading, ever to read a text on a serious subject. This public failing is a barrier to the communication of serious subject matter. No wonder, then, that radio was hailed as a potentially powerful medium for improvement: here at last was a tool of communication whose use did not require a special skill on the part of the recipient. One of the main approaches to a study of the relationship between radio and the printed page must be, therefore, an inquiry as to whether radio has thus far fulfilled this hope. The question may be formulated something like this: *To what extent has radio increased, or can radio increase, the scope of serious responses beyond the scope so far achieved by print?*

The answer is closely related to the existence of radio programs which convey information of the detached, objective nature which seems characteristic of objects of serious attention. The scope of serious responses in the community would be increased by radio if the number of people who read or listen to serious subject matter were greater than the number who read such material before radio entered the scene. The first step in this investigation can thus be reframed in the following way: Do we find that people who



are not likely to read "for information," and who are not in touch with serious subject matter through the medium of print, listen to "serious" programs?

The question so put is an acid test of radio's capacity as a new means for the communication of ideas. If it can be answered in the affirmative, it would be proved that radio is fulfilling the most optimistic cultural hopes stimulated by its appearance. If the answer is negative, the issue is still not closed. For (a) radio may increase serious responses in the future, when it is more integrated with the institutional pattern of society; or (b) radio has substitute functions which are of equal importance with the increase of serious responses. We shall take up these possibilities after the main question has been answered.

### *Radio Programs Comparable to Print*

In a typical week during April 1938 the broadcasting time of all the 700-odd stations in the United States was distributed as shown in Chart 1 on page 7.<sup>1</sup> The 15.3 per cent of the time given to "all other talk programs" is obviously of special interest to us. Since the F.C.C. compilation does not detail the contents of these programs, a special study was made of the programs broadcast by all radio stations in Buffalo, New York, during a typical week, and "talk programs" were classified in detail. The original survey was made by the Psychological Corporation. These offerings (other than news, drama, and farm programs) occupied 12 per cent of total

<sup>1</sup> From a survey made by the Federal Communications Commission.

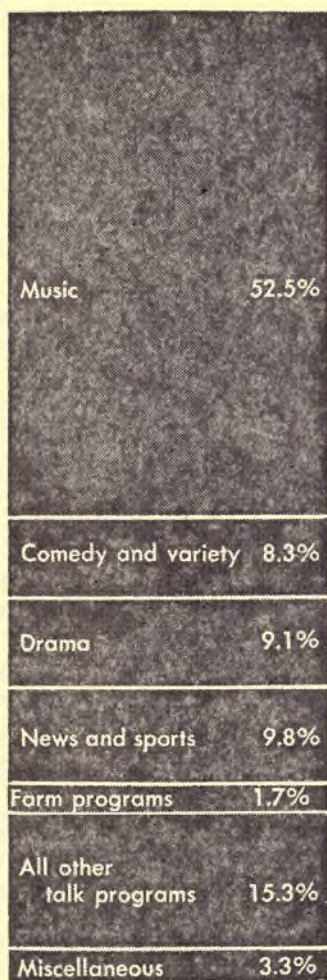


CHART I.—DISTRIBUTION OF PROGRAMS ON ALL AMERICAN STATIONS DURING ONE TYPICAL WEEK

broadcasting time in Buffalo, less than the 15 per cent previously found for all American stations. The content is indicated in Chart 2, the amount of time devoted to each category being given as a percentage of the total time allotted to all "talk programs."

The first block of programs singled out by spacing in this chart is referred to when the term "serious" programs is used in this chapter. Examples of what we mean by "serious" programs are: the University of Chicago Round Table; America's Town Meeting of the Air; the programs put on by the Smithsonian Institution, such as "The World is Yours"; the programs broadcast by the Federal Radio Project, such as "Men Against Death"; book programs, such as the "Northwestern Bookshelf"; the programs of Station WNYC explaining the work of the government of the City of New York; the "American School of the Air"; and dramatizations of American history, such as those put on by the Federal Office of Education, including, for example, "Americans All—Immigrants All."<sup>2</sup>

To reserve the term "serious" programs for this type of broadcast needs some defense. Why do we exclude programs which form the larger part of Chart 2? Interest in broadcasts on home economics or personal improvement or hobbies derives, it seems to us, from a felt personal need to supplement one's own knowledge or skill, usually at some point of immediate need and inadequacy, whereas the interest in

<sup>2</sup> Numerous other examples of this type of program can be found in *Listen and Learn*, by Frank Ernest Hill, published by the American Association for Adult Education, New York, 1937.

Public affairs	11.9%
Straight education	8.5%
General knowledge	6.2%
Dramatized true events	3.6%
Miscellaneous popular knowledge	8.8%
Home economics	21.5%
Self-improvement	10.1%
Hobbies and special interests	7.3%
Religion	22.1%

CHART 2.—DISTRIBUTION OF TOPICS IN SPEAKING PROGRAMS (EXCEPT NEWS, DRAMA, AND FARM PROGRAMS)

what we here call "serious programs" is more detached. Therefore the term "service programs" will be used for this second group, distinguishing them from "serious" broadcasts. For similar reasons news programs also will be segregated. They differ from service programs in that they are less keyed to specific interests; they should be distinguished from serious broadcasts because today news interest is so general that earnest endeavor cannot be attributed to anyone simply because he keeps track of current events. Later in this book it will become plain that the distinctions between serious, service, and news programs are not merely impressionistic: the corresponding audiences show basic differences.<sup>3</sup>

More difficult than this terminological issue is the question of whether we can assume that there is a perfect correspondence between serious programs and serious listening.

<sup>3</sup> This terminology is not completely satisfactory, but no better one seems available. The term "educational program" is not adequate, because it over-stresses the aspect of learning. A good program of the "Professor Quiz" type might be educational, but would not be serious in the sense of the preceding discussion. The term "intellectual program" has been suggested, but that does not adequately cover the dramatization of true events which has recently come into prominence through the efforts of governmental agencies such as the Federal Office of Education and the Federal Radio Project. Such programs are serious but not intellectual. For the most part, the terminology we have chosen seems to be the most adequate, even though it is somewhat awkward to speak of "serious" programs as different from "service" programs and "news" programs. Caution will be exercised during the course of the text to avoid misunderstanding. Sometimes it will, indeed, be advisable to use the word "serious" in a larger sense and to include service programs and news programs in one group, in contradistinction to straight entertainment. "Serious" music has recently been used to refer to "classical" music, a term which has become rather questionable. The concept of serious music, as opposed to "light" music, corresponds closely to what we mean by serious programs in other fields. Sometimes, therefore, we shall use serious musical programs as examples of serious programs when there is no other material at hand.

Our argument was that serious listening would have the same psychological function as serious reading, and if there were listeners to serious programs who did not do any serious reading, then radio would have extended the total scope of serious responses. "Serious" listening was thus identified with tuning in to serious programs. But how do we know that people do not listen to a forum program, for example, only because they like a good fight between celebrities; or listen to a dramatization of true events because they like the background music?

It is necessary, therefore, to study in more detail the gratifications people get from listening to specific serious programs. The pattern for such studies has been set in the analysis of listening to the "Professor Quiz" program, which will be reported presently. For the time being, there is only incidental evidence concerning the attitudes with which people listen to serious programs, and this evidence was obtained from two studies of listener reactions in connection with the University of Chicago Round Table and America's Town Meeting of the Air.<sup>4</sup> For the Round Table it was found that the informational content of the program is, for regular listeners, more important than other features, such as dramatic effects, personality of the speakers, etc. It seems characteristic of listeners to the Town Meeting of the Air, that they want to "acquire culture," that they take their listening very seriously, often as if for a special cause, and

<sup>4</sup> The first study was conducted by Marjorie R. Fleiss and the second by Jeanette Sayre, both staff members of the Office of Radio Research.

that they are eager to induce other people to listen. It seems, then, that serious programs are listened to in a mood similar to the one in which serious reading is done. For the time being, then, one may consider listening to serious programs a "serious response." The whole concept, however, will need elucidation in terms of actual research with readers and listeners. The following pages will clarify the matter on some points, and will present examples of possible research techniques.<sup>5</sup>

### *Putting the Question in Terms of Research*

Does serious listening occur among people who are not likely to read serious subject matter? In order to answer this question we should find people who do not read seriously and then study their listening habits. But classifying people according to their reading habits is a very laborious process.<sup>6</sup> If it were possible to use some simpler kind of information and still arrive at the results we need, our task would be much easier.

That people's reading habits are highly expressive of certain of their personal characteristics is well known from other studies. For example, the better people are educated,

<sup>5</sup> There will, however, remain a certain gap. The gratification which people get from listening should be studied in the case of different kinds of programs. It has actually been studied only for the contest type, which appears to be a transition between serious and service programs. After the method was established, other problems seemed more important for the time being, and it was not applied to other programs.

<sup>6</sup> This will become quite evident in the following section, where one example of this sort of study, conducted jointly by the Office of Radio Research and a book club, will be reported.

the more serious reading can be expected from them.<sup>7</sup> The level of their reading depends upon their reading skill as measured by psychological tests.<sup>8</sup> The neighborhood in which they live is an index of what they read.<sup>9</sup>

Attributes which we know are related to reading habits can be used as substitute indices. Suppose we want to compare the listening habits of people on different levels of reading skill, but that we have not enough information on their reading habits. Then we might, instead, compare people of different social or educational levels. Roughly, the difference in their listening would also be found if readers of different levels were compared. This is a device which has been called the rule of the *interchangeability of indices*.<sup>10</sup> The procedure has a further advantage. During the last decade, much more research has been done in the sphere of radio than in the field of reading. Many radio studies can be drawn on for our present purposes even if they do not contain information about reading habits, as long as some substitute index is included. The main data that will be encountered are: intuitive ratings made by the interviewer on the basis of his general impression of the home and the appearance of the interviewed person; occupation; rental

<sup>7</sup> Gray, William S., and Munroe, Ruth, *The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1929.

<sup>8</sup> Buswell, Guy Thomas, *How Adults Read*, Supplementary Educational Monographs Number 45, University of Chicago, August, 1937.

<sup>9</sup> Miller, Robert A., "The Relation of Reading Characteristics to Social Indexes," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLI, No. 6, May 1936, pp. 738-756.

<sup>10</sup> See Lazarsfeld, P. F., "Interchangeability of Indices in the Measurement of Economic Influences," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, February 1939, pp. 33-45.



value of the house in which the respondent lives; section of the city in which he lives, evaluated according to either the interviewer's knowledge of the community or more exact information provided by ecological studies; formal education; telephone ownership.

In order to have a terminology which makes our reports independent of the special index used in each particular study, the term "cultural level" will be used. By a measure of cultural level we mean any index which has a reasonable, positive relation to the ability and inclination of a group to pay attention to serious subject matter in print.<sup>11</sup> Observing the rule of interchangeability of indices, we shall assume that the several indices of cultural level reflect, for all practical purposes, this interest of a group in serious printed matter. Since at this stage of the investigation only very general trends will be examined, our results will not be affected by the errors implicit in this procedure.

The final formulation of our empirical test, then, reads: *Do people of low cultural level listen to serious broadcasts?* The answer will be decisive for the question of whether radio has thus far increased the scope of serious responses among people in American communities.

<sup>11</sup> It should be stressed that the term "cultural level" as used in this book is not meant to imply evaluation. The term is employed merely to cover those different indices with a generalizing terminology.

## RADIO LISTENING ON DIFFERENT CULTURAL LEVELS

*Frequency of Listening*

Before answering this question of whether serious programs are listened to by people on the lower cultural levels, it is necessary to consider how the whole issue has developed. Why should radio be expected to reach with serious subject matter people who had not been reached by print? Evidently what is behind this expectation is a feeling that radio, in general, reaches people who do not read. That assumption has never been tested systematically, but it is plausible, for radio is more accessible, in general, than books; once the radio is installed, its operation costs little; and listening supposedly does not entail the special skill or exertion required by reading. In our fourth chapter we shall explore such assumptions carefully; at the moment we are interested only in understanding the general feeling that radio is more ubiquitous than print. According to the technical analysis just presented, this first problem will have to be put in the following terms: Is the amount of radio listening correlated with cultural level in the sense that, as we go down the scale, the amount of listening increases? This, indeed, is the fact as our data show.

The material which covers the longest period is the data of the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting (C.A.B.). C.A.B. information is obtained by telephone calls, the people being asked at what times during the preceding six hours their radio sets were in use. The fact that the inquiries are

made only in cities and by telephone reduces the scope of the inquiry to the 40 per cent of the urban population who actually subscribe to telephone service. The C.A.B. ratings include also people from "D" homes—that is, people with less than approximately \$2,000 income—but since these telephone owners are unrepresentative of their income class, we have excluded them from the discussion throughout this monograph when telephone surveys are the source of our data.

Over the two-year period 1937-1938, about 300,000 calls were made by C.A.B., and the data obtained were analyzed for the Office of Radio Research Project by Mr. H. M. Beville, Chief Statistician of the National Broadcasting Company.<sup>12</sup> The three cultural levels which could be distinguished were: "A" homes, with probable incomes of more than \$5,000; "B" homes, with \$3,000 to \$5,000 incomes; and "C" homes, with incomes of probably \$2,000 to \$3,000. The distinction was made on the basis of the telephone exchange to which the home belonged.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Beville, H. M., "Social Stratification of the Radio Audience," available in mimeographed form at the Office of Radio Research.

<sup>13</sup> In the following pages figures will be repeatedly given on radio listening among different social groups. It will have to be remembered that those groups themselves differ greatly in size. Beville makes the following rough estimate:

<i>Income group</i>	<i>Per cent of total interviews</i>
A .....	6.7
B .....	13.3
C .....	26.7
D .....	53.3
Total .....	100.0

For all times of the day and for all parts of the week it was found that the number of radio sets in use actually increased with lowering cultural level. Table I covers two time periods, from noon to five and from eight to midnight, of the average weekday (Monday to Friday). These social

TABLE I.—PROPORTION OF ALL RADIO SETS IN USE AT A CERTAIN PERIOD FOR DIFFERENT CULTURAL LEVELS

<i>Cultural level</i>	<i>Time period</i>	
	<i>From noon to 5:00 P.M. (per cent)</i>	<i>From 8:00 P.M. to midnight (per cent)</i>
A (high) .....	14	30
B .....	22	36
C .....	28	40
D (low) .....	No reliable data available	

differences in amount of listening are, it was found, greater in the afternoon than during the evening.

A more detailed picture is drawn by material collected by the two major networks in a joint study and analyzed by the Office of Radio Research. Through a commercial agency an urban sample of 4,661 people was asked, during the winter of 1938-1939, how long the radio had been turned on in the home during the preceding day. The homes were selected and classified according to their rental value as established by the estimate of local experts, and the interviews made by house-to-house canvassers, so that no telephone bias affected the results. In Chart 3 these homes have been classified by rental value according to amount of listening: whether moderate (less than 2½ hours during the

day), medium (from 2½ to 10 hours), or extensive (more than 10 hours). It can be seen from this chart that the proportion of moderate listening in the highest rental group is more than twice what it is in the lowest, whereas the proportion of extensive listeners is only one-fourth.

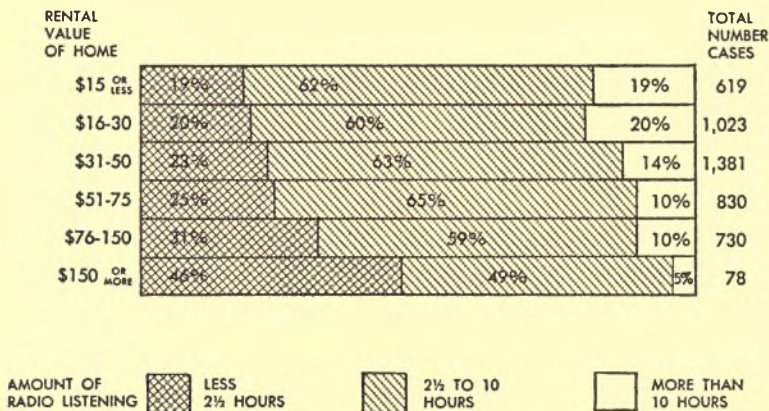


CHART 3.—AMOUNT OF LISTENING IN HOMES OF DIFFERENT RENTAL VALUE

The disadvantage of all of the studies reported so far is that the figures pertain to family listening, which probably tends to minimize the differences between cultural levels. The Office of Radio Research seized the opportunity of another study to ask people about individual listening.<sup>14</sup> In order to make the replies of men and women more comparable, this question was asked: "How much do you, personally, listen to the radio on an average winter evening?" Differences between the sexes in amount of daytime listening

<sup>14</sup> See Curtis, A., "The Reliability of a Report on Listening Habits," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, pp. 127-131, February, 1939.

were thus excluded. It is evident that the answers do not provide an exact measurement, but they are probably a good index of attitude toward radio. If groups differ strongly in this estimate, there is every reason to suppose that they really differ in amount of listening. The index of cultural level chosen in this case was amount of formal education;

TABLE 2.—AMOUNT OF RADIO LISTENING FOR EACH SEX ON DIFFERENT AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVELS <sup>a</sup>

(Proportion listening to the radio more than two hours on an average evening after 6 P.M.)

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Male listeners (per cent)</i>		<i>Female listeners (per cent)</i>	
	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and over</i>	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and over</i>
No college . . . . .	47.5	42.3	65.1	59.3
College . . . . .	44.4	40.7	48.2	41.3

<sup>a</sup> The detailed composition of the sample is reported in Appendix I A, Table 2.

because none of the other studies gave information on this point. The respondents are divided into those with and those without college education, and in order to avoid any spurious correlation the results are given (Table 2) separately for the two sexes and for people below and above the age of 40. The total number of cases is about 1,900.

It can be seen that for each sex and age group the people without college education listen more than those with college training; every figure in the first line is larger than the corresponding figure in the second line.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The difference is especially marked for women who listen more than men. In each sex and educational group the younger people listen more than the older.

An interpretation of the rather uniform results evident in all of these tables may be offered. People on the higher cultural levels probably have more diversified interests and more money to pursue them so that they spend less time listening to the radio. Owing to the commercial set-up of broadcasting in this country, furthermore, radio programs are usually designed to match the taste of the broad masses of the population, and therefore probably remain below the taste level of the upper cultural groups. Hence these groups may never have built up the listening habits which the lower cultural groups seem to have developed. It will be wise to watch for the future development of this trend. As radio becomes more and more an established institution, will the social differences in the amount of its use become more or less pronounced or remain the same? The answer may depend partly upon the future program policies of the major stations. For the moment we have to rest with the knowledge that the amount of radio listening increases as we move down the cultural scale.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> There is, however, one possible exception to the whole relationship. It is not impossible that, in the very lowest economic level, let us say in families whose homes have a rental value of less than \$15, there is again less listening to the radio. Some figures seem to indicate such a reversal of the trend, and experience with single cases would indicate such an interpretation. In very poor families people are afraid of the expense involved in having the radio on too long. Then it might be that in these poorest quarters home life is so bad that people try to be at home less. Finally, their interests might be below the standard of current broadcasting. However, as long as the fact is not safely established, it is not worth while to dwell on the factors which might support such an interpretation.

*Serious Listening and the Cultural Level*  
(*Inferential Evidence*)

It appears, then, that one popular expectation regarding radio is well justified. Undoubtedly radio is heard most by those people who are less likely to read, especially on serious subjects. But it seems that, together with this justified expectation, another idea has been accepted which does not hold up under a close scrutiny of the facts. This is the assumption that people on the lower cultural level who, as just demonstrated, listen to the radio more are also more likely to listen to serious subject matters over the air. That their behavior is quite the contrary will now appear.

People actually do less serious listening as the cultural level descends. The proof of this statement is not easily adduced. The total number of listeners to serious programs is actually so small that surveys far beyond the scope of the usual commercial check-ups are necessary in order to get reliable information. The direct evidence collected will therefore be preceded here by an analysis of inferential data.

We can show, first, that programs which can be called "lowbrow" are mainly favored by people on lower cultural levels. From a list of programs which H. M. Beville analyzed in the light of C.A.B. ratings of 1936 and 1937<sup>17</sup> we select, on the one hand, those programs which show at least twice as much listening among the "C" families as among the "A" families and, on the other hand, those programs which are listened to more on higher cultural levels. The

<sup>17</sup> See page 15 ff.



programs listed in Table 3 stand out under these circumstances. They are all programs which, in order to make the figures more reliable, are given an average rating of more than 10 per cent.

TABLE 3.—AVERAGE PROPORTION OF RADIO OWNERS LISTENING DURING WINTER SEASON ON DIFFERENT CULTURAL LEVELS

Name of program	Cultural level (per cent)			
	A (high)	B	C	D (low)
Metropolitan Opera <sup>a</sup> . . . . .	19.7	17.4	11.9	No
Ford Hour . . . . .	20.3	17.0	13.7	reli-
General Motors Symphony. . . . .	16.6	14.1	10.4	able
NBC Symphony . . . . .	10.4	9.1	7.2	data
Today's Children . . . . .	4.8	8.4	11.1	from
Amos 'n' Andy . . . . .	6.8	11.1	15.7	tele-
Lum and Abner . . . . .	5.0	7.5	10.7	phone
Major Bowes . . . . .	11.4	21.1	27.7	surveys
National Barn Dance . . . . .	4.3	9.9	14.2	
Pick and Pat . . . . .	6.3	11.2	14.5	
First Nighter . . . . .	8.0	12.9	18.0	
Gangbusters . . . . .	7.5	12.5	16.3	

<sup>a</sup> Season of rating: October 1937-April 1938. All other ratings for season of October 1936-April 1937.

As can be seen from this list, the only programs with average ratings of more than 10 per cent which are preferred by the higher cultural levels are those which broadcast more or less serious music.<sup>18</sup> It must be kept in mind,

<sup>18</sup> It might be mentioned in passing that there is probably no question pertaining to radio listening which, by and large, is so sensitive to social differences as listening to serious music. In Table 8 we shall present an example of this, and a recent study is reported from Washington, D. C., in which the question "Do you like hill-billy music?" was asked. Sixty-two per cent of the lower income groups said "Yes," as against only 29 per cent of the higher income groups. The importance of this fact will be discussed in the music publication of the Office of Radio Research.

however, that serious discussion programs and similar types of programs are not included here, because their generally small audience excludes them from this analysis. The programs, on the other hand, which are definitely preferred by people lower in the cultural scale, are those which can be characterized as of definitely bad taste.<sup>19</sup> An expert on program production gives the following description of the content of these programs:

*Today's Children*: Dramatic serial which is the story of Mother Moran and her grown sons and daughters, referred to in the script as "today's children." The family, from the upper middle class, is made up of Terry, his wife Dorothy, and her daughter Lucy; Frances, who is about to marry a widower; Bob, whose wife, Katherine, has a family skeleton which must be kept in the closet; and Eileen, whose radio career and ill-fated romance are high spots in the narrative. Mother Moran's homely wisdom is evident from episode to episode.

*Amos 'n' Andy*: Comedy dramatic serial featuring the noted black-faced team of Amos and Andy. The characters reside in Harlem, and their everyday life amongst their families and neighbors, with Amos's clear thinking and Andy's undaunted enthusiasm, form the major part of the story. All the various characters in the story are created by Freeman Gosden and Charles Cottrell—"Amos" and "Andy," respectively.

<sup>19</sup> The one exception might be *Amos 'n' Andy*. From a rough inspection of the rating of this program in previous years, the theory could be advanced that certain programs undergo a social depreciation as time goes on. They start as a novelty and, at that moment, are interesting to all cultural levels. Then the upper levels slowly turn to other programs, and the first program slips down to the lower levels. Major Bowes's program seems to have had a similar destiny. Its present interest for the lower cultural levels is probably connected with its definitely local appeal, a point which will be discussed further on page 102 ff.

*First Nighter*: Series of supposed "First Night" openings at the Little Theatre off Times Square. Each week a new original radio play is presented, using strictly radio actors.

*Lum 'n' Abner*: Comedy dramatic series laid in the backwoods town of Pine Ridge. The story revolves around the everyday life of the two rural characters, Lum and Abner.

*Major Bowes*: Amateur Hour, with contestants from various parts of the United States. Major Bowes acts as Master of Ceremonies and presents the talent, which ranges from "hog callers" to grand opera aspirants. The winners are chosen by a vote sent in by the listening audience.

*Pick and Pat*: Black-faced comedians in a program of minstrel-type comedy, with an orchestra under the direction of Benny Krueger, and the Yellow Jacket Quartet.

*National Barn Dance*: Presenting the picture of a real rural Barn Dance, with comedy spots, quartet, and soloists included. Pat Barrett takes the part of Uncle Ezra, lovable old ringleader of the fun at the barn dance, and the Hoosier Hot Shots supply the music.

*Gangbusters*: Dramatization of cases from actual police records. The stories are typical G-Man-type adventure, packed with suspense and excitement. At the close of each program, descriptions of wanted criminals are given to the radio audience. Norman Schwarzkopf, former head of the New Jersey State Police, acts as Moderator on the program.

Although the figures of Table 4 are not final proof, they support the generalization that the lower cultural groups, who are so fond of programs lacking any serious aspect, would not be likely to care markedly for serious broadcasts. Numerous other studies of program preferences give the same results as those implied in the table. Over and over again in these studies the same type of program, very often exactly the same program, shows the same cultural stratifica-

tion. Attention is here largely confined to this C.A.B. rating table because it is the first time that C.A.B. ratings have been analyzed from this angle; whereas other available studies on program preferences are already published and can be consulted directly.<sup>20</sup>

So much for inferences from non-serious programs. Important conclusions can also be drawn from programs which, owing to their special character, permit a reliable statistical analysis. From time to time radio speeches of great political importance are broadcast and, in some cases, the American Institute of Public Opinion, on the day following the speech, has conducted a poll to discover who listened. These programs are a severe test of our thesis, because obviously many people might listen—even if they generally do not listen to serious programs—just because of the sensational

<sup>20</sup> A bibliography which includes information as to where these preference studies can be found has been published by the Office of Radio Research in the February, 1939, issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. It should be observed in passing that program preferences are very sensitive to the cultural level of the respondents. One of the surveys mentioned in this bibliography points to five outstanding current comedy and variety programs specified as favorites. It is possible to divide these programs into two more sophisticated ones, namely Jack Benny and Charlie McCarthy, as compared to three less sophisticated ones—Major Bowes, Joe Penner, and Eddie Cantor. In spite of the small number of cases, the relationship between preference and cultural level comes out very clearly if we take as the index of cultural level those occupations which are clear-cut in their educational requirements—professionals and executives compared to factory and farm laborers. The following table shows the number of people on two occupational levels who prefer one of the two groups of programs:

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Preferred variety programs</i>	
	<i>More sophisticated</i>	<i>Less sophisticated</i>
Professional and executive . . . . .	64	26
Factory and farm labor . . . . .	9	38

character of the case. If, then, the listeners to these programs show a marked slant toward the higher cultural levels, such results could be considered a strong inferential argument.

The first case in question is the speech which Senator Black gave in the fall of 1937 after his return from Europe and before he was seated in the Supreme Court. Table 4 shows the relationship between listening and cultural level for those in the sample who own radios. The index of cultural level here is the intuitive rating of socio-economic status.<sup>21</sup>

TABLE 4.—PROPORTION OF LISTENERS ON DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVELS WHO HEARD SENATOR BLACK'S RADIO SPEECH

<i>Socio-economic status</i>	<i>Per cent listening</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
High . . . . .	62	366
Upper middle . . . . .	49	934
Lower middle . . . . .	42	427
Low . . . . .	35	452

It must be borne in mind that in the case of political speeches two factors probably play a role. One is that people of lower cultural level, as we have already demonstrated, are less concerned with serious subject matter. It is also certainly significant that the lower cultural levels are less

<sup>21</sup> In passing, it is worth noting that in all tables it turns out uniformly that workers on relief listen to political speeches more than employed ones. That might be due either to the fact that unemployed people have more time to listen, or to the close relationship of their economic destiny to political events. A detailed discussion of the audience to Mr. Justice Black's speech has been published in the February, 1939, issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, "The Change of Opinion During a Political Discussion."

likely to know about such speeches, which are announced mainly through newspapers. This point suggests a very neat research possibility. A speech of great national significance, obviously, has a large audience of about one-third or more of all radio owners, especially if it is broadcast during the evening. Therefore it would be reasonable to ask those who didn't listen whether it was because they did not know about the speech, or because they were not interested, or because they were unable to listen at the time of the broadcast. The separation of these three possibilities is part of the important task of studying non-listening.

One might feel that the case of Senator Black was, after all, not one of great importance to people on the lower cultural levels. It will therefore be the more surprising to learn that even when President Roosevelt has broadcasted the same relationship between listening and cultural level prevailed. In April, 1938, President Roosevelt gave a fire-side chat on government spending, and again the Institute of Public Opinion checked whether a representative cross section of people listened to it.<sup>22</sup> Again there was a high relationship between listening and cultural level.

During a week in March, 1937, President Roosevelt gave two radio talks on the Supreme Court issue, and for this period again we know the number of people who listened. Questions regarding both speeches were asked at the same

<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately no question regarding radio ownership was asked. In order to avoid a spurious influence of this factor, therefore, the farmers were excluded from the tabulations, because it can be assumed that in cities and towns radio ownership is fairly general.

TABLE 5.—PROPORTION OF URBAN LISTENERS TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT ON DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVELS

<i>Socio-economic status</i>	<i>Per cent listening</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
High .....	43	187
Upper middle .....	38	433
Lower middle .....	35	210
Low .....	28	255

time. Only three cultural levels are distinguished in the tabulation now available. The best way to present the result is to say that on the high level the number of speeches listened to per person is .9, on the middle level .8, and on the low level .7.

These results are especially important because we know from election figures that President Roosevelt's following is much greater on lower than on higher cultural levels.<sup>23</sup> If, nevertheless, the amount of listening to his radio speeches goes inversely to this trend, it seems quite evident that what is at stake here is the likelihood that people on the lower levels will listen to serious broadcasts.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> A summary of the major public opinion polls can now be found in each issue of *The Public Opinion Quarterly* (Princeton, N. J.).

<sup>24</sup> This result is a characteristic example of practical implications of research which cannot be foreseen. After this part of the study was completed, a radio debate between Professor T. V. Smith and Senator Taft was broadcast, in which they discussed the New Deal, Smith pro and Taft con. A poll taken by the American Institute of Public Opinion showed that the great majority of the listeners were on the side of Taft, which might be taken as an indication of either how the population feels or how effective the two speakers were. Actually it is most likely that it reflects the composition of the radio audience listening to this kind of broadcast: the higher cultural levels which would be for Taft to begin with are much more likely to listen.

*Serious Listening and Cultural Level (Direct Evidence)*

We have mentioned how difficult it is to get data pertaining directly to regular, periodic broadcasts of a serious nature. It is therefore very fortunate that there was available a survey the field data of which lent themselves to a special re-analysis from our point of view. The study was conducted in Buffalo by the owners of a Buffalo newspaper, who also own one of the major Buffalo stations. The canvass was made by face-to-face interviews, so that all social strata of the city could be sounded and thus one of the serious faults of telephone surveys would be eliminated. A printed roster of all the programs broadcast in the city during the preceding six hours was shown to each respondent, and he was requested to check those programs to which his radio had been tuned. Every six hours a new but comparable sample of 240 respondents was interviewed. As a rough criterion of cultural level, telephone ownership was used, so that the whole sample breaks down into two approximately equal groups of telephone and non-telephone homes. This division is especially favorable because the results permit inferences as to the mistakes frequently made when the results of telephone surveys are considered representative of the whole population.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The survey was conducted by the Psychological Corporation, and we are indebted to its director, Dr. Henry Link, and to the sponsors of the survey for permission to re-analyze the data. The original tabulation was made without distinction between telephone and non-telephone homes; the retabulation and analysis from this aspect was done by the Office of Radio Research under the supervision of Hazel Gaudet, a staff member.



In consultation with Buffalo broadcasters the whole list of programs broadcast during one week was scrutinized in order to single out all those which would fall within our definition of serious programs. The following five groups were distinguished:

- A. *Public Affairs*: This group included both forum-type programs, such as "America's Town Meeting of the Air" and the "People's Platform," and individual talks on politics, economics, and other matters of current interest.
- B. *General Knowledge*: This category included talks on science, art, philosophy, and the like, and certain literary and professional club programs.
- C. *Straight Education*: This group included only programs which were intended to be of a purely instructive nature, such as the "American School of the Air." The distinction between this group and others is very arbitrary, since most of the programs studied are of a more or less "educational" nature.
- D. *Dramatized True Events*: These are programs of an historical and descriptive nature. They include such well-known programs as "Americans All—Immigrants All" and the Smithsonian Institute's program, "The World Is Yours." It is a mixed group as far as subject matter is concerned, but is unified by the common technique of presentation.
- E. *Semi-serious Programs*: This is a miscellaneous group of programs of a semi-popular nature, variously entitled "Timely Topics," "The Fact Finder," "Don't You Believe It," etc., which titles are somewhat self-explanatory.

It might first be interesting to know how often such programs are on the air. Chart 4 shows the number of hours during which these different types of programs were broadcast in one week on Buffalo stations.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> In Chart 2 this information was used in another context.

In order to appraise these figures correctly, it should be kept in mind that the roster covered five stations for 17 hours a day. Hence there is a total of 595 hours to which these figures have to be related, and it appears that the offerings of this kind of serious program are few.<sup>27</sup> The total time given to the five groups is 26 hours, and this is only 4.4 per cent of the stations' total broadcasting time.

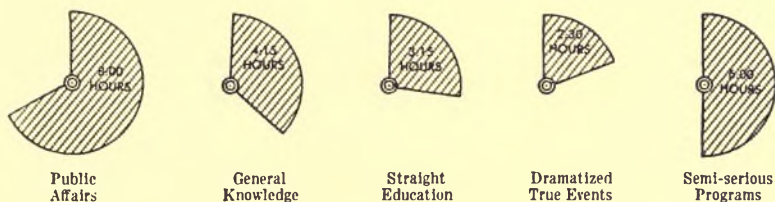


CHART 4.—TIME GIVEN TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF SERIOUS PROGRAMS DURING A TYPICAL WEEK ON ALL BUFFALO STATIONS

Now we want to compare differences between telephone and non-telephone homes in regard to serious listening. The amount of such listening is small, indeed. The best way to describe it is to give the amount of time 100 radios are tuned in during one week to any of the five groups of programs. Such information has to be interpreted against the total amount of listening by the same group of people. For general orientation, it is best to remember that a radio in a telephone home in Buffalo is tuned in, on the average, less than three hours a day (2 hours 52 minutes) or a little more than 20 hours a week, and in a non-telephone home, less than 3½ hours a day (3 hours 20 minutes) or approxi-

<sup>27</sup> These data were collected during a typical week of March, 1939.

mately 23½ hours a week.<sup>28</sup> One hundred telephone people listened 2,006 hours, and 100 non-telephone people 2,333 hours, a week.

This method of computation being kept well in mind, the net result of the analysis can then be summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6.—AMOUNT OF LISTENING TO SERIOUS PROGRAMS IN TELEPHONE AND NON-TELEPHONE BUFFALO HOMES  
(Hours and minutes a week per 100 homes)

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Type of home</i>		<i>Total</i> (hours: minutes)
	<i>Telephone</i> (hours: minutes)	<i>Non-telephone</i> (hours: minutes)	
General knowledge . . . . .	3:20	0:44	1:02
Public affairs . . . . .	7:39	2:59	5:09
Straight education . . . . .	7:08	4:49	5:75
Dramatized true events . . .	2:06	1:34	1:80
Semi-serious programs . . . .	0:54	1:37	1:06
Total for five types . . .	20:39	10:63	15:52

The program groups are arranged in the order of greatest relative difference between the telephone and non-telephone groups rather than in the order of total amount of

<sup>28</sup> These averages are based on all persons interviewed, whether or not their sets were turned on during the day. It is also common procedure to calculate average listening for a group only on the basis of sets which were turned on. Calculated in this manner, average listening for this group is approximately 6 hours a day, a figure which compares favorably with other sources. The figure of 3 hours' listening per day mentioned above is low compared with reliable national figures for 1938: 4 hours 18 minutes average listening per day in all homes. This may be accounted for most probably by the fact that the Buffalo study asked subjects how much listening they did to specific programs, whereas these national figures are based on sheer estimates of the amount of time the set was turned on in each home. The subjects were more likely to minimize the time when asked to cite the specific programs they heard.

listening. The results corroborate sharply and directly our main thesis regarding the decrease of serious listening on lower cultural levels. The most marked difference between the two levels occurs with programs on general knowledge, which are more than seven times as popular in telephone as in non-telephone homes. The difference in regard to programs on public affairs is not so great, but that is due to the fact that here a number of programs are included which approach the commentator type, as, for instance, "What Is New in the Capital."

When the discussion programs, such as "America's Town Meeting of the Air" and the "People's Platform," are isolated, the differences between the two groups of homes seem to be as great as in the case of programs on general knowledge, but the figures are too small to permit a special tabulation. When we consider programs of the straight educational type, it must be kept in mind that they are directed chiefly toward children, and that the non-telephone homes probably have more children. Furthermore, it is known that adults frequently listen to educational programs, and since that is more likely to be the case in non-telephone homes, these two factors may account for the relatively good showing of these programs in non-telephone homes. The difference in amount of listening between telephone and non-telephone homes decreases further when one comes to dramatizations such as "The World Is Yours." Here evidently the form of presentation makes serious content more acceptable to persons on the lower cultural level. It is, however, quite

important to realize that even with those programs which are ostensibly directed toward listeners of the lower level, the difference still exists.<sup>29</sup> The only group of serious programs which are heard more in non-telephone homes are those semi-serious programs which dramatize curious or unusual facts. This group hardly belongs in the present context, and discussion of it will be reserved for the next chapter.

Although the weight of this discussion lies with the difference between telephone and non-telephone homes, it is wise at this point to stress another implication of Table 7, which to our knowledge presents for the first time precise information on public listening to serious programs. The preceding data can be recalculated for weekly listening per radio in the following way: One hundred homes listen to serious programs 15 hours 52 minutes, or 952 minutes, per week. One radio, therefore, is tuned in to serious broadcasts

<sup>29</sup> There is some evidence available on the audience of individual serious programs from the ratings collected by the C.A.B. (see text above). But as their source is telephone calls, the evidence is quite unrepresentative for the lower-income classes, as has been pointed out. Still, a special tabulation done for the Office of Radio Research on two educational programs of the Columbia Broadcasting System might be worth mentioning. The "People's Platform" is a free discussion program, broadcast on Sunday night; "Americans All—Immigrants All" is an historical dramatization broadcast on Sunday afternoon.

	<i>A &amp; B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
"People's Platform" . . . . .	3.1	2.7	No reli-
"Americans All—Immigrants All" . . . . .	1.5	1.1	able data

The figures cover the period from January 4 to May 9, 1939. They show less listening in the C group than in the A & B group. It should be noticed that the dramatization of a serious topic is no less sensitive to social differences than the discussion type of serious program.

an average of 9.5 minutes a week—excluding, as we have explained, serious music, news, and service programs. The radio in a telephone home is tuned in to serious broadcasts an average of 12.4 minutes a week; in a non-telephone home, 6.7 minutes a week.<sup>30</sup>

### *Level of Reading and Serious Listening*

One theoretically possible approach to our task would be peculiarly good for our purposes. If people were classified according to the amount of serious reading they do, and if an accurate check-up of their listening habits were then made, direct evidence would be available on the extent to which people who do not read serious subject matter actually get it over the air. The Office of Radio Research participated in a study which approximated this approach. In the fall of 1937 the Book-of-the-Month Club set out to gather, by means of interviews, considerable information on the reading and radio preferences of its members, and the Office of Radio Research was able to add to the list, in advance, a number of questions.

The Book-of-the-Month Club serves over 250,000 people throughout the country, who subscribe to the informational service of the club and pledge themselves to buy a

<sup>30</sup> As this book goes to press, there is being made by the Office of Radio Research a study which gives characteristic figures on the social stratification of the audience to the Child Guidance Program put on by the State University of Iowa. Since we know that there could be hardly any listening in non-telephone homes, a random sample restricted to 600 telephone subscribers was interviewed. Boyd McCandless, who is in charge of the study, reports 7.5 per cent listening among women with at least high-school graduation and 3.8 per cent listening among women who did not graduate from high school.

minimum of four books through the organization. Each month the Club selects the "book of the month," which is bought by a great proportion of its members although they are not bound to this selection and are free to choose any book they please. It can be assumed that the Book-of-the-Month Club members represent a characteristic medium group of America's readers. The top group of professional readers are not likely to belong to the Club, although a great proportion of the members are professional and semi-professional people. On the lower cultural levels only a very select group comprising the more interested readers would belong. There seem to be sociological, psychological, and economic factors that are decisive in moving one to join the Club. On the one hand, those people who have less adequate retail book outlets in their community would be likely to avail themselves of this mail-order opportunity. On the other hand, those who lack a certain guidance and direction in their reading might be glad to learn from the Club's reviews what the right thing to read is at the moment. As book buyers, furthermore, these people would be above the average economic level of American readers, inasmuch as they do not rely completely upon free or inexpensive circulating-library services. For these reasons the Book-of-the-Month Club membership is certainly not representative of American readers. It might be said that, as far as cultural level goes, the range of this sample is narrow, and whereas that reduces the chance for generalization, it

makes any relation we might find between level of reading and level of listening especially significant. Altogether, in view of the expense involved in such a survey if undertaken *de novo*, it seemed advisable to accept the disadvantages of the selection of the sample for the sake of getting some general information before a more representative survey was undertaken.

The content of the 2,500 personal interviews made by the organization was submitted to a thorough scrutiny.<sup>31</sup> Among the questions asked of Club subscribers was this: "What radio programs do you usually listen to in the course of a week?" Now, as already mentioned, this question is likely to ignore serious programs in the narrow sense of forums, talks, and so on. In order to make up for this difficulty, the concept of a serious program was taken more liberally, so as to include serious music, news commentators, and news reports. A serious listener was defined for statistical purposes, then, as a listener whose favorite programs consisted, to the extent of 50 per cent or more, of either serious music, news, service programs, or serious programs in the narrower sense used in this discussion. The "light" listeners, then, were those who in the majority of cases named as their favorites comedians or serial dramas or popular dance bands. Any relationship between level of reading and level of listening, as defined, would obviously appear

<sup>31</sup> Edward Suchman, staff member of the Office of Radio Research, was in charge of this analysis. We are indebted to Mr. Theodore Malcolm, then research director of the Book-of-the-Month Club, for all the help he has given in this survey.



even more strongly if the concept of serious listening were defined more rigidly.

The vast amount of information obtained regarding the respondents' reading habits permitted an unusually refined classification of reading level which probably goes beyond anything tried so far in the nature of reading classification.<sup>32</sup> By this classification it was possible to group the Book-of-the-Month Club respondents on five reading levels:

*Level I:* This group is interested in all kinds of reading, with emphasis on the better fiction (*e.g.*, classics, character novels, historical novels, etc.) and the heavier portions of informational reading (*e.g.*, biography, science, arts, music, etc.). The reader in this group does much more reading of books than of magazines, but the magazines he does read are of more serious character. He is extremely likely to read a book-review column regularly. His favorite authors are found among those of classic or established reputation (*e.g.*, Dickens, Hugo, Shakespeare) and among the noted contemporary authors (*e.g.*, Mann, Huxley, etc.). His good taste is further indicated by the actual books read recently, and his criticisms of these books. He reads at least two books a month.

*Level II:* The reader in the second group is interested in all kinds of reading, but without the careful discrimination of Level I. While his reading usually contains the higher type of fiction, he may also read fiction of a less serious order (*e.g.*, romances, mystery stories, etc.). He is seldom a reader of classical literature, and he often complains of the heavier fare in the information group. He prefers books to magazines, but not so markedly as Level I. The chances are that he reads a book-review column occasionally, but not so regularly as the preceding group. His favorite contemporary authors are about

<sup>32</sup> The student of reading is asked to pay special attention to Appendix I B, where the technique of this classification and the checks which were made to test its internal consistency are discussed.

equally divided between established authors, such as those mentioned above, and those of a more popular nature (*e.g.*, Gibbs, Norris, Rinehart). He does not have the sophisticated critical interests of our highest group, but he is able to discuss the books he likes or dislikes with fair intelligence. He also reads at least two books a month.

*Level III:* Level III is composed of two types of readers: (1) The Level II type who, however, reads less than two books a month, and (2) the individual who, although he reads more than two books a month, limits his reading strictly to the field of fiction. The latter individual avoids all books of an informational, non-fiction character, and, as might be expected, we find that his tastes in fiction do not include the classical, historical, and character novels. His reading is about equally divided between books and magazines. Only about half of the readers in this group read book reviews regularly. The favorite authors belong, for the most part, to the good popular author group, although the reader may name one or two authors of established reputation and recognized worth.

*Level IV:* This group is composed of three types of readers: (1) The Level III reader of both fiction and information who reads less than one book a month; (2) the Level III reader of fiction only who reads less than two books a month; and (3) those readers of popular fiction (*e.g.*, romances, mystery stories, pleasant stories, etc.) who read more than two books a month. This type of reader prefers magazines to books, and for the most part, does not read a book-review column. His magazine reading is of the popular variety type. His favorite authors are almost strictly limited to the popular variety (*e.g.*, Zane Grey, Faith Baldwin, Elinor Glyn, etc.). He is almost completely lacking in critical interest, and complains of books as being "too highbrow" and "too long."

*Level V:* This group is composed of readers in Level IV who read less than one book a month, and those individuals classified as nonreaders who occasionally do read one book or more a month. This is our lowest Book-of-the-Month reading group, and it is predominantly composed of fiction readers interested in only the lower types of fiction and only very slightly in books of information. Only

a very small minority would prefer books to magazines. They are not interested in book-review columns. Their favorite authors fall almost completely in the level of writers such as Glyn and Baldwin. Like Level IV, these readers also are lacking in critical interest.

In addition to the above groups, there was a separate category for specific-interest readers of business, technical, and professional books. These readers were felt to present a special problem not related to level of reading and were omitted from our classification.

Each respondent can thus be classified according to his level of reading and, as we described before, according to whether he is a serious listener or not. It is possible, then, to tabulate the proportion of serious and non-serious listeners for each reading level (see Table 7).

TABLE 7.—PROPORTION OF SERIOUS AND NON-SERIOUS LISTENERS ON DIFFERENT READING LEVELS

<i>Type of listener</i>	<i>Reading level</i>					<i>All levels</i>
	<i>I (high)</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V (low)</i>	
Serious listeners	58.0	40.9	32.3	21.1	18.8	36.0
Non-serious listeners ..	<u>47.0</u>	<u>59.1</u>	<u>67.7</u>	<u>78.9</u>	<u>81.2</u>	<u>64.0</u>
Total per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number of cases ..	164	731	393	506	117	1911

The relationship is most marked. The lower we go in the reading scale, the fewer serious listeners do we find, and we have a distinct corroboration of our earlier finding: the decrease of serious listening with decreasing cultural level. The outstanding advantage and disadvantage of this

table should be kept in mind. As an index of cultural level, the plane of reading is used. Thus the table comes nearer to the basic phenomenon which we are studying than any other table which uses more remote indices of likelihood to engage in serious reading. On the other hand, the sample is

TABLE 8.—FAVORITE RADIO PROGRAMS OF PEOPLE ON DIFFERENT READING LEVELS

Type of favorite program	Reading level (per cent)				
	I (high)	II	III	IV	V (low)
Classical music . . . .	24.0	16.1	13.1	9.5	7.0
Popular music . . . .	13.5 <sup>1</sup>	12.8	14.5	15.6	15.1
Comedy and variety	22.3	24.3	26.0	26.5	26.8
Serial drama . . . . .	13.7	16.7	19.3	22.1	21.4
News commentators and reports . . . .	13.6	15.4	14.2	12.2	13.3
Educational programs	5.8	5.5	4.6	3.2	3.9
Quizzes . . . . .	3.4	3.4	5.2	7.1	7.8
Miscellaneous . . . .	3.7	3.8	3.1	3.8	4.7
Total per cent . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number of mentions . . . .	408	1945	1050	1313	299

selected largely from the reading section of the American population, and it certainly covers little of the whole range of variation actually present between serious reading and no reading at all. But just because of this the result is the more significant for our enterprise.

One who is more interested in the details of the relationship might prefer to study Table 8, where the frequency with which each program type is mentioned on each of the five reading levels, instead of the proportion of serious programs, is shown.

Notice from this table that it is again classical music which is most sensitive to the differences in level—even more sensitive than educational programs, which are small in number. If we were not dealing with a selected group of readers, the slope of the frequency with which educational programs are mentioned would, of course, be much greater. The serial dramas are the ones which increase most toward the lower levels.

One final word might be said about nonreaders. The Office of Radio Research has made several efforts to get a clear picture of the listening habits of those people who do not read, but several factors make the problem rather difficult. An old survey, made in 1932 by the Chicago Library School in an industrial district, was retabulated and the program preferences of people who had not read anything in the preceding two weeks were studied. By far the most outstanding difference between those and the regular readers was the great preference of nonreaders for folksongs and old-time music. Upon further scrutiny, however, it turned out that the nonreaders were mainly new immigrants who evidently did not know the English language and enjoyed the music of the old country. On the other hand, in the Book-of-the-Month Club sample it turned out that the people who had not read anything in the preceding two weeks had program preferences which were higher rather than lower than those of the lowest readers. Obviously, we find here what Waples calls "Park Avenue Nonreaders"—

people who do not read because they are so much engaged in other activities, such as parties and sports.

A third effort proved no more successful. The Macfadden Publishing Company investigated magazine reading habits in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and from the lists were selected those families who had no magazines in their homes. A staff member of the Office of Radio Research was sent to Fort Wayne to interview some of those families. He found that in many cases the absence of magazines was quite accidental and not indicative of the families' lack of interest in reading. It seems, then, that until the concept of "non-reader" is more carefully defined it is better not to try to study his listening habits.

### *Summary and Interpretation*

The material presented so far can be summarized schematically in the following way. Suppose a sample of people is classified by some adequate index as to cultural level, then as to listening habits. Let the complete bars in the schematic Chart 5 represent the total amount of radio listening, and the black portions of those bars the amount of serious listening. The evidence adduced reveals that, as we go down the cultural scale, there is more and more radio listening but less and less serious listening. It is on the opposing trends exhibited in the complete bars and their black portions that the whole issue of this chapter centers. Evidently the radio *could* increase the serious responses in the community, because

it reaches people who are less likely to read, but by and large it *does not* seem to reach them with serious content.

Why, then, was so much faith placed in radio's power to contribute to mass education? Two reasons are reiterated: radio is easier to attend to than print, and it is more accessible. It is probably correct that listening is easier than

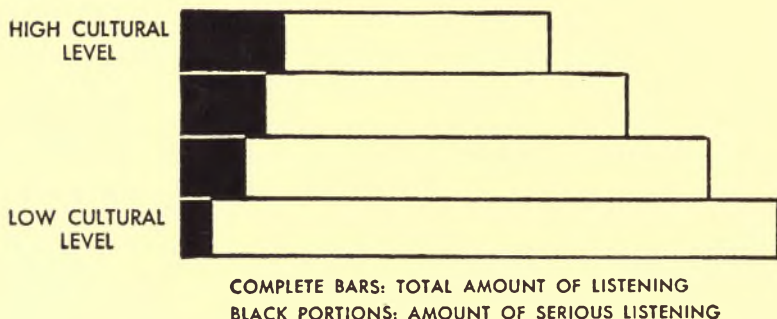


CHART 5.—GENERAL LISTENING AND SERIOUS LISTENING ON DIFFERENT CULTURAL LEVELS (SCHEMATIC)

reading, if the notion of ease is properly conceived. But this means only that if people of low cultural level were interested in serious subjects, then radio would be a more adequate way of communication for them than print. If they are not concerned with serious subjects, why should the ease of communication make them more inclined to look for a content in which they have no initial interest? This difference in ease of communication would play a role only in the case of subjects, like news, which people care about. As to accessibility, the whole contention that serious broadcasts are so much more accessible than print is probably errone-

ous.<sup>33</sup> Radio, as a whole, goes everywhere—but not serious broadcasts. They cover only a very small section of the total broadcasting schedule. They are publicized very little, and they come at fixed hours which are missed much more easily than the book or the pamphlet which, if it is not read at one time, still is on hand at another time and might later attract attention. Coupled with lack of genuine interest, such factors make serious broadcasting much more inaccessible than it seems to one who thinks only of the many hours the average radio is on during the day.

To sum up: the advantage radio has over print in regard to ease of communication does not operate as long as people are not initially interested in serious subject matter; and the alleged accessibility of radio is not even existent psychologically for people whose desire for serious communication is weak.

And yet there is one side of this whole relationship between radio and serious responses which, if properly made known, could justify all the educational hopes which have been placed in radio. It seems that, so far in American culture, little serious interest has been developed which was not rather closely tied up with print. During school days it is the textbook that carries the kind of material through which serious interests grow, and later on it is through reading that they are maintained, or through contact with people who read. If, therefore, an individual for one reason or

<sup>33</sup> See the discussion of this point in Chapter IV.



another has no contact with print, he is not likely to develop and preserve enough general interest to have any use for serious broadcasts. But this does not exclude the possibility that the situation can change and that, owing primarily to radio, new groups of people can acquire serious interests which so far have not been developed in connection with print. By substituting radio for print, a relationship like that between print and intellectual curiosity could be developed among people with less reading skill. The whole problem, then, would take another turn. The question would not be whether radio satisfies intellectual needs which so far have not been satisfied by print, but whether it could develop such needs which remained undeveloped so long as print had a monopoly of serious communication. It is not likely, of course, that radio can accomplish this just by its mere existence. Print did not raise the intellectual standard of living just because it was invented, but because it was used by educational institutions such as schools and promoted by cultural agencies such as libraries and publishers. In the same way, serious broadcasting will have to become linked with the whole plexus of educational and cultural institutions before it can contribute substantially to the enlightenment of the American community. Forces outside of radio will have to be brought into operation to provide vehicles and establish audiences for serious broadcasts. Only if such subsidiary measures are taken can we count on broadcasting as a new intellectual opportunity for those people

who are not reached by print. How large this opportunity is, and under what conditions and by what procedures it can be realized, is the question to which we turn in the next two chapters.

## II. *Why Do People Like a Program?*

### PROGRAMS WITH WIDE POPULAR APPEAL

#### *The Audience for Service Programs*

THE question asked at the beginning of the previous chapter has been answered in the negative. Most serious broadcasts, by and large, do not reach people who are not likely to read serious printed matter. There are, to be sure, many exceptions to this rule, and we shall later investigate some of them. Again, no indictment of serious broadcasting is implied, for there is no reason to depreciate its importance as supplementary communication for people on higher cultural levels who do read. But the idea that radio is at this moment a tool for mass education, for considerably increasing serious responses in the community, is groundless.

This negative finding does not mean that radio cannot be important in the communication of ideas to great portions of the population. For the scope of serious listening may increase as time goes on and people become more accustomed to serious programs, and perhaps there are other functions that radio performs which, if properly analyzed, might seem as important as any growing attention to serious topical matters. Let us explore these two possibilities, the second in this and the first in the next chapter.

The reader will remember that a special group of programs was singled out for further discussion: service programs. One type of service program deals with house-keeping matters, often giving general advice about cooking, efficient buying, and home-furnishing, while others are timed more to the moment, such as those offering early morning reports on the food markets. Another type is what might be called the "self-improvement program." The "Voice of Experience" reads letters from listeners and answers their problems over the air; on the "Goodwill Hour" people in trouble are interviewed personally, and the advice given them is picked up by the microphone. Other programs in this group are of a more general inspirational character. Akin to these psychological broadcasts are programs on how to improve one's health. Hobby programs, too, such as broadcasts to gardeners or photographers, belong to the service group.

The borderline between serious and service programs is fluid. It would be difficult, for instance, to determine how to classify a program such as "You and Your Work," in which different occupations are dramatized for the benefit of young people who are making vocational choices. The more directed toward specific problems such a series is, the more it would approach the "service" type; the more generally descriptive it is, the closer it is to the "serious" group.

The average service program is distinguished from its serious brother by two important characteristics: service programs have a larger audience, and one much more stratified

toward the lower cultural levels. Whereas an audience rating<sup>1</sup> of 1 to 3 per cent is high for one of the major educational programs, the "Voice of Experience" has a rating of about 6 per cent, the "Goodwill Hour" 10 per cent, the "Court of Human Relations" 8 per cent. And these are figures gained by telephone surveys which tend to under-rate programs, such as these service programs, with stronger appeal to non-telephone homes. No general compilation of all available figures has been made, but a tabulation obtained from the Buffalo survey, discussed on page 6, seems quite representative of this situation. (See Table 9.) The

TABLE 9.—COMPARISON OF AMOUNT OF RADIO LISTENING TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROGRAMS IN TELEPHONE AND NON-TELEPHONE HOMES  
(Hours and minutes a week per 100 homes)

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Type of home</i>		<i>Total</i> (hours: minutes)
	<i>Telephone</i> (hours: minutes)	<i>Non-telephone</i> (hours: minutes)	
Home-economics . . .	14:19	16:27	15:23
Psychological . . . . .	15:38	21:26	18:32
Religious . . . . .	10:30	20:12	15:21
Serial drama . . . . .	444:07	555:35	498:71
Quiz . . . . .	45:12	27:40	35:30
"Serious programs" . .	20:39	10:63	15:52

figures show that there is more listening to home-economics and "psychological" programs in non-telephone homes. This is a striking difference from the figures on serious listening, summarized on the bottom line of the table, which show

<sup>1</sup> An "audience rating" is the proportion of all radio sets tuned in to a certain program. It will have to be remembered that C.A.B. ratings used in the text are obtained from telephone homes only. See page 15.

that the time spent on serious listening in telephone is twice the time so spent in non-telephone homes. Note for later reference that there is markedly more listening to serial dramas in non-telephone homes, and that, as far as social stratification goes, quiz programs seem to have a transitional position between serious and service broadcasts.

In these service broadcasts we have, then, a group of programs, with content comparable to printed subject matter, which do reach large strata of the population on lower cultural levels. We can be sure offhand that many of the listeners to these programs do not read comparable subject matter, because their number is far greater than the number of serious American readers. These programs are commercially sponsored, for the most part, and thus they evade the influence and even the interest of the educator; yet through them radio conveys information to millions of people. If standards were set up for these programs, if experiments were made to determine their effect, and if they were integrated into planned adult education, they would probably be one form in which radio could supplement print in serious communication. The importance of bringing such possibilities strongly to the attention of responsible agencies is evident.

### *Strange Sources to Learn From*

If a large radio audience in the lower cultural strata is desirable, then Table 10 showed us two more types of programs worthy of attention: serial dramas and, to a certain

extent, quiz programs. They are usually classified as entertainment programs, but some listeners feel quite definitely that they learn from them. Women who are interviewed about listening to daytime serials make comments of the following kind:

Aunt Jennie's stories are good for children. There was the story about the feller who killed a man and let his brother take the blame for it. When it came to the trial he broke down and confessed. *I want my child to hear that—it teaches it to tell the truth and that it is better to do it right away.* Then there was the story about the mother who taught her son how to spy on his uncle and how the boy grew up to be selfish and how mean he was to a crippled boy. The story showed the mother was at fault and *it teaches me as a parent how to bring up my child.*

There are a lot of things in Big Sister which I could have used. [This listener had had to bring up a younger brother. When told that it was too late now, she said:] I still like to know *how I could have done it.* Also things like sickness and losing your job could always happen to you. I like to continue listening to the story *because I can learn from it.*

When you listen to Plain Bill, then you see how he helps people and I think maybe *I can use some of the things he does in my own home.* He is a good diplomat. He uses a good deal of psychology. . . . I get different advice what I could use sometimes and give to others. Sometimes I need it in my own home, for my own children and grandchildren. On the radio they have problems with children and *they do certain things and I can do it too then.*

In the Aunt Jennie story today the fellow had an argument with the uncle and he blamed it on the girl. That was wrong of him. *That is just like my boy friend.* . . . My boy friend is rather jealous. The other day I went to a dance and some of the fellows

told my boy friend—it was only a wedding. He has been so mad he has not talked to me since. Listening to the stories like that *makes me know how other girls act* and listening to the way the girl argued I know how to tell my boy friend where he can get off at.

I like family stories. If I get married I want to get an idea of *how a wife should be with a husband*. Sometimes I feel like sending Aunt Jennie some of my problems to see if she could solve them. I should like to know *how a mother should treat a child*, how much money she should allow her. [This listener has been giving all her salary to her mother.] If I marry, I will have to live with Joe's mother. I never heard a sketch with a mother-in-law, but *I would like very much to hear one—to see whether I should marry him or not*.

In the same way it has been observed that broadcasts of the "Professor Quiz" type are considered sources of information. Among 100 women who were asked, "What are the programs from which you can learn something?" 22 per cent mentioned quiz programs, and no other type of offering was rated nearly so high.<sup>2</sup> No large-scale figures for different population groups are available on this important question. But the Office of Radio Research took the opportunity of including this question in a high-school study, so that the reports of 745 students are available. These young people mentioned nearly 4,000 programs from which they thought they could learn something. These are classified in Table 10. More than one-quarter of the mentions concerned quiz programs and one-third dramatic programs of some kind, crime stories and serial dramatizations being far in the lead.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see page 123.



These are, then, programs which not only have a mass audience but, irrespective of how they are classified in official statistical reports, convey ideas and information to the

TABLE 10.—TYPES OF PROGRAMS MENTIONED BY HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS AS EDUCATIONAL

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Per cent of mentions</i>
Quiz .....	28.6
News .....	18.5
Crime drama .....	12.4
Semihistorical drama .....	10.7
Other (especially serial stories) drama .....	10.6
Popularized information .....	5.1
Serious music .....	3.0
Popular music .....	2.1
Psychological and personal-problem .....	2.4
Comedy and entertainment .....	2.2
Science and culture .....	1.2
Sports .....	1.0
Forums and speeches .....	0.9
Straight education .....	0.7
Religious .....	0.1
Hobby .....	0.1
Miscellaneous .....	0.4
Total per cent .....	100.0
Total mentions .....	4,115

listeners. They are not, however, so easy to deal with as service programs. We know the purpose of a home-economics program, and research is needed only to set good standards for it and make it as effective as possible. But what are the appeals underlying the remarkable success of serial dramatizations and quiz programs? A series of studies was outlined to answer this question. Although none is yet completed, the facts so far collected are very suggestive, as

the following tentative analysis of the "Professor Quiz" program shows. But before examining those results, let us see how the appeals of a radio program can be identified.

#### HOW TO STUDY THE APPEAL OF PROGRAMS

##### *The Analysis of Content*

There are three different ways of learning what a program means to people. Wherever possible all three should be used simultaneously.

One way is to start from an analysis of the *program content*. This procedure permits certain inferences concerning what listeners will get out of the content, or at least it precludes a number of possibilities. One would certainly not suppose that people listen to talks on the history of Greek art in order to obtain advice on how to cook food. But expert analysis of contents will discover much more subtle hints as to what the appeals and the effects of a program are likely to be. For instance, Professor L. S. Cottrell, an authority in the field of family relationships,<sup>3</sup> makes the following comments after listening to a few installments of a successful dramatic serial:

1. An outstanding impression which I get from this program is the extent to which those parts of it dealing with the hospital situation are shot through with an intense *individualistic, competitive type of relationship*. The program just shows a brilliant brain surgeon

<sup>3</sup> Burgess and Cottrell, *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage*, Prentice-Hall, New York, 1939.

whose major value in life apparently is not to be a great scientist in the sense that he has mastered the phenomena with which he is dealing, but rather that *he wants to be a great man and stand high in some prestige hierarchy. The whole emphasis seems to be on relative status and prestige, rather than the content of his occupation.* This is, of course, characteristic of our competitive individualistic society, and, perhaps one might add, is one reason for many of its contradictions and inability to solve some of its social problems. Certainly this type of attitude and orientation to one's social relationships leads to individuation and fragmentation and overemphasis on individual achievement, rather than in the direction of satisfaction in collective achievements and mutual creative activity. If the latter is a desirable goal, then from an educational point of view this attitude or role pattern is a negative value. It is interesting to me that the program shows no inclination to question the value of this attitude. It is regarded as highly commendable and the natural and normal attitude one should have. Such attitudes are natural and normal in our culture as it is, but from the point of view of a more socialized type of education it would not be the attitude to present as the desirable one. Of course, if you are going to present a drama about people, you have to present them acting as people act, but if you are going to use it as an educational experience, it would seem to me necessary to point out the problems imposed by overvaluing individualistic and competitive success. It would also be necessary to point out the very relevant fact that the doctor and his associates could not be the brilliant and famous brain surgeons they are but for the fact that hundreds of other men less interested in prestige, nameplates, private offices, and national or international fame than they are, have accumulated the knowledge on which famous surgeons must move.

2. Somewhat incidental to the main interests in this drama and yet interesting to the educator who is interested in patterns of social relationship is the presentation of the role of the Negro manservant. Again from the point of view of the purposes of the broadcaster this characterization serves a good function. He introduces the humor,

the clowning, and also enables the middle-class housewife to smile in a sort of superior, patronizing way at the simple, muddle-headed, childlike, but nevertheless devoted, Negro. An educator using this script or program would have to see to it that other role presentations of Negroes would *correct the stereotyped conception of the Negro* as a simpleton, or a "bad actor," or a doglike creature with unbounded devotion to his master and mistress. This depiction does not give a white child a correct conception of the attitudes and conceptions of self obtaining in the Negro servant; it is totally unrealistic.

3. There are two general points to be made about the conception of relationship in marriage which is presented in this drama. In the first place the drama carries on the Hollywood *conception of marriage as successful only when the romantic, thrilling, honeymoon type of relationship continues*. It implies that one cannot be happy in marriage when the relationships settle down from the romantic peak to something a little more stable and less exciting. From research in the field of marriage one gets the impression that this fallacious expectation of what constitutes a fundamentally happy marriage is a source of a good deal of unhappiness and maladjustment. It is also suggested in the drama that if people will just make up their minds to *hold on to those early memories* of wedding and honeymoon the *romance will never fade*. Again, from the point of view of the broadcasters, this presentation is effective because it provides the satisfaction of vicarious living through a romantic situation and re-animates the sentiments connected with our idealization in marriage. From the educator's point of view this pattern or conception of the pattern should be set over against a more objective and sober consideration of what is involved in the marital relationship.

4. It is constantly pointed out how the leading woman is convinced that the modern wife must share in her husband's interest and career if she is really to perform her function. However, nowhere is there a suggestion that a fundamental share in her husband's career would involve some appreciation of the knowledge and skill that he has to use in his profession and would involve an ability to

talk intelligently with him about some of his scientific and professional problems. The extent of her sharing as presented in the drama seems to be to back him up and encourage him in his individual striving for the dizzy heights of fame, and to shield him with some kind of mysterious woman's instinct that can sense danger to her man and, no doubt, will find a way to ward off the sinister influences which stand in the way of his final success. From an educational point of view this presentation is unsatisfactory in that it *presents a false notion of what constitutes sharing in a man's career*, and second that it presents the wife in the mysterious role of the guardian angel with some kind of mysterious power to deal with things about which her husband apparently is as naïve as a child.

Such analysis could well be made in quantitative terms. Broadcasting offers a semi-experimental situation which makes possible still another type of comparative content analysis. In tuning his radio, the listener has to make a choice among several programs being broadcast at the same time, and from his choice one sometimes can guess what these programs mean to him. During the season 1937-1938, on Tuesday from 9:00 to 9:30 P.M., there were two bands on the air—Al Pearce's Gang and Ben Bernie. These programs were very similar in content—a mixture of dance music and vaudeville jokes. At the same time the program "Sidewalk Interviews" was on; this consisted of interviews of people accosted in different parts of New York, who would tell something about themselves and their impressions of the city. In October Ben Bernie went off the air. Chart 6 shows what happened to his former audience. The size of the audience for Al Pearce's Gang immediately in-

creased markedly, whereas the audience for "Sidewalk Interviews" remained practically constant. The two band programs had, apparently, a similar appeal, and the listener

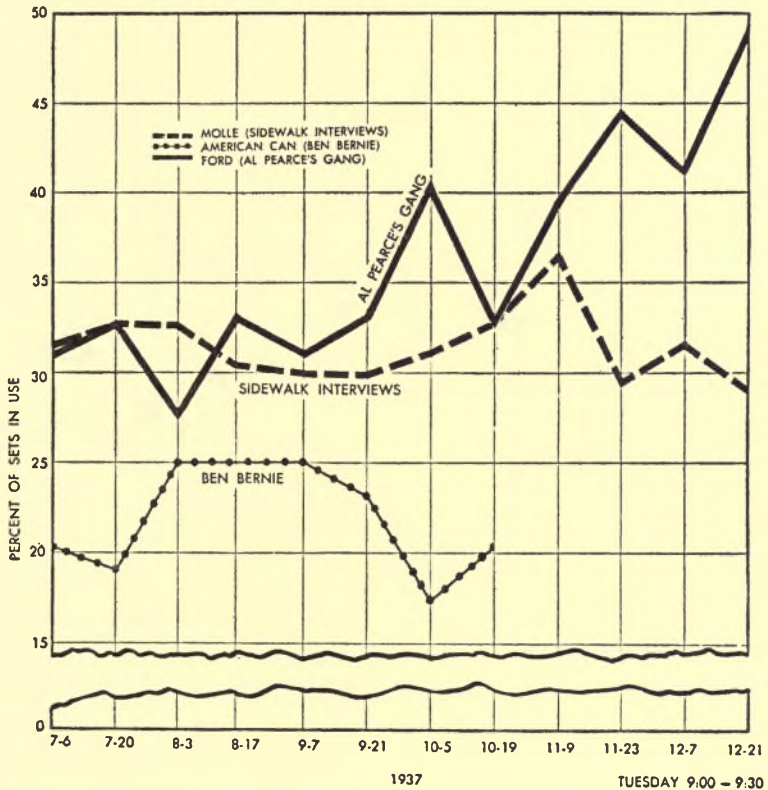


CHART 6.—CHANGE IN SIZE OF AUDIENCE WHEN COMPETITIVE PROGRAM GOES OFF

considered them more or less interchangeable, whereas "Sidewalk Interviews" had an appeal which did not interest listeners to band programs, and the listeners therefore did

not shift over to it.<sup>4</sup> An interpretation of the content of these three programs would then be the more valuable if account were taken of the behavior of the listener when faced with a choice between the programs.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Listeners' Characteristics*

The second way to find out what a program means to people is to make a careful *differential analysis of the various groups who listen*. Much is known about psychological differences between sex, age, and social groups. If a program is listened to more by some of these groups than by others, therefore, the nature of its appeal can be more readily understood. Suppose, for example, that the audience of one of two comedians is more highly educated than the audience of another; then it can safely be assumed that the first offers a more sophisticated kind of humor. (See the concrete examples on pages 25 and 191.)

Fruitful ways of stratification will vary with the problem

<sup>4</sup> If one wants to trust such figures completely, one might consider the increase of the "Sidewalk Interviews" audience on November 9 as being due to trial hearings which the Ben Bernie listeners gave to "Sidewalk Interviews" and which did not turn out to their satisfaction, so that on November 23 they had made the shift to Al Pearce's Gang, and "Sidewalk Interviews" had only its normal audience.

<sup>5</sup> Another approach of this kind was used by Station WOR in an effort to discover whether the audience for their health program at noon is different from the station's general audience. It was found that on those days when the program was not on, most of the people who listened from 11:45 to noon also listened from noon to 12:30. However, on the days the health program was on, people who had listened to WOR up to noon tuned to other stations, and new people came in who stayed only for the half hour of the health program and then tuned out again. In this way the special-appeal character of the program was established.

at hand. In a study of the audience for a child-guidance program it was found that quite a number of childless women were among the regular listeners. Hence the practical advice offered is not the only appeal inherent in this program. Some women, regretting their lack of children, might derive a vicarious satisfaction from hearing someone talk about them; for others the broadcasts might have general educational value. Another pertinent example is offered by the general audience of Station WOI, which is operated by the Iowa State College. There is some indication that the number of active church members is especially high among the regular listeners, although the programs have no religious slant. This fact points to the possibility that for a certain type of people educational broadcasts have an inspirational appeal in addition to the informational appeal they are meant to have.

It would be helpful if in the many listener surveys being conducted by broadcasters more detailed information about the listener were collected. Age, education, and hobbies are easily ascertained, and in the hands of the trained psychologist they can become useful tools for analyses of what a program means to its listeners.

### *Gratification Studies*

People can be asked directly what a program means to them (that is, why they listen) and their replies taken as a starting point for further research. Such a gratification analysis should proceed on several levels, always in close



relation to the program itself. The average listener is not a good introspectionist, but some of the information he can give is immediately pertinent: which parts of the programs he likes best, at what spots he is bored, what comes to his mind as he listens, etc. From this first level of mere description of experience we may go to the second level, that of conceptualization. If one talks with a person just after that person has listened to a psychological program, for example, one will be able to tell whether the respondent listened mainly in order to obtain guidance for a concrete problem or mainly for consolation in a mood of dissatisfaction. The listener does not speak in such terms, but the psychologist, aware of the important difference, can classify him according to his report. The concepts useful on this level stem partly from the interviewer's previous knowledge, but they also grow out of his sensitive attention to the respondent's replies. For example, one of the listeners to a health program made the following remark:

I like his program very much. But you have to listen very often to really get something out of it. When you listen to him again and again and you hear how he says this and that should be done, then *it gives you a good feeling. You know you have done it right; you followed his advice.*

Such a remark suggests that the interest of some listeners lies more in being given orders than in the special content of the information. They enjoy the opportunity to obey an authoritative voice.

On a third level one works with a systematic psychological theory and scans the listener's story to see whether one's theoretical expectations are corroborated, and if not, why not.<sup>6</sup> The psychologist attempts to identify the satisfactions which the listeners derive from a certain program. It is this kind of gratification study that we shall presently examine.

Once certain gratifications have been singled out as being characteristic of responses to a program, we still want to know how generally they prevail among other listeners. To find out whether an appeal is operative in the case of a particular listener, we have to build up a store of especially revealing questions such as:

How do you visualize the participants in the program?

What do they remind you of?

What actual use will you make of what you heard?

Which episodes stand out most clearly in your mind?

What do you think will happen next time?

Would you like to have a script of the program? If so, what would you do with it?

How does this program compare with other programs? How does listening to it compare with other leisure-time activities?

With every new program, very elaborate case studies must first be made. From these, certain critical questions can be derived, and the questions can then be used on a

<sup>6</sup> An example of this approach will be found in the study of the public scare occasioned by Orson Welles's broadcast of "The War of the Worlds" (*The Invasion from Mars*, by Hadley Cantril with the assistance of Hazel Gaudet and Herta Herzog, Princeton University Press, 1940). In this study an attempt was made to establish from individual remarks of the persons interviewed something like a thrill of disaster experienced by people who were greatly frightened and who still enjoyed the event.

larger scale. The final aim is to obtain a frequency distribution of the different gratifications, and knowledge of the differences which exist in this quantitative distribution from group to group. The whole procedure will become much clearer as we now turn to a concrete example.

#### PROFESSOR QUIZ—A GRATIFICATION STUDY <sup>7</sup>

##### *The Source of Information*

The program "Professor Quiz" was analyzed because it is a type of highly successful quiz broadcast regarded by many of the radio public as "educational." The analysis involved only a small number of case studies. It is definitely qualitative in the sense that the appeals of the program were isolated, whereas other factors were neglected, especially the question of what kind of people listen to "Professor Quiz." The case studies presented here were deliberately selected from the lower-income group.

"Professor Quiz" has a very large audience, and, in a general way, one can easily account for his success. Such programs have a multiple appeal: different aspects of them appeal to different people. But mere armchair speculation cannot possibly surmise the multiplicity of these appeals. It is necessary to question a variety of people before one can feel sure that no major element of the program's effectiveness has been overlooked. In discussion, these multiple appeals

<sup>7</sup> This study was conducted and written up for this publication by Dr. Herta Herzog. Dr. Herzog wishes to express her appreciation of the help she received from Professor Hadley Cantril.

which may be linked to problems of serious broadcasting have been especially emphasized. The reader will have to keep in mind what has been said in the preceding chapter regarding the methodological place of such a gratification study: it is only one of three complementary approaches to the problem of what a program means to people. Content analysis and stratification of audience have to be added in order to utilize fully the kind of detailed analysis presented on the following pages, which have to be considered as a sample of procedures rather than as conclusive findings.<sup>8</sup>

The data consist of eleven very detailed interviews with three men and eight women. Most of the persons interviewed were between 20 and 40 years of age; one man was 60, and one girl was 17. Aid in checking the detailed interviews was obtained from 20 previous check-list-type interviews. The check-list covered the following points: (1) whether the listener is disappointed when he does not know the answer; (2) whether he likes the contest; and (3) whether he thinks the program is educational.

### *The Diversified Appeal of the Quiz Program*

The different appeals of the quiz program can be represented in the diagram of Chart 7 on page 66.

<sup>8</sup> Before one can speak of results in such a study, two more steps must be taken. On the one hand, a much greater number of cases must be used, in order to be sure that no major group of people and no relevant aspects of their experience have been omitted. At the same time, one will want to develop an interview schedule containing many "indicator" questions of the kind mentioned in the preceding section, so that the statistical analysis of the cases can be carried through more systematically.

As the interviews show rather clearly, there are four main types of appeals to be found in the quiz program:

1. The competitive appeal.
2. The educational appeal.
3. The self-rating appeal.
4. The sporting appeal.

Each of these appeals has its own gratifications, as the following analysis will show.

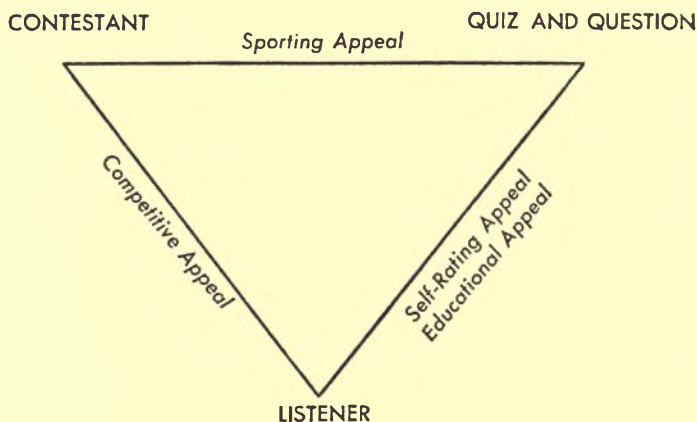


CHART 7.—THE APPEALS OF “PROFESSOR QUIZ” SCHEMATICALLY REPRESENTED

### *The Competitive Appeal*

In one way or another the competitive appeal is mentioned in all 11 interviews. However, there are several variations in its importance to the listener. There is, first, the competition with the contestant (mentioned in eight cases); second,

the competition with the participant co-listener (mentioned in four cases); and third, the competition as merely a means of showing off before an admiring audience (mentioned in three cases). These three different modifications of the competitive appeal are sometimes combined in an individual interview.

**THE IMAGINARY PARTNER.** Participation in a contest obviously serves, in all its modifications, as a means of bolstering up one's self-esteem or freeing oneself from certain frustrations, and it will help to discover, if possible, something of the nature of the frustrations that the competition in a quiz contest can relieve, and some reasons why competition with the contestants bolsters up one's self-esteem.

The majority of the people in our sample had had a grammar- or high-school education. The one college-educated person was a man who had not been successful in business. Although the contestants in the program represent a cross section of "average people" and all the listeners except one knew this fact, the competitive spirit was always directed against the "college people." In the case of the unsuccessful college graduate, the competitive spirit was directed specifically against the "college graduates":

You don't have to be a college graduate, but being well-read and interested in world affairs and reading newspapers makes you able to answer the questions.

Education is important because, of course, a college graduate can do better than those with less education, but you don't have to be a college graduate to answer a good many of the questions.

In short, for this particular type of listeners the quiz program is an outlet, not for a feeling of intellectual inferiority, but for a resentment against people who have a formal education. The program serves to relieve resentment against the social position and the social advantages of "college graduates."

This substitution of the "college man" for the actual contestant is evidenced by two details:

1. If one asks the interviewees what persons competed on the program, as far as they remember them, "teacher" is given in almost all statements. The profession of teacher obviously serves as the symbol of a formal education.

2. In two cases in which the competitive spirit is directed not against the actual contestants but against the co-listening husband, the woman said, when asked why she liked to compete with him, "Because he has a very fine mind." Only later was it brought out in the interview that he was a college graduate, whereas she was not and had always resented this advantage of her husband.

But if the listeners want to beat the "college man," would they prefer to have actual college people on the program? It turns out that all of our respondents prefer the contestants to be average people. They say:

It is expected of college people that they know everything. I would not want to compete with them.

I prefer the people on the program to be people like myself. Now, you take a lawyer—I would not try to compete with him.

The respondents stress emphatically, then, that the quiz contest is a contest between average people, and they would not be at all interested in competition with people who are not average.

The imaginary college graduate against whom the competition is unconsciously directed accounts for a number of otherwise nonunderstandable details:

1. One is the listener's feeling of solidarity with the actual contestants. If the interviewees are asked how they feel about the mistakes the contestants make, in almost all cases they say they feel sorry for the blunderers. Yet these interviewees are the same people who want to compete with, and want to beat, the contestants.

I feel sorry for the people if they cannot give a correct answer. Very often I feel that they know the answer and that it is on the tip of their tongue, but they cannot get it out. They have not had the education to be ready at any time when they are asked.

If an average person misses, I feel sorry for him; but if a college man misses, there would be a certain satisfaction. The college person has had more of a chance, and should be able to answer the questions. The average person deserves twice as much credit as the college man if he gets it right.

2. As will be shown later, the listener's chance to choose a potential winner is part, although not the most important part, of the appeal of the program. We should expect that the potential winner would be picked because he seems most likely to win; in other words, that the respondent would pick a person because he could get some satisfaction



through identification with a probable victor. But the truth is that in half of the cases in which this appeal is present, the selected winner is not the one most likely to win but the person "who is most like myself." A listener chooses the person "like myself" apparently not to increase his own chances of winning but, through identification with the average man, to participate in the college man's defeat.

3. There is an almost hysterical stress on "the average man" and what the average man knows and can do, and how he can beat "the others." "What one should know" is always expressed in terms of "what the average person should know," and questions of a "specific," "academic," or "foreign" nature would be less stimulating than those on "daily life information."

THE CHANCES OF WINNING: THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A LISTENER. There are a number of objective factors connected with the semi-active situation in which the listener to the quiz program finds himself. There are, too, some subjective factors which increase the chances of winning and seem to contribute much to the enjoyment derived from the program.

One such feature is that the questions are not very academic or technical; they deal with things taught in school or known from daily life. The listeners state quite frankly that they would neither be interested in any other type of questions nor be able to answer them.

The questions are not necessarily on an academic subject. That is what I like about it. Of course, if they would be highly specialized, I would not know them; but they are things you pick up in daily life. For instance, last time they asked the second line of a poem which was a nursery rhyme. We sang it as kids, and of course everybody knew it.

In connection with the type of questions asked, we find that the people who have finished their high-school education stress that more profound questions would probably be "more educational but less fun." People with grammar-school education state that "the variety of topics offered in the quiz program is even preferable to reading."

I love the program. It is so instructive. I don't read much because I play so much bridge, but I think you learn so much from that program. There are so many questions of the type that you would not read about, even if you had the time. You get a much more diversified amount of knowledge than taking a course, for instance. It covers so much more ground.

Stagefright as a handicap for the actual contestants and an advantage for the listener is, in almost all cases, frankly admitted.

I feel sorry for the people if they miss questions. Once a bank clerk—and he ought to be smart—missed a question. Maybe his mind went blank for a moment. That can happen to the smartest people. It is much easier for me, sitting all alone, and listening than for those on the program.

The element of luck involved in what questions the individual contestant happens to get is another admitted handi-

cap. It does not apply to the listener, because in all cases we found that the listener tries to answer all questions.

If a contestant answers correctly it is luck in many cases. For instance, if an accountant gets a mathematical question, or a teacher gets an English question, then it is definitely a matter of luck. I have more chances to be lucky as a listener, because I try to answer all questions.

THE PERSONAL SCORING SYSTEM. Listeners acknowledge that these facts are advantages to them. But they seem much less aware of the fact that they increase their own chances of winning by eliminating a number of questions as irrelevant:

I don't feel bad and I don't even try to answer mathematical questions. Very few women can answer them—why should I try them?

The program is a very convenient method of learning, but of course there are many things that you don't care if you don't know.

I think that it is a useless question they had last time—"Which country is most densely populated in Europe?" I have never been there and I shall never be there, and I am not interested in such far-fetched things. But I like those questions—and I can always answer them—which deal about our country and the things of our daily life.

Of course I don't know all the questions they ask. But I am much older than the contestants. They ought to know some of the things I have known and forgotten in the meantime.

One should be able to answer current event questions because it is in everyday life. You read in newspapers what is going on in the

world. Also, highlights in history one should remember from general reading and schooling. But one does not necessarily have to be able to answer mathematical questions, because they take an analytical mind.

In short, these listeners very often think of what one should know in terms of questions they can answer, although they do not admit it to themselves. Certain people, however, from the very beginning, do not aspire to answer all questions. "Why should I know all those things?" they say. "My education has not extended so far."

WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT QUESTIONS ON WHICH THEY FAIL. When people are asked how many questions they are usually able to answer, the percentages vary from 25 to 90 per cent. Even if this figure is incorrect, the fact remains that people quite frankly admit that they do not know all the answers. Although the whole program is experienced as a competition, the listener's pride is salved by the explanations of failures:

1. There is always the excuse that an answer "just slipped my mind," that "I knew it, but couldn't get it past the tip of my tongue," that "I knew it once, but have forgotten it since," that "It was not explained enough when it was asked," or that "I didn't hear it clearly enough." In short, it is possible to salve defeat, as such, in the semi-active listening situation.

2. The actual contestants on the program may not know the answer. Then the listener will quickly measure his ignorance against theirs.

3. The listener receives the admiration of the family for making some correct answers. His satisfaction in answering one question correctly makes up for his chagrin on failing to answer other questions.

4. The listener can say that he can answer some questions which one should not expect him to be able to answer. Therefore he can afford to miss on some of the questions that he is expected to be able to answer.

5. The remark is sometimes made that "After all, I didn't go on the air"; therefore one is not supposed to know the answers. In other words, people seem ready to blame the actual competitors for exhibitionism, of which they, the listeners, are supposedly quite innocent. The fact that they try to show off before their family does not enter their minds, probably because of the objective peculiarity of the radio, which allows for participation in a "public event" in the complete privacy of the listener's four walls.

6. Most important of all, even if one fails on a question one does learn the answer and so acquires new information.

### *The Educational Appeal*

Although in each interview the listener mentioned competition as an incentive, this was not the incentive most emphatically stressed. What is mentioned by all but one person, and is stressed by the majority as most important, is "education." Of 20 people, only 15 said that the contest adds to their enjoyment, and all 20 said they considered the program educational. The educational element even enters

into the enjoyment of the competition: listeners enjoy the competition as a means of expressing their resentment against the educated. But obviously formal education cannot be obtained through answers to the quiz. What, then, do people mean when they say they like the program because of its "educational value"?

TWO STANDARDS OF PREFERENCE AMONG LISTENERS. One very well-educated listener among our respondents disliked the program particularly because of the "lack of a frame of reference for the questions asked." He felt that in many cases the knowledge contained in the answers was useless to him, since he was unable to relate it to pre-established interests or information and therefore was unable to remember it.

The same difficulty was encountered by the less-educated people interviewed. If asked whether they could give any example of an easy or hard question, the great majority of them invented a question instead of citing one actually asked. They said they did not remember the actual questions. However, all of them except one insisted spontaneously that they "would remember the answers if the questions were brought up in conversation."

Whether or not they are actually able to remember those answers could be learned by testing. What is more important here is the fact that the educational value of the program seems to consist exactly in these scattered and unrelated bits of information. There is absolute agreement among the respondents on the difference between reading a book or taking a course and following a quiz program. People unanimously

insist that the quiz information is "diversified knowledge" as compared to the concentrated knowledge acquired through other media of education. Nicholas Murray Butler's distinction between two educational ideals, "knowing something about everything" and "knowing everything about something," is reproduced in the listeners' minds. Their preference for diversified information is due, first of all, to the American educational system, and it is most characteristic of grammar- and high-school graduates, who represent the main body of listeners. They have never known the educational ideal of specialization and they have no longing for it. As already mentioned, "too technical questions" do not interest them.<sup>9</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that people

<sup>9</sup> It might be argued that the reasons given above for the appeal of "Professor Quiz" are valid only for listeners found in a lower socio-economic group. That this is not the case is evidenced by a separate study of "Professor Quiz" listeners conducted in the town of Swarthmore by N. D. Piper, Princeton, '39.

Piper interviewed 15 people, 7 men and 8 women. All except one were members of the upper middle class living in a suburban, residential area. Here again the "educational value" of the program was stressed by 12 of the 15 respondents. Also, in spite of this avowed educational value, all except 3 persons were unable to remember anything they had learned from the program. From all indications the Swarthmore middle-class quiz listener listens for the same general reasons as the Jersey lower-class quiz fan.

Since Piper obtained answers to a check list of questions, it is impossible to go beyond his statistical findings in seeking an "explanation." As indicated above, listeners do not merely "forget" the questions and answers. *Why* they "forget" and what the program really means to them can be discovered only by following up these statistical hunches with searching interviews determining the personalistic meaning of an appeal to a given listener.

Their educational frame of reference is one-dimensional and quantitative, not multi-dimensional and qualitative: the sign of an immature attitude. The quiz program is liked because it makes one familiar "with new topics," not because it increases knowledge about topics whose place in a general system of knowledge is already defined before "Professor Quiz" is tuned in.

have no particular preference for certain types of questions. If asked whether they have any favorite subjects, they say either "No, everything is worth while knowing," or they select their favorite questions in terms of degree of difficulty, thus shifting from the educational to the competitive emphasis. In all our interviews there was no evidence that listeners were especially interested in one topic and therefore wanted specific questions related to that topic so that they could gather pertinent information.

Also consistent with this standard of judgment regarding education is the fact that stress is laid upon the question asked rather than on the specific answer for it. A further confirmation is the finding that as a result of the quiz program none of the interviewees has ever read a book dealing with the topic touched in the program. Two of the 11 respondents, however, report having looked up a word in a dictionary.

It is quite likely, of course, that many of the group of quiz listeners have a dictionary at home but do not have a library large enough to cover the different subjects touched in the quiz program. Listeners could, of course, borrow a specific book from the public library. But the program does not stimulate them to hunt for further facts about specific things. They want to hear about new topics. Most characteristic is the statement of a man who says that he has the complete volume of Shakespeare on his desk in order to be able to "place quotations." Apparently he would never think of reading a Shakespearean drama because it has been quoted



in the quiz program. But he is interested in finding out just where the answer to the quiz question appears.

One man said:

I am surprised at the extent of my general knowledge. The program has also shown me how woefully deficient I am in certain branches like the technical side of music, and certain aspects of literature.

When asked whether he intended to do anything about these deficiencies, he said:

Oh, no. But I am especially gratified when I know an answer in a subject that I thought I knew nothing about.

What is it, then, that such diversified education is good for? Why are the respondents so eager to "learn" this way?

UPHOLDING OR ENHANCING ONE'S SOCIAL STATUS. Again and again it was said that it is valuable to learn from the quiz program; that it is good to know more because "if the topic comes up in general conversation, you know what it is all about." Most clear-cut is the example of a barber who listens regularly to the program (even sacrificing his leisure time, since he has to stay in his barber shop in order to hear it) because of the following reason:

My customers are all women, and they certainly do talk a lot. The quiz program helps me in conversation with them. You never know what is going to come up in conversation, and sometimes something I heard on the program helps.

People obviously want to know more because this extended range of knowledge provides greater possibilities for

carrying on conversation. Against the value of a formal education which, in the listener's mind, makes possible a higher social status, the diversified knowledge obtainable through the quiz program raises the listener's position in the eyes of his neighbors. The barber does not feel that he is going to move from a small Jersey town to the beauty parlor of one of the Park Avenue hotels because he has listened to the quiz program; but he does feel that he is going to increase his popularity among his customers in the small town if he knows what they are talking about, or can refer to special things he has learned in the quiz program.

One secretary said she considered the question, "What is *lapsus linguae*?" very difficult. When asked whether she would ever use this expression instead of "slip of the tongue," she said, "No, of course I wouldn't think of it; but next time somebody is going to use it, I still know what it is all about, and I won't be impressed any more."

There is also the example of a law clerk who said he enjoyed particularly the sport questions on the quiz program because "Next time the boys talk about sports, I can use the information I got from the quiz program." Thus, in addition to the greater ability acquired in placing certain topics which one has heard in the quiz program, the possibility of relaying the answers makes one a better social entertainer.

But if the "social-in-group" value of the quiz program is so evident for the listeners, why do they not also want to get "social-out-group" values? Why do they not want knowledge rather than information?

THE QUIZ AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR READING. The quiz listeners apparently consist of a social and intellectual stratum for whom reading is a definite problem.

A housewife says she plays bridge all day and does not have time to read a book. But a quiz program is even better than a book "because it provides information on questions which you would not find in books."

A stenographer says, "It costs time and money to read." The quiz information is free, and can be got without cost.

A clerk says that when he comes home at night his wife expects him to be with her. She would mind very much his "sitting down in the easy chair and reading a book all by myself." But she enjoys learning with him from the quiz contest.

A businessman would be too tired after a day's work to read. The quiz program has "enough other stimuli to keep me awake."

A typist says she would "not know what books to pick" even if she wanted to read. The quiz program presents to her topics worth listening to and knowing. She is relieved from the responsibilities of having any standards of judgment of her own.

All the quiz listeners interviewed consider it important to read books, but for some reason they never get around to reading. In other words, they are aware of the social and intellectual handicap in their lack of education but, at the same time, they have put up with it and are not willing to make any sacrifice to eliminate it. The quiz program relieves

them of their feeling of guilt (“that I do not do anything to improve myself”) without involving any effort on their part.

I know I am the best in my office. I know I could have gone much further if I had wanted to; but I am not ambitious. If I would set out to learn something more, I would be able to do so, but I just never got around to doing it. I listen and like the program because it increases my self-esteem. If I am able to answer them, I know that I am pretty good.

In addition to the fact that reading would involve effort, it may be that many of the quiz listeners are not intellectually articulate enough or sufficiently trained to get much out of reading.

HOW THE QUIZ MAKES READING WORTH WHILE. In one of our interviews a maid with a grammar-school education said that she was “terribly happy” when reading a book helped her to answer a quiz question:

I received a particular thrill when they asked once who was the lawyer in the Scopes case, and I knew it. I had read the life of Darrow, and knew it was Darrow. I felt so proud. It makes you feel swell to think that something you read you can actually use. When I put the book away, I didn't think I would ever be asked about it, and I put it away and forgot about it. And when they asked it on the radio, it dawned upon me right away. I felt wonderful. I knew I didn't read the book for nothing, and I thought to myself, “It sure does pay to read things; you never know when you are going to use it.”

This girl obviously reads “books” (not one particular book) because of a vague desire to improve herself. She

never really was convinced that it did her any good, although she could see that "the better people do read books." The fact that reading a book increased her score on the quiz program "even if it is only like a game" demonstrated to her very clearly the value of books.

An unemployed mechanic stressed in somewhat different words the same thing:

If we didn't have programs like this, we might dismiss things from our minds we have read about. This program helps us to keep on reading. You pay more attention to what you are reading, so that you will be able to answer the questions. The program keeps you stimulated. It is like exercising. If you don't use your muscles you get old before your time. You keep on reading because you might be able to use it sometime.

A large number of the respondents insisted that reading and conversation are the things that make one good at a quiz. Paradoxically speaking, one might say that probably the quiz listeners could be made to read a book to be better at the quiz contest. But they probably could not be made to read up on something that had already been mentioned in the quiz program.

THE QUIZ AS A LUCKY COMBINATION. The Puritan attitude toward pleasure is still influential in this country. So, if recreation can be combined with serious effort, people feel less guilty about spending time in recreation. On the other hand, a resigned reluctance to undertake any serious hobby also exists. If serious activities can be combined with fun, the reluctance decreases, because there is a stimulus strong

enough to overcome the feeling that one is "not able anyhow."

The distaste for a quiz program that might be centered on one topic—a distaste evident in all 11 interviews—was always explained by the argument that the program would be much less exciting and interesting. Yet along with enthusiasm for the program the opinion that the quiz program is educational and worth-while was always expressed.

The importance of the combination of enthusiasm with "education" is brought out very clearly in the third appeal of the program, namely, "finding out how dumb I am."

### *The Self-rating Appeal*

Quite independently of competition with the actual contestants and of comparison between the listener's and the contestants' ability to answer questions, each program is interesting to the listener as a means of "finding out about myself." Allegedly this angle is more important to almost all the interviewed people than is their score as compared to the scores of the contestants.

This appeal is almost always described in the form of "finding out how dumb I am," with the additional statement that "I know more than I expected." This latter fact is stressed in all except one case.

I am often surprised I can answer many of the questions.

It is more important to me to find out what I know than beating the others in answering. I find that I know more than I thought I did.

Obviously the listener can get more satisfaction by the simple trick of underrating himself before entering the test and then being "pleasantly surprised about the amount of knowledge I have."

Why should people want to get such a ranking for themselves?

SELF-RATING AS A MEANS OF COMPENSATION. A good quiz score is likely to compensate a listener for the things he has failed to accomplish in actual life. Not only does the unsuccessful listener in our sample group enjoy showing off before his admiring family, not only does the woman dissatisfied with her inferior education like to find out that she is as smart as the educated people, but a good score is likely also to relieve one of a feeling of guilt about having been too indolent. So it was with the stenographer who states that she could have done better if she had wanted to. Lack of opportunity and ability for education becomes lack of interest. Not having got so far in education as one wished is made a matter of subjective choice when, actually, failure was due to very strong outer or inner circumstances more or less beyond the person's control. Obviously frustrations are not escaped in this way, but they are made easier to bear.

The stenographer suggests the high-school teacher who gave up her "career" because she had babies. She says:

At times I have regretted that I have been so lazy. With the backing I have had, I should have accomplished more. When I was nine I won a trip to Europe for what was considered the best composition of all the school children in New York. I was always a smart

kid. I went to college and secured two degrees. I am afraid that I have let down and allowed myself to become rusty. This program, in a small way, satisfies my ego. I found that I am still good. I found out that I have still kept up with what is going on.

The mere fact that listeners to "Professor Quiz" are asked questions is likely, of course, to increase their feeling of importance. On being interviewed they repeatedly stated that the greater participation of the listener in this particular program is one of its best features.

THE EMPHASIS ON SELF-RATING IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE. In our interviews we found that many of the people who enjoyed the opportunity for self-rating had liked and participated in contests during their school days. This supports the contention that the school system and our whole cultural environment emphasize scoring as a means of establishing one's ability as well as a means of having fun.

SELF-RATING IN ITS BIOGRAPHICAL IMPLICATIONS. Being asked questions also means, in some cases, being taken back to one's own school days. This regression is particularly true of older people, who like to remember a time when they were still young and life was still ahead of them. Even for the younger people, however, the school situation to which the quiz program has been compared seems enjoyable as a sort of dramatic, entertaining reproduction of a one-time serious situation. After all, if they do not know the answer to a question in a quiz program, it does not matter. They are now free to build up their own scoring system, whereas in school a wrong answer was a serious matter, and it was rated



by the teacher. Thus the reproduction of the school situation allows symbolically for a rearrangement and mastery of difficult circumstances.

For one stenographer the program was like the situation in her office when her boss was not explaining exactly what he wanted, and "I have to use all my wits to find out what he wants and to satisfy him." It might be that for her the quiz program represented some sort of actual training, and, at the same time, by converting her troubles into a play situation, made them easier to endure when they occurred in real life.

SELF-RATING ON A GAMBLING BASIS. Numerous people stressed the fact that a good score depends very much on "guesswork and luck." Some of the listeners find a sort of masochistic pleasure in having luck affect the test of their own abilities, even in front of somebody else. Here belongs the case of the former high-school teacher who says that she is very good in historical and geographical questions but very poor in mathematical and practical questions, in which her husband is much better. She stresses luck emphatically. She seems unable to refrain from entering into the competition with her husband, and trusts to luck that there will be more historical and geographical questions than questions of the sort her husband is better able to answer.

It is also possible that this repeated stressing of luck is due to a rather general opinion that nowadays it is not what you know that counts, but rather how lucky you are.

You don't have to be a college graduate. You can just be ordinary in order to succeed. For some of the answers you have to have an education. Some you can remember from school, from magazines and books. But most of them you can guess and it comes out right. It is like a guessing game. You don't need education. It is mere luck. I am not so educated, and there are some things I never heard, and I just give a thought and it comes out right. I don't even know how I get the answers, sometimes.

### *The Sporting Appeal*

The sporting appeal, we have noticed, is less frequently mentioned and is probably of minor importance compared to the others. Altogether, eight people spoke about enjoying the *contest*. This appeal is less important probably because there are so many immediately personal applications possible, and because it is rather unnatural for the listener to preserve the attitude of an onlooker at, say, a baseball game.

There are essentially three types of interest in the program as a contest between other people. First, by picking a potential winner a listener can show how good a judge he is. Second, the contestant selected as the probable winner may be a symbol of the kind of person one wants to win. Third, the blunders the contestants make in answering questions can be enjoyed.

JUDGING THE POTENTIAL WINNER. Pleasure derived from the effort to pick the contestant most likely to win was mentioned in four cases. In all of them the process of selection was enjoyed because the listeners liked the idea of being able to judge other people so well that, after an answer or two, they could guess the final outcome.

I pick a potential winner after the first couple of rounds and stick to my selection and hope he will win. If he answers the first two questions correctly and talks with assurance, I am pretty sure he will win. I like it most if the contestants are very close. I think I am a pretty good judge of who is going to be best.

I enjoy watching the others compete. After the first round I pick a winner, and I am very interested in seeing if I have made a good selection. I feel that I can judge whether a person has a good mind by the way he answers the first question. After I pick a winner, I hope that the person comes in. It is like watching a horse-race.

I pick a winner mostly because my children are interested in that aspect of the program. They are always very pleased if I am right, and of course, I am pleased too.

There are obviously several elements involved in the satisfaction of picking the right person as the winner. One is the pure pleasure of having been right in a judgment which applies to all types of judgments. It is connected, in the case of the quiz program, with being right in other people's eyes, and thus increasing one's authority among them. A second element might be the practical importance of predicting success: in our culture, mixing with the right people is so important for success that the skill to predict success for other people is almost indispensable. Finally, a listener participates in someone else's success through having chosen the successful contestant when his chances of winning were still undecided.

Usually the criteria according to which the potential winner is selected are abilities valued highly, but not achieved completely, by the listener. So a rather insecure and nervous

woman judges by "assuredness of answer." The secretary who regrets that she never went to high school judges the potential winner according to the "phrasing of his answers" in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The woman who is concerned about having forgotten a lot of the things she learned in college judges by "precision, promptness, and ease of answer." This participation in someone else's success is, apparently, a mild form of identification with the person who has more chances of winning.

PICKING A DESIRED WINNER. There is a difference between identification with a person who is better than oneself and is likely to win, and picking a winner just like oneself whom one wants to win. In the first case, increased self-esteem goes with identification with the better chance. In the second case, the contestant serves as a symbol, and the whole situation is obviously used as an outlet for resentment.

We have already told about the barber who picks an average person like himself whom he wants to win against the college people. Here is a case in which a housewife picks the housewife and wants her to win against the college people:

I like to feel that there are housewives on the program and that they win. Even though they are not out in the professional world they have enough intelligence to compete with college graduates.

In both cases the identification with the person on the program serves (1) as an outlet for resentment, and (2) as a means of extending to the individual contestant membership

in a larger group of the underprivileged who are on "his side" in the contest.

ENJOYING THE BLUNDERS. Only one person in the sample stated that he considered the program equivalent to a comedy and that he enjoyed the embarrassment and stumbling of the contestants. Two more said they liked "occasional mistakes." And still two more announced that they liked the so-called experts to miss.

Often the contestants do not know the answer and they stumble around and they give funny answers and I can get a good laugh out of it. Also, there is quite a bit of humor in the preliminary statements.

These figures coincide with the results of the check list, according to which 11 out of 20 people interviewed said that they got some pleasure out of having the others miss. The objection can be raised that we should be unable to get people to admit, in answer to a straight question, that they had sadistic or socially unacceptable traits. We have tried to check this possibility by taking account of answers to cross questions such as "Are you annoyed when a person misses a lot of questions?" or "What do you think not knowing an answer is indicative of?" Perhaps the figures mentioned above are understatements but still they definitely indicate that, in the minds of these respondents, enjoyment of the contestants' mistakes is not a very important appeal of quiz programs.

*The Quiz Listener*

During the season of 1937-1938, "Professor Quiz" was listened to in an average of 13.3 per cent of all telephone homes. For families of different income groups this was the rating:<sup>10</sup>

	<i>Per cent</i>
"A" homes (highest income group) .....	8.0
"B" homes .....	15.5
"C" homes .....	14.0
"D" homes .....	no reliable data

If programs are ranked according to frequency of listening, "Professor Quiz" has a rank of 21 in "A" homes, 8 in "B" homes, and 16 in "C" homes. Its overall appeal, then, is most adapted to people in the \$3,000-\$5,000 income class. Nothing is known so far as to its differential appeal to different sex and age groups. It can be assumed that for those groups the four appeals are of varying intensity. It would seem probable, for example, that the sporting appeal is greater for "A" people, whereas the educational appeal will become more pronounced as we move downward on the cultural scale. All those questions are topics for further research, without which no final conclusions can be risked. But no significant research in that direction was possible without the preceding gratification study, which carved out the necessary concepts and pointed to the relevant problems.

The cases which were analyzed probably belong to the "C" group. Among them the typical "Professor Quiz" lis-

<sup>10</sup> For a definition of this classification, see page 16, footnote 13.

tener might be sketched as an individual who envies the college graduate and yet likes to feel that he—the average man—is just as good. He acquires information to increase his social status and to “improve” himself. But the information he seeks is disjointed, unrelated, unsystematic. It is preferred so because he does not know how to organize information and does not want to undergo the intellectual discipline necessary to learn how. “Education” for him is rationalized to mean, then, the passive absorption of anything which happens to be presented.

### *A Challenge to Research*

It should be obvious by now that the three ways to study the appeal of programs are closely interrelated. A content analysis can do no more than give hints about what the program might mean to people. Whether it does appeal as expected must be found out by direct contact with the listener. On the other hand, any appeal which has been construed from the listener’s introspection has to be tested. This can be done only by predicting that certain types of people will like or dislike the program, and the task of prediction in turn will lead to the problem of audience stratification.

What is the practical value of such studies? Note that one difference between serious broadcasts and service programs is that the latter are usually commercially sponsored, whereas the former are sustaining programs put on by the networks as a public service. But, paradoxically, the programs from which people claim to learn most are put on the

air by advertisers and not by educators. Just at the point where radio really supplements the functions of reading, responsibility lies outside the hands of educators. We do not know of any educational broadcaster who would present a women's serial, a "how to get along" program, or a quiz contest. The educators obviously feel that these programs are beneath their dignity. The type of study exemplified in this chapter shows what radio listeners want and how they can be reached in larger numbers. Why not improve the standards of such broadcasts and still use the appeals which prove so effective? Here radio could take a real step beyond the achievements of print in the communication of ideas.



### *III. The Future of Serious Listening*

#### GIVING TO THOSE WHO HAVE

##### *Is Serious Broadcasting Enough?*

IF the people on the lower cultural levels do not want to listen to serious broadcasts, why should we try to inveigle them into doing so? If they prefer to get education of a sort from listening to "Professor Quiz" rather than to a round-table discussion, why shouldn't they? This is not the place to enter into detailed discussion of such questions. But one thing is sure. If young people feel that they can learn something by listening to "Gangbusters," if adults like to follow "psychological" programs, no intelligent educator will merely frown upon them and let it go at that. Teachers should exploit these programs, so far as possible, in their classroom work. Psychologists should endeavor to raise program standards, because if they do not the opportunity afforded by these broadcasts for the education of large audiences will be missed.

And yet this is only one side of the picture. It is unlikely that any considerable cultural achievement has ever sprung spontaneously out of people's "needs." Progress is the result of efforts originated by small, advanced groups and gradually accepted by the population. This is not to say that the

serious programs now on the air are the best radio could offer. On the contrary, our first chapter indicates that upper-class people try to enforce their educational standards over the radio, but lower-class people do not accept them, because such standards are not adjusted to their point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Serious programs can surely be made much more adequate socially than they now are. It will always be a task of social planning, however, to induce people to listen to serious broadcasts. If radio is to become a tool for the communication of ideas to people who are not reached by print, then serious listening has to be institutionalized, just as print was institutionalized after it had been invented. Technological improvements change our cultural life not by their mere existence but because they are used for cultural purposes. Making such use of radio means not only putting on desirable programs but also *making sure that they are listened to*. The argument of this chapter is that serious broadcasting consists of program production *and* of audience building: two parts of one whole problem.

Since the research investigator must begin with existing material, the following pages will deal with programs actually on the air. The examples selected are only test cases. If progress is made on the production side, the audience-building phases will be easier and socially more valuable, but will not be less necessary. Our discussion, then, will cover the conditions under which serious broadcasting seems suc-

<sup>1</sup> This formulation was suggested by Dr. Harold Lasswell's very helpful criticism of this manuscript.

cessful, in the sense that it finds any appreciable kind of audience and practical possibilities of audience building.

Why has serious broadcasting a better chance to be heard on higher cultural levels? If a variety of interests exists among a group of people and if all kinds of serious activities are habitual with them, then serious listening is accepted as one of those activities and becomes part of the cultural pattern of the group. Or, in other words, if people live in a stimulating environment they are more likely to use radio not only for entertainment but also for a vehicle of ideas. A few examples of this relationship between a stimulating environment and interest in serious broadcasts will help to clarify our discussion.

### *Age and Cultural Background*

The most pronounced evidence of the importance of general stimulation comes from a number of studies in which it was possible to correlate age with amount of serious listening. The focus of these studies was to learn whether biological maturity went with closer attention to serious broadcasts. The investigators were disappointed to find that the relationship between age and amount of such listening proved rather inconclusive. But then another consideration was introduced. If interest in serious broadcasts depends mainly upon the background against which they are received, the influence of age should be different on different cultural levels. On a high level, where the general background provides continuous intellectual stimulation, there should be an

increase of serious listening as people grow older, while on a low level the contrary should be true. The stimulation which people on the lower level get in school and during the more excitable period of adolescence is not maintained afterward if their background in later life is poor. Hence they might be expected to listen to fewer and fewer serious broadcasts as they grow older. This assumption was clearly corroborated in a number of studies.

TABLE 11.—PROPORTION OF LISTENERS TO MR. JUSTICE BLACK ON DIFFERENT AGE AND CULTURAL LEVELS

	<i>High level</i>		<i>Low level</i>	
	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and older</i>	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and older</i>
Per cent listening . . . . .	50	55	33	25
Total number of cases . . . . .	606	548	403	275

In the survey mentioned in the first chapter, dealing with Mr. Justice Black's speech, the age differences evident in Table 11 were found when the respondents were divided into an upper and lower cultural level, according to the socio-economic ratings given by the interviewers. On the higher level the older people listen more than the younger; on the lower level they listen less.

In a poll conducted by *Fortune* in January 1938, this question was asked: "Do you listen to classical music on the radio, such as the Ford Hour or the Metropolitan Opera?" The Office of Radio Research prepared a special tabulation of the answers, using an occupational classification as an index of cultural level. Professionals and business executives were contrasted with factory workers and white-collar em-

ployees. This tabulation (Table 12) pertains to men only, because no adequate occupational classification was available for women. Again we see that the age trend is inverse for the two cultural levels.

Examples of this kind could be taken from many other studies of serious listening where a cross tabulation of age and cultural level is possible.<sup>2</sup> Just to round out the picture,

TABLE 12.—PROPORTION OF MEN WHO LISTEN TO CLASSICAL MUSIC ON DIFFERENT AGE AND CULTURAL LEVELS

	<i>High level</i>		<i>Low level</i>	
	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and older</i>	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and older</i>
Per cent listening . . . . .	73	76	60	52
Total number of cases..	224	251	379	255

some information on leisure-time activities, to be investigated later in this chapter, might be drawn on here. It will be seen later that preference for radio goes up and interest in books goes down with declining cultural level. If these data are broken down on an age basis, it appears that older people, by and large, are more interested in radio than the younger, and if we consider reading the intellectually more mature leisure-time activity, there seems to be a regression in level of interest as people grow older. This

<sup>2</sup> Although the data are statistically significant, the interpretation given above might be open to exception. One might argue that the cultural differences between social groups are smaller in the younger age brackets because there are many young people who belong only temporarily in a lower social group and move into a higher group as they grow older just because they are more discriminating intellectually. The question could be decided finally only if tables such as those given here were available, formal education instead of economic status being used as a background index because the former would change very little, if at all, as individuals grow older.

regression, however, is slight on the higher cultural level and marked on the lower. This trend is apparent in Table 13, which shows the number of people for whom radio is the preferred leisure-time activity as against each group of 100 people for whom reading is preferred.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 13.—RATIO OF RADIO AND BOOK PREFERENCES ON DIFFERENT AGE AND CULTURAL LEVELS

	<i>High level</i>		<i>Low level</i>	
	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and older</i>	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and older</i>
Radio-book ratio <sup>a</sup> . . .	81	108	161	332
Number of cases . . . .	865	973	1,468	1,273

<sup>a</sup> Number of people preferring radio as a leisure-time activity for every 100 who prefer books.

On the higher cultural level the shift toward radio might be explained by the fact that the eyes of people on this level trouble them more as they grow older, so that they no longer prefer to read. The trend on the lower cultural level, however, is so strong that it can well be taken as another indication of how intellectual interest wanes in an environment which is poor in intellectual stimulation.

These data are enlightening because they show that it does not suffice to speak, without further clarification, about what people are interested in. Biological maturation may make people more receptive to serious broadcasting in one milieu and less receptive in another. The psychological interpretation is not difficult. In a richer intellectual atmos-

<sup>3</sup> As index of cultural level, an intuitive rating of socio-economic status is used. The figures are adjusted so as to include in each age-economic group an equal number of men and women.

phere, serious broadcasts are tied in with other serious pursuits. People talk more about what they have heard; probably a certain amount of social pressure is brought to bear which makes listening to serious broadcasts an asset to the individual. In an intellectually interesting environment stimuli reinforce each other, and serious broadcasting is woven with them so that the habit of serious listening slowly increases as the people grow older. On a poorer cultural level such stimuli are lacking, so that the seed of serious broadcasts falls upon stonier ground, and, as people grow older, they listen to such programs less and less.

### *The Story of Two Rural Counties*

A typical instance of this relationship between general milieu and interest in serious broadcasts appears in a study of radio listening in rural areas.<sup>4</sup> Before the county to be studied intensively was chosen, a number of communities were surveyed superficially. One of these was Burt County, Nebraska, and another was Pike County, Illinois. The former is a relatively rich county, inhabited largely by farmers of Norwegian descent, with a tradition of diversified co-operative activities. Pike County, on the other hand, is below the American average in wealth and is rather poor in cultural life. A few figures will indicate the difference between the two:

<sup>4</sup> W. S. Robinson, *Radio Comes to the Farmer*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (to be published in 1940).

	<i>Pike County</i>	<i>Burt County</i>
Average value per farm of land and building (1934)	\$6,841	\$15,538
Per cent of farms reporting co-operative selling (1929)	16	20
Per cent of farms reporting co-operative buying (1929)	5	17
Estimated proportion (per cent) of homes with radio (1937, before electrification) . . . . .	57	90

Background differences between people in the two counties were very noticeable to the research worker. Burt County residents appeared to have many more interests than the residents of Pike County. Inquiry regarding amount of time spent in reading disclosed that in Burt County people read about 20 per cent more than people in Pike County. Differences in the extent of social participation seemed equally marked. In Burt County, seven out of ten women belonged to at least one group holding meetings regularly, six out of ten belonged to two, and three out of ten to three or more such organizations. In Pike County, however, only two women out of ten belonged to any group at all, and only one out of twenty belonged to two or more. It seems safe to say that group participation in the one area was at least three times as frequent as in the other.

One important psychological contrast between the residents of the two counties was that Pike County residents were on the defensive economically and socially, while Burt County people were not. The former, apparently pushed to the wall economically, tenaciously held to their customary opinions and ways of doing things, and were unwilling to take agricultural or economic advice from any source. On



the other hand, Burt County people exhibited open-mindedness and interest in new ideas.

Our field worker could sense in the two areas radically different attitudes toward serious broadcasting, the attitudes apparently being due to the widely differing backgrounds. He found knowledge of serious programs and interest in them in Burt County; but they were seldom mentioned, and then only after special questioning, in Pike County. In Burt County only 69 women, a small sample, were interviewed intensively on this subject, because the main study then shifted to the other county as one of lower cultural level and therefore of greater interest to radio research. Still, the difference between the amounts of serious listening in the two areas is of great significance statistically, since 45 per cent of the interviewed people in Burt County reported some kind of serious listening, but only 15 per cent in Pike County reported it.

### *The Little Fellow Likes the Little Station*

The relation between background and listening habits was implied in a previous publication of the Office of Radio Research, in which it was shown that the audience of small stations has a lower average cultural level than the audience of large network stations.<sup>5</sup> This result has since been checked with similar data from other sources, and, at least for the

<sup>5</sup> Meyrowitz and Fiske, "The Relative Preference of Low-Income Groups for Small Stations," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, February 1939, Vol. XXIII, No. 1.

northeastern parts of the United States, it holds true. After discussing several possible interpretations of this phenomenon, the authors of the earlier study arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The small stations have a local appeal. Many of their programs are sponsored by local advertisers with whom the listener is familiar or has frequent contact. He hears names and addresses of people close at hand, whom he may know. He may even telephone the station and suggest a musical selection himself, and thus hear his own name mentioned over the air. The atmosphere surrounding the programs of the small station is much like that in poor neighborhoods, where there is still more personal contact among people than in wealthier, more depersonalized districts.

2. The appeal of the large network station is often the appeal of New York and Hollywood. Those who participate in the programs are socially and psychologically remote, the places from which the broadcasts originate are often distant, and the process of identification is more complicated than when, as with small stations, programs are of necessity confined to local areas. The psychological universe of people in the lower-income groups is limited socially and geographically. Such people may feel an element of strangeness in the range of the large stations and find keener satisfaction in the restricted and more familiar realm of the small stations.

Another element, then, enters our discussion. People who live in a milieu providing little cultural stimulation often

are not even attracted by current network entertainment fare, preferring programs more attuned to their local life. It is obviously even less likely that such people will become interested in serious broadcasts without help in appraising their meaning and importance. More light, incidentally, could be shed on this issue if pertinent information were available on the role which age plays in this question of preference for small stations. Considering the data already presented regarding the role of age, one would expect that this preference on the lower cultural levels for small stations might be especially marked among older age groups, whereas among younger people interest in jazz might cut across cultural levels and minimize social differences in the matter of station preferences.

Proof that a generally stimulating environment inclines people to listen to serious broadcasts should be collected wherever it can be found in the course of research. It is not advisable, however, to set up special studies for this purpose, because the main purpose should be to learn *how* background factors affect listeners' interests. A closer analysis would very likely show that environmental stimulation operates in at least two ways: a wider diversity of personal interests develops which makes serious listening more meaningful; and there are more people or institutions which specifically suggest that people listen to serious programs. The central aim of research should be to explore these facilitating factors in serious listening.

## TWO FACILITATING FACTORS IN SERIOUS LISTENING

*What Is a Frame of Reference?*

One of the strong influences on the success of serious broadcasts is the extent to which a program ties in with special interests or the "frame of reference" of different groups of potential listeners. A few examples will help to clarify what is meant when we speak of "frame of reference."<sup>6</sup>

When one enters a strange city for the first time, he is bewildered in his lack of any frame of reference for what he sees; forgets the location of places and often misses his way. But after a while, a few landmarks begin to stand out—a tall building here, a certain street corner there—and these begin to serve as a frame of reference, so that from then on the stranger's knowledge of the city increases rapidly. Every new place can be registered in relation to these outstanding points, and whereas at the beginning single items were as likely to be forgotten as remembered, now there is a possibility of building up experience economically.

Take the example of reading in the course of some special study. As long as one is new in the field, it is quite difficult to remember what one has read. But then special problems and points of view of one's own begin to form, and hence-

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Allport, in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association, said of this concept: "It expresses the importance of context; it . . . has to do with any context whatever that exerts a demonstrable influence upon the individual's perception, judgments, feelings, or actions." (*Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 37, No. 1, January 1940.)

forth reading becomes much more successful. The different data and statements are oriented according to whether they prove or disprove some tentative assumption, or whether they bring up a point hitherto overlooked. A frame of reference has been built up which makes reading meaningful, more economical, and more enjoyable.

The importance of the frame of reference is well known to educators. The experienced teacher tries to give problems in arithmetic which grow out of the child's daily experience; he teaches history by starting with the local community. In other words, the educator tries to use the child's existing frames of reference for developing his interest in other and more remote subject matters. Sometimes such a frame of reference may be built up quite accidentally. For example, if we meet at a party an Irishman who tells us something about his home country, for a few days we may look with special interest at items about Ireland in the newspapers.<sup>7</sup>

When people have some kind of special interests, these are likely to form frames of reference which facilitate the acceptance of serious broadcasts. Thus, among farm women living in Burt County, Nebraska, there is, as mentioned above, much participation in club and other group activities.

<sup>7</sup> Often very little intrinsic relation is required between such a frame of reference and the new interest which it supports. In one of our case studies, an army radio operator was interviewed who had written a letter to a psychologist giving talks on self-improvement over the radio. The respondent remarked: "I wanted to use the power that lies in my brain. That's why I was especially interested in the talks of ——. *I always was enthusiastic about radio.* Naturally, these talks *coming through the radio* had a great influence on me."

Over half of the women who belonged to these clubs reported that they employed the radio in connection with their club work. Some of them listened to book-review programs, or to home demonstration talks, or to special broadcasts of the "National Farm and Home Hour," in order to tell other members about them at their formal meetings. In some few instances they followed a particular aspect of the news in order to gather material for a report on a current national problem. Occasionally this listening was even more co-operative, in that a woman would pledge herself to report on a particular program so that others would not have to inconvenience themselves in order to hear it. In each of these cases a special frame of reference made serious listening meaningful.

How vital such frames of reference can be is apparent from the fact that they made for statistically significant differences in amounts of serious listening even among the small sample of 69 women interviewed in Burt County. The women were roughly classified into two groups according to whether they were more or less likely to have some kind of frame of reference which would make serious programs tie up with their own pursuits. Two criteria were used for the existence of such frames of reference: group participation and the presence of some personal hobby or interest, examples of such personal interests being curiosity about foreign affairs because of having once met a Japanese, an unusual inclination to read good books, special interest in cultural topics, and so on. The women who belonged to a

club or had some personal interest, or both, and those who did not qualify on either score, were grouped separately. The one group might be considered better prepared psychologically for serious listening because their interests and affiliations created appropriate frames of reference; the others were likely to be less prepared.

In order to measure the importance of such psychological preparedness, one must beware of formal education's entering the appraisal as a spurious factor. We already know that better-educated groups are more likely to listen to serious broadcasts; the question here is whether a personal frame of reference provides additional interest in serious broadcasts within a given educational level. Hence the Burt County women were further divided into those whose education had ended in the eleventh grade or before, and those who had at least finished high school. The findings are given in Table 14. Obviously those who are prepared by a personal frame of reference do much more serious listening than those who are not prepared. There are three or four times as many listeners as non-listeners in the prepared group, whereas among the unprepared women there are one-fifth as many listeners as non-listeners. This correlation is one of the strongest found in all studies incorporated in this book.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> It would be highly desirable to collect more evidence of this kind because, if the results could be generalized, they would be of decisive importance. The table implies that the effect of education on serious listening operates through personal frames of reference. If the table is reorganized, so as to compare the role of education inside the prepared and unprepared groups considered separately, the residual influence of education alone is very

TABLE 14.—RELATION BETWEEN PERSONAL FRAME OF REFERENCE AND SERIOUS LISTENING ON TWO EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

Relation to frame of reference	<u>Higher educational level</u>		<u>Lower educational level</u>	
	Listen	Do not listen	Listen	Do not listen
Psychologically prepared . .	16	4	10	3
Psychologically unprepared	<u>2</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20</u>
Total number of cases . .	18	15	13	23

### *Devotion to a Cause and Serious Listening*

Some listeners seem to be more or less consciously aware of such frames of reference in that they listen to serious programs for the sake of some other thing they hold dear. In the course of a special study of "America's Town Meeting of the Air," a considerable number of people who had sent in letters were interviewed in great detail to ascertain how they came to listen and why they were interested in the program. One woman in Boston made the following comment:

I am interested in anything educational. It is because of Christian Science. It makes you want to be better and better. There is no effort in this; it just happens that once you start, you go right on being better and better. *This makes me* interested in anything educational, and the *Town Meeting is educational, so I listen to it.*

Other people of this kind do not want so much to improve themselves as to reform the world. Probably one of the small. The interested reader is invited to study how clear-cut such inter-relationships become, if one takes the pains to consider at least three variables simultaneously.



main reasons why people on the lower cultural level listen to serious broadcasts is their interest in a special cause with which they are affiliated.

The Office of Radio Research has begun a study in which people of inferior formal education who listen to educational broadcasts are interviewed to learn how their interest developed. We hear, startlingly often, the following type of comment, which points to the *relationship between affiliation with a cause and serious listening* in this social group:

I just like to know how things are going; I'm particularly interested to know how labor stands, and how it's getting along; *I like to follow it as I've always been a labor man*; I like to know how economic things are going too.

*It's good for me to listen because* it keeps me up on the way things are going now; *I'm interested in* the way things go because you've got to know politics and the way people are thinking if you ever want to get anything done, like *putting this better and cheaper housing business across*.

This type of listener characteristically tries to influence other people to listen to his pet programs. Such respondents either complain that they cannot induce their wives to listen or report with pride the number of family members they have won over, and thus indicate that for them this kind of listening stands for something of general and clearly emotional importance.

The study is not yet sufficiently advanced to supply statistical evidence, but our hypothesis is strengthened through consideration of a group of listeners on low educational and

economic levels with whom we were in contact for some months. There are among them many Townsendites, labor-union members, and adherents of other pressure groups. When they were asked to suggest topics that the "Town Meeting of the Air" should discuss, these pet causes, ranging from the single tax to the question "Will world revolution help America?" were suggested as most urgent. For final proof of the hypothesis it will, of course, be necessary to learn whether, among listeners to serious programs on lower cultural levels, the frequency of affiliations with political and social movements is greater than among comparable social groups in the general population.

#### *Knowledge of Speakers as Frame of Reference*

A personal frame of reference sufficient to make serious listening meaningful need not be a major "cause." Anything that permits an individual to relate a serious program to some prior experience may facilitate its acceptance.

An inquiry among groups listening to the "Town Meeting of the Air" shows how much more serious broadcasts mean to people when they are already prepared for the programs in this sense. For a fee of \$10, these listening groups receive a number of services from Town Hall in New York, which puts on the program in co-operation with NBC. Two of these services inform the groups in advance about future broadcasts. One is a "Who's Who" which gives information about the participants in coming discussions; the other is a statement of the issues to be discussed. These

two services, then, are intended to set up frames of reference into which subsequent broadcasts will fit. Other Town Hall services are more general in nature. These include a handbook for discussion leaders, a pamphlet on methods of discussion, and a general book describing the aims and operations of the Town Meeting. The leaders of more than 100 discussion groups were asked to give each of these services a rating according to whether they found it very valuable, of average value, or only slightly or not at all helpful. The "Who's Who" and the service stating the issues were rated as very valuable by 70 per cent of the leaders, whereas the other material was rated as very valuable by only 25 per cent. Evidently the groups themselves feel that the best help they can get is background material in advance of the broadcast; in other words, a frame of reference.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of prior acquaintance with speakers is further emphasized by the reactions of a group of listeners who were studied over a period of several months. In the case of two Town Meeting programs, the respondents were asked prior to the broadcast whether they knew anything about the speakers, and afterward which speaker they liked best. The answers seem to show that listeners like most those speakers of whom they have had some prior contact, through having read their newspaper columns or books or through having heard of them.

Such semi-personal acquaintance seems to be an influence

<sup>9</sup> We are indebted for the information on listener groups to Mr. Arthur Northwood.

even upon interest in broadcasts of serious music. Station WOI in Ames, Iowa, has a daily morning broadcast of fairly good musical recordings: the "Music Shop." Before each record is put on, the announcer says a few words about some personal incident in the life of the composer or about certain features of the composition. In the majority of 400 letters written to the station about this program, reference is made to these anecdotes. The British Broadcasting Corporation, which follows a similar technique in its recorded-music programs, made a specific study to learn whether listeners want such remarks included; 78 per cent of the responding listeners replied in favor of the custom.

### *Institutional Promotion*

A stimulating background facilitates serious listening, then, by providing personal frames of reference which make serious programs more meaningful. But there are obviously more stimulating influences at work. Relatives and friends talk about serious broadcasts; teachers, librarians, and ministers point out their value. Cultural activities in a stimulating environment are usually promoted by disinterested agents who are listened to because they represent a claim which people are more or less willing to accept on rather general grounds. This is not the place to discuss in detail the "cultural pressure" that is exercised in what is called a rich environment. But let us examine one special form of this pressure which might be called "institutional promotion."

By "institutional promotion" we mean the efforts of so-

cially accredited institutions to encourage, as part of the activities they sponsor, listening to certain radio programs. The facilitation of serious listening which results is partly due to the "good will" that such agencies have built up beforehand. Audiences for serious broadcasts, it seems, can be built up very economically as a secondary effect of the general cultural activities carried on by different kinds of institutions and "movements."

One of the chief research methods for discovering factors that facilitate a certain purpose is to study special instances of success and failure. If radio research is to go beyond the mere routine of hand-to-mouth commercial research, it will have to keep in touch with actual broadcasting experience and to tie in with special investigations of pronounced successes or failures in broadcasting. The Office of Radio Research has therefore studied two stations which are unusually successful among educational stations: WRUL (formerly WIXAL) in Boston, Massachusetts, and WOI in Ames, Iowa. Both stations seem successful because they are associated with institutions having a special interest in promoting them.

WRUL is a station in which a number of prominent Christian Scientists were interested during its early period. The magazines and newspapers of this church give the station considerable publicity not only for its Christian Science propensities but also because of its world peace activities. The *Christian Science Monitor* offers two news broadcasts over the station, and the religious services of the mother

church apparently played a large role in building up a following for the station's other programs. A considerable portion of the original listeners were Christian Scientists who were attracted during the early pioneering work of this station. It seems quite probable that their interest in WRUL broadcasts is greater because it touches their general devotion to everything which bears upon their church affiliation.<sup>10</sup>

Short-wave programs are difficult to get, and reception is subject to great irregularities. The WRUL listeners nevertheless accept such inconveniences in order to listen to their favorite programs. Some of them follow, in addition to the church services, many other programs in which they originally were not really interested, just because they think it is their duty to follow them. They contribute financially to the support of the station. Christian Scientists who do not have their own short-wave sets go to their friends' homes to listen. Indications are that the turnover among Christian Science listeners is smaller than among those who listen because of the station's specific appeals. The station is interesting in many respects, especially because it shows that short-wave broadcasting is likely to become an outstanding medium for educational broadcasting. Here we want to note in particular how, in the case of this station, affiliation with a pre-radio movement facilitates serious listening.

<sup>10</sup> The station has also listeners who are organized around other special-interest programs, like photography and radio mechanics, but they are not considered in the present discussion, although they, too, are partly recruited by institutional promotion. Amateur clubs and popular science magazines can be easily traced as major influences in the listening habits of these people.

Station WOI, operated by the Iowa State College, has a strong financial and administrative connection with the extension work of the college. Its success was attested by a survey of rural radio listening in Iowa, which showed that it stood fourth among stations "heard most during the day-time," although only eighth among stations "having strongest signal strength."<sup>11</sup> Among all other stations there was a direct correlation between signal strength and amount of listening.

Many of WOI's programs and services are linked to the activities of the field agents in the Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service; others provide material of more general interest which can, if desired, be tied in with the efforts of the field agents. Examples of the former type are the weekly "Extension Hour" for talks and entertainment, the "4-H Club" programs, broadcasts of special conventions, and short courses held on the campus. The special features of "Farm and Home Week" are deeply appreciated by the farm people who cannot attend this popular convocation. Opera music broadcast for the benefit of the rural women's music-study groups, and the women's county choruses which are occasionally heard over the station, give impetus and publicity to the "rural arts" program of the college's extension department.

One special feature of WOI is the detailed farm market reports which are broadcast six times a day, and which do much to build a rural audience around the station. A gen-

<sup>11</sup> H. B. Summers, *Iowa Rural Radio Listener Survey*, 1938, p. 10.

eral survey which the Agricultural Extension Service made all over the state showed that the WOI market reports have a larger audience than similar reports offered by other stations, although a nearby station, WHO, is one of the most successful in the Middle West and would probably endanger the success of the physically much weaker educational station if it were not for the close connection between WOI and its parent institution and for the services which the college offers to farmers all over the state. Thus the service which the Extension Service has built up over decades provides the fertilizing soil into which the WOI broadcasts fall, and, conversely, the station in many cases facilitates the work of the Agricultural Service.

To clarify this concept of institutional promotion, let us distinguish it from what one might call direct promotion and from mere personal frames of reference. Anyone who puts a program on the air should, and usually does, advertise it. Advertising is obviously part of institutional promotion. But the latter, in addition, makes use of the prestige and goodwill which the institution has built up through its previous activities. The success of WRUL and WOI shows that people listen to certain serious broadcasts because the stations are connected with their Christian Science church or their Extension Service—that is, to favored institutions. People often want to participate in the work of such institutions, and serious listening can be made one form of such participation—a form which, incidentally, is often less strenuous and exacting than other participating activities. The connec-



tion of serious broadcasts with favored institutions is, then, of pronounced importance to serious listening.

The arousing of listener interest through institutional promotion should be distinguished from interest springing from personal frames of reference. From the listener's point of view the difference is that between intellectual and social motivation: he may listen because the subject matter of the broadcast can be tied in with some already established interests (personal frame of reference); or he listens because he favors the sponsor of the broadcast and is ready to follow in a new venture (institutional promotion). The distinction is of practical importance because the former type of interest points to the techniques that are likely to facilitate serious listening, and the latter type of interest to the institutions which are likely to be successful in such efforts.

This, then, brings us to our main purpose. All of our examples have revealed the degree to which people's listening depends upon factors not inherent in radio programs themselves. These subsidiary, non-radio elements, decisive for the acceptance of serious broadcasting, have been carved out as distinctly as possible. We turn now to the practical consequences of our analysis.

#### AUDIENCE BUILDING

##### *The Idea of Audience Building*

There has been a tendency in recent years to see the problem of serious broadcasting mainly from the program side.

This tendency has resulted in a notable and certainly desirable improvement of program techniques, but our observations seem to show that the improvement of programs will not by itself substantially increase the willingness of people to listen. The range within which serious programs can be improved seems small compared to the range of conditions which determine whether people are willing to listen to those programs. Obviously an important opportunity for practical action in the form of audience building has been all but neglected. Conditions that facilitate the acceptance of serious broadcasts need not be left to their "natural" development. It is possible deliberately to introduce and cultivate numerous conditions, like those just reported, which would tend to enlarge the scope of serious listening. It is a waste of energy and money to pour out serious broadcasts over the air without at the same time building audiences.

Some readers, as we have said, may feel that there is a paradox in the idea of audience building. If people do not want serious programs, why should they be induced to listen to them? This is our answer: Educators and social experts have never merely supplied material to feed interests already in existence; a strong element of promotion is necessary in any progressive program of action. The fact that serious subject matter is broadcast implies that such subject matter is important enough to invite listening. If a broadcaster tries to make his program more engaging, he has a promotional point of view. Why should he restrict his energies to production if the winning of a larger audience by

supplementary effort would widen the influence of the program? <sup>12</sup>

Another objection might be this: If serious broadcasting does not carry itself, if facilitating work has to be undertaken to prepare its acceptance, why, then, bother with serious broadcasting at all? Isn't it better to spend the required energy and money in building up reading rather than serious listening, which, after all, may be viewed only as a substitute for reading? Here the answer seems to be that *it is easier to promote serious listening than to promote reading* beyond the scope it has attained so far. There are a number of obvious reasons why that should be the case. One is the social character of listening; people can listen in groups but can hardly read in groups. If a Y.M.C.A. secretary in a small community assembles a group of members to listen regularly to some serious program, there is a mutual stimulation and check-up which would not be present if he asked people to read books at home. Then, too, broadcasting fits better into the pattern of community activities. Many a discussion group has died because there were not enough good local speakers available and there was no money to invite speakers from outside. A good serious program, however, can take the place of a speaker, and it is relatively easy for the group to find a competent chairman for the subsequent discussion

<sup>12</sup> Reference should be made here to a study which was carried on under the auspices of the National Music League. An excellent music program was put on the air for thirteen weeks, and telephone surveys were made to see how the audience would grow as the series went on. The results showed clearly that, at the end of the 13 weeks, the audiences had not grown at all, obviously because of the lack of any audience-building activity.

of the program. Audience building in such cases can take advantage of all those factors which make people willing to form clubs and discussion groups. Furthermore, serious broadcasts can be helpful in reducing the high rate of mortality which such group efforts usually experience when carried on under purely local conditions.

Putting the whole appraisal of the situation into other words, we might say that, even if we make people want to read, there is still the grave difficulty that many of them don't know how to read, whereas if we overcome the first resistance against serious listening by introducing facilitating conditions, then the advantage which listening has over reading in the way of ease becomes effective.

### *Techniques of Audience Building*

Many techniques of audience building are implied in the discussion of facilitating factors in the second section (page 105 ff.) of this chapter. Some of the methods employed in commercial radio are outlined in *How to Build the Radio Audience*, by Douglas Duff Connah.<sup>13</sup> A brief description of a few possible steps in audience building will, however, clarify our own point of view.

One very necessary step is to make sure that people *know* about the serious programs being broadcast. Here are some illustrative cases that show the importance of making the broadcasts known to listeners.

The State University of Iowa has broadcast over a period

<sup>13</sup> Harper and Brothers, 1938.

of eight years a child-guidance program. This was made the center of a study of non-listening. A random sample of 600 women was picked from the telephone directory, because from previous observations it was clear that only very few listeners would be found in non-telephone homes. These women were reached by a combination of mailed question-

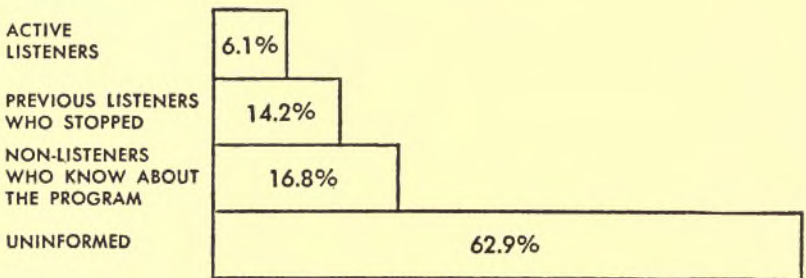


CHART 8.—FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF LISTENING AND NON-LISTENING TO A CHILD GUIDANCE PROGRAM

naires, telephone calls, and personal interviews.<sup>14</sup> They were classified as in Chart 8. Almost two-thirds of the women did not even know that the program existed! Doesn't that show how much is still to be done about the most elementary step of audience building—making people aware of the programs available?

Wherever one investigates this question, one will find similar results. In Springfield, Illinois, for example, the names of 100 women who read rather inferior novels<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This study was made under the direction of Boyd McCandless.

<sup>15</sup> Corresponding to the lowest grade in the Foster scale. See J. H. Foster, "An Approach to Fiction through the Characteristics of Its Readers," *The Library Quarterly*, 1936.

were selected from library records, and these women were asked the question: "What program do you know from which you can learn something?" Table 15 gives the answers of the 74 women who mentioned one or more programs. The second column of the table adds the number of those who not only know of the program but also listen to it.<sup>16</sup>

TABLE 15.—KNOWLEDGE OF AND LISTENING TO "EDUCATIONAL" PROGRAMS AMONG 74 WOMEN

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Number of programs mentioned</i>	<i>Number of regular listeners</i>
Quiz programs .....	39	28
Other interview programs .....	10	10
Spelling bees .....	7	3
News and commentators .....	18	14
Home-making programs .....	10	7
Psychological programs .....	7	7
Religious programs .....	5	5
"Chicago Round Table" .....	5	5
"Chicago Town Meeting" .....	1	0
"Town Meeting of the Air" .....	4	3
School programs .....	8	2
Book programs .....	2	2
Others .....	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>
Total number programs mentioned ...	123	92

The table shows that only a small number of women (5 out of 100) had even heard of one of the major serious programs, which has been on the air for many years: the "Chicago Round Table." This finding is especially startling because we know from other sources that this program's

<sup>16</sup> For these interviews we are indebted to Miss F. Henne of the Chicago Library School.

following is greatest in its home state, Illinois, where this survey was made. Most of the women were asked directly at the end of the interview whether they knew of this program. Only a few vaguely recalled having heard of it.

Pointing in the same direction are the replies given by a representative sample of 171 women in Marshalltown, Iowa. For eight years Station WOI has broadcast a daily program on home economics. As such programs go, it is successful. During the last year 150,000 copies of scripts have been sent to listeners upon request. And yet of the sample studied 36 per cent of the women had never heard of the program.

Here is further evidence on this point. In building up the panel of controlled listeners for our "Town Meeting of the Air" study, we discovered a number of people who had never heard of the program. Later we received letters from a number of these people thanking us for making them aware of the program—apparently they were enjoying it. In another study, people were asked by postcard to listen to an Ibsen play broadcast over WNYC, the New York City municipal station.<sup>17</sup> Ninety per cent of those who listened and returned reports stated that only through our postcards had they learned of the program. It seems, then, that owing to lack of proper information about available programs, there is still a wide gap between the size of the audience which serious broadcasts actually have and the size of the audience they might have.

<sup>17</sup> Hadley Cantril and Hazel Gaudet, "Familiarity as a Factor in Determining the Selection and Enjoyment of Radio Programs," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, February 1939.

Newspapers carry schedules of radio programs including serious broadcasts, but such meager announcements are apparently inadequate. Not only is mention of the few serious broadcasts buried in the overwhelming number of other programs, but the usual *announcements do not help to provide the frame of reference* which is apparently an important condition for stimulating people to listen to serious programs. If local newspapers carried a discussion of the topic to be broadcast and information about the participants, certainly a greater number of people would become interested. It is true that very often such information would have to be provided centrally and would have to be sent to the newspapers in advance. But this is precisely the procedure we are advocating: wherever serious broadcasting is contemplated, a considerable proportion of the available budget should be allocated to audience-building activities. It is better to transfer some funds from production to audience building than to have the broadcast fail to reach its mark.

The stations themselves can do much to make their listeners aware of serious broadcasts by announcing them in connection with other programs. When a new commercial program comes on a network, there is often a considerable amount of *cross-announcing* on other programs with established audiences. This procedure, if used in connection with serious broadcasts, would be especially important because these announcements would reach people who might not otherwise learn about the program. There is practically no group of the population which could not be reached by



proper selection of the programs on which serious broadcasts were to be promoted.

Educational stations have the opportunity of using what might be called *acclimatization programs*. These would be programs, less serious than the rest of the fare offered by the station, devised to attract audiences which otherwise could not be reached. Special care could be given to promoting educational programs among listeners to these acclimatization programs, partly by adequate announcements and, still better, by information designed to set up frames of reference, similar to the background material sent out by Town Hall to its listener groups.

One interesting example of this type of activity comes from Station WQXR in New York, which specializes in the broadcast of serious music. It presents an evening program of lighter music, to which people are attracted who might not listen to more serious music. In 1938 a request program was put on this "Just Music" hour, and many people who had never bought one of the monthly program booklets of the station, in which the serious musical programs are listed, cast their vote in favor of a musical selection. The Office of Radio Research had a special tabulation made of 875 cases of such people who listened to "Just Music" but were evidently less interested in serious music, since they had never written in for the station's program booklet. A year later, 22 per cent of these people had either subscribed to the booklet service or asked for individual copies. Apparently

they had "graduated" from the lighter "acclimatization" program to the more serious ones.

A word might be said here about the importance of discussion groups in audience building. A preliminary study<sup>18</sup> makes it appear quite likely that these groups generally have a shifting membership and are short-lived. But their most important function may be that they acquaint individuals with serious programs. A worth-while aim of radio research would be, therefore, to discover how many people continue listening even after the listening group has gone out of existence.

If our analysis of facilitating factors is correct, listening groups should be more successful where they *tie in with ideological movements*. It is true that the general broadcaster can scarcely provide special programs for every special-interest group to the extent that a labor or Christian Science station can. But many problems, as we have seen, are interesting for such groups merely as an object of scrutiny and debate. By educating these organizations systematically toward such use of radio, audiences can be substantially enlarged. We have, for instance, incidental reports of labor groups that listen to a commentator. The chairman uses the program to show how much of the selection and interpretation of news springs from a point of view with which labor does not agree.

It should be stressed that the type of co-operation be-

<sup>18</sup> By A. Northwood (Town Hall Club) in connection with the Office of Radio Research.

tween broadcasters and outside organizations which we have in mind is somewhat different from the activities contemplated by the different regional radio councils now in formation. The latter seem to be more interested in the distribution of radio time and the intercorrelation of programs. This objective is, of course, important, but here again the necessity for audience building should not be overlooked.

### *The Ulterior Social Value of Audience Building*

Such audience-building activities would often be to the direct interest of local institutions. Librarians, for instance, see the radio mainly as a way of promoting the use of libraries. But if a man comes in and asks what he should read, it might be wise for the librarian to ask him what programs he listens to and then to give him books which are related to some of his listening. In this way different elements of his experience would be integrated, his frame of reference would be enlarged, and, as a result, he would become more interested in his reading as well as in his listening. Very often a book could be recommended which would help him enjoy some serious program to be broadcast the following week. Quite a number of programs are announced on the billboards of libraries, but it would be more important that the librarian keep the serious programs of the coming weeks in mind when she helps in the selection of books. By such correlations of programs and books, audience building could be accomplished at the same time that the aims of the insti-

tution itself were being furthered. Similar possibilities for club groups and Y.M.C.A.'s have already been indicated.

Attention is directed to the analysis of the "Professor Quiz" program in the previous chapter. There it is shown plainly that people are really willing to read for the sake of a radio program. If the librarian finds it difficult to convince certain groups of the population that reading makes sense, he might try to share with the radio the work of promoting reading. The librarian could give the reader his start and then count on the radio program to keep the reader going.

Note this already quoted comment by a respondent in the "Professor Quiz" study:

The program keeps you stimulated. It is like exercising; if you don't use your muscles, you get old before your time. *You keep on reading because you might be able to use it sometime.*

No better formulation of what the common people feel about books has yet been given than this housemaid's report—also quoted earlier—on a memorable experience:

I received a particular thrill when they asked once who was the lawyer in the Scopes case, and I knew it. I had read the life of Darrow, and knew it was Darrow. I felt so proud. *It makes you feel swell to think that something you read you can actually use.* When I put the book away, I didn't think I would ever be asked about it, and I put it away and forgot about it. And when they asked it on the radio, it dawned upon me right away. I felt wonderful. *I knew I didn't read the book for nothing,* and I thought to myself, "It sure does pay to read things; you never know when you are going to use it."

This interconnection between listening and enrichment of background is one of the most important implications in the idea of audience building. It is vividly exemplified in the field of music.

Before radio developed, relatively little serious music was played in America. Suddenly a greatly increased supply of good music was spread all over the country, partly through the efforts of the major networks, and partly because the playing of good records was an inexpensive way for small stations to fulfill their educational obligations. As a result, practically all listeners were in that position in which the less educated find themselves today, so far as serious programs are concerned: serious music was offered to groups which had had no preliminary opportunity to develop an appreciation for it. The Office of Radio Research set out originally to determine whether this vast increased supply of good music created new interests or merely served as an additional source of music for those who were already interested. People who subscribed to the "Masterwork Bulletin," a booklet containing the names of the selections to be played during the music programs of WNYC, were interviewed and asked for the biography of their musical interest and the role which radio played in it.<sup>19</sup> The first returns seem to show that more important than the two possibilities mentioned above is a third one: that radio preserves interests stimulated by background factors which, without radio, would never have developed further and possibly might

<sup>19</sup> The study is under the direction of Edward Suchman.

have died out completely. Churches, schools, and other community groups have always furnished some music and have given many gifted people a start in the development of musical interests, but owing to lack of continued encouragement and cultivation most of those interests have probably died before attaining much stature. Now many of them are preserved and intensified through radio music, so that some people actually attend institutions for musical instruction.

Interestingly enough, the same type of influence appears in letters to Station WOI in Ames, Iowa, as the following three characteristic quotations suggest. People tell about how their original musical interests were fading when radio came to their rescue and even inspired some of them to resume long-abandoned musical activities:

I was brought up in a large English city among musical people, and when I came out to this prairie farm, I could no longer hear the music I wanted. *I missed the music very much, but one adapts oneself and I had almost forgotten about my early enthusiasm.* However, after we had had our radio sometime, I stumbled on the WOI and the Music Shop. Needless to say, I have listened ever since.

My wife and I had a rather generous musical appreciation, cultivated in our childhood, but that was some thirty years ago. We came out West and found that there was very little we could do to satisfy our desire for good music. *That was until radio and WOI came along to rescue us.* Today radio brings us the best in music, and we are making up for the twenty-odd years we missed. It is like being born again.

It was six years ago when I first found the Music Shop program. Quite a few years before that I had given up all thoughts of improving my piano playing and ever being able to listen to music. I have

all the work to do on a 400-acre farm. But when I bought a radio, and after listening to that program (Music Shop) each morning for one year, *I decided to study music again*, and for five years now I have been going seventeen miles every two weeks for my lessons and have missed few times in the five years. *It was your playing of the recording of "Dedication," Schumann, that made me think I must do it*, and now I can play it as well as many others.

Probably there is a still more complicated relationship between personal musical interest and the influence of radio. Musicians who grew up a few decades ago say that they had a hard time preserving their musical interests in a pioneer culture in which the fine arts were considered womanly. The radio with its prestige, especially among people in the low cultural levels, may make serious musical interests more acceptable and thus facilitate the development of musical gifts. Note that this is simply a special case of what we mean in speaking of a richer background as favoring the growth of talents. Interest, prestige, and encouragement preserve and strengthen abilities that would otherwise wither.

Helping to build audiences for serious programs could be, then, a new and effective form of the time-honored effort to raise the spiritual standards of the community.

## *IV. To Read or Not to Read*

### THE PLACE OF READING SKILL IN RADIO LISTENING

#### *How Radio Selects Its Audiences*

WHICH groups of the population are reached more easily by radio, and which by print? The educator as well as the advertiser, the sponsor of a safety campaign as well as the politician, has to decide whether print or radio is more effective in communicating his message. Information about the medium preferences of different population groups is therefore indispensable.

Such information is likewise relevant to that question which is now uppermost in the minds of many intelligent citizens: What will radio do for society? The answer depends mostly upon which parts of the population are subject chiefly to radio's influence and upon the conditions which determine whether or not people listen. Speculations as to what radio will do for mass education should be enlightened by an analysis of the conditions under which the "masses" will or will not expose themselves to education via radio. Again, much of the total effect of any single program is predetermined by the structure of the audience. Here is a pertinent example. The Federal Office of Education has an excellent program—"Immigrants All—Ameri-



cans All"—which describes the contributions of groups of different nationalities to American culture, the purpose being to promote national tolerance. Whether or not this program really makes the native-born American listener more tolerant toward newcomers is, therefore, a highly relevant question. Suppose—and there are reasons to suppose—that the bulk of the listeners are the immigrants themselves, who receive comfort from being told how valuable they are to this country. Then an analysis of the structure and the motivation of the audience reveals that the effect of the program cannot possibly be the one intended originally: to promote tolerance in the native-born.

The actual and possible effects of radio, therefore, must always be studied in two steps. One has to investigate who listens to what, and why. Then, and then only, does it make sense to study further what changes are caused by the broadcast—if people listen. Let us use an appropriate terminology and distinguish between the *preselective* and *subsequent* effects of radio. It is in the preselective effects that we are most interested in this book. To put it colloquially, one might say that *the radio program selects its audience* before it affects it; whom radio—as compared with print—reaches is, then, the central issue in all efforts to compare the two media.

Let us approach this question with these queries: What people prefer radio? What people would rather get through print communications which come in comparable form via the two media? The reader will have to keep in mind that

the questions so stated do not cover all the possibilities of radio. Radio's role in disseminating music and thus changing leisure-time habits is not covered; our approach also neglects the thrill one gets from listening to a unique event which happens thousands of miles away. Radio and print are compared insofar as different population groups prefer the one or the other for the communication of ideas.

This comparison can take two forms: Who are the people who prefer radio as compared with those who prefer print? What are those comparative advantages in reading and listening that determine medium preferences? The two questions are equivalent. We should not understand why people have certain preferences if we did not know the advantages that the two media have for them. But any statement as to reasons for preferences can be tested only if it helps to predict who would rather read or rather listen to comparable content. Hence our discussion will weave back and forth between factors which account for medium preferences and groups which profess them. It will not be possible to exhaust the topic. Some results, however, will be quite clear-cut and others sufficiently suggestive to encourage further use of the technique which has been applied.

### *Medium Preference and Cultural Level*

Available data strongly support the following proposition:

If people have the choice between radio and print for fairly comparable subject matter, the higher their cultural

level the more likely will they be to prefer to read rather than to listen.

The evidence can be found in a variety of sources. For instance, Chapter V will show that in cases where the question has been asked, "Do you prefer to get your news over the radio or through the newspaper?" the answers have revealed a sharp increase of radio preferences with lowering cultural level.<sup>1</sup> The same result seems to appear for all other subject matters investigated.

In New York 304 housewives without college education were asked whether they would prefer magazine stories or radio serials if they had the choice of only one. Dividing the women according to those who did and those who did not go to high school, we get the data given in Table 16.

TABLE 16.—CHOICE BETWEEN RADIO SERIALS AND MAGAZINE STORIES AMONG 304 NON-COLLEGE WOMEN WITH AND WITHOUT HIGH-SCHOOL EDUCATION

<i>Preferred source of stories</i>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Less than high school (per cent)</i>	<i>High school (per cent)</i>
Radio . . . . .	55	31
Magazine . . . . .	<u>45</u>	<u>69</u>
Total per cent . . . . .	100	100
Total number of cases . . . . .	112	192

Education appears to make for increased reliance on magazines.

On another occasion 306 adults in Middle-Western towns were asked whether, if they cared to learn about something,

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Table 34.

they would prefer to listen to the radio or to read about it. Here a random sprinkling of college graduates is included in the group with more than grade-school education. Table 17 shows, again, the positive correlation between education and preference for print.

TABLE 17.—PREFERENCES AS TO SOURCE OF LEARNING AMONG A RANDOM SAMPLE OF 306 PEOPLE IN MIDDLE-WESTERN TOWNS

<i>Preferred source of information</i>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Less than high school (per cent)</i>	<i>High school (per cent)</i>
Radio .....	73	37
Print .....	27	63
Total per cent .....	100	100
Total number of cases .....	154	152

The preference for print among people of at least high-school education is almost as great as that for radio among less-educated respondents. The differences in this table are probably so great because the word "learning" used in the question strongly suggested print to somewhat literate people.

Another illustration comes from a ballot taken by the magazine *Fortune* and analyzed by the Office of Radio Research.<sup>2</sup> One of the questions read: "Which one of these recreations do you enjoy the most?" Then a list of ten different recreations was given, two of which were "listening to the radio" and "reading magazines and books." The answers are broken down according to four economic levels, ascertained by the usual intuitive ratings. On each of four

<sup>2</sup> We are indebted to *Fortune* and Mr. Elmo Roper for permission to re-analyze these data.

such levels we find preferences (see Chart 9) with striking regularities in progression from level to level. On the lowest level the people who prefer radio are more than twice as many as those who prefer books and magazines, whereas on the highest level the relationship is almost inverse.<sup>3</sup>

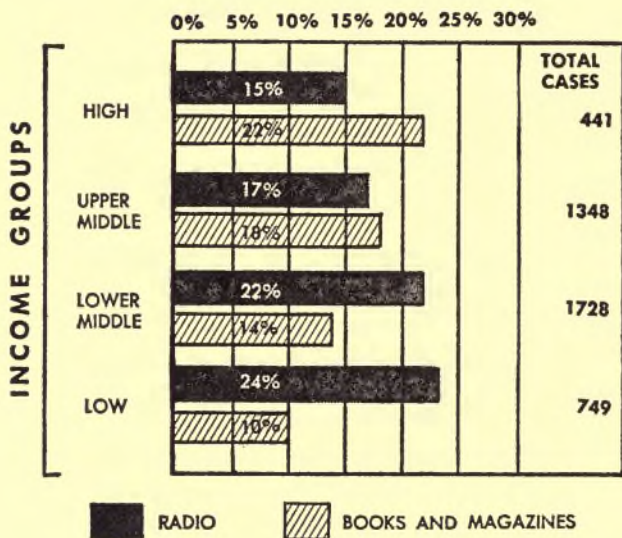


CHART 9.—PROPORTION OF PERSONS ON DIFFERENT CULTURAL LEVELS MENTIONING RADIO OR READING AS FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Similar examples could be multiplied. For instance, Table 25, to be discussed later in another context, reflects once more the same trend. Some previous publications also contain evidence on this point.<sup>4</sup> Our initial proposition thus appears to be a safe generalization.

<sup>3</sup> It might be of incidental interest that the trend of preference for movies goes parallel to that for radio, but is still more sensitive to cultural level. The proportions of people giving movies as their preferred leisure-time activity are, from group "A" through "D," 13, 16, 19, and 33 per cent.

<sup>4</sup> See, for a summary, Cantril and Allport, *loc. cit.*, Chapter V.

*The Experience of Effective Communication:  
A Psychological Interpretation*

Why do people on higher cultural levels prefer print to radio for the communication of comparable subject matter? People on upper cultural levels are, on the average, more skillful readers. We submit that our result can be explained as a special case of the following rule: The higher the reading skill of a certain group, the more they will prefer to read rather than to listen to comparable information, because print is for the skilled reader a more efficient form of communication.

That people with very little or no reading skill might of necessity prefer radio to print is obvious. For a very skilled reader, on the other extreme, reading has definite advantages. In the first place, it is more efficient for skilled readers in terms of *time*. In reading, the reader fixes his own rhythm and rate of speed; in listening, the broadcaster, not the listener, determines the pace. The skilled reader reads more rapidly than the broadcaster speaks; consequently he can cover a given amount of material in a shorter time by reading than by listening. Reading for the skilled reader is also a more *flexible* method of obtaining what he wants. He can choose the portions of the printed page to which he cares to give attention; if he wishes, he can scan printed material. But he cannot "scan" a radio broadcast.

As one goes down the scale of reading skill, these advantages of reading disappear, and radio communication

becomes more efficient and, therefore, more desirable. People feel that "radio is faster than reading," that they "get more in the same amount of time from radio than from books."<sup>5</sup> Often this attitude is expressed in such remarks as the following:<sup>6</sup>

*It takes more energy to read than to listen,* so I listen to adventure stories and don't read them.

I would like to read, but then I think of *all the necessary effort*, and then I don't do it.

It seems that the unskilled reader must concentrate to such an extent on the *process* of reading that he cannot become completely engaged with the *meaning* of what he reads.<sup>7</sup> He is like a person learning a foreign language who must pay so much attention to the mere act of translation that he can give little attention to what he reads as literature. Thus reading becomes less efficient than listening, in terms of the final purpose of engaging in an act of communication.

<sup>5</sup> It would be interesting to make a study, with actual reading-skill tests, to determine at which degree of skill the factor of speed changes from an advantage of reading to an asset of listening.

<sup>6</sup> For the source of the following quotations, see pages 000-000.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough, this strain is often talked about in physical terms. The reader must maintain a certain posture; he must "hold himself up"; his freedom of movement is restricted; whereas the listener is at liberty to choose his position and to move about.

Listening is easier than reading. *You can just sit down.*

I have little time to read books. That tires you out. It is *like the earphones at the beginning of the radio*. You have no freedom.

Listening is easier than reading. You can *close your eyes*. . . .

It should be stressed that these remarks come from unskilled readers. The skilled reader, on the contrary, tires from the effort of adapting himself to the slow speed of a radio speech.

This psychological interpretation, based upon our statistical result, helps us to understand a remarkable fact that becomes clear when one talks with people about their medium preferences. People who prefer reading and those who prefer radio listening give substantially similar reasons for their respective preferences. For example, those who prefer to read say that printed matter *is easier to understand*; those who prefer to listen say that they understand broadcast material more readily:

I seem to get things much more simply by reading them.

I understand easier when I am listening. It is explained better.

I grasp things much easier when I am reading. . . . When I am listening, half the time I don't know what people are talking about.

I prefer to listen. I get more into my head.

I get more out of it when I listen.

Those who prefer to read say that reading is *more absorbing*; those who prefer to listen, that listening is more absorbing:

I am more absorbed in reading because I was brought up on reading before I ever saw a radio.

I "lose myself" more in listening because I listen to the radio more. . . . I'm more used to it.

I become more absorbed in reading. . . . In all radio programs I feel removed, an observer.

I live right inside the radio when I listen.



Perhaps the most striking pair of comments in regard to absorption is the following:

In listening there are always other things that take your mind away. When I read, I have to live with it. *I have to look always at the book. When I am listening, I am looking around.*

When there is a story [on the radio], I think I am there. *But when I am reading, I look up once in a while, I know always where I am.*

Those who prefer to read say that they can *concentrate* more easily on and pay closer attention to printed matter; those who prefer to listen say that radio material gets more attention and concentration:

I can concentrate more when I am reading.

It takes less effort to concentrate on somebody who is talking.

You have to concentrate more when you read a book, and that automatically brings greater absorption.

When I listen to a lecture on the radio, I know I can't go back [reread], so it makes my mind more alert and I think faster.

Reading more completely involves my attention.

If you hear a voice, you pay closer attention.

The readers say that reading is "*more company*" when one is alone; the listeners, that radio listening is "*more company*":

A book is more absorbing. You can forget you're alone.

Radio is more company because I more easily lose myself in radio than in a book.

Those who prefer to read indicate that they are *more convinced* by what they read; those who prefer to listen find radio material more convincing:

. . . I believe things less when they are coming through the radio than when I am reading them.

When I am listening, I am immediately convinced.

I like to have things written down. It gives me a feeling of certainty I don't have when I am listening.

Radio convinces me more because somebody is telling it to me.

Printed things are more vulnerable. That's why they must be proved and reproved. And that gives me more confidence in them.

On the radio, one thinks if they have chosen that man, he must be good. They would not give time to a quack. Time is too expensive on the radio. They certainly have a responsibility when they select somebody.

Finally, there are differences in what individuals prefer when they are in a bad or *troubled mood*:

My mood plays much more of a decisive role in listening than in reading. In reading, I can read even when I am in a bad mood.

At times, I cannot read at all; my mind is too upset, especially when I have difficulties in my job. Then I would rather listen.

In six respects, then, the two groups speak of their preferred tool of communication in the same terms, although the one group refers to the radio and the other to print.

They both feel that the medium of their choice is easier to understand, more absorbing, easier to concentrate on, means more company, conveys more conviction, and is better suited to a troubled mood.<sup>8</sup>

The right answer emerges if one remembers that the two parallel series of comments are made by skilled readers on the one hand (those who prefer print) and by unskilled readers on the other (those who prefer radio). They speak in similar terms about their subjective reactions to two media which are physically different but psychologically equivalent for the two groups. They are in reality referring to the same thing: the subjective effects of the *experience of efficient communication*. Their "reasons" for preferring reading or listening are nothing but the subjective aspects of getting a desired subject matter in the most adequate way. Those who prefer to read feel, subjectively, that print is easier to understand, more absorbing, more convincing, and so on, *because* reading is for them, as skilled readers, the more efficient process. And this experience of efficiency results in these secondary, subjective effects which they attribute to print. On the other hand, the less skilled readers who prefer to listen feel, subjectively, that radio has these same magic qualities *because* listening is in their case a more efficient process than reading. And this experience of effi-

<sup>8</sup> In two of the studies, the question of memory was brought up especially. About two-thirds of the individuals who prefer one of the two media claim that material presented by the preferred medium is easier to remember. In the absence of objective retention tests, we must assume that they mean, mainly, that visual or auditory material, as the case may be, is more vivid to them.

ciency results in the same set of secondary, subjective effects which they attribute to radio.

#### INTEREST AND LISTENING

##### *The Kind of Communication*

Reading skill is not the only factor which definitely influences medium preference. In explaining why they prefer radio, less skilled readers make comments such as the following:

When you are reading, sometimes you don't know the words, then you skip them. When they talk to you, *they talk in plain English.*

I understand more easily when I am listening. *It is explained better.*

Obviously it is not only the process of listening which is advantageous for such respondents. The average informational radio programs are actually simpler than the average printed text, partly owing to the broadcaster's policy and partly because the art of writing readable books is less developed than the technique of simple speech. It can be expected, then, that people who have only a mild and cursory interest in a topic would prefer a series of short broadcasts to the elaborate supply of information usually offered in print.

We have conclusive data on this score for the communication of news. In the study of a book club<sup>9</sup> it was possible

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter I, page 35 ff.

to develop two indices for people's interest in current events. One was derived from a list of eighteen types of books which was submitted during the interview; each respondent had to check whether he preferred those books, disliked them, or was neutral toward them. One category listed was books on current events. Whether a person prefers or dislikes such books, or is neutral toward them, may be taken as three degrees of concern with "news." In another part of the questionnaire the respondents were asked whether they preferred to get their news from the newspaper or through the radio. Table 18 gives the answer for each of the three in-

TABLE 18.—RELATION BETWEEN INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS AND PREFERENCE AS TO SOURCE OF NEWS

<i>Preferred source of news</i>	<i>Degree of interest in current events<sup>a</sup></i> (per cent)		
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
Radio . . . . .	22.1	35.1	40.5
Newspaper . . . . .	77.9	64.9	59.5
Total per cent . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number of cases . . . . .	711	681	492

<sup>a</sup> As indicated by the attitude toward books on current events.

terest groups. The result of the table is statistically clear: the higher the interest in current events, the more frequent is the preference for newspapers. This will be easily understood in the light of the preceding analysis: people who are little interested in news will be satisfied with the smaller supply usually coming over the radio, whereas keenly interested people will prefer the more detailed service provided by the newspaper.

The result is important enough to warrant the use of a second index, this time the reading of current-events magazines. For the respondents in the same study, the magazines read regularly were known, and thus the whole sample could be divided into those who did and those who did not report reading current-events magazines. Again the reading

TABLE 19.—RELATION BETWEEN INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS AND PREFERENCE AS TO SOURCE OF NEWS

<i>Preferred source of news</i>	<i>Degree of interest in current events<sup>a</sup></i> (per cent)	
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Radio .....	23.3	35.3
Newspaper .....	76.7	64.7
Total per cent .....	100.0	100.0
Total number of cases .....	592	1292

<sup>a</sup> As indicated by reading of current-events magazines.

of current-events magazines was taken as an index of interest in news. Table 19 gives the medium preferences of these two groups of respondents. The same result appears quite clearly: the greater interest in news is associated with greater preference for newspapers.

Should one, therefore, conclude that the more people are interested in certain subject matter, the more will they want to learn about it from print? This would be too hasty a generalization. The correct conclusion is, rather, that *the greater the interest in given subject matter, the more strongly will people prefer this medium, which gives a fuller report of the topic under discussion.*

In order to prove this point it was necessary to select a topic on which the radio would give more detailed information than the newspaper. A sports event was a reasonable choice, and 534 Princeton juniors were asked the following two questions:

1. Are you interested in baseball?  
Very much?      Somewhat?      Hardly at all?
2. If you cannot be present at a baseball game you are interested in, would you prefer to (CHECK ONE):  
Read a description in the newspaper?      Listen to it over the radio?

Table 20 shows the medium preferences for groups with different degrees of interest in baseball. The students with a

TABLE 20.—RELATION BETWEEN INTEREST IN BASEBALL AND MEDIUM PREFERENCE AMONG PRINCETON STUDENTS

<i>Prefers to get a game from:</i>	<i>Degree of interest in baseball (per cent)</i>		
	<i>Very much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Hardly at all</i>
Newspaper .....	21	45	52
Radio .....	69	55	48
Total per cent .....	100	100	100
Total number of cases ....	179	201	154

pronounced interest in baseball overwhelmingly prefer the radio, just as people keenly interested in current events preferred the newspaper as their source of information.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Tests were made with similar questions on football and again with news. However, too few students reported that they were interested in news or football "hardly at all" to permit tabulation; but the trend for football was the same as for baseball, and the trend for news the same as reflected in Table 21.

*The Joint Role of Reading Skill and Interest*

Is it certain that two factors, reading skill *and* interest, have really been under our scrutiny? Is there not a danger that these last tables merely reflect once more the role of reading skill? Probably most people who are more interested in baseball are on a lower cultural level (and have less reading skill) and therefore prefer the radio for information on a game. Similarly, people with stronger interest in news might belong to an upper cultural level (have a higher average reading skill) and therefore would prefer print as a source of news. For the latter case, fortunately, we have data to show that the two factors do have importance independently of each other.

It will be remembered that in a study done in co-operation with a book club<sup>11</sup> the respondents were classified according to their reading level. Five reading levels were distinguished, ranging from I (highest) to V (lowest). We thus have a good substitute index of reading skill. Table 21 presents, once more, unmistakable confirmation of the statement that the greater the reading skill, the less is the preference for the radio over the newspaper as a news source. The percentage preferring radio drops regularly from 45.1 on the lowest reading level to 21.5 on the highest.<sup>12</sup>

Now we can use the two indices for interest in current events which have been introduced above, and subclassify

<sup>11</sup> See page 35 ff.

<sup>12</sup> It must be kept in mind that the respondents are members of a book club and, therefore, literate above the average.



TABLE 21.—PROPORTION PREFERRING RADIO TO NEWSPAPER AS A SOURCE OF NEWS ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OF READING SKILL

<i>Reading level</i>	<i>Per cent who prefer radio to newspaper</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
I (high) .....	21.5	160
II .....	26.8	725
III .....	34.5	379
IV .....	36.5	498
V (low) .....	45.1	122

each reading level according to the degree of this interest. Using as an index first the attitude toward current-events books, we have fifteen groups: three interest groups on each reading level and five reading levels for each interest group. For each of these fifteen groups of people, Table 22 reports the proportion which prefers radio to print as a source of news.

TABLE 22.—PROPORTION PREFERRING RADIO AS SOURCE OF NEWS ON DIFFERENT READING LEVELS AND WITH DIFFERENT DEGREES OF INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS<sup>13</sup>

<i>Reading level</i>	<i>Degree of interest in current events<sup>a</sup></i> (per cent)		
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
I (high) .....	18.2	24.4	30.2
II .....	18.8	31.8	35.7
III .....	24.2	39.5	39.4
IV .....	28.6	36.8	42.6
V (low) .....	33.3	42.8	54.4

<sup>a</sup> As measured by attitude toward current-events books.

This table is quite remarkable. It shows that preference for radio increases regularly as reading skill and interest in current events decrease. The group represented in the

<sup>13</sup> The total number of cases for each group is given in Appendix IA, Table 22.

lower right-hand corner is almost three times as likely to rely on radio as the group in the upper left-hand corner. Each of the two factors plays its own part: the effect of reading skill is notable on any of the three interest levels, and for each of the five reading levels the same association with interest is found. And the result is corroborated if the other index of interest, introduced above, is used: the reading of current-events magazines. Table 23 shows once more how people with less interest in news prefer the radio on each reading level and how, at the same time, radio preference increases with decreasing reading level in both interest groups.<sup>14</sup>

TABLE 23.—PROPORTION PREFERRING RADIO AS SOURCE OF NEWS ON DIFFERENT READING LEVELS AND WITH DIFFERENT DEGREES OF INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS<sup>15</sup>

<i>Reading level</i>	<i>Degree of interest in current events<sup>a</sup></i> (per cent)	
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
I (high) .....	16.4	25.3
II .....	21.3	29.8
III .....	24.9	39.2
IV .....	32.0	38.8
V (low) .....	35.1	48.5

<sup>a</sup> As indicated by the reading of current-events magazines.

<sup>14</sup> For the research technician it should be pointed out that here is a result of great interest, for the whole systematic context was obtained by an unusual amount of cross tabulation. As can be seen from Appendix I B, the establishment of the reading level alone required the simultaneous consideration of four variables. Here two more have been added: to wit, a certain type of reading material and preference for radio news as compared with newspaper news. If the original table had been given in full, it would have consisted of several hundred boxes. Nevertheless, the final result is of great simplicity and clearness. This seems a good example of the mutual strengthening of a theoretical scheme and a very thorough statistical analysis.

<sup>15</sup> The total number of cases for each group is given in Appendix I A, Table 23.

A final example of a somewhat more complicated nature is furnished by a careful random sample of 1,500 interviews taken in Sandusky, Ohio during the Spring of 1940. In a study undertaken jointly by Elmo Roper's organization and the Office of Radio Research the respondents were asked two questions:

Question 4: Where do you think you will get *most* of your information about issues and candidates in the coming presidential election: —from talking to friends or relatives, or from seeing newsreels, or from going to political meetings,—or from magazines, radio, newspapers,—or where?

and

Question 8: Would you say you have: a. A great deal of interest in the coming election; or b. A moderate interest, or; c. A mild interest, or; d. No interest at all?

The whole survey aimed at measuring the role of different media (radio, magazines, etc.) in the course of a presidential campaign. For the present text an advance tabulation was made. The returns were divided into two groups according to the people's education, the dividing line being whether they had or had not graduated from high school. On each of these two levels the respondents were further classified according to their interest in the election. Finally, those were singled out who had given either radio or newspaper as their main source of information on election issues and candidates. Thus Table 24 resulted.

We see first that the importance of radio is much greater on the lower educational level; each figure in the second line exceeds the corresponding figure in the first line. But interest in the election seems to make a greater difference among better educated people; and surprisingly enough, preference for radio increases the more people are interested in the campaign. Apparently, with the personality of candi-

TABLE 24.—EDUCATION AND POLITICAL INTEREST AFFECTING PREFERENCE FOR RADIO AS SOURCE OF POLITICAL INFORMATION

(Proportion in each group preferring radio rather than newspapers <sup>a</sup>)

<i>Education</i>	<i>Interest in Election</i> (per cent)		
	<i>Great</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mild or None</i>
High school grad. or more . . . . .	49.7	43.1	38.0
Less than high school grade . . . . .	56.5	53.0	51.4

<sup>a</sup> For base figures see Appendix I A, Table 24.

dates about to play a great role, those who feel a keen interest expect more cues from radio than from newspapers. The difference is slight on the lower cultural level. The people here are altogether less interested in the presidential election, a result which does not appear in this table but comes out clearly from other parts of this Sandusky survey. Perhaps, therefore, they will be guided to a greater extent by local influences, which of course would be transmitted more by the local newspapers than by radio.

So far two influences on medium preference have been studied. They were selected because general considerations suggested their importance, and the merit, if any, of the preceding pages lies in the supply of concrete evidence as

to the role of these influences. Obviously, however, more factors enter into the picture. A writer on this topic could scan his own experience and could well develop a useful list of conditions which might determine when an individual would rather read and when he is more likely to prefer the radio. But such a list would be casual, and one would not know whether it included all essential possibilities. Thus arises the question of whether a technique could be developed which would systematically compare the role of radio and print for the communication of comparable subject matter. We shall now examine studies pertinent to this question.

A PROCEDURE FOR COMPARING RADIO AND PRINT IN THEIR  
MEANINGS TO PEOPLE

*The Technique of Comparative Case Studies*

The Office of Radio Research has made various efforts to determine which people, under what conditions, and for the sake of what gratifications choose radio or print as a source of communication for comparable subject matters.

First, 1,000 reader cards in a metropolitan library were selected and classified as to the types of books the corresponding borrowers had taken out of the library over a period of six months. Then, out of each group of readers, a number were interviewed in regard to their reading habits. These case studies yielded interesting information, but the method proved unsatisfactory for two reasons. It turned out all too

often that the library records did not really represent the reading habits of the borrower. A person would take out books for friends and family members in his name, and would often, himself, read quite different things obtained elsewhere. In these cases the main purpose of the method was upset—the purpose having been to infer the reading interests of the respondents from their library cards and then, through personal interviews, to tie in these interests with their listening habits. Again, and still more discouragingly, it turned out that many of these individuals did not listen to anything on the radio but music and variety, so that the two media served two completely different purposes, and no comparison between reading and radio listening was possible.

The approach from the radio side proved more satisfactory. People who we knew listened to specific programs, for instance to a commentator, were interviewed in detail as to what they got out of listening and how such listening tied in with their reading habits. By selecting a specific program of the type mentioned, we were able to insure a certain comparability with reading, because we could exclude people who listened, for example, only to musical programs. Furthermore, people seem to be much more able to talk about radio programs than about books, mainly because a given program extends over a long period and is repeated in many installments, whereas a book usually produces a more ephemeral impression. But one difficulty still remained:

simple case studies do not permit a check upon the validity of one's interpretation. For instance, if people who listen to a commentator stress their appreciation of the help he gave them in interpreting the news, we do not know whether this desire for guidance is specifically characteristic of the commentator audience or is a much more general psychological trend.

Finally, a procedure was developed which, so far, has proved quite satisfactory. It consists in choosing different subject matters which are presented in print and over the radio in a fairly comparable way, and then selecting groups of people for study who have actually made a decision as to whether they prefer radio or print as a source of this type of communication. In this way the factor of interest and the part that subject matter plays are kept constant, inasmuch as each single study deals with only one subject matter.

The following subject matters were selected for special investigation:

*Novels:* People who listened to a program in which novels were read over Station WOI were compared with people who read the same novels in print.

*Personal advice:* Readers of the Dale Carnegie book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, were compared with listeners to a somewhat similar radio program on self-improvement.

*Home-economics advice:* A comparison was carried out in a small town in Iowa between housewives who preferred to get their home-economics advice over the air and those who preferred to get it from women's magazines.

*Health advice:* A health magazine put on a health program, and the two kinds of media advertised one another. Some of the readers and listeners were compared.

*Child guidance:* Listeners to the Iowa Child Study Group program were asked to compare their listening experience with reading on educational matters.

Before reporting on these studies we must first take up the concept of a standard of reading, in order to illustrate how it was possible, in those and other studies, to make inferences about the reading skill of the respondents. Then, in order to give a clear idea of the technique of comparative case studies, we shall briefly report one of the studies mentioned above (that dealing with homemaking advice); and, finally, we shall take up the main conclusions derived thus far from the studies as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Concept of a Standard of Reading*

At this point it is necessary to be more precise about the term "reading skill," which has heretofore been used rather loosely. It is obviously essential to distinguish between

<sup>16</sup> Studies reported in this monograph have been carried to varying degrees of completion. When a technique was carved out clearly in one area, comparable situations were tapped only to the extent necessary to bring out possible differences. The approach discussed in the following pages deserves more attention than we ourselves could give it. Teachers in the social sciences, interested in timely and manageable pieces of research for their students, might find it useful to assign small lots of comparative interviews of the kind suggested presently, either on the topics just mentioned or on further topics such as: reading news or listening to it on the radio; inspirational texts read or listened to over the air; dramatic works read as compared with those broadcast; travelogues printed or delivered by radio speakers; and so forth. The task of such additional studies would be mainly to put findings on a safe statistical basis, which no single agency can do alone in view of the amount of time such case studies require.



formal reading skill and well-developed reading habits. Conceivably there may be people who are able to read but who, for some personal or social reason, never get around to it, although it is quite doubtful whether such cases are very frequent. Similarly, people with little formal skill might be slow but prolific readers, although these cases too probably are infrequent. No data exist on this point, but we can avoid the issue by introducing the concept of "standard of reading." A person would have a high standard if he had reading skill *and* the habit of reading; a low standard if he had neither; and a medium one if he had reading skill *or* the habit of reading, but not both.

This resort, however, still leaves practical problems unsolved. In the broad type of study needed in social research, the use of a precise test of reading skill will usually be impracticable because of the magnitude of the samples to be investigated. It will be necessary, therefore, to use substitute indices of reading ability. But what is a good substitute index—formal education? socio-economic status? Formal education is highly correlated with reading skill; but there will always be people who are well educated but have done little reading as adults and have slowly lost their skill. On the other hand, there will certainly be people who do not have much formal education, but have developed reading skill because they found themselves in a milieu where reading was socially enforced, as when the uneducated girl marries a man of higher social status. Socio-economic status would therefore be another indicator. Conse-

quently it will be best to play safe by using both indices in combination if we want to get at formal reading skill.

The same reasoning applies when we consider indices for well-developed reading habits. Is it quantity or quality of reading that matters? The answer is that a person who reads many good things should rate high; one who does neither should rate low; and one who scores high in either quantity or quality, but not in both, should be given a median rating.

Out of all this a procedure has been developed which is suggested here in the belief that it may prove useful to students of diversified problems in the field of reading. Four substitute indices of reading skill have been selected: education, socio-economic status, amount of reading, and level of reading. Each of these four variables permits a rough division into two parts: higher and lower. The best procedure is to take the average prevailing in the group in regard to each of those four items—education, for example—and then give a plus sign to a person who is in the upper educational bracket, and a minus sign to one who is in the lower bracket, and so forth. Hence a person will be credited with four signs if he is in the upper bracket of all four variables; and with three, two, one, or no signs, according to his standard in regard to each of the other variables. The number of signs will then be the score of his standard of reading.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> In order to make this procedure more intelligible, it is summarized here in schematic form. Each individual is characterized by a positive or negative status as to four attributes. The following scheme permits one to see at a

This index of standard of reading obviously is not necessarily attached to the four criteria used here by way of exemplification. In one case books, and in another magazines, might be used to determine quality of reading. Or, for the measurement of quantity of reading one might take the number of magazines read, and judge quality according to whether the respondent read any books at all. Furthermore, the scheme is not restricted to the use of the four attributes mentioned above. Sometimes one might use only three, because information about the fourth was not available; in other studies one might want to show a fifth, as membership in a reading club or subscription to book reviews. Finally, the question of what shall be considered a plus and what a minus with respect to each variable has to

glance the number of plus signs to be attributed to an individual according to which of the sixteen places provided in the scheme he belongs to. Once the respondent is placed in the scheme, we immediately know his standard of reading with the help of the number inscribed in the corresponding box, with 4 connoting the highest standard, and 0 the lowest.

<i>High education and High social status</i>			<i>Low education and High social status</i>		
<i>Quantity of reading</i>	<u><i>Level of material read</i></u>		<i>Quantity of reading</i>	<u><i>Level of material read</i></u>	
	High	Low		High	Low
Much . . . . .	4	3	Much . . . . .	3	2
Little . . . . .	3	2	Little . . . . .	2	1
<i>High education and Low social status</i>			<i>Low education and Low social status</i>		
<i>Quantity of reading</i>	<u><i>Level of material read</i></u>		<i>Quantity of reading</i>	<u><i>Level of material read</i></u>	
	High	Low		High	Low
Much . . . . .	3	2	Much . . . . .	2	1
Little . . . . .	2	1	Little . . . . .	1	0

be decided separately for each study by reference to the median in the distribution at hand.

The whole procedure is similar to the one used in developing a standard-of-living index. The possession of such objects as a car, a refrigerator, or a separate living room not used for other purposes is positively correlated with standard of living. The possession of one of these objects alone is not decisive one way or the other; it is the total number of such single items that is most highly correlated with what we intuitively call "standard of living." Likewise it is reasonable to suppose that our standard-of-reading index provides a useful measure of what reading means to people, notwithstanding the index's shortcomings, which always adhere to the use of a crude yardstick of this kind.<sup>18</sup>

*The Four Steps in a Typical Comparative Study*  
(*Home-economics Advice*)

We are now in a position to describe the technique of comparative case studies by reporting, very briefly, the study in which housewives in a small Iowa town who preferred

<sup>18</sup> Such an index not only is very flexible in its adaptation to special problems, but has a considerable technical advantage. It would be quite difficult to develop for each special study a precise scale of level of reading, as has been done in our Book-of-the-Month Club study, discussed in Appendix I B. But it is not so difficult to distinguish just two levels; a higher and a lower one. By using a number of categories, distinguishing each according to "plus" or "minus," we get a final scaling which is much easier to handle. The lack of refined subdivisions of each variable is, so to speak, compensated for by the combination of rough subdivisions of several variables. This index of standard of reading will have to be matched in a special study against a real reading-skill test.

the radio for homemaking information were compared with those who preferred magazines.<sup>19</sup> This technique may be examined in four steps.

Step 1: *Finding two comparable groups of women*, one of which prefers to get its homemaking advice by radio, and the other by magazines. One possible way of finding the groups would be to compare subscribers to selected women's magazines with listeners to a homemaking program who write in to the station. In regard to homemaking, however, it is known that most women get advice somewhere, so that it seemed simpler to follow a random sampling procedure. By this method 171 women were selected in Marshalltown, Iowa, a semi-industrial town of 18,000 population.<sup>20</sup>

Step 2: *Testing the role of reading skill and interest.*  
(a) *Reading skill.* Wherever possible, each study should collect additional evidence regarding the relation between reading skill and reliance on print as opposed to radio. The standard-of-reading index for this homemaking study was developed by assigning each respondent a number of scores, depending upon whether she belonged to the upper or lower part of the group in regard to each of the following characteristics:

*Formal Education*

- + Completed high school or went to college
- Did not complete high school

<sup>19</sup> The study was set up following a suggestion of Frank Stanton, Research Director of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

<sup>20</sup> For the details of the procedure see A. Curtis, *The Listener Appraises a College Station*, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., 1940.

*Economic Status*

- + "A" and "B" homes
- "C" and "D" homes

*Amount of Reading*

- + Three or more magazines read fairly regularly
- Two or less magazines read fairly regularly

*Level of Reading*<sup>21</sup>

- + Read a book during the last month
- Did not read a book during the last month

The women were then classified according to the number of plus signs which they scored from 0 to 4. The small number of cases forced us to combine classes, so that the final figures appear as in Table 25. It is evident how strongly

TABLE 25.—NUMBER OF WOMEN PREFERRING RADIO, MAGAZINES OR OTHER SOURCES FOR HOMEMAKING ADVICE ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OF READING SKILL

<i>Level of reading</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>Preferred source</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Magazines</i>	<i>Others</i> <sup>b</sup>	
High . . . . .	2	46	5	53
Medium . . . . .	30	31	22	83
Low . . . . .	14	6	16	36
Total number of cases . . . . .	46	82	43	171

<sup>a</sup> High = 3 or 4 minus signs; Medium = 1 or 2 minus signs; Low = no minus signs.

<sup>b</sup> In this special study the question was not to decide between radio and magazines, but to indicate the preferred source of homemaking advice; as a result, other sources were mentioned, such as friends, newspapers, cooking schools, etc. They are lumped together here to permit a straight radio-magazine comparison.

<sup>21</sup> The women read so few books that the only possibility of making a classification of level of reading would have been to distinguish a better and a poorer type of magazine. However, on the ground of observation and general considerations, it appeared best to consider the women who had read any book at all as being on a higher level, and those who had not read any on the lower.

women with a presumably high standard of reading prefer magazines, whereas the women with a low standard of reading clearly prefer radio as a source of homemaking advice. This is the table referred to in the previous section, where comparable results were reported.

(*b*) *Interest*. On a given level of reading skill, is medium preference in connection with home-economics advice determined by an interest factor similar to the one which causes people highly interested in news to prefer newspapers and those most interested in football to prefer radio? The available material suggests that the following is the case: Women who have a more genuine interest in housekeeping—those who regard it more as a matter of craftsmanship than of routine work—are more likely to prefer magazines rather than radio under otherwise similar conditions.<sup>22</sup>

A number of questions were directed toward finding out what kind of help the respondents had received during the preceding three months and what kind of advice they would like to get more of. It turned out that the magazine-minded women had obtained a wider variety of advice than the radio-minded women. The latter concentrated more on foods, whereas the former were interested in child care and

<sup>22</sup> The reason for expressing this idea tentatively is a shortcoming of the study. The study was set up at a stage when the theoretical framework had not been well developed. As a result, no index for this aspect of homemaking was devised, and it had to be inferred from more or less related parts of available information. The shortcoming shows clearly how important it is for such studies to identify extent as well as quality of interest of the respondent relative to possible differences in the content of what radio and print offer, even in generally comparable areas. In the studies now in progress, precise care is being put into the elaboration of adequate indices.

in visual aids helpful in interior decoration and clothes making—aids which, obviously, they could not get from the radio. It seems, then, that a broader range of household interests may account in part for the fact that some of the women prefer magazines more than one would expect in view of their general standard of reading. An interesting corroboration comes from a tabulation which shows that women who relied more on magazines had more children living at home than those who preferred radio: this was true for each of the three standards of reading distinguished above. The difference is not reliable statistically, because of the small number of cases: but if this result should prove correct in a larger sample, it would tend to indicate that, on the whole, the magazine-minded women have a richer variety of interests and needs in the homemaking field. They are therefore more likely to avail themselves of the advantages which magazines afford in the way of wider range and assistance with home economics.

Step 3. *Analyzing exceptional cases.* There will always be a certain number of women whose medium preference will not accord with the general statistical trend: women on high levels who like radio better, and others on low levels with an inclination toward print. A careful study of these cases is likely to bring out additional factors influencing medium preference.

From our present study the following points were developed by an analysis of deviate cases. The two “highbrow”



women who preferred radio to magazines were both widows in their fifties who lived alone. Housekeeping was probably no longer a major issue for them. They also might have had trouble with their eyes. Besides, their loneliness might have put a premium on the voice of radio.

Among the six deviate cases on the low economic level who preferred magazines, four women spoke of enjoying "looking at magazines," and only two about reading them. This attitude suggests that the pictures in magazines may have an appeal of their own, irrespective of the information they convey. A corresponding study might investigate whether, among people with the same standard of reading, some have predominantly visual and others predominantly acoustical perception that might tend to determine their medium preferences.

The interviews made in connection with this study were rather short and cannot really qualify as case studies. In an investigation with more detailed interviews an analysis of deviating cases would be likely to yield proportionately more hints about additional factors which influence medium preference.<sup>23</sup>

Step 4. *Discovering additional factors in the retrospection of the respondents.* Since people so interviewed are often quite inarticulate, a special technique was developed which was found effective in eliciting a considerable amount of in-

<sup>23</sup> Extensive use of this method was made in Cantril, Gaudet, and Herzog, *op. cit.*, Chapters V and VI.

formation.<sup>24</sup> The nucleus of the interview was the following set of questions:

- Which of the sources just mentioned do you
- a.* Find gives the greatest amount of information?—Why?
  - b.* Use the most often?—Why?
  - c.* Find the most convenient?—Why?
  - d.* Enjoy the most?—Why?
  - e.* Find soundest and most reliable?—Why?
  - f.* Find easiest to keep for later use?—Why?
  - g.* Find the easiest to remember?—Why?
  - h.* Prefer most in general?—Why?

The different media were thus compared in eight different respects. This list was framed after the study of a number of preliminary interviews in order to adapt it as much as possible to the points of view of the women. The weight of the inquiry, however, lay not with these aspects of comparison but with the answer to the question "Why?" following each of them. It was believed—and the results bore out the expectation—that this technique would bring out much

<sup>24</sup> In order to begin the discussion, the respondents were asked whether they cared for advice on home-economics matters, and, of course, all of them said, "Yes." They were then asked whether they had obtained any such information during the preceding two months, and, if so, to give concrete samples. This information was not tabulated because it served merely to put the women in the right frame of mind. Then a number of possible sources of homemaking information were mentioned specifically, and each time the women were asked whether they could mention a special case in which they had obtained good ideas on homemaking from this source. The sources mentioned were the following: newspapers, magazines, radio, books, study groups, local merchants, neighbors, cooking schools, other sources. In each case, if the respondent said that she had found a good idea there, she was requested to mention the name of the magazine or radio program, or whatever medium it may have been, and to specify concretely the help received. In this way, it was felt that perfunctory answers were reduced to a minimum.

more comment from the respondents than would have been elicited if they had just been invited to compare the different sources of homemaking advice. The eight items used in the questionnaire had no purpose other than to start the women thinking the matter over. The respondents did not have the feeling of uneasiness which usually results if, after they have made a few comments, the interviewer continues to ask, "Is that all you can think of? Is there any other comment you have to make?" and so on. It is true, of course, that very often the women repeated themselves, explaining why radio was easiest to remember in the same terms they had used in explaining why it was more convenient. But the eight leading questions had only a transitory function. It will be seen presently that, by and large, they elicited a great variety of responses.<sup>25</sup> Of course the leading question employed should be varied to suit the particular subject matter under investigation. The best selection can be made for each new study only by special pretesting.

It must be remembered that the purpose of all such studies is to assemble facts about the factors which determine whether people prefer to read or to listen to subject matter

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes it is quite revealing to consider at what point in an interview certain remarks are made. It will be seen later that many women who rely more on magazines than on radio stress the advantages of listening while they are doing their housework. The reference to simultaneous use, however, comes more often when the respondents are asked, "Which do you use most often?" The answer referring to use after work is more frequent after the question, "Which do you prefer?" This probably means that "preference" for this kind of listening during work is necessitated by a heavy working schedule; on the other hand, those women who have leisure time seem to prefer to get their homemaking advice after work—provided reading is not too much of an effort for them. For a more detailed discussion of these replies, see A. Curtis, *op. cit.*

which they can get in fairly comparable forms over the radio and through print. In the following pages we shall examine a list of such factors as derived from the studies undertaken so far. The list is by no means exhaustive, and its arrangement is very tentative because more comparative studies have to be made before one can assume that the whole field has been adequately surveyed.

Two rules have been followed in the choice of examples presented. Comparisons can be carried through only if the respondents have fairly equal reading skill. We know from the previous discussion that reading skill is decisive in determining medium preference. Hence only those additional factors which we can be sure do not merely reflect differences in reading skill are of significance. The second rule is that the ultimate test of these additional factors must be that they lead to group differences. On the basis of these factors one must be able to find two groups of people with different characteristics, one of which we can predict will prefer radio more frequently than the other, according to the respective advantages which correspond to such factors. In the following list, we have referred wherever possible to such tests.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> All of the data contained in these chapters were obtained from field studies. This fact obviously raises a methodological question: the relationship between laboratory work and field study. So far, radio and print have been subjected to comparative research mainly in laboratory experiments. (For a summary and specific examples, see H. Cantril and G. Allport, *Psychology of Radio*, Harper and Bros., New York, 1935.) Usually the subjects have been presented with printed and broadcast matter, and the effects of the two methods of communication have been compared in terms of comprehension or memory, or some other variable. These experiments are highly important, and their continuation is commendable. They obscure, however, the equally important

SOME ADDITIONAL REASONS WHY PEOPLE PREFER ONE  
MEDIUM TO ANOTHER

*Other People Around—Other Things to Do*

Radio listening is actually or potentially a *socialized activity* which one can, and often must, share with others. Hence a person who would normally read sometimes listens to the radio:

When I come home I *cannot read a book because my wife would be angry*. But I can make her listen with me to a good program.

On the other hand, the socialized character of radio listening may influence other people to read:

I prefer to read. Then I am more alone. We have only one radio, so there is always somebody else in the room. *I don't want the others to know in what I am interested*. I like to read in bed. Nobody interrupts me then.

It is interesting that medium preference is related not only to the people who are around at the time but also to

fact that, under conditions of real life, some of the subjects would prefer to read and others to listen to the radio in order to learn about the same subject matter. It was felt that knowledge of the conditions under which people choose one medium or the other is a prerequisite for the intelligent organization and interpretation of laboratory experiments. As the balance thus far has been so much on the laboratory side, this monograph contains only data gained from field studies. Special situations and conditions were thought out which promised to be revealing, but then the problem was centered on the questions: "Who are the people who would prefer to listen or to read, and why do they exhibit this preference?" Wherever possible, hints for follow-up laboratory experiments have been given. The aim, then, has been to provide a somewhat new frame of reference for further studies, both field and laboratory, into the problems of reading and listening—a frame of reference which stresses the choices and habits of people under real life conditions.

those one has to associate with during the day. Thus a person who has many social contacts in his work may read in the evening because he wants quiet:

I prefer something quiet. *Radio is too noisy after all my work.* I am talking and listening the whole day, so I want to have quiet and be without people in the evening.

Another instance is a salesgirl who listens to music or reads in the evening, but never listens to verbal material over the radio, because, as she puts it:

Saleswork in a department store is very hard on the nerves. *I get terribly tired of the sight and sound of people.* I need escape and relaxation.

It is possible, of course, that a person living in extreme isolation would often listen to the radio just to hear people talk.

It is well known that one can often do other things while listening to the radio. These other things are of special importance if they *must be done* and if they cannot be done while one is reading. Sometimes, however, the possibility for co-activities is a matter not of necessity but rather of *attitude*—of whether one has a one-track mind or is restless and wants to do several things at the same time. Finally, the choice between listening to the radio and doing something else at the same time, on the one hand, or reading on the other, will depend upon *how important the subject matter is* to the particular person.

The widespread habit of doing other things while listen-

ing to the radio may, of course, have regrettable consequences. It may be instrumental in developing a habit of inattention and in limiting what programs people turn on and what they actually hear. Thus the tables are turned, and many people do not listen to spoken programs, *because* while listening to such programs they cannot do other things they want to do and are in the habit of doing at the same time.

### *A Second Chance*

Reading permits a person to *dwell* upon printed material, to reread it, and one cannot do this while listening to broadcast material. One may want to dwell upon the material or reread it for sheer *aesthetic pleasure*, or to heighten impressions derived from it:

I prefer to read historical novels because when I come to a good part *I can stop and think about it*, but in a radio program you are carried right through and miss a lot of impressions.

A person may want to stop and meditate, to *study* the material and increase his understanding of it, especially when it occasions difficulties. Such difficulties may arise because of the vocabulary, terminology, or sentence structure in which the material is presented; because the concept systems used as frames of reference are unfamiliar; or because the material is too closely packed—the flow is too rapid in terms of content-time on the radio or content-space on the printed page. Or an understanding of the material may

depend upon a complex or extended process of reasoning. In all of these cases, reading has the advantage over listening:

I like to have things written down. It gives me a feeling of certainty that I don't have while listening. You may have misunderstood certain things. *When you listen you have no possibility to ask somebody about it. When it is written, you can look into a dictionary* when there is a scientific word you don't understand, or you can ask somebody—your husband, for instance.

Again, an individual may want to dwell upon the material in order to *evaluate* it or *interpret* it:

I can step back from a book. I can have more distance and better judge the content and have my own opinion. *Radio* forces you more. It *does not give you time for distance*, and I have an uneasy feeling of not being as free as if I am reading.

The possibility of going back to a printed text, which the fleeting sounds of radio do not provide, is especially important for people whose occupations make them subject to frequent interruptions. In a study of a children's guidance program<sup>27</sup> it was found that mothers often prefer to read because if they are called to household duties they can later resume where they left off, whereas the radio program would, meanwhile, have been largely missed or concluded.

I prefer to *read* for both important and casual topics because you can reread the material. If you miss anything in a broadcast, you're lost. *The children or the telephone always interrupt me, too.* I send for the lectures after any broadcast I listen to, and read them.

<sup>27</sup> This study was conducted by Boyd McCandless.



In a similar situation is the young man employed in a grocery store:

*In my work, I must always be ready for interruptions. It is easier to leave a book than the radio. With a book, you can always go over it again, but if you miss something on the radio, you're out of luck.*

### *The "Directive" Role of Radio*

Because radio fare is limited and is available only at specific hours, radio exerts a directive influence upon listeners in their *choices of what to listen to*. A person's choice is made easy because of the few offerings available, whereas he may be bewildered by the problem of choice in the boundless ocean of print:

*With books, the choice is so much greater and you can pick a wrong one. It takes too much time to get your own judgment.*

So often you go to the library and *you don't know what you want* and get something you don't care for. . . .

We venture the opinion that for many persons who listen to programs such as "America's Town Meeting of the Air" and the "Chicago Round Table," this directive influence of radio in regard to serious programs is conducive to listening. The rapid increase in the number of political problems which call for attention makes it very desirable for the politically untrained person to judge their relative importance. The selection of topics on such programs may serve as an appropriate yardstick. Such a yardstick seems especially valuable to what one might call "small-town professionals"—people

who are sufficiently alert intellectually to be interested in social issues but who live in an environment which does not give them much guidance.

Because the beginning and the end of radio programs are fixed in terms of time, radio also exerts a directive influence with respect to the question of *when to listen and when to stop listening*, for which there is no corresponding determinant in reading. Several of the listeners to the Iowa novel-reading program commented as follows:

I rather like the idea of having just that half hour. If I start a book I'm not satisfied until I finish it. With the radio *you know that at 1:30 that's all there is* until tomorrow.

When I get started *reading, I can't stop*, and then I neglect other things.

The following comment expresses the same idea, but in curiously inverted terminology:

I don't like to stop in the middle of things. You must do that when you read a book. A radio program is a thing you can *listen to from the beginning to the end*.

In other words, radio sets out the "task for the day," which begins and ends at regular hours. This schedule provides a regularity which is absent in reading and which some people welcome. After listening to each day's program, many listeners have a sense of completion, whereas in reading there is no closure until the book is finished.

Radio through its use of voices, sound effects, and incidental music provides a kind of *imaginative direction* lacking

in print. Print conveys primarily verbal content; the reader's imagination must do most of the job of picturing the setting, the characters, and so on. Radio, on the other hand, does some of the work for the listener: he hears the characters speak, and sound effects further the illusion of the setting.

I can create the picture of the characters by hearing a novel read well. I like to picture things as I read and do it better if I hear. *Characters become pretty vital and alive if heard.*

Some persons, on the other hand, prefer to do their own imaginative creation. They do not like the "directive" assistance forced on them by the radio:

I don't like to hear reading, because no one else can read the way I can. *Nobody else gives it the interpretation I do.*

A question worth investigating is whether the desire for such aids to the imagination as radio provides is an independent characteristic of certain people or a result of lack of reading skill.

An unexpected form of the directive role of radio is suggested by women who say they prefer listening because *they read too fast*. They mean that many parts of the book which they considered valuable are skipped by the reader, who is anxious to follow the plot. When listening one is not led into the temptation to skip and skim:

It seems to me that I get more out of it when I listen to her [the reader of a novel over Station WOI]; *she brings out the philosophy and the description* and so on that you miss when you read rapidly.

People with rather little interest in current events would comment in a similar way when explaining that they prefer the radio news bulletin to newspapers because they read too fast, and so are likely to miss what is important. It should be interesting to students of reading to examine more carefully what is meant by this surprising term "reading too fast," which is used by unskilled readers when they discuss subject matter somewhat over their heads.

To summarize, we may say that the directive influences of radio—its effect on choices of what to listen to and when to start and stop listening, its assistance to the imagination, and its presentation of a balanced content—may please people with no standards of judgment or with unspecific standards, but may repel individuals with specific, individualistic interests.

#### *Four Other Reasons for Medium Preferences*

It was obvious in some of the comparative case studies that radio and print have what might be called a different *valence*. In general, people feel that reading is more difficult, more worth while, more educational and cultural than radio listening:

Reading is more important to me because it has *more lasting values*.

Opera is the only thing on the radio comparable to reading . . . *beautiful and high-class*.

On the other hand, there is a general belief that radio listening is easier, that it requires less effort, that broadcast presentations are more "popularly keyed," that radio stresses entertainment rather than education. Among people of higher social and cultural standing this valence factor with its consequences in prestige and social acceptance tends to encourage reading. Among persons of lower social and cultural status the same factor tends to discourage reading, which seems too forbidding. Among such people there may also be an unconscious identification of reading with formal education, which they consider laborious and unpleasant. For them the prestige and social-acceptance aspects of reading do not exist.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas reading has the greater valence, radio can point to the *expressive surplus value of the human voice*, because of which the listener may feel that he learns more than the speaker actually says or intends to say.

An extreme case in point occurs when a person who cannot understand German listens to one of Hitler's speeches. He knows he can read the verbal content later in the newspaper. While listening, he cannot even understand what is said. Yet he listens because he thinks he may learn something, quite beyond verbal content, about the speaker's determination or sincerity or ability. This expressive surplus value of the voice seems to be the core of the much-vaunted

<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, also, the prestige factor works in curious reverse, as with the housewife who commented as follows:

"I feel always a little bit *ashamed when I read*. It looks so lazy. You don't just sit and read if you have a family."

“personal relationship” and added participation afforded by radio.<sup>29</sup>

Closely related to this phenomenon are other *auxiliary appeals* which radio can make use of. The contest and the discussion are the most outstanding examples of information vehicles that the book can hardly use.<sup>30</sup> Books and magazines, of course, can offer pictures, which radio in its present stage of development (pending the improvement and popularization of television) cannot supply.

Finally, there is the element of *listening skill*: people might have varying abilities to comprehend what they hear. If such differences exist among persons of the same intelligence and the same reading skill, then the individual with the greater listening skill might be more likely to listen to the radio than the one with less listening skill. This matter of listening skill has received little attention to date, and would seem to be a fruitful subject for investigation. Frank Stanton, Research Director of Columbia Broadcasting System, suggests developing listening tests similar to the existing reading tests.

<sup>29</sup> This is different from the feeling of being “on the inside” which some people have when listening to an event like a coronation. The same feeling prevails if we see a handwritten letter of Lincoln’s in a museum. And it presumably disappears when the letter is printed or the coronation broadcast is recorded. The expressive surplus value of the voice, however, remains on the record. Incidentally, if one were to follow up this trend of thought, the graphological analysis of a handwriting sample could connote what we gain by listening to a speech instead of reading it. For the distinction between the elements of content and expression in a communication, see Karl Buehler, *Sprachtheorie*, Leipzig, 1934.

<sup>30</sup> Early writers—Plato, Chaucer, and Boccaccio, for instance—obviously hoped that the discussion form could be used successfully in books. But print could not make a sufficiently clear distinction between the participants in the discussion to warrant the additional effort.

*Does "Radio-mindedness" Exist?*

As we closely scrutinize the comments contained in our case-study data, we may ask ourselves whether, after all these factors have been isolated and applied, there is not still something else deep in the personality of an individual which affects his tendency to read or to listen? Is there something that one might call "listening-mindedness" or "reading-mindedness" which, apart from all the factors we have isolated and mentioned, may cause an individual to prefer reading or to prefer listening?

The "feel" of the case-study material suggests such a possibility. Take, for instance, the following two comments:

I really enjoy sitting down and just having someone read to me.

I don't like to be read to by anyone.

Is this difference to be explained on the ground that some people are "listening-minded" and others not? We cannot say, on the authority of our present data, whether such residual personality factors exist; but we can mention two aspects of radio listening and of reading which might possibly be the psychological bases for such factors.

The first is that radio listening is a relatively *passive activity*, while reading is active:

I have to be more active in reading. *Radio makes us passive.*

*A book . . . gives me something to do.* Radio is just sitting.

It may be that some individuals have a personality which makes them prefer the active process of reading; others, a

personality which makes them prefer the passive process of listening.

Another possible basis for preference based upon a residual personality factor is that radio employs the *human voice*; reading obviously does not. Again and again in our case studies, respondents mention the human voice as if it were of especial importance:

It is more *interesting* when a person talks to you.

I like the voice. It is *nearer* to you.

A voice to me has always been more *real* than words to be read.

I like to hear a voice better than reading. It's more *exciting*.

The voice may constitute a *social appeal* for people who are especially receptive to social contacts, and thus make them prefer radio more than might otherwise be expected.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> One who is inclined toward more hazardous speculation might feel that, in addition to differences based upon degree of passivity and desire for human contact, there may be a third personality difference which could be related to different degrees of radio-mindedness. We have in mind what might be called two different types of attitude toward authority. One type enjoys the element of order and command more; the other, the element of comfort and guidance implied in our relationship to social agents more powerful than ourselves. It might be that information and advice conveyed by print carries more weight with the former type, whereas radio communications are more impressive for the latter. In the home-economics study summarized on pages 161-168, women were asked whether, in their opinion, radio or magazines gave more sound and reliable advice. The two groups which voted for the one or the other medium explained their choice in rather different ways. Women who preferred magazines said:

Writers well trained.

Written by authorities that give tested information.

I feel I am perhaps getting more authoritative advice.

Experienced people send ideas in to magazines.

Here the element of strict authority comes out rather clearly. The other



Consideration should be given in the future, then, to devising methods of ascertaining whether "listening-mindedness" and "reading-mindedness" exist, and if so, to techniques for measuring them.

One way to test the existence of such a psychological *residual factor* would be as follows:

1. People who score high on an *activity-passivity* test and others who score low should be compared as to their reliance on radio and print. The two groups of subjects should first be equated as closely as possible on the basis of reading skill and interest in the particular subject matter.

2. The same procedure should be followed with two groups which score high and low on a test of *self-sufficiency*, directed mainly toward finding out whether the company of other people plays an especially great or small role for these people.

The point in both cases is to see whether certain personal characteristics of people make them more inclined toward one or the other medium, all other factors being substantially equal.

women who prefer radio mention this element of authority in a smaller number of cases and more commonly speak in terms such as the following:

They talk directly to you as person to person.  
Voice has a lot to do with inspiring confidence.  
I guess that radio tells what is true.

One might see the picture of a strict father behind the first group of quotations and of a mellow one behind the second group. Taken in such an isolated context, such speculations are not convincing. But they apply to quite a variety of fields, as is being shown in a paper on file at the Office of Radio Research: T. W. Adorno, *Elements of a Social Critique of Radio Music*.

## THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RADIO

*The Limited Supply of Programs*

Many people in our studies listened to the radio at times because they could not get the book they wanted, and many read because the radio was out of order. These situations are only aspects of a much larger matter to be investigated. All the factors studied so far lack final practical value without information as to what people can get over the radio as compared with what they can get from print. For an initial orientation, let us survey this question of accessibility.

Besides the fact that printed material must be bought and radio is—at least seemingly—free, the most obvious difference between the two media is that the supply of serious subject matter offered by radio is much smaller than that available in print. This difference has an interesting bearing upon the relationship between quality and quantity in the consumption of radio material as compared with printed matter. In the book-club study<sup>32</sup> it was possible to classify people according to the number and the maturity level of books they had read during the preceding month.<sup>33</sup> Chart 10a shows most clearly that the people who read the

<sup>32</sup> See page 35 ff.

<sup>33</sup> This classification of level is rougher than the one used on pages 38-40. As can be seen in Appendix I B, the refined classification of reading groups uses both level and amount of reading as criteria. But up to a certain point in the development of the index, amount of reading was not introduced, and this notion of level, based only on the type of books read, is used in this table.

better books are likely to read more books. The readers on the high level read about three books a month, whereas the readers on the low level read, on the average, about one book per month.

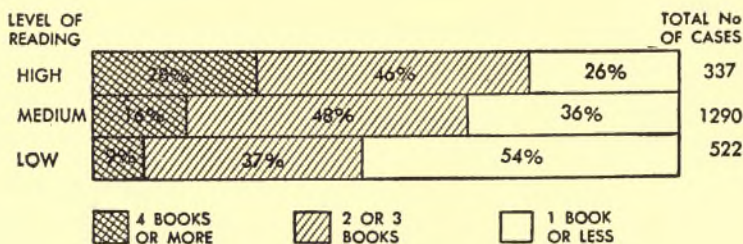


CHART 10a.—RELATION BETWEEN QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF READING

The relationship is the reverse in radio listening. In the course of our investigations we learned how long 1,000 people had listened to the radio the evening preceding the study. These people were classified as "serious listeners" or

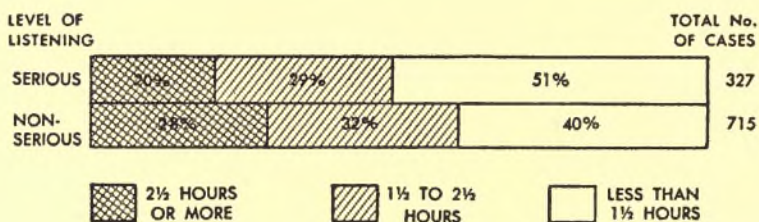


CHART 10b.—RELATION BETWEEN QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF LISTENING

"light (non-serious listeners," according to the distinction used before.<sup>34</sup> Chart 10b shows that the people who listen to better programs listen much less than the "light listeners." Only 20 per cent of the serious listeners, as compared with 38

<sup>34</sup> See the discussion of this classification on page 37 of this report.

per cent of the light listeners, are at the radio more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours a day. The two graphic examples together show that the relationship between quantity and quality is positive for reading and negative for listening: obviously an effect of, among other things, how little serious material is available on the air.

### *The Limited Availability of the Listener*

Probably the most critical aspect of accessibility is the fact that radio programs come at fixed hours, so that people themselves have to be available at such times in order to hear them. The saying that radio goes everywhere and is within the reach of everyone is true only of broadcasts in general. If we concentrate on a specific supply of programs, the picture changes considerably. If one who turns on the radio at a certain moment finds just what he wants to listen to, he is simply lucky. The necessity of adapting one's own schedule to the station's schedule, if one is interested in a specific program, may make specific radio material less accessible than a special book. Hence people often listen to what they can get on their radios at such times as they are able and inclined to listen, rather than to what they really like. A few examples will show the implications of this point.

When a commercial radio program with a considerable following goes off the air, the people who were in the habit of listening to that program exercise their limited choice in two ways. Some of them stop listening entirely at that hour; thus the total size of the radio audience decreases. Some of

them make a new choice among the remaining competitive programs; they select another as "next best" and begin listening to it. Obviously choice in such situations is deter-

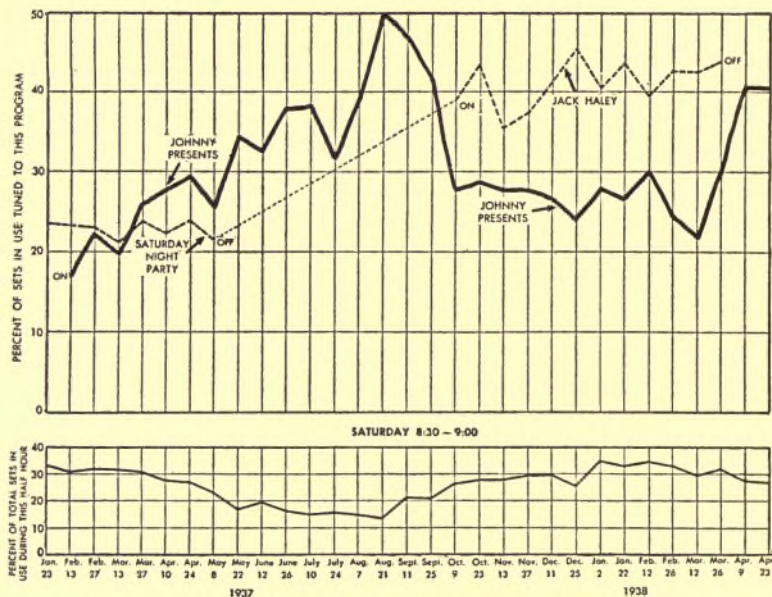


CHART II.—EFFECT OF OLD COMPETITIVE PROGRAM GOING OFF AND NEW PROGRAM COMING ON

mined not by any absolute standards of like and dislike but on a relative basis in the light of the limited offerings then available.

Chart II provides a good example of these two effects of the discontinuance of a popular program: the decrease in total amount of listening, and the increase in the audience for a competing program. For some time in 1937 two programs were broadcast on Saturday night from 8:30 to 9:00

P.M. One was a variety program, "Saturday Night's Party"; the other a dramatization of the "thrill of the week" under the title "Johnny Presents." In May the first program went off the air and "Johnny Presents" was left without major competition from other sponsored shows. In October a new comedy program by Jack Haley came on. The two effects of the going off and coming on of these competing programs are quite distinct. On the one hand, the audience of "Johnny Presents" rose considerably when "Saturday Night's Party" went off, and dropped back to its old level when the Jack Haley program came on. On the other hand, the total audience for this period went down when there was only one big show on, and went up again when a second major show came back on the air.<sup>35</sup> The fluctuation of the total audience, shown on the lower portion of Chart 11 with the audience figures for the two programs, makes the comparison easier.

In somewhat similar vein, an Office of Radio Research study of Boake Carter's audience in Syracuse and Columbus tends to show that, in a general way, the fewer are the major offerings available, the smaller is the size of the total radio audience; but also that under such conditions the gains in the audiences for each available broadcast are probably due to the fact that a considerable number of people listen because nothing they like better is accessible at the

<sup>35</sup> This is indicated by the sudden drop of total audience on May 22, and the sudden rise on October 9. Between these two dates, during the summer, the total audience decreased as the result of the well-known seasonal fluctuation. The example is taken from a mimeographed publication of the Office of Radio Research: H. M. Bevelle, *Social Stratification of the Radio Audience* (second printing, 1940).

moment. Table 26, taken from this study, gives in the first line the total amount of listening at 7:45 P.M. on a weekday in February, 1938, in the two cities. In the second line the proportion of listeners tuned in to Boake Carter is given.

Columbus had four radio stations, and Syracuse two. Also there seem to be more stations within receiving distance of Columbus than of Syracuse, since, according to our study, at the hour of Boake Carter's broadcast Columbus people

TABLE 26.—COMPARISON BETWEEN TOTAL AMOUNT OF LISTENING AND AMOUNT OF LISTENING TO BOAKE CARTER IN SYRACUSE AND COLUMBUS

	<i>Per cent in Syracuse</i>	<i>Per cent in Columbus</i>
Proportion of radio sets on . . . . .	45.0	60.6
Proportion of radio sets tuned in to Boake Carter	33.5	19.2
Total number of interviews (= 100%) . . . . .	400	400

listen to almost twice as many programs, in addition to those broadcast locally, as are mentioned by Syracuse listeners. Probably as a result of this greater supply more people listen to the radio in Columbus than in Syracuse, but since listening is spread out among more competing programs, the proportion of listeners attracted to a single program such as Boake Carter's is smaller.<sup>36</sup>

People further limit their choice by becoming *habituated to particular stations*, and if the difference between the programs offered by the various available stations is not too

<sup>36</sup> The study shows incidentally that, as a result of this circumstance, the audience of the commentator is likely to consist of two parts. One section is made up of those who always listen to him and who are obviously interested in what he has to say. The other part is a floating, accidental audience which just listens because nothing it likes better is accessible at the moment.

great, they are more likely to listen to the one broadcast over that station which has become their favorite. No definite information is available on the extent of this habituation, but its existence is reflected in data from an extensive telephone survey made in eight cities. The average percentage of radios tuned in to Boake Carter during a typical

TABLE 27.—COMPARISON OF STATION POPULARITY WITH SIZE OF AUDIENCE TO BOAKE CARTER IN SEVERAL CITIES

<i>City</i>	<i>Average proportion of sets tuned to station carrying Boake Carter</i>	
	<i>During five Boake Carter programs (per cent)</i>	<i>During all programs of a week (per cent)</i>
Charlotte .....	91.0	77.7
St. Louis .....	52.6	49.2
Twin Cities .....	42.5	32.8
Washington .....	37.0	26.0
Boston .....	31.6	24.0
Cincinnati .....	31.0	19.7
New York .....	19.7	23.7
Chicago .....	19.4	27.6

week was computed; the figures are given in the first column of Table 27. In the second column figures are given for the average size of the audience for all programs broadcast during the week by those stations which broadcast Boake Carter. The share which each station gets of the total radio audience can be taken as a measure of the extent to which listeners are habituated to the station. A comparison between the two columns shows how closely the size of Boake Carter's audience varies with the general following of the eight stations.

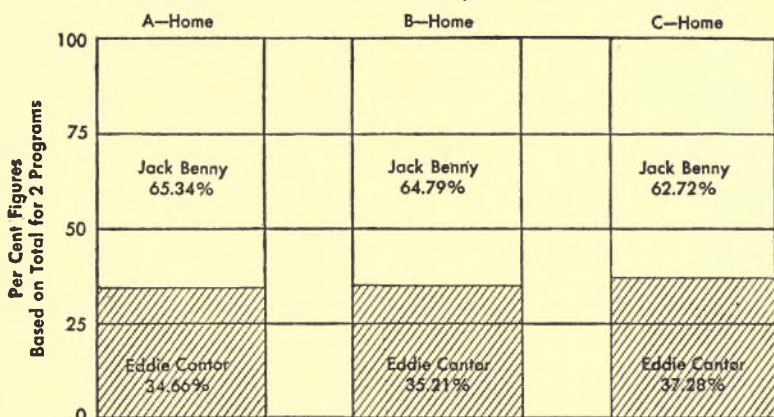


*How Accessibility Determines Audience Stratification*

That people are forced to listen to what they can obtain when they are able to listen can be corroborated inferentially from another type of material. During the season 1935-1936 two well-known radio comedians were in direct competition on Sunday night from 7:00 to 7:30. One was Eddie Cantor; the other, Jack Benny. It has already been mentioned that the Jack Benny program is the more sophisticated of the two, and therefore, in studies of program preferences, is more frequently mentioned than the Eddie Cantor program in the upper cultural levels, while Eddie Cantor is mentioned more than Jack Benny in the lower levels. We find this preference reflected in the C.A.B. data.<sup>37</sup> When the two comedians are on at the same time, Cantor's audience increases with decreasing cultural level as compared with Benny. This is shown in the upper part of Chart 12. The next year Eddie Cantor broadcast on Sundays from 8:30 to 9:00, this time his major competitor being another program, "Do You Want to Be an Actor?" That was an amateur show which, as such shows go, had an especially strong appeal to the lower cultural level. If people with more sophisticated tastes wanted to listen to the radio, they now had no other choice than to listen to Eddie Cantor. As a result, Cantor's audience now decreases with decreasing cultural level as compared with the "ham" program. The evidence is given in the lower part of Chart 12.

<sup>37</sup> See page 15 ff.

SUNDAY 7:00 — 7:30 P.M. E.S.T  
 Oct. 1935 — Apr. 1936



SUNDAY 8:00 — 8:30 P.M.  
 Oct. 1936 — Apr. 1937

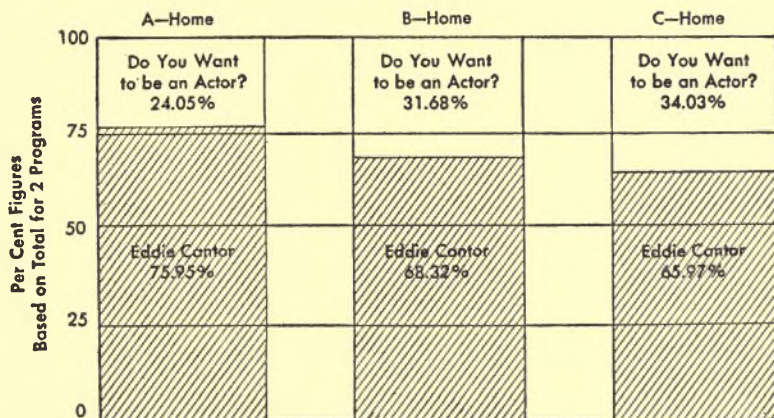


CHART 12.—SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF A COMEDIAN'S AUDIENCE UNDER DIFFERENT COMPETITIVE CONDITIONS

The same phenomenon is apparent with another program, that of Leo Reisman's orchestra. Chart 13<sup>38</sup> shows that when it was opposite the "Eno Crime Club," its audience decreased with decreasing cultural level if compared with the crime program. When later, however, it was opposite two other programs which evidently have quite a different appeal, its audience was increasing toward the lower cultural levels.

In other words, limitations in the supply of programs accessible to listeners at any given time affect even the stratification of the audience to these programs. Audience stratification is an index of program appeals.<sup>39</sup> Consequently the data given above indicate that radio programs, within limits, carry no absolute appeals; that their appeal is relative and is experienced by many listeners in comparison with competing programs accessible at the same time.

The sequence of examples just reported should make it

<sup>38</sup> The programs cited in the chart are annotated as follows:

*Eno Crime Clues*: Mystery drama by Stewart Sterling, in which detective Spencer Dean and his helper Dan Cassidy play the leading roles. Each episode is a complete story and is packed with thrills and excitement.

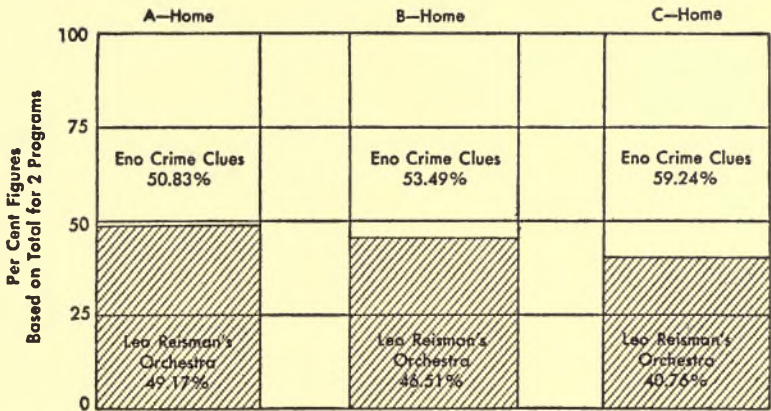
*Leo Reisman's Orchestra*: (Philip Morris) dance orchestra, directed by Leo Reisman, with Phil Duey and Sally Singer as soloists. Phillips Lord, in a new series of thrills from life, presenting to the air men and women who have had weird adventures.

*Hammerstein's Music Hall*: Variety program presented in the style of the old-time music hall. Ted Hammerstein, producer, acts as Master of Ceremonies. The talent includes an orchestra with Lucy Laughlin and Jerry Mann as soloists. Frequently guest artists are presented.

*Log Cabin Dude Ranch*: Songs of the range and cowboy ballads sung by Louise Massey and the Westerners, with the accompaniment of a guitar. Also a dramatized story by Jim Babcock, picturesque veteran of the plains. These stories are done by flashback and deal mostly with the old West.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter II, page 60 f.

TUESDAY 8:00 — 8:30 P.M.  
Oct. 1935 — Apr 1936



TUESDAY 8:00 — 8:30 P.M.  
Oct. 1936 — Apr. 1937

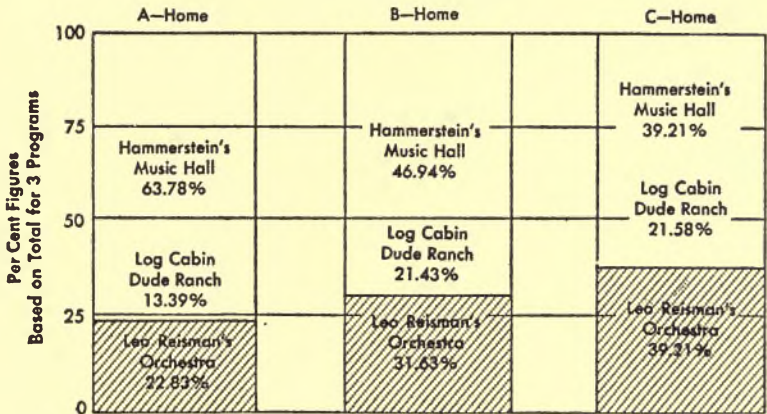


CHART 13.—SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF AN ORCHESTRA'S AUDIENCE UNDER DIFFERENT COMPETITIVE CONDITIONS

clear that accessibility plays an effective role in people's "communication behavior," and that although this role is not yet generally measurable it is certainly considerable.

#### A CHALLENGE TO THE MAN OF ACTION

##### *They Do What They Prefer*

Of the many aspects of radio and the printed page which could be compared, the reasons why people might prefer one or the other have been examined in this chapter. For two factors in preference, reading skill and interest, rather precise data could be adduced; other factors have been listed and exemplified by material gained from comparative case studies. We have studied the accessibility of radio through the interpretation of various figures on listening to specific programs and stations. But a number of serious questions have been implied, and it is the intention of this section to answer two of them.

Of considerable importance to the validity of our analysis is this query: Are people who say they prefer a certain medium also more likely to use it? A positive answer can be given and documented. If two groups of respondents are asked which medium they prefer for a comparable content, then the group in which reading is preferred will also show a higher degree of actual interest in reading, if we accept the validity of indices such as the number of magazines subscribed to, the amount of time spent in reading,

and so on. Corresponding indices regarding radio habits will be lower in the group that prefers reading.

In the next chapter we shall find evidence, collected from thousands of interviews to support our assertion. But even in very small "spot" studies it proves true that when people express a preference for one medium over the other they are suggesting a good index of their communication habits. In a study of listeners to a child-guidance program in Iowa 74 women stated their preferences for listening or reading as a means of obtaining pertinent information; similar answers are available from a group of 107 women who were interviewed in the same state in connection with a home-economics program. Table 28 gives some data on actual listening and reading habits of those who prefer radio and those who prefer print.

TABLE 28.—SOME READING AND LISTENING HABITS OF TWO GROUPS OF WOMEN WITH PREFERENCES FOR DIFFERENT MEDIA

	<i>Preferred source</i>	
	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Print</i>
<i>Average number of magazines read regularly</i>		
Child-guidance program listeners . . . . .	3.7	4.9
Housewives sampled at random . . . . .	2.2	4.0
<i>Average hours of radio listening</i>		
Child-guidance program listeners . . . . .	3.8	2.3
Housewives sampled at random . . . . .	5.2	2.8
<i>Average number of homemaking programs heard regularly</i>		
Housewives sampled at random . . . . .	2.3	1.2

Similar corroboration of our point is offered by the study of book-club members discussed earlier in this text. The

respondents can be divided according to the way in which they prefer to get their news, and a very revealing series of data on actual behavior corresponds to the expressed preferences. (See Table 29.)

TABLE 29.—SOME READING AND LISTENING HABITS OF BOOK-CLUB MEMBERS WITH PREFERENCES FOR DIFFERENT MEDIA

<i>Per cent in each of the two groups who</i>	<i>Preferred source of news</i>	
	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Newspaper</i>
Read at least 2 books a month . . . . .	51.1	61.8
Listen at least 2½ hours per day . . . . .	65.8	45.1
Read most of the evening preceding the interview	24.4	31.8
Listened most of the evening preceding the interview . . . . .	24.7	16.7
Total number of cases in each group . . . . .	700	1,300

We can be reasonably sure, to repeat, that people who prefer a particular medium use it more often, and that the figures presented earlier in this chapter are a good index of the extent to which people actually rely on radio or print. We have thus really made the first step toward predicting when people would rather listen, and when they would prefer to read, for given subject matter. But not much has been said about the utility of such knowledge; the dreaded question "So What?" has still to be met.

### *Research Analysis and Constructive Action*

What are the possibilities of intelligent co-operation between the social scientist and the man who puts the results of analysis to practical use? The student interprets his mate-

rial as exactly and penetratingly as he can. If his job has been well done, the man of action can take up where the researcher has left off. The practical man would often lose his way if research had not mapped out the terrain for him, but in the end it is he who must do the traveling.

Good examples of such division of labor appear in the field of market research.<sup>40</sup> There it is well established that the student analyzes the motives of people and the businessman tries to influence them for his own purposes. The psychologist finds that growing boys stop drinking milk because they think it is "sissy"; then the milk company hires a famous football coach to speak for milk over the radio. Similarly it is discovered that many housewives do their laundry at home until an emergency forces them to patronize a steam laundry once; enjoying the relief from drudgery, they may thus continue to patronize the laundry. The promotion manager who reads this analysis procures the addresses of all families in which a member has died, he invites them to meet the emergency by sending their laundry out, and thus he wins new customers. In these and many comparable cases the analyst leads the man of action to the point from which he can see the promised land of successful practical activity.<sup>41</sup>

There are, in this chapter, some obvious implications for

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, *Technique of Marketing Research*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1937.

<sup>41</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, *Art and Prudence*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1937, gives an interesting discussion of this whole topic. His section on knowledge and opinion (page 231 ff.) and the point of view taken in the present text seem to be in agreement.



practical action. The educator will be less worried over the possibility that radio will take people away from their reading; for if reading is a more efficient form of communication for someone who knows how to read, then we can be confident that such a person will continue to prefer it, and the efforts of all the movements which try to improve people's reading habits remain justified and unimpaired by radio's progress. On the other hand, our analysis seems to show more clearly which group of the population can be immediately benefited by education over the air. This group does not consist mainly of people who do not know how to read at all, because very probably these people do not have the conceptual skill to absorb any serious subject matter. The best prospects for radio education are, rather, people with some intellectual training but with weak incentives toward serious concerns, whether because of their present environments or for personal reasons. Here our analysis shows that the directive role which radio has in many respects, and the fact that radio listening is an activity which can be socialized, open great opportunities for "cultural pressure groups." Because the supply of informational radio programs is very much less than the supply of print, and because it is easier to organize and control listening groups than reading groups, it is clear that the technique of adult education has much to gain from such suggestions as can be gleaned from this study.

The findings in this chapter will present leads also to people who are interested in the radio-print problem com-

mercially. Our findings on the preference for print among people on higher cultural levels can easily be translated into terms of purchasing power; in this form they should contribute to many a discussion regarding the best uses of advertising appropriations. We hope our analysis will help, furthermore, to clarify somewhat the much confused controversy regarding "eye versus ear." The experimental literature on this topic is full of contradictory statements: for every study which shows that the ear is more receptive, another study can be quoted which attributes the same advantage to the eye. The truth seems to be that the physiological means of perception is of itself of only small importance in the communication of idea; what counts is the situation in which communication occurs—the reading and listening habits of the respondent and the character of the subject matter in question. However, there can be no final decision at this time, as to the usefulness of the approach suggested here. It remains to be seen whether readers who must make actual decisions in the field of communication will be able to apply the present analysis as time goes on.

## *V. Radio and the Printed Page as Sources of News*

### THE SCOPE OF NEWS BROADCASTS <sup>1</sup>

OF all the areas in which radio and print compete as agencies of communication, the largest, as measured by number of consumers, by hours on the air, or by words on paper, is the field of news. And no field is more important. In all countries, however governed, the communication of news is vital. Dictatorships control news and use it to keep in power; democracies can flourish only in soil nourished by the news which provides bases for free discussion. Young though radio news broadcasting is, it has rapidly established itself as a mighty channel of information for citizens of America. Today, with Europe at war, the radio as a news agency takes on momentous importance and responsibilities.

Radio news broadcasting came of age at a time when other factors already had operated to revolutionize communication. By the time of the first scheduled news broadcast in 1920, the isolation of the average American family already was disappearing. The most important political event stimulating a news interest in events outside the local community

<sup>1</sup> The reader should be reminded that the first three sections of this and the first section of the next chapter are in the main a contribution of Professor Samuel Stouffer.

was probably the World War of 1914-1918. The War, in turn, merely accentuated a trend which was set in motion by other agencies of communication. The automobile and better roads were stimulating travel, bringing rural and small-town people into frequent personal contact with city life, and incidentally aiding in speeding up the delivery of daily newspapers. The extension of education, especially in high school, was widening the educational basis for an interest in national and world affairs. The growth of the use of public libraries, women's study clubs, and magazine circulation, as well as of daily newspaper circulation, was doubtless dependent to a considerable extent on the rise in the educational level of the population. The motion pictures in both newsreel and dramatic form with settings all over the world, were giving the individual a new sense of participation in life beyond his own locale.

Into this scene came the radio to make its contribution to the breakdown of isolation and to the development of a popular sense of participation in a larger world, not merely through the broadcasts of news but through drama, variety, music, and political talks such as those of President Roosevelt. The radio signals, coming instantaneously often from the very scenes of events and entering directly into the home, gave listeners a feeling of personal touch with the world that possibly no other medium could provide.

*One Week's News Programs*

Today radio news plays an imposing part in American life. The Federal Communications Commission in a survey of all broadcasting stations in the United States<sup>2</sup> found that during the week beginning March 6, 1938, not an exceptional week as far as news is concerned, an aggregate of 3,984 station hours representing one-tenth of all radio time was devoted to news. If to this figure is added the time devoted to the broadcasting of special events, including sports and meetings, as shown in Table 30, the aggregate becomes 6,435 hours, or nearly one-sixth of all broadcasting time. Even this is a conservative estimate, for it omits talks, some of which—especially by the President of the United States and other public figures—could properly be included in the category of news.

Because a few notable personalities such as H. V. Kaltenborn, Raymond Gram Swing, Lowell Thomas, and Boake Carter have or have had large radio audiences, one may be inclined to see the news-broadcasting picture as one in which a few national figures deliver the news, with editorial comment, to the nation. But the relative importance of these figures is probably small as compared with that of the hundreds of local news reporters who serve limited regions. Table 30, also computed from the Federal Communications Commission's data, shows that over three-quarters of all news broadcasts and special-events programs originate lo-

<sup>2</sup> See Chart 1, page 7.

cally. This point is especially significant in view of the fact that only 42 per cent of all other programs are broadcast directly from local studios. In other words, news programs originating locally are four times as numerous as those originating nationally and regionally,<sup>3</sup> whereas less than half of all other programs are of local origin. Here is evi-

TABLE 30.—ORIGIN OF NEWS AND RELATED EVENTS PROGRAMS AS COMPARED WITH OTHER PROGRAMS

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Place of origin (per cent)</i>			<i>Total</i>	
	<i>National</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Number of hours</i>
News reports . . . . .	13.3	6.0	80.7	100.0	3,984
Special-events and service programs ..	12.4	8.2	79.4	100.0	2,451
All other programs ..	52.1	5.9	42.0	100.0	<u>33,378</u>
All programs . . . . .	45.8	6.0	48.2	100.0	39,813

dence that the “national” news commentator is far from dominating news broadcasting at the present time.

The influence of the local commentator or news reporter can be illustrated from a careful survey of 5,771 rural radio listeners in Iowa by H. B. Summers of Kansas State College. First choice among these listeners as their best-liked program was the news reports by H. R. Gross of Station WHO, Des Moines. Gross received more votes than anyone else on the air—even more than the popular comedy programs of Jack Benny or Charlie McCarthy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It can be seen from Table 33 that regional broadcasting occupies only 6 per cent of the total broadcasting time, the great bulk of radio hours being divided almost equally between programs of national and those of local origin.

<sup>4</sup> H. B. Summers, Iowa Rural Radio Listeners' Survey, Manhattan, Kansas, 1938.

*The Popularity of News Programs*

News broadcasts bulk large not only in aggregate time on the air but also in the size of the listening audience. Among 5,528 adults in the northern states from coast to coast who were interviewed by the Office of Radio Research with respect to radio listening habits and preferences, 61.5 per cent reported that they listen to radio news broadcasts regularly.<sup>5</sup> If people who do not own radios are excluded, the figure rises to 71.1 per cent for all radio-owning families. In periods of great news interest, such as the European crisis of September, 1938, the figure is still higher.

A particularly interesting note on the public interest in news broadcasts is gleaned from a survey of 75,000 telephone subscribers conducted by the Columbia Broadcasting System in eight cities during a week in April, 1938, which survey the Office of Radio Research analyzed for the present purpose. Since the calls were tabulated by fifteen-minute intervals, our information extends only to fifteen-minute news programs, and not to the common five-minute broadcasts of news bulletins. It is very revealing to compare the size of the audience of each of the longer news programs with that of the audiences of the programs preceding and following it on the same station. Obviously several combinations are possible:

“Popular” Pattern: News program more popular than both the preceding and following programs.

<sup>5</sup> See page 218 ff. for details regarding this study.

“Unpopular” Pattern: News program has fewer listeners than both the preceding and following programs.

“Neutral” Pattern: All other possible combinations.

The data, summarized in Table 31 in terms of these three patterns,<sup>6</sup> show that among telephone subscribers news pro-

TABLE 31.—POPULARITY OF NEWS PROGRAMS AS COMPARED WITH LISTENING TO PRECEDING AND FOLLOWING PROGRAM ON THE SAME STATION

<i>Degree of popularity</i>	<i>Number of daytime news programs</i>		<i>Number of evening news programs</i>	
	<i>Small stations</i>	<i>Large stations</i>	<i>Small stations</i>	<i>Large stations</i>
More popular . . . . .	75	41	36	36
Less popular . . . . .	25	29	10	10
Neutral . . . . .	<u>102</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>44</u>
Total, all news programs . . . . .	202	106	66	90

The eight cities included in the survey are New York, Chicago, Washington, Boston, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Minneapolis and St. Paul.

grams fall into the “popular” pattern much more frequently than into the “unpopular” pattern. Adding each line we find that 40.6% of the 464 programs fall into the former, and 15.9% into the latter group. In other words, *in the majority of cases news programs have a larger audience*

<sup>6</sup> There are many factors other than the popularity or unpopularity of news programs which can affect the pattern, such as time of day (whether on a rising or descending curve of general listening), characteristics of special competing programs, and the sheer number of news programs available (since the fewer the news programs, the greater is the relative popularity of any one program but possibly the less the total audience to news). These factors have been controlled in part by tabulating the data separately for large stations (that is, the leading stations in any city in total listening) and small stations, and for daytime and evening listening separately.



*than the preceding and following programs on the same station.*

Note that the daytime news programs appear predominantly on the small stations. In the evening, when the total listening audience is greater, the large stations have more news programs than the small stations. As would be expected, the network news commentators who appear in the evening raise the level of news listening somewhat more than the local news reporters in the evening: of the 72 evening news programs on large and small stations falling into the "popular" pattern, 40 were news broadcasts by network commentators, while of the 20 evening news programs falling into the "unpopular" pattern only two were by network commentators. A study of competing programs suggests that news broadcasts in these cities held up relatively best against the competition of music (especially dance music) and speeches, and least well against "big name" variety programs. The chief limitation of this study is the fact that it was confined to telephone subscribers, who are not, as has been mentioned, a representative sample of radio news listeners. However, no other study of such magnitude has ever been made within one week in the history of broadcasting through coincidental telephone calls, and the knowledge obtained regarding the audience of telephone owners is graphic and significant.

*The Content of News Programs and of Newspapers*

To contrast the flow of news reaching people by radio and through newspapers, respectively, it is necessary among other things to develop quantitative methods for comparing the news coverage afforded by the two media. A valuable pioneering study was made for the Office of Radio Research by Professor Daniel Katz of Princeton University.

To narrow the field and assemble comparable data, the investigation was limited to the city of Cincinnati for the week of April 4 to 9, 1938. Cincinnati has three daily newspapers and four radio stations. Through the co-operation of Stations WXRC, WLW, WCPO, and WSAI, transcripts of all news broadcasts were obtained. Through the courtesy of the *Times-Star*, the *Post*, and the *Enquirer* (the first two being afternoon papers and the third a morning paper), copies of their daily issues were obtained for the same week. Each newspaper and each transcript was examined, and every story and item was classified according to two criteria. The first was the area of life to which the item of news or comment pertained. Owing in part to the need for a logical classification and in part to the nature of the material itself, ten major areas were used. These areas were: (1) foreign news and comment, (2) governmental and political affairs, (3) economic matters, (4) society and family items, (5) art, recreation, and hobbies, (6) education and science, (7) calamities, accidents, and non-homicidal deaths (in the old legal terminology, "acts of God"), (8) social aspects of

life, (9) religion and the church, (10) crime, corruption, and its prosecution. Most of these ten areas were subdivided in considerable detail.

There are three technical problems which make such a comparison difficult:

1. What on the radio should be compared with newspaper content? The substance of news programs alone is not necessarily the natural radio counterpart of the newspaper. Take, for example, educational matters; they will not often be referred to in news programs; but the radio also broadcasts talks of scientists and dramatizations of scientific discoveries which raise the number of educational items on the air to a total considerably greater than a comparison limited to strictly news programs would reveal. In a similar way, religious sermons increase radio's religious contributions, and frequent talks designed especially for women would add to the category of "family items" if all talk programs were included with news broadcasts in a comparison of newspaper and radio content.

It is not possible to decide offhand which basis of comparison is more advisable, because that depends upon the purpose of the study. But without such a decision statistical results have only limited value. It was found, for instance, that the news programs on the four radio stations covered 1,799 items, whereas the three newspapers covered 5,498 items. This vital advantage of the newspaper in regard to range of content would certainly be reduced if, on the radio

side, some of the other programs just mentioned had been included.

2. Even after the basis of comparison had been decided upon, a study comparing newspaper and radio content would have to cover a considerable time period to permit valid generalizations. The content of radio programs probably shows a much greater variability over a period of time than that of newspapers. The sports page of a newspaper, for instance, may be enlarged somewhat during the period of big games; but this variation is probably much less pronounced than that on the radio if we take some weeks when several hours are devoted to descriptions of games or fights and other weeks when just the regular sport news is broadcast. The same would be true for variations occasioned by political campaigns. The broadcasting schedules reflect these differences much more than does the content of newspapers, and therefore an adequate comparison would have to cover a series of carefully sampled weeks.

3. A third problem of grave difficulty is that of classifying news items according to the attention they get when presented by the two media. An objective measure would be the number of words given to each item, but it is doubtful that such a procedure would be justified psychologically. If one radio news item contains twice as many words as another, then we have to listen to it twice as long. But in the newspaper it may well be that we skip more in reading a long item than when reading a short one. Thus an interesting question for research arises: Can an empirical rela-

tionship be found between the length of an item and the average time spent in reading it? One could test, for instance, the hypothesis that the time given to columns of various length varies with the logarithm of the number of words they contain.

Daniel Katz chose to classify all news items according to three qualitative categories: (1) mentioned or barely men-

TABLE 32.—STRUCTURE OF RADIO AND NEWSPAPER NEWS ACCORDING TO RELATIVE LENGTH  
(per cent)

	<i>Brief mention</i>	<i>Fair length</i>	<i>Full account</i>	<i>Total per cent</i>	<i>Total num- ber of cases</i>
Radio . . . . .	24.7	52.6	22.7	100.0	1,799
Newspaper . . .	52.7	20.6	26.7	100.0	5,498

tioned, (2) described with some attempt at adequacy, and (3) fully described. These three categories are probably adequate for a study of the internal structure of the two media and would permit us to decide whether certain items receive relatively more attention than others. But it will have to be kept in mind that, for instance, "full exposition" in a newspaper certainly means much more in terms of quantity than in the case of the radio.

The type of results that can be gained from such a classification is reflected in Table 32, which shows that the bulk of the radio news falls in the category of medium length, whereas the newspaper items are more likely to be very short.

Dr. Katz gave his three categories a weight of 1, 2, 3, respectively, but in order to keep things simple we report

here only a straight enumeration of the unweighted items. With these precautions in mind, let us compare the distribution of weighted items which was found for this one week in the three newspapers and in the news programs of the four radio stations.

TABLE 33.—CINCINNATI NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO STATIONS COMPARED WITH RESPECT TO INCIDENCE AND TYPE OF NEWS STORIES FOR ONE WEEK

<i>Type of news story</i>	<i>Total no. of comments</i>		<i>Ratio: newspaper items per 100 radio items</i>
	<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Radio</i>	
1. Foreign news and comments	226	417	54
2. Governmental and political.	648	412	157
3. Economic . . . . .	768	207	372
4. Family . . . . .	359	29	1,239
5. Art, recreation, etc. . . . .	1,398	135	1,035
6. Science, education . . . . .	272	52	522
7. Natural events and disasters	420	192	220
8. Social aspects . . . . .	954	203	470
9. Religion, church . . . . .	127	12	1,058
10. Crime, corruption, and its prosecution . . . . .	<u>326</u>	<u>140</u>	233
Total . . . . .	5,498	1,799	306

Summarized below are those conclusions of the study which are relatively little affected by its intrinsic statistical difficulties:

1. The radio gives relatively much more attention to the international scene than does the newspaper. The difference is so great that in spite of the greater general coverage of newspapers, the absolute number of items on foreign affairs on the radio is greater than in the newspaper. Among news items of a governmental and political character, radio is more likely to stress national news and to neglect

local and state information, whereas with the newspapers the balance is more likely to be in the other direction.<sup>7</sup>

2. The detailed reports of the stock, bond, and commodity markets in the newspaper give this medium a superiority over the radio with respect to coverage of the economic aspects of life. Once more the dramatic tendency of the "newscaster" to concentrate upon less prosaic events can be seen in radio's stronger emphasis upon strikes and labor relations. Perhaps this tendency is accentuated by the greater importance of the so-called dramatic events of strikes and lockouts as compared with vague accounts of future trends in the stock market.

3. Natural disasters and accidents are by their nature news and are emphasized relatively more by the radio than by the press. Run-of-the-mill accidents and deaths received more notice in the printed page, but the storms and floods which were ravaging the country in this crowded April week were played up much more by the radio than by the newspaper, and so again the dramatic bias of news broadcasts was exemplified.

4. The social aspects of life received more complete coverage in the newspaper than over the air. Social events, from ceremonies of celebration to funeral rites, are more thoroughly reported. Special prominence in this general domain is guaranteed the newspaper through its society page. The only part of this area covered by the radio is that of personal and anecdotal items. Notices of this sort are more frequent in the news broadcast than in the newspaper because they make for good storytelling.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to observe that this difference in content is reflected in the readers' appraisal of the situation. Twice the Office of Radio Research had an opportunity to ask a few hundred people whether they thought that radio had increased their interest in foreign affairs, national events, and local politics. The answers to such a question are often perfunctory, but the differences with respect to the three main types of news is very conspicuous and corresponds to the differences in content mentioned above. More than 90 per cent of the people answered that radio had increased their interest in foreign affairs, whereas not quite 50 per cent credit radio with having increased their interest in local politics. Answers regarding national affairs furnish intermediate figures.

5. The frequently reported decline in accounts of religious and church events is confirmed in this study. Neither papers nor radio gave much notice to religion in spite of the proximity of Easter. Religion, like education, has to be news in its own right to make the headlines.

6. The radio features crime and its prosecution relatively more than the press. (In view of the allegations that the newspapers play up crime to an alarming extent, it is of interest to find that they give only one-twentieth of their columns to the subject.)

Professor Katz concludes his analysis with the remark that radio has to please a much larger number of consumers than the newspaper without giving the different groups a chance to select the parts of the news that are of most interest to them. The radio, therefore, proceeds in two ways: (1) by seeking the lowest common denominator through the dramatic and the emotional, and (2) by seeking the highest common factor, and thus selecting the truly important happenings of the day. The study shows the advisability of making further efforts in the direction of content comparison.

Now we are prepared to resume the discussion of the previous chapter with special attention to the communication of news. What are those advantages of radio, as compared with print, of which people are likely to avail themselves, and what medium preferences will therefore be found in various groups of the population?



PREFERENCE FOR THE RADIO OR FOR THE NEWSPAPER AS  
A NEWS SOURCE

*A Preliminary Speculation*

Let us first draw up a hypothetical list of the advantages of the radio over the newspaper as a source of news. From the factors influencing reading and listening that were elaborated in the preceding chapter, we may select the following:

<i>Advantages of Radio</i>	<i>Advantages of the Newspaper</i>
Delivers the news first.	Delivers news more fully (at least, the routine news).
Can be heard without cost, once the overhead for the radio and current is paid.	Caters to interest of minority groups, such as those who read the financial pages or society page, without losing larger audience.
Can be heard while one is doing other work.	Does not require attention at some specified hour.
Can be heard with a minimum of mental effort.	Permits selection by the reader and skipping of uninteresting news.
In special events, can give sense of intimate participation through sound effects and voices of personalities.	Permits the reader to set his own pace and to reread where he does not understand.
	Presents news pictures.

To which classes of people are the specific advantages of the two media likely to be of marked importance?

The radio's advantage in delivering the news first is likely to vary directly with the elapsed time between the radio program and the delivery of the daily paper containing no later news. Hence we should expect this advantage to be more pronounced in rural regions than in urban, more pronounced in sparsely populated areas such as the Mountain States than in states on the north Atlantic seaboard. The differential might be of importance to city people, too. Psychologically the significance of the differential probably is that much of the newspaper news, having been anticipated by the radio, no longer relieves suspense. A radio-news listener turns to a sports page not to find out how the baseball games came out but, if at all, to read details and "dope." That the "dope" can be readable and even exciting is evident particularly in the sports pages of an afternoon paper, which long before the advent of radio was forced to reckon with the fact that the morning paper took the cream of the announcements of triumphs and defeats. The technique of the afternoon sports section is to provide gossip and to build up news suspense. Perhaps we have here a clue to a change in psychological function which the radio will tend to force upon the newspapers generally.

Two of the radio's advantages, that news listening involves no appreciable cost (once the radio is paid for) and that the radio news can be heard without appreciable mental effort, would possibly vary inversely in importance with the economic and educational status of the listeners. It should be found again that radio as a source of news is preferred

more as we follow the cultural scale downward in the group under investigation.

Those who should appreciate most the radio's advantage of being heard without interfering with other work are the housewives, especially those who have no maids and do their own housework. At one time or another, however, this advantage also may be appreciated by other members of the family. It is an advantage, for example, which may be considered of value to drivers of automobiles equipped with radios.

The newspaper's advantage in delivering the routine news more fully would presumably vary directly with the interest in news, and we have already seen on pages 145-151 of Chapter III that there is evidence to support this assumption.<sup>8</sup>

The newspaper's advantage in serving specialized interests of minorities among its readers without alienating the general audience—for example, with the stock-market quotations and the financial page, the society page with its personal accounts of routine social events, and the sports page—is difficult to evaluate in terms of the class of people to

<sup>8</sup> Presumably the newspaper's advantage of being more detailed in its news reports varies with the degree of suspense to be found in the news situation. If there are big events afoot, such as a Presidential election, war, or major kidnaping, the radio does not at once eliminate suspense, and the newspaper, though its actual news breaks may be for many people several hours behind the radio, carries interpretations and speculations which serve to heighten the suspense and intensify the excitement. The more exciting and suspended the event, the more likely it is that the newspaper and the radio will be complementary and actually stimulating. In times of crisis, as we shall see in the next chapter, both radio and newspaper increase their audience.

whom this specialization is most important. Certainly the radio is handicapped by being forced to find a least common multiple of interest.

The newspaper's advantage of not requiring attention at specified hours would probably be appreciated more by urban dwellers, whose habits are irregular, than by others. If one is out for the evening one may miss the radio programs entirely, but the newspaper can lie about for later reading if one is not prepared to read it at the moment of its arrival.

The advantage of the newspaper in permitting the reader to skip uninteresting news, to select what he wants, and to set his own pace is possibly of relatively small importance, since the radio news summary is usually brief. Moreover, if the news is uninteresting one can tune out the program or simply ignore it, though only at the risk of missing something interesting to come. It is somewhat risky to guess what type of people would find the newspaper an advantage on this score. Presumably it is the persons who are bored by news that scan the headlines and concentrate on other than news sections of the paper. On the other hand, the fact that the newspaper permits a reader to set his own pace might conceivably be of some advantage to two relatively small but different groups of people. One kind would be those who though interested in news may not be able to follow radio's swift verbal presentation adequately—a group likely to be on a low economic and educational level. The other kind would be those who are critically minded and wish to

study what is reported about a news event, even though they are quite competent to follow the oral reports—a group likely to have a high economic and educational level.

The newspaper's advantage in presenting news pictures would doubtless be appreciated by all classes of the population.

We should expect in general, then, that for routine news coverage radio's advantages would be most appreciated by people in the lower economic levels, by women, and by people in rural areas, and that consequently these persons would tend to prefer radio as a source of news. Conversely, the newspaper's advantages would appeal most to those with higher economic status, to men, and to urbanites, and they would be likely to prefer the newspaper.

### *Medium Preferences of Various Population Groups*

To test these speculations regarding medium preference, data from several sources can be offered. First we shall present material from a representative sample of 5,528 persons in the northern states from coast to coast:<sup>9</sup> it was collected in April, 1939, and analyzed by the Office of Radio Research. This is by far the most comprehensive sample of its kind that has been available up to the present time. It is based on face-to-face interviews of persons classified by the methods used in the polls of the American Institute of Public Opinion.

<sup>9</sup> States excluded (because of inadequacy of the data) are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Table 34 gives for 18 different groups of people the proportion of those who prefer the radio to the newspaper as a source of foreign and national news.<sup>10</sup> Chart 14 is a corre-

TABLE 34.—SEX, ECONOMIC LEVEL, AND LOCALITY AS AFFECTING PREFERENCE FOR RADIO AS SOURCE OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN NEWS<sup>11</sup>

<i>Size of locality and economic status</i>	<i>Per cent preferring radio<sup>a</sup></i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
<i>Population of 100,000 and over</i>		
High .....	30.5	37.7
Medium .....	45.7	51.9
Low .....	49.3	46.5
<i>Population of 2,500 to 100,000</i>		
High .....	30.3	56.1
Medium .....	43.6	58.9
Low .....	56.6	65.4
<i>Farms and towns under 2,500</i>		
High .....	44.7	58.0
Medium .....	53.2	58.6
Low .....	56.9	69.7

<sup>a</sup> The total number of cases for each group is given in Appendix I A, Table 34.

sponding graphical presentation. In terms of group differences, the results are very clear-cut: (1) preference for radio over print increases with decreasing economic status; (2) women exhibit a stronger preference for radio than do men; (3) preference for radio is greater among rural people than among people in metropolitan centers (cities with a popula-

<sup>10</sup> The figures represent the percentage of all regular news consumers who (1) answered that they prefer the radio when asked, "Do you prefer to get your national and foreign news over the radio or in a daily newspaper?" or who, (2) while they were regular radio news listeners, said they did not read the daily newspaper regularly. The small number who indicated "no preference" are excluded from this table.

<sup>11</sup> Radio owners only. Percentages are computed on the basis of those who express a definite preference only.

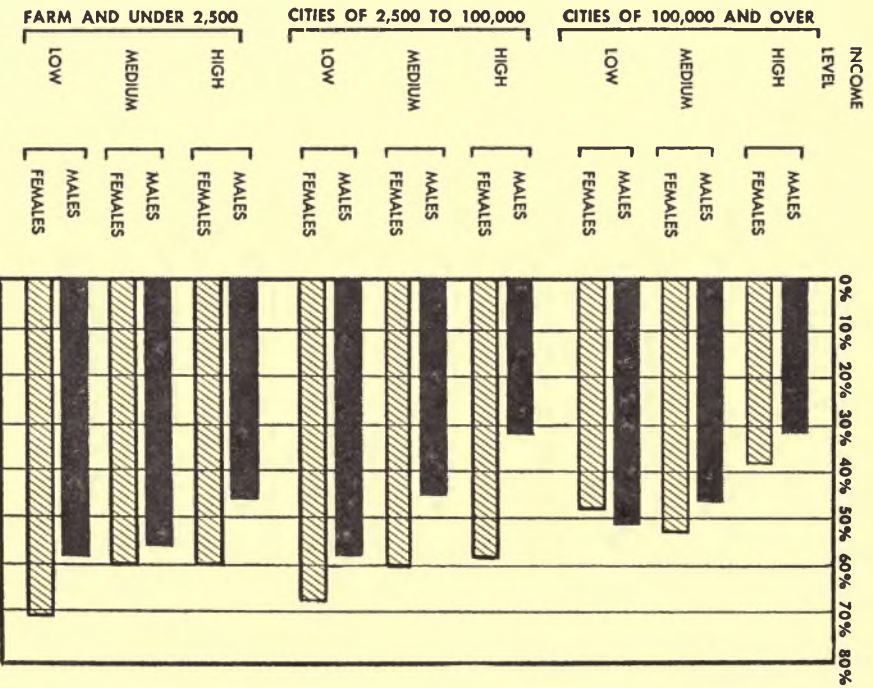


CHART 14.—PROPORTION AMONG THOSE WITH A PREFERENCE WHO PREFER THE RADIO TO THE NEWSPAPER FOR THEIR NATIONAL AND FOREIGN NEWS

tion of over 100,000). The speculative results outlined above are, then, plainly corroborated.

The chart is set up in such a form as to permit study of each of the three distinctions separately. In each population group, for instance, and on practically every economic level, the percentage of women preferring radio is larger than the percentage of men. It can be seen on the other hand that the increase of radio preference with decreasing economic level holds true for practically all residential groups and for both sexes.

The reader may wish to dwell a few moments on the details of these figures. He will see, for instance, that men of low economic status equal or even surpass the radio preference of women of high economic status. Obviously economic differences are more decisive than sex differences. Similarly, rural men have a higher radio preference than metropolitan women, so that the residential differences, too, are more important than sex differences. Economic and residential differences seem, by and large, to be about equally decisive. If we follow all three distinctions in the direction in which they tend to increase radio preference, we find more than twice as much preference for radio among rural women on a low income level as among metropolitan men on a high income level (69.7 against 30.5 per cent). An interpretation of these figures is practically identical with the general analysis attempted on preceding pages.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The single exception to the general trend (among metropolitan people of low cultural level) is not statistically significant. Yet if in a larger sample a significant discrepancy occurred—that is, if metropolitan females of low



## MEDIUM PREFERENCE AND ACTUAL CONSUMPTION OF NEWS

*How Many People Read and Listen to the News?*

We have shown how medium preferences differ among various population groups, such as the several economic classes, urban and rural persons, and men and women. Are the preferences these groups express consistent with their actual reading and listening behavior? Two questions in our sample of 5,528 cases form the basis for an answer:<sup>13</sup>

Do you listen to radio news regularly?

Do you read a daily newspaper?

Each of these questions divides people into two groups: consumers and nonconsumers of radio news. This obviously makes for a certain crudeness of all the results; it would be much better to know how much time the respondents

cultural level had less preference for the radio than males—a suggestion might be advanced that the metropolitan women of low economic status include many foreigners who cannot understand spoken English as well as do male members of their families, and therefore are likely to prefer a newspaper in their native tongue.

The fact that women show greater radio preference in regard to news than men is of much systematic importance because, although women listen to the radio more than men, they also read more, so that it cannot be expected that in general women would be more likely to prefer listening and men to prefer reading. The situation will probably vary from one educational and economic background to another. On the ground of incidentally available data, the hypothesis can be offered that on an average, considering many groups and many subject matters, the proportion of those preferring radio to print as a medium of communication will be greater among men than among women. The figures found in the present study therefore apply only to news.

<sup>13</sup> For the time being, only radio owners are included in our statistical analysis. This restriction will be eliminated later.

spend on the two news media. Such information, however, would have been much more difficult to secure and, in many cases, might not be very reliable. For the comparison of different groups in which we are mainly interested, however, it is likely that if the proportion of people who listen to radio news is greater in one group than in another, then also the average amount of time spent on radio news would be greater in the one group than in the other. The same would be true for newspaper reading.<sup>14</sup> And a "yes, no" question is crude in another respect: two people might both answer that they read a daily newspaper, but one might regularly follow all foreign and national news and the other might just read the sports or society page.<sup>15</sup> And yet for a first orientation our material will prove illuminating.

Distinguishing between the two sexes, three residence classes, and three economic groups, Table 35 shows the pro-

<sup>14</sup> If we were to discuss more subtle problems, for instance how news consumption in times of crises influences the formation of opinion, we would certainly have to use a finer yardstick indicating actual amount of time. Some methodological problems connected with such information are discussed by Alberta Curtis, "The Reliability of a Report on Listening Habits," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, February 1939, Vol. XXIII, No. 1.

<sup>15</sup> The relatively minor importance of written news to newspaper readers in relation to the pages devoted to news presentation, is suggested by Dr. George Gallup's study seven years ago of the reading habits of 40,000 readers of daily papers, and the follow-up study published in 1938 of 60,000 additional readers (*Advertising and Selling*, March 31, 1932, p. 23 ff., and January, 1938, p. 41 ff.). Only 40 per cent of newspaper readers in the 1932 study had read the news story under the front-page banner headline, as compared with 65 per cent who had read the best comic strips, and, among the women, 48 per cent who had read the serial love story. On the other hand, the news picture page, with which as yet the radio cannot compete, was read (or viewed) by 90 per cent of Gallup's respondents. The principal change noted by Gallup between 1932 and 1938 was an increased attention to radio program listings, increasing from about 25 to about 40 per cent.

portion of people who say they engage in regular radio news listening and daily newspaper reading. In order, however, to make the following discussion somewhat simpler

TABLE 35.—SEX, ECONOMIC LEVEL, AND SIZE OF LOCALITY AS AFFECTING NEWS READING AND LISTENING<sup>16</sup>

<i>Size of locality and economic level</i>	<i>Proportion who are regular radio news listeners (per cent)</i>		<i>Proportion who are regular newspaper readers (per cent)</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
<i>Cities of 100,000 and over</i>				
High .....	66.1	64.6	98.0	89.9
Medium .....	68.8	63.1	94.2	84.3
Low .....	69.4	60.6	84.7	79.3
<i>Farms and towns under 2,500</i>				
High .....	70.5	72.7	89.7	80.0
Medium .....	71.9	75.7	86.2	83.9
Low .....	66.6	67.1	67.7	63.7

to follow, we shall concentrate as far as residence goes on the difference between metropolitan people (living in cities over 100,000) and rural people (living on farms or in towns under 2,500). The data come from the survey described on page 218.

<sup>16</sup> For the sake of a complete record the figures pertaining to towns of 2,500 to 100,000 population are added. A reader more interested in detail will see that point by point the results discussed in the text apply to this group to give it an intermediary position between metropolitan and rural residence.

<i>Towns of 2,500 to 100,000</i>	<i>Proportion who are regular radio news listeners (per cent)</i>		<i>Proportion who are regular newspaper readers (per cent)</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
High .....	65.8	69.9	97.1	88.9
Medium .....	71.8	66.6	88.9	81.0
Low .....	68.8	67.0	74.1	70.0

We shall summarize here only the *main results* which can be derived from this tabulation, leaving it to the reader to dwell upon additional details:

1. The proportion of people who say they read a daily newspaper is markedly greater in each group than the proportion of those who mention regular listening to radio news.

2. The influence of economic status on listening to radio news is very small. By and large, it can be said that the proportion of people listening to radio news is the same on all economic levels.

3. In contrast to this relationship, the proportion of people reading daily newspapers shows a marked decline with declining economic status. As to frequency of reading, in each of the four groups the high economic level has the highest figure, the low economic level the lowest figure, and the medium level a figure between the two others.

4. The sex differences in regard to radio news are very small and are opposite in urban and rural areas. The metropolitan men listen slightly more than the metropolitan women, whereas among rural people the women listen more.

5. The sex differences are much more distinct for newspaper reading; in each residential group and on each economic level markedly more men than women read the daily newspaper.

*People Do What They Prefer*

Could one have foreseen the structure of Table 35 from the preference data discussed in the preceding section (pages 218-221)? Even a cursory comparison shows that the reading and listening behavior of the respondents in regard to news is in accord with expressed preferences and gives those preferences additional meaning. Let us take as an example economic differences. To isolate this factor from sex and residential differences, we visualize a "standardized" sample in which on each economic level we have an equal number of men and women from each of the three residence groups.<sup>17</sup> The result is Table 36, which gives for such a standardized sample in the first column the proportion of regular radio listeners, and in the second column the proportion of daily newspaper readers, on three economic levels. In the third column the ratio of the first over the second column is given, and in the fourth column are listed the preference figures taken from Table 34. Those preference figures also are now "standardized" according to the same procedure, so that they give for each economic level the proportion of those who prefer to get their foreign and national news from the radio rather than through the news-

<sup>17</sup> Numerically the sample is easily achieved by averaging the six frequency figures our data provide for each of the three economic levels. There are six figures available for each level because for this computation the information on the medium-sized cities is included. For the high income group, for instance, one would take the proportion of radio listeners among men and women in all three residential groups and get for this economic level an average proportion of news listening independent of sex and place of abode.

paper—assuming that we have on each level the same number of men and women from the three residence groups. The third column tells precisely the story we are driving at: as we go down the economic ladder the number of radio listeners increases in relation to the number of newspaper readers. That is what the increase of radio preference, reproduced in column 4, in the same direction, led us to expect,

TABLE 36.—PROPORTION OF REGULAR NEWS CONSUMERS AND MEDIUM PREFERENCE ON DIFFERENT ECONOMIC LEVELS

<i>Economic level</i>	<i>Regular news listeners (per cent)</i>	<i>Regular newspaper readers (per cent)</i>	<i>Proportion preferring radio (per cent)</i>	<i>Number of listeners per 100 readers</i>
High .....	68.3	90.6	42.9	75
Medium .....	69.7	86.4	51.9	81
Low .....	66.6	73.3	57.4	91

but our information is now richer and more complete. All economic groups listen to radio news in about the same frequency, but the upper groups read newspapers much more than the lower, and this is what accounts for their smaller preference for radio.

Going back now to Table 35, we see that the same result holds true generally. *The preferences that were analyzed in the preceding section (pages 218-221) are due mainly to variations in reading and not in listening habits.* To make that evident statistically, a standardization for sex and residence differences is carried through, as was just done for the factor of economic level. Table 37 gives the results of this standardization. The reader will remember that on the assumption that the numbers of respondents on all three

economic levels and in all three residence groups are equal,<sup>18</sup> the figure 68.6 per cent, for instance, entered in the left upper box, is computed for males who listen regularly to radio news broadcasts.

The table has to be understood like the preceding one,

TABLE 37.—SEX AND SIZE OF LOCALITY AS AFFECTING CONSUMPTION OF NEWS AND PREFERENCE FOR NEWS MEDIA

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Regular news listeners (per cent)</i>	<i>Regular newspaper readers (per cent)</i>	<i>Proportion preferring radio (per cent)</i>	<i>Number of listeners per 100 readers</i>
Male . . . . .	68.6	86.7	45.6	79
Female . . . . .	67.5	80.1	55.9	84
<i>Size of locality</i>				
Cities of 100,000 and over . . . . .	65.4	88.4	43.6	74
Towns of 2,500 to 100,000 . . . . .	68.3	83.3	51.8	82
Farms and towns of less than 2,500..	70.6	78.5	56.8	90

and the interpretation again centers on the last two columns. We see that among females who like radio news more than men there are also relatively more news listeners than newspaper readers—relatively, in the sense that among men we find 79 news listeners for every 100 newspaper readers, whereas among women we find 84. At the same time we see that the greater radio preference of women originates not from their listening more to radio news but from their reading newspapers less.

<sup>18</sup> The figure can be checked by computing an average of all the nine figures found in the "male" column in Table 35.

A similar interpretation is possible for the differences regarding the three residence groups. The number of news listeners rises from 74 per 100 newspaper readers in metropolitan areas to 82 in medium-sized cities and to 90 in rural areas. Here again we see that the trend of the preference figures reflects the increase in the relative importance of news listening as compared with newspaper reading.

We might, then, summarize the results of this discussion as follows: In all groups studied, the respondents acknowledge more newspaper reading than radio listening. What constitutes "newspaper reading," however, may vary with different groups, and many of those who report reading the newspaper actually may only read portions of it—for example, the comics, the sports page, and the pictures. The preferences various groups express as between radio and newspaper are closely consistent with their actual behavior, in terms of the proportion of their actual newspaper reading to their radio-news listening.

Variations in medium preference appear chiefly in the form of variations in newspaper reading, whereas the proportion of people who report news listening is rather similar in all the different population groups.

### *The Universal Appeal of News Programs*

The popularity of actual news listening in all population groups is made more impressive if the frequency figures reported in Table 35 are represented graphically. Chart 15 shows the proportion of people, among men and women



in three income and three residential groups, who acknowledge regular news listening. The broad consideration which introduced this chapter helps to explain why there is so little variation from one population group to another. Take, for example, economic differences: lower income groups are more likely to listen to the radio in general; but they are less likely to be interested in news. These two trends obviously balance one another, and as a result there is about the same amount of news listening in all three income groups.<sup>19</sup>

The same seems to be true with men and women. Although women are less interested in news, they are more habituated to the radio than men, and therefore again the differences in actual news listening are not imposing. The consideration of residential differences complicates the situation somewhat, but even then it is possible to interpret all the data represented by Chart 15 as resulting from an interplay of three factors: radio habituation, interest in news, and the time advantage of radio over the newspaper. A corresponding analysis has been carried through by Professor Samuel Stouffer of the University of Chicago; because of its more technical character it will be reported separately.

For a statistical summary it seems advisable to bring the findings of this and the preceding section together in a single bar chart based on the empirical data collected from the

<sup>19</sup> Compare this result with the findings of Chapter I (summarized in schematic Chart 5). There it was shown that serious listening decreases with decreasing cultural level. Obviously the interest in "educational" subject matter declines much more quickly than interest in news as we go down the social ladder. Hence the increasing reliance on radio cannot balance the decreasing "serious" interest, and serious listening declines.

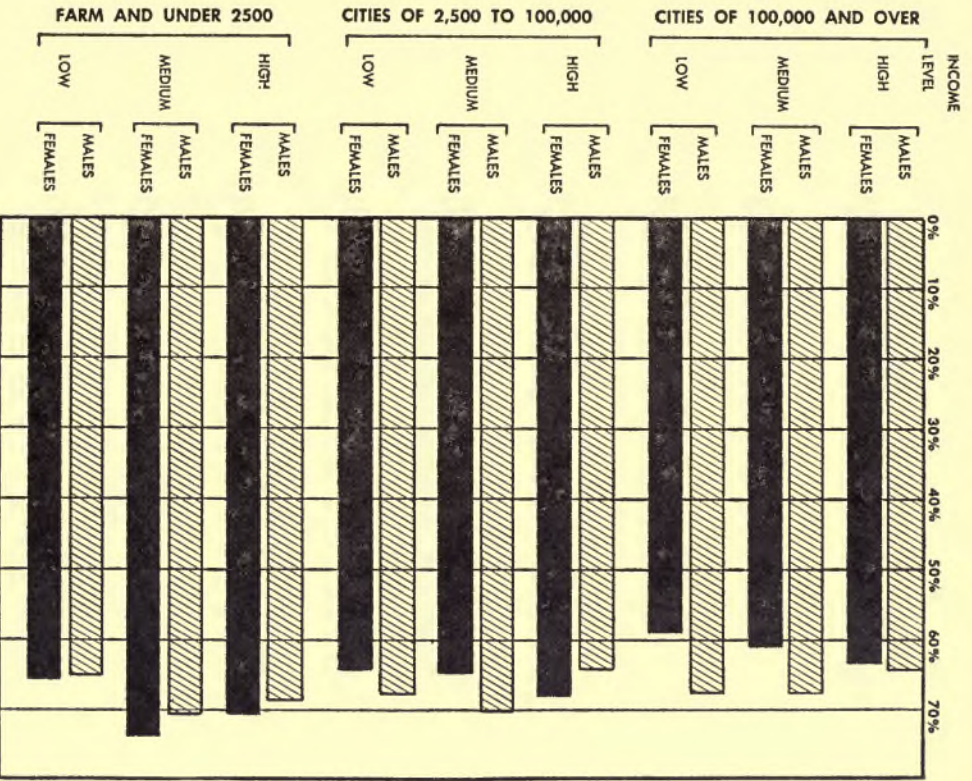


CHART 15.—RADIO NEWS LISTENERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL RADIO OWNERS

representative sample of 5,528 adults in the northern states. This is done in Chart 16 which considers only radio owners. It compresses into one page a most comprehensive story—the story told in this chapter—about the radio-news listening audience.

Consider the bottom bar in Chart 16 by way of illustration. It represents females of low economic status living on farms or in towns of less than 2,500:

One hundred per cent equals all radio owners in this group.

The total length of the bar (84.9 per cent) represents the percentage of all radio owners in this group who are regular news consumers.

The black section at the left, labeled R, represents the percentage (21.2) who say they listen regularly to radio news but do not read a daily newspaper regularly.

The white section at the right, labeled N, represents the percentage (17.8) who say they read a daily newspaper regularly, but do not listen to radio news regularly.

The three shaded and dotted portions in the middle, taken together, represent the percentage (45.9) who say they both read a newspaper regularly and listen to radio news regularly.

These persons are divided into three groups. The darkly shaded portion (labeled Rn) represents the percentage (37.0) who say they depend more on the radio than on the newspapers for their national and foreign news. The dotted portion (rn) represents the percentage (1.4) who have no

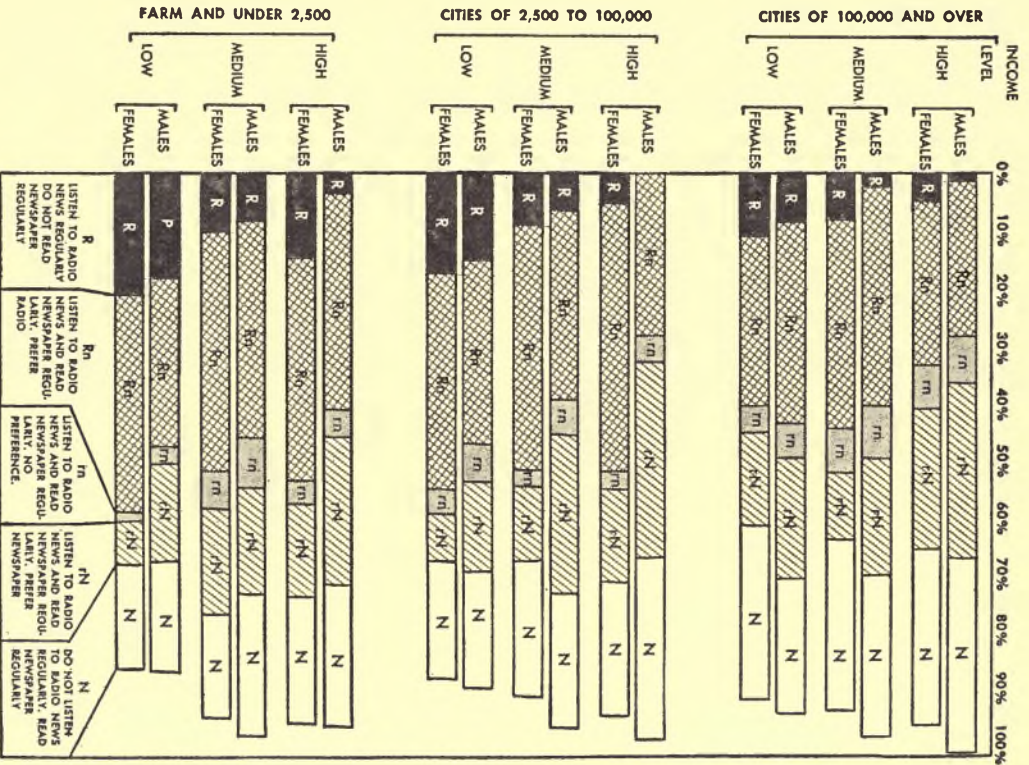


CHART 16.—NEWS SOURCES AND PREFERENCES OF RADIO OWNERS

preference. The very light shaded portion ( $rN$ ) represents the percentage (7.5) who prefer the newspaper.

From this one chart, the reader may see many of the relationships summarized above:

1. *Preference for Radio over Newspaper*: The shaded bars  $R_n$ , indicating the number of newspaper readers who prefer radio news, are considerably longer in most of the population groups than the bars  $rN$ , which represent the number of radio-news listeners who prefer the newspaper. The excess of the darkly shaded  $R_n$  bars over the lightly shaded  $rN$  bars is greatest for the low income groups, for women, and for rural areas. This relationship corresponds with the numerical analysis of preference data given in the previous section of this chapter (Chart 14).

2. *Actual Listening and Reading Habits*: The black bar  $R$  shows a wider variability from group to group than any other part of the total bars, indicating that the number of those who only listen to radio news without reading the newspaper is most sensitive to sex, age, and ecological differences. The white bar  $N$  shows the smallest variations because people who read the newspaper only represent a very mixed group, determined by a number of motivations which are not distinctly related to one of the three major characteristics.<sup>20</sup> The group variations in the relative fre-

<sup>20</sup> People who only read the newspapers are probably a conglomeration of persons with a variety of specific interests: women who care mainly for the advertisements of department stores, or the news of local and social affairs; men who are interested mainly in the business page; a number of highbrows

quency of listening and reading can be followed in a number of ways, either by comparing the size of the black bars with the size of the white bars, or by comparing the whole bars without the white portions with the whole bars without the black portions. The major group differences are, in any case, equally unmistakable.

#### SOME FURTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RADIO-NEWS LISTENING AUDIENCE

##### *Two Types of Radio-news Listeners*

Chart 18 can be viewed from still another direction. The radio-news audience seems to be composed of two main groups: those who listen to radio news but prefer the newspaper (the RN bar), and those who prefer the radio and may or may not read the newspaper (the Rn and R bars). We shall now see that the two groups of listeners are, by and large, quite different in their attitudes toward news. For the sake of convenience we shall refer to them as the "N-type" and the "R-type" of radio-news listeners. The former variety of listener relies mainly on the newspaper (hence the letter N), and the latter sees in radio his main or exclusive source of news (hence the letter R). It must

who do not listen to the radio at all because they have developed an aversion to popular music or radio advertising; and some people who are so specialized in their political interest that radio news has nothing to offer them. Case studies should be made to clarify the motivation of these newspaper readers. It is reasonable to assume that, on the average, these people are less interested in current events than those persons who use both sources of information but prefer the newspaper.

be remembered that these are two types of radio-news listeners; therefore those people who only read newspapers and do not listen to radio news are excluded from consideration. The very small group of people who use both sources of news but have no preference is also excluded from the following investigations.

The bar charts just discussed show that the R-type is much more numerous than the N-type in each population group investigated (that is, the total length of the Rn plus R bars is longer than that of the rN bar). The *main proposition* for which we are to examine evidence, in contrasting these two population types, is this: The N-type radio listener is a news consumer with an older, more firmly established and more extensive interest in news than the R-type; the R-type listener is likely to have developed his interest in news more recently, under the influence of radio, and is not so much impressed by current events. The N-type listens to radio news because he wants even more news than he obtains from his newspaper, or wants news more frequently, or more quickly than his newspaper supplies it; the R-type prefers to listen because listening is less bothersome than reading, and his modest demands are quite satisfied by what the radio offers.

The ensuing analysis aims to show differences in respect to character of news interest between those news listeners who prefer newspapers and those who prefer radio news. By calling the first group the N-type and the second the

R-type we create a convenient terminology and point, at the same time, to the tie-up between medium preference and character of news interest.

Some evidence indicates that the interest in current events manifested by people who prefer the radio to the newspaper was developed more recently than the interest of those who prefer newspapers. In September, 1939, the Columbia Broadcasting System interviewed through the research organization Market Analyst, Inc., 1,000 people at the World's Fair in regard to some of their habits of news consumption. Table 38 gives the cross-tabulation of the answers to two questions: "Where do you get your current news?" and "Before the crisis, did you ordinarily follow the foreign news?" Clearly, persons corresponding to our N-type—

TABLE 38.—RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGENCY OF INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS AND MEDIUM PREFERENCE

<i>Preferred source of news</i>	<i>Per cent who followed news before the present war</i>			<i>Total per cent</i>	<i>Total number of cases</i>
	<i>Constantly</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Never</i>		
Newspaper ..	33.8	54.5	11.7	100.0	467
Radio . . . . .	23.3	57.3	19.4	100.0	472

those people who prefer newspapers—were more often interested in current news before the crisis than were the R-type; the latter's interest in foreign news has developed more recently, and only under the stress of extraordinary events. If such a strong relationship can be shown over so short a period of time as that covered by this question, it is



quite probable that over a period of years the effect would be much more noticeable.<sup>21</sup>

Evidence is available to show that the R-type listener has not only a more recent but also a less elaborate interest in news. In the preceding chapter a table dealing with members of a book club cross-analyzed their reading level, their medium preferences, and their interest in current

TABLE 39.—RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS AND MEDIUM PREFERENCE

<i>Preference as to source of news</i>	<i>Degree of interest in current events as indicated by:</i>	
	<i>Proportion interested in current-events books (per cent)</i>	<i>Proportion reading current-events magazines (per cent)</i>
Radio (R-type) . . . . .	48.3	38.7
Newspaper (N-type) . . .	69.9	46.9

events as shown by interest in books and magazines on contemporary affairs. This material has been recomputed for our present purposes. Table 39 gives the proportion of people caring for current-events books and reading current-events magazines among those who prefer radio and those who prefer newspapers as a source of news. It was necessary to remove the influence of level of reading because otherwise one might have suspected that R-type listeners do less of

<sup>21</sup> A study might be made which would start with a statistical analysis of replies to the question, "Where do you get your foreign news?" The respondents would be classified by age, sex, and cultural level, and each group characterized by a combination of these characteristics. Interviews would then be made with some who prefer radio and some who prefer the newspaper as a source of news. The purpose of these interviews would be to obtain the history of the respondents' news interest and to see whether the N-type people are, indeed, more seasoned news consumers than the R-type.

such reading because they are less skilled readers. The table therefore compares the R-type and the N-type groups under the assumption that there is an equal number of people on each level of reading in both groups.<sup>22</sup>

This table shows that a significantly higher percentage of the people under investigation who prefer newspapers (N-type) are interested in current-events books and read current-events magazines than among those who prefer radio as a source of news (R-type).<sup>23</sup> It therefore definitely permits the inference that N-type radio-news listeners are more interested in current events than R-type listeners.

It is, then, plausible to assume that the audience of news programs is composed of two types of listeners: those who supplement newspaper reading (which they prefer) with radio-news listening (N-type), and those whose preferred, and probably main, source of news is the radio (R-type). The two types are definitely distinguished in the character of their news interest, in that the R-type is the more modest

<sup>22</sup> This is again the procedure of standardization which has been explained and applied on previous occasions. The proportion of such readers in the R-group and in the N-group is computed first for each level of reading separately, and then an average over the five reading levels is taken.

<sup>23</sup> The figures in the first column of the table are larger than those in the second because the question in regard to books was merely whether the respondents were interested in current-events books, whereas the one regarding magazines was whether they were actually reading current-events magazines at the time the questionnaires were filled in. It should also be noted that the question about medium preference in this study was worded as follows: "How do you prefer to learn about news?" On the other hand, our main study based upon 5,528 cases from which the principal bar chart was derived referred especially to national and foreign news. It is quite probable that if the question in the Book-of-the-Month Club study had been worded in the same way, the differences evident in the table would be even more distinct.

news consumer and his interest is of more recent origin. Some further indications of the same significance can be found in a special discussion of the audience of news commentators.

*Inferential Evidence: The News  
Commentator's Audience*

It may be assumed that the news commentator's systematic presentation and explanation of current events will appeal more to people with an intensive, elaborate interest in news than to those with less news interest: N-type news consumers should be more interested in news commentators than the R-type; R-type listeners should be more interested in straight news bulletins than in the systematic presentation of commentators. Such conclusions are corroborated by an analysis of the social stratification of the commentators' audience.

We know that the proportion of people preferring the newspaper (and hence the frequency of the N-type listeners) increases markedly as we go up the economic scale; that is, there are many more N-type people on the higher economic level than on the lower. If, therefore, it can be shown that the commentators' audience is stratified toward the higher income groups as compared with the audience for straight news bulletins, the probability is strong that this trend indicates a stratification toward N-type people, and that there is relatively more listening to commentators among the N-type people than among the R-type.

We have satisfactory evidence that the audience of commentator programs is, indeed, stratified toward the higher economic groups. In Chapter I a face-to-face survey of listeners in Buffalo was discussed in detail, and the reader will

TABLE 40.—COMPARISON OF LISTENING TO VARIOUS TYPES OF NEWS PROGRAMS IN TELEPHONE AND NON-TELEPHONE HOMES

<i>Type of news program</i>	<i>Proportion of homes listening</i>		<i>Amount of listening per day per 100 radios</i>	
	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Non-telephone</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Non-telephone</i>
		<i>(per cent)</i>	<i>(hrs.:min.)</i>	<i>(hrs.:min.)</i>
News bulletins ..	17.7	14.8	18:00	15:50
News commentators	6.7	4.8	5:10	3:30
Sports bulletins ..	4.4	6.1	8:10	14:40
Sports events ...	2.5	1.9	6:00	5:10
Total number of cases . . . .	315	405	315	405
Per cent of commentator listening in total news listening . . . . .	21 <sup>a</sup>	17 <sup>a</sup>	14 <sup>b</sup>	9 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Proportion of homes.

<sup>b</sup> Proportion of time spent.

remember that cultural level was indicated, roughly, by the distinction between telephone and non-telephone homes, and that the comparison between these two types of homes revealed important social differences. From the same survey a special tabulation of news listening has been made; this is set forth in Table 40. In the first two columns the percentage of respondents listening to four kinds of news programs is given separately for telephone and non-telephone homes. In the second two columns we have the number of hours

per day during which 100 radios in each type of home were tuned to these four kinds of news programs.

The bottom line of this table is decisive for our present purposes in that it reveals the ratio of commentator listening to total news listening of all types. It shows that in telephone homes 21 per cent of those who listen to any news programs listen to commentators, while in non-telephone homes only 17 per cent of news listeners appear in the news-commentator's audience. Similarly, in the telephone homes 14 per cent of the total time devoted to news programs is given to commentators, while in non-telephone homes the corresponding figure is only 9 per cent. Thus, whether we consider number of people listening or amount of time devoted to listening, the telephone homes show a comparatively greater interest in commentators than the non-telephone homes.<sup>24</sup>

Of course the sample in the Buffalo study is too small to make these differences statistically significant if they were an isolated result. But other data point in the same direction. An interesting parallel to the Buffalo study is furnished by some material collected by the Office of Radio Research from 500 students in a Newark high school.<sup>25</sup> As usual, the students were asked about their favorite radio programs, and were then classified according to their intelligence quotient

<sup>24</sup> The table shows, too, that of the four types of news programs distinguished, sports bulletins are the only ones with a definite majority of non-telephone listeners.

<sup>25</sup> The data were collected and analyzed by Hazel Gaudet, staff member of the Office of Radio Research.

and scholarship, as ascertained from the records of the school. Table 41 gives in the first column the proportion of children naming a commentator as a favorite program, and in the second column the proportion mentioning straight news bulletins; the third column shows the proportion of

TABLE 41.—PROPORTION OF HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS MENTIONING COMMENTATOR (C) AND NEWS BULLETINS (N) AMONG FAVORITE PROGRAMS

a. On Different Levels of Scholarship

<i>Scholarship</i>	<i>Per cent mentioning commentators</i>	<i>Per cent mentioning news bulletins</i>	<i>Ratio: C/(N+C)</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
High . . . . .	20.0	10.0	.67	40
Average . . . . .	6.7	13.0	.34	269
Low . . . . .	7.4	15.4	.32	149

b. On Different Levels of Intelligence

<i>Intelligence quotient</i>	<i>Per cent mentioning commentators</i>	<i>Per cent mentioning news bulletins</i>	<i>Ratio: C/(N+C)</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
120 or more . . .	10.2	12.2	.46	98
100 to 119 . . . .	7.4	14.4	.34	243
Below 100 . . . .	8.3	16.7	.33	84

children among all those mentioning any kind of radio news who list commentator programs. It is easily seen how sharply the interest in commentator programs decreases with declining scholarship and intelligence, although the total amount of news programs mentioned remains fairly constant on all three levels in both tables.<sup>26</sup>

The two foregoing tables are based on a comparison of

<sup>26</sup> The evident increase in interest in straight news bulletins among lower intelligence groups may be due to the interest in sports news and thus corroborate similar results in the table derived from the Buffalo survey.

listeners to commentators and straight news programs. Of further interest is a tabulation based on the names of commentators which the respondents in our main news study mentioned in answer to the question: "To which commentator, if any, do you listen regularly?" From the 5,528 cases the men were selected because it seemed possible to classify them, according to their occupations, into three cultural groups. The upper occupational group contains professionals, semiprofessionals, and high-income businessmen; the middle group includes low-income businessmen, clerical workers, and skilled workers; the low group contains unskilled workers and people on relief. Among the commentators mentioned by the respondents, five stood out, three of whom (Boake Carter, H. V. Kaltenborn, and Lowell Thomas) were commentators with essentially political emphases, whereas the other two (Edwin C. Hill and Walter Winchell) spoke on more general topics, stressing the human side and social aspects of the news.

Table 42 presents the answers of the men on the three occupational levels to the question concerning news commentators. The first column gives the percentage of each group that listened to one or more of the three leading "political" commentators; column two shows the proportion that listened to one or both of the two most mentioned "human interest" commentators; the third column presents the percentage mentioning other commentators, the fourth those who did not mention any, and the fifth those who indicated that they did not listen to commentators at all.

This table is interesting in our present context. The proportion of people who do not listen to commentators at all or who do not know the name of any commentator to mention goes up rapidly as we move downward on the occupational scale. One out of five people on the upper oc-

TABLE 42.—PROPORTION OF URBAN MALES ON DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL LEVELS LISTENING TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEWS COMMENTATORS

<i>Type of news commentator</i>	<i>Occupational level (per cent)</i>		
	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Low</i>
Political . . . . .	52.6	44.1	37.5
“Human interest” . . . . .	9.6	14.2	12.5
All other names mentioned . . . . .	16.0	16.4	15.4
No name mentioned . . . . .	7.7	5.8	10.4
Do not listen to commentators . . . . .	14.1	19.5	24.2
Total per cent . . . . .	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Total number . . . . .	312	514	376

cupational level does not have a favorite news commentator for one reason or another, but on the lowest occupational level one out of three either does not listen to commentators or cannot name one to which he listens regularly.

But even among listeners to commentators there is a marked difference. If one compares the number of those who mention “political” with those who mention “human interest” commentators, the former number diminishes markedly with decreasing occupational status. In the higher occupational group the people interested in commentators on political matters are almost six times as numerous as people interested in commentators dealing with personal-interest material, whereas on the lower occupational level the ratio is only three to one.



We may conclude, then, that the higher occupational groups exhibit more interest in news than the lower, as evidenced by a higher proportion of listeners to commentators, and especially to "political" as distinguished from "human interest" commentators. Since, as we have previously pointed out, there are many more N-type people in the higher economic groups and hence in the higher occupational groups than in the lower, this conclusion is inferential evidence that the N-type listeners care more for commentators in general, and "political" commentators in particular, than do R-type people. This finding again indicates the keener interest in news among the N-type citizens.

#### *A Method of Testing the Intensity of News Interest*

To test the intensity of news interest of those depending primarily on newspapers (N-type) and those relying chiefly on the radio (R-type), and to test the degree of dependence upon preferred news sources, a semi-experimental technique was tried which, by enhancing people's awareness of their own experiences, is likely to increase the information they can give. External difficulties restricted the number of interviews that could be made, so that no statistical data can be given. We shall, then, merely outline the technique and offer some of the preliminary results in the form of hypotheses.<sup>27</sup>

A sample of people is selected, half of whom depend

<sup>27</sup> The experiment followed an idea of Mr. James Rorty's and was under the supervision of Dr. Hadley Cantril.

primarily on newspapers for their news and the other half on radio, but all of whom customarily listen to radio news and read the newspaper. These persons are asked to abstain from one of their usual news sources in such proportion that the following scheme is obtained:

<i>Persons depending primarily on:</i>	<i>Persons abstaining from:</i>	
	<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Radio</i>
Newspapers .....	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Radio .....	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>

After a week these people are asked about their experiences during the time they were on a restricted "news diet." Appropriate questions are the following ones:

1. Did you miss your newspaper (radio)?
2. During the experiment, did you increase your listening (reading) when you had to abstain from reading (listening)?
3. How do you think your refraining from reading papers (listening to news broadcasts) affected your general interest in news?
4. During the experiment did you keep as well informed as you usually do?
5. What type of news did you miss most?
6. Did you feel any urge to turn to the forbidden news source?
7. Was such an urge greater during the first or the second period of the week?
8. Did you get interested in kinds of news other than the kinds you were interested in before the experiment started?
9. Did news change its meaning for you during the experiment? Was it more or less personal, more or less stale?

The answers to these and similar questions are likely to outline the news interests of the various groups and their

dependence upon their preferred medium as a source of news.

The limited returns already yielded by this technique suggest a number of hypotheses. The following ones refer to the two groups who abstained from their preferred news source (the N-type who gave up newspapers and the R-type who abstained from radio news, which appear in the upper left and lower right corner of the scheme indicated above). In formulating these tentative results, therefore, for the sake of convenience we can refer to those who preferred newspapers and abstained from reading them during the experiment as "N-type," and to those who preferred radio news and abstained from it as "R-type":

1. N-type people miss their favorite source of news more than the R-type. They feel the deprivation more keenly, and more of them break their agreement to abstain.

2. In addition to this emotionally felt lack, the N-type news consumers who give up newspapers are more strongly aware that they are less well informed during the experiment than the R-type who abstain from radio-news listening but read the newspaper.

3. The N-type person, during his abstention from newspaper reading, feels that news becomes more important to him, whereas the R-type is more likely to be dishabituated and to lose interest in news. Correspondingly, the frustrated N-type leans more heavily than usual upon radio news, whereas the frustrated R-type is not so likely to compensate for his usual radio diet by increased newspaper reading. The N-type's need for news, then, tends to be more of the kind that increases when the supply from the usual preferred source is curtailed, whereas the news needs of the R-type are more likely to decline.

The trend expressed in the preceding formulation seems corroborated by the experience of those people who abstain from the medium which is usually not their preferred one.

4. People who usually prefer the newspaper miss radio news more than those who usually prefer radio miss the newspaper. In other words, N-type people miss any kind of news source more than the R-type, whether or not it is their preferred source of news.

These tentative results corroborate, then, the main proposition that N-type news listeners display a stronger and more firmly rooted news interest than R-type consumers, and that newspapers have a more vital function and fulfill a deeper need among them than does radio among R-type people.

The technique just described seems particularly appropriate because it is a special case of a more general experimental rule. If people not trained in introspection are supposed to give information regarding their experiences, it is advisable to catch them at certain "breaking points." If we want to know, for instance, how unemployed men on relief feel about their plight, a good time to question them is the moment when a curtailment of the relief allowance is announced. If we want to know what determines people's consumer habits, the moment of an actual purchase is best for an interview. In our suggested "news diet" study, people are under an acute strain because their normal habits are interfered with and so they are more likely to be aware of what the two media of communication mean to them.

Repeatedly respondents made comments such as the following:

It is just terrible to go without a paper. I didn't think it would be so hard. Maybe if there were no papers in the house it wouldn't be so bad. But with papers, it just pulls you constantly.

At the same time they can refer to concrete incidents which help to describe their reactions:

If I got in with a group discussing things, I felt dumb as the result of not having read the paper. You don't get everything on the radio. It tries to cover too much in a short time.

### *News Interest among Young People*

The majority of news listeners are of the R-type (that is, they prefer radio to newspapers) and exhibit a more recent and less developed news interest than the N-type minority.<sup>28</sup> How do young people, as a group of especial importance, fit into this pattern? Having been brought up as a radio generation, they might be more used to relying on radio and hence more likely to prefer it to newspapers. Yet they have a much higher average of education than the older generation and have grown up during a time of unusual interest in current events; hence one might expect that they would have a more intense interest in news and consequently tend to prefer the newspaper.

A poll taken by the American Institute of Public Opinion

<sup>28</sup> Obviously it is not to be supposed that all news listeners can be separated in clear-cut fashion into these two types; many listeners belong to transitional categories in the middle ground between these two extremes.

in 1937 indicates that young people are more likely to prefer radio to the newspaper as a source of news than older people in similar population groups. In this poll the question was asked: "How do you prefer to get your news?" In order to keep the spurious factor of education as constant as possible,

TABLE 43.—SEX, AGE, ECONOMIC LEVEL, AND TYPE OF LOCALITY AS AFFECTING PREFERENCE OF RADIO TO PRINT AS SOURCE OF NEWS<sup>29</sup>

<i>Locality and economic level</i>	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>Below 25</i>	<i>25 and over</i>	<i>Below 25</i>	<i>25 and over</i>
<i>Urban:</i>	<i>(per cent)</i>		<i>(per cent)</i>	
High . . . . .	27.3	20.5	32.3	29.6
Medium . . . . .	43.5	24.0	55.2	36.2
Low . . . . .	33.3	29.4	47.9	31.1
<i>Rural (all) . . . . .</i>	40.0	44.0	48.8	42.0

the tabulations made by the Office of Radio Research were separate for three economic levels and for urban and rural people. After a sizable number of age breakdowns were tried, the break at the age of 25 seemed the only one which yielded clear-cut differences. Table 43 shows definitely that medium preference for radio is more pronounced among young people under 25 than among people over 25.

<sup>29</sup> 100% equals those who expressed definite preference in answer to our question. Less than one-third of the subjects were unable to state a preference for either radio or print; these figures are therefore based on approximately 70 per cent of the original sample. If those with radio preference are computed as the proportion of the whole sample, the results remain the same as in the above table. The reader will notice that in this table the proportion of people preferring radio does not decline regularly with economic status. This inconsistency might be due either to the small size of the sample or to the wording of the question, which referred to news in general. The latter explanation is not probable, because we will find our basic proposition well corroborated in other studies where the same general wording has been used. This table is the only one in all our material which is irregular on this score.

The preference of young people for radio is constant in all sex and economic groups, with the one exception of rural males (for which exception no explanation can be readily offered). This finding can be taken as representative for a number of other studies. A similar tabulation in the Book-of-the-Month Club material and the *Fortune* poll of April, 1937, by the Office of Radio Research yielded the same age trend.

The stronger preference for radio among young people might be the result of either more thorough radio habituation or less news interest. The data now available do not permit us to decide whether young people with the same news interest as older news consumers would be more likely to listen to radio news because they are more used to the radio.

Yet there is considerable evidence that young people are less interested in news than older people, and that this fact explains, in part at least, their more noticeable preference for radio news. Their more modest news interest is indicated by data on program preferences. In a sample of about 2,000 cases, which will be discussed in detail in the last chapter of this book, the respondents were asked about their favorite radio programs, and from the answers the proportion of people who included some kind of news program among their favorites has been computed. Table 44 shows that this proportion is higher among respondents above 40 than among those below 40, and thus indicates less news interest

among younger listeners. All the figures in the first line are smaller than the corresponding ones in the second line.

The same differences as to age are corroborated by a number of other preference studies. In the *Fortune* poll already mentioned, news broadcasts ranked first as favorite programs among people above 40, but fourth for people

TABLE 44.—PROPORTIONS OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SEX, AGE, AND EDUCATIONAL GROUPS WHO MENTION NEWS PROGRAMS AMONG THEIR FAVORITES

Age	Men		Women	
	No college (per cent)	College (per cent)	No college (per cent)	College (per cent)
40 or below . . . . .	12.9	14.8	10.5	11.9
Over 40 . . . . .	19.3	19.5	16.4	19.6

between 20 and 40. In a study conducted by *The Woman's Home Companion* among its readers, preference for news programs—especially daytime programs—was found to increase with age. Cantril and Allport,<sup>30</sup> in a study conducted in Boston and its vicinity, found that both men and women 30 years old or older rank news programs as being of more interest, and want more of them, than do people under 30. In our own study of a book club, the frequency with which news programs were mentioned as favorites also increased with age.<sup>31</sup> H. B. Summers, in his 1939 survey of the Kansas

<sup>30</sup> Cantril, H., and Allport, G. W., *The Psychology of Radio*, Harpers, 1934.

<sup>31</sup> An annotated bibliography of all the preference studies which have been assembled and analyzed by the Office of Radio Research can be found in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, February, 1939, pp. 187-192.



radio audience, gives a very detailed age breakdown of program preferences which shows a sharp drop of preference for news broadcasts below the age of 25, and a sharp increase between the ages of 25 and 30—an increase that rises only slightly after the age of 30.

There can be no doubt, then, that a weaker interest in news is quite decisive in determining the greater preference of young people for radio as a source of news. Whether, in addition to this factor, more thorough radio habituation among younger people is influential could be decided only after an analysis similar to that on pages 149-151 of the preceding chapter. It would be necessary to have an index of each respondent's interest in news and of his standard of reading. We already know that young people on the average would have a higher standard of reading and a lower index of news interest. Whether younger people would still prefer radio more than older people, after these two factors have been kept constant, must be a question for further research.

For the time being the most plausible assumption is that young people, because of their more marked preference for radio and weaker interest in news, contribute heavily to the aggregate of R-type radio-news listeners.

#### THE NEW COHORTS OF NEWS CONSUMERS

It has been demonstrated, and will bear repetition, that radio-news listeners fall approximately into two main groups. The N-type listeners have the necessary skill to

read newspapers with ease, and prefer that medium of obtaining news, but their interest in news is so firmly established and intense that they supplement their newspaper reading by listening to radio news. The R-type listeners, preferring radio as a source of news, feel a more modest and more recent interest in current events; they are novices whose still-rudimentary news interest has sprung up because of stimulation by the radio, or radio has at least facilitated the growth of interest engendered by the exciting political events of the day. The news diet of the R-type listener shows generally less variety than that of news consumers who rely mainly on newspapers. From the foregoing discussion we know also that this new consumer of news is more likely to be a woman than a man, more likely to live in a rural than in a metropolitan area, and, above all, is more likely to be a person on the lower economic and cultural level.

It is in the last of these characteristics that the most notable social significance of the findings in this and our earlier chapters seems to lie. Radio is the medium by which the large, lower income groups of the population prefer to get their news, just as they prefer it as a source of information on how to run their homes and how to improve themselves. News having recently become a topic of immediate interest for large parts of the population, radio is supplying the new consumer with just the kind of elementary news diet he wants. In meeting the needs of people not adequately served by other media, radio undoubtedly is performing an impressive social service. But the value of this service is de-

pendent in part upon the accuracy and impartiality of the flow of information coming over the air. That this qualification is of extreme social importance is plain when we consider that *people on the lower cultural levels are apparently more suggestible than those on the higher cultural levels.*

In the next chapter evidence will be offered to show that the ability to discern bias in a radio program or newspaper

TABLE 45.—INTERPRETATIONS OF THE "INVASION FROM MARS"  
ON DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Per cent who be- lieved play</i>	<i>Per cent who believed news report</i>	<i>Total per cent</i>	<i>Total number of cases</i>
College graduates . . . . .	70.6	29.4	100.0	136
High-school graduates . . .	61.0	39.0	100.0	534
Grammar-school graduates.	51.2	48.8	100.0	252

seems to decrease as we go down the income scale. Similarly, in a study of a few hundred listeners to "America's Town Meeting of the Air"<sup>32</sup> the figures strongly suggest that listeners in non-telephone homes were more influenced by the program series than listeners in telephone homes. The most marked of these signs of suggestibility appear in a study of the mass scare caused by Orson Welles's broadcast of "The War of the Worlds."<sup>33</sup> Table 45 divides the interviewees according to their formal education into three groups and then reports the proportion of those who believed that the program was a news report and of those who realized that

<sup>32</sup> See J. Sayre, *The Audience of an Educational Program*, on file at the Office of Radio Research, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>33</sup> H. Cantril, with the assistance of Hazel Gaudet and Herta Herzog, *The Invasion from Mars*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1940.

it was a play.<sup>34</sup> The proportion of people who took the broadcast seriously increases quite markedly the lower we go in the educational scale.

The question of whether radio or print is more suggestive has been repeatedly discussed, usually on the assumption that the audiences to the two media are substantially similar. But it now appears that people who rely more on print are different from those who rely chiefly on the radio. Another question, then, becomes at least equally important: Is the potential radio listener more suggestible than the potential reader? There are strong indications that this is the fact. Hence our analysis of the new cohorts of news consumers, built up around and served by the radio, goes far beyond a mere descriptive finding. Of all the facts that make radio a powerful social institution, probably the most imposing one is that radio is the preferred medium of the more suggestible man.

<sup>34</sup> This table is a special tabulation of 922 interviews made by the Columbia Broadcasting System in the week after the Orson Welles broadcast.

## VI. "For Further Details . . ."

### THE EFFECTS OF THE RADIO UPON NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION

#### *The Importance of Radio in a Time of Crisis*

SO far in this book we have asked how radio supplements the printed page by bringing serious information to that sector of the population which, for various sociological reasons, is not likely to read. We have also learned which kinds of people prefer radio and which prefer the printed page, and we have observed the conditions under which such preferences exist and what radio listening as compared with reading means to these people. To round out the picture we now turn to see how radio, the upstart among the tools of communication, has affected that older medium which in pre-radio days had almost a monopoly of the field: the printed page.

Two questions are foremost in the minds of many investigators of the public's reading habits: Does radio tend to displace reading? Could it be used to stimulate reading?

We start with the first question, and at once we are back in the field of news, where its most urgent implications appear. Is radio displacing the newspaper? The answer is of grave practical concern to newspaper publishers; it is also of theoretical importance to the sociologist, because it

offers an example of the impact of a new mechanical invention, the radio, upon an old established social institution, the newspaper. Around the new invention new institutional arrangements form, and a struggle for survival, requiring adjustments of many kinds, develops between the old and the new.

TABLE 46.—PROPORTION PREFERRING RADIO AS SOURCE OF NEWS AT TIMES OF CRISIS AND NORMAL TIMES <sup>a</sup>

(On different cultural levels in rural and urban populations)

	<i>Rural population</i>			<i>Urban population</i>		
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Middle</i> ( <i>per cent</i> )	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Middle</i> ( <i>per cent</i> )	<i>High</i>
<i>Prefer radio</i>						
1937 . . . . .	46.5	48.3	34.0	33.8	28.8	18.6
Crisis, 1938 . . . . .	67.4	76.9	70.4	74.9	79.6	71.9

<sup>a</sup> Among those who have a choice.

It is the big part that radio played during the European events of the past years that has caused many observers to expect a decline in the power of the newspaper. The way in which a crisis increases radio's importance is indeed impressive. During the week of October 17, 1938, the American Institute of Public Opinion asked a representative sample of American people the following question: "In the European crisis, were you more interested in the radio reports or the newspaper reports?" Table 46 compares the answers to this question with the answers to a question asked the preceding year: "For news, do you depend upon the radio more or less or about the same as you depend on your newspaper?"

The data reported in this table are for northern states

only. They show that in all economic classes, rural and urban alike, there was a decided tendency for people to state that they were more interested in the radio reports during the European crisis than in the newspaper reports. In the preceding year more people depended on the newspaper for their news than depended upon the radio, especially in the urban regions. The economic difference which affects radio preferences of urban people in 1937 disappears during the crisis. The profound significance of radio in a period of tension is made clear by these figures.<sup>1</sup>

Each new crisis, one might argue (and there seem to be more crises every year), puts radio more in the lead. Even if in periods of lull the amount of news listening decreases, the net effect could be that newspapers become increasingly superfluous.

### *Reading in Spite of Listening*

But such a conclusion might be unjustified. Could it not be that radio broadcasting of a news event tends to encourage one to try to get more of the details from the newspaper? In the study (analyzed in the fifth chapter) of 5,528 individuals in the northern states, the following question

<sup>1</sup> Another difference between the survey of 1937 and that of 1938 is the proportion of people who have no preference as to sources of news. About a third of all the respondents did not express themselves on this question in 1937, whereas during the crisis of 1938 only one out of six persons claimed that it made no difference to him where he got his news. This change indicates that the new radio preferences which accrue in periods of crisis stem from groups which previously cared little for news: a fact which corroborates strongly our discussion of N-types and R-types of news listeners in the previous chapter.

was asked: "Did the radio news broadcasts increase or decrease your interest in newspaper stories of the crisis?" Of those interviewed, 79.4 per cent answered, "Yes." Are such replies trustworthy? A way of checking them would be to conduct a field study in which the individual was asked to mark a copy of a paper indicating what news he actually read, and then to compare his reading with the scripts of the news program to which he listened just prior to the arrival of the newspaper. Less definite but still useful evidence of the reliability of the replies can be gained from direct interviews with those people who have asserted that news listening increases their newspaper reading: as they are able to give concrete examples to link up news listening to subsequent reading, our confidence that their answers were not perfunctory will be so much the stronger.

In a check-up after a speech by President Roosevelt, it appeared that many respondents had read the President's speech after hearing it over the radio. Some people wanted to go over parts they did not get quite clearly over the air (for instance, because their attention was distracted). Others wanted to see how the printed presentation compared with the oral one. Still others reacted like one who attends a ball game and then reads about it later in the newspaper because it has become "his" game; they wanted to read about "their" speech—the one they heard the evening before on the air. Reading something one has heard is for some people intellectual pleasure, because of the plasticity and ease of understanding characteristic of follow-up reading. Still other



people, reading the editorial comments in order to compare them with their own reactions, came to reread the speech.

The general trend of these answers is confirmed by answers to the question included in our main survey of 5,528 people: "Did the radio news broadcast increase or decrease your interest in newspaper stories of the crisis?" The answers

TABLE 47.—EFFECT OF NEWS LISTENING ON READING AMONG PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT MEDIUM PREFERENCES

<i>Per cent who said:</i>	<i>Prefer radio</i>	<i>Prefer newspaper</i>
Interest in paper increased . . . . .	48.5	40.1
Interest in paper decreased . . . . .	22.0	3.9
Made no difference . . . . .	26.9	44.3
No opinion . . . . .	2.6	11.7
Total per cent . . . . .	100.0	100.0
Number of cases . . . . .	2,056	2,247

to this question, fortunately, can be related to the preferences expressed for radio and newspaper, respectively. Results are shown in Table 47.

It will be seen that the increase of interest in newspapers far outweighs the decrease. Among those who prefer newspapers to begin with, the negative impact of radio is practically negligible.<sup>2</sup> But even among persons who usually prefer the radio, those who have an increased interest in the

<sup>2</sup> Rural and urban people who usually prefer radio as their source of news react in a very similar way. For rural people who usually prefer newspapers (a relatively small group), the crisis obviously generates a conflict: their preferred medium is at an increased disadvantage with respect to timeliness; hence two-thirds of them are unable to answer the question.

paper during a period of crisis are twice as numerous as those who are less interested in the paper, presumably because the radio gives them such outstanding service.

The situation might of course be different for topics of varying degrees of importance and for different groups of people. Further interview studies will, then, be necessary, set in a statistical frame. One will have to keep in mind that the main problem is whether people who would otherwise read the newspaper do not do so because they get the news over the air. As far as available evidence goes, however, the effect of radio news broadcasting on the reading of news is anything but negative.

### *The Changing Function of the Newspaper*

If the increased popularity of radio is not detrimental to newspaper reading, then newspapers, too, should show rising circulation in times of crisis. To test this assumption, a newspaper was studied for the duration of the Czecho-slovakian crisis in the fall of 1938, during which the personal interviews just reported were taken. Chart 17 shows the daily circulations of the *Chicago Daily News*, an afternoon paper, from August 1 to October 1, 1938, the circulations being expressed as percentages of the circulations on the corresponding days of the week in 1937. The curve shows a sharp and quite well-sustained increase in circulation, with peaks corresponding to Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich, respectively.

Even if research should finally prove that people don't read less news, or that they read even more, because they get news over the air, news broadcasts still might have a profound effect upon newspapers. Two possibilities come to

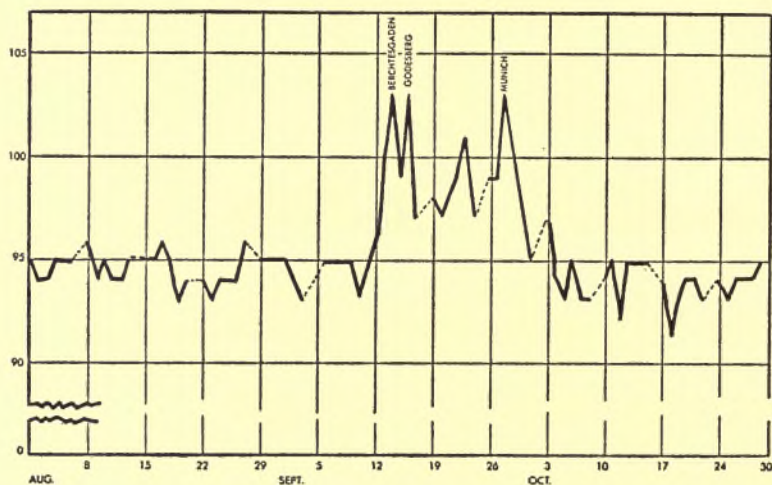


CHART 17.—HOW A NEWSPAPER'S CIRCULATION GREW IN A EUROPEAN CRISIS. RATIO OF THE CIRCULATION OF THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS IN AUTUMN, 1938 TO CORRESPONDING DAYS IN 1937

mind at once: radio might affect the editorial content of newspapers, and it might impair them economically by cutting in on their advertising revenues.

Up to the advent of radio, the newspaper had two functions: reporting what happened, and interpreting the importance of the event. Since radio is the quicker in reporting events, the newspaper is likely to lose its role as a carrier of scoops. When we open the paper we probably know already,

from the radio, the major events. But what we don't yet know is how they happened, what all the parties concerned say about them, and what they probably meant. So far radio does not yet compete with the newspaper in documentation or interpretation—not to mention pictorial evidence. One quite conceivable development in the newspaper is a progressive shift from the reporting to the elaborating function of news service.

A number of interesting investigations of this possible change could be undertaken. How, for instance, have headlines already changed? Do they, more and more, feature details of events rather than the occurrence itself? And what about election returns? They are a great occasion for the radio, and the tendency of the broadcasts to reduce the circulation of election-night daily newspaper extras is well known. An interesting question is whether the night's broadcast increases public interest in election news published in the *next* day's paper—particularly, the next afternoon's paper. The suspense in general may be relieved by the night's broadcast, but the radio whets the appetite for more details in the newspaper.

An illustration of such a possible study of election events in their consequences on radio and the press is provided by an analysis of circulation figures of the *Chicago Daily News*, an afternoon paper, during several election periods. The data, appearing in Chart 17, show that this newspaper gradually lost most of the excess circulation produced by election-night extras, but held or increased its excess circulation on

the day following each election. This is true with Presidential elections, off-year elections, and city mayoralty elections. Here, then, is inferential evidence of the changing function of the newspaper.

### *The Long-term Trend in Newspaper Circulation*

The most tempting way to study the effect of radio on newspaper circulation would be to analyze the existing circulation figures, but three major difficulties make an interpretation very hazardous:

1. If newspaper reading increases or decreases, radio will be only one of several causes. The growing importance of foreign affairs, the breakdown of rural isolation, and other factors will have to be kept steadily in mind.

2. Radio can affect newspaper reading in various ways. News broadcasts might make the news content of the paper more or less interesting. But listening to any kind of program could occupy the time formerly available for newspaper reading, and all sorts of stimulations coming over the radio (for instance, dance orchestras broadcasting from night clubs) might change the entire pattern of the public's leisure-time activities. Again, radio touches the destinies of newspapers by competing for a place in businessmen's advertising budgets.

3. Newspaper reading is not synonymous with news reading. The remarkable development in the picture form of news reporting might have an influence upon newspaper

circulation which would spuriously be attributed to radio if it were overlooked.

Apart from these general factors there is a special reason why inferences about radio's long-time effects are dangerous when derived from general newspaper-circulation data. Circulation figures relate to the total number of papers sold, not the total number of families taking newspapers. Many families may take two or three papers. If many of these families, because of the radio, reduced the number of papers taken, the papers' circulations might drop, even if the radio encouraged a large number of non-newspaper-reading families to take newspapers for the first time. The newspaper figures might in this case show a loss; at the same time there would be an increase of news reading among the public.

It is likely that the radio first invaded families able to take a daily newspaper. By the time of the 1930 census, radio ownership varied from 12 per cent of the families in the East South Central states to 55 per cent in New England. By 1938, according to the estimates by the Joint Committee on Radio Research, radio ownership had risen to 60 per cent in the East South Central states, to 92 per cent in the Middle Atlantic and New England states, and to 95 per cent on the Pacific coast. By this time practically all the regular newspaper subscribers undoubtedly had radios. The growth in radio ownership since 1930 probably represents an accretion, year by year, of successive groups who even before they possessed radios were less ardent newspaper

readers than the groups preceding them in radio ownership. The effect of the radio on newspaper circulation among these people would be particularly important to study, but there would be no way of interpreting the trends to indicate whether there was an increase or decrease in newspaper reading after these people obtained radios. As indicated before, any increase of reading in this group might cancel a decrease in the circulation of extra papers among the earlier radio owners and stauncher newspaper readers; or the reverse might be true.

If, however, a rather special hypothesis can be set up, general newspaper-circulation figures cautiously handled may be of some interest. Here are three such hypotheses and the actual findings concerning them:

1. *Expectation:* If, as studies previously discussed seem to show, the radio's advantages to rural listeners were greater relatively than its advantages to urban listeners, then one would expect the circulation for newspapers to increase more or to decline less (say, between 1929 and 1937) in the immediate trade area of the city than in the outlying territory.

*Findings*<sup>3</sup> (limited to cities of 15,000 and over, all of

<sup>3</sup> An individual study of each city was made at the office of the Audit Bureau of Circulations in Chicago. All cities which changed the boundaries of their retail trading zone in the time period considered were omitted, as also were cities with one or more non-ABC papers. *Editor and Publisher* tables on this must be disregarded entirely, because so many cities altered the boundaries of their zones and *Editor and Publisher* ignores this change. The reader should know that these and the following findings required more than a month of statistical work, which was carried through by Professor Stouffer and his assistant.

whose papers were Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) papers in both 1929 and 1930): Table 48 divides 181 cities into two groups, one of increasing and the other of decreasing aggregate newspaper circulation. About half of the cities with an increasing circulation showed greater increases in the rural areas than in local and suburban areas. Those factors

TABLE 48.—CHANGES OF NEWSPAPER CIRCULATIONS IN CENTRAL AND OUTLYING AREAS OF 181 CITIES<sup>4</sup>

	<i>Number of cities for which circulation changed more in:</i>	
	<i>Local and suburban area</i>	<i>Outlying area</i>
Cities with <i>increasing</i> aggregate circulation . . .	60	60
Cities with <i>declining</i> aggregate circulation . . .	10	51

that make for an increase (for example, improved service) seem, then, unrelated to special circulation areas. The decrease of circulation, however, is much more likely to take place in outlying areas. Five-sixths of the cities which lost newspaper circulation lost more heavily in outlying areas, where the time advantage of radio is likely to be more effective. A special tabulation (not reproduced here) showed that the same relationship holds true also if the circulation figures are analyzed separately for the Eastern, Western, and Southern parts of the country.

2. *Expectations*: Since radio news, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, tends to favor national news at the expense of local affairs, the local newspaper might hold up

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3.



more successfully because it still performs a function which radio has not taken over.

*Findings* (all daily circulation, ABC and other, pooled for each city): Table 49 shows that for three regions alike, conforming to expectation, newspaper circulations in the smaller cities held up better. Only about half of the big

TABLE 49.—PER CENT OF CITIES OF DIFFERENT SIZE SHOWING AN INCREASE IN DAILY NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION IN DIFFERENT AREAS<sup>5</sup>  
(1929 to 1937)

Size of city	Region		
	East	West	South
100,000 and over . . . . .	50	45	65
25,000 to 100,000 . . . . .	59	56	78
15,000 to 25,000 . . . . .	68	68	84

cities' newspapers increased their circulations between 1929 and 1937, while more than two-thirds of the small-town papers showed such an increase.

3. *Expectation*: The afternoon papers probably get the major news breaks—especially on foreign and national political news, and in the Central and Western time zones—but may not have so much time as the morning paper for the preparation of detailed interpretive materials. Since the newspaper's news-break value, in comparison with its feature value, is reduced by radio, the morning paper should be benefited at least in the local areas.

<sup>5</sup> This table, compiled from data in *Editor and Publisher*, includes newspapers that are not members of the Audit Bureau of Circulations. The publisher's estimates of circulation in such cases are not always dependable, but failure to include such newspapers results in a much more serious bias. For classification by city size, 1930 census figures are used.

*Findings:* (a) The percentage of morning circulation in the total morning and evening circulation has increased on an almost straight-line trend ever since the World War. The pattern is about the same since 1930 and before. (b) In a sample of cities for which data were available by special analysis at the Audit Bureau of Circulations between 1929 and 1937, the morning papers in 25 out of 45 cities (56 per cent) held up better than the evening papers in local and suburban circulation. This is perhaps the fairest comparison of morning and evening papers, since the evening papers necessarily have a different and shorter radius of distribution from the center of a city. These findings seem to conform with the expectation that morning papers may suffer relatively less damage from the radio than evening papers. However, the results are not decisively corroborative, and further studies are called for.

General circulation figures, then, give certain leads if they are studied under special conditions. The analysis attempts to create a kind of semi-experimental situation by dividing areas according to the differential role radio is likely to play. The trends selected in the preceding samples can be summarized as follows:

The newspaper fared better in urban as compared with rural areas; this phenomenon could be due to the time advantage that radio has outside the centers of distribution of print. The newspaper fared better in small than in large cities; this might be because the radio does not compete in the presentation of routine personal news items of local in-

terest. The morning newspaper did somewhat better than the evening paper, and this might be due to the fact that the morning paper is frequently "analytical" and therefore less subject to radio's competition than the afternoon paper, which is more dependent upon its straight news content at least in regard to current daily events.

### *Newspaper Advertising and the Press-radio Conflict*

Radio's competition with the newspaper for advertising revenue may yet become a most weighty consideration in any estimate of radio's effect on news reading. Perhaps the most serious potential effects, particularly in connection with local advertising, have hardly yet been felt. That the newspapers have taken a heavy loss in advertising revenue Table 50 shows. But for liquor advertising (usually banned on the radio), the newspaper would make even a worse showing in the national advertising field.

But how much of the newspapers' loss in advertising can be traceable directly to radio? Certainly not all of it, because even if the estimated expenditures for all radio advertising for 1937—140 millions of dollars—went to the newspapers, they would not restore the estimated expenditures for newspaper advertising to the 1929 level. It is quite likely, moreover, that some of this money spent on radio advertising would not have been spent on newspaper advertising in any case, and that some would have been spent for other media, such as magazine and outdoor advertising. Probably the direct inroads of radio advertising on newspaper advertising

could be traced much more adequately than the direct inroads, if any, of radio news on newspaper circulation. The major advertisers in the fields in which radio network advertising is concentrated—drugs, food, automobiles, tobacco,

TABLE 50.—ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE FOR ADVERTISING IN MAJOR MEDIA IN THE UNITED STATES, 1928 TO 1939<sup>a</sup>

(Millions of dollars)

	<i>News- papers</i>	<i>Maga- zines</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Out- door</i>	<i>Farm papers</i>	<i>Total</i>
1928 .....	760	215	20	85	35	1,115
1929 .....	800	240	40	80	35	1,195
1930 .....	700	210	60	65	30	1,065
1931 .....	620	170	80	50	20	940
1932 .....	490	120	80	35	13	740
1933 .....	450	110	65	30	10	665
1934 .....	500	145	90	30	14	780
1935 .....	530	150	105	35	16	835
1936 .....	580	170	120	45	20	935
1937 .....	600	190	145	50	20	1,000
1938 .....	520	145	145	50	17	875
1939 .....	525	150	170	50	17	910

<sup>a</sup> Totals have been rounded to nearest five million dollars. Estimates compiled by Dr. L. D. H. Weld, director of research, McCann-Erickson, Inc., for *Printer's Ink*, March 1, 1940.

soaps, and petroleum—are fairly limited in number, and the records of their expenditures are available for study. It might be reasonably easy to determine which advertisers forsook the newspapers and transferred their allegiance to radio.

If the newspapers are weakened further in the struggle for existence, the result probably will be a progressive elimination of the marginal papers and an acceleration of the trend toward monopoly of the news by one paper in all but

the large metropolitan cities. The social and political consequences of such a trend will be interpreted variously, depending upon the point of view of the writer. The major papers will probably continue to build up financial alliances with radio stations. As of January 15, 1940, 269 of the 814 U. S. stations were owned in whole or in part by newspapers. But one might wonder when the tables will be turned—when stations will own papers. Radio's greatest weakness is the difficulty of announcing its programs beyond the range of people who listen at a certain moment. (See our analysis in Chapter IV of the accessibility of specific programs.) Newspapers are a necessary outlet for radio's audience-building efforts; in one form or another they will have to decide on making radio programs "news" in their own right.

It is hardly possible for an outsider to comment helpfully on a topic that is being discussed so thoroughly by all the parties concerned. Just for the sake of speculation, we wonder what the data presented in this volume do suggest.

There are at least two directions in which a sort of compromise might be framed in the struggle between radio and press for advertising accounts: both involve a kind of division of function. It has previously been mentioned that the newspaper might assume more and more the task of giving details and interpretations of news while the radio took over the function of spot reporting. Likewise, one might visualize the province of radio advertising as that of merely announcing the existence of different products, whereas the

advertising pages of newspapers and magazines would undertake to describe them, praise them, and give details about their use. Such a division of function would obviously be to the advantage of both competing media: the insertion of advertising matter in the radio program would be minimized by the reduction of radio advertising to announcements of brands and prices, and the printed media would be less endangered financially by radio's competition for advertising accounts. There is no reason why the formula, "For further details, see your daily newspaper or your weekly magazine," could not apply to advertising as well as to news.

The other conceivable division of function in the advertising field recalls our discussion in Chapter IV of the medium preferences of different population groups. It will be remembered that preference for print increased sharply with rising cultural level. Speaking in commercial terms, this means that the higher people's purchasing power is, the more they will prefer print to radio for the communication of comparable subject matters. Possibly there, an equilibrium will slowly develop in which the advertising of higher-priced products will be carried chiefly by magazines, while products for mass consumption will be advertised mainly over the radio—with, of course, much overlapping between the two media. Of course the number of people reached by radio is so much greater than the circulation of printed media. But at least the close correlation between purchasing power and preference for print should provide a starting

point for further research that could lift the whole discussion to a more rational level.

Let us say, to summarize, that so far as newspaper reading is concerned there are no signs that news broadcasts have reduced newspaper reading. Quite to the contrary, it seems likely that owing to the rising interest in news transmitted by radio, there is now by and large more newspaper reading than ever before. Although no finally conclusive evidence is available, the best hypothesis for scientific tests and practical action is that listening to radio news increases newspaper reading. Yet radio has undoubtedly made heavy inroads into the advertising accounts formerly monopolized by printed media. Joint ownership of radio and newspapers is now spreading, and this might solve the problem so far as the biggest capital investments are concerned, but it presents definite social dangers and still leaves the great number of smaller newspaper and magazine units unprotected. Research might be able to give leads to other solutions for the conflict by pointing to the difference between the contents and audiences of radio and the printed page. These differences might be a basis for such rational divisions of function as we have just discussed.

## EFFORTS TO PROMOTE READING THROUGH BROADCASTING

*Radio Book Programs*

The effect of radio upon the newspaper is practically the most important form in which the first of our two initial questions makes itself felt: Does radio tend to displace reading? The second question—Could it be used to stimulate reading?—leads us back into the field of education (and at the same time, it is to be hoped, keeps the interest of the book publisher alive). The educator and the social scientist will quite naturally insist that, however valuable radio may be as a new tool for communicating ideas, its use should never interfere with continued efforts to promote reading. A number of arguments, some of them implied in the foregoing pages, can be advanced to support such a point of view. One is the necessary limits of radio as to subject matter: beyond a certain level of difficulty, topics listened to on the radio cannot be studied so well as when followed in print. Besides, even though the dispenser of printed material may reach fewer people than he might by radio, he finds his public accessible oftener and under a wider diversity of circumstances. Above all, reading has the capacity—which radio obviously lacks—of building layer upon layer of thought and information in the public mind. After having read a simple text on a certain topic, the reader can proceed to more complicated details; there is no limit to possible refinements of understanding in the domain of print. Radio, which has to reckon with



an ever-changing audience, can never move very far from a base of simple, elementary communication. To put it in somewhat metaphorical terms, a person who has read pulp magazines voluminously might acquire so much reading skill that he could graduate to more serious literature; a listener who has been introduced to new problems through radio cannot proceed to learn further details through the same medium. The only graduation normally possible is graduation from radio listening to reading. There is no evidence, to be sure, that reading carries in itself a momentum toward self-improvement. General observation makes it seem probable that lifting oneself by the bootstraps occurs, if at all, only under definite cultural pressure. But the main point is that such "uplift" is more practicable through printed matter than through listening to radio broadcasts.

Radio could, however, develop into a powerful tool for stimulating interest in reading.<sup>6</sup> To us this possibility seems so desirable we shall climax our study with a survey of what radio has already done, or might do, in the promotion of reading. Let us consider first the book programs that radio has presented.<sup>7</sup>

At the moment there is a trend in radio toward the in-

<sup>6</sup> The problems and possibilities which librarians are facing in establishing relationships between their profession and radio broadcasting are discussed fully and optimistically by Faith Holmes Hyers in *The Library and the Radio*, National Advisory Council on Radio in Education, New York: 1938, Information Series, No. 18.

<sup>7</sup> The information reported in this chapter has been collected in an elaborate survey by Alberta Curtis, staff member of the Office of Radio Research. Her report is on file and available there. Here only some major points are selected.

tensified use of literary materials and a greater variety in their adaptation for broadcasting purposes. Recent examples are "Meet Mr. Weeks" (editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*) on NBC; Ted Malone's "Poetry Tour" in the homes of famous American poets on the same network; the "Author, Author" short-story quiz on the Mutual network; and the broadcasts over the Columbia network by Professor John T. Frederick, who did an effective job for the University Broadcasting Council in Chicago. Orson Welles's dramatizations of books and the bias of "Information, Please!" toward literary questions might also be mentioned.

"Meet Mr. Weeks," a particularly interesting example of a program dealing with literature, was carefully designed so that it would not, like earlier literary radio efforts, become a "flop." NBC's Information Department reported a steady if small stream of requests for book programs, and the result is this series, which attempts to give the "human side of literature," not by the discussion of books as such but by the conversation of a recognized editor who discovers the fascinating ideas, historical tidbits, and dramatic episodes which happen to have been recorded as literature. Letters, manuscripts, children's books, and famous news stories have been subjects of discussion thus far.

The total number of book programs on the air is appreciable. The fullest information available on the distribution of book programs has been gathered by the Publisher's Advertising Club, which in the fall of 1937 polled radio stations and booksellers all over the country to learn where

book comments by radio were meeting with sufficient response to justify the sending of review copies and other book material. Permission was granted the Office of Radio Research to examine the returns for the purposes of our report. The list has been kept active by additions, but the discontinuance of programs has not been noted. Since the questionnaire asked for suggestions, in regard to radio book reviews, which would be of value to the station or of interest to the publisher, it is probable that stations carrying such programs or interested in doing so would rise to the opportunity for getting material. It will be necessary to circularize the stations again if we wish to get more complete data on the number and types of programs extant.

Out of about 200 stations responding, 146 were broadcasting some kind of literary comment at regular or irregular intervals:

- 92 had *regular* book programs or part-book programs;
- 15 used book scripts at *irregular* intervals;
- 39 used book material but gave no indication of regularity.

Classifying the responses in another way:

- 73 stations reported having *all-book* programs;
- 27 stations had *part-book* programs—with books included at irregular intervals on most of them;
- 46 gave no indication of whether their programs were all-book or part-book.

This list does not show the whole picture. At the time of the survey there were two syndicated services which provided stations with material for book programs: the Radio

Book Service and Esther Gould's Book Corner. The latter, which offered publicity about authors rather than books, has since been discontinued. (Publishers who co-operated in supporting this service hoped to build up their authors without "giving away" the contents of their books.) Among the stations which these services supplied, over 100 did not report to the Publishers' Advertising Club. Some publishers, notably E. P. Dutton and Company and Dodd, Mead and Company, send out script material and book-news items to be used by either newspaper or radio commentators and reviewers. Although some of the stations subscribing to these services may never use them, it is most likely that others had programs that were not reported in the questionnaire survey just mentioned.<sup>8</sup>

*Radio Guide*, a weekly publication which reports radio programs all over the country in considerable detail, listed 161 different book programs for the week ending March 18, 1939. Many of these programs were on regional or nation-wide networks, and therefore would cover a considerable number of stations. Finally, on many types of programs—commentators' talks, club programs, and programs featuring public affairs, discussions, and sermons—books are mentioned or even discussed although the broadcasts are not specifically listed as book programs.

The Office of Radio Research carried on detailed correspondence with 23 radio book reviewers and program man-

<sup>8</sup> A shorter survey repeated in 1939 was analyzed by Alberta Curtis just as this book went to press. This time 143 stations reported book programs. The whole picture in 1939 was much the same as that in 1937.

agers, and the reports of 18 libraries to the American Library Association in 1936, dealing with their efforts to link radio broadcasting with reading, were examined. From these data we derived a picture of the imposing variety of programs dealing with books which lend themselves to the following classification, the types being given in what seemed to be their order of frequency:

1. Book reviews.
2. Miscellaneous other methods of bringing a book to the attention of the listener.
3. Literature courses.
4. Straight reading of books.

1. *The Book Review*: The book review is by far the most frequent form of radio presentation dealing with books. Originally it probably did not differ greatly from the reviews customary in newspapers. But it seems that the specific situation of the book-review broadcaster led to some thought about forms of delivery most appropriate to the radio. In the newspaper the book review rides along with the main content of the medium, while a book program has to stand on its own merits; hence many correspondents stress that they try to give their programs a more personal, intimate, colloquial touch. And, indeed, a comparison of the average printed book review with radio scripts on the same topic show a characteristic difference. Many newspaper reviews are of a rather esoteric character; the reviewer stresses his intimate knowledge of literary details, and tries to link

the review of a specific book with other books or literary currents. Very many printed reviews are, therefore, difficult for average persons to read. The radio reviewer who cannot discuss so many books, and who counts correctly on a less "literary" audience, tries to make his report more generally appealing and to build it more from the listener's point of view.

Two devices mentioned by radio reviewers seem especially worthy: one is the practice of stating what type of reader might expect to enjoy a certain book; the other is the endeavor to give information on the background of a book—about the setting, the problem, or the author—so that the reader, when he takes to the book, already has a frame of reference which makes the reading more meaningful.

Most of the reviewers stressed that their comments were designed to stimulate interest rather than to "give away" the contents of books. Rather different from this type of review is the program which gives a more or less complete digest of certain books. Station WOI, in Iowa, which is aware that it serves rural listeners, no more than half of whom have books available, compromises between the digest and the review in its programs on travel books, public-affairs books, and magazine articles. The main points of the material are completely covered, but the speakers strongly suggest that the whole book or article is more valuable than this summation of its parts.

For the rest, the reports obtained are suggestive of a

number of technical problems. How many books should be mentioned in fifteen minutes? Should only good books be reported, or should all outstanding books be mentioned, along with necessary criticism of the less commendable ones? Each reviewer has his own ideas, and no evidence is available as to the preferable procedure. There are certain areas in the Middle West and especially in the Far West where a considerable number of different book programs are within reach. It would be worth while to set up a panel of people who would listen to several programs, and to study the kinds of programs which were most appealing and effective for different types of listeners and prospective book purchasers.

While we are on the subject of technical difficulties, we might mention the most common one, which is the lack of a unified policy on the part of publishers toward radio. Some publishers favor radio publicity and give review copies of books to reviewers whom they believe competent and favorably disposed to such books. A ticklish situation arises, however, when the reviewer is adverse in his judgments. One publisher insists that the copies of scripts for radio reviews be sent to him when the reviewer has prepared them, and he is thus able to judge the competence and disposition of the reviewer. The difficulty publishers find in evaluating radio publicity as against newspaper publicity increases their reluctance to co-operate with all reviewers who offer their services.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> An especially interesting and delicate problem arises from the fact that American radio is devoted so largely to the advertising of commodities. The reviewer who wants to promote the reading of certain books is thus faced

The financial problem—that of going on the air commercially—which radio presents to the book trade can hardly be solved by research. The individual publisher cannot afford to buy desirable time, and apparently no co-operative scheme for publicizing his products is practicable. Publishers are now, however, losing their wariness in regard to selling dramatic rights; they consider the dramatization of their books excellent publicity. By learning how to edge into dramatic and commentator programs, they may be able to build up among listeners an expectation and a desire for literary tips that will pave the way for further experimentation in radio.

The general trend of our survey shows that there are more radio book programs in the whole country than obser-

with the question of whether his quiet comments can compete with the sort of delivery the listener is used to hearing, or whether he should try to keep pace with the lingo of current advertising. An embittered book columnist, commenting in the *New York Post* for March 5, 1931, had this to say about these New York columnists: "The radio book reviews broadcast by Alexander Woollcott, Clifton Fadiman, Harry Salpeter, and other gentlemen of the critical fraternity, have interested this department greatly. We have serious doubts, however, concerning the sales value of such talks, conscientious and entertaining though they may be. If cigarette and soap and toothpaste manufacturers find the mental level of their radio audience most effectively reached by playing jazz and shouting slogans into the microphone, we suspect that a program something like the following one would show more immediate results than astute critical talks by George Bernard Shaw, Arnold Bennett, and Carl Van Doren:

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. You are about to hear a half hour of sweet and hot jazz played by the Book-of-the-Week Blue Symphonists. And if you wonder why the boys seem pepped up tonight, and why they play as though they were inspired, let me whisper it—because they all have read Millicent Pashim's latest romance, *She Got Out and Walked*. And after you have heard the ravishing music in this Book-of-the-Week hour, take my tip and walk (heh heh)—do not run—to the nearest bookstore and get your copy of *She Got Out and Walked*."



vation in the East, which has rather few such programs, would lead one to suspect; that there is available quite a diversified experience with different types of book program, and that this could easily be developed toward a more systematic knowledge of the most effective types of presentation; and, finally, that existing evidence points to the conclusion that book programs have a pronounced effect upon book sales and library circulation. In order to have a more organized picture of the situation, the Office of Radio Research undertook a special study, tackling the whole question not from the side of the program, as was necessarily done in the general survey, but from the side of the listener and reader. To the main results of this study we now turn.

2. *Other Forms of Presentation:* Broadcasters have not restricted themselves to mere reviewing, but have tried all known forms of verbal radio presentation. Station WAAB and the Colonial network, for instance, had a "Book Theatre" sponsored by a group of Boston booksellers. "We have evolved a program entitled the 'Book Theatre' which takes a book through two or three scenes to a high point and stops. The listener then has two choices, either to wear himself out guessing what happens next, or to get the book and read it." The idea of the "teaser" is like the one on which the Office of Education's radio division based a series called "Treasures Next Door," except that the latter dealt with "classics" instead of new books, and directed listeners to the public library for the end of the story. Each script ended with this comment: "Good books are like good friends—

always there, always the same. They are waiting for you in the public library, if you will go in and ask for them." Somewhat related to this technique were the sponsored programs put on the air to advertise Modern Age Books in 1938, each program presenting a dramatized episode of a book, at the end of which the listener was invited to get the book itself for further enjoyment.<sup>10</sup>

Another approach consists of putting the authors themselves on the air in interviews conducted by an announcer or literary expert. Such programs aim to make the book more interesting through the personal touch which the listener gets by listening to the author. A variation of this method was adopted in the Book-of-the-Month Club programs, in which writers were introduced as the authors of their own books but were interviewed as to their preferences among books written by other authors. Panel discussions about books have also been attempted, especially by the Library School of the University of Southern California. Here the building of such programs has been part of the training of students.

The one-minute spot announcement of new books in the public library has been found effective when worked into news broadcasts. The Des Moines Public Library recently began to furnish a skillful news reporter with the literature on burning current issues, and he inserted mention of this material in discussions of the background of his topics. An-

<sup>10</sup> The strong belief in dramatization which some of our correspondents expressed appears to be justified by the study reported in the next section.

other example of an effort to discuss a brief bibliography on different subjects was reported by Mrs. Ina Roberts of the Cleveland Public Library:

I never talk too much about one book, but rather about a number on one subject. . . . A talk featuring books for salesmen, so grouped as to take in many aspects of the subject, from high-power salesmanship to the man who sells from door to door, brought to the Business Information Bureau for several weeks daily requests for special lists.

In some cases fan mail is encouraged to give listeners a sense of participation in a book program. The program may then be built around listener requests. For example, Gretchen McMullen has based her book comments very largely upon suggestions received from listeners. The Northwestern Bookshelf likewise has called upon listeners to express their own literary likes, and some extremely interesting replies have been received. This practice points not only to a measurement of interest but to a form of audience participation which may be of valuable aid to the program builder.

3. *Literature Courses*: Practically all book commentators sample books at random, without making an effort to integrate their series into a "course" or to find any continuing and developing theme around which to build their programs. The few exceptions to this rule will make clear what is meant by "literature courses" as distinguished from book reviewing.

The only actual "course" in literature which has been discovered was that of Edgar G. Doudna, given over WHA

for the Wisconsin College of the Air. It ran weekly from September, 1937, through May of the following year. The bulletin of the College of the Air described its purpose as being to "show through selected writings, interesting stories, and pertinent comments, how American political as well as social ideas and ideals are depicted in literature and determined by it." Titles of talks were: "Introduction," "The Puritans," "Benjamin Franklin and the Early Novelists," "Idealizing the Pioneer with Cooper," etc.—ending with "Wisconsin in Literature" and "Summary."

A regular series on literature is Professor John C. Scammell's "Splendors of Literature," broadcast weekly over WRUL in Boston. These programs have been running for over two years.

They not only deal with certain books and certain authors from the standpoint of the structure of their work, but particularly attempt to key a broadcast to some of the human qualities of courage, mercy, honesty, etc., which are illustrated by the book or author under discussion.<sup>11</sup>

The special emphasis upon moral ideas seems to be especially appealing for some groups of listeners. Professor Scammell selects for discussion, in the main, major works of world literature for which listeners already have a general frame of reference. By presenting those works under new aspects and linking them up with his and other people's personal experience, he seems to strike a happy combination of old and new elements in his presentation.

<sup>11</sup> From a letter written by the president of WRUL.

There are obviously many ways in which central ideas can be used in building book discussions. The discussion of literature of a regional character, for example, might be particularly effective. Experience in several quarters seems to show that whenever a book is reviewed which pertains to local history or which has a local setting, the response of the listeners is greater than usual. This tendency would run parallel to a trend toward heavier emphasis on regional broadcasting in general, for which book programs should be especially well adapted. If there is a job for radio in the development of a cultural heritage, regional literature would certainly be an outstanding part of its material.

In connection with the integration of book programs with different kinds of reading promotion, it should not be forgotten that reading as a process could be taught or discussed over the radio. Inability to read even simple material hampers many adults and is one of the most clearly recognized problems in education. The radio would seem to be a good medium for teaching the facts about correct reading habits, since these facts are not known or available in print to the adults who need them most. Since the facts are contrary to many popular suppositions—for instance, that the slow reader absorbs and retains his reading material better than the fast reader—they would have the interest of novelty.

4. *Reading of Books*: In a number of cases the straight reading of literary texts over the air has been attempted successfully. The procedure varies from the one followed at WOI, in which a current novel is read textually in full,

to a program which the Mutual Broadcasting System calls "A Book a Week," in which a novel is condensed for reading in five daily quarter-hour periods, and to the practice reported from England, where the British Broadcasting Company has novels completely rewritten or written expressly for reading over the air.<sup>12</sup>

The straight reading of novels is interesting from several viewpoints. First, it seems surprisingly conducive to follow-up reading. On the Iowa novel-reading program a request was made on three successive days for letters listing books purchased as a result of the program at the close of the reading for the day. Exactly 607 pieces of mail were received, including 360 indicating purchase or intention to purchase and 247 which simply expressed appreciation of the program. The number of titles listed as purchased was 535. Additional purchases listed without titles, or estimated from the lists of persons stating they had purchased "several" or "practically all," produced an estimated total of 786.

This type of program evidently appeals to a group of women, among others, who for some reason do not belong

<sup>12</sup> Jeanette Sayre, staff member of the Office of Radio Research, has had several interviews with members of the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation, who explained the great care taken in rewriting these texts. The adaptation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* took nine months. A definite set of rules are followed, especial stress being laid on dialogue parts, the cutting out of descriptive passages, and even the elimination of whole minor plots to make the main story clearer. An interesting difference between the British and the American experiences is that the British radio addresses itself to men as well as to women, because most Englishmen go home to lunch and books are read during the lunch hour. The corresponding American programs are directed almost exclusively toward women.

to the regular class of readers but whose taste is somewhat superior to the level of the women's serials which take up so much time on the usual daytime schedule. The Iowa program has been made the subject of a special study which will be published in another context. There it will be seen that the novel-reading program was among the three most popular broadcasts of Station WOI.

If the Iowa example permits the inference that such novel-reading programs will always have a good chance for winning sizable audiences, valuable implications are obvious. One of the main handicaps of educational stations as compared with commercial stations is their lack of serial story programs. An educational station cannot afford to accept the onus of broadcasting the usual serial dramatic stories, which are mostly of very low taste, and the writing of better stories for a specific local station would be too costly. The novel-reading program would perhaps prove a very adequate means of overcoming this difficulty. Just as the playing of good musical records became a major feature of educational stations, the reading of novels might be a good device to win a type of listener who otherwise would patronize commercial stations only.

In regard to all four types of book programs mentioned above, there is little information available as to the audience such programs attract. In a few instances such programs, by good luck, have been included in general listener surveys. An inspection of the figures produces the impression that

the audience for book programs is of about the same magnitude as that for serious programs generally (discussed in the first section of this report). Yet most of these programs do not have the build-up which the major educational programs receive. Where such a broadcast has been going on many years, such as Joseph Henry Jackson's program originating in San Francisco, and the Iowa novel-reading program, the audience seems to be far above the average size of an educational audience. Still less known, however, is the effect of such programs upon the reading habits of the listeners. One main problem is whether people actually read the books which they hear about over the air, or whether they use radio reviews as a substitute for reading, merely to acquire a kind of superficial knowledge of the books for parlor purposes.

*The Effect of Book Programs on Book Sales  
and Library Circulation*

In pointing out the extent to which our knowledge of the effects of radio on our culture is still in flux, one could do no better than to quote the following two editorials from *The Saturday Review of Literature*:

*What the radio will do to fiction as an art leaves no room for doubt. What it will do to the taste of the public is scarcely less uncertain. For by forcing the novelist to shear away description and extraneous happenings, leaving only outstanding incident and dialogue in high relief, it will accustom the public palate to fiction stripped of every vestige of psychological content and so barren of subtleties and psychological interpretations as the fiction of the screen.*



. . . No worse turn could be done to literature than to have the novel become the perquisite of the radio.<sup>13</sup>

In the editorial opinion, *it is all nonsense that radio puts an end to good reading*. . . . When print took over the telling of popular stories, oral telling declined. But to suppose that the book is to be supplemented by the radio is to assume that we are going to be content with story-telling. . . . A fully developed novel is enriched from those powers to think which are the privilege of a writer who does not have time to recite his work. It is quite impossible to read such a book over the radio.

. . . Indeed, *the radio may do a great deal to restore good reading*, which suffers now more from diffusion than from lack of material. . . . In all probability the radio will eventually take over much, though by no means all, so-called light fiction of the rental-library variety, leaving the better books a freer field to attract good readers. . . . What would be left would be real books.<sup>14</sup>

These statements are absolutely contradictory in their essence, and since neither of them offers any evidence, one cannot even say that the later one supersedes the first. The evidence unearthed by our survey is still haphazard and meager enough, but, if anything, it seems rather to back the more optimistic attitude of the second editorial.

From our broad survey of the whole field, a few clear-cut cases of effects upon reading and book sales exercised by radio book programs can be mentioned.

Marion Humble has reported in her study of rural library service that radio is a very potent influence on book selection in areas which are not served by the usual sources of book publicity:

<sup>13</sup> *The Saturday Review of Literature*, December 26, 1925.

<sup>14</sup> *The Saturday Review of Literature*, February 15, 1936.

The increasing influence of radio upon reading habits and the choice of books is being felt in every section of the country. To the question, "Where do you hear about the books you ask for in the library?" farmers' wives, rural teachers, and club-women in small villages give the same reply: "Radio."<sup>15</sup>

The Morris Sanford Book Company of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, sponsored Professor Clyde Tull in a series of "Fire-side Chats."<sup>16</sup> Sales figures were observed for six days before and after broadcasts. It was ascertained that three times as many copies of *Gone with the Wind* were sold after his review as in the corresponding period before.

A report from the Michigan network on Alvin Hamer's book-commentator program includes an answer to the question about responses:

The recent offer of one two-dollar book free, for the first correct answer to arrive by telephone at our studios within ten minutes after the close of the broadcast, brought 200 telephone calls in fifteen minutes. Telephone calls trickled in the rest of the day and evening. This is for one two-dollar book, the only prize that was offered. . . . Booksellers and librarians reported exceptional success following our broadcast on *Four Hundred Million Customers*, *The Cruise of the Gull Flight*, *Dangerous Year*, etc.

H. F. Joyner of Rome, Georgia, writes:

During the past year, one library in our city has doubled its circulation and added approximately 400 new members to its membership. This particular library is mentioned in each program.

<sup>15</sup> Marion Humble, *Rural America Reads*, American Association for Adult Education, 1938, page 29.

<sup>16</sup> Effects were reported in *Publishers' Weekly*, November 7, 1936.

More indirect is the evidence reported by a New York publisher who circularized book stores and circulating libraries in the Far West, asking them to list, in the order of importance, the stimulating forces which in their opinion sent people into their stores and libraries. Joseph Henry Jackson's radio talks received the highest number of votes—37 out of a total of 239—from dealers in California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. In California he received 18 votes for his radio program to 9 for his newspaper column. The average number of votes received by all other sources of influence was 3.1. Other radio book commentators mentioned in the list were: Alexander Woollcott (9 votes), Luther Mayer (6), Richard Montgomery (2), William Van Wyck (1), Wendell Fifield (1). This poll of expert opinion might be repeated in the areas which are known to be best served by book outlets and book programs.

A similar inquiry has been made under the direction of Dr. Charles Brown, the director of the library of Iowa State University.<sup>17</sup> A questionnaire was sent out to the 349 public and association (club-supported) libraries in Iowa, with these queries:

1. Have you observed in your library an increased demand for books read or reviewed over WOI?
2. Have you added books to your collection, or duplicated titles, because of demand created by these programs? If so, list titles.

<sup>17</sup> The analysis of the returns was conducted by Alberta Curtis, staff member of the Office of Radio Research. This study corroborated the results of a similar inquiry which Dr. Brown made in 1932, and which was published in *Publishers' Weekly*, August 13, 1932.

3. Can you quote any comments by your borrowers on (a) the book reading; (b) the book and magazine reviews?

The summary of the replies follows:

Just 155, or 44.5 per cent, of the 349 public and association libraries replied.

Slightly more than four fifths of the libraries which replied had observed an increased demand for books read or reviewed over WOI. The proportion for public libraries was 87 per cent; for association libraries, 72 per cent. (To supply a drastic correction for those libraries not responding, it might be assumed that those reporting represented *all* those which had observed an influence of the programs. In that case, the proportion of all libraries saying their circulation was affected is 37 per cent. Even this is a fairly impressive figure.)

More than half of those reporting (53 per cent) had added books as a result of this demand. Again, there was a higher affirmative response from public than from association libraries: 56.5 and 44.7 per cent, respectively. Fifty-nine libraries were able to list actual titles. Eight libraries spoke of the importance of these programs as a major aid in selecting books. The great majority of titles listed had been read rather than reviewed over WOI.

Eighty-nine librarians gave comments on the book-reading programs; 39 gave them on the book and magazine reviews. The most frequent type of comment: "Borrowers say that they want to finish the book quickly, or fill in the part missed." *Example*: The Iowa Library Commission, which runs the Traveling Library, wrote: "Our patrons have requested special titles that were being read over WOI. They have asked us especially for the titles by Rose Streeter Aldrich and Dorothy Canfield. We have many copies of these books, and probably would have duplicated had this not been so. No comment except that they enjoyed the story and wanted to finish it or supply some part they had missed. No comment on reviews."

A number of people connected with the book trade have independently announced their hunch that demand for books can be created most readily when mention is made of them on commentator's programs devoted mainly to other topics. Woollcott's recommendations of James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, Walter Duranty's *I Write as I Please*, and Benefield's *Valiant is the Word for Carrie* were made on his "Town Crier" series. On the same night that he spoke of the last two, "The Voice of Experience" recommended Dr. Carrel's *Man the Unknown*. Sales mounted on all three books. The figure of Alexander Woollcott has acquired almost legendary stature with the book trade, and as will be seen presently our own more systematic evidence points likewise to his importance as a recommender of books. In an interview with a man who was in the forefront of the efforts to promote book buying over the radio,<sup>18</sup> Woollcott's series "The Early Bookworm" was credited with great effect, not measurable now, upon the sale of at least three books. Two of these were Dashiell Hammett's *Maltese Falcon* and William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*; the other *Whistler's Room*, had gone out of print, and the demand created for it was so vigorous that the publisher had to set up new type and reissue it. Woollcott is also credited

<sup>18</sup> It might be added here that booksellers are not always grateful for attention attracted to a book that is not current. One expressed a fervent desire to wring the neck of William Lyon Phelps if the latter ever got on the air again and excited the interest of people in acquiring the hundred best books for their libraries. These books, complained the bookseller, are too often out of print or out of stock, and when restocked some of them remain on the shelves.

with having made James Hilton's books best-sellers through his commentator program. Hilton's *Lost Horizon* had been on the shelves for two years, in little demand, when Woollcott "went quietly mad" about it, causing it to become a steady favorite for years.

Similar observations are on record in the political field. If an otherwise politically neutral commentator comes out for a candidate, many people are more impressed by the recommendation than by the radio efforts of the candidate himself. Such observations could be generalized into the following hypothesis: If a radio audience has been habituated to expect entertainment from a certain personality, the latter can carry over his following to certain causes, if his sponsoring of such causes is an exceptional event. If this rule holds true, then the much discussed election of a Texas governor would have happened not in spite, but because, of his having sold flour and not politics over the radio.

Thus the promotion of reading through programs designed for other purposes is an opportunity for all interested parties. Thus it is reported that material regarding books and bookmobiles was inserted in two entertainment programs, "One Man's Family" and "Lum and Abner," in connection with the recent convention of the American Library Association.

Despite a considerable amount of evidence to the contrary, the opinion that radio programs are not able to promote the sales of books is frequently expressed in the book trade. Reasons given include: "lack of appeal to usual radio-

listening intellect, book industry's own mechanical difficulties, seasonal conditions, absence of brands and labels, and proven slight return on all but a few best sellers."<sup>19</sup>

Why is the trade generally pessimistic, even though an actual scrutiny of the field shows quite a number of successful cases of book promotion over the air? One reason may be that publishers' opinions are possibly tinged too strongly by experiences in New York, where the vast number of other stimuli at work may, indeed, make book talks less engaging than they are elsewhere. Perhaps publishers are lamenting lack of success in the metropolitan area while they overlook chances in other parts of the country. A case in point is the experience of the publishers of Modern Age Books with a program they had on WABC for thirteen weeks, beginning January, 1938. Fan mail grew from about 100 to 400 letters per broadcast, and the station assured the sponsors that this result was good for that type of program, but the cost made it impossible to continue the series. Lack of book outlets was another decisive reason for the discontinuance of the program. The Modern Age editor when interviewed said, however, that much of the mail received came from small towns, particularly in the Middle West. No special effort was made to encourage mail orders, since they are too expensive to handle. Obviously here the structure of the commercial setup was at cross-purposes with the kind of response the program received.

<sup>19</sup> *Variety*, April 27, 1938.

A further reason for the pessimism of publishers might be that most of their discouraging experiences occurred at a rather early period in the history of broadcasting—namely, the beginning of this decade. At that time radio was still a thing of curiosity for many people, and their willingness to do any serious listening was only slightly developed. Just as the audience to serious music has steadily grown in recent years, book programs might have found more and more listeners if they had been broadcast continuously.

Finally, there may be special conditions accounting for the failure of a given book program to evoke a strong response. One of the big networks, for example, made a check-up in libraries to see whether the circulation of Shakespeare increased during broadcasts of some of his major dramas over a period of three months. There was no evidence of increased Shakespeare reading in the libraries, but that could very well be due to the fact that most people who listen to a Shakespeare drama over the air would have the works of this poet on their own library shelves.

Publishers have pointed out to us that the observations and research reported in the preceding pages do not offer a ready-made solution for their problem of how to sell books through the use of the radio. While our primary intention has not been to carry on commercial research, it should be pointed out that the techniques and materials now at hand point the way to the gathering of commercially valuable



data. For example, the book trade would like to obtain an evaluated list of book programs and their producers throughout the country. This could be obtained through contacts with organized listening groups and libraries, and through continued polling of stations and book stores. Methods of checking the sales effects of book-program series are suggested in the examples listed above. The relative efficacy of various types of book programs—dramatized versions, book reviews, authors' talks, dialogues—could be studied by enlisting a panel of listeners who would judge the various methods of presentation on the basis of their appeal and tendency to stimulate the desire to read. By recurrent repetitions of the study described in the following pages the relative effectiveness of programs now on the air could be checked.

#### READING UNDERTAKEN AS A RESULT OF RADIO LISTENING

##### *A Survey and Its Method*

The study now to be examined purports to answer two questions: Do people read as a result of listening to the radio? If so, which are the programs that influence them to read? Introducing two terms which permit us to refer conveniently to these two questions, we might reformulate the questions thus: How much "follow-up reading" is there? What is the "reading-pull" of different radio programs?

About 2,000 people were personally interviewed. The interviewers used a questionnaire which took its final form

after a large number of trial interviews had been made.<sup>20</sup> The questionnaire follows:

READING STIMULATED BY RADIO PROGRAMS  
(Interview Schedule)

1. Have you ever read a book, pamphlet, magazine article or newspaper item because of something you heard on the radio? Yes... No...
  - A. If the answer to Question 1 is NO, was it because you do not listen to the radio? Yes... No...
  - B. If the answer to Question 1 is YES, what did you read? As a result of listening to what program? Why did you read it? What additional factors influenced you in this particular reading? Where did you obtain the book, pamphlet, magazine or newspaper read? INSERT ANSWERS TO QUESTION 1-B ON PAGE 2.
2. Sex . . . . . 3. Home City. . . . . 4. Occupation . . . . .  
 (In case of doubt, mention place where respondent has done relatively most listening in the past year.) . . . . . (Please be specific)

<sup>20</sup> In order to keep down expenses, the study was carried out by the voluntary co-operation of students in two library schools—in New York and Southern California. (We are greatly indebted to Miss Miriam Thompkins, Assistant Professor of Library Science, Columbia University, and to Mrs. Mary Duncan Carter, Director, School of Library Science, University of Southern California, for their assistance.) The Easter vacation was chosen for the canvass so that many of the New York students could get their interviews in their home towns outside of New York. As a result, the interviews are geographically distributed in the following way:

	<i>Per cent</i>
New York City . . . . .	34.3
Other places in the Northeast . . . . .	28.7
Southeast . . . . .	5.5
Midwest . . . . .	5.9
Los Angeles . . . . .	15.6
Other places in Far West . . . . .	8.2
Rest of states . . . . .	1.8
	100.0

This distribution was sufficiently diversified to avoid exclusive local coloring; but it is not, of course, geographically representative of the United States. Our results are, then, dependent upon the special configurations of broad-

5. Age (check age group)

20-24 years	35-39 years	50-54 years
25-29	40-44	55-59
30-34	45-49	60 and over

6. Education (check years completed)

Elementary school

1..; 2..; 3..; 4..; 5..; 6..; 7..; 8..

High school

College or University

1..; 2..; 3..; 4.. 1..; 2..; 3..; 4..; 5..; 6 or more..

(If the situation makes it impossible to ask the respondent this information, try to make a good guess at the end of the interview. Check here if age has been guessed...; and here if education has been guessed....)

- 7. How many hours, on an average winter evening (after 6:00 P.M.), do you listen to the radio? .....
- 8. Which magazines, if any, do you read fairly regularly? .....
- 9. How many books, if any, have you read during the last four weeks? .....
- 10. What are your favorite radio programs, of any sort, to which you listen frequently? .....

casting in the areas covered. But the nature of our analysis permits us to avoid a bias.

One of our aims is to show which programs are most likely to be followed up by reading; our results will thus, in any case, apply only to areas where such programs are broadcast. Owing to the preponderance of regional and network broadcasting in America, it is quite unlikely that any type of program escaped our survey completely. Our second purpose is to show the importance of different factors in influencing the amount of follow-up reading. These basic psychological and social correlations are the same in all regions covered by the study, as was to be expected, and as has been tested by special additional tabulations not included in this summary. Even the basic datum, the total amount of follow-up reading, does not seem to vary significantly in the different areas indicated in the preceding list, if proper corrections are made for the composition of the samples.

Mr. Edward Suchman was in charge of the elaborate statistical analysis of this material.

Title and author of publication				
Name of radio program or name of person broadcasting				
What in the radio program suggested following it up by reading?				
Was there any other influence prior to or in addition to the radio program which prompted this reading?				

During the preliminary work it became evident that there are marked differences in follow-up reading on different cultural levels. Therefore it did not seem advisable to take a representative sample of the population, which would not have included enough cases among more highly educated people who, as will be seen, furnish the bulk of the follow-up readers. The sample, then, was loaded rather heavily toward the higher cultural levels. In order to avoid any misinterpretation of the results so gained, they are given separately for the different educational groups, education being used as an index of cultural level.

Otherwise the sample conforms to the usual standards. The distribution on the basis of age and education is the

same for men and women. Two-thirds are below 40 and one-third are 40 or over, for both sexes. Slightly less than half had at least some college education. The younger people have, on the average, more formal education than the older, as is generally true at this time in the American population. The total sample contains 863 men and 1,060 women.

A word of clarification must be given in regard to the main question addressed to the respondents: whether they ever followed up a program by reading. Two objections could be raised to the information obtained in this way. One is that no definite time interval during which such reading might have occurred has been specified in the question; hence some respondents will be inclined to scrutinize all their experience to give an adequate answer, and others will just remember follow-up reading which might have occurred quite recently. Partly connected with this objection is the other: that some respondents, trying to be as explicit as possible, will give many examples, while others may be satisfied to mention only one or two experiences. No attempt was made to conduct the elaborate kind of interview that would have been necessary to avoid such differences in replies. Rather an adequate correction has been attempted through a specific kind of statistical analysis.

The information has been used in two ways. First, all the respondents have been separated into those who claimed that they had never followed up a radio program by reading, and those who reported that they had done so in one or more instances. In the latter group no differentiation was

made as to whether one or more follow-ups were mentioned. Our basic index for the tendency of a group of people to follow up radio listening with reading is, then, the proportion of people who mention at least one such experience. No use is made of the frequency of such mentions by each person, so that variations due possibly to different attitudes during the interview would not affect our results. To make the index more stringent, influences were counted only in cases where a person was able to name the program which induced the reading and the book, pamphlet, or magazine that was the object of the follow-up reading. If he stated only that he had read one or more news items in the paper as the result of listening to the radio, he was not counted in the influenced group. (This situation obtained in 7 per cent of the whole sample.)

Our second purpose was to see what programs were especially conducive to follow-up reading. The base of reference was changed from the single respondent to the single program mentioned. In this way, again, we tried to circumvent possible bias introduced through the interview technique by recording the frequency with which each program was mentioned by the entire bulk of our respondents, in comparison with other programs mentioned, but irrespective of who the respondents were. It will be seen that a possible distortion which might result from the special composition of our sample could be eliminated by comparing the frequency with which the programs were mentioned as being conducive to reading with the frequency with which they were reported as favorite programs.

*What Factors Determine Follow-up Reading?*

As might be expected, the greater the formal education of a group, the more likely they are to do some reading in consequence of having listened to a radio program. It is remarkable that beyond the grade-school level one out of every three persons reports some follow-up reading; and

TABLE 51.—PROPORTION OF PEOPLE ON DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS REPORTING SOME READING IN CONSEQUENCE OF LISTENING TO A RADIO PROGRAM

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Per cent of follow-up readers</i>	<i>Total number of cases</i>
Elementary school . . . . .	15.8	272
High school . . . . .	31.0	718
College . . . . .	36.7	928

these cannot be dismissed as perfunctory answers, since the program listened to and the book, pamphlet, or magazine read had to be named by the respondent.

The result can be made more precise by considering sex and age together with education. Table 52 shows that follow-up reading is more frequent among women than among men. By comparing the four figures to the right with the four to the left, it can be seen that, pair by pair, the proportion of women reporting follow-up reading is greater for each age and educational group.

The role played by a college education, incidentally, is considerably greater for men than for women, as can be seen from the fact that the average difference between Column 2 and Column 1 is 14.4 per cent for the men,

whereas it is only 4.6 per cent between the fourth and the third column for the women. In a less clear-cut way the same part seems to be played by age. Young people of both sexes do more follow-up reading than people over 40, but the difference is slightly smaller for women than for men. It seems then that the reaction of men in this case is more

TABLE 52.—PROPORTION OF EACH SEX REPORTING FOLLOW-UP READING ON DIFFERENT AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVELS<sup>a</sup>

<i>Age</i>	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>No college</i> ( <i>per cent</i> )	<i>College</i> ( <i>per cent</i> )	<i>No college</i> ( <i>per cent</i> )	<i>College</i> ( <i>per cent</i> )
Below 40 . . . . .	22.7	36.3	32.9	39.0
40 and above . . .	15.5	30.3	31.4	34.5

<sup>a</sup> For base numbers see Appendix I A, Table 52.

variable according to different situations than that of the women. As a result of the direction in which age, sex, and education work, the college-educated younger women report almost three times as much follow-up reading as the men over 40 who are without college education.

The determining role of education can be easily understood in view of the fact that education stands for ability to read and without such ability no follow-up reading could be expected. There is, however, the difficulty that with increasing cultural level (which is also proportional to formal education) people listen to the radio less, and without listening there couldn't be any follow-up reading either. Indeed, such reading is definitely related to amount of listening, as Table 53 shows.



Obviously, then, people are more likely to read in consequence of a radio program if they are more prepared to read in general (as measured by formal education) and more exposed to the influence of radio, according to the amount of their general listening. In cases where the two factors conflict it appears that preparedness for reading just

TABLE 53.—RELATION OF FOLLOW-UP READING TO AMOUNT OF RADIO LISTENING

<i>Average amount of listening per evening</i>	<i>Per cent of follow-up readers</i>	<i>Total number of cases<sup>a</sup></i>
Less than one hour . . . . .	18.8	393
One to three hours . . . . .	33.5	1,041
Three hours or more . . . . .	39.8	443

<sup>a</sup> The total number of cases included varies slightly from table to table according to the number of insufficient answers turned in on different questions.

balances the importance of being subject to the general influence of radio. Table 54 presents the proportions of people reporting follow-up reading among four groupings of re-

TABLE 54.—PROPORTION REPORTING FOLLOW-UP READING ON DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS IN RELATION TO AMOUNT OF RADIO LISTENING<sup>a</sup>

<i>Average amount of listening per evening</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	
	<i>No college</i>	<i>College</i>
		<i>(per cent)</i>
Less than 2 hours . . . . .	21.5	29.2
Two hours or more . . . . .	29.0	46.6

<sup>a</sup> For base numbers see Appendix IA, Table 54.

spondents, the groupings being determined according to a cross-combination of people having or not having had at least some college education, and listening more or less than two hours on an average winter evening. The two fac-

tors seem to have roughly the same weight. Among people who are without college education but who listen much to the radio, there is about as much follow-up reading as among college people who do not listen much.

Since tabulations if carried on under the guidance of psychological ideas will prove practically useful, the following

TABLE 55.—PROPORTION REPORTING FOLLOW-UP READING ON DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS IN RELATION TO AMOUNT OF READING <sup>a</sup>

<i>Amount of reading</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	
	<i>No college</i>	<i>College</i>
	( <i>per cent</i> )	
Read little . . . . .	22.4	34.7
Read much . . . . .	45.5	41.0

<sup>a</sup> For base numbers see Appendix I A, Table 55.

possibility should be of interest: Although people read less the lower their education is, many people with relatively less education actually do considerable reading. Not having had much formal training, they should be the people who need advice as to what to read; radio should be as good a source of advice as any other. One should therefore expect that people who read much in spite of little education would be most influenced in their reading by radio programs. Table 55 shows that this is indeed the case.

The greatest amount of follow-up reading is done among the prolific readers of less education.<sup>21</sup> This result supports surprisingly the opinion about the effectiveness of radio that we have generally held in this volume: Radio as an incen-

<sup>21</sup> Amount of reading is measured by the number of magazines read regularly; it seems likely that if actual book reading were recorded, the statistical trend in Table 55 would be still more pronounced.

tive to reading is particularly effective where people with little formal training have acquired an interest in reading from other sources, presumably through some personal experience. Radio serves such people second to another (more personal) stimulus. They need radio's advice objectively because they lack general background stimulation; and they want it subjectively because they have previously acquired the taste for reading.

Summarizing, we see that above the grade-school level one out of every three persons can remember offhand at least one situation in which he was influenced by a radio program to follow up by reading. Women do more follow-up reading than men, young people more than the older. In general the susceptibility to follow-up reading is greater the more a group is prepared to read and the more they usually listen to the radio. Poor reading habits can be compensated for by much radio exposure in its effect upon follow-up reading. The data collected in this inquiry permit one to single out some types of people who are especially likely to turn to the radio for guidance in their reading, and thus these same data provide valuable hints program for sponsors.

By way of parenthesis it should be stressed that, even after we have seen that people read in consequence of listening to the radio, we still cannot tell whether the total effect of radio is toward an increase of reading. It could well be that people take reading clues from the radio but, because they spend so much time listening to the radio, still read

less than they might otherwise read. It would be rash to attempt general conclusions on this possibility. Objective data, like book-circulation figures, are subject to many influences, so that the effect of a single factor such as the radio cannot be isolated. Furthermore, subjective reports are not reliable in the testing of a process that covers a considerable time span.

The group most likely to read less on account of the radio consists of those marginal readers for whom reading involves considerable effort. Two studies seem, indeed, to suggest a decrease in reading among working people on account of the radio. One was made in 1930 when radio was still a novelty, so that subjective awareness of its effects was probably keener. Then E. Cooper<sup>22</sup> found that among 1,000 male occupational workers 30 per cent thought that on the whole their reading activities had been decreased, that they received from the radio much of the information they had formerly sought in books. Three years later Ridgeway found that among 379 adult non-users of a public library lack of time was the reason given most frequently (by 52.5 per cent of the group) for not reading.<sup>23</sup> Among the 116 individuals with whom personal interviews were obtained, the interests conflicting or competing with reading were investigated. Radio heads the list of competing interests: 62.9

<sup>22</sup> "An Investigation of the Reading Interests of One Thousand Adult Occupational Workers," University of Pittsburgh Graduate School Abstracts of Theses, VII, page 29 (1931).

<sup>23</sup> Helen A. Ridgeway, "The Reading Habits of Adult Non-users of the Public Library in a Typical Metropolitan Community," unpublished master's thesis, School of Library Service, Columbia University, 1934.

per cent of the group give this "excuse." The popularity of the radio was carefully explained by many of the people interviewed as lying in its accessibility and its requirement of less effort, and by housewives as being an accompaniment to their work. In 1939, in the course of Curtis's home-making study, reported earlier in this book, half of the women who relied mainly on radio for household advice<sup>24</sup> stated that they had read fewer magazines since the advent of radio.

In turning to a summary of the programs which are conducive to reading one should keep in mind, then, that this stimulating effect of radio on some groups might be counter-balanced by the opposite effect on others. We can be sure, however, that for anyone who wants to do his part in stimulating good reading through the controlled use of radio, the present type of study points to the way.

### *The Reading Pull of Various Radio Programs*

Table 56 shows the frequency with which certain program types and a few specific programs have been mentioned by respondents as stimulating them to read. In general we find serious-talks programs leading to the greatest amount of follow-up reading. Book talks or book-review programs are by far the most influential type of serious program, constituting about one-third of all mentions. Alexander Woollcott is the most frequently mentioned individual. Also of

<sup>24</sup> For the most part, it will be remembered, these were women with little formal education.

importance among the serious-talks programs are the forums and discussions.

TABLE 56.—FREQUENCY WITH WHICH DIFFERENT TYPES OF RADIO PROGRAMS ARE MENTIONED AS STIMULATING FOLLOW-UP READING

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
<i>Serious-talk programs</i> .....	228	28.5
Book talks	83	
Alexander Woollcott	35	
Forums and discussions	35	
Politics and government	25	
Religious talks	18	
<i>Dramatizations</i> .....	150	18.7
Orson Welles	69	
<i>News</i> .....	112	13.9
Commentators	51	
Bulletins	44	
"March of Time"	17	
<i>Classical and semiclassical music</i> .....	87	10.8
Opera	32	
Symphonic—general comment	22	
Symphonic comment by Deems Taylor	17	
<i>Quiz contests</i> .....	65	8.1
"Information, Please"	52	
<i>Comedy and variety</i> .....	47	5.9
<i>Popular-knowledge talks</i> .....	32	4.0
<i>Popular stories and serials</i> .....	22	2.7
<i>Service programs</i> .....	13	1.8
<i>Popular dance and band music</i> .....	4	0.5
<i>Miscellaneous</i> .....	41	5.1
Total .....	801	100.0

In dramatizations which are second, Orson Welles accounts for almost half the influences. Here he plays about the same outstanding role that Alexander Woollcott has among the commentators. The specific plays mentioned were all subsequent to "The War of the Worlds" (the "Martian" broadcast), but this is not mentioned often.

In the third place are the news programs, the number of mentions being about equally divided between news bulletins and news commentators. In this tabulation the people following up listening with newspaper reading only have been included.

Note that 10.8 per cent of the follow-ups were in relation to programs of classical and semiclassical music. Almost half of these programs were operas. Of follow-ups of the symphonic programs, 70 per cent were due to the music commentator on the program. Notable among the commentators was Deems Taylor.

"Information, Please!" accounts for almost all the follow-up reading resulting from quiz programs (8.1 per cent).

The foregoing table shows the frequency with which programs lead to reading among people who are at all inclined to read as a result of listening to the radio. The table is not open to the objection that our sample covers a disproportionate number of better educated people, because these are just the ones for whom a program would have "reading pull." The figures themselves, however, are still ambiguous, since a program could appear frequently in such a list either because it has many listeners (even if not many of them read as the result of listening) or because it induces a large proportion of its listeners to read (even if its audience is small). If we confine the term "reading pull" to the proportion of an audience which does follow-up reading in consequence of a certain program, then the figures we obtained in the table are equivalent to the product of audience size

times reading pull for each program. To isolate the reading pull, some measure of audience size will be required. For a first approximation we choose the frequency with which a program type is mentioned as a favorite. If, then, a program

TABLE 57.—COMPARISON OF PROGRAMS MENTIONED AS FAVORITES AND THOSE MENTIONED AS CAUSING RESPONDENTS TO READ

<i>Type of program</i>	<i>Per cent of all favorite programs</i>	<i>Per cent of all influential programs</i>
Classical and semiclassical music..	14.8	10.8
Popular music .....	9.2	0.5
Popular stories and serials .....	10.3	2.7
Serious drama .....	8.7	18.7
Comedy and variety .....	19.2	5.9
News reports <sup>a</sup> .....	9.7	7.6
News commentators .....	5.1	6.3
Quizzes .....	12.6	8.1
Serious talks .....	4.7	28.5
Popular talks .....	0.8	4.0
Service programs .....	0.9	1.8
Others .....	4.0	5.1
Total per cent .....	100.0	100.0
Total number of answers .....	2,432	801

<sup>a</sup> Here newspaper reading is included as follow-up.

is more frequently a favorite than it is conducive to reading, its reading pull is low. If it appears relatively more often as "influential" than as "favorite," its reading pull is high. Table 57 gives the distribution for the main program types according to these two bases.

This table shows, then, the relative effectiveness of the various types of programs in stimulating reading. For example, although comedy and variety rank high as popular programs, they are completely ineffective as reading stimu-



lants. Serious talks on the other hand, while not so popular, are very effective in promoting reading. The strong reading pull of serious drama was suspected by several correspondents in our book-program survey, and seems now to be definitely established. The relatively strong reading pull of music programs is somewhat surprising, especially in view of the fact that it is about as great as the reading pull of quiz programs which, in turn, is smaller than one might have suspected.

Individual differences in the frequency with which programs are mentioned as conducive to reading follow in general the pattern of differences in listening habits known from other sources. Age and educational differences go in the same directions and are of about the same magnitude if treated independently. Hence young people without college education, for instance, mention radio drama as inspiring reading almost three times as often as older people with college education, whereas serious music goes the other way around, being mentioned more than three times as often by the older college people as by the younger and less educated groups. Sex differences are small.

The kind of reading done in consequence of all the programs mentioned is rather obvious. As a result of musical programs, biographies of composers are read, or texts of operas. Dramatizations provoke the reading of the book dramatized. News programs lead to magazine and newspaper reading, and quiz programs to the use of dictionaries and reference books. Pamphlets to be read are often dis-

tributed in connection with serious talks, except in the case of book programs, in which direct advice as to what to read is given.

More interesting from a practical point of view are the actual situations in which people decide to read after they have listened to the radio. Although no general conclusions about them can be safely drawn, one who is interested in promoting reading through radio will find useful suggestions in a brief survey of the motivation implied in follow-up reading.

#### *Why Do People Follow up Radio Programs by Reading?*

The rather crude technique used in this informational survey does not permit a detailed analysis of each respondent's motivation. About one-fourth of all the follow-up reading reported pertained to *fiction which was heard over the air*—mostly in dramatic form. It would be worth a special study along the lines of the "Professor Quiz" analysis (reported in the second chapter of this book) to find out what gratification people get out of such reading. Gratification may be found in comparing the printed with the spoken presentation; in filling in gaps left by the radio presentation; and in reliving a pleasant experience. Often the radio presentation serves to direct a wandering reader in the selection of books if he does not know what else to pick in a circulating library. One way to help the respondents to express themselves in such an inquiry would be to ask them to compare their reading of the printed version with the

original reception over the air and to state in what respects the follow-up reading has or has not lived up to expectations.

About 600 of our cases pertained to nonfiction. Of these, about one-fourth involved reading that was *explicitly suggested* on the program: the reading of either a pamphlet written for, or of a book recommended by, some speaker. About half of the respondents read for further information upon their own initiative, once the broadcast has aroused their interest. In the large majority of cases the broadcast does not "create" the interest in the subject matter, but rather releases it or crystallizes it around certain printed material.

I immediately sent for a copy of Congressman's Lemke's recent speech, as I hoped it might consist on close reading of a liberal policy for the solution of our economic life. I have believed in the public ownership of our natural resources for many years.

I subscribed to and read *News-Week* after listening to "Town Meeting of the Air," because there are many more points brought out which the daily papers did not cover. I have a conviction that one should know more of what is happening so that opinions do not take the place of knowledge.

I read Downes' "Symphonic Broadcasts" as a result of listening to the New York Philharmonic, because I wanted to increase my knowledge of musical facts, due to a feeling of ignorance.

I read *With Lawrence in Arabia* after hearing the newscast of his death; I am a British subject, and very familiar with the Colonial system, and have traveled a great deal in that section of the world, so wanted to read the book.

Concern with current political issues accounts for the majority of this type of follow-up reading, general educational interests being second. The remaining follow-up reading is guided by personal motivation, as in the case of the woman who reads the medical theory of cancer after hearing a public-health program, because she worries about having cancer; or the woman who keeps up on war crises because she has a son of army age; and so on.

In about one case out of seven, it is interest in a person appearing on the program that leads the listener to read what the speaker has written:

I read Cornelia Otis Skinner's *Dithers and Jithers* as a consequence of hearing her on "Information, Please!" because the cleverness exhibited by Miss Skinner in answering questions made me want to enjoy it further.

I read *Farewell to Sports* by Paul Gallico, as the book was mentioned while Gallico was being interviewed over the radio. I thought Gallico was very clever.

The rest of the cases constitute a miscellaneous group. Rather outstanding is the tendency of quite a number of listeners to check up on people appearing on the air:

I consulted the dictionary in order to check up on the pronunciation of the speakers. I have been for a number of years conscious of English usage, and wanted to verify their pronunciation of words as it differed from mine.

To bring out more clearly the interrelation between radio and other influences that make for reading a special question

was asked: "Was there any other influence prior or in addition to the radio program which prompted this reading?" About half the respondents were able to indicate concretely such an additional influence. In the order of frequency the most frequently mentioned of these conjoint influences were: printed references, personal recommendations, and previous experiences with the book or author in question.

The first of these types of previous influences includes printed notices, advertisements, reviews, and general publicity concerning reading material. Often the immediacy of the radio broadcast supplies the necessary impetus, or supplements an idea already present because of the listener's having come across a mention, the title, or some hint concerning the content of the book which he goes on to read. The following comments are typical:

I read this book by Overstreet which I heard mentioned on the Town Hall program, because I had already seen it on exhibit. I went back and got it.

The broadcast of Sokolsky's made me even more conscious that the ideas of Lin Yutang in *The Importance of Living* coincided with mine; I had already thought this from a book review which I had read, but the broadcast, I think, was my real reason for reading the book.

I read *Mein Kampf* after it was discussed over the radio, and also because of the wide mention and comments the book received in the newspapers, as well as because of a natural interest in the European situation.

The second type of previous influence that makes listeners receptive to the idea of further reading is the personal

recommendation. Here we find friends playing the most compelling role:

I read *Romance of the World* after hearing of it over the Catholic Hour; a friend who was listening with me said she had read it, and strongly recommended it, so I read it.

I read *The Citadel* after hearing it described over a book-review program; a friend had told me about it, insisted on lending it to me, saying that she was absolutely sure I'd like it.

The third major type of additional influence, previous experience with the book or the author, is exemplified by the following comments:

I read the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin after having heard part of Franklin's life dramatized over a Saturday evening program; the reason I went on to read this particular book, I guess, was that I had read it once hastily several years ago.

I read Anne Lindbergh's *Listen! the Wind!* after hearing of it on a woman's program, and also because I had read her *North to the Orient* and thought it very fine.

Miscellaneous influences are indicated by scattered comments such as the following:

I read through a half issue of *True Story* because I'd happened to listen to the *True Story* broadcast, and on this particular day the magazine happened to be lying around in the beauty parlor while my hair was drying; I picked it up to see what it was really like.

I have read a few of the Crime Club mysteries, after hearing some of them dramatized; the movies had originally made me familiar and somewhat interested in them.

It is of much psychological significance that so many respondents mention, offhand, multiple influences. The hypothesis could be advanced that the successful direction of an individual's choice will, in most cases, hinge upon a certain suggestion coming as the "last straw" in a series of stimuli. A study specifically of this phenomenon should answer questions such as: How many influences under different conditions are necessary to bring about a desired course of action? Is the order in which they come irrelevant or has radio an optimum position—for instance, toward the start of the sequence, because the listener in his home cannot easily proceed to immediate action?

In any case, by the mere fact that it can add to the number of influences favoring reading, radio probably not only adds to already existing efforts to encourage reading but makes those efforts more efficient by providing a background of stimulation against which later stimulation is more successful. This, however, is not the only weighty conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing two sections.

### *A Practical Conclusion*

The reader may be surprised that we found as much follow-up reading as was reported by our respondents. The results corroborate the tentative impression gained from the program survey reported in the preceding chapter: that the effect of radio on reading is great, especially for certain strata of the population educated enough to have reading habits, but not so high on the upper cultural level, where

people do not listen much to the radio and are so sophisticated that they are not likely to take rather unspecific advice as to what they should read. That alone should encourage persons interested in the promotion of reading to turn to radio as a possible ally and to investigate further its potentialities.

But the whole situation suggests a more precise statement. There are three ways in which radio could be used for the promotion of reading. One is the indirect way already discussed in the third chapter of this book: advancing reading by audience-building activities. Librarians should induce people to listen to educational programs, because, we think, people will then do more reading. They will read in part for and in part as a consequence of the program. We have just seen that the most successful means of inducing people to partake in some activity is to expose them to a multiplicity of persuasions. The librarian and the radio program together are probably not twice, but many times, as successful as either of them alone.

The second chance for the promoter of reading is to "edge in" on programs which have built up an audience by virtue of their entertainment quality. Consider, for instance, how the California Library Association edged in on one of the successful daytime serials, *Lum and Abner*:

[*ABNER has luckily disposed of an invention which he took in on a bad debt. Both he and LUM have therefore decided that inventing is a good business. LUM has heard that most inventors sleep very little, so he and*



*ABNER have been trying to keep awake the last three nights in the hope that it may also turn their minds into inventive channels. CEDRIC listens to the conversation.]*

ABNER: What's a feller goin' to do all night? Ain't nobody to talk to. . . .

LUM: Why, you've got to put in yer time studyin', figgerin' out inventions. . . .

ABNER: Yea, but it won't work fer me. Ever time I get to studyin' I catch myself dozin' off.

LUM: Well, I was the one that thought about that stayin' up anyway. I been readin' fer two nights straight.

ABNER: Readin' what?

LUM: Well, I read two boy-scout books and I got another book awhal ago from the feller.

ABNER: What feller?

LUM: That feller on the truck that comes out here.

ABNER: I never knowed nuthin' about it.

LUM: Well, he jist started last week.

CEDRIC: That truck full of books you mean, Mr. Lum?

LUM: Yea, bookmobile they call it. . . . The library in there at the county seat sends the truck all over this county.

CEDRIC: And you buy books from him, huh?

LUM: No, you jist take out a library card and they come around 'bout oncet a week and you pick out what books you want to read. . . . Don't cost you a nickel.

ABNER: I doggies, that's a good idy.

LUM: Oh, hit's the finest thing atall. . . . The American Library Association got up the idy and this state was one of the first to start it.

ABNER: Well, good fer us. . . .

LUM: Now they're tryin' to get all the states to put 'em in.

ABNER: They bring the truck right around to the door, huh?

LUM: Yea, hit's jist like a library sept it gives fokes like us that lives in small towns and the country and don't have 'em a chance to read good books.

ABNER: I doggies, I'll have to tell Pearl about that. . . . She does love to read books.

LUM: Well, they got books fer all ages and kinds of people. . . . Boys' books and girls' books, books on cookin' and sewin' and I don't know what all. . . .

ABNER: Well, I don't want to learn nuthin' about cookin' and sewin'.

LUM: Well, they got books on everything. . . . Here's a list he give me this mornin' of some newins he got in.

ABNER: Let's see it.

LUM: Here, I'll read 'em to you. . . . Here's one. . . . HOW TO RAISE A DOG.

ABNER: Race a dog?

LUM: Raise a dog.

ABNER: I don't see how they filled up a whole book on that.

LUM: Well, they's a lot more to it than jist throwin' a couple of bisquits to 'em of a mornin' like you do. . . . ONE THOUSAND AND ONE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR AQUARIAM.

ABNER: 'Bout my what?

LUM: Your aquariam.

ABNER: I never knowed I had one—what is it?

LUM: I don't know, it's sompin' . . . part of the huming body like 'pendicitis, I reckon. . . . BABIES ARE HUMING BEINGS.

ABNER: Well, I done knowed that without readin' the book . . . air they jist findin' that out, you reckon?

LUM: Here's a book . . . MODERN INVENTIONS. . . . I gran-nies, I didn't see that. . . .

ABNER: Yea, you ort to got that.

LUM: I grannies, I will the next time he comes out with the bookmobile. . . . He may still be in town. . . . Cedric, run—

ABNER: Air you asleep, Cedric?

CEDRIC: Nome, I was just settin' here studyin'. . . . You know that was a purty good invent, that truck with them books. . . . That travelin' library. . . . If we could study up sompin' like that for the blacksmith shop over there—

[*End of the portion about libraries and books*]

Librarians should be alert for similar local opportunities of "stowing away" their message in other radio programs.

The third method of promoting reading over the radio is represented by the book program itself. We have seen that outstanding for reading-pull are those programs which are especially devoted to books. They probably do not have a very large audience, but with their followers they seem to be quite successful. Might not book programs afford a chance for educational broadcasting which has not been sufficiently exploited thus far? That their audience at this moment is not vast should not be discouraging, because they share this handicap with most other serious programs, as has been shown in the first chapter of this book. They do not make a bad showing if one keeps in mind that certainly no book program has ever been given anything like the build-up and the support that some of the leading educational programs enjoy. It does not seem impossible that if promotional efforts similar to those carried on in behalf of "America's Town Meeting of the Air," for example, were put behind a good book program, the program would attract a really large audience.

The reasons for this expectation are several. Practically all the better-promoted serious programs deal with public affairs. We have perhaps neglected a sector of the population which would be interested in serious matters of a more aesthetic and less political character. Book programs should furthermore lend themselves especially well to broadcast-

ing because of the narrative element with which they can easily be imbued. Finally, they should appeal psychologically to just that part of the population which is accessible to serious broadcasting—that is, people with some intellectual training but with a certain lack of cultural initiative or opportunities—a lack that makes guidance especially desirable.<sup>25</sup>

Pending the results of further study, we suggest that if some agency which is not interested in the sale of books and preferably is not even a library, but is an organization with general cultural standing such as a university or club, would produce a book program with a build-up like that given to some of the major public-affairs programs, a new sector of the American radio audience would be gained for serious listening.

#### THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF RADIO

In the foregoing pages our mood has been optimistic, although far too little information is available to permit any precise conclusions. The few data collected by now seem to show that radio has not impaired the reading habits of the

<sup>25</sup> In order to put such a hunch on a safer basis, a study would be desirable which would combine two techniques exemplified in this volume. This study should preferably be of a comparative character, covering readers of and listeners to book reviews, people who do not want any advice in connection with their reading, and people who do not read, because of lack of advice. In addition to using the comparative statistical technique discussed in Chapter III, it would include a detailed appeal-analysis of listeners to book programs—an analysis of the kind exemplified by Herta Herzog with the "Professor Quiz" program.

population and that if properly used radio offers a rich opportunity for the promotion of reading. This opportunity is due not so much to inherent characteristics of radio and the printed page as to the social frame in which the two media were set when they entered into competition. Leisure time has been much expanded through social legislation during the last decade, so that more time for radio listening has been available and has not necessarily been enjoyed at the expense of some other activity—at least as far as adults are concerned. A sharp rise in the average amount of schooling acquired by the American population, moreover, has manifested itself especially during the thirties. But reading in general and follow-up reading in connection with listening are mainly a matter of formal education, as has been shown all through this book. Thus the whole trend of the times is such that any effect hostile to reading that radio theoretically could have is not at all likely to come into operation.

This reasonable supposition that the effect of radio depends upon the social forces prevailing at a certain time raises the question of radio's future place in American culture. In attempting to look ahead beyond the present, we are overstepping the realm of concrete evidence and even the topic of this book. But as we survey our impressions of the data gathered in these many studies of what radio is doing today, we have a pronounced feeling as to what it will and will not do tomorrow.

The social consequences of radio will come about via its

influence on the attitudes and habits of people, but this role of radio will vary according to the different turns our social system takes. Should the populations of our big cities slowly be decentralized, radio will be of ever greater importance for an increasingly suburban people. Should there be a trend toward ever denser population centers, radio will not have such importance, because the movie downstairs in each skyscraper and the evening school at the corner of each block will do some of the work radio would otherwise do. Listening to foreign short-wave broadcasts is more vital for a country at war than for one at peace. In a country able to preserve its democratic institutions, radio will be politically less influential than in a dictatorship, the very existence of which depends upon the enforcing of propaganda upon the population. If on the other hand powerful educational institutions are formed for the purpose of exploiting the cultural possibilities of radio, its import upon the public mind will be considerable even in a democracy.

It is true that the mere existence of radio might help in some cases to tip the balance in favor of one of the many alternatives which society faces today. Radio could make people more willing to move away from metropolitan centers, because it relays some advantages of those centers to the rest of the country. Radio will probably make it easier for a party in power to keep itself at the helm of the state, and so could function as a potentially anti-democratic instrument or at least slow up the cycle of ascendancy and decline characteristic of political parties. Radio can, for better or for

worse, facilitate many tendencies toward centralization, standardization, and mass formation which seem prevalent now in our society. But of the many alternative developments that can be visualized now, very few will occur "by a tip of the balance." They will be the result of powerful social forces which during coming decades will affect radio broadcasting much more than they will be influenced by it.

Technological innovations have, it is true, a tendency of their own to engender social change. But so far as radio is concerned all signs point to the unlikelihood of its having, in its own right, profound social consequences in the near future. Broadcasting is done in America today to sell merchandise; and most of the other possible effects of radio become submerged in a strange kind of social mechanism which brings the commercial effect to its strongest expression. There are no sinister tendencies operative in radio; it works all by itself. A program must be entertaining and so it avoids anything depressing enough to call for social criticism; it must not alienate listeners, and hence caters to the prejudices of the audience; it avoids specialization, so that as large an audience as possible will be assured; in order to please everyone it tries to steer clear of controversial issues. Add to this the nightmare of all broadcasters, that the listener is free to tune in on competing stations whenever he pleases, and you have the picture of radio as a stupendous technical advance with a strongly conservative tendency in all social matters.

If in 1500 A.D. a study of the social fruits of the printing

press had been made, it could hardly have foreseen all the changes which we attribute today to its invention.<sup>26</sup> In the frame of the social conditions of those days, not even the most exhaustive analysis of the new medium of communication could have led to useful prediction. The importance that print has acquired is due largely to the Reformation and the big Western revolutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the same sense we cannot know what radio will mean in centuries to come, because we do not foresee what major social developments are impending. We can be fairly sure only that radio will not of itself mold the future. What we, the people of today and tomorrow, make of our social system: this will define the place of radio in history.

<sup>26</sup> Here is a justifiable line of argument for a research director, who might at this time have been appointed by a Fugger foundation: People, in most cases, don't know how to read; therefore, the mass production of books will have no effect; religious issues, the only ones which really matter, should be discussed with the fervor of an inspired mind, and therefore the cold medium of print is an inappropriate medium of communication. Thus the newly invented printing press will have little social importance.





## Appendix IA

### APPENDIX TABLES

THE tables in the text were not set up according to any rigid rules. In each case the main considerations were to make their content easy for the reader to grasp and to fit them most conveniently into the general continuity of the text. As a result tables with similar statistical structures may have been set up differently.

Wherever base figures could be included in a table without crowding it or without confusing its clarity, this was done. Otherwise base figures were omitted and instead a cross-reference to this appendix was inserted so that nevertheless the base figures could easily be looked up.

Base figures appearing directly within the body of a table are referred to by the term, "Total number of cases."

Because the appendix tables are set up exactly like the original tables to which they refer, no titles are given.

BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 2

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and over</i>	<i>Below 40</i>	<i>40 and over</i>
No college . . . . .	232	201	299	238
College . . . . .	284	113	353	138

BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 22

<i>Reading level</i>	<i>Number on each degree of interest</i>		
	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
I .....	99	41	20
II .....	324	250	151
III .....	128	144	107
IV .....	133	196	169
V .....	27	49	46

BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 23

<i>Reading level</i>	<i>Number on each degree of interest</i>	
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
I .....	73	87
II .....	259	466
III .....	117	262
IV .....	125	373
V .....	20	102

BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 24

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Interest in Election</i>		
	<i>Great</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mild or none</i>
High school grad. or more .....	155	130	108
Less than high school grad. ....	267	206	352

BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 34

<i>Size of locality and economic status</i>	<i>Number preferring radio</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>100,000 and over</i>		
High .....	167	89
Medium .....	484	264
Low .....	371	170
<i>2,500 to 100,000</i>		
High .....	188	57
Medium .....	456	236
Low .....	251	159

## BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 34 (CONT.)

<i>Size of locality and economic status</i>	<i>Number preferring radio</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>Farms and under 2,500</i>		
High .....	132	50
Medium .....	549	319
Low .....	239	122

## BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 52

<i>Age</i>	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>No college</i>	<i>College</i>	<i>No college</i>	<i>College</i>
Below 40 .....	242	290	307	362
40 and above .....	213	118	249	142

## BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 54

<i>Amount of listening</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	
	<i>No college</i>	<i>College</i>
Less than 2 hours .....	361	458
2 hours or more .....	503	393

## BASE NUMBERS FOR TABLE 55

<i>Amount of reading</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	
	<i>No college</i>	<i>College</i>
Read little .....	582	417
Read much .....	282	434

## Appendix IB

### INDEX OF READER GROUPS ACCORDING TO LEVEL AND AMOUNT OF READING<sup>1</sup>

THIS study represents an attempt to establish an index of reader groups, based upon an analysis of the reading habits of Book-of-the-Month Club members. Essentially it consists of a combination of the level of reading taste and the amount of reading done by the respondents.

The index was constructed by classifying each respondent according to his reading taste into one of five groups representing different levels of reading. The five categories of readers are given below:

#### I. *First-class reader:*

This reader is interested in all kinds of reading, with emphasis on the better fiction. He is also a reader of the heavier portions of both the information and the miscellaneous groups. His good taste must be confirmed by other parts of the questionnaire.

#### II. *Second-class reader:*

A. *Information only:* Such a person is distinguished from the first-class reader by a complete lack of interest in books of fiction. His reading taste, while high, is limited to informational books.

B. *Fiction and information:* A person who reads both fiction and information, but material of a lighter nature than the first-

<sup>1</sup> This summary of the development of an index of "book-mindedness" is condensed from a report by Edward A. Suchman, staff member of the Office of Radio Research, to be published soon.

class reader. For instance, he is not a reader of what we call literary stories, and he complains of the heavier fare in the information group.

C. *Fiction only*: A person characterized by a complete avoidance of books of the informational type. His reading is limited to fiction, for the most part light fiction. However, he does venture occasionally into books classified as high fiction.

### III. *Third-class reader*:

This reader is pre-eminently a reader of still lighter fiction. In most cases he will prefer the "low" type of fiction and avoid anything heavy. He may occasionally read something from the informational category, but on the whole reads lighter matter, such as travel and adventure.

In addition to the above three groups, there was a separate category for specific-interest readers of business, technical, and professional books. A person who did not read any books was classified as a non-reader.

To complete the index, the respondents were further classified into those reading two books or more a month, one book a month, and less than one book a month. From this combination of level and amount of reading, it was possible to divide the respondents into five levels of reading according to the class of reader and the number of books read as given in the text.

The consistency of the index was then checked by comparing these five groups according to their interest in books and attitude toward reading as determined by various questions on reading habits. It was found that there was a steady and marked decrease from the highest to the lowest group in the number of respondents who read book-review col-

umns, who preferred the newspaper to the radio as a source of news, and whose preferred activity when they were tired was reading. It was also found that the number of favorite authors decreased in direct proportion to the level of the groups, as did the number who preferred books to magazines and the number who answered that they regularly read in bed.

The index of reader groups, then, was found to correlate highly with other questions bearing a relationship to the attitude toward reading, and suggesting it as a valid index of "book-mindedness."

## *List of Tables*

TABLE	PAGE
1. Proportion of All Radio Sets in Use at a Certain Period for Different Cultural Levels	17
2. Amount of Radio Listening for Each Sex on Different Age and Educational Levels	19
3. Average Proportion of Radio Owners Listening During Winter Season on Different Cultural Levels	22
4. Proportion of Listeners on Different Socio-Economic Levels Who Heard Senator Black's Radio Speech	26
5. Proportion of Urban Listeners to President Roosevelt on Different Socio-Economic Levels	28
6. Amount of Listening to Serious Programs in Telephone and Non-Telephone Buffalo Homes	32
7. Proportion of Serious and Non-Serious Listeners on Different Reading Levels	40
8. Favorite Radio Programs of People on Different Reading Levels	41
9. Comparison of Amount of Radio Listening to Different Types of Programs in Telephone and Non-Telephone Homes	50
10. Types of Programs Mentioned by High-School Students as Educational	54



11.	Proportion of Listeners to Mr. Justice Black on Different Age and Cultural Levels	97
12.	Proportion of Men Who Listen to Classical Music on Different Age and Cultural Levels	98
13.	Ratio of Radio and Book Preferences on Different Age and Cultural Levels	99
14.	Relation Between Personal Frame of Reference and Serious Listening on Two Educational Levels	109
15.	Knowledge of and Listening to "Educational" Programs Among 74 Women	123
16.	Choice Between Radio Serials and Magazine Stories Among 304 Non-College Women with and Without High-School Education	136
17.	Preferences as to Source of Learning Among a Random Sample of 306 People in Middle-Western Towns	137
18.	Relation Between Interest in Current Events and Preference as to Source of News	146
19.	Relation Between Interest in Current Events and Preference as to Source of News	147
20.	Relation Between Interest in Baseball and Medium Preference Among Princeton Students	148
21.	Proportion Preferring Radio to Newspaper as a Source of News on Different Levels of Reading Skill	150
22.	Proportion Preferring Radio as Source of News on Different Reading Levels and with Different Degrees of Interest in Current Events	150

## LIST OF TABLES

343

TABLE

PAGE

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 23. Proportion Preferring Radio as Source of News on Different Reading Levels and with Different Degrees of Interest in Current Events | 151 |
| 24. Education and Political Interest Affecting Preference for Radio as Source of Political Information                                 | 153 |
| 25. Number of Women Preferring Radio, Magazines or Other Sources for Homemaking Advice on Different Levels of Reading Skill            | 163 |
| 26. Comparison Between Total Amount of Listening and Amount of Listening to Boake Carter in Syracuse and Columbus                      | 188 |
| 27. Comparison of Station Popularity with Size of Audience to Boake Carter in Several Cities   | 189 |
| 28. Some Reading and Listening Habits of Two Groups of Women with Preferences for Different Media                                      | 195 |
| 29. Some Reading and Listening Habits of Book-Club Members with Preferences for Different Media  | 196 |
| 30. Origin of News and Related Events Programs as Compared with Other Programs   | 203 |
| 31. Popularity of News Programs as Compared with Listening to Preceding and Following Program on the Same Station                      | 205 |
| 32. Structure of Radio and Newspaper News According to Relative Length   | 210 |
| 33. Cincinnati Newspapers and Radio Stations Compared with Respect to Incidence and Type of News Stories for One Week                  | 211 |

34.	Sex, Economic Level, and Locality as Affecting Preference for Radio as Source of National and Foreign News	219
35.	Sex, Economic Level, and Size of Locality as Affecting News Reading and Listening	224
36.	Proportion of Regular News Consumers and Medium Preference on Different Economic Levels	227
37.	Sex and Size of Locality as Affecting Consumption of News and Preference for News Media	228
38.	Relationship Between Recency of Interest in Current Events and Medium Preference	237
39.	Relationship Between Interest in Current Events and Medium Preference	238
40.	Comparison of Listening to Various Types of News Programs in Telephone and Non-Telephone Homes	241
41.	Proportion of High-School Students Mentioning Commentator (c) and News Bulletin (N) Among Favorite Programs	243
42.	Proportion of Urban Males on Different Occupational Levels Listening to Different Types of News Commentators	245
43.	Sex, Age, Economic Level, and Type of Locality as Affecting Preference of Radio to Print as Source of News	251

## LIST OF TABLES

345

TABLE

PAGE

44.	Proportions of People in Different Sex, Age, and Educational Groups Who Mention News Programs Among Their Favorites	253
45.	Interpretation of the "Invasion from Mars" on Different Educational Levels	256
46.	Proportion Preferring Radio as Source of News at Times of Crisis and Normal Times	259
47.	Effect of News Listening on Reading Among People with Different Medium Preferences	262
48.	Changes of Newspaper Circulations in Central and Outlying Areas of 181 Cities	269
49.	Per Cent of Cities of Different Size Showing an Increase in Daily Newspaper Circulation in Different Areas	270
50.	Estimated Expenditure for Advertising in Major Media in the United States, 1928 to 1939	273
51.	Proportion of People on Different Educational Levels Reporting Some Reading in Consequence of Listening to a Radio Program	308
52.	Proportion of Each Sex Reporting Follow-Up Reading on Different Age and Educational Levels	309
53.	Relation of Follow-Up Reading to Amount of Radio Listening	310
54.	Proportion Reporting Follow-Up Reading on Different Educational Levels in Relation to Amount of Radio Listening	310
55.	Proportion Reporting Follow-Up Reading on Different Educational Levels in Relation to Amount of Reading	311

TABLE

	PAGE
56. Frequency with Which Different Types of Radio Programs Are Mentioned as Stimulating Follow-Up Reading	315
57. Comparison of Programs Mentioned as Favorites and Those Mentioned as Causing Respondents to Read	317

## *List of Charts*

CHART	PAGE
1. Distribution of Programs on All American Stations	7
2. Distribution of Topics in Speaking Programs	9
3. Distribution of Amount of Listening	18
4. Time Given to Different Types of Serious Programs	31
5. General Listening and Serious Listening on Different Cultural Levels	44
6. Change in Size of Audience When Competitive Program Goes Off	59
7. Different Appeals of a Quiz Program	66
8. Frequency of Different Kinds of Listening and Non-Listening to a Child Guidance Program	122
9. Proportion Mentioning Radio or Reading as Favorite Leisure Activities	138
10a. Relation Between Quality and Quantity of Reading	184
10b. Relation Between Quantity and Quality of Listening	184
11. Effect of Old Competitive Program Going Off and New Program Coming On	186

12.	Social Stratification of a Comedian's Audience	191
13.	Social Stratification of an Orchestra's Audience	193
14.	Percentage Who Prefer the Radio to the Newspaper for Their National and Foreign News	220
15.	Radio News Listeners as a Percentage of All Radio Owners	231
16.	News Sources and Preferences of Radio Owners	233
17.	How a Newspaper's Circulation Grew in a European Crisis	264

## Index

- Adler, Mortimer J., 197  
Adorno, T. W., 182  
Adult education, 51  
Advertising: newspaper and radio, 272; various media, 273  
Age: and follow-up reading, 309; and listening to small stations, 104; and listening and educational level, 19; and news reading and listening, 251; and radio book preferences, 99; and serious listening, 98  
Allport, G., 105, 138, 169, 253  
"America's Town Meeting of the Air," 8, 11, 33, 109 ff., 123, 124, 174, 256  
"Americans All—Immigrants All," 8, 34, 133-134  
American Institute of Public Opinion, 25, 250, 259  
"American School of the Air," 8  
Audience: accessibility and stratification, 190; characteristics of the radio news, 235; promotion, 129; selection, 133. *See also* Listener characteristics  
Audience building: discussion, 118 ff.; social value, 128; techniques, 121  
Audience changes: and competitive programs, 59  
Audit Bureau of Circulation, 268, 269  
"Author, Author," 279  
  
Beville, H. M., 16, 21, 148, 187  
Black, Hugo, 26-27, 97  
"Book a Week, A," 291  
  
Book-of-the-Month Club, 35, 38, 149, 183, 195-196, 238, 252, 287  
Book programs: discussion, 123, 277; effect on book sales and library circulation, 293; and promotion of reading, 328  
Books: importance of reviews, 314; radio dramatization, 286; radio reviews *vs.* printed reviews, 282 ff., 314; reading on the air, 290; reviews, 282 ff., 314  
British Broadcasting Company, 112, 291  
Brown, C., 296  
Buffalo, listener survey, 6, 29, 50  
Burgess, E. W., 55  
Burt County, Nebraska, study, 100, 107  
Buswell, Guy Thomas, 13  
Butler, Nicholas Murray, 76  
  
California Library Association, 325  
Cantril, Hadley, 63, 124, 138, 166, 169, 246, 253, 256  
Carter, Boake, audience, 187  
Carter, Mary Duncan, 303  
Case studies: subject matter and preference, 156-157; techniques, 154  
"Chicago Town Meeting," 123  
Child-guidance programs, 122, 195  
Cincinnati: special study, 207  
Cities: size and newspaper circulation, 269-270  
Columbia Broadcasting System, 35, 163, 204, 237, 257



- Comedy programs: relative audience, 191; and follow-up reading, 315
- Commentators: as favorite programs, 243; audience, 240; and news, 206
- Communication behavior: and accessibility, 194
- Communication: effectiveness, 139; and subjective efficiency and readers' comments, 141 ff.
- Comparisons: criteria of good, 169
- Connah, Douglas Duff, 121
- Cooper, E., 313
- Co-operative Agricultural Extension Service, 117
- Co-operative Analysis of Broadcasting, 15, 21, 25
- Cottrel, L. S., 55
- Cultural level: measures, 14; and medium preference, 135; and radio-book preferences, 99; and radio listening, 15; and radio news, 259; and recreation preferences, 138; and serious listening, 21, 29, 98; and small stations, 102
- Current events: and preference for news source, 146-147; interest in and medium preference, 151, 237
- Curtis, Alberta, 18, 162, 223, 278, 296, 314
- Deviate cases: discussion, 165-166
- Doudna, E. G., 288-289
- Drama and follow-up reading, 30, 315
- Economic level: and news consumption, 227; and preference for radio news, 219; and news reading and listening, 224; and radio news appeal, 230
- Education: educational listening and inferior, 19, 110; and follow-up reading, 308; and "Invasion from Mars" reaction, 256-257; and medium preference, 136; and news programs, 253; and quiz programs, 74; and reading skill, 160; and suggestibility, 257
- Educational broadcasting, 133, 198, 292, 328; institutional promotion, 113-114, 118; and promotion of reading, 277
- Educational programs: discussion, 30; knowledge, 123; listening, 123; and reading level, 41; youth's idea, 54; relative effectiveness, 139
- Election returns, newspaper reports, 265
- Favorite programs: and follow-up reading, 315 ff.; and reading level, 41
- Federal Communications Commission, 6, 202
- Federal Office of Education, 8, 133-134
- Federal Radio Project, 8
- Fifield, W., 296
- Fiske, M., 102
- Fleiss, M., 11
- Follow-up reading, discussion, 261, 306-307, 319
- "Ford Hour," 22
- Fortune*, 97, 137, 252, 253
- Fort Wayne, Indiana: study, 42
- Foster, G. H., 122
- "Frame of reference," 105
- Frederick, John T., 279
- Gallup, George, 223
- Gaudet, Hazel, 29, 63, 124, 166, 242, 256
- General Motors Symphony, 22
- Gould, Esther, 281
- Gratification: studies, 61-62; case studies, 64
- Gray, W. S., 13
- Health advice programs: case study, 157
- Henne, F., 123
- Herzog, Herta, 63, 64, 166, 256

- Hill, Frank Ernest, 8  
 Home economics programs: case study, 156; knowledge of, and listening to, 123  
 Homer, Alvin, 295  
 Humble, Marion, 294  
 Hyers, Faith H., 278
- Imaginative direction, 175  
 Indices: of current events interest, 146; interchangeability, 13; of program appeal, 192; of reading ability, 158; of reading habits, 13; of standard of reading, 158  
 "Information, Please!," 316  
 Institutional promotion: definition, 114  
 Interest: and listening, 145; and reading skill, 149; and medium preference, 164  
 Interviewing, 166, 304  
 Iowa State University, 121
- Jackson, Joseph H., 293, 296  
 Joint Committee on Radio Research, 267  
 Joyner, H. F., 295  
 "Just Music," 126
- Katz, Daniel, 207, 210-213
- Lasswell, H., 95  
 Lazarsfeld, Paul F., 13  
 Learning: preferred sources, 136  
 Libraries: and radio broadcasting, 282, 287, 290; and serious listening, 128  
 Link, Henry, 29  
 Listeners: characteristics, 60; and choice of programs, 185; comments, 69 ff., 80, 85 ff., 131, 144-145, 170, 250, 320 ff.  
 Listening: and age level, 19; amount, 44; as a social activity, 170; and competitive programs, 186; and cultural level, 14-15, 22; and income groups, 16; and educational level, 19; and the human voice, 181; and follow-up reading, 310; family, 18; frequency, 15; gratification from, 11; groups, 111-112; and ideological movements, 127; individual, 18; influences on reading, 260-261; levels and amount, 184; medium preference and amount, 196; and outside factors, 117-118; passivity, 180; and reading skill, 133; and rental value of home, 18; serious, *see* Serious listening; and sex, 19; skill, 179; and socio-economic level, 26-27; stimulation of reading by, 303; and telephone and non-telephone homes, 31-32; and time of day, 17; to different types of programs, 50; *vs.* non-listening ease, 122  
 Literature on the radio, 280, 288-289
- Macfadden Publishing Company, 43  
 Magazine stories and radio serials, 136  
 Magazines and listening, 196  
 Malcolm, Theodore, 37  
 Malone, T., 279  
 Market Analyst, Inc., 237  
 Market research, 197  
 Marshalltown, Iowa, study, 124, 162  
 McCandless, Boyd, 122, 173  
 McMullen, Gretchen, 288  
 Medium preferences: and current events interest, 237; factors influencing, 145, 148, 170; and interest in newspapers, 262; and listening habits, 196; and news consumption, 223; and news source, 214; and population groups, 218; and reading habits, 196; and times of crises, 259  
 "Meet Mr. Weeks," 279  
 Memory: and various media, 144

- Men. *See* Sex
- "Men Against Death," 8
- Metropolitan Opera, 22
- Meyrowitz, A., 102
- Miller, R. A., 13
- Modern Age Books, 300
- Munroe, Ruth, 13
- Music: classical, 41, 98; and follow-up reading, 315, 317; and reading level, 41; serious, 22-23, 126, 130
- Mutual Broadcasting System, 279, 291
- National Broadcasting Company, 16, 111
- National Broadcasting Company Symphony, 22
- National Farm and Home Hour, 107
- News: discussion, 123; and follow-up reading, 315, 317; and new listeners-readers, 254-255; preferences for sources, 146-147, 150; and reading level, 41
- News broadcasts: discussion, 200; amount of listening, 224; as favorite programs, 243; audience, 235; and intelligence level, 243; and interest in newspapers, 262; listening to different types, 241; and newspapers, 207; popularity, 204; and occupational level, 245; origin of types, 203; stimulation of newspaper reading by, 262; universal appeal, 229-230
- News commentators: ranking, 244
- News interest: among young people, 250; and age, 250; testing intensity, 246
- News listeners: types, 235
- News listening and intelligence level, 243
- Newspaper: amount of reading, 224; advantages, 214; advertising, 272-273; changing function, 263; circulation in local, suburban and outlying areas, 269; circulation, influence of radio, 258, 268; circulation in times of crisis, 263-264; circulation, long-time trend, 266; circulation, morning and afternoon, 270; radio station ownership, 274
- News programs: and age and sex, 253
- Non-readers: definition, 42
- Non-serious programs: inferences, 23-24
- Northwood, A., 112, 127
- Office of Radio Research, 17, 34-35, 42, 97, 110, 154, 187, 204, 242, 280, 281
- "People's Platform," 33-34
- Pike County, Illinois, study, 100
- Piper, N. D., 76
- Political broadcasting, 26
- Print: meaning to people, 154; and preferences for radio, 134, 139, 141
- Printed page. *See* Reading
- "Professor Quiz," 129
- Programs: amount of listening to different types, 50; analysis of content, 55; appeal, 55; accessibility, 183; audience stratification, 192-193; choice, 185
- Psychological Corporation, 6, 29
- Psychological programs, 123
- Quiz programs: appeals, 64 ff.; discussion, 123; follow-up reading, 315, 317; listener characteristics, 91-92; listener reactions, 63; and reading, 80; and self-rating, 83; and social status, 78
- Radio: advertising, 273; accessibility, 183; and difficulty of comparing newspaper, 208; directive role, 174; future, 331; meaning to people, 154; and news, 162, 200,

- 214; and newspaper circulation, 267-268; ownership, 267; and promotion of reading, 277, 325; publishers' attitude toward, 284, 300; and serious responses, 5, 6; social consequences, 329; and social system, 331
- Radio Book Service, 280-281
- Radio Guide*, 281
- "Radio-mindedness," 180
- Reading: advantages, 139 ff.; influencing factors, 4, 308; passing of leisure time, 3
- Reading level: and amount of reading, 184; discussion, 38-39; and medium preference, 149, 163, 196
- Reading: broadcasting and promotion, 277; other influences, 322; and prestige, 178; and serious programs, 314; and serious listening, 35
- Reading skill: discussion, 5, 133, 139, 157; and interest, 387; standard, 157; and unskilled readers, 140
- Regional broadcasting, 128, 290
- Religious programs, 123
- Research: suggestions, 27, 157, 179, 254, 265, 301-302; techniques, 55, 92, 134, 154, 169-170, 182, 246, 303-304, 329
- Ridgeway, H. A., 313
- Roberts, Ina, 288
- Robinson, W. S., 100
- Roosevelt, F. D., 27-28, 261
- Roper, Elmo, 137
- Rorty, James, 246
- Rural listening, 100, 116
- Rural-urban differences: and news appeal, 232; and news reading and listening, 219, 224, 228, 271
- Saturday Review of Literature*, 293
- Sayre, Jeanette, 11, 256, 291
- Scammell, J. C., 289
- Serious broadcasting: and educational institutions, 46; and favored institutions, 118
- Serious listener, definition, 37
- Serious listening: and age, 96; amount, 44, 184; and cultural level, 21, 29, 96; discussion, 3, 11, 94; facilitating factors, 105; and frames of reference, 109; future, 94; and libraries, 128; promotion, 126; and reading level, 35; and rural areas, 102
- Serious music: discussion, 22, 23
- Serious programs: accessibility, 45; amount of listening, 32, 50; classification, 30; and follow-up reading, 314; and size of audience, 125; and time factor, 31; understanding, 8
- Service programs: audience, 48; discussion, 10, 315, 317
- Sex: follow-up reading, 309; and news consumption, 228; news reading and listening, 224
- Small stations: age and listening, 104; discussion, 100
- Smithsonian Institution, 8
- Smith, T. V., 28
- Stanton, F., 162, 179
- Stations: habituation, 188; popularity, 189
- Stouffer, Samuel, 200, 230, 268
- Suchman, Edward, 37, 130, 304
- "Suggestibility," 256
- Summers, H. B., 116, 203, 253, 254
- Taft, Robert A., 28
- Talk programs, 6, 315
- Taylor, Deems, 316
- Thompkins, Miriam, 303
- "Town Meeting of the Air." *See* "America's Town Meeting of the Air"
- "Treasures Next Door," 286
- Tull, Clyde, 295

- "University of Chicago Round  
 Table," 8, 11, 123, 174
- Variety programs: occupational level  
 and listening, 25
- Voice, appeal, 178, 181
- WAAB, 286
- WABC, 300
- WCPO, 207
- Welles, Orson, 63, 256, 279, 315
- WHA, 288, 289
- WHO, 117
- WLW, 207
- WNYC, 8, 124, 130
- WOI, 61, 113, 114, 116, 124, 131,  
 283, 290-291, 292, 297
- Woman's Home Companion*, 253
- Women. *See* Sex
- Woolcott, Alexander, 296, 298, 314
- WOR, 60
- "World Is Yours, The," 33
- WRUL, 114, 117, 289
- WQXR, 126
- WSAI, 207
- WXRC, 207









