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SOME IMPLICATIONS OF BUSING IN URBANA, ILLINOIS:  
AN INQUIRY INTO AN ASPECT OF INTEGRATION

BY

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A.B., University of Illinois, 1966

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois, 1968

Urbana, Illinois

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June, 1968

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY  
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ENTITLED SOME IMPLICATIONS OF BUSING IN URBANA, ILLINOIS: AN  
INQUIRY INTO AN ASPECT OF INTEGRATION  
BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the citizens of Urbana who allowed me to conduct the interviews cited throughout this inquiry. This expression encompasses the average citizens, school board members, various school board candidates, and the many prominent civic leaders who were most cooperative.

I am grateful also to the administrative staff of Urbana School District Number 116 for the consideration that was shown during my many visits to that office. In particular I must thank Mrs. M. Newberry for the numerous insights offered and for the patience that she displayed during my many interruptions upon her already burdened schedule.

There is no doubt that this study could not have become an intelligible presentation had it not been for the excellent academic guidance given so generously by my advisor, Dr. C. Benjamin Cox. My hope is that I will be able to offer the same superior level of wisdom to any students that I might have the opportunity to advise in the future.

Finally, I must express my appreciation for the extensive time that my wife, Kathleen, has spent proof-reading and typing this manuscript. The suggestions that she has made throughout this study have been most helpful.

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Were the typical citizen of Urbana reading a local newspaper on July 19, 1966, he might have seen an article which described a request that the Hays Elementary School be integrated. The article described the appearance of the Hays School Neighborhood Education Association Committee at the July 18, 1966 meeting of the Urbana School Board. Briefly, he would have noted that the school board was petitioned to "...take action toward the desegregation of Hays School...." A spokesman for the group cited studies which indicated that the Hays' students were not receiving an adequate education. Also cited was the Supreme Court's 1954 decision which states that "separate but unequal facilities are inherently unequal." In addition comments taken from a doctoral thesis which described the inferiority of Hays School were presented.<sup>1</sup> The spokesman contended that neither the local realtors nor the city government were taking any steps toward integration and concluded that the school district could be the only local agency to implement such a program.

During the school board meeting suggestions were then offered by members of the audience regarding possible methods of integrating Urbana's elementary schools. These suggestions included the idea of "open enrollment," the use of Hays School for all kindergarten and first grade pupils in Urbana, and the proposal that students be bused to and from Hays School. Near the close of the meeting, the president of the board suggested that a meeting be arranged between members

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✓ <sup>1</sup>Scheck, Charles Springer. "Planning the Community Schools-- The Cases of Champaign and Urbana." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; Department of Education, University of Illinois, 1965

of the board and representatives of the committee from the Hays School district. The meeting was to be held within ten days.

Many of the suggestions offered at that first board meeting would drastically alter the pattern of elementary education in the city of Urbana. No response appeared in the local news media, however, until after the next meeting of the school board on July 26, 1966. One of the local papers summarized the body of the motion which was passed on that date as follows:

"...convinced that racial balance in all schools of the district is educationally sound as well as morally right, the board has decided to place the majority of Hays School area pupils in other schools."

This plan further stated that all students living in University-owned housing south of Florida Avenue and west of Race Street be bused into Hays School. The motion was passed with one dissenting vote. This board member stated that, "this (the motion) is right. The shotgun treatment of this is the one area I'm really concerned about."<sup>2</sup> However, this member went on to state that board policy was his policy, and that he would stand behind it completely.

When the local newspapers reported the action taken by the board at the July 26, 1966 meeting, concern was immediately expressed by the citizens of Urbana in the form of meetings, letters to the editors of the two local newspapers, and personal phone contacts with school board members.

As a result of the board's decision to bus pupils, a busing program was initiated in September of the 1966-67 school year. From

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<sup>2</sup>The Champaign-Urbana News Gazette, July 26, 1966, p. 2.

the time of the promulgation of the program, various reactions have been exhibited by the residents of Urbana. Such reactions were expressed in the form of letters to the editor, the formation of committees to support the program and the formation of groups to oppose it. These activities were possibly most vociferous during the school board elections of 1967. The program was questioned both with regard to additional time and money. Many doubted both the moral and legal propriety of the program. Others maintained that there was absolutely no need for integration in the school system. It was seen as a flagrant excess by one group, and merely as an initial step by others. Several praised the unlimited advantages of such a program and asserted that it was both "educationally sound and morally right." Segregation and integration often attained prominence as the sole issues to be considered while educational implications were often completely ignored. Occasionally the reverse occurred.

This thesis will investigate certain aspects of Urbana's busing program. Primary concern will center around three areas. It will first assess the reaction of a randomly chosen cross-section of what might be called Urbana's average citizens. A second focus will be upon the roles that the members of the board of education and other prominent leaders assumed with regard to the busing program. Finally, the relationship of the busing program to the school board elections of 1967 will be examined.



This thesis examines a subject related to education in general and in so doing deals with a specific and current social problem. The attempt was to investigate a practical social-educational situation rather than attack a broad problem which would require emphasis largely upon its theoretical concerns. The concern was also with originality and interpersonal involvement. A problem was sought which would demand participation on a person-to-person basis in addition to the stricter academic relationship of investigator to research material.

An investigation of the program of busing school children in Urbana, Illinois, as a means of instituting integration in that city's elementary schools appeared to satisfy the above criteria. This issue, though closely related to education was very much a part of the larger society for the citizens of Urbana. With regard to originality of the topic, the first year of operation of the busing program had recently been completed and had not yet been investigated systematically.

Before arriving at a final decision to investigate this topic considerable time was spent in informal conversations with persons whose interests ranged from intense to a bare awareness of the program's existence. It became apparent that if this topic were to be examined systematically a combination of techniques including informal conversations, structured interviews, and the evaluation of documentary data would have to be utilized. The purpose of the initial informal conversations was to learn how involved or aware the people of Urbana were in this issue. It was evident that most citizens appeared to be sincerely concerned about the education of their children and possibly even more concerned about the racial implications of the busing program.

Both extreme satisfaction and dissatisfaction with regard to the program was noted in these conversations. In general the attitude expressed was that this issue seriously affected many aspects of community life. Such aspects included the rearing of children, concepts of neighborhood, civic and religious participation, employment, and even perceptions of personal security.

The supporters of the busing program had praised its successes and, as might be expected, those who opposed it from the beginning for a variety of reasons could still find no positive gains. Neither the supporting nor the opposing judgments were based on a careful study of the program in its entirety, however. Rather, what appeared to be a large degree of misunderstanding and confusion regarding even the most basic aspects of its operation was reflected in the comments of both proponents and opponents. The need to investigate and analyze this program as completely and systematically as possible seemed clear.

Literature concerning the busing program was restricted to newspaper accounts, school board minutes, and scattered committee reports. The information attained from this material was valuable in itself, but possibly more important were the references made to individuals who had assumed crucial roles in developing the total program. This material indicated the need to investigate further by means of personal interview.

Among those initially interviewed were individuals who first made the request for educational improvement and racial integration. Members of the local school board were also contacted because of their key roles in policy formation. Since the program became a crucial

issue in the school board election of that year, candidates on the unsuccessful opposition slate were able to offer much insight for this study. The Office of the Urbana Superintendent of Schools housed the administrative staff who were responsible for the detailed implementation of the program. Members of this staff contributed much of the descriptive data used throughout this study. Discussions were also held with various members of the Urbana City Government.

The above interviews were unstructured and generally assumed the style of informal discussion. They were directed by the researcher only when specific information was desired or when the conversations seemed to be losing momentum. The attempt, then, was only to suggest topics and to allow the interviewee to expound upon them at will. It was possible in this manner to attain pertinent information and background knowledge and also to identify areas of the total problem which seemed particularly crucial to the individual being interviewed.

Since there had been discovered in informal conversations a large degree of awareness and interest on the part of the average citizen of Urbana, a series of structured interviews were employed in the various residential areas of the city. The initial goal was to hold ten interviews in each of the nine elementary school districts. However, it later became necessary to limit the number of interviews to a total of sixty rather than the projected ninety because in several of the districts the adult members of the family were employed during the time of the day and the week that the interviews were conducted.<sup>1</sup> In addition

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<sup>1</sup>Of the sixty adults who granted interviews to the researcher approximately fifty invited him inside of their homes. In only one case was he asked for his identity and purpose.

to this problem, there were the typical difficulties encountered when random interviews are used. For example, many potential interviewees did not answer their doors, though it was evident that they were home. In some cases individuals flatly refused to grant an interview because they suspected that they were being approached by some type of "snooper" for certain local agencies such as the city government, political partisan groups and the N.A.A.C.P.<sup>2</sup>

Though the interviews were not prearranged, certain controls were attempted. That is, it was determined that interviews would be conducted in each of the school districts. Also these interviews were to be conducted only with residents who had one or more children currently enrolled in elementary school. In three cases, however, grandparents in custody of children were interviewed, and in three instances school teachers were interviewed even though they did not meet the enrollment criterion. An attempt was made to contact a cross-section of the economic levels represented in each district. Most of the districts, however, could generally be classified as consisting of a uniform income level. When an economic distinction seemed necessary, it was made by the researcher's estimate of the approximate property value. The racial content of each district was also considered. One district was judged to be principally Negro, one consisted of both Negro and white residents, and six districts were judged to be principally white in racial composition. In the one mixed district an equal number of Negro and white respondents were interviewed.

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<sup>2</sup>While several of these potential interviewees politely refused, a few demanded, "You get the hell out of here!"

Two residential interview schedules were used. Though similar, one was specifically designed for an area which is classified as University of Illinois-owned housing. A total of ten respondents were contacted at random in this area. This interview was specifically tailored because the residents were largely foreign students whose contact with issues such as this one was assumed to be limited. These residents are typically thought of as transients living in the area for no longer than two years in most cases. However, as the details of the busing program will illustrate, this area occupied a position of great importance in the total program.

The interview schedule used in this university housing group sought only to find out if the respondents were aware of the program, if they preferred neighborhood schools, if they had encountered any specific problems since the initiation of the program, and if there had been any noticeable attitude changes on the part of their children toward members of other races. [See Appendix A for the full interview schedule.] Though specific questions were posed in this schedule, the attempt was made to allow the interviewee to determine the extent of his reply. The aim was to detect attitudinal information even though it was not structurally sought within the framework of the question being posed.

This first interview schedule served in addition as a pilot study for the second interview schedule. It was soon apparent, for example, that the respondents would be much more cooperative if

their names and occupations were not directly asked. The experience gained from these interviews illustrated also that the following data would be pertinent for the total investigation:

- 1) the length of residency within a particular neighborhood
- 2) the total number of children in the family
- 3) the total number of children enrolled in elementary school
- 4) the number bused to other schools  
[See Appendix B for Orchard Downs Introductory Data and Appendix C for Residential Introductory Data.]

The second interview schedule was used for approximately fifty residential contacts throughout the remaining areas of Urbana. This schedule presupposed a fair amount of awareness as to the existence of the busing program. It also presupposed a certain permanency of residence uncommon to that of the first area interviewed. This schedule was structured to determine when and how the respondent first learned of the busing program and what his initial reaction had been. The individual's opinion of the neighborhood school concept was also included. Each interviewee was asked what, if any, special problems had arisen since the promulgation of the program and if he had noticed any change in the quality of his child's education. The schedule also investigated attitudinal changes toward persons of different races. Respondents were asked if they favored the continuation and/or expansion of the busing program. The final question dealt with the person's self-perception as to whether he felt that he could influence decisions of the local school board. [See Appendix D for the complete interview schedule.]

Interviews were held in the residential neighborhoods of Urbana for several reasons. First, it was hoped that personal interviews would reveal how significant the issue of busing was to the average citizen, and to what degree he was involved in such a program. Also, since public acceptance often plays a vital role in the success of such a program, an attempt was made to determine the attitudes and opinions of typical parents in the Urbana school system. Finally, it seemed important to attempt to assess the possible public reaction to any alteration of the existing program.

Interviewing was begun in the Orchard Downs area, the residency of the only non-Negro pupils who were to be bused under the terms of the new program. It was assumed that parents from the Downs would be able to offer extensive insight into the overall busing program. It was also supposed that many of the residents in this area would be unaware of and/or unconcerned with the details of the program. This supposition was based on the fact that these persons are temporary residents, many being foreign nationals, and most being students at the University of Illinois. Of the ten interviews held in Orchard Downs, six of the respondents were completely unfamiliar with the program. The remaining four individuals were familiar with certain aspects, but readily admitted a general lack of concern.

Though these interviews did confirm the supposed unawareness and lack of concern, two couples from the Downs were reported to have actively presented their opposition of the program to the school board. These actions would appear to be exceptional, however, while

the ten random interviews more typically represent the knowledge and attitudes of the Downs' residents. Several of the respondents were asked why they exhibited so little concern over an issue which directly involved their children. The following comments are typical of those received from this question:

What is the difference? We have no voice anyway. We are just students and everyone knows that.

My wife and I will only be here for a year or two anyway. Even if the program were bad by definition, it wouldn't hurt our kid that much.

I barely have time for my studies now, let alone the petty politics of Urbana.

America confusing country anyway, I think this just another example probably. What difference one school or the other. My little girl doesn't like Americans -- black, white or purple, it make no difference.<sup>1</sup>

On the second interview schedule which was used in the remainder of the interviews, neither the interview entries used nor the replies obtained were as restricted in nature as were those obtained from the Orchard Downs area. As a method of examining the results of these interviews each question will be considered separately as responded to by the total number of interviewees. When one question is related to or illuminates another, however, there will be joint presentation of the two questions.

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<sup>1</sup>All quoted responses throughout this paper are faithfully reproduced regardless of non-standard usage.



The first question on this schedule asked, "When did you first learn that some of the Hays students would be bused to other schools?" As is noted in another chapter [See Chapter 5], there was a great deal of concern expressed regarding the method employed by the board in arriving at the decision to bus students. The first question sought simply to determine when and how the respondents were informed of the program. This question will assume an even more important role when it is considered in view of the responses obtained from the last question on the schedule which asked, "Do you feel that you can influence decisions of the Urbana School Board?"

Forty-nine of the fifty people interviewed replied that they had learned of the program only after the final decision had been made by the school board. The one individual who claimed prior knowledge was a relative of one of the persons instrumental in initiating the first request for school desegregation. The inclusion of this question served, in a sense, as a frame of reference for the entry concerning the ability to influence the board. That is, many stated that prior to the busing decision they had felt that they were able to influence the board on programs of community-wide involvement. Only three interviewees continued to believe that they as individuals could influence the school board. Essentially, these three respondents stated, "Yes, of course I can influence the board if I really try."

Eighteen of the respondents felt that it was still possible to influence the board through group action. The following comments illustrate the opinions of this group:

Yes, one could do it if he were to form a large enough group.

Yes, because I pay my taxes and P.T.A. dues and so do many people I know of.

Obviously, the only possible way would be through group action. I assume it would have to be a sizeable group.

More than twenty respondents were certain as a result of the busing decision that they had no voice in the governance of the school board. The following illustrate their attitudes:

It's not possible, because a lot of my friends and I sure as hell tried.

No, they have things pretty well cut and dried and they don't publicize anything before board meetings anyway.

No, not even with group action because they do what they want.

No, because they only make decisions by themselves and they don't care what the people think. Actually, they are sneaky bastards.

I doubt it. I used to be on a school board and we made our own decisions, so this board will do what it wants. At least people were in favor of the things we did when I was on a school board.

No, they will do what they want. They have shown this and it isn't right.

No, cause Urbana Board is being influenced by outside coloreds. None from here can say they been mistreated if they have lived here over ten years. They just never been held back. The board's givin in to colored trouble-makers.<sup>2</sup>

Two of the respondents saw little possibility of influencing the board, but did offer particularly interesting comments:

Whether they made the decision secretly or not was not criminal. They just took advantage of the University's Orchard Downs. The whole thing is whimsey, anyway.

If it was secret or not don't matter, the thing is that they don't give the choice to the people. But maybe it's the best way of doing things. I mean they got the damned thing through.

The information obtained from the comments of these respondents allows the conclusion that the decision was made without the knowledge and/or consent of the average citizen of Urbana. Though these findings will be clarified in a later chapter [See Chapter 4] dealing with the decision itself, they serve here to aid in an understanding of why the majority of the respondents felt that they could not influence their local school board.

The next entries to be examined were presented on the interview schedule in the following order:

5. As a result of busing have you noticed any change in the quality of your child's education?

6. As a result of busing, has your child's attitude toward people of other races changed?

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<sup>2</sup>The Negro who exerted the principal influence on the school board was a life-long resident of Urbana.

7. As a result of busing has your attitude toward people of other races changed?

Though the first of these three questions differs in content from the other two, they are grouped for analysis because they are all measurements of changes which would require long-term investigation. That is, for a study of a program which has only recently completed its first year of operation, these questions are possibly somewhat premature.

Responses to the question concerning changes in the child's education did indicate that most people believed it possible to make such a judgment only after more time had lapsed. Only three respondents stated explicitly that they had noted any change in the quality of their child's education. These three respondents were then asked what types of changes they had perceived. A white respondent said, "Well, it's just better. I mean the kids are mixing, so I suppose it just has to be better." Another, white respondent interpreted a negative change. He stated, "The discipline problems are worse; that is, unbelievable. And the kids are unruly--the colored ones. How can it be anything but worse?" A Negro respondent explained, "My kid's education is worse at the white school because he used to learn more at Hays." His child, who was present at the interview, added, "It hasn't improved none. I don't mind the whites, but now I just have to fight them more often."

The remaining respondents felt that it was impossible to make a judgement at this time. However, several offered insight into their total attitudinal compositions by offering the following observations:

Could be enrichment ultimately I guess, but all its done so far is intensify race and riot problems.

The damn school is okay, it's just the Hays' kids what are so bad.

It's gotten a hell of alot worse since they started bringing those kids in here.

How can there be a change when all they are doing is poking it down our throats.

When the question was asked concerning the attitude of the respondents' children, forty-seven persons indicated that there had been no change. Another suggested that this was obviously a "stupid" question since, "You got to be a head shrinker to know what's goin on in kids' heads today." Two interviewees did note a change in the attitude of their children. One commented that, "Now at least they are playing with Negroes and that is a start." The second person said, "There has been a change. My boy is now prejudiced. He's never known any colored before but now he's met them and it's been one bad experience." Later in response to the question about changes in his own racial attitudes this same respondent stated:

No, one day my little girl brought one home for lunch and I told her it's okay to be nice to one, but don't ever bring one home again. After all, all of God's children are the same as it says in the Bible, but that still ain't no reason for her to bring one home with her.

Another respondent commented similarly, but the remainder of the interviewees said that they perceived of no changes in their

attitudes. Two individuals in the no change group expanded upon their comments with the following statements:

I really think my attitude could improve cause I think the little colored kids are trying real hard. That is important.

Change? Yah, there's been a big change. My husband and I just won't help the school anymore as long as they keep them niggers there. Many of us feel that way around here! We pulled out of the P.T.A. and Scouts and everything. And, I got a lot of kids, so this is going to be felt.

The second question on the interview schedule asked, "When you first learned about busing were you for or against it?" The intent at this point was to determine what the respondent's initial reaction had been. Sixteen individuals replied that they had initially favored the program, six stated that they had had no opinions, and twenty-eight stated flatly that they opposed it.

Initial proponents of the busing program made comments such as the following:

I was simply delighted. It certainly was about time that something was being done in Urbana.

I was happy because I want all of my kids to mix with people of other races.

I'm for it, but let's face it, they just took advantage of a unique situation with Orchard Downs. I mean, what could the people in the Downs do about it? Still, it was a surprisingly liberal move for a place like Urbana.

I would be in favor of any program if its aim was the improvement of my child's education. If mixing him with whites will do it, then good.

Those who stated opposition to the busing program often proved to be more vocal than those who supported it. The following are representative of their remarks:

Well, I can tell you one thing. I have enough work in my classroom without having colored kids pushed on me. Let's just say I was not thrilled about it.

If the move was made for integration, then it is stupid cause there is already integration in Urbana. Mixing politics and education makes my ass tired.

I was against it, I'm still against it, and I will always be against it.

They waste a hell of alot of time just to integrate when it is not needed. I live my life, let them live theirs.

It is silly to bus kids any distance at all, let alone from the North End.

It is damn ridiculous, why not build adequate schools in that area?

I was so mad I could have beat everybody's ass. You ain't for it are you?

It seems apparent that those who supported the program did so because they believed that an integrated educational environment would be more beneficial for their children than the continuation of a segregated pattern. It appears that those who opposed the program initially based their judgments upon the perceptions that integrated education simply does not yield advantages for their children. In brief, many of the opponents simply prefer to see the continuation of a segregated educational system in the city of Urbana.

The next question asked was, "Would you prefer to keep your children in neighborhood schools?" Several of the program's proponents suggested that the sacredness of the neighborhood school concept allowed opponents a socially acceptable method of cloaking their opposition to school integration and, in this case, to the total busing program. Thirty-six respondents stated very bluntly that they not only preferred but insisted upon neighborhood schools. The following illustrate the opinions of this group:

They are a must, in case of accidents, because the kids are closer to home.

Neighborhood schools are best. If Hays needs improvement then send better teachers there and leave the kids where they belong.

I bought a home near this school so that my kids could go here. I am sure as hell not going to send my kids out of here and I do not like other kids coming in.

They can bus other kids in if they want, but they aren't going to bus mine out. All they are getting is more wasted money and no integration.

It is just plain silly to try to integrate a city by busing kids to other schools, especially when kids can walk to their own schools.

I pay high taxes just so my kid can go to this particular school and believe me they are high taxes! If you think I am going to pay them to send kids from the North End to this school, or my kids to their school, then you are a misguided person.

Certainly, I am for neighborhood schools but I do have two kids bused to another school that has classes for the gifted. But, of course, that is different. Oh yes, neighborhood schools are definitely the best.



Well, the question is better education. There is no integration issue here! But all of the kids are getting worse education this way.

Come on fella, is six hours a day integration?

These comments illustrate that the concept of the neighborhood school continues to be an important consideration whenever a program for educational improvement and/or integration calls for taking pupils out of their home neighborhoods. Some of these respondents suggested that their preference was based upon considerations of convenience, safety, etc., but for many the concept appears to be a cloak for attitudes with racial overtones. Such respondents rarely considered the quality of the education being offered, but usually defended the concept of the neighborhood school as though it were inviolable.

The majority of the remaining respondents did not reject outright the neighborhood school concept but generally qualified their reservations or remained non-committal. Several felt that it was largely unimportant where the school was located as long as it offered the best educational facilities for their children.

The following comments suggest that five of the interviewees overtly preferred integrated schools to their present neighborhood schools.

I prefer that my children go to an integrated school. If it were possible to bus them to one, I would do it immediately.

As long as it wasn't too inconvenient I would allow my kids to be bused out of this neighborhood. I think they should come into contact with Negroes as well as people of other races.

I really prefer having my kids in the neighborhood school, but I'll send them to an inferior school if it will start the process of integration.

Community integration is probably the best answer but since that seems unlikely in a city like Urbana, I would like to have my children bused to a Negro school. They have to learn to interact with and accept people of other races, and I think its best if it is done while they are young.

A few hours a day of integration is better than none at all.

These responses stress the importance of integration even in one case at the expense of quality education. However, such comments were expressed only by very few of those interviewed.

Though respondents often volunteered what they perceived as problems in the program, one entry specifically asked, "What was the biggest problem you and your children faced with regard to busing?" This question sought to determine whether individuals perceived problems which were unique or whether the problems were common enough to be mentioned by many respondents. There was also the possibility of determining if certain of the cited problems were more attributable to actions or attitudes of whites than to Negroes.

Seven respondents replied that they had neither seen nor heard of any problems connected with the program. Another respondent stated that she was unaware of any problems, but she attributed this to the fact that none of the Hays' students had been placed in her

child's classroom. Had any of these children been placed in her child's classroom, she suspected that, "...many problems would have arisen."

Several problems were cited explicitly by a majority of the respondents. Both Negroes and whites suggested that busing was bad because of the young ages of the children being transported. Inclement weather, additional time requirements, and the increased distance from home were also mentioned as problems by the respondents. However, several problems were mentioned solely by white respondents. The following comments referring to such concerns as taxes, molesting, vulgarity, lunch and P.T.A., are typical of these statements by whites:

I pay higher taxes than the colored people do for their houses, so why should my taxes subsidize their kid's education. If they want to spend more money, then use their money to fix up their school. I don't like paying higher taxes so they can get better schools while my kids get the same old things. Everybody I know complains about this tax bit.

There are constant problems of the colored kids molesting our kids, besides only the poor people's schools got the colored kids. None were bused into the rich schools.<sup>3</sup>

Our kids are learning the darndest things, like cussing, from those damn nigger kids.

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<sup>3</sup>Official records in the central office of Urbana School District 116 indicate that approximately 176 students were bused from Orchard Downs to Hays School during the first year of the busing program. Approximately, 341 students were bused from Hays School to the remaining seven elementary schools. All seven schools received students from Hays School. The numbers allocated each school varied from twenty-six at Wiley to fifty-two at Thomas Paine School.

The problem is that our school makes no special allowance for them, but then society doesn't either.

The problem is taking those kids home for lunch. They shouldn't do it. It is a waste of money. Why I set right here and watch them load up at noon.

Of course, the colored parents have the biggest problem because many of them have to be in two or three P.T.A.'s at one time. I mean I'd rather have them go to their own school for their sake.

There is really no significant exchange, so why bother with it anyway.

They are isolated because they don't have any type of lunch program. They just eat on the stage at school. This makes them distinctly from a different area. Besides most of them bring little or nothing from home for lunch.

The following problem areas were cited only by Negro respondents. Typical of these, as reflected in the following statements, were winter exposure, white prejudice, and unequal treatment.

It is too cold for our little kids to wait for the bus outside all winter. And, it is dangerous for them to cross some of these streets out here. But one nice thing is that they all carry such nice big full sacks of food for their lunches. Why when they used to go home they generally got nothing for lunch cause both parents were working.

Problem? I will tell you what the problem is young man. The principal of the school and the white children called them niggers. Even the white people said that the teachers and some of the kids were prejudiced.

If a white kid and a colored kid gets in a scuffle of some kind the bus drivers put the colored kid off the bus for six months and the white kid off for two weeks for the same offense.

Why, they still make the colored kids go in the back door at the Junior High School. So our kids were complaining so we went to see the principal. He said he wasn't aware of it. So, we sent some folks to watch and it sure was happening. So, just think of the problems we will have at the elementary schools.

Through the random system of interviews employed, three white school teachers were contacted. Two taught at different Urbana elementary schools, and the third taught at Urbana Junior High School. While there is no pretense of representing their statements as typifying the professional attitude toward the program, the statements reflect both positive and negative responses on the part of teachers. The following are some of the comments made during the interviews:

I was somewhat skeptical of the program initially, but I am not now. You should see how hard the colored children try. And, let's face it, their task is not easy. The program is really becoming a success. But, too often I hear a teacher tear a colored child down in front of the rest of the class.

Problems, huh! Well, I will just give you a few. They all have low intelligence and low achievement levels. They steal everything they can get their hands on. Why they even had the gaul to steal my brand new scotch tape dispenser. And, they are hard to come by, you know. I asked and asked, but didn't find it until I inspected their lockers at the end of the year. I know that most of the teachers at my school agree with me whether they admit it to you or not. My school has really gone to the dogs and now I am really looking forward to retirement.

There are a lot of problems. We have them at the Junior High. But I feel that most kids from low socio-economic levels come to school with a chip on their shoulders whether they are white or colored. They may be tired, or hungry, or upset from parental battles. The tension is high and it takes very little to set off problems. But this is no reason not to have integration. We just have to work at finding a solution.

These responses indicate that general problems such as distance and extra time bothered both white and Negro respondents. White respondents in particular tended to stress the increased tax burden and the unfavorable conduct of the Hays children. The attitude was generally expressed by this white group that integration was certainly unnecessary and probably bad.

The Negroes contacted generally emphasized concern for their children's health and safety, but often commented even more extensively on what they considered to be the traditional problems of segregation in Urbana. For example, two Negro respondents referred to a street widening project which had occurred approximately two years before these interviews were conducted. They said, "We have been asking, calling, and complaining to the city and the school board for more than two years, and they still haven't replaced a school crossing sign that they took down." One of these respondents was one of the three who had stated that he could individually influence the school board.

Two of the teachers contacted expressed a favorable attitude toward the program, remarking positively about the sincere efforts of

"the colored children" and the normality of problems with kids from low socio-economic levels. The third teacher, who was apparently obsessed with the notion of the "low intelligence" and the immorality of the imported Negro children, found the whole thing "quite distasteful."

These responses appear to indicate that there were both individual and common perceptions of the problems associated with Urbana's busing program. Also illustrated is that most of those problems can be and often are designated as having a racial basis.

The final entries in the interview schedule to be considered asked if the respondent would favor the continuation or expansion of the busing program. Approximately twenty-five persons replied that they would favor the continuation of the program. However, most of these suggested, "...we have nothing to lose. It is only hurting the kids from the North End, and if their parents don't mind, why should we?" Approximately ten respondents appeared actually to favor the continuation of the program so that it might achieve both integration and educational improvement. Essentially, these respondents suggested that they would favor expanding the program. The remaining thirty-five interviewees appeared to be adamantly opposed to any program which would either increase the number of Negro children being bused into white neighborhoods or involve the busing of white children into the Negro neighborhood. The following illustrate the opinions of this group:

As long as mine aren't affected, why the hell should I care?

There will be a hell of alot of trouble if they try to take my kids out of their school or this neighborhood.

You're out of your cotton pickin' mind even to suggest that they take our kids into that school. If the Downs people don't care, that's their business.

I would move out of the state first--mine go nowhere.

My neighbors and I already have taken the appropriate legal steps just in case they ever try it.

If these expressions are, indeed, representative of Urbana's opinion in general, it seems likely at best, that the busing program will be continued in ensuing years at about the same level it has functioned during its first year of operation. On the basis of these interviews, it does seem apparent that there will be increased resistance by some factions of the citizenry if an attempt is made to expand the program in any real sense.

The intent of the interviews was to determine how significant an issue the busing program is in the city of Urbana, and what the opinions of the citizens of that city are. It is evident that the issue has great significance and that most citizens are eager to express their opinions. The responses show that most of the respondents believed that the decision to bus students was made clandestinely. Disapproval of this apparent secrecy was expressed



by a majority of those contacted. Prior to the busing decision, it appears that many citizens believed that the school board was a democratic institution responsive to the wishes of the people. Some continue to believe that the board can be influenced through large-group action; however, an important segment of those contacted feel that the board is in no way responsive of their wishes.

Nearly all of the respondents saw no change in the quality of education being offered. Few detected any change in theirs or their children's attitudes toward people of other races.

It was also evident from the responses that those who initially opposed the program continued to do so, and they continue to repeat their initial objections and criticisms. The same appeared to be true for the initial proponents. There was no sizeable group that appeared to have been convinced that there was any reason to change its initial response.

Though many of the entries on the interview schedule prompted expressions of an interest in education, the responses very often illustrated that the issue of primary concern was that of race.

As has been noted, members of the Urbana School Board were interviewed regarding specific topics. The information volunteered by the board members tended to center around five general areas of discussion related to the total busing program: 1) the origination of the idea to bus students, 2) aspects of the decision-making process, 3) the member's reactions to the charge of secrecy, 4) public reaction to the busing program, and 5) the individual member's evaluations of the program. Since many of these areas are closely related, a certain amount of overlap will occur throughout this chapter. When relevant, information gained from non-board members will also be presented.

Those members interviewed generally agreed that it had been realized for years that, "...something would have to be done about Hays School sooner or later." One member presented a detailed account of his conception of the events which ultimately led to the decision to bus students. He stated that the board had been aware for at least ten years that the education of Negro youth was not as good as it should have been. A gap could be seen between the Negro and white students in Urbana by analyzing test scores given at the third and fourth grade levels. This gap was also evidenced by the high Negro drop-out rate. To combat this situation, this member avered that the board had always given the school additional educational materials, and had always maintained a sufficient number of specialists for use by that school. Although this member believed that such measures did appear to alleviate the problem somewhat, a

gap did continue to exist. The board then realized that such an approach had not yielded sufficient results. Since Hays enjoyed a quality educational environment, the board concluded that the problem must lie in the lack of motivation from the home situation. According to this member, it was on the basis of this conclusion that the board then decided that an attempt should be made to create a substitute for home-centered motivation by mixing the Negro children with white children. The white children would provide models for the Negro children to imitate. In support of this idea, another member said, "The only way to get the Negro kids to drag themselves up is if they get middle-class values; and, this is only possible by subjecting them to middle-class whites. Right or wrong, this is the class which runs the country."

Though most members appeared to agree generally with the basic conclusion that Negroes and whites should be mixed, other factors which prompted the attempt to integrate were mentioned. One individual suggested that the existence of a distinct Negro neighborhood was becoming "too obvious" in Urbana. Another member said that the need to find a "permanent home" for the children of Orchard Downs residents encouraged the decision. This member explained that before the busing program, the children from this university housing area were placed in various schools depending upon available classroom space. It was also mentioned that the Citizens' Advisory Committee, which is a board appointed lay committee, the function of which is to advise the board on general

educational matters, had often commented upon the inadequacy of Hays School. Finally, one member said, "We didn't do it to improve the quality of education at Hays because it was good. We realized that integration was inevitable and we cooled off a potential boiling pot in Urbana. Besides, the competition and motivation would be good for the Hays' students."

It appears, then, that basically most members are in agreement on the general conceptions of the development of the busing program. Several rationales are offered, however, as the basic reasons for attempting to integrate Urbana's elementary school system.

According to one school board member, the decision to bus Hays' students to other white schools in Urbana had evolved slowly. He stated that the board had put out "feelers" for more than a year to parents and groups in the Negro neighborhood. Although the exact nature of the "feelers" were unexplained, the initial reaction to them by the Negro community had been negative. He continued by stating, "At first we got the idea that they didn't want their kids "singled out as would be the result of busing them out of their neighborhood." However, by the spring of 1966 he concluded, "We got the idea that the Negroes would accept the program. So, they somehow got the message and bang, they appeared at the board with a demand for desegregation on July 18, 1966."

Several board members suggested that the decision to bus students was arrived at during an eight day period following that request to integrate Hays school made by the Hays' Neighborhood Education Association Committee. According to one member,

"We either met together or discussed integration by phone every day during that period." Most members only intimated the difficulty of that decision. However, one member said, "It sure was a hard decision. I have never seen so much dissent before by this board. [Another member concluded that the method of integration finally decided upon was chosen because of the cost factor. He said, "We chose busing simply because it was the least expensive of any possible alternative. No member should feel pride in the fact that we chose busing--it was simply the cheapest way to integrate and even then we had arguments." A second member insisted that while the board was generally a close-knit body, common agreement on integration was never insisted upon. The expectation was simply "...that you vote with your own conscience. Never did anyone say that we want a unanimous vote on this issue." Another member suggested, however, that common agreement was, indeed, stressed; the "moral responsibility angle" had been pushed in order to attain board agreement on the busing program.]

Discrepancies in these comments gave rise to various questions which are often unclearly answered. For example, it was noted that "feelers" had been sent out for more than a year and that initially Negro parents had revealed that they did not want their children bused. Certain board members appeared to believe, however, that the decision to bus had been a direct result of the Negro group's request that Hays School be desegregated, and that the decision had been made during the eight days immediately following

that request. One member said, "Our response was to the Negro demand, but I don't feel that a minority should dictate and this is what happened."

From the information gained from board sources, it is not immediately clear whether the presentation of the Negro group's demand was an invited or a spontaneous one. However, information gained from prominent Negro leaders helps to clarify this ambiguity. One individual volunteered, "A board member called me and asked me if my people would accept the plan. I said that I believed that they would, and the proposal was passed by the board on the twenty-sixth." Another said that the committee of which he was a member was reactivated for the specific purpose of presenting the request for integration to the school board.

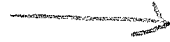
As has been noted, one board member suggested that consensus was sought by pushing the "moral responsibility" of the board members. Another member said that he and other members were "confident" that the vote on the busing issue would be unanimous when it was presented formally to the board. Though a third member had believed that a unanimous vote was never insisted upon, he readily admitted that the board was "shocked" by the single negative vote which one member registered. If the speculation that the board did, indeed, attempt to gain consensus is valid, further evidence of a lack of success toward that effort can be detected since two other members were purported to have said to the dissenting member, "...I wish I had your strength of conviction." The dissenting member

said that he understood their comments to mean that "...they were really with me."

The information concerning the origination of the idea to bus students and various aspects of the decision-making process allows certain observations. It appears that contact between certain Negro leaders and board representatives had been maintained for at least a year prior to the time that the decision to bus students was made. The evidence also suggests that the initiative had come from within the board rather than from the Negro community. The positive response of the Negro leadership appears to have been the reactivation of a neighborhood educational committee for the purpose of presenting the public request for integration. The interviews also indicate that the board was not officially informed of the quasi-official negotiations taking place between board members and the representatives of the Negro community. Those who were most active initially in promoting the attempt to integrate were also most anxious to achieve board consensus on the decision. It is fairly evident that both the initiation of the idea to bus students and some aspects of the decision-making process were products of internal management within the board.

Several board members made comments concerning the allegation that the decision to bus had been made secretly. This allegation stemmed from the fact that no public announcement had been made

No  
Communication  
with Community



of the meeting at which the policy to bus had been adopted by the board. One member said in explanation of this oversight that there had always been a certain informality with regard to informing the local newspapers of board meetings. Another member said, "There was never any intent to conduct any of our business in secret. Administrative breakdown was the reason that it was not in the papers." Though another member agreed that the lack of press notification was an accident, he expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of public notice and said, "I got up and asked where the public was. By making the decision this way, I went against myself morally, because as a citizen I would have liked to have been involved in such a decision. I felt that it should have been done in a more public way." Another avowed also that no one was at fault, but that the administrative staff had simply "goofed." This member continued by stating, "...but then what difference does it make since people only show up when they become self-righteous over an issue."

Further evidence suggests that the lack of a public announcement was, indeed, due to a "goof" on the part of the administrative staff. The "goof" was the result of an internal employee-related problem that was not relative to the busing program itself. These data suggest, however, that administrative safeguards to insure the announcement of school board meetings were not in operation. The fact remains that the lack of public notice did not deter either



one protesting member or the rest of the board from acting upon the busing proposal.

Some board members' comments focused upon the nature of the process of decision-making rather than upon the lack of a newspaper notice. One observation was, "Yes, it was done in secret. I don't know how else we could have done it. We held private meetings from the eighteenth to the twenty-fifth of July. On the twenty-fifth the board members signed a waiver so that we could have a special meeting on the next day." Another member said, "Of course it was made in secret, all decisions are made in secret." Another individual who was not a board member, yet figured prominently in making the request for integration, said that the idea of integrating Urbana's elementary schools certainly was not a secret, since it had been discussed at three prior Citizens' Advisory Committee meetings. The board's decision to bus students as a method of implementing integration did come as a surprise to some members of the C.A.C., however, since its chairman requested at the next school board meeting that the board inform the C.A.C. of important decisions prior to their release to the press.<sup>1</sup>

Besides receiving responses from the members of the C.A.C. regarding prior notification, the board members received immediate reaction from the public. One member reported that he was constantly

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education, School District Number 116, County of Champaign and State of Illinois, September 26, 1966.



asked by various conservative individuals, "Why the hell did you do it?" Other members stated that their phones rang constantly for several days. One member eventually invited several "responsible parents" from a neighborhood of particularly strong opposition to his home for an informal discussion session. His goal was to convince these parents that the busing program was beneficial for all children involved. He hoped that they might return to their neighborhood and help to quell the vociferous opposition. Continued opposition to the busing program from that area indicated to this member that he had not been successful.

Opposition also came from the area of University-owned housing. Though numerically small, it proved to be quite vocal since several parents simply did not want their children bused into the "Negro neighborhood." One board member suggested that there would have been much less opposition if the board had informed those residents of the decision to begin the program before it appeared in the newspapers. He suggested that this would have entailed calling the officers of the housing organization and explaining the program to them. [The fact that these residents did not have prior knowledge of the program, "...allowed a couple of southerners, born and raised in prejudice, to gain some support in opposing the program on the grounds of secrecy."

In an attempt to reduce the opposition from such affected groups, the board arranged a meeting to be held the following week at the Hays School. The purpose of the meeting was to explain and "sell" the new program to the parents from Orchard Downs and the Hays neighbor-

hood. One board member said that the meeting actually accomplished little since "...most of the parents left with the same attitudes they came with." One member suggested that the meeting may well have done more harm than good. This member said that a white person from Orchard Downs had asked, "How will our kids act around kids like these who have never had nor known anybody or anything?" This board member continued by stating, "...and the parents of those Negro kids were sitting right there listening to all of this." Another board member concluded that "The milk of human kindness had certainly gone sour that night." There is no evidence that this meeting succeeded in attaining any community consent regarding the decision to bus students.

At the time of this investigation, most members believed that it was too early to appraise the program since it had been in existence for only one full year. Two members did simply state "the program is working well." One said that this was because the academic loss had been much less than had been anticipated. He attributed the slight academic loss to careful efforts taken by the central administration to place students according to their abilities. Another member said that a meaningful appraisal could occur only after it is known if the academic gap between Negroes and whites has closed when the students who are currently being bused enter the junior high school. A third member predicted, "It is only when these first graders enter junior high school that we'll know if we've been in the integration business, or if we've been in the education business."

Several members commented about their conceptions of specific problem areas with regard to aspects of the program. One member emphasized the necessity of educating teachers who might be unfamiliar with Negro children. This member related one account of a Negro youngster who arrived home from a predominantly white school singing "eenie, meenie, minie, mo, catch a nigger by the toe...." When asked by one of his parents where he had learned the song, the child replied, "Oh, my teacher taught it to our class today." The parent then contacted this board member and asked for an explanation. After an investigation it was concluded that the teacher in question was simply naive and had meant no harm by presenting this lesson. Another member said that his uneasiness centered around the fact that the busing program had destroyed school-related Negro parent and student organizations. He said that he had attended the Hays School P.T.A. on occasion and that there were approximately twenty regular participants. After the busing program had been initiated, only two or three Negroes were attending P.T.A.'s in the white neighborhoods. These parents were present "...as observers, and not as participants, as they had been at the Hays P.T.A." He said that special efforts to invite Negroes to such meetings had been made on the part of white parents from two of Urbana's school districts, but that they appear to have been futile. A third member suggested his conception of a problem with regard to the program when he related what he termed "The Big Yellow Bus" story. He said that he had asked a white child

how he was getting along with a Negro child who had been bused into his school. The child replied that though he liked the Negro child, he could not really get to know him or make friends with him because he got right back on "The Big Yellow Bus."

Though the board members were generally hesitant to evaluate the program in any extensive detail due to its recent inception, several of their comments did reveal their conceptions of specific problem areas. The need for educating white teachers was noted as was the need for increasing Negro participation in formal school-related organizations. [ The "Big Yellow Bus" story related in one interview suggested that Negro-white students' relationships are limited since they are abruptly terminated at the end of the school day. ]

The evidence presented in this chapter supports the thesis that both the origination of the idea to integrate and the culminating decision to bus pupils were carefully cultivated through protracted quasi-official negotiations between individual board members and representatives of the Negro community. Parenthetically, the official involvement of the total school board was limited to the final stages of the decision-making process. It has been shown also that the failure to publish prior notification of the school board meeting at which the official decision was made was inadvertent and completely unrelated to the agenda of the meeting or to the decision itself.

In the introduction of this paper, it was stated that the political significance of the busing issue was vividly demonstrated during the 1967 Urbana School Board campaign. The election was held in April of that year, approximately nine months after the initial announcement of the decision to bus students had been made. The first candidates to file were three school board members seeking re-election.<sup>1</sup> In lieu of presenting a detailed platform, the incumbents cited their record and promised continued educational improvement in Urbana's school system. A week later, three other candidates filed and announced their intention to run for the board positions as a slate.<sup>2</sup> This opposition slate presented a nine point platform which pledged the following:<sup>3</sup>

1. support school administrators efforts to maintain high educational standards
2. maintain the principle of neighborhood schools
3. have comparable facilities for each school
4. maintain the same educational standards in all schools
5. support the maintenance of discipline
6. keep the public well informed on all important subjects
7. retain and acquire quality teachers

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<sup>1</sup>Champaign-Urbana Courier, February 12, 1967

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1967

<sup>3</sup>Opposition Slate Campaign Material

Though months had passed since the busing decision had been announced, even the most cursory reading of this platform reveals its intimate relation to that decision. If a comprehensive understanding of the total busing program is to be acquired, it is necessary to examine busing-related issues that were brought out during the campaign. An analysis of the political advantages and disadvantages enjoyed by each of the two slates will aid in attaining this understanding.

Adjunctive to this analysis, it is necessary to indicate that one person had filed for election as an independent candidate.<sup>4</sup> Though this candidate's platform was comprised of the usual statements concerning the need for quality education, it did provide for an alternative to the busing program. According to his platform, integration and educational improvement by busing would never work; but "...re-districting approach, the Princeton Plan, and as a long-range goal, the educational park concept..." would truly achieve such goals.<sup>5</sup> Though this candidate was to receive very few votes, various oblique affects of his participation in the campaign will be noted in this Chapter.

As was noted in the residential interviews [See Chapter 2] most respondents believed that the board's decision to bus Negro

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<sup>4</sup>Courier, March 31, 1967

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., March 31, 1967

pupils from Hays school to other elementary schools was made secretly and that the board had completely ignored the desires of many of Urbana's citizens to maintain segregated, neighborhood schools. The image of the board that a few individuals had expressed did not appear to be isolated. By incorporating the plank of "Keep the public well informed..." the opposition slate appealed to the disgruntled voter's disapproval of the [incumbent board's clandestine] [procedures in instituting busing.] Furthermore, this appeal was also reported in the opposition's pledge that residents would receive "consideration" when presenting problems to the board. This platform entry had strategic value because many people apparently felt that the board had given no satisfaction to their complaints against certain aspects of the busing program, [such as the lack of public] [involvement in the decision-making process.] For example, one parent said in a statement to the board at its October meeting that he wasn't "...totally happy...." that Negro children were being bused to his child's school. While the board apparently "listened sympathetically" to this and other grievances, the newspaper report suggests that the individual in question and others with similar points of view left the meeting without feelings of satisfaction.<sup>6</sup>

Another politically expedient point on the platform of the opposition slate was concerned with the equal treatment of all of Urbana's schools. Interviews conducted in this present research

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., October 1966



revealed that many people believed that certain schools in the district received preferential treatment in the allocation of funds, library materials, etc. The criticism that "This school is bad enough without having Negro kids brought in." was frequently voiced by teachers and administrators as well as by parents. It would seem that the opposition candidates were successful in their exploitation of this sentiment since they carried each of the districts in which the accusations were most common. [See Appendix E.]

The evidence gained from interviews throughout this study suggests that many of Urbana's citizens consider divergence from the traditional concept of the neighborhood school as heretical. Whether such a belief is based on sincere concern for educational benefits and possible inconvenience or more directly upon the conviction that some people are inferior to others is not discernible from many of the interviews. For the most part the basis of the belief is irrelevant since the neighborhood school concept offers sanction for opposition in such a general way.

Another advantage held by the opposition slate was realized in the form of reports of increasing incidents between Negro and white students at the junior and senior high schools. The inclusion of the item concerning the "maintenance of discipline," allowed the slate to take advantage of that situation. Politically, it is irrelevant whether such incidents were actually increasing or whether they were simply becoming more widely reported. Several interviewees related the details of one incident which was reported to have resulted in several "fights" between Negro and white youths. One

account suggested that a Negro boy had made sexual overtures to a white girl during a school assembly. Another version stated that it was the girl who was attempting to "stimulate" the boy. A third account suggested that the mother of the girl had seen the boy brush her daughter as he attempted to find a seat in the crowded hall. The mother then, allegedly, began to shout obscenities at the boy and to physically attack him. Though the actual details of this particular incident (if, indeed, there was an incident) are superfluous, it is illustrative of the kind of circumstance which can foment the circulation of extensive rumors. Interviewees often concluded that such incidents could occur only if weak discipline was being administered. Politically, the opposition was able to capitalize on such attitudes by including reference to "school discipline" in this platform.

The usual proclamations regarding quality education were included in the platform, as was the promise of a "complete sports program." However, as the campaign proceeded, it became clear that such considerations were of secondary interest to many of Urbana's citizens. The role occupied by the independent candidate indicates that race rather than educational improvement was of primary concern. Since this candidate was a Negro, many of the interviewees who supported the opposition slate were able to say, "See, even some of their own kind are against busing and the school board."

The preceding analysis suggests that the opposition slate had several distinct advantages. Through the charge of secrecy surrounding the sudden announcement to the public that a busing program would begin, the opposition was able to emphasize that a public body had disregarded the rights of Urbana's citizens to participate in an important public decision. Related to this point was the criticism that the board was neither responsive nor considerate when opposition to the program was presented before the board. The opposition also utilized the complaint that unequal treatment was being given to the various elementary schools in the district.

The use of the neighborhood school concept and the emphasis upon the need for strict school discipline were also advantageously manipulated by the opposition slate.

Though the advantages of the opposition slate would seem to be significant, it is necessary to realize that they were largely based upon emotional foundations. The use of emotion can often generate political interest, but often this interest is not translated into political action. In the case of the school board campaign the desired ultimate political action was voter turn-out. However, one of the opposition candidates said, "We just didn't get the vote out in areas where we had support. We didn't have the political experience or organization to do it. But, there were many more people for us than the final tally showed." This observation was substantiated during several of the residential interviews.

{ During one interview a respondent stated that she had never heard of the busing program, and she then slammed the door. An instant later she opened the door and began to shout, "Goddam you, I am against it. I don't want any Negroes in my school." While it was clear that this respondent had been involved in the campaign in the emotive sense, it was later determined that she had not "bothered" to vote in the school board election. Though this example is somewhat extreme, several other interviewees stated that they simply did vote even though they favored the opposition.

The opposition slate lacked many advantages that are founded upon real political considerations. Because of their general political inexperience, they were unable to establish an effective and widespread power base and a functional political organization. They also failed to develop ready channels of communication with prospective voters and to mobilize city-wide support. In addition, they lacked the necessary expertise regarding routine school board activities. On several occasions the opposition's candidates bluntly admitted a lack of knowledge of board procedures and stated that they would have to do some research before they could answer a particular question. The point of political acumen is that the successful candidate is generally the one who appears to have immediate and reliable knowledge about the details of the office he is seeking.

The inclusion of the neighborhood school pledge in the platform of the opposition functioned both advantageously and disadvantageously.

Although it did generate some emotive support, it also functioned to label the slate negatively. The first newspaper article describing the platform of the opposition slate stated that "Three candidates whose platform includes a pledge to maintain the principle of neighborhood schools announced...that they will seek election."<sup>7</sup> Though the article listed all nine points of the slate's platform, the newspaper reporter asked questions only about the slate's stand on neighborhood schools. One of the candidates was asked if this stand meant that the opposition was against the busing program. The candidate replied, "We are not against busing as it is at the present time. But we are against further cross-busing. We are not eager to have our own children bused to other schools, but we don't object to having Negro children bused."

A letter to the editor of one of the local newspapers summarizes well how this statement was interpreted. The letter stated, "The quality of education does not seem to be the issue. Could it be busing? One of the opposition candidates has said that he doesn't mind busing Negro children, he only objects to busing white children."<sup>8</sup>

The opposition slate had acquired a negative label which left the candidates open to attack from many segments of the population of Urbana. One the day before the election, letters to the editor

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1967

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1967

of one newspaper indicated that the acquisition of such a label had been both permanent and detrimental. Headlines attached to these letters included the following: "A Big Brother Slate," "Don't Turn Back the Clock in Urbana," "Opposition Unconvincing," "The Remedy Worse."<sup>9</sup> One of the opposition candidates stated succinctly, "They all called us racists."

The campaign waged by the opposition may well have been unsuccessful largely because of their reliance upon emotive factors which proved to be politically ineffective and ephemeral. The opposition was generally unsuccessful in utilizing real political factors such as organization, communication, and effective voter mobilization.

In many ways the incumbents had these primary political advantages which the opposition lacked. For example, the incumbents had the necessary expertise and political experience produced by their combined service of thirty-one years on the Urbana board.<sup>10</sup> Because of their official position nearly every comment they made was soon to appear in print; their names were constantly in front of the voters. The fact that they had initiated the busing program gave them the instant support of liberal groups within the community. Most local churches, civic groups, and University-oriented organizations endorsed the incumbents, and many of their members became active campaign workers.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1967

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., February 12, 1967

There were also indirect benefits. For example, one of the opposition candidates had said that he was asked to discuss the issues with a local minister. He was assured that the minister would not attack his slate's position from the pulpit. Though it appears that this assurance was realized, a few days later, the minister was the guest clergyman on a local television program which features a few minutes of religious comment. According to the candidate, "The minister viscously attacked racism and racists. He did not mention any names, but everyone knew who he was talking about."

Further evidence of real political considerations were realized in the form of active campaign participation on the part of the incumbent's supporters. Several campaign workers made comments which are typified by the following: "We were really organized. We drove people to the polls all day. We had babysitting service and everything. Everyone that we knew was involved." One of the opposition candidates seemed to agree that the incumbents were quite successful in the mobilization of their supporters. He said, "I saw them bring in loads of graduate students with beards and sandals. They hauled them in by volkswagon buses. They must have loaded them right out of their boarding houses and into the polling places." Another advantage was that the incumbents were endorsed by a committee of sixty teachers who had organized for that purpose, a few days before the election.<sup>11</sup> That a period of approximately nine months

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., April 6, 1967

had lapsed between the announcement of the busing program and the election was also beneficial to the incumbents. For many people the issue was becoming stale and as one interviewee said, "Nothing really bad has happened. I mean no riots. Besides, it's policy now and probably can't be changed." The emotive aspect had evaporated for many people.

It is clear that most of the advantages enjoyed by the incumbents were based upon politically real considerations. The incumbents exhibited educational expertise, political experience and the ability to communicate frequently with the voters. They also immediately obtained the support of many liberal groups and were able to mobilize successfully many campaign workers. The lapse of time from the initial announcement of the decision to bus also seems to have eroded much of what was politically harmful in the decision itself.

The incumbents did face certain disadvantages, but they were generally emotive. Obviously, they had lost the support of persons who continued to be strongly opposed to the busing program. It has been noted, however, that a large percentage of these people may have resignedly not have voted. The "sneaky bastard" image was also still in the minds of many who opposed the method by which the decision had been made. Important also was the fear by many that the board would increase or expand busing. Throughout the campaign the incumbents assured inquirers that they would not institute cross-busing. Many people believed, however, that they could not accept the word of the incumbents. One person said, "They will sneak cross-busing in by 1969."



The one disadvantage having a very real political basis was the charge that certain schools in the district were being slighted at the expense of others. As has been noted, the opposition slate appears to have utilized this weakness very well. Interviewees commonly complained that the rich peoples' school and the professor's school got everything.

The results of the interviews with various candidates and some of the board members confirmed that race was the paramount issue in the campaign, though the public information published during the period preceding the election rarely states this so vividly. One opposition candidate said that he had entered the campaign because he opposed the use of secrecy by a body that was supposedly responsible to the public. He said that race was not a consideration. Nonetheless, the board's perception was that the central issue was race. One board member said, "The issue was, 'I don't want those Negro kids in my child's classroom.' " Another responded, "It was race and there is no need to try to deny it." Finally, one member said that "Though they said that they were opposed to the manner in which we made the decision, the real issue was that we did it."

Several candidates and board members suggested that it was unfortunate that the campaign became so competitive. Though most agreed that opposition was an integral part of election procedures, several complained that "More time was spent in mud-slinging than in the intelligent discussion of relevant issues." Supporters of both slates who were interviewed often charged that political

"lies" were being created and perpetuated by the other side throughout the campaign. One such "lie" accused that one of the slates was receiving "big money" from outside sources. Elements of this particular account reached the letters to the editor page of one of the local newspapers as the following excerpts indicate: "I just want to know one thing. Who is putting the big money into...the campaign for school board in Urbana? As long as I've lived here, I've never seen anything like this. Who is trying to take over out [sic] school board and why?"<sup>12</sup> An answer to this letter soon appeared. The individual suggested that the slate he supported was being accused on the one hand of cultivating the "Poor White Trash" in Urbana and of receiving "big money" on the other. He said that he was one of the "Poor White Trash" and that he had collected \$112.00 for his slate from others like himself. He said that time and money was freely donated by himself and his friends.<sup>13</sup> A third letter offers a general description of the way in which the campaign was often conducted: "We will not stoop to the type of whispering campaign being conducted by the opposition."<sup>14</sup>

Information gained from various board members, candidates, and campaign workers does support the observation that "whispering

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., March 31, 1967

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1967

<sup>14</sup>Champaign-Urbana News Gazette, April 2, 1967

campaigns" were being conducted by persons on both sides. Certain individuals were accused of being perverts, psychotics, communists, rightists, paranoids, prostitutes, and so forth. Other accusations were that certain "self-proclaimed" liberals were racists, and that certain conservatives were secretly for integration.

Another aspect of the "whispering campaign" was that political deals were being offered by this or that group. Although several respondents related their particular conception of which "deals" had occurred, the information acquired from several interviewees appeared to give substance to only one attempted political deal. It was suggested that the independent Negro candidate had been asked to withdraw from the campaign because it was feared that the pro-incumbent vote might be fragmented. In return, this candidate was promised the support of a sizeable segment of Urbana's population should that candidate desire to seek a board position during the next school board election. The candidate decided, however, not to withdraw. The election results indicated that an insignificant amount of the vote was actually taken away from the incumbents.

The intent of this chapter has been to illustrate that a close relationship did, indeed, exist between the decision to bus students and the school board election of 1967. It might be concluded that the issue is largely irrelevant since the results of the election reveal that the incumbents won approximately fifty-five percent of the total vote cast in the Urbana election.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., April 9, 1967

In the words of one of the incumbents, "We beat the hell out of them. They learned that it's not popular to be racists in a city like Urbana." Another said, "Yes, it was a sound defeat." However, the finality of such conclusions exclude consideration of some of the insights available if the election is closely examined. For instance, the fact remains that a sizeable group of voters did not support the incumbents. If the incumbents were, indeed, correct that the principle issue was race, it could be concluded that this numerically significant minority was not convinced that Negro children should be sitting in the same classrooms with their children. That is, this segment may have accepted the results of the election, but it does not follow that the busing program in particular and the concept of integration in general has become in any way institutionalized in the city of Urbana. Also, had the opposition been less politically naive they could have made a more effective effort to get the voters to the polls in areas of anticipated strength. The incumbents did this effectively. The opposition also sacrificed the middle-of-the-road type voter by immediately receiving a negative label. Their public image was that they were primarily anti-incumbent and anti-busing. They did not create an image of reasonable alternatives.

A final factor that was detrimental to the opposition slate was the fact that one of the board members delivered an eloquent defense of the busing program at the last board meeting prior to the

election. At the same meeting another member stated that "The net cost to implement the present plan has been \$1,495, as of March 20, 1967."<sup>16</sup> The opposition appeared to have realized the effectiveness of these comments, and attempted to counteract this effectiveness by stating, "We feel that the recent reports and answers given at the recent board meeting were eight months too late."<sup>17</sup> One Urbana school administrator, during an interview after the election, said, "The opposition simply couldn't attack the things said at that board meeting. The defense was excellent and the cost was negligible. It cost them the election."

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<sup>16</sup>Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
School District Number 116, County of Champaign and State of Illinois  
March 20, 1967

<sup>17</sup>Courier, March 27, 1967

This thesis has been concerned with some implications of busing in Urbana, Illinois. The focus of this investigation has been an inquiry into busing as an aspect of integration. It has been limited to the events which led to the official announcement that busing would be instituted and to various related phenomena that occurred during a period of approximately nine months after the decision had been announced. This undertaking has been only a brief introduction into a very extensive and complicated question. The intent has not been to judge the busing program, but only to present the information which has been gained. Undoubtedly, a comprehensive study could be made of many of the topics that have only been briefly touched upon in this paper. It is possible, as one board member suggested, that the busing program can be appraised only after the students who began first grade upon the inception of the program begin to assume the duties of students in the junior and senior high schools. This board member suggests that only then will the Board of Education know if it has been in the integration business or in the education business.

APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## UNIVERSITY-OWNED HOUSING INTERVIEW SCHEDULE—ORCHARD DOWNS

Name: Address:

Sex: Occupation:

Length of Residence  
in Orchard Downs:

- 1) Do you prefer to keep your children in neighborhood schools?
- 2) What do you consider to be the biggest problems with the busing of your children?
- 3) Has the quality of your child's education been improved since he had been bused to Hays School?
- 4) As a result of busing has your child's attitude toward people of other races changed?
- 5) Has your attitude changed?

On this schedule the race or nationality of the respondent was noted, though not explicitly asked.

Names of respondents were noted only when volunteered. Most preferred not to have his name connected with his opinion. Occupation was also included only when volunteered by the respondent.



APPENDIX B  
INTRODUCTORY DATA - ORCHARD DOWNS AREA

	<u>Country</u>		<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Length of Residency</u>
	<u>American</u>	<u>Foreign</u>			
	<u>White - Negro</u>				
1.		Mexican	F	housewife	9 months
2. X			F	housewife	2 years
3. X			F	housewife	1 year
4. X			F	housewife	1 year
5. X			M	student	2 years
6.		Australian	F	housewife	1 year
7. X			M	teacher	1 year
8.		Israeli	F	housewife	5 months
9. X			M	student	2 years
10.		Indian	F	teacher	1 year

## APPENDIX B

	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Number Bused to Hays</u>
1.	2	0
2.	1	1
3.	2	2
4.	2	2
5.	1	1
6.	0	0
7.	1	1
8.	1	1
9.	2	2
10.	1	0

## APPENDIX C

## INTRODUCTORY DATA - URBANA RESIDENTIAL AREAS

<u>School District</u>	<u>Length of Residency</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Number in Elementary School</u>
Yankee Ridge	3 yrs.	teacher		
Prairie	3-1/2 yrs.	secretary	4	3
Prairie	4 yrs.	factory	1	1
Leal	1 yr.	res. assist.	3	2
Leal	3 yrs.	housewife	3	2
Leal	1/2 yr.	teacher	2	1
Leal	6 yrs.	res. assist.	2	0
Leal	25 yrs.	student	2	1
Leal	6 yrs.	housewife	0	0
Leal	6-1/2 yrs.	housewife	4	2
Leal	3 yrs.	professor	2	1
Leal	17 yrs.	teacher	1	1
Thornburn	40 yrs.	post office	0	0
Thornburn	10 yrs.	housewife	2	0
Thornburn	7 yrs.	housewife	4	1
Thornburn	13 yrs.	housewife	1	1
Thornburn	2 months	student	6	1
Lincoln	2 months	student	1	1
Lincoln	2 months	secretary	2	2
Lincoln	1 yr.	secretary	0	0
Lincoln	5 yrs.	housewife	3	2
Lincoln	1 yr.	housewife	4	4
Wiley	11 yrs.	housewife	4	3
Wiley	13 yrs.	housewife	3	1
Wiley	9 yrs.	housewife	2	2

APPENDIX C (CONT'D)  
INTRODUCTORY DATA - URBANA RESIDENTIAL AREAS

<u>School District</u>	<u>Number Bused</u>	<u>Sex of Respondent</u>
Yankee Ridge	0	F
Prairie	0	M
Prairie	0	F
Leal	0	F
Leal	0	F
Leal	0	M
Leal	0	F
Leal	0	M
Leal	0	F
Leal	0	F
Leal	0	M
Leal	0	M
Thornburn	0	M
Thornburn	0	F
Thornburn	0	F
Thornburn	0	F
Thornburn	0	F
Lincoln	0	M
Lincoln	0	F
Lincoln	0	F
Lincoln	0	F
Lincoln	0	F
Wiley	0	F
Wiley	0	F
Wiley	0	F

APPENDIX C  
INTRODUCTORY DATA - URBANA RESIDENTIAL AREAS

<u>School District</u>	<u>Length of Residency</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Number in Elementary School</u>
Wiley	5	factory	5	3
Wiley	12	housewife	2	1
Wiley	13	housewife	2	1
Wiley	15	housewife	4	2
Wiley	1	teacher	3	2
Weber	2	housewife	9	1
Weber	4	post office	3	1
Weber	12	housewife	4	2
Weber	13	Grandmother	3	3
Weber	9	housewife	4	3
Weber	12	grandmother	7	2
Weber	3	housewife	2	2
Weber	5	housewife	0	0
Hays	4	housewife	4	2
Hays	6	student	3	1
Hays	5	student	3	2
Hays	5	housewife	2	2
Hays	2	housewife	5	2
Hays	6	housewife	3	1
Hays	21	housewife	6	2
Hays	11	housewife	5	2
Hays	20	Butcher	3	2
Washington	12	Unemployed	3	3
Washington	4	factory	4	2
Washington	6	factory	2	1

## APPENDIX C (CONT'D)

## INTRODUCTORY DATA - URBANA RESIDENTIAL AREAS

<u>School District</u>	<u>Number Bused</u>	<u>Sex of Respondent</u>
Wiley	0	M
Wiley	0	F
Wiley	0	F
Wiley	0	F
Wiley	0	M
Weber	0	F
Weber	0	M
Weber	0	F
Weber	0	F
Weber	0	F
Weber	0	F
Weber	0	F
Weber	0	F
Hays	2	F
Hays	1	M
Hays	0	M
Hays	2	F
Hays	2	F
Hays	1	F
Hays	2	F
Hays	2	M
Hays	2	F
Washington	0	M
Washington	0	M
Washington	0	M

APPENDIX D  
RESIDENTIAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

① Name:	⑤ Address:
② Occupation:	⑥ Years in Area:
③ Number of Children:	⑦ Number in Elementary School:
④ Number Bused:	⑧ To Which School:

- 1) When did you first learn that some Hays' students would be bused to other schools?
- 2) When you first learned about busing were you for or against it?
- 3) Would you prefer to keep your children in neighborhood schools? Why? Why Not?
- 4) What was the biggest problem you and your children faced with regard to busing?
- 5) As a result of busing have you noticed any change in the quality of your child's education?
- 6) As a result of busing has your child's attitude toward people of other races changed?
- 7) Has your attitude changed?
- 8) Do you favor continuing busing in Urbana?
- 9) Do you favor the expansion of busing in Urbana?
- 10) Do you feel that you can influence decisions of the Urbana School Board?

The respondent's race was noted on this schedule though not explicitly.

Names and occupations were recorded only when this information was volunteered. Insistence on obtaining this information seemed to frighten most respondents.

APPENDIX E  
ELECTION RESULTS BY PRECINCT\*

	<u>The Incumbents</u>	<u>The Opposition</u>
Wiley	1289	1221
Hays	188	85
Leal	2925	1204
Yankee Ridge	1671	709
Orchard Downs	159	53
Lincoln	436	584
Washington	283	436
Weber	283	436
Prairie	316	481
Thomas Paine	386	589

\*From Central Office, Urbana School District Number 116



