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What Educational Values Do Comics Have?

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WHAT EDUCATIONAL VALUES DO
COMICS HAVE?

A Problem Submitted to the Department of Education in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements of the
Course of Research Problems 390b

By
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KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

July, 1956

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Any errors or omissions herein are the sole responsibility of the writer.

PART I

WHAT EDUCATIONAL VALUES DO COMICS HAVE?

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers, parents, and all those who care about children are more concerned today than ever about the effect of comic books on our youth. Comics are big business. In 1951, more than 900,000,000 comic books with more than 400 different titles were sold. Over 90 per cent of the regular readers of these books and comic strips were boys and girls between 8 and 13 years of age. Many of these boys and girls read 5 and 6 comics weekly.¹ Children are going to read comics; therefore, it is up to educators and parents to improve the medium. The teacher can and should aid children in learning to discriminate among the comics as among other forms of reading. Parents, too, must be up and doing. The interest in this problem is already shown by the fact that thirty professional articles have been published about it.² The comic situation is a problem which must look for solution to all those who cherish the values of childhood and youth.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of how the market is being flooded with comics struck the writer forcibly, while reviewing a course in

¹Edgar Dale, Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching, p. 319.

²Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Ability in Reading, p. 432.

Curriculum last summer. Immediately, she was determined to become more informed. This problem concerns itself with determining the educational values, if any, in comics and to present this information in such a way that it may be used to help teachers and parents to bridge the gap from comics to stories and books that will satisfy the same interests at a higher level.

Need for the Study

There is no question about the popularity of the comics. The comic book producers sell over 15,000,000 a month. That alone should inspire any teacher to reflect and ask: "Why do boys and girls read comics in preference to other literature?"

There is need for teachers to search literary sources which are rich in elements of action, surprise, adventure, and excitement, so that they may be prepared to guide, direct, and satisfy the imaginations of these lovers of comics into channels of more wholesome, pleasurable entertainment. There must be dormant educational values to be developed from the comic books since the appeal for this type of literature is stupendous among our boys and girls. Recently in some of our large cities committees have been formed and legislation has been passed to raise the standards of comics and to prohibit "crime" comics. With this forward step made, all educators and parents should join to save our youth from this communication of evil.¹

¹Jessie L. Murrell, "Are Comics Better or Worse," p. 49.

General Design for the Study

The documentary and questionnaire types of the normative-survey method were used in this research. The normative survey research method was chosen because it seemed to fit this particular problem. The word survey involves the gathering of data in regard to current conditions. And the word normative is used because the research was made for the purpose of ascertaining the norm. It should be understood that the writer does not attempt to solve the problem. The solving of problems of human behavior is too complicated and is not attempted in this problem. The documentary deals with records which already exist. It is definitely quantitative; it is concerned with certain characteristics which can be identified and counted. One may find these data in books, periodicals, encyclopedias, especially in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, The Journal of Educational Research, Review of Educational Research, Educational Indexes, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, and pamphlets.

In using the questionnaire, one should: (1) weed out any trivial question, (2) make the responses simple--possibly involving only check marks, (3) study the questions to avoid unnecessary details, (4) not ask for information which is obtainable from documentary sources available, (5) not ask for information of a respondent unless it fits his situation. The questionnaire should have a clear purpose with definite limitations; each item of information should fit into a pattern of essential

knowledge about one's problem. Responses should be sought that can be summarized in some form. Questions of opinion should not be used unless one is certain that the opinion is what one is seeking, and that it will be worth getting. Criticism should be sought before the questionnaire is sent out. Finally, one must not overlook the importance of selecting carefully the group to whom one sends the questionnaire.¹

The technique of the questionnaire is very often ineffective for purpose of accurate investigation. Because questions are not formulated properly, returns are inadequate; often respondents who are capable fail to cooperate. Objective tabulation of results is difficult if a detailed verbal description has been required.²

Specific Design for the Study

The writer, in collecting data for this problem, wished to ascertain the prevailing conditions on this particular subject at hand; therefore, she used documentary and questionnaire types of research. These techniques seem to be the answer for a course in summer school. She used the Porter Library extensively. Keeping in mind primary sources were most important, she began with the educational indexes for a workable bibliography, reviewed Monroe's Encyclopedia of Educational Research,

¹Good, Barr, Scates, The Methodology of Educational Research, pp. 337-343.

²Barr, Davis, Johnson, Educational Research and Appraisal, p. 66.

checked on Year Books to see if any educators had recently written on this subject. She read (1) an unpublished graduate thesis, (2) skimmed through an unpublished graduate problem that treated on comics in a particular situation, (3) examined the card catalog, (4) made a list of the books on the subject or what she thought were related subjects to the problem.

The writer wrote to the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers, New York; to George A. Pflaum Publisher (Catholic), Dayton, Ohio; to Bob O'Connor, who headed the Committee on Cleaning Comic Newsstands in Wichita, Kansas; to Rev. Philip Dion, who wrote a recent article for the Catholic Educator. She followed the information in The Methodology of Educational Research by Good, Barr, and Scates, and Research Methods in Social Relations, Part 2, by Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook. A questionnaire was then formulated which was given to the pupils in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in Horace Mann School, Pittsburg, Kansas.

Scope and Limitations

This study is made in the interest of our modern youth. It is a study to discover what our boys and girls in the elementary schools are reading when they read the comics. It proposes to find current issues on this medium of communication, as well as to study its historical background both as to its educational values and its effects on our boys and girls. The writer hopes, after having finished this study, to be better informed herself

so that she may acquaint the teachers and parents how they may guide and direct our boys and girls into better channels of reading.

The reader must recognize that this study was made while attending a summer session in KSTC; consequently, detailed research was limited by time and resource materials available; the questionnaire might have been handled on a different basis if time had permitted. Better sampling might have resulted from a questionnaire presented to a larger group of students with greater variety of environments.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Historical Background

Comics have had a long history. One might trace them to the time when the Egyptians and Assyrians recorded their military triumphs and domestic discords in pictures. The first comic cartoons to appear in sequence in the United States were the Buster Brown, the Katzenjammer Kids, and Happy Holligan in newspaper strips in 1890.¹

The modern comic book was launched in 1911 when Calvin Harris, manager of American, persuaded the Ball Publishing of Boston to produce the book as a circulation builder for the newspaper. This comic book was a collection of Bud Fisher's "Mutt and Jeff" newspaper strip.² From 1900 to 1920, the comics were largely humorous and entertaining.

¹David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read, pp. 261-262.

²Hayden Weller, The Journal of Educational Sociology, p. 195.

The comics second period began about 1920 when a gradual change of theme from humor to human interest and pathos was taking place, and by 1930 leading comics stopped trying to be funny and became adventurous strips. With the appearance of the Superman in 1938, the comics shifted from dramatic adventure to emotional appeal of a wish to be brave, to be right, and for the individual to have a chance to identify himself as the hero of the comics.¹

The publication of crime comic books may well be compared with our jets in speed and growth. In 1946-1947, one-tenth of all comic books were crime; in 1948-1949, they increased to one-third of the total; by 1949, the comic industry had reached over one-half; and by 1954, the vast majority were crime, violence, and sadism.²

Educators' Opinions and Survey Reports

As the writer's research became more involved in the big issue of comic books, she was often frustrated between two forces, one of which states comic books are perfectly harmless, while the opposite shows clearly the way in which crimes are committed. One particular anti-comic writer, Dr. Frederic Wertham, the author of the book, Seduction of the Innocent, has inferred in his writings on this subject that the pro-comic

¹Russell, op. cit., pp. 263-267.

²Dr. Frederic Wertham, Seduction of the Innocent, p. 30.

experts have sometimes been found to have financial interest in the productions, while the anti-comic experts have invested their interests in the well-being of children.¹

The book, Seduction of the Innocent, is the result of seven years of scientific investigation conducted by Dr. Frederic Wertham. It gives his findings on the effects that comic books have on the minds and behavior of children who read them. The book was named the most important book of 1954 by the NEA Journal.²

According to this author, one finds Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Jumbo, and Jungle not fit comics to be in the hands of our boys and girls. The stories instill a wish to become superman and the advertisements supply the means for becoming one; the stories display the wounds and the advertisements supply the weapons; scantily clad girls are featured and advertisements glorify the deeds.³

The harmfulness or harmlessness of the comic books should not be accepted as a fact without evidence. Kessel and McIntire have revealed beyond a doubt the cheap and false attitudes toward life in numbers of the strips they analyzed. Rowland, analyzing radio programs based on comic book themes, revealed an amazing emphasis upon crime, a disrespect for law and a

¹Dr. Frederic Wertham, "Are They Cleaning Up the Comics," p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 23.

³Dr. Wertham, op. cit., p. 217.

tendency for the hero to commit as many crimes in the cause of righteousness as the villain commits in the cause of evil.¹

Paul Witty states that, if the comics which have proved most popular in studies of children's interests represent ten or fifteen per cent of a child's reading program and the rest of it is wholesome books and magazines, there is no cause for alarm.²

Paul W. Steward and Associates, Inc., questioned the entire population of Hudson, New York, on their reading of comics and found slight variations. "Comic book readers like them in big doses. A regular reader among the boys and girls reads an average of twelve to thirteen a month; among the adults, six a month."³

Josette Frank, director of the survey of children's reading of comic books, made by the Child Study Association made this comment: "The comics appear to have almost universal appeal to children . . . regardless of I. Q. or cultural background."⁴

The Cincinnati Committee on Evaluation of Comic Books made a report after completing seven years of painstaking annual review of comics. This group is composed of volunteer members. It includes in its membership parents, teachers, and administrators for public and private schools, workers in juvenile

¹Dora Smith, Forty Eight Year Book, pp. 226-230.

²Dora Smith, "Reading in the Elementary School," pp. 226-230.

³Harvey Zarbaugh, "The Comics--There They Stand!" p. 196.

⁴Ibid., p. 196.

courts, men and women engaged professionally in work with youth, clergymen, librarians, social workers, business men and women, psychologists, and others. An attempt to clean up the comics was made in the year 1955; hence, this committee assumed the task of rating comics with extraordinary interest, and they announced their findings. Of the 323 books reviewed, the committee rated 121 no objection, which was 37 per cent; 41 some objection, or 13 per cent; while 161 or a little over 50 per cent were objectionable. These ratings applied to children under sixteen.¹

Even our culture has been influenced by some of the heroes and heroines of the comics. In Crystal City, Texas, the heart of the spinach country, the citizens raised a monument to "Popeye." "Buster Brown" set a fashion in boys' clothes, "Little Orphan Annie" and "Daddy Warbucks" have been among the most vocal critics of the New Deal. "Private Pete" played a major role in the educational program of the armed forces.² Is there any wonder that comics have become so popular?

It is quite obvious that comics in a social atmosphere silently grew to considerable dimensions before the guardians of our culture were aroused. It was also interesting to learn that the originator of Superman, M. C. Gaines, was originally a schoolmaster. He realized the effectiveness of the picture

¹Murrell, op. cit., p. 49.

²Zarbaugh, op. cit., p. 196.

continuity technique and began his career by developing Picture Stories from the Bible. He is now publishing serially Picture Stories from American History, pointed both to popular and school instruction.¹

In this comic movement, what do the people have? Some educators might label it the folklore of our modern literature. God forbid!

All comics do not cater to the criminal. There are the humorous productions by Walt Disney, who delights the child with his slap-dash humor and his harmless antics. The True Comics use picture technique to tell stories of heroes and events important in contemporary life. The Classics are trying to reach the weak readers; whether they will lead to future reading of the books themselves is yet to be answered.²

One high school English teacher whom the writer interviewed on the comic subject, said that she was amazed and it was very gratifying to learn all that the ninth grade knew of the story of Ulysses' Wanderings, before they began it in their course. She was very much in favor of those comics which picture classics such as Trojan War stories and Ivanhoe because they arouse interest in very young children which later stimulates a desire to learn more about the heroes they have met.

¹W.W.D. Sones, "The Comics and Instructional Method," pp. 232-238.

²Smith, op. cit., pp. 226-230.

Catholic publishers, quick to see the effectiveness of the picture medium of communication, have made available religious stories, lives of the saints, and historic heroes in the comic format. The Treasure Chest, a Catholic publication published bi-weekly during the school year, brings to its subscribers wholesome entertainment, valuable information in science, history, fiction, and tips on teen-age manners and conduct. There is also project material showing how to organize good citizenship clubs with the understanding of Christian social principles.¹

Good comics are food for thought. They introduce new ideas; they stimulate minds and imaginations because they are rich in meaning and true in ideas. Some comics are portrayals of exciting events in history or startling scientific developments. These are the kinds that furnish good reading for our students. Perhaps it could be from Tarzan to Kipling's jungle boy, Mowgli, who knows?

Some psychologists emphasize that even though hostility and violence are the meat of many comics, they should not be condemned in wholesale fashion. The child develops hostile feelings and this may provide an outlet to express hostility. However, comics that incite crime and appeal to the most perverted instincts should not be in the hands of our children.²

George Hill doubts that the reading of comic strips in our daily papers would do any serious harm to a child's

¹Rev. Philip E. Dion, C.M., "In Praise of Religious Comics," p. 1-6.

²Jessie J. Murrell, "Are Comics Better or Worse," p. 48.

vocabulary but would tend to help him build vocabulary meanings. The manufactured words serve the purpose of adding pleasure and enjoyment. More concern should be placed on attitudes and ethical concepts, and that is why a teacher should be alert to the students' reading and know what comics they read.¹

The amount of distorted spelling and poor English is not as great as most teachers believe. Hill found that only 5.4 per cent of the words in sixteen popular comic strips were distorted, and he doubted if there is any harm to children's vocabulary or spelling.² Even those who are prone to take the negative side have admitted the harm is not in the daily newspapers.

Children must be taught to discriminate between the better and poorer types. Our youth could be encouraged to develop a group opinion in a book club meeting.³ All of us are well aware of the influence of one's peers, particularly in our adolescent group.

Luella Cole⁴ states, (1) that the vocabulary of the comics is of difficulty of about fifth, or sixth grades; (2) that each comic book contains approximately 10,000 words of which about 1000 are beyond the Thorndike Word Book's first 1000 words; (3) that the slang in them does not exceed 5 per cent

¹George Hill, "Word Distortion in Comics Strips," pp. 523-525.

²Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 432.

³Ibid., p. 432.

⁴Luella Cole, The Elementary School Subject, pp. 120-121.

of the total reading content; (4) that most of the conversation is printed in capital letters, instead of in type; (5) that children probably learn many new words through their comics' reading; and (6) that interviews with children indicate that the comics appeal to the love of the child for adventure, mystery, excitement, sports, humor, fantasy and desire to acquire knowledge.

Another author points out that the writers of comics are better psychologists than they are sometimes given credit for. The comic writer writes for the age of the child who has much free time. He makes the book inexpensive, it satisfies the reader's urge, it is amusing and exciting, and it is an adventurous story with little or no effort to understand.¹

Harold Downes, instructor in English in Lynn, Massachusetts, Industrial Arts High School, with the assistance of the publishers of the Superman, D. C. Comic Magazines, prepared a workbook in language. This is a laboratory guide in English study involving vocabulary and word meanings. It comprises several aspects of the language study. Mr. Downes reported unusual interest on the part of the students using them, the main difficulty was the students completed one week's work in one evening!² This bears examination.

A workshop at the University of Pittsburgh identified twenty-five different uses for selected comic magazines. It was most important in remedial reading.

¹A. Sterl Artley, Your Child Learns to Read, p. 487.

²Sones, op. cit., pp. 232-238.

History, geography, science have been prepared in comic strip form and published in Junior Scholastic, a current-events magazine for school children. One writer described a test that was given to 400 children. The children were divided into sixteen matching groups. Their I. Q's. arranged from 91-111. One-half were given the story in pictures, while the other one-half were given the same story in printed text. Those who read the picture story made scores from ten to thirty per cent higher. The next week they reversed the procedure. The group that read the printed text the first time went significantly higher than the group who read the picture story the first time. This did indicate that those who read the printed text did not reach its saturation point in the first reading while those who read the picture story did.¹

A survey to determine to what extent the comic magazines are read by boys and girls in the schools of Duluth, both public and private, was made. A questionnaire was answered by 8,608 children from grades six through nine. The findings showed that 8,608 children had read 25,395 comics during the week preceding the study although 935 had not read any comics. Bat Man ranked first choice; Superman, second; Donald Duck, third; and Tip Top, fourth. There was little difference between students in public and private schools in the comics reading. The maximum number read by any boy in the public

¹Sones, op. cit., pp. 232-238.

schools was 47 and by any girl 42. In the private schools, the maximum read by any boy was 46 and by any girl was 47. The peak of comic reading was reached in grade six in the public schools, and in grade four in the private schools. This group was not asked why they read the comics as this study was for the extent of the reading. Another group of 350 children in two schools, one in Chicago and the other in Minneapolis, were asked to write without signature their answer to the question: "Why do you like Comics?" The answers showed that 121 liked them because of the humor; 90, adventure; 52, pictures made easier reading; 46, pastime, 20 gave various reasons, and 21 solved crime.¹

The writer gave a questionnaire to pupils of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of Horace Mann School, Pittsburg, Kansas. The students were asked to answer the following questions in as few words as possible. In order to get a true picture they were told not to sign their names. There were fifty-five pupils.

1. Boy or Girl?
2. Grade?
3. Do you read the comic magazine or books? (This does not refer to comics in the newspaper).
4. About how many comic magazines do you read in a week?
5. Which comic do you like best?

¹Sister M. Katharine McCarthy, Marion W. Smith, "A Study of Comics," pp. 98-101.

6. Why do you like comics?

The results of the questionnaire have been summarized in the following table:

TABLE I

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE--HORACE MANN PUPILS
JULY 5, 1956

	Grade	Yes	No	Ave. No. per Week	Most Popular Magazine	Reasons for liking Comics
Boy	4	12	0	10	Varied	Funny and Enjoyment
	5	5	0	13	Varied	Excitement and Entertainment
	6	10	3	8	Superman and Hot Rod	Funny and Interesting
Girl	4	8	1	6	Varied	Funny and Enjoyment
	5	11	0	6	Bugs Bunny and Roy Roger	Funny
	6	5	0	5	Nancy	Funny and Entertainment

Robert Thorndike in his study calculated that a comic contains 10,000 words of reading matter. If a child reads a copy once a month, he reads approximately 120,000 running words, roughly twice the number of words in the fourth or fifth grade reader. In such a dilemma, he will have acquired much

current slang, lost his taste for grammar, and will have formed a habit of sliding over difficult words; he will have lost his sense of artistic values, will have placed himself into a state of hyperexcitement where only the most thrilling will give him adequate satisfaction.¹

Guidance From Parent and Teacher

Vigilance and guidance of the parents in motivating their children to make right choice in reading cannot be over-emphasized. Mothers can form clubs and, through these clubs, become informed on how to cope with the problems of our youth. Some of the work that is being done today concerning comics has resulted from the untiring efforts of our good parents. The work has only begun; it is far from completion.

Many teachers have recognized the appeal and interest that this medium of communication has for boys and girls. They know that direction and guidance is an endless job; yet they must not falter in helping the boys and girls form proper reading habits. However, it is not the vast majority of teachers who are taking the comics seriously. All teachers should be well informed as to what the comics contain, especially the ones that their students read.

Teachers must deliberately build the values they want their students to have. Jesus, the greatest of all teachers, should not be left out of the picture when they are teaching

¹McCarthy, op. cit.

morals and values of truth. The greatest lesson of all morals is the Ten Commandments; and, if they can be taught through the medium of a religious comic, why not do so, even though critics may be very severe in their condemnation of comics for destroying the culture and reading habits of our boys and girls. Religious comics, like other techniques, must be judged in the light of their purpose. The purpose of religious comics can be multiple, but the primary aim is to teach the child wholesome living, to know, love, and serve God here in order to be happy with Him in eternity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has concerned itself for the most part in reviewing current literature in order to come to some decision on the educational value of comics. One should define what one means by value and educational. Value in this sense is disciplining the mind through study or instruction, and, educational describes the kind of discipline. In this sense, one wants to determine if the reading of comics provides our youth with desirable training.

The educational values of the unobjectionable comics are: (1) to develop interest; (2) to provide motivation which introduces new ideas; (3) to satisfy the imagination; (4) to afford wholesome entertainment; and (5) to stimulate a liking for history, science, or literature. Proper attitudes along

these lines do promote desirable discipline in our boys and girls, and these are educational values. On the other hand, the objectionable comic magazines give us the reverse situation, namely: (1) they contribute our major problems of maladjustment among our boys and girls; (2) they promote crime; and (3) they give the child its worst in language, art, and ideas.

The writer cannot over-emphasize the idea that comics appeal to our youth; our boys and girls are going to continue reading them, and our producers will increase the volumes. Consequently, it is the concern of parents and teachers to devise techniques that will eventually lead the interest of our youth into worth-while channels. Prohibition is not the solution, but a balance in the selection of comics is essential. Balance requires guidance and direction. The writer concludes that the philosophy is sound since this medium of communication satisfies the psychological needs of our boys and girls.

Recommendations

The writer recommends that parents and teachers work wholeheartedly towards the improvement of the literary value of the comics. Discrimination in the choice of comics is essential, but teachers or parents cannot direct a child to choose if they themselves do not know what the comics contain. Sometimes neither the cover nor the name of the comic gives a hint of what is within the comic book. It is important that the teacher knows what the comic contains, as the title may

be misleading. The Parents' Magazine rates the comics annually, but a teacher will not be satisfied with an annual rating; she will want to know the subject matter contained in the comic book in order to help her students to discriminate.

The teacher should study each child's total pattern of interests in order to have an adequate understanding of his activities, preferences, and behavior. An abundance of excellent substitutes for comic reading should be available both at school and in the home. These books should be beautifully illustrated, with simple vocabulary, plenty of excitement, humor, surprise, and adventure. No restrictions should be placed on the circulation of these well-chosen books. It has been reported that when some boys and girls were asked, why they read comics they replied, "Comics are cheap and I like to read."¹ In such a group as this, the teacher has ample opportunities to improve the habits of reading and direct them in better reading tastes.

In her procedure of direction, the teacher may begin with some dominant interest that she found in the study of her pupils. This interest may be matched with a similar interest from the literary selection. She may have a bulletin board display comparing the characters of each book. Suggestive activities in art, reports on behavior of the characters, and ideas of imitation may guide the child's thinking towards higher goals in reading. The curriculum should be broad

¹Zorbaugh, loc. cit.

enough to promote many child activities in the fields of sports, hobbies, and clubs. More teachers and parents should make themselves responsible for the leisure time activities of our boys and girls.

The comics influence the thinking of millions; therefore, responsibility lies with educators, parents, and teachers for channeling valuable educational material into this area of influence.

PART II

SOME PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER STUDY
OF THE READING OF COMIC MAGAZINES

CASE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

This problem will concern itself with the study of the activities of boys and girls in the fifth grade in the Immaculate Conception School, Groves, Texas. In the study the writer will select two groups from this class and compare their leisure time activities. In one group she will place those who participate in sports, clubs, or some group activity, while in the other group she will place those who are not interested in such activities. These students will be interviewed to find out what their reading interests are in comics. The comparison is to determine whether the boys and girls, who do not participate in sports or any other school activities, read more or fewer comics than those who do participate. After reviewing the anecdotal and cumulative records the case worker will then, as nearly and as objectively as possible, select one from each group to make a case study. From these case studies she will assume that each member of the group will have about the same reading interests as the two that were studied.

Purpose of the Study

The writer is trying to find ways and means to combat the objectionable comic magazines that are produced to-date.

If any solution should present itself in this problem, her interest is to inform the many other teachers that are confronted with this same vexing situation. Most children in the schools in the United States are exposed to many good books suitable to their age level, yet they continue to buy and read comic books by the million every month. A professor in Sweden has suggested the Nobel Prize for Children's Literature as an inducement for good stories for children.¹ This incentive for promotion of good literature, along with the Comic Code, if the code is followed to the letter of the law, is a forward step to boycott some of the violent comics.

Design of the Study

Before proposing a plan to solve this problem with the case study technique, the writer read several works on the methods of research, namely, Techniques of Guidance by Arthur Traxler, Methods of Research by Carter Good and Douglas Scates, Evaluation in Modern Education by Wrightstone, Justman, and Robbins, and Guidance in Elementary Education by Roy D. Willey.

From these works she learned that there are five major steps to every case study to be observed: "(1) status of the situation or unit of attention; (2) collection of data, examination and history; (3) diagnosis and identification of casual factors; and (4) adjustment, treatment and therapy;

¹H. M. Robinson, "Comics Again," p. 493.

and (5) follow up of the adjustment program. Consideration is given to records and problems of recording in case procedure."¹

In a case study one is usually concerned with a better adjustment of an individual under investigation, but this problem is undertaken for the purpose of getting acquainted with the reading interests of a group through the selection of one student of each group to be studied. In a case study the history of the individual is usually the starting point. This is done by examining the cumulative records, the anecdotal records which would give more personal information, and also interviews of personages who have had contact with the pupils being studied. Notes should be taken during the interviews, and if possible have the one interviewed write a brief statement concerning the child's interests in outside activities or hobbies. The interviewer should give the child's personality and social background.¹ The instructor of the class is making the case study; therefore, it would be possible to give the whole class an aptitude test. This knowledge would be a great help in her interviews with her case study.

The pupil himself should be interviewed during a friendly visit while sipping a coke or munching a candy bar which affords an ideal situation. When one interviews a pupil to get data about his difficulties, care should be used not to

¹Carter Good and Douglas Scates, Method of Research, p. 726.

²Arthur Traxler, Techniques of Guidance, p. 285.

place him on the defensive. There is no one pattern in writing the case but certain principles should be followed. One should write objectively basing the diagnosis on facts discovered and eliminating irrelevant items. The report should not reflect bias, and a plan for treatment should be formulated. An investigator does not diagnose treatment for difficulties outside of his own experience.¹

During the period of treatment, the case investigator should keep a careful journal record of the progress of treatment. He should not depend upon his memory but should write up each interview with the pupil and each significant observation just as soon as possible. Not all of what is written in the journal will find its way into the case report, but a complete journal record is an inestimable help in making a final report at the end of the period of treatment.

Since this case study lends itself to measurement, comparable tests should be administered at the beginning and the end of the treatment. Such tests will take the evaluation of the treatment out of the realm of speculation and will sometimes reveal significant progress under conditions where no conclusions about growth could be made on the basis of observation alone.

After a case has been released from treatment, it should be followed up. Direct observation and contact from time to time is most essential to make sure that a relapse does not

¹Traxler, op. cit., p. 303.

take place. The appeal for reading comics is universal so guidance and the enrichment of the curriculum with attractive, adventurous, humorous, action stories cannot be overemphasized.

The investigator in this particular problem will assemble her information on student interests in activities and see if she has found a solution to the question studied. Do boys and girls who participate in school activities read fewer or more comics than those who do not participate in school activities?

Scope and Limitations

The study proposes to inform teachers, parents, and educators with any valuable information that is found through the study of this problem and to offer a program to meet the needs of students who do not participate in school activities. Guidance and interest on the part of an efficient case worker will be invaluable in this study.

In solving a problem of this nature the questionnaire and interview techniques administered to the whole class might produce more efficient results, but this problem was limited to the case study techniques with two pupils from the class. Likeness and differences are essential in a comparison study. Since only two are selected for the case study, the optimum conditions are inadequate. The success of the case study depends on the absence of bias in the interpretation of the records on file and on the information gathered. The case study worker's personality is also a very important factor in the study.

AN EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH PROBLEM

Hypothesis: Readers whose age equivalent score on the California Reading Test is below their mental age read more comics than do those readers whose age equivalent is equal to or above their mental age.

Statement of the Problem

The hypothesis to be tested by this experiment is to observe under control conditions why some of the sixth grade students whose age equivalent score on the California Reading Test is below their mental age read more or less comics, after remedial reading instruction than do similar readers who do not have such reading instruction.

To study the reading of comic magazines further the writer proposes to use another technique of research in order to determine some of the factors that operate to affect pupil interest in the comic magazines. The need for teachers and parents to understand the comic appeal is unquestionable, and the only way to secure this information is through a continuous experimental evaluation program.

Purpose of the Problem

The writer realizes the comic medium of communication has captivated the thinking of these boys and girls in her class. Since these boys and girls are not retarded in their reading because of low mental ability the instructor would like to make at least an effort to discover the cause of

these poor reading scores. The investigator will conduct a remedial reading course with these pupils. And if she discovers any worthwhile knowledge in the solution of this problem, she will inform other teachers of the results so that as educators they will direct their efforts to elevate this trend of comic influence and stimulate the educational development and growth of our boys and girls to enable them to develop richer and nobler values in life.

Design for the Study

In the development of the experimental technique the investigator read several works on this particular method, namely, Methods of Research by Carter Good and Douglas Scates; Research Methods in Social Relations by Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, Part I; Educational Research and Appraisal by Barr, Davis, and Johnson; then the basis of this work seems to hinge upon Greenwood's¹ definition, "An experiment is the proof of an hypothesis which seeks to hook up two factors into a causal relationship through the study of contrasting situations which have been controlled on all factors except the one of interest the latter being either the hypothetical cause or the hypothetical effect."

To describe this design it will be necessary to state the hypothesis. Readers whose age equivalent score on a California Reading Test is below their mental age and who have had remedial

¹Carter Good and Douglas Scates, Methods of Research, p. 706.

reading instruction read fewer comics than do similar readers who have not had such instruction. The instructor proposes this experiment in order to determine if the low reading scores have any effect on the amount of reading of comics. This study includes seven boys and five girls in the sixth grade whose reading scores were lower than their mental ability. This group was matched with the same number of boys and girls whose mental ability was the same, and whose reading scores were just as much lower than their mental ability.

The first step in attempting to solve this problem should be to check the cumulative records of the twenty-four students for the necessary information on these variables: chronological age, grade, mental age, reading age, social-economic status, and comic book reading amount. A check on the comic reading of mother and dad or any other members of the family would be revealing. Since these two groups had the same instructor that variable is controlled. However, the difference in training with regard to their learning procedures is often undetected. The two groups should be as nearly equivalent as possible in all variables except one, the remedial reading instruction, the independent variable. It is not necessary to hold every factor constant save one. It is acceptable to study the effects of various combinations of factors each in varying degrees.¹

¹Ibid., p. 717.

The investigator should check the initial steps in a controlled experiment noting that the following essential elements are present: (1) an experimental group and a control group matched in all relevant respects, or whose differences are known; (2) the experimental situation is withheld from the control group; (3) the presence or absence of the dependent variable (comics) is observed in both the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group the investigator is subjecting the independent variable to an implication of measurement of difference.¹

In the study of pupil progress in the fields of education one will find distinct limitations, as it is difficult and often impossible to control variable factors. "There are many situations in which the investigator is more interested in a careful analysis of the interrelationships of various factors as they operate normally under conditions that are reasonably typical, than in using a procedure which may do violence to a natural situation by attempting to hold all factors constant except the experimental variable."²

To determine if the dependent variable is affected by the independent variable a remedial reading program is administered for four months. During this period the instructor will guide, observe and motivate their reading activities with action and humorous stories having simple vocabularies. The

¹Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations, Part I, p. 63.

²Good and Scates, op. cit., p. 700.

selection of these stories will be based on their own reading level. Observations will be made from time to time inquiring indirectly into their reading diet. Then at the end of four months another standard test with equal difficulty, such as the California Reading Test, will be administered to determine if any improvement took place. There is a danger, however, of trusting too much, for the purpose of experimental evaluation in scores from standard tests. Measurement in research of all kinds must be complete; it must be comprehensive.¹

After adequate testing has been administered, it should be followed by an interview to ascertain if their reading interests for comic magazines have diminished, or if any appreciation for better reading is noticeable. Inferences may be drawn from the experimental results to determine whether the independent variable changed during the period of experimentation. And from these inferences conclusions may be drawn.

Scope and Limitations

The study proposes to acquaint teachers, educators, and parents of the statistical findings based on experimental tests of the effects of comic magazines on children. The problem concerned readers and non readers of comic magazines at a sixth grade level.

¹William A. Brownell, "Safeguards in Experimentation," p. 100.

The experimental method has apparent limitations in the educational field, particularly if one is trying to measure achievement. There are many factors which influence individuals in their learning process. An instructor is not an expert, even though she may have some knowledge of the technique of experimentation. The time element was no small item in the limitation of this study.

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