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Communications

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, Graduate School of Business, 401 Uris Hall,
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THE CLUSTER PLAN FOR DESEGREGATING PUBLIC SCHOOLS, OR A LITTLE LESS WELTANSCHAUUNG, PLEASE, FOR SOME MORE ADEQUATE DESCRIPTIONS

It may not be possible to be wholly objective, as Messrs. Stimson and Thompson (among others) assert (see [2]). Nevertheless, one should be as objective as possible in OR, or any other science, and this carries with it the concomitant duty of accurate and adequate descriptions—including descriptions of work by others to the extent that it may be pertinent.

Messrs. Stimson and Thompson fall far short of what is attainable in this dimension. Their discussion of the cluster plan as developed for Oklahoma City by an interdisciplinary *team* of operations researchers, educators and sociologists is a case in point. There is *no* discussion of this plan as it was reported in [1]. Instead, it is classified, along with others cited by Messrs. Stimson and Thompson, as having adopted a “desegregation view”—which is said to be a view that enables OR practitioners to (a) apply known approaches in a narrow manner to one part (school busing) of a complex social problem and thereby (b) answer only to the immediately urgent needs of school administrators. This characterization then enables Messrs. Stimson and Thompson to issue their call for more *weltanschauung* as well as more recognition of the value-laden character of operations research, etc.

Main features of the cluster plan for Oklahoma City, which may be of interest in other cities, can be described as follows: First, the high schools were formed into suitable clusters. Second, the assumption that each school should teach every subject was dropped and, instead, each school in a cluster was assigned a specialty subject or set of subjects such as physics, mathematics, etc. Each student was then assigned to a cluster—along with a *home* school for studies like gym, music, etc.—so that to obtain an education *every* student must circuit his or her cluster of schools, with busing providing the necessary transport to his or her education each day.

Other details such as class scheduling and advisory arrangements for students are discussed in [1] along with the algorithms for busing and the measures of integration utilized. Here we may note that school busing was only an incident in pursuing the education and the related schedule of classes that each student wanted. Furthermore, eliminating the need for assigning each student to one school which he or she must then attend *all* the time, not only helped to defuse emotions, but also placed integration in the positive educational position that it ought to assume—with *more* opportunities for interracial contact than are available under most school assignments with related requirements for busing.

As Messrs. Lutz *et al.* report in [1], all of the originally stated objectives, including improved educational quality with improved cost/effective utilization of facilities, were achieved, and my own recent very informal check¹ (a few months ago) indicates that essentials of the cluster plan are still operating in Oklahoma City. Had Messrs.

¹ I spoke to R. P. Lutz in Dallas about this—and this was the extent of my check.

Stimson and Thompson provided more in the way of description, they might then have helped to push in the direction suggested by Judge Luther Bohanon, the chief U.S. Judge for the Western District of Oklahoma, when he indicated in the course of his rulings that this plan might also be used in other cities that have the same or similar problems!

This note is intended as a corrective toward that end. The characterization provided for the cluster plan of Oklahoma City by Messrs. Stimson and Thompson, however, suggests that readers ought to approach their article [2] with more than ordinary caution. A reading of the complete manuscript, as necessitated by this class of publication, viz, an extension to present knowledge, does not alter either of the immediately preceding sentences.

References

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2. STIMSON, D. H. AND THOMPSON, RONALD P., "The Importance of 'Weltanschauung' in Operations Research: The Case of the School Busing Problem," *Management Science*, Vol. 21, No. 10 (June 1975), pp. 1123-1132.

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THE DANGERS OF RESEARCH BASED ON ONE TELEPHONE CALL TO DALLAS

I welcome the opportunity to respond to Mr. Cooper's comments [1] about the paper that Mr. Thompson and I wrote on operations research and school busing [3] and to present some aspects of a legal case to overturn the dual school system in Oklahoma City. This case, which lasted over ten years and was finally decided in 1972, is Robert L. Dowell, etc., et al., Plaintiffs, v. Board of Education of the Oklahoma City Public Schools et al., Defendants [4]-[7].

It is Mr. Cooper's view that we were not as objective as possible (whatever that means), that we should have described a study by Lutz and his colleagues [2] to provide readers with information about the cluster plan they devised, and that we classified the Lutz study as a desegregation study rather than an integration study. These alleged shortcomings led Mr. Cooper to conclude his letter by warning readers to approach our paper with more than ordinary caution. However, if Mr. Cooper's research into the school busing problem had gone beyond one telephone call, he might not have written his letter.

Let us consider the charges. As to objectivity, readers must decide for themselves. As to detail, in a short article with 153 references, let alone in the 10-page condensation that was published, it is not possible to present the many interesting points made in the large number of studies cited.

The substantive issue raised in Mr. Cooper's letter concerns our treatment of the operations research study by Lutz and his colleagues. That study was conducted in response to a request by the Board of Education of Oklahoma City for assistance in complying with the requirements of the Court in the Dowell case. Because this case is complicated, a brief statement about each of three different desegregation plans