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in Page Titles

Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1998](#) -> [May](#) -> Excerpt from The Brookings Report, 1960

UFO UpDates Mailing List

Excerpt from The Brookings Report, 1960

From: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
Date: Fri, 01 May 1998 23:50:17 -0400
Fwd Date: Fri, 01 May 1998 23:50:17 -0400
Subject: Excerpt from The Brookings Report, 1960

The following excerpt is posted FYI

Proposed Studies On The Implications Of
Peaceful Space Activities For Human Affairs

By
Brookings Institution, 1960
Report To The 87th Congress, Union Calendar 79
Report Number 242

For
National Aeronautics And Space Administration

The general public

1.As with other matters not central to day-to-day living, the public, considered as a whole, is probably only selectively attentive to and knowledgeable about space activities. The relationship between the impact of events on indifferent or only occasionally interested people and their attitudes and values is but partly understood and needs further study.

2.It has been alleged that the "public" is optimistic about space activities. If this is so and if the optimism is widespread, the present support it generates for the space program may not be lasting if the difficulties inherent in space efforts have not been appreciated enough to make the failure of specific projects understandable. The resulting disillusionment may be a serious factor in reducing public support as space efforts become more grandiose, the consequences of payoff more exciting, and the losses from failure more dramatic. On the other hand, this optimism, if it exists, may produce a state of mind tolerant of failures. The factors affecting optimism, realism, and tolerance of frustration need more study as an aid in preparing for this situation. The roles of the promoter spokesman and the mass media in encouraging expectations of great and imminent accomplishments are integral to this problem area and would benefit from research.

3.The conviction that space activities will broaden man's horizons are presently based on the perspectives and special interests of a relatively few people in western societies. The

claim may be justified, but there is need for research to assist understanding of the conditions under which innovations broaden or narrow perspectives in various cultures. For example, sufficient emphasis on space as the proper expression of man's highest aspirations may result in the evolution of a broadly based belief that this is so. But whether or not this is likely to be the case cannot now be decided in view of our limited understanding of how new ideas disseminate through societies. If and as horizons were broadened as a result of space activities, other aspirations would compete with them for attention and resources, and continuous study would be required to evaluate the appropriate position of space in this competition.

4. Though intelligent or semi-intelligent life conceivably exists elsewhere in our solar system, if intelligent extraterrestrial life is discovered in the next twenty years, it will very probably be by radio telescope from other solar systems. Evidences of its existence might also be found in artifacts left on the moon or other planets. The consequences for attitudes and values are unpredictable, but would vary profoundly in different cultures and between groups within complex societies; a crucial factor would be the nature of the communication between us and the other beings. Whether or not earth would be inspired to an all-out space effort by such a discovery is moot: societies sure of their own place in the universe have disintegrated when confronted by a superior society, and others have survived even though changed. Clearly, the better we can come to understand the factors involved in responding to such crises the better prepared we may be.

5. Man-in-space programs in their early days will confront some groups with value conflicts over the proper circumstances for risking life, family integrity, etc. Arguments are already intense on the merits, or lack of them, of investing heavily in man-in-space efforts. Later efforts may expose astronauts to living conditions with which many of the public cannot, or will be reluctant to identify. The threat and isolation of space thus emphasized may repel many people, especially as urban living becomes ever more the life pattern, and support for these efforts, therefore, might be less forthcoming. In some people, however, the adventures of the astronauts may fire a latent pioneer spirit; support for man-in-space programs might be strong among this group -- but it also might be displaced by their newly stirred personal pioneer aspirations. There may be possibly profound effects on attitudes and values if through the astronaut experiences it is found that the extraordinary abilities sometimes displayed under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress can be made available to man for use in more normal circumstances.

However, it should be kept in mind that intense solar radiation and heavy-particle cosmic rays may make more than an occasional manned essay into deep space too dangerous to be practical during the time period under examination. If so, the consequences for attitudes and values are not clear. Understanding of the impact of the man-in-space program on attitudes and values in general, and on those toward the program itself in particular would benefit from a series of studies of public expectations and beliefs as these change over time.

Since commitment of effort to competing programs for social betterment fundamentally depends on attitudes and values about their relative merits, a research area with potentially profound implications for society and space activities, which is also urgent for policy purposes, concerns the development of:

Systematic methods for assigning priorities between competing scientific and social efforts (where competition may be over the long term and involve personnel, money, public support, and conflicting attitudes and values).

A variety of more specific studies on public opinion and values as affected by space activities will depend on research providing trend data describing:

The state of knowledge, values, and attitudes regarding space activities, both on-going and contemplated; and what assumptions, expectations, and values underlie the attitudes and interpretations of this knowledge. What are the effects over time of new knowledge and events on attitudes toward space activities, and what are the effects of the sources of information on the

acceptability of the information?

In view of the conflicting attitudes and values so far expressed about the Mercury program, and in view of the possible favorable and unfavorable consequences of astronaut launchings, it is urgent to plan studies that would provide information on what the public needs to know and would assist in interpreting public reactions by determining:

Present public knowledge and expectations about and underlying attitudes toward, the Mercury program and the astronauts. These should be continuing studies so that the impact of events can be anticipated, evaluated, and planned for.

While the discovery of intelligent life in other parts of the universe is not likely in the immediate future, it could nevertheless happen at any time. Whenever it does occur its consequences for earth attitudes and values may be profound. Hence a long-term research effort, which would aid in preparing for this possibility, could usefully begin with:

A continuing determination of emotional and intellectual understanding and attitudes regarding the possibility and consequences of discovering intelligent extraterrestrial life.

While space activities offer a special opportunity to study the relationship of innovation to social change, understanding the relationship will require examination of other innovation situations, too. Research is recommended to determine:

What factors historically have entered into support or rejection of new ideas or technologies. What was and wasn't appreciated about the potentialities (or lack of them) in the innovation and under what personal and social circumstances did this occur? In particular, what were the roles of physical environment, politics, personalities, limited systems analysis capabilities, insufficient communications to decision makers, etc.?

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