

# DOES BIGGER MEDIA EQUAL BETTER MEDIA?

Four Academic Studies  
of Media Ownership in  
the United States

BENTON FOUNDATION  
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL  
October 2006

---

These studies were made possible by support from:



#### The Benton Foundation

A private foundation since 1981, the Benton Foundation (<http://www.benton.org>) works to advance a public interest vision and policy alternatives for the digital age and to demonstrate the value of communications for solving social problems. The foundation is based in Washington, DC.



#### The Social Science Research Council

The SSRC (<http://www.ssrc.org>) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization founded in 1923 to bring research to bear on public problems. It works on a wide range of issues, from media policy, to the social impact of HIV/AIDS, to changes in systems of higher education. Coordination and support for this research was conducted under the auspices of SSRC's 'Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere' program. Funding for the Necessary Knowledge program is provided by the Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom program of the Ford Foundation.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Credits	i
Table of Contents	ii
Principal Findings	iii
About the Authors	vi
Introduction	1
MEDIA OWNERSHIP MATTERS: Localism, the Ethnic Minority News Audience and Community Participation —Carolyn M. Byerly, Kehbuma Langmia and Jamila A. Cupid	4
QUESTIONING MEDIA ACCESS: Analysis of Women and Minority FCC Ownership Data —Carolyn M. Byerly	27
DO RADIO COMPANIES OFFER MORE VARIETY WHEN THEY EXCEED THE LOCAL OWNERSHIP CAP? —Peter DiCola	38
NEWSPAPER/TELEVISION CROSS-OWNERSHIP AND LOCAL NEWS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING ON TELEVISION STATIONS: An Empirical Analysis —Michael Yan	50

# PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

## MEDIA OWNERSHIP MATTERS: Localism, the Ethnic Minority News Audience and Community Participation

—Carolyn M. Byerly, Kehbuma Langmia and Jamila A. Cupid

This project used ethnographic and survey research to discern patterns in news consumption among minorities in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, and to determine whether news consumption contributes to civic involvement. Scholars interviewed 196 people, two-thirds of whom were African American, the rest comprising Latino, African or other ethnicities.

### FINDINGS

- Most prefer news from television (48%) to newspapers (28%) and radio (18%).
- Those who use radio prefer minority-owned radio stations because “they give you the only accurate reporting.”
- A significant number of the African-Americans surveyed (12 %) perceive widespread media bias against African American communities. Among the examples given:
  - White murder victims were reported to get more sympathetic treatment than Black victims.
  - Some noted that important community events are ignored, such as the retirement of a well-known civil rights leader.
- 40% said the news does not help them to understand the problems that are most important to them – safety, lack of income, and lack of affordable housing.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study supports the existing FCC rationale for encouraging minority ownership, while raising serious questions about whether current measures go far enough. We conclude that the FCC needs to reaffirm and expand its commitment to diversity of ownership—especially at the local level and among minority groups.
- Local stations—especially commercial television stations—are insufficiently attentive to issues of underrepresentation and misrepresentation of news and affairs in minority communities. Thus, the FCC needs to monitor fulfillment of the localism principle more intently.

## QUESTIONING MEDIA ACCESS: Analysis of Women and Minority FCC Ownership Data

—Carolyn M. Byerly

The goals of this project were to discern patterns in ownership of broadcast media by women and minorities and to compare these to general trends in media ownership. We analyzed Form 323 reports, filed with the FCC, for the year 2005, with some comparison to 2003.

## FINDINGS

- FCC data indicate that media ownership opportunities for women and minority groups remain extremely limited. Of the 12,844 radio and television stations that filed reports with the FCC in 2005, women own 3.4% and minorities own 3.6%.
- Most of the media owned by women and minority broadcasters are AM or FM radio (89% for women, 87% for minorities) —a medium with relatively low costs of entry and barriers to ownership in rural areas.
- Nearly all broadcast stations with majority women and/or minority ownership in the FCC reports for 2005 are located in rural areas and small towns (71% for minorities, 87% for women).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- FCC responsibility for expanding women and minority media ownership is based on the recognition that patterns of social marginalization are reinforced by a lack of access to channels of communication. Lack of access diminishes the ability of groups to participate fully in public discourse and political debate.
- Current data indicate that (1) the FCC has made very little progress in this area, and that (2) ownership limitations provide support for these goals by increasing ownership opportunities overall.
- Unenforced reporting requirements, data-entry errors, duplicate filing, and other problematic aspects of FCC data collection make accurate accounts of minority and women's ownership difficult. A more serious FCC engagement with these issues must begin with better data collection.

## DO RADIO COMPANIES OFFER MORE VARIETY WHEN THEY EXCEED THE LOCAL OWNERSHIP CAP?

—Peter DiCola

This study seeks to answer the question “Do larger radio station groups offer more variety?”. DiCola notes that the method by which the FCC defines markets shapes how the local ownership caps will actually be enforced. From 1992 until 2004, the FCC's signal-contour market definition allowed more consolidation than Arbitron's market definition would have allowed. Because of mergers allowed during the signal-contour market definition era, in 104 markets there is now at least one radio company or organization that exceeds the local ownership cap.

## FINDINGS

- Station groups that are over the cap and station groups that are exactly at the cap offer less variety in programming formats than station groups that are under the cap.
- Relatively uncommon or “niche” formats like classical, jazz, folk, tejano, and gospel are least common among station groups that are over the cap or exactly at the cap—even though those station groups have the most spectrum to spend on niche formats—while being much more common among station groups that are under the cap.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The FCC should retain its current local ownership caps in the service of content diversity. In the radio market, consolidation and content diversity are at odds.
- The FCC should consider a policy of mandated divestiture for those station groups that exceed the local ownership cap.

## NEWSPAPER/TELEVISION CROSS-OWNERSHIP AND LOCAL NEWS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING ON TELEVISION STATIONS: An Empirical Analysis —Michael Zhaoxu Yan

This study was conducted to test the proposition—often asserted in media ownership proceedings—that consolidated media ownership allows for more and better investment in news and public affairs programming. This study analyzes the relationship between local newspaper/television cross-ownership and the presence and quantity of local news and local public affairs programming on broadcast television. The analysis is based on a two-week constructed random sample of television programming in 2003 for 226 randomly selected, plus 27 cross-owned television stations.

## FINDINGS

- Cross-owned television stations do not provide more local news and a local public affairs programming than do independently-owned stations.
- Cross-ownership does not correlate with either the presence or the quantity of local public affairs programming.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Cross-ownership is not associated with any meaningful improvement (in terms of program quantity) in station performance, relative to comparable stations, in the local news and public affairs arenas.
- Thus, changes in ownership rules by the FCC can not be justified in terms of claimed improvements in local news and public affairs programming.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

---

### CAROLYN BYERLY

Carolyn M. Byerly is an associate professor in the Department of Journalism at Howard University, Washington, DC. She teaches graduate-level seminars in media theory, research methods, media effects, and other subjects. Her research concerns the media and social movements, with a focus on gender, race, and sexual orientation. Much of her scholarship is international in scope. She is the co-author of *Women & Media: A Critical Introduction* (Blackwell, 2006), and the co-editor of *Women & Media: International Perspectives* (Blackwell, 2004), as well as many journal articles and book chapters. She received her PhD and MA degrees in communications from the University of Washington, Seattle.

### JAMILA A. CUPID

Jamila A. Cupid is a doctoral student in Mass Communication and Media Studies, School of Communications, at Howard University.

### PETER DICOLA

Peter DiCola is a Ph.D. candidate in economics at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He received his J.D. magna cum laude from the University of Michigan Law School in May 2005, and was awarded the Henry M. Bates Memorial Scholarship. Currently, he serves as the Research Director of the Future of Music Coalition, a non-profit research and advocacy organization, while he works on his dissertation. He has research interests in the fields of telecommunications law, intellectual property

law, law and economics, labor economics, and industrial organization. He is the co-author, with Kristin Thomson, of *Radio Deregulation: Has It Served Citizens and Musicians?*, which was cited by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in *Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC*. He has also written a chapter, "Employment and Wage Effects of Radio Consolidation," for the scholarly collection *Media Diversity and Localism* (Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 2006).

### KEHBUMA LANGMIA

Kehbuma Langmia is an assistant professor in the Department of Communications at Bowie State University, Maryland.

### MICHAEL YAN

Michael Yan is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Michigan. Professor Yan's research interests concern the economics of the media industries (especially the broadcast and cable television industries) and public policies toward them. More specifically, his research revolves around three main themes: the historical development of various video delivery systems/industries, the competitive/economic relationship between these systems and the role government policy plays in their development. His current projects focus on media ownership rules, local and public affairs programming on television and audience segmentation in network broadcasting. He has published in the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* and *Journal of Media Economics*.





# INTRODUCTION

Peter DiCola

---

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the Benton Foundation offer this collection to promote the public interest by diversifying the sources of research on media ownership. Media corporations and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) itself have traditionally conducted most of the research on which Congress and the FCC have made communications policy. Since the contentious debate in 2003 over further relaxation of ownership limits on television, radio, and newspaper companies, however, academic and public-interest groups have sought to contribute more balanced, disinterested, and rigorous research to the FCC's proceedings. In 2006, the FCC will conduct another congressionally mandated review of its media ownership rules, which include the ban on cross-ownership of newspapers and broadcast outlets and the limits on local ownership of radio stations. Thanks in part to support from the SSRC and the Benton Foundation, the four studies presented here will be part of the record in the FCC's new proceedings, demonstrating the value of research from sources other than the regulators and the regulated.

A common theme of this research is the inadequacy of the data on media companies submitted by television and radio licensees and collected by the FCC. For example, Carolyn Byerly's study ("Questioning Media Access:

Analysis of FCC Women and Minority Ownership Data") documents the woeful state of monitoring minority ownership of media outlets. Byerly pinpoints various flaws in the data and suggests concrete remedies. While the FCC has collected "Form 323" on the gender, race, and ethnicity of media owners, it does not appear to have organized, checked, cleaned, aggregated, or usefully analyzed the data. Using the FCC's data, however, Byerly finds a tiny fraction (on the order of 3% to 5%) of all types of media outlets to be owned by women or minorities. Most instances of minority media ownership happen in the radio industry rather than television, a fact explained by both the larger number of AM and FM stations and the lower entry costs to purchase a radio station.

Carolyn Byerly, with fellow authors Kehbama Langmia and Jamila Cupid, takes the analysis of minority ownership further—to the level of actual media content and the response of individuals to that content—in her second contribution to this collection. In "Media Ownership Matters: Localism, the Ethnic Minority News Audience and Community Participation," the authors survey nearly two hundred minority news-media consumers in three Washington, D.C. metro area neighborhoods. Underscoring the relevance of having minority ownership of radio stations, the authors find that their survey respondents most often listed minority-owned radio stations as

sources of news. This suggests that minority ownership may, in fact, help radio stations serve minority communities better. That said, the study's survey respondents relied most on television as a source for news, while simultaneously expressing the opinion that the news they receive from television lacks completeness, an ideal the respondents link closely to stories on local issues. Another interesting survey result from the study explores the connection between media consumption and civic involvement. This section in particular raises important questions for the FCC. As the authors wonder, why do the survey respondents rely on television yet thirst for more detailed, action-guiding news and information that television seems ill suited to provide? And what would a survey of both news-media consumers and news-media non-consumers find about this link?

The study by Michael Yan, "Newspaper/Television Cross-Ownership and Local News and Public Affairs Programming on Television Stations: An Empirical Analysis," takes on the daunting question of cross-ownership: situations in which newspaper companies and broadcast (radio or television) companies are one and the same. The FCC has banned cross-ownership since 1975, but those companies with newspaper and broadcast holdings acquired before the institution of the ban were grandfathered in. Yan's paper takes a structural look at this question via an analysis of programming drawn from a sample period in 2003. If there are economies of scope in owning both a newspaper and a broadcast outlet—that is, if cross-ownership allows companies to use one newsroom to serve both mediums—then one would expect cross-owned television stations to air more hours of local news and public affairs programming, all else being equal. Yan finds statistically significant evidence of such a result, however, only for the incidence of news carriage. He finds no evidence that cross-owned stations that carry local news provide more hours of local news than non-cross-owned stations that carry local news. He also finds no relationship between cross-ownership and either the incidence or amount of public affairs programming. These results raise serious questions about the logic of deregulating in an effort to achieve economies of scope that will foster the provision of local informational programming.

These results also raise the issue of the importance of being able to analyze the possible effects of changes in ownership structure over time, as analyzing multiple years of data would help researchers to better isolate the possible effects of ownership changes. Policymaking would benefit tremendously from the availability of historical data on ownership, market conditions, and programming,

dating back to at least the early 1970s. Additionally, systematic tools for evaluating the *quality* of news programming would also be useful. Though some databases exist to cover some television markets, like that assembled by Danilo Yanich at the University of Delaware, the research community lacks comprehensive and detailed programming logs or content archives with which to analyze the specific content of news broadcasts. The work of all academic, public-interest, and FCC researchers, and perhaps even most industry researchers, suffers from this gap in our collective information set. For the FCC to determine whether the public interest in accurate and useful news programming would be endangered by cross-media corporations, Congress or the FCC itself must provide for better data.

Finally, it is important to recognize that no study can tell us whether macro effects would emerge by the FCC's elimination of the cross-ownership rule. Moving from the current state of affairs, in which only very few markets experience cross-ownership, to a state of affairs in which all U.S. newspapers and all U.S. broadcast outlets were eligible for ownership by the same nationwide companies might have effects we cannot discern from studies based on data from the past or current media ownership environment that does not feature widespread cross-ownership of newspapers and broadcast.

Unlike the proposed elimination of the cross-ownership ban, in which far-reaching regulatory changes have yet to occur, the FCC's radio ownership limits have already been relaxed in dramatic fashion. My own contribution to this collection, "Do Radio Companies Offer More Variety When They Exceed the Local Ownership Cap?," examines one particular effect of the relaxed rules. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 raised the local radio ownership cap from a sliding scale of three or four stations per market to a sliding scale of five to eight stations per market. This change interacted with the FCC's idiosyncratic method of defining a "local market" to allow additional ownership consolidation in some cities but not others. Some station groups (that is, groups of stations in the same market with the same owner) came to exceed the local ownership cap due to this regulatory loophole. The FCC grandfathered such holdings in 2004 when it repaired the market-definition loophole.

In my paper, I use this quasi-experiment to look at the programming choices of station groups in excess of or exactly at the local ownership cap versus those under the cap. I find that the largest station groups focus primarily on just six main programming-format categories: news,

adult contemporary, rock, classic rock, country, and contemporary hit radio/top 40. By contrast, the source of niche formats—for example, jazz, classical, bluegrass, gospel, and tejano—are the smaller station groups and the noncommercial sector. This contradicts radio companies' arguments for further relaxing the local ownership cap. Radio companies argue that they seek to compete with the wide variety and niche programming offered by satellite radio and that they require more stations to do so. Yet my research shows that, at the same time they are arguing for more stations, they are failing to offer niche programming in the very market situations in which they have the most stations.

Admittedly, my study and other studies would have benefited from a richer data environment for academic and public-interest researchers. Better data and better studies are needed to inform U.S. communications policy. Congress has charged the FCC with reviewing its media

ownership rules every four years. The federal appellate courts have consistently demanded higher-quality justifications from the FCC for its decisions. Thus it is imperative that the data environment improves from both a social-science and a legal perspective. One positive step, for example, would be for the FCC to take steps to require its broadcast licensees to provide more information on ownership and programming as a condition of their licenses. Many other policy measures are possible: another SSRC initiative of which I am part, known currently as the Data Consortium, is working on a diverse set of initiatives and recommendations. But the current state of affairs remains unfortunate. The public, the research community, and the FCC itself lack the information society needs to make the soundest judgments possible about media policy, an area that affects the very functioning of government. The studies in this collection, however, aim to do solid, balanced, and informative work with what researchers have available to them now.

# MEDIA OWNERSHIP MATTERS

## Localism, the Ethnic Minority News Audience and Community Participation<sup>1</sup>

Carolyn M. Byerly<sup>2</sup>  
Kehbuma Langmia<sup>3</sup>  
Jamila A. Cupid<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*The study's goals were to explore patterns in news consumption in ethnic minority communities and to discern the relationship of that consumption to community participation. We interviewed 196 participants in three Washington, DC, metro neighborhoods. Participants were African-American, Latino, African and other ethnic minorities, 52% female and 48% male. About half the participants said they get their news from television, with Fox and NBC preferred. About a fourth said they read a newspaper. Those listening to radio (18%) overwhelmingly preferred a minority-owned station. Participants leaned toward believing the news did not help them to understand crime, rising costs of living and other problems they faced each day. They criticized the overemphasis on negative news and what they believed to be racist coverage of crime, wishing instead to hear more about solutions to problems and more in-depth explanation for problems. They prefer news sources with greater detail, as well as news reported from the perspectives of those who experienced the problems. Dispatching news makers to their neighborhoods, participants said, was key to improving local news. Half the participants said the news did not affect their level of community involvement, with the rest saying either yes, it did, or that they were uncertain.*

### RATIONALE AND GOALS OF THE RESEARCH

#### Connections between News and Civic Participation

**T**he study presented here proceeds from a basic assumption that media ownership matters in a democratic society. Federal media regulation in the United States recognizes that people rely on news and public affairs programming for their information about local affairs, and that the consumption of such information results in greater likelihood of their taking part in government and other community activities. Since the 1930s, media regulation has also assumed that a relationship exists between media ownership and content, particularly with respect to a media company's willingness to serve its local audience's needs. This assumed relationship has become known as the localism principle, and it has become one of the standards the FCC uses in determining whether a broadcast station serves the public interest.

The present research grew out of an interest in learning whether and how the news media were performing with

specific respect to the minority public's interest, and to discern how news consumption affected their involvement in the community. The nation's capital is an ideal location in which to conduct such research. Washington, DC, and its nearby suburbs in Maryland and Virginia, form a large metropolitan area with an historically large African-American population and recent demographic shifts through immigration that have also expanded the population of Latino/Hispanic and other ethnic groups. New census data show that between the years 2000 and 2005, five out of every six of the half-million new residents to the Washington-metro area were people of color. Hispanics and Asians were in the largest numbers, and most of the growth was in the suburbs of Northern Virginia and Suburban Maryland, according to news reports (Layton and Keating 2006, B1).

The research was conducted in three neighborhoods in summer 2006 – two in the city of Washington, DC, and one in Suburban Maryland. The study's timing was motivated by a number of factors and conditions that suggested the need for research on ethnic minority audiences and the news.

## Media concentration/conglomeration

At present, the news media have never been more concentrated in their ownership. Waves of deregulation since the 1980s, but most profoundly since the Telecommunications Act of 1996, have led to media conglomeration with only a handful of parent companies in radio, television, and newspapers. In addition, media corporations are predominantly White-owned and controlled, and research suggests that even some minority reporters and producers may help to perpetuate a White-oriented news agenda given the predominant values that operate in management and newsrooms (Campbell 2005, Gray 2005). A primary focus of the study was to learn to what extent the minority news audience relies on the large conglomerate media for information about the world they navigate each day and what they think about that news.

Our project was grounded in the knowledge that exactly 40 years earlier, research funded by the Kerner Commission (1968) had found a great mistrust of corporate mainstream news media among Black residents of major U.S. cities (including Washington, DC) where violence had erupted. The Commission thus determined that the news media had contributed to those incidents by failing to reveal the misery and frustration that existed for those living in poor Black urban communities. The invisibility of brewing unrest by the mid 1960s, according to the report said, had prevented wider public awareness, public dialogue and government action. While the present research was not conducted in the same heat of crisis,

---

**Many...believed the  
mainstream news framed  
stories in ways that blamed  
Black people for their  
problems...**

---

it was conceived with the knowledge that mainstream news media still largely ignore the needs and concerns of minority citizens, many of whom struggle against chronic unemployment, poverty, crime, and de facto segregation in housing and education. Because the news media have long been accepted as the “4th Estate,” that celebrated link between government and people, we believed the matter of media ownership was a factor to be considered in their performance of that role. Historically and presently, few minorities (or women) have owned large

media companies (Byerly 2006). This becomes particularly problematic in the case of broadcast media, which use public airwaves and which have a statutory obligation to serve the needs of their local audiences (Einstein 2004).

## Location variables

The nation’s capital, with a multicultural population, presented itself as a vibrant political environment in which to conduct the present study. The city is governed by a mayor and eight-member city council, each of whom represents one of the eight wards comprising the District of Columbia. Wards are divided into smaller neighborhood councils, a structure that helps to engage grassroots participation throughout the city. The city has an active political history, particularly in the last century through civil rights struggles over desegregation of public facilities and employment. The surrounding suburban areas in Maryland and Virginia have had similar political histories. In Summer 2006, election season was alive and well throughout the Washington, DC metro area, and the local media were actively covering issues and races. A lively mayoral election would bring a new leader to the head of Washington government for the first time in eight years. In nearby Prince George’s County, Maryland, races for county executive and other local seats also held the promise of major change. Demographics also make the city and metropolitan neighborhoods ideal for the study, as noted earlier, in that the composition of residents has shifted dramatically through recent increased immigration, and, in some areas, the gap has widened between rich and poor.

## Timing of FCC comment period

The timing of the present research coincided with an anticipated announcement by the FCC that it would be reviewing a number of its earlier regulations of specific interest to minorities and women, including ownership, localism in content and cross-ownership rules. The Commission had been required to reconsider these in a ruling by the Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, in *Prometheus v. FCC*, in June 2003. As mass communication researchers at historically Black universities, we saw the opportunity to provide new and timely research, from a minority perspective, for commissioners to consider during their deliberations on these issues.<sup>5</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

A growing literature has sought to connect news consumption and political activity. Squires (2002) surveyed



the Black audience for WVON radio, which specializes in “Black talk,” in Chicago in order to determine whether listeners were utilizing the information transmitted by the station in their political decision-making processes and in relation to their communities. Though not a news format, talk radio has had its place in public affairs programming for at least two decades. In this major U.S. city, Squires found the average listener to be 35-65 years old, to vote Democrat and to have an annual income of \$25,000-45,000. Participants used a range of both Black and White (mainstream) media, and they were well-informed about both White and Black issues, she said. Many of the 232 people she surveyed (through questionnaires) said they believed the mainstream news framed stories in ways that blamed Black people for their problems, only covered the negative in Black communities, and tended to homogenize black people and their experiences. By contrast, Black-owned media were, they said, “explicitly interested in Black issues and Black progress” (p. 67). WVON listeners, she learned, used that medium to voice their views, debate issues, and learn about things that were happening in which they might participate (e.g., marches and other events).

Mindich (2005) investigated why Americans under 40 don’t follow the news, with a particular interest in correlations between news consumption and continued decreases in voting. Citing Pew Center research, he noted that while everyone in the U.S. watches more television than reads newspapers, African Americans of all ages watch more television than either Whites or Hispanics do (qtd. in Mindich, p. 82). Because local television news today is comprised mostly of violence and business, and very little about government, he hypothesized that civic engagement (especially in the form of voting) is a result of a lack of civic knowledge. Mindich’s interviews with people under 40 revealed that most believe news is “bought and paid for by big corporations” (p. 80), and that it held very little relevance for them. Concluding that “an uninformed citizenry is not a democracy. . . [but] a crisis,” Mindich recommended that citizens support legislation limiting media conglomeration, that stations be required to broaden their diversity in public affairs programming, that there be news programs for kids, and that the broadcast stations be required to air political ads free of charge (as most industrialized nations do).

Other research concerned with the media-politics connections, however, do not feature audience research but instead rely on statistical analysis that seeks correlations

between voting records, media ownership records, broadcast programming formats, and other existing data bases, rather than interviews or other human subject research. In one study by Obeholzer-Gee and Waldfogel (2006), the researchers sought to learn whether the presence of local television news affects local civic behavior among a Spanish-language audience. The authors used cross-sec-

---

### “Spanish-language news programs boost Hispanic turnout by 5-10 percentage points overall”

---

tional and time-series variation in the availability of news on Spanish television with local news to study its effects on Hispanic voter turnout in presidential and non-presidential years in the United States. They then measured the relationship between Spanish news and voter turnout, finding that voter turnout was higher in areas with Spanish-language local news and, in fact, that “Spanish-language news programs boost Hispanic turnout by 5 to 10 percentage points overall” (p. 11). On the other hand, they found, those without access to local television news were significantly less likely to participate in elections. Their findings challenge other scholarship which contends that the spread of television has brought a decline in political participation (p. 13).

Another genre of research analyzes news and other media content and makes presumptions about that content’s impact on audience attitudes. Entman (1990) and others have argued that the media help to create a sophisticated contemporary form of racism that they call “enlightened racism,” something more subtle but which, they believed, nonetheless generates animosity between Whites and Blacks and reinforced White resistance to Black political demands. Using this same analytical framework, Campbell (2005) conducted semiotic and textual analysis of television news coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, which had aired on a number of stations in large and medium-sized markets, finding that White and minority journalists alike framed their stories in ways that made racism seem a thing of the past. He concluded that his findings affirmed Entman’s argument.

Some scholars (e.g., Gandy 1998) have taken concerns about racist content to the structural level, questioning

how representations of race arise from structural relations within the media themselves. More recently, Hunt (2005) has questioned the increased concentration of ownership, which he recognizes has left fewer network programming options available to television viewers. He

In 2002, for example, subsidiaries of the “Big 5” media conglomerates accounted for nearly 81 percent of the programs on the schedule. . . [and] far from being race neutral, media markets are actually the direct product of *raced* processes. That is to say, network television continues to be defined by a highly insular industry in which white decision makers typically reproduce themselves by hiring other whites who share similar experiences and tastes (Hunt 2005, pp. 16-17).

wrote:

Like Campbell, Hunt suggested that when Black reporters and anchors are hired, they must survive by negotiating that White value system, often participating in the stereotyping of Black people. Coming from a legal perspective, Schwartzman and Desai (2005) have also emphasized the relationship between media ownership and both hiring choices and content diversity. Although advancements toward diversity were grounded in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, court challenges to a number of laws and regulations promoting minority ownership since then have chipped away at that policy, Schwartzman and Desai wrote. Today, they wrote, only the distress sale policy remains in the realm of broadcasting to promote minority ownership (p. 12). In analyzing telecommunication policy over a 50-year period, Lloyd (1998) advanced a civil rights perspective which envisions regulation that will take the informational needs and interests of the whole citizenry into consideration, not just those of media corporations.

Siegelman and Waldfogel (2001) raised important empirical questions about the impact of deregulation on minority-owned media. The authors investigated whether and how the ethnicity and race of owners affect content. They had several important findings. One was that even though White station owners include minority-oriented material in markets with minority populations, they limit the kind of issues they are willing to address in relation to minority experiences. They also found that relatively few markets have Black or Hispanic news outlets, which leaves primarily White-owned stations to provide news for both minority and majority audiences. The authors’ extensive analysis of programming on minority-

owned stations strongly suggested that, overall, minority-owned stations were more strongly motivated to provide ethnic and race-specific content than were White-owned stations. They concluded that the race and ethnicity of broadcast ownership matters.

Einstein (2004) has expanded on the understanding of how profit motives contribute to the racial dimension of content. Her analysis of FCC regulation and its impact on diversity (of perspectives) in programming included a number of important insights, including a recognition that “left to their own devices, communications companies will produce what is likely to make them the most profit,” and because our broadcast system is based mainly on advertising (which require large markets for higher profits), producers will create content that produces large audiences rather than minority audiences (Einstein 2004, p. 3).

As we have seen in the foregoing discussion, very little research exists on the relationship between media use and civic behavior based on survey, interpretive or other research involving human subjects. The literature thus conveys the extent to which the ethnic minority news audience remains an understudied segment of present U.S. society. We know very little, for instance, about the complexity of the habits, reading and listening choices and views of the African-American audience, with respect to either news or other media (Gray 2002, p. vii). Gray says that, in the main, Black audiences are taken for granted, presented as one-dimensional and simplistic by scholars, journalists, market researchers, and others, according to sociologist Herman Gray (*ibid.*). The same applies, of course, to those of other ethnicities. Situating our research in the broader content and structural concerns in the aforementioned scholarship, we seek to expand what is known about the minority news audience and its civic engagement by allowing members of that audience to speak for themselves.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

---

The study was conducted in two Washington, DC, neighborhoods (Columbia Heights and Lamond Riggs), and one suburban Maryland neighborhood (Hyattsville) in June and July, 2006. Neighborhoods were selected for their socio-economic diversity, and, in the cases of both Columbia Heights and Hyattsville, their greater ethnic diversity. The latter two neighborhoods have seen shifts in their composition, primarily through immigration, in recent years and we believed that we would learn valuable information from talking with residents.



The research design combined ethnographic (interpretive) and survey (social science) approaches in order to assure data that could be analyzed both statistically and qualitatively. Mass communication researchers have adapted ethnographic methods from the field of anthropology, in order to study media audiences in their own local settings, and to pursue lines of inquiry that seeks the subjective, situated knowledge of their subjects. Conducting ethnographic research requires doing background research on participants' geographic settings (in this case, three distinct neighborhoods), visiting the area to collect observational data, and conducting face-to-face interviews in familiar places. In late spring 2006, the researchers – a white American female, an African male, and an African-American female – conducted observational, historical, cultural, demographic and other research on the three neighborhoods selected for the study.

We conducted short (15-30-minute) interviews with approximately 200 people (52% female, 48% male) in public places, which included public libraries, a park, and a grocery store.<sup>6</sup> Limited resources confined the research to a selection of English-speaking persons, including those for whom English was a second language. An additional criterion was that participants routinely used the news. We recruited participants on-site, both through verbal invitations and by handing out flyers, intentionally seeking out racial and ethnic minorities. Participation was strictly on a voluntary basis, with no compensation, and participants were told they could withhold answers from any questions that made them uncomfortable. Slightly more than half of the study's participants were from the Hyattsville (MD) neighborhood, and the remainder from the Columbia Heights and Lamond Riggs (DC) neighborhoods.

Researchers used a 21-question instrument that contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions sought factual information about demographics (gender, age, education, income level, nation of origin, length of time in the USA and in the Washington area); as well as participants' perceptions of the most important problems in the city of Washington, their neighborhoods, and their own personal lives; and which media they most often used for news. Open ended questions sought "why" and "what kind of" answers, such as why do you use particular news media, and how are you involved in your neighborhood or community? The instrument was a refinement of one that had been developed and pilot tested in several Washington, DC, neighborhoods in spring 2006, by the principal investigator and several doctoral students at Howard University.

Answers from open-ended questions were coded, and then, together with those from closed-ended questions, analyzed using a standard spreadsheet program. Information from the open-ended questions will also be used to enhance quantitative data with examples, illustrations, and insights into participants' thoughts and experiences. Data are also analyzed using the information from ethnographic background research on each neighborhood.

## ETHNOGRAPHY OF THREE NEIGHBORHOODS

---

The Washington, DC, metropolitan area is comprised of clusters of neighborhoods with distinct histories and characters. However, they also share a number of important commonalities. The metro area has undergone a demographic shift over the last half decade. Census data show that five of every six new residents to the Washington area since 2000 have been people of color, with the largest increase being Hispanic. The 2005 U.S. Census found that 55% of the larger Washington-metro area's population is White, with the remainder (45%) ethnic minorities (Layton and Keating, 2006); however, the population of Washington, DC, is primarily Black. Overall, new immigrants tend to have college degrees and belong to professional classes. While Hispanics are the largest group among recent arrivals, there is variation by area. For example, Prince George's County, Maryland (one site for the present research) has higher numbers of African and Caribbean communities, reflecting what the *Washington Post* called "the region's racial divide" (Layton and Keaton, 2006, p. A6). Metro area neighborhoods also share similarities in crime patterns, particularly the District of Columbia and neighboring Prince George's County, Maryland, where criminal activities often move back and forth across jurisdictions. Law enforcement personnel of these jurisdictions have developed closer working relationships in recent years to try and curb homicides, carjackings, theft and other crimes believed to involve residents who travel back and forth across the District line.

### Columbia Heights, DC

The Columbia Heights neighborhood in central Washington, DC, dates to the early 1800s, with the establishment of a horse track. Columbia College established itself there in 1921, and John Quincy Adams made the neighborhood his home after his presidential term ended, in 1829. The neighborhood takes its name from the college (later relocated and renamed George Washington University), and its slightly higher elevation

than the rest of the city (<http://www.columbiaheightsnews.org>). In the early 1900s, Columbia Heights became home to middle class African Americans, who populated the many row houses and small apartment buildings still standing today. Well known figures, like bandleader Duke Ellington, owned homes in the upscale neighborhood, where the ornate Tivoli Theater was a landmark and cultural center. Meridian Hill Park, which opened 1936, later became referred to as “Malcolm X Park” after the famous leader led a rally there in the early 1960s. Riots in Columbia Heights, after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, assassination in 1968, destroyed many businesses, and some buildings remained boarded up for years (<http://www.columbiaheightsnews.org>). However, neighborhood revitalization was inspired by the opening of a Metro train station in 1999, and by the leadership of several local churches and non-profit organizations (<http://innercity.org/columbiaheights/voices.html>).

Columbia Heights is part of Ward 1, which also includes the Mt. Pleasant and Park View neighborhoods. The population of this “cluster” is approximately 47,000, with 53% African-American, 30% Hispanic, 13% White, and the remainder of other ethnicities. These figures show a shift in ethnic composition from 1990, when the neighborhood was 66% African-American and

---

**Young professionals with  
higher incomes have begun  
to push out working  
class families, and big busi-  
nesses and developers  
were posting signs for  
new construction.**

---

21% Hispanic ([www.neighborhoodinfodc.org](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org)). Ward 1 has wide socio-economic and educational gaps among its residents, seen in the average annual family income of \$48,719, with a poverty rate of 26%, and an unemployment rate of 10%. Slightly more than half (58%) have a high school diploma. Approximately half (48%) of the households are headed by a female with children ([www.neighborhoodinfodc.org](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org)).

The rich-poor gap in the Columbia Heights neighborhood is associated with gentrification, such as researchers

observed in summer 2006. Young professionals with higher incomes have begun to push out working class families, and big businesses and developers were posting signs for new construction along a number of main and smaller streets. Condominiums had begun to spring up throughout the neighborhood, like one being built just past the Columbia Heights Metro Station on 14th Street (Haberkorn, 2006). Signs of the neighborhood’s changing ethnic demographics included numerous Latino street vendors, restaurants and shops; the renaming of facilities, such as the former Tivoli Theater (now the refurbished GALA Hispanic Centre); and increasing numbers of White residents. Gentrification has also brought upscale tastes, seen, for instance, in the planned location of a Whole Foods Market in the neighborhood. The upheavals from such changes have received local media coverage. One *Washington Post* story about gentrification in Columbia Heights noted: “Homeowners, real estate brokers and builders see the natural foods powerhouse not just as a grocery but also as an engine for development. . . [but] the hunger of some residents for the cachet of Whole Foods is stirring unease among working-class residents who worry they will be forced out by new affluence and among longtime retailers who are struggling with rising rents and sagging sales” (Layton, 2006). Violent crime in Columbia Heights is high, with 24 homicides, 165 reported sexual assaults, 3,800 aggravated assaults, and more than 3,500 reported robberies in 2005 (<http://mpdc.dc.gov>).

### **Lamond Riggs, Northeast DC**

The Lamond Riggs neighborhood, part of a larger neighborhood cluster that includes Fort Totten, Queens Chapel and Pleasant Hill, comprises the city’s Ward 4. The area lies in the extreme northeast section of Washington, DC, next to Prince George’s County, Maryland. The population of approximately 15,000 is 79% Black, 16% White, and the rest mainly Hispanic. This residential neighborhood is characterized by older, mostly brick duplexes and apartment buildings laid out along tidy, quiet streets. This well kept neighborhood conveys a sense of stability and pride among its residents. Landmarks include Circle Park, an oblong area of playing fields, lawn and trees, and the Bertie Backus Middle School. The neighborhood is also home to the Lamond Riggs Branch Library on South Dakota Street, and the Archdiocese of Washington Pastoral Center on Eastern Avenue. New apartment buildings were under constructions in summer 2006, not far from older established commercial development, particularly around the Fort Totten Metro station. Socio-economic conditions vary considerably in Lamond Riggs, with average family

incomes at \$61,000, but a high unemployment rate (10%), even though 80% of the population has at least a high school degree. About half (51%) of the households are headed by females with children ([www.neighborhoodinfodc.org](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org)). Crime rates are relatively low in Lamond Riggs, with 14 homicides, 408 aggravated assaults, 17 sexual assaults, and 375 robberies reported in 2005.

### Hyattsville, Maryland

The city of Hyattsville is situated just across the northern boundary of Washington, DC, in Prince George's County, Maryland. Hyattsville was founded by Christopher Hyatt in 1860 (<http://www.hyattsville.org>). Rail and telegraph services contributed to the city's growth as both a summer residence for Washingtonians escaping hot, humid summers, and for others who wanted a year-round affordable community. Hyattsville is convenient to Washington by rail and bus lines and a good network of roads. The city has experienced periods of commercial highs and lows over the last century, but by the time of the present research in summer 2006, it was showing signs of revival, with a number of historic downtown buildings under renovation, and new residential and commercial construction taking place in several places, especially around the Prince George's Plaza shopping center and nearby Metro stop on East-West Highway. Observation of the Hyattsville neighborhoods revealed stark contrasts. Immigrant, non-White, and low-income people living in densely-populated apartment buildings complained to us of noise and danger during informal walks through their areas. Those of higher incomes, particularly White and ethnic minority professionals, occupied the larger single-family homes situated along tree-shaded streets in quiet neighborhoods. These contrasts in realities represent the socio-economic disparities of this suburban community. Hyattsville's population of 17,433 residents is 52% female, 48% male. While recent U.S. Census figures

indicate that while the city itself is 75% White, 12% African American, and the remainder Hispanic and other ethnicities; the immediate surrounding area of Prince George's county is much more diverse, with African Americans at 66%, Hispanics 10%, Asians 4% and Whites the minority at 14%. The median household income of Hyattsville is \$45,355, significantly lower than the Prince George's County median household of \$53,659.<sup>7</sup> Homeownership in the city is 51%, with the remaining 49% living in rented properties, mostly apartments (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>). In 2005, 49% of the crime in Hyattsville was property theft, 20% was carjackings, 11% was assaults and another 11% was burglary. Robbery and rape were the least crimes committed in the city, though these are higher in surrounding Prince George's County ([www.Hyattsville.org/police](http://www.Hyattsville.org/police)).

## FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

We derived a range of descriptive statistics from the study involving 196 participants, in relation to patterns of news consumption, perceptions about that news, and levels of community engagement among ethnic minorities in three neighborhoods in the Washington, DC, area.

### Demographic Overview of Participants

The study's participants were fairly evenly divided between Washington, DC (93), and Hyattsville, MD (103). The smallest portion of our purposive sample was in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. Among all participants, slightly more than half (52%) were female, and the rest (48%) were male, a split reflecting general population trends. The proportion of men to women varied, however, by neighborhood, as seen in Table 1.

GENDER	NEIGHBORHOOD				Percent (N=196)
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	
Female	15	29	58	102	52%
Male	24	25	45	94	48%
Grand Total	39	54	103	196	100%
<b>Table 1: Gender by neighborhood.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)					

While all neighborhoods in the study had their greatest participation by African-Americans, as anticipated, Columbia Heights had a number of Latinos, and Hyattsville had a substantial number of African participants. Table 2 provides a breakdown of participants by race and ethnicity.

RACE/ETHNICITY	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Black/African-Amer.	25	47	64	136	68%
African	1	4	19	24	12%
Hispanic	7	1	5	13	7%
Multicultural	4		1	5	3%
White/European	1		5	6	3%
Asian		1	2	3	2%
Caribbean			3	3	2%
Other/No response	1	1	4	6	3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 2: Race and ethnicity by neighborhood.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)					

Approximately 30% of all the study's participants were born in a nation other than the United States – again, an accurate representation of the surge of immigration to the Washington metro area. Most immigrants who participated in the study reported living in the United States less than 5 years. Table 3 shows regional origins and numbers of years of U.S. residency for study participants.

REGIONAL ORIGINS*	NUMBER OF YEARS IN UNITED STATES								
	1 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 15	16 to 20	21 to 25	25+	UNK	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Africa-	12	2	5			1	6	26	13%
Asia						3	1	4	2%
Caribbean	1	3	2	2		1	3	12	6%
Central America	3	2			1	3	2	11	6%
Europe	1				1			2	1%
North America						138	1	139	70%
South America						2	1	3	2%
Grand Total	17	7	7	2	2	147	14	196	100%
Table 3: Regional origins, by number of years in U.S. (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)									

Income levels of participants accurately reflected the income diversities of their respective neighborhoods. Table 4 indicates that while the median income range of all three neighborhoods was \$26,000-\$50,000, there was a relatively greater percent of participants with higher incomes in the Hyattsville neighborhood.



ANNUAL INCOME	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Over \$100,000	1		3	4	2%
\$51,000-100,000	7	11	29	47	24%
\$26,000-50,000	13	15	41	69	35%
\$25,000 or less	12	17	23	52	27%
Other*	6	11	7	24	12%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 4: Income level by neighborhood.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006) *Includes retired, unemployed, living with parents, students, etc.					

Educational levels among participants in all three neighborhoods were also an accurate reflection of the overall picture in demographics of these neighborhoods. Hyattsville had the highest percentage of participants with bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees and the lowest percentage with only a high school diploma. By contrast, Columbia Heights and Lamond Riggs had higher numbers of participants with only a high school degree or less. Table 5 provides a summary of the study participants' educational levels, by neighborhood.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Doctorate		2	2	4	2%
Master's degree	7	5	18	30	15%
Bachelor's degree	6	9	24	39	20%
Some college	13	20	37	70	36%
H.S. diploma	11	16	20	47	24%
< 12 yrs	2			2	1%
Other/unknown		2	2	4	2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 5: Educational level by neighborhood.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)					

In breaking down educational level by gender, we found that women in the study were much more likely than men to have a college education. Forty-three percent of the 102 women we interviewed had a bachelor's degree or higher, and another 44% had some college education. By contrast, only 16% of the 94 men we interviewed had a bachelor's degree or higher, and only 26% had some college education. Approximately a third (31%) of all the men in our study had a high school education, and another 4% had less.

AGE RANGES	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
18-25	6	18	17	41	21%
26-35	13	7	20	41	21%
36-45	8	11	27	46	23%
46-55	5	9	18	32	16%
55+	7	8	20	35	18%
UNK		1		1	>1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 6: Age range by neighborhood.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)					

HOUSING	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Rent*	26	15	52	93	47%
Own home	4	16	38	58	30%
Live with someone	7	20	13	40	20%
Homeless shelter	2	1		3	2%
Other/unknown		2		2	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 7: Type of housing by neighborhood.**  
(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)

All of the neighborhoods had an even distribution of ages, with just under half (42%) of all participants being between 18 and 35 years old, about a quarter (23%) being 36-45 years old, and the remainder (35%) over 45. Table 6 shows the age ranges by neighborhood.

Approximately half the participants in the study were renters (most of those living in apartments), with a smaller number (30%) being homeowners. The remainder indicated that they lived in some kind of shared arrangement (e.g., with relatives), and a small number (3%) said they either lived in a shelter or would not disclose this information. Table 7 provides an overview of types of housing indicated by the study's participants, by neighborhood.

### Most Important Problems

In order to pursue a line of questioning about how the news media covers matters of concern to participants, we sought first to establish what they believed to be the most serious problems (or issues) in the city of Washington, DC; the neighborhoods in which they resided; and in their own personal lives. Asking first about their perceptions of problems citywide was based on an understanding that what happens anywhere within Washington often spills over into one's own neighborhood and/or personal life.

We found that the problems/issues identified by participants in relation to the city and the individual neighborhoods overlapped so substantially so that the two lists were almost undistinguishable. For example, more than a third (36%) of the study's participants identified crime as the single most important issue in citywide, as well as in their own particular neighborhoods. Many participants explained that the fear of assault and robbery often

inhibited them from wanting to be out at night, or in wanting to venture into other parts of Washington, DC. While we did not ask whether participants had personally experienced assault or robbery, we did notice many said that someone they knew had experienced these crimes; others referred to recent high profile murders in the city that they had learned about in the news. Not surprisingly, many also identified the related matter of "personal safety" high on their lists of Washington, DC, and neighborhood problems. A factor possibly influencing the widespread perceptions that crime and safety were paramount concerns was a spate of homicides, over a several day-period in early July, in several Washington neighborhoods, which had prompted DC Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey to declare a "state of emergency" that remained in force through the fall. Measures he enacted included the deployment of additional officers in neighborhoods and the imposition of a 10 p.m. curfew for juveniles (Klein 2006). Both the violence and police response to it received widespread local news coverage, which study participants referred to in their interviews.

Affordable housing was identified high on the list by those in Hyattsville. A few participants recognized that the city lacked in jobs (7%), youth activities and services (6%), and affordable health care (5%). Some participants also singled out changes in their own or other nearby neighborhoods, with congestion, gentrification, immigration, and racial tensions among the examples they gave. Tables 8 and 9 provide detailed summaries of the "most serious issues" in Washington, DC, and the individual neighborhoods where we interviewed.

In identifying the most serious problems in their personal lives, participants in all three neighborhoods singled out a lack of income (27%), and the closely related problem of

MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IN CITY OF WASHINGTON, DC?	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Crime - general	19	28	24	71	36
Lack of affordable housing	4	4	20	28	15
Poor schools	2	9	7	18	8
Lack of jobs	3		11	14	7
Safety of residents	2	1	9	12	6
Lack of youth services		3	8	11	6
Lack of affordable health care	1		7	8	5
Drugs - illegal	1	3	2	6	3
Poverty	1	2	2	5	3
Lack of transportation	1		2	3	1
Other*	5	4	10	19	10
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 8: Perceptions of most serious problem in city of Washington, DC, by neighborhood.**

(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)

\*Other included congestion, ineffective government, immigration, racial tensions, gentrification, etc.

MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	(Lamond Riggs DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Crime - general	13	19	21	53	28%
Lack of affordable housing	6	6	20	32	17%
Safety – my own	2	2	15	19	9%
Lack of affordable health care	4	2	5	11	6%
Neighborhood changes	3	1	9	13	6%
Lack of jobs	3	2	7	12	6%
Lack of youth services	3	8	2	13	6%
Drugs - illegal	2	3	4	9	5%
Poor schools	1	2	3	6	3%
Lack of city services		1	3	4	2%
Traffic		3	1	4	2%
Other*	2	5	13	20	10%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 9: Perceptions of most serious problems within neighborhood participants reside.**

(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)

\*Other includes lack of transportation, congestion, racial tensions, homelessness, poor police service, etc.

the cost of living (24%). The third highest ranked concern was the need for education and training (16%). These three problem areas represented two-thirds of all those expressed for the three neighborhoods, with little variation among them. Table 10 provides a complete list of personal concerns identified in this question.

MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE?	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
Lack of Income	10	12	31	53	27%
Cost of living	10	10	28	48	24%
Need for education & training	6	13	12	31	16%
Family problems	3	4	6	13	7%
Personal health problems	1	3	10	14	7%
Need for better housing		2	1	3	2%
Raising teens		1	2	3	2%
No personal problems	2	1	3	6	3%
Other*	7	7	11	25	12%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 10: Most serious personal problem, by neighborhood.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006) *Other includes discrimination problems, lack of child care, problems balancing work and personal life, parenting, among others.					

### Usefulness of News to Understanding and Acting on Problems

There was less consensus on whether the news helped participants to better understand or address the problems in the city, neighborhood or personal lives. As Table 10 illustrates, Hyattsville residents said a decisive “no” (80 of 103 participants, 78%), indicating the news media were not helpful to them in better understanding or acting on the problems they’d identified. However, the residents of Columbia Heights said “yes,” the news was helpful, and those in Lamond Riggs were fairly evenly divided (though leaning slightly more to “yes”). The remaining Hyattsville participants were divided between yes and sometimes. Table 11 summarizes responses on the news’s usefulness in understanding and addressing top problems.

DOES THE NEWS HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THESE PROBLEMS?	NEIGHBORHOOD				
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	Percent (N=196)
No	10	25	45	80	40%
Yes	18	22	28	68	35%
Sometimes	10	7	28	45	23%
Other/no response	1		2	3	2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 11: Does the news help you understand these problems</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006) (i.e., the problems you believe to be most important in the city of Washington, DC; your neighborhood; and your own personal life)?					

### Preference for Local News Media

We asked participants which news media they used most often for *local news and information*, recording up to four responses per person. This ruled out national and international media like CNN television news, and the *Christian Science Monitor* newspaper. There was little differentiation in responses among neighborhoods, suggesting that the data should be aggregated. Commercial television news stations were by far the most frequently cited sources (48%), with the local Fox and NBC affiliates ranking top, and both ABC and CBS trailing. The category of newspapers (28%) fell second in the preferred media categories, with the newspaper of record, the *Washington Post*, most often identified, but with a wide range of community and weekly newspapers also cited. Of the latter, the newsy tabloid *Gazette*, which publishes weekly neighborhood editions, both in the District of Columbia and throughout suburban Maryland and Virginia, was the most popular. Radio, both commercial and non-commercial (18%), and the Internet (6%) were among the least cited categories of news sources. However, it should be noted that those citing radio news preferred stations that are African-American-owned (and/or operated). Three of the



radio stations most often cited – WOL, WJJM and WKYS – are owned by Radio One, the largest African-American broadcast company in the United States. Its owner Cathy Hughes is a Washington, DC, area resident. Additionally, participants who identified the Internet as a news source nearly always said it was a supplement to other media, rather than a sole source of news. Non-commercial television news was cited the least often (2%). Table 12 provides detail about participants' preferences for local news media.

WHICH NEWS MEDIA DO YOU USE MOST OFTEN?	Specific Format*	Number per format	Overall percent (N=364)
Newspaper (n=102, 28%)	<b>Daily Newspaper</b> -Washington Post (n=62) -Washington Times (n=5)	67	18%
	<b>Community/weekly Newspaper</b> -Gazette (n=10) -City Paper (n=7) -Express (n=6) -Other (12)	35	10%
<b>Totals for all newspapers</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>28%</b>
Television (n=173, 47%)	<b>Non-commercial TV</b> -WHUT (n=4)* -WETA (n=2) -C-SPAN (n=3)	9	2%
	<b>Commercial TV</b> -Fox affiliate (n=50) -NBC affiliate (n=45) -CBS affiliate (n=25) -ABC affiliate (n=29) -LocalNews8 (n=10) -Span-language (n=3)	162	45%
	TV Other – did not specify	2	>1%
<b>Totals for all television</b>		<b>173</b>	<b>48%</b>
Radio (n=61, 18%)	<b>Non-commercial radio</b> -WAMU (n=12) -WPFW (n=8)*	29	8%
	<b>Commercial radio</b> -WIIIUR (n=9)* -WTOP (n=9) -WOL (n=7)* -WPGC (n=6)* -WMMJ (n=3)* -WASH (n=3) -WKYS (n=2)* -Other (n=5)	35	10%
<b>Totals for all radio</b>		<b>64</b>	<b>18%</b>
Other sources (n=25, 7%)	Internet	25	6%
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>364</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 12: Which media and formats preferred as sources of news.**  
(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)  
\*Indicates minority-owned and/or operated stations.

In breaking down the preference for media by gender, we found that more men (25%) than women (18%) preferred Fox news, and that more women (22%) than men (18%) preferred NBC news. Approximately the same percentages of men and women said they preferred the *Washington Post* and radio news sources. In breaking down news choices by educational level, we found that those with a high school education or some college education were more likely to prefer Fox news than those with higher educational levels. Similarly, there was a higher educational level among those who preferred the *Washington Post* as a news source. We found no other significant patterns by gender or educational level in relation to media choices.

### Qualities of Preferred Media

We asked participants what made their preferred news sources the “best,” and we recorded up to two reasons per participant. While we received a range of answers, nearly half of all responses

related to two qualities, those being completeness of information (27%), and a stronger focus on local issues (22%). Many of the respondents who emphasized the localism aspect of news referred specifically to stories with a minority angle, e.g., “they tell you what is going on in African-American communities,” or, as one Hispanic participant said, “I like to get local news in Spanish.” Additional qualities cited included liking the format or style (11%), for example, on-site reporting; trusting the information (9%); and being able to count on the timeliness of the information (9%). Table 13 provides the range of responses to this question.

<b>WHAT MAKES THESE NEWS MEDIA BEST?</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>Percent (N=241)</b>
Their information is complete	66	27%
They focus on local issues	51	22%
I like their format & style	26	11%
I can trust them to tell truth	20	9%
I can count on timely info	19	9%
They're convenient to use	17	7%
I'm in the habit of using them	13	5%
I like the reporters	11	4%
They cover people I care about	9	3%
Other	9	3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 13: The reasons given for preferring news sources.</b>		
(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)		

### Ways the news should improve

Because participants said they regularly used the news, we wanted to assess whether and how they believed the news could improve, asking them to identify the single “most important way” this could be accomplished. Many (24%) said the news should expand the amount of attention given to local issues, while a fair number (16%) said they would like for the news to be more in-depth (i.e., contain better story development, more facts, etc.).

A number of participants (12%) pointed to perceptions of bias (particularly a conservative bias, they said) in the news, and indicated they would like to see more balance in perspectives. Concerns about bias included specific reference to racial inferences in the coverage of the city's state of emergency. A Black female in Lamond Riggs neighborhood said, “When a White person commits a crime, his face is not shown, but when the person is Black, his face is always shown.” A college-educated resident in Lamond Riggs neighborhood said he believed that the news media “have a lot of negative views of Black males.” One long-time Columbia Heights resident complained that reporters “cover the murders of Black children differently from White children,” meaning the latter get both more coverage and more sympathetic coverage. There was a general perception that minorities were depicted more negatively than Whites, and this perception was conflated with concerns about lack of accuracy and completeness. Another participant described what he saw to be a disparity in coverage of two recent murders, which occurred within days of each other in different parts of the city: one was the shooting death of disabled African American activist Chris Crowder (who used a wheel chair), in northwest Washington, DC, and the other, the stabbing death of White British Jewish activist, Alain Senitt, who died in Georgetown. The participant accused television news of repeatedly mentioning that the murder of the white man was “so tragic, and reporters emphasized his work in the community,” but he perceived there was comparatively little news on the Black man or his activism.<sup>8</sup>

Others wished that a broader range of minority problems than crime and criminality be covered; they listed the need for health care, problems of illiteracy and widespread poverty as things they wanted to see on the news.

Most interesting was the number of participants (11%) who said they felt the emphasis on crisis and negativity in the news was a “downer.” They said they would like to see more attention

given to worthwhile deeds and positive efforts being made to solve problems. One recent African immigrant living in Hyattsville said he felt the news ignored immigrant concerns, and this made him turn away from the news. The wish for more positive content in the news did not suggest participants' desire to escape the reality of war, crime, or other real-life events, but rather to know more about what else was happening around them and to hear more about efforts toward solutions to the many problems that do exist. Some participants cited activities being undertaken in their own neighborhoods, churches, or organizations that news reporters never covered. One resident remembered the retirement of a church pastor who had been a major civil rights leader, a public celebration that brought dignitaries from the region and even the governor's office, but which the news ignored even after many efforts to get reporter presence. And, quite a few expressed concern that reporters rarely came into their neighborhoods except to cover a crime, fire or other crisis, and even then didn't seem to know much about them or the neighborhood. These participants (10%) said they wanted reporters to "know us and our neighborhoods" better. Others (9%) said they wanted reporters to "let residents in the neighborhoods speak for themselves" more often. Table 14 provides the full list of suggestions for improving news.

HOW COULD THE NEWS IMPROVE?	Total	Percent (N=199)
Expand local issues coverage	46	24%
Be more in-depth	32	16%
Improve balance (more perspectives)	24	12%
Cover stories that are more positive	23	11%
Know us & our neighborhoods	20	10%
Let residents of neighborhoods speak	18	9%
Be more accurate	11	6%
Be more timely in covering events	8	5%
Assist people to get involved	6	2%
Follow a story for a longer period	3	2%
Be more aware of race/culture	3	2%
Other	2	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 14: Suggestions for how the news could improve.</b>		
(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)		

### Level and kind of community involvement

In trying to assess both kind and level of community involvement, we asked participants how they were involved in neighborhoods or the wider community, noting up to two responses per person. We used the larger concept of "community," which included both neighborhood and citywide involvements. A fourth of the participants (25%) said they were not involved in the community in any way. In coding the remainder, we distinguished among *belonging* (to a group), *attending* (meetings or events), and actually *volunteering* (i.e., giving time and/or talent). Responses showed the greatest form of community involvement to be civic (i.e., non-political, non-religious) organizations (20%). Examples of civic involvement included helping to organize Black history celebrations and an AIDS-prevention project, or being active with a Big Brothers organization.

The third greatest form of community involvement was church activities (14%). Some (9%) indicated they volunteered in a parent-teacher organization at their children's schools, or for a youth mentoring program. We aggregated responses indicating informal efforts to care about those around them or to help out as needed as "neighborliness," (11%). Table 15 indicates the various ways that participants said they were involved in the community.

HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY?	Total	Percent (N=225)
<i>I'm not involved</i>	54	25%
<i>I volunteer for civic (non-political) groups</i>	46	20%
<i>I take part in church activities</i>	32	14%
<i>I try to be a good neighbor</i>	24	11%
<i>I volunteer in education-related work/mentoring</i>	21	9%
<i>I attend local meetings</i>	19	8%
<i>I belong to a neighborhood association (or other group)</i>	14	6%
<i>I volunteer for political parties, candidates, etc</i>	5	2%
<i>I vote</i>	4	2%
Other	6	3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 15: Level and kind of involvement in community**  
(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)

### Relationship of news consumption to community involvement

The central concern in the study was to discover the nature of the relationship between news consumption and community involvement among those comprising the ethnic minority news audience. We believed it was important to ask participants directly whether they perceived such a connection. Responses to the question “Do you believe the news affects your community involvement?” varied considerably by neighborhood, as Table 16 shows.

DOES THE NEWS AFFECT YOUR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT?	NEIGHBORHOOD				Percent (N=196)
	Columbia Heights (DC)	Lamond Riggs (DC)	Hyattsville (MD)	Grand Total	
NO	24	27	43	93	48%
YES	13	23	44	80	41%
UNSURE	2	4	16	21	11%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 16: Perception as to whether news affects community involvement.**  
(Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)

Participants in the central Washington, DC, neighborhood of Columbia Heights said “no” twice as often as they said “yes,” while participants from both Lamond Riggs and Hyattsville neighborhoods were almost evenly divided about whether their use of news affected their community involvement. Only in the Hyattsville neighborhood was there any significant amount of uncertainty (i.e., “unsure”).

A follow-up question sought to discern participants’ reasons for giving a yes, no or unsure response. Not all participants chose to give a reason, but the majority (58%) of those who did said that the news had a discernible influence on whether they participated in their community.

What is important to note, however, is that only 45% of those respondents actually meant that the news helped or encouraged them to take an active part in their communities. The remaining 13% in this category said that the news had a negative influence on them; in other words, that it *discouraged* them from getting involved in their communities. Explanations ranged from the over-emphasis on crime in and around the city and/or their own neighborhood which made them fearful of being out any more than necessary. Many of these statements were accompanied by a wish to know about what was being done, or whether there was ever



a drop in crime rates. In fact, citywide crime statistics for Washington DC do show a steady drop in the number of homicides, sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults between the years 2000 and 2005, yet this information is rarely reported in the news – particularly broadcast (Metropolitan Police Department 2006). Several said that the overall negativity of the news made them feel overwhelmed and as if they couldn't make a difference anyway. A very small number (6%) said they were either apathetic toward the news or that they were uninvolved for other reasons (e.g., lack of time). We believe there is more to be learned about the specific ways that the news affects the minority news audience's civic behavior. Future research seeking to discern this important connection could pursue a series of questions about what (more specifically) participants "use" in the news, to see if there is a match with the kinds of activities they engage in. Table 17 provides the summary of responses that we received to this question.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE NEWS AFFECT YOUR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT?	Total	Percent (N=184)
<b>Answers indicating a strong association (either positive or negative) between news &amp; community involvement</b>		
POS: The news motivates me to get involved.	40	22%
POS: The news informs me of what is happening and/or what needs to be done.	39	21%
POS: Other (e.g., assists, promotes unity)	4	2%
NEG: The news discourages me from wanting to go out and get involved.	25	13%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Answers indicating no association between news &amp; community involvement</b>		
I am independent of influences like the news (i.e., I make up my own mind).	26	14%
The news has no effect on my community involvement one way or another.	24	13%
I lack time to get involved – the news not a factor.	7	4%
Other (e.g., the news is a joke)	8	5%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Answers indicating a neutral or ambivalent association between news &amp; community involvement</b>		
I am apathetic toward the news.	6	3%
I am uncertain whether the news plays a role	5	3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Table 17: Whether news affects community involvement.</b> (Source: C.M. Byerly, K. Langmia & J. Cupid, 2006)		

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### Meaning of "local" news

Participants appeared to closely equate "completeness" of information with "focus on local issues" in their choice of news sources and in the range of topics they wanted to see covered. In other words, a story that contained information relevant to their lives was also seen to be sufficiently factual and adequate in its content. Such adequacy, then, was inevitably related to the day-to-day realities of having a Black, African, Hispanic or another minority identity. For the minority news audience, then, localism is about having one's own particular sense of the day-to-day world incorporated into the news agendas, and being able to see and hear the views of those like one's self. The notion of "minority reality" should not be construed to mean a homogenized reality but rather a diverse one in which the various ethnicities and other demographics that compose identity and experience are represented. We also found both subtle and overt suggestions that participants' preferences for news content in relation to both topic and presentation often fell along demographic categories, e.g., race/ethnicity, nationality, educational level and income.

In addition, we noted with interest that the quality of completeness in the news was both the criterion most often mentioned as a determinant for a preferred news source(s), as well as the aspect of content participants most wanted to see expanded and improved. There was, for example, a desire to see not just a report of a burglary or assault, but also some context for those crimes and more information about underlying causes of crime or perhaps solutions in progress. Moreover, the desire was to see these reported from the perspectives of those who experienced the problems. Dispatching news makers to the various neighborhoods, participants said, was key to improvement because participants believed strongly that news worthiness can only be achieved if their own realities predominate.

The predictability and sameness of the news turn some people off; thus, they wonder why news couldn't also expand on the wider range of issues and problems they faced each day (e.g., joblessness, cost of living, lack of healthcare, and challenges in raising teenage children). And, repeatedly, we heard the wish for minority perspectives and minority voices. The irony, of course, is that television, the most commonly identified source of news for this study's participants, also has the least capability of

---

### Local Television news...dedicates most of its content to crime

---

expanding its detail given today's limited broadcast formats: "news packages" that range from 15 to 90 seconds, on average, with the (very) rare investigative report. We believe it highly significant that 48%—nearly half—of the study's participants said that the news did not inform them of what they could do to improve the situation(s) in their communities, something that gets to the heart of this study's concerns. This suggests that for many, the news inhibits citizen participation.

#### Race in crime reporting

Local television news, as Mindich (2005) observed and that substantial numbers of other studies also affirm, dedicates most of its content to crime, and, since most of this study's participants said they get their news from television we were not surprised that they so often referred to the way crime was reported. While this might raise the possibility of an agenda-setting effect in the present study (since a sizeable number of participants identified crime to be the top problem in both Washington, DC, as well as in their own neighborhoods), such would be difficult

to determine given the timing of the city's imposition of a "state of emergency" in the very weeks when we were conducting interviews. DC Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey reacted to a spate of 14 murders, many armed robberies, and other violent crimes during the first 11 days of July 2006, by declaring a 30-day state of emergency on July 12 (Klein 2006). The declaration gave Ramsey the power to impose a youth curfew, shift assignments for the department's 3,800 officers, and increase patrols in the hardest hit neighborhoods. Thus, in spite of an overall steady drop in crime between 2000 and 2005 (as noted earlier), there was a spike upward in the summer of 2006, and the usual plentiful dose of crime reporting was thus even more plentiful. Participants in our study expressed numerous concerns about the way this news was reporting these events, as noted earlier.

Race had been central to the actual events (i.e., crimes and city officials' reactions to them) as well as to the media's reporting on these. The first thirteen of the 14 murders, including that of disabled African American activist Chris Crowder, had involved Black victims; the fourteenth, British activist Alan Senitt, was White. Many in the African-American community said they believed that it was Senitt's case that Ramsey was reacting to in declaring a state of emergency. In addition, few in the Washington area had missed the fact that suspects in Senitt's case, all Black, were arrested within days of his murder, while the investigation of Crowder's murder had produced none. But it was at a gathering of people attending a church gathering in Georgetown to discuss Senitt's murder where police Inspector Andy Solberg, a White man, incited the most heated public controversy. Solberg commented on the fact that the suspects had been seen earlier in the area where Senitt was killed. He told residents that Senitt's assailants "are going to stand out" in the area. "They were black," Solberg said. He later reiterated his statement to a local television station, denying the racist implications and insisting that "They were Black. This not a racial thing to say that black people are unusual in Georgetown. This is a fact of life." (Klein 2006). Solberg's comments were reported by local newspapers and broadcasted frequently in the days after he made them, inflaming tensions.

Clearly, the media's coverage of the summer 2006 crime wave merits a study unto itself, a project that lay beyond the scope or goals of the present study. However, we believed it would be useful to examine selected stories using the study participants' stated preferences for completeness and their strong desire to see local news reported from a minority perspective. We focused particularly on the city's newspaper of record, the Washington Post,

which garnered the most diverse range of users of any media among this study's participants.

We noted that the *Washington Post* dedicated considerable space and staff time to covering the two high profile murders of Crowder and Senitt; as well as the state of emergency that followed and the city residents' response to it. Some stories, such as one on July 12, by Alison Klein, had as many as six additional contributors, some of whom had gathered perspectives from African-Americans in various neighborhoods. This particular story was noteworthy in that it reported numerous residents' criticisms of the police department, including its failure to solve more recent killings, such as that of Maurice "Moe" Darnaby, 35, who was slain around closing time July 1 at his market (Klein 2006). In these ways, the story meets many of the participants' wish to see local news reported thoroughly and from the minority community's perspectives.

However, an earlier story on July 7, also by Alison Klein, exhibited the kind of problems that the participants said they wished to see improved. Half of the 2,423 curfew violators, the story said, who had been picked up since the curfew's imposition on July 12, were from "two police districts east of the Anacostia River," the "districts that account for about half of the city homicides" and "38% of the residents younger than 17," according to police data. To any reader familiar with the city, "East of the Anacostia River" is an explicit reference to the city's poorest African American neighborhoods, and mention of the "residents younger than 17" committing crimes could be interpreted as blaming young black men for crimes there. These data (i.e., higher crimes rates and higher rates by young men) may be statistically accurate, but there is clearly more to the story. Anacostia is the poorest and most chronically neglected by public services, including police protection. The story contained only one source, the police chief. No one from Anacostia was given the

---

**[Residents] with a high school degree or less watched Fox twice as often as those with some college or college degrees.**

---

opportunity to address the hardships of residents who live in a danger zone worse than other areas, or to convey efforts going on in some Anacostia neighborhoods to make the area safer.

Such information did ultimately appear in a story by

Robert E. Pierre and Petula Dvorak, on July 31, which examined the race and class tensions associated with the police crackdown. This story examined the city's 11th and 12th victims, both teens, whose bodies had been dumped along a parkway in Southeast Washington. The story provided a historical context for killings in Southeast Washington, a range of official and citizen perspectives, and a review of various grassroots efforts going on there to lower crime (Pierre and Dvorak 2006). This story provided the qualities that this study's participants said they wanted in the news.

### **A preference for Fox News**

We noted with interest that the local affiliate of the Fox network, which broadcasts locally on Channel 5, emerged as the most preferred television news source in this study. Owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, Fox launched in 1986 and created its niche primarily with Black and youth-oriented audiences. However, some research suggests that the Fox station has not always treated minorities fairly. Glascock's (2003) study of entertainment programming carried on Fox, UPN and WB stations (all of which cater to minority audiences) found what he called a "continual presence of stereotypical depictions and increased levels of physical violence" (p. 98). Glascock posited the likelihood that such content could "reinforce and cultivate stereotypical attitudes and unrealistic fears about real-world violence" (ibid.). With more specific regard to news, Fox has been widely criticized for a conservative political perspective that some say runs through its news and public affairs programming. Commentators closely tied to the Bush administration appear regularly on Fox's national news programs, and media sources as wide ranging as the liberal watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) and the mainstream *USA-Today online* have referred to Fox's "right-wing tilt" (Johnson 2006). We noted earlier that Fox watchers in this study tended to be males with less than a college degree. A further breakdown showed that those with a high school degree or less watched Fox twice as often as those with some college or college degrees.

Wanting to better assess the local news carried on Fox by the Washington, DC affiliate, we monitored a week of evening newscasts during early August 2006, noting the demographics of anchors, reporters, and news sources; subject and location of stories; and the situational context within which these were told, e.g., if a trial was being reported, what was the angle taken and what conclusions, if any, were drawn by the reporter. We found that news personnel in any given program typically included both men and women, at least one reporter of color (and often several, usually African-American). Like other stations,

Fox's local newscasts feature heavy doses of violence – the war in Iraq, sexual and other assaults, drug abuse, etc. There was also coverage of families, local political races and neighborhood tragedies (e.g., a family pulling together after a fire destroyed their home, a toddler rushed to a hospital after ingesting PCP/angel dust). We discerned some instances of problematic story framing. In one story aired August 14, on the 5 p.m. newscast, a Black man with a Muslim name, charged with wounding a little girl, proclaimed he was only punishing her for cutting another child's hair. The reporter portrayed the man's behavior as brutal, then stated that he had no criminal record and had apparently never done anything like that before. Another example occurred in a segment of the 10 p.m. news, also on August 14, when footage of Middle Eastern men (none of them associated with a crime) filled the screen, while the reporter talked about US and UK terrorist threats on flights being downgraded. Other stories appeared to be framed more positively with regard to ethnic identity. In one story, aired August 15, a camp for overweight low-income minority children was reported from the perspective that this is a needed service that is assisting these families. Another story about traffic fines included interviews with both White and Black offenders, and both male and female court examiners; however, all shared the same law enforcement view, which was a negative one toward the offenses. While illustrative of findings in our study, these examples should be considered anecdotes, at best, suggesting the usefulness of conducting further research on the way that Fox affiliates covers local news.

### Minority-owned media

Important to note is that most of the 18% of participants in the study who identified radio as a main source of news specified minority-owned and/or operated radio stations, both commercial and non-commercial. One resident of the Lamond Riggs neighborhood who named WPGC-FM as his choice, said, "They tell you what's going on in African-American communities." A second resident said that Howard University-owned WHUR-FM is "Black-community oriented, as opposed to just telling about the shootings, robberies and more negative news like TV does." One Columbia Heights resident said that Pacifica Network's minority operated WPFW-FM "gives me the only accurate reporting of what's going on in the community." A woman in the Hyattsville community said that WOL radio (a property of Radio One), was a station she could trust because she knew African-Americans owned it. Several Hispanic participants cited their reliance on Spanish radio, television and local newspapers. Such unambiguous statements are strong testament to the element of trust in ownership, and the attendant assumption that the minority audience's interests in terms of local

information are best being met when those in control of the news messages are from their own communities.

### Implications

While this study focused on a single metropolitan area, we believe there is much to be learned from its findings. The 196 residents from three neighborhoods who took part in the study were a good representation of the larger population in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, income and educational level. Therefore, we can generalize at least to the multi-ethnic media audience for this metro area. We also see strong parallels between the findings in this study and Squire's, conducted in Chicago a few years earlier. Like Squire's subjects, those in our own study used a range of both Black and White (mainstream) media, and they were well-informed about issues concerning majority and minority communities. Many participants in both studies said they believed the mainstream news framed stories in ways that blamed Black people for their problems, only covered the negative in Black communities, and tended to homogenize black people and their experiences. Though in different cities in different regions of the country, both sets of participants said that minority-owned media were more clearly concerned with minority interests and well-being. We believe these voices tell those with authority in policy making that media ownership matters in a multicultural democracy, and they suggest that democracy is most accessible at the local level.

A significant historical parallel is also suggested by the findings of the present report and those from the Kerner-funded research, conducted in the late 1960s in Washington, DC, and other major U.S. cities. Though our own study was not conducted in the context of extensive rioting that destroyed whole city blocks (as was the case in Washington after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in April 1968), the present study did coincide with an imposed "state of emergency" prompted by a crime wave in June and early July. So, in this respect, there are some elements of historical parallel. We found it highly noteworthy that our participants said they do not trust the mainstream news (even though many watch or read it), are not finding the news helpful to learning more about the things paramount in their lives, and do not feel like the news addresses the range of issues that exist in the Washington, DC-metro area. These issues, they said, include the sky rocketing costs of housing and living expenses; the influx of immigrants; third, fourth and fifth generation residents feeling displaced or forced out by gentrification and rising costs; neighborhood businesses going under; lack of jobs; and lack of educational programs or training for trades, etc.



We conclude, much as the Kerner Commission did four decades earlier, that the mainstream news should be doing more to serve the interests and needs of minority communities whose members, in the foreseeable future, will constitute the majority within the society. At the same time, media ownership by minorities should expand in order to assure minority communities have access to public discourse and the full social and political participation that flow from it.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The research reported in this paper was funded by the Social Science Research Council, New York, and conducted in summer 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Carolyn M. Byerly is associate professor, Department of Journalism, Howard University, Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup>Kehbuma Langmia is assistant professor, Department of Communications, Bowie State University, Bowie, Maryland.

<sup>4</sup>Jamila A. Cupid is a doctoral student in Mass Communication and Media Studies, School of Communications, Howard University, Washington, DC.

<sup>5</sup>As expected, a 90-day comment period was announced (and thereby opened) by the FCC on June 21, 2006.

<sup>6</sup>We are grateful to Washington, DC, library officials and to the library staffs at Lamond Riggs and Mt. Pleasant Libraries in Washington, DC; and to administrators and staff at the Hyattsville Public Library; as well as the store manager of Giant Foods, Hyattsville, for their cooperation with us during the project.

<sup>7</sup>Several neighborhoods, most notably the county seat of Upper Marlboro and the cities of Laurel and Mitchellville, are home to affluent professional families, both White and non-White.

<sup>8</sup>We include a fuller discussion of the two men's deaths, and the news surrounding these, in the conclusion.

## REFERENCES

Bottom Line at the Top, The. (2006, July 10). *Washington Post* (Business Section), p. D1.

Byerly, C. M. (2004). Women and the Concentration of Media Ownership. In R. R. Rush, C. E. Oukrop, and P.

J. Creedon (Eds.), *Seeking Equity for Women in Journalism and Mass Communication Education*, pp. 245-262. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Campbell, C. P. (2005). A Myth of Assimilation: "Enlightened" Racism and the news. In D. M. Hunt (ed.), *Channeling Blackness: Studies on Television and Race in America*, pp. 137-154. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Candeub, A. (n.d.). The First Amendment and Measuring Media Diversity: Constitutional Principles and Regulatory Challenges. *Legal Studies Research Paper Series* (Research Paper no. 03-26), Michigan State university College of Law. Retrieved from the Social Science Research Network Electronic Paper Collection <http://ssrn.com/abstract=90317>, August 26, 1996.

Columbia Heights DC Blog. Retrieved June 30, 2006 from <http://columbiaheightsdc.com/blog/index.html>

Columbia Heights News. Retrieved June 30, 2006, from <http://www.columbiaheightsnews.org>

Columbia Heights Today. Retrieved June 14, 2006 from Website: <http://www.columbiaheightsnews.org/About/About-Front.html>

Cooper, M. (2003, July 21). *Abracadabra! Hocus Pocus! Making Media Market Power Disappear with the FCC's Diversity Index*. (Report) Washington, DC: Consumer Federation of America and Consumers Union.

Einstein, M. (2004). *Media Diversity, Economics, Ownership & the FCC*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

*Gazette, The*. (2006, July 13). College Park, MD, edition

Glascok, J. (2003, Winter). Gender, Race, and Aggression in Newer TV Networks' Primetime Programming, *Communication Quarterly* 51:1, 90-100.

Gray, H. (2002). Foreword, pp. vii-x. In R. R. Means Coleman (Ed.), *Say it Loud: African-American Audiences, Media and Identity*. NY: Routledge.

Haberkorn, J. (2006, July 31). EatWell Wines, Dines Locals. *Washington Times*, p. D1.

Hunt, D. M. (2005). Making Sense of Blackness on Television. In D. M. Hunt (ed.), *Channeling Blackness:*

*Studies on Television and Race in America*, pp. 1-24. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hyattsville, Maryland website. Retrieved September, 2006, from website [www.mdmunicipal.org/cities/index](http://www.mdmunicipal.org/cities/index).

Inner City. Retrieved June 14, 2006 from <http://innercity.org/columbiaheights/voices.html>

Johnson, P. Fox's ratings rise despite recent harsh criticism. Retrieved from USA-Today online, retrieved September 5, 2006, from <http://usatoday.printthis.clickability.com>.

Klein, A. (2006, July 12). July Homicide Total Rises to 14 in District; 'Crime Emergency' Declared by Ramsey Following Surge in Crime, *Washington Post*. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/12>.

Kunz, W. M. (2007). *Culture Conglomerates: Consolidation in the Motion Picture and Television Industries*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Keating, L. and Keating, D. (2006, Aug. 15). Area Immigrants Top 1 Million: Education Levels are Higher than Elsewhere, Census Finds, *Washington Post*, p. A1.

Klein, A. (2006, Sept. 7). Ramsey Lauds Tougher Policing: Chief Cites 11% Drop in Crimes Since Emergency was Declared, *Washington Post*, p. B5.

Layton, L. (2006, July 22). Hungry for Whole Foods: Wooing of the Upscale Grocery Highlights Tension Over Changes in Columbia Heights. *Washington Times*, business section, p1. Retrieved July 31, 2006, from <http://www.washtimes.com/business/20060730-093558-6808r.htm>

Layton, L. and Keating, D. (2006, Aug. 4). Data Show Minorities' Movement to Majority. *Washington Post* (Metro Section), p. B1.

Lloyd, M. (1998, Jan.). Communications Policy is a Civil Rights Issue. *Community Technology Center Review*. [INCOMPLETE]

Matabane, P. W. (2005). Television and the Black Audience: Cultivating Moderate Perspectives on Racial Integration. In D. M. Hunt (ed.), *Channeling Blackness: Studies on Television and Race in America*, pp.

64-73. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Means Coleman, R. R. (2002). Introduction, pp. 1-26. In R. R. Means Coleman (Ed.), *Say it Loud: African-American Audiences, Media and Identity*. NY: Routledge.

Metropolitan Police Department. Annual Stats: 93-05. Retrieved September 4, 2006 from website <http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/view>.

Mindich, D. T. Z. (2005). *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*. New York: Oxford University Press.

NeighborhoodInfo DC. Retrieved June 12, 2006 from [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/nclusters/nbr\\_prof\\_clus2.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/nclusters/nbr_prof_clus2.html).

Oveholzer-Gee, F. and Waldfogel, J. (2006). Media Markets and Localism: Does Local News en Espanol Boost Hispanic Voter Turnout? (Working Paper 12317) Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved August 26, 2006, from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w12317>.

Pierre, R. E. and Dvorak, P. (2006, July 31). Crime Measures Derided as Too Little, Too Late; Race, Class Tensions Summer as D.C. Residents Question Timing of Crackdown, Effectiveness of Tactics. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/article/2006/07/30>.

Prince, S. (2006, July-August). Will the Real Black Middle Class Please Stand Up? *Monthly Review*, 58:3, pp. 67-79.

Siegelman, P. and Waldfogel, J. (2001). Race and Radio: Preference Externalities, Minority Ownership, and the provision of Programming to Minorities, *Advertising and Differentiated Products* 10, pp. 73-105.

Squires, C. (2002). Black Audiences, Past and Present: Commonsense Media Critics and Activists, pp. 45-76. In R. R. Means Coleman (Ed.), *Say it Loud: African-American Audiences, Media and Identity*. NY: Routledge.

Schwartzman, A. and Desai, Parul. (2005). Minority Ownership and Employment in the Mass Media: A Report of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, Washington, DC.

Schwartzman, P. (2006, July 15). Police Still Seeking Answers in Slaying of D.C. Activist, *Washington Post*. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from <http://www.wash->

ingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/14.

Tabb, W. K. (2006, July-August). The Power of the Rich. *Monthly Review*, 58:3, pp. 6-18.

Vogel, R. D. (2006, July-August). Harder Times: Undocumented Workers and the U.S. Informal Economy. *Monthly Review*, 58:3, pp. 29-39.

Washington Crime Statistics and Crime Data. <http://washingtondc.areaconnect.com>, Retrieved September 2, 2006.

Washington, DC, neighborhood information taken from DC Neighborhood Cluster Profile [www.neighborhoodinfodc.org](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org). Retrieved August 27, 2006 and September 2, 2006.

# QUESTIONING MEDIA ACCESS

## Analysis of FCC Women and Minority Ownership Data

Carolyn M. Byerly

---

### ABSTRACT

*We analyzed women's and minority ownership in the United States using Federal Communications Commission reporting data for the years 2004 and 2005, deriving frequencies describing media formats, location, and sizes of community served by women and minority-owned broadcast. Data show that both women and minority broadcasters serve mainly small-town and rural areas, and that the most commonly owned medium is radio (both AM and FM). FCC data indicate that in 2005, women owned only 3.4% and minorities owned only 3.6% of the 12,844 stations filing reports. These numbers are troubling in their miniscule representations, in relation to White male ownership of the remainder. We also pointed out numerous problems with the FCC database, which excludes reports of non-commercial stations and which appears to be incomplete in its incorporation of all women and minority-owned stations filing reports. We believe that ownership may be somewhat higher than these single-digit percentages, but still so low as to beg for federal policy that enables more females and racial minorities to own stations. We also request that the FCC improve administration of the reporting system to assure databases are accurate and complete.*

### INTRODUCTION

Access to mainstream channels of communication is widely understood to be a prerequisite for participation in political and social processes. Thus, mass communication theorists have placed the media central to the democratic public sphere, where matters of common interest can be articulated and debated, and the agendas for public and political agendas can be set. But access to the mainstream media – newspapers, television, and radio – has been an historical challenge for women and racial minorities. Ownership of the electronic media, in particular has raised serious concerns for these marginalized (female and minority) segments of American society in that radio and television transmit their content via the public's airwaves. Thus, both ownership and the content spawned have also been concerns in the legislative and legal realms, with regard to assuring access. The

Communications Act of 1934 required broadcasters to serve the “public interest, convenience and necessity,” and both subsequent laws and the Courts’ interpretation of them have upheld this essential principle (Einstein 2004). Women’s and civil rights’ movements since the mid twentieth century have pushed for ways to increase access through ownership by their respective constituents, and to expand gender and racial equality in broadcast content.

But the progress has been slow and uneven on these fronts, particularly through several decades of corporate conglomeration that has seen media industries concentrated in the hands of only a few mega-industries whose boards, executives, and managers are primarily wealthy, white and male (Byerly 2004, Hunt 2005). A large, diverse literature, which we will explore in more depth in other sections of this report, assumes that there is a relationship between ownership and content.

## GOALS OF THE RESEARCH

---

Here we ask where women and minority ownership stands in relation to the bigger field of media conglomerates today. We have tried to assess this through an analysis of ownership reports filed by broadcast licensees and submitted to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC requires commercial and noncommercial educational AM, FM and television broadcast stations to file ownership reports at two-year intervals, or when a station changes owners.<sup>1</sup> Exempted from biennial reporting are sole proprietors (where the station is licensed to an individual or individuals), and licensees which are partnerships composed “entirely of natural persons”<sup>2</sup> Licensees filing reports do so electronically using Forms 323 and 323-E<sup>3</sup>, which request basic information about names of owners, stations owned, formats (i.e., kind of service), gender and race/ethnicity of owners, percentage of vote that each owner holds, and a number of other details. The FCC reports that 12,844 stations filed FCC Forms 323/E for calendar years 2004-05.<sup>4</sup> Stations whose owners include women and/or racial/ethnic minorities with a greater than 50% voting interest are designated as “female” or “minority” owned companies. We note at the outset, however, that only the commercial licensees’ reports are included in the FCC databases for women and minority ownership, since non-commercial and educational licensees are not required to identify the gender and ethnic identities of their ownership structures. This omission will be discussed below, but readers should be aware that both the database and this analysis based on it are affected by this omission.

The FCC’s website in July 2006 reported that there were 438 female-owned and 460 minority-owned broadcast stations filing Form 323 for 2004-05, out of a comprehensive pool of broadcast licensees filing ownership reports for those years. Women own 3.4% and minorities own 3.6% of the 12,844 stations that filed reports, respectively, in the United States and in the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The present report provides an analysis of these women and minority-owned broadcast companies, for the years 2004-05, using data derived from reports made available on the FCC’s website. While the most “official” collection of such information available to us, we found the reports to be lacking in several ways, suggesting flaws in the reporting system. Our analysis, therefore, is accompanied by numerous questions, concerns and recommendations related to the women and minority ownership reports.

The federal agency in which the public has entrusted the authority and responsibility to oversee licensing and monitoring of broadcast operations has made information available to the public which, according to its own staff, has not been monitored for completeness or accuracy.<sup>5</sup> However, the absence of other independent baseline analyses of such ownership compelled us to undertake the present research. Our report should be read as a first, if imperfect, start to fill a gap in such a literature. As mentioned, the broadcast media are mandated by law to serve the public’s interest, and to meet the needs of the local communities in which they operate. Our research was undertaken with the hope of helping to provide information useful in assessing whether this is happening.

Our analysis sought to discern patterns in ownership with respect to the type of media formats (i.e., kind of service), size of community where broadcast media are located (and serve), gender and ethnicity of owners, and percentage of control (i.e., voting percentage) by women and minorities. In addition, we were concerned with learning to what extent there is of overlap between the two sets of reports (i.e., how many stations appeared in both sets of reports). Last, we compare the 2005 ownership data to that of 2003 (which we analyzed in a similar way at an earlier time) in order to discern changes and consistency. We compare and contrast findings from the women’s and minorities’ companies throughout the report.

## PROBLEMS IN THE FORMS 323/E REPORTING

---

We noted at the outset that there are certain flaws and discrepancies imbedded in the findings we report here. These appear to derive from problems inherent in the Form 323/E reporting process, and the subsequent data bases for women and minority ownership that these create and which are made available to the public by the FCC on its Internet website ([www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)).

**Incomplete reporting and/or compilation.** First, it appears that there may be more women and minority-owned media than represented in the reports. For instance, the FCC’s data do not include reports from Radio One, the largest minority-owned commercial broadcast company, and the seventh largest broadcast station in the U.S., with 70+ stations. FCC staff indicate that Radio One, whose principal owner is female, was not included in either the women’s or minority’s reports because the company did not complete the page on ownership demographics; instead, they attached a pdf file



containing a company report. Staff also indicate that this problem will be corrected in the next round of reporting, 2006-07, when completion of the demographic page will have to be completed before the electronic system accepts the report.<sup>6</sup>

Second, as we noted earlier, the reports provided on the FCC website for 2005 include *only commercial full-powered broadcast stations*. Missing are any data from non-commercial educational broadcast stations, whose reporting Form 323-E does not include categories for gender and minority ownership composition. We have not been able to learn the rationale behind this omission. As a result, however, ownership reports for both women and minorities lack information about this significant category of broadcast, which includes, for example several prominent minority-owned non-commercial stations in the Washington, DC, area, including WHUT-TV (a pub-

---

### Radio has been the medium with greatest ownership by women and minorities historically.

---

lic television station) and WHUR-FM (both at Howard University), or WPFW-FM (non-commercial, and part of the Pacifica group). In addition, requiring only the full-powered broadcast stations to report obviously leaves out several thousand low-powered stations, both radio and television.

The total picture of broadcast ownership available through the Form 323 reports would seem to beg the question of what exactly do women and minorities own. The FCC announced that by March 31, 2006, it had licensed a total of 27,556 broadcast stations, including commercial and non-commercial radio, television, FM translator, and low-power television and radio stations.<sup>7</sup> It becomes critical, therefore, to have an accurate understanding of what portion of these enterprises are women- and minority-owned, particularly in the full-powered stations which reach the largest audiences. Radio has been the medium with greatest ownership by women and minorities historically, and changes in ownership patterns can only be discerned with complete, accurate data.

There is beginning to emerge some important complementary research to our own, presented in this report. The Washington DC-based media advocacy organization Free Press's recent analysis of television ownership for

women and minorities, which derived its data for TV ownership by culling the CDBS, searching for individual Form 323-E filings, indicates that approximately twice as many women and minorities own TV stations than the FCC's own data for these two groups show.<sup>8</sup> We do not know whether the findings would be similar if such research were extended to radio and other broadcast formats. However, Free Press's work underscores the importance of having complete and reliable ownership information for females, and racial and ethnic minority groups, which have been historically marginalized economically, socially, and politically. Ownership data will tell us a great deal of what we need to know about these groups' access to and control of messages that circulate through the public airwaves.

### Duplicate reporting and other count problems.

Some stations filed more than one report, with both reports apparently being counted by the Commission. This happened several times in both the female and minority groups; our adjustments to eliminate duplication resulted in a slight change to the overall count of stations in the women ownership data, from 438 (reported by FCC), to 436. In addition to duplicate reporting, we found reports for stations in the minority data base that did not appear to have been included in the FCC's count of 460 stations; our adjustments to the minority figures resulted in a slightly larger number of 461.

**Questions about percent of vote.** We found eight instances of reports for minority-owned stations indicating that minorities control far more than 100% of the vote, e.g., WMFA, of Raeford, NC, the minority vote is stated to be 200%; WUFO, of Amherst, NY, minority vote is stated to be 196%, etc. We were unable to learn whether these are data-entry errors, or whether is another explanation. We did not note similar problems for the women's data.

**Inconsistencies in services filing reports.** Low power and translator stations were reported by their owning companies in addition to other types of services; however, the FCC does not require uniform reporting by owners who own only low power and translator stations and so we lack a complete picture of how female and minority ownership figure into the totality of broadcast service.

These problems – gross omissions of reports, possible data-entry errors, duplicate filing, etc. – mean that the data bases provided by the FCC on its website represent a greatly inadequate source of public information on women-and-minority media ownership in the United

States at the present time. The extent and magnitude of these flaws suggest a troubling level of ineptitude and/or irresponsibility on the part of a federal agency entrusted with the authority and responsibility for both collecting such data and making them available to the citizenry. We believe that the Commission must take immediate action to resolve these problems. We request that the Federal Communications Commission act:

(1) to refine its administrative procedures to assure that all Form 323/E reports are submitted on time and that those relevant to women and minority ownership be accurately and completely assigned to their respective databases, and

(2) to institute a research component to its activities which would provide the kind of routine data analysis, such as we provide here, on a biannual basis, subsequent to receipt of licensee reports.

## METHOD

We took a statistical approach in analyzing the data contained in the 2005 Form 323 reports for women and minority-owned media companies. We also used supplementary reference materials to obtain additional facts about size of communities where these companies are located, and, in a few cases, to complete missing data (e.g., type of format a given company's service represented). Details about station location, kind of media owned, gender and voting percentages of owners, and a range of other characteristics were entered into a standard spreadsheet, with correlations for tables derived from the spreadsheet data. These tables, which are included in the Appendix of this report, supplement and illustrate the narrative analysis provided here

## REPORT OF FINDINGS

### Media formats owned

The 2005 FCC reports indicate that women hold a majority voting interest in 436 broadcast stations in 46 states and 3 territories – roughly 3.4% of the total 12,844 stations that filed Form 323 reports ([www.fcc.org](http://www.fcc.org)). Those include 202 (46%) FM stations, 187 (43%) AM stations, 38 (9%) TV stations, with the remaining 9 (2%) being TX (translator), low-power radio or other formats. **Table 1** provides a listing of media formats by state for women-owned companies. Minorities own broadcast stations in 38 states and 4 ter-

STATE	MEDIA FORMAT				Grand Total
	AM	FM	TV	TX/ OTHER	
AK	1	2			3
AL	5	2			7
AR	2	2	4		8
AZ	3	4	2	1	10
CA	8	10	1		19
CO	1	2			3
CT		3			3
FL	13	7	1		21
GA	6	6			12
GU		1			1
HI	1	1	1		3
IA	2	2	1		5
ID	5	7			12
IL	7	7			14
IN	1	2			3
KS	2	6			8
KY	7	9	1		17
LA	2	3	3		8
MA	2	2			4
MD	2	3			5
MI	5	10			15
MN	2	5	2	2	11
MO		4	2		6
MS	3	1	2	2	8
MT	2	3			5
NC	7	4			11
ND	1				1
NE	3	2			5
NH	3	1			4
NM	5	8	1		14
NV	1	1			2
NY	7	4	6	2	19
OH	3	4	2		9
OK	1	4			5
OR	8	11	3		22
PA	9	8	1		18
PR	5	2			7
RI	1				1
SC	3				3
TN	6	3			9
TX	17	17	3	1	38
UT	2	1			3
VA	7	8		1	16
VI		1			1
VT	2	2			4
WA	9	9			18
WI	1	2	1		4
WV	4	4			8
WY		2	1		3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>436</b>

**Table 1:**  
Media format by state for women-owned stations.  
(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports)

ritories, according to FCC data contained in the Form 323/E reports for 2005. More than half (52%) of these minority-owned media are AM stations, with about a third (36%) being FM stations; the remainder are divided equally between television (6%) and other (6%) kinds of stations (e.g., translator or low-power). Table 2 provides a listing of media formats by state for minority-owned companies.

STATE OR TERRITORY	MEDIA FORMAT				Grand Total
	AM	FM	TV	TX & OTHER	
AL	15	6		1	22
AR	5	9	1		15
AS	1				1
AZ	4	5	1	1	11
CA	25	37	2	11	75
CO	4				4
CT	5				5
FL	14	1		5	20
GA	13	6	1		20
GU		1			1
HI	3	1	1		5
IA			1		1
IL	1				1
IN	1		1		2
KS		2	1		3
LA	7	3			10
MA	1	1			2
MD	3	3			6
MI		6			6
MO	1	1			2
MS	10	10			20
MT			1	1	2
NC	17	4			21
NE	3	2			5
NJ			1		1
NM	5	6	1	1	13
NV	1				1
NY	3		2		5
OH	2	1			3
OK	6	8	1		15
PA	3				3
PR	28	13	8	6	55
RI	1				1
SC	5	6			11
TN	3				3
TX	37	27	2	1	67
UT	2				2
VA	6	1			7
VI		3		1	4
WA	4	3	1		8
WI			1		1
WY			1		1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>461</b>

**Table 2:**  
Media format by state for minority-owned stations.  
(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports)



### Size of communities with women- and minority-owned stations

Nearly all broadcast stations with majority women and minority ownership in the FCC reports for 2005 are located in rural areas and small towns. More than half (52%) of the women-owned stations, and well over a third (38%) of minority-owned stations are in rural communities with less than 10,000 inhabitants. Similarly, about a third of women-owned (35%) and exactly a third (33%) of minority-owned stations are in small towns. By contrast, fewer women-owned (11%) and minority-owned (17%) stations are located in urban settings. We did not conduct research on stations located in U.S. territories. Tables 3 and 4 show size of communities where women- and minority-owned media are located. We note, however, that if the 71 stations owned by Radio One were included, the percentage of urban stations would have increased noticeably for both women and minorities.

SIZE OF COMMUNITY	MEDIA FORMAT					
	AM	FM	TV	TX & OTHER	Grand Totals	Percentage (N=436)
Rural (<10,000)	93	129	4	2	<b>228</b>	<b>52%</b>
Small town (11,000-99,000)	65	62	22	5	<b>154</b>	<b>35%</b>
Urban (>100,000)	24	7	12	2	<b>45</b>	<b>11%</b>
U.S. territories (community size undetermined)	5	4	0	0	<b>9</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3:** Size of community where women-owned stations located, by media format  
(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports)

SIZE OF COMMUNITY	MEDIA FORMAT					
	AM	FM	TV	TX & OTHER	Grand Totals	Percentage (N=461)
RURAL (<10,000)	65	98	2	11	<b>176</b>	<b>38%</b>
SMLTWN (11,000-99,000)	90	46	10	7	<b>153</b>	<b>33%</b>
URBAN (>100,000)	55	6	8	3	<b>72</b>	<b>17%</b>
U.S. territories (community size undetermined)	29	16	8	7	<b>60</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4:** Size of community where minority-owned media stations are located, by media format.  
(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports)

### Patterns in gender and ethnicity in ownership

Three-fourths (75%) of women-owned stations in the FCC's 2005 reports are actually owned by both men and women. We found that more than 50 (13%) of those stations have women holding less than 60% of the vote, and in many cases women's controlling interest is as low as 50.25% -- barely a "woman-owned station." In fact, many "women-owned companies" appear to be family corporations in which the female owner(s) are greatly outnumbered by the male owners. In terms of ethnic composition, nearly all (83%) of the owners in women-owned stations, according to FCC reports, are white, not of Hispanic descent. The very few stations with all minority owners include Hispanics, 5%; Asians 5%; and Blacks 4%. The remaining 3% are stations whose owners are of multiple ethnicities. Table 5 shows ethnic breakdowns in women-owned media.

ETHNICITY OF OWNERS	MEDIA FORMAT					
	AM	FM	TV	TX & OTHER	Grand Totals	Percentage (N=436)
Asian	10	5	4	1	20	5 %
Black	12	6	Unk.		18	4 %
Hispanic	15	8	1		24	5 %
Multiple ethnicities	4	4	4	0	12	3 %
White	146	179	29	8	361	83 %
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Table 5: Ethnicity of owners in women-owned stations, by media format.**  
(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports)

STATE OR TERRITORY	GENDER OF OWNER(S)				
	MEN & WOMEN	WOMEN ONLY	MEN ONLY	GENDER UNK..	GRAND TOTALS
AL	8		14		22
AR	10		5		15
AS			1		1
AZ	10		1		11
CA	29	4	42		75
CO			4		4
CT	2		3		5
FL	9	2	9		20
GA	8	1	11		20
GU	1				1
HI	4		1		5
IA	1				1
IL	1				1
IN	1		1		2
KS	2		1		3
LA	7	1	2		10
MA	1		1		2
MD	5		1		6
MI		1	5		6
MO	2				2
MS	15		5		20
MT			2		2
NC	15	1	5		21
NE			5		5
NJ			1		1
NM	9		4		13
NV			1		1
NY	3	1	1		5
OH	1		2		3
OK	14		1		15
PA			3		3
PR	40		15		55
RI			1		1
SC	2		9		11
TN	2		1		3
TX	32	5	30		67
UT			1	1	2
VA	7				7
VI	4				4
WA	2	2	4		8
WI	1				1
WY	1				1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>461</b>

**Table 6: Gender of minority-owned media by state.**

(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports).

Just over half (54%) of all minority-owned media who are listed in the 2005 Form 323 summary have both male and female owners, with nearly half (42%) having male owners only. The remaining 4% is composed of stations with all women owners. **Table 6** shows the distribution of gender in ownership by state, among minority-owned stations. Hispanics (45%) account for nearly half of all minority broadcast owners, with Blacks about a third (30%), Asians (7%), American Indians (4%), and Native Hawaiians comprising most of the remainder (3%). A few (11%) of minority-owned stations have owners with varied ethnicities. **Table 7** shows the range of ethnicities, by media format.

ETHNICITY	MEDIA FORMATS						Percentage (N=461)
	AM	FM	FX	TV	TX & OTHER	Grand Totals	
American Indian	8	9				17	4%
Asian	19	6		6	1	32	7%
Black	79	50		5	2	136	30%
Hispanic	104	71	8	17	10	210	45%
Multiple races	25	18	1	6		50	11%
Native Hawaiian	3	13				16	3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 7: Ethnicity of owners in minority-owned media by media format.**  
(Byerly analysis of 2005 FCC reports)

## COMPARISON TO 2003 OWNERSHIP DATA<sup>9</sup>

Out of the total 11,609 stations that filed ownership reports with the FCC in 2003, only 412 media companies (3.5%) were identified as having an ownership structure in which females controlled a greater than 50% voting interest. This figure is slightly higher than the more current 2005 ownership of 3.4%. This slight decline is important in that it appears to represent a continuing (and troubling) five-year trend. Again, we emphasize the difficulty of making an accurate assessment of slight decline given the apparent incompleteness of the databases on which they are based. However, even the extent to which we can follow the scant information available, we would register concerns. Women's broadcast ownership was at 4.3% in 2001, meaning that the present (2005) percentage of 3.4% is almost a full percentage point drop in half a decade.

Our analysis of the 2003 data showed that two-thirds of the woman-owned stations were concentrated in about a dozen states, with Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, and North Carolina having the greatest numbers. As the current 2005 data also show, women in 2003 owned mostly AM and FM radio stations, with very few (7%) being TV stations. In 2003, as in the current 2005 data, women-owned companies were remarkably white (90%) in their ethnicity, though the more recent data show a slight improvement with a drop in white female ownership from 90 to a pres-

ent 83%. Troubling, however, is that some of the minority-owned women's stations in 2003 have disappeared in the more current 2005 reports. These include, for example, WFLI-AM, in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, owned by two Asian women; WYNS-AM in Leighton, Pennsylvania, two of whose owners are African-American women; WGLI-FM, in Hancock, Michigan, and its sister station WCUP-FM in nearby L'anse, Michigan, an all American Indian-owned station serving the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. These owners did apparently file Form 323 reports (as the FCC's more complete CDBS database reveals); however, these were not subsequently included in the FCC's data for women-owned stations. Such examples illustrate the extent of the "reliable data problem" in the FCC's collection and processing of the ownership reports, and compel us, again, to call for an immediate improvement to the situation.

In 2003, the FCC registered Form 323 reports from 389 minority-owned broadcast stations. That year, more than 20% of those stations were located in Puerto Rico. The remainder was concentrated in 13 states, with California, Texas, North Carolina, Alabama and Georgia having between 20 and 43 stations each. Well over half (58%) of the minority-owned stations in 2003 were AM radio stations, with another 38% being FM radio stations. The few remaining (4%) were TV stations. These percentages are almost identical to the more recent 2005 data for minority ownership, in which 52% were AM-owned radio stations, 36% were FM stations, and only 7% TV stations.

In minority-owned stations, 2003 reports showed the largest ethnic group to be black (38%), with Hispanic (28%) second, Asian (12%) third, American Indian (4%), with the remaining stations having multiple ethnicities.

Both 2003 and 2005 data for minority-owned stations reveal trouble spots. For example, the state of Pennsylvania, with large African-American populations in Philadelphia and other urban areas, showed only one minority-owned AM station in 2003 and only three in 2005. Illinois showed only five minority-owned stations, including one black-owned AM station; one Asian-owned AM, two Asian-owned FM, and one Hispanic-owned FM station), even though Illinois has large African-American and Hispanic populations, particularly around Chicago.

---

**...both women and  
minority broadcasters  
appear to serve primarily  
rural areas and small  
towns.**

---

In 2005, only one minority-owned AM station is reported in the FCC data. Similarly, Hawaii, which has large Japanese and other Asian populations, listed only one FM and one TV station, both Asian owned, in 2003; the 2005 FCC data for Hawaii lists one AM, one TV and three FM Asian-owned stations. The greatest concern raised by these data, however, is their apparent incompleteness, due to the FCC's failure in administrative monitoring of the Form 323/E reporting and the subsequent posting of the data for public consumption.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

---

We have observed in earlier research (Byerly 2004) that most analysis of media ownership is accomplished through a gender- and race-neutral lens, making it difficult to situate women and minorities' interests in the bigger picture. The reopening of a public commentary period on media ownership, by the FCC, pursuant to the Prometheus ruling in 2003, provided a context for this to be addressed.<sup>10</sup>

The foregoing analysis of media ownership data filed by companies in which women and minorities hold a greater than 50% began with an acknowledgment of the inadequacies of the data base for these companies, and provid-

ed both a critique of the problems and recommendations for remediating them. We recognize that these problems are not new but that they likely characterize reports of women and minority-owned companies for earlier reporting in years 2003 and 2001, as well. What meaning can then be derived from an analysis of such flawed data, one might ask?

There are several significant points to be taken from the foregoing analysis, which covers two reporting years (2003 and 2005, the latter in more detail). The first is that both women and minority broadcasters appear to serve primarily rural areas and small towns, and, in some cases, they may be the only local-based media that residents have available to them. These media thus find themselves in a unique position to provide information and cultural programming specifically relevant to audiences that would otherwise not be available. It also affords them an opportunity to provide a wide range of views with respect to public affairs issues affecting women and minorities. Further research is needed to learn the extent to which such diversity in program content exists.

A second and related point is that most of the media owned by women and minority broadcasters are AM or FM radio, the medium that is most affordable, available, and convenient to audiences. Radio is recognized by media scholars as the "intimate medium," in that it is used in the private spaces of the car, bedroom, home, and often by people when they are alone. Thus, radio has the chance to communicate in intimate times and places with listeners in ways that television does not. Radio historian Susan J. Douglas (1999) says that the radio, more than any other technology,

... has worked most powerfully inside our heads, helping us create internal maps of the world and our place in it, urging us to construct imagined communities to which do, or do not, belong. (Douglas 1999, p. 5).

Douglas also acknowledges that the radio, more than any other medium, has emphasized the country's ethnic, racial, geographic, and gendered divisions by being able to shape its content to the segmented audience along demographic and interest lines. This point was demonstrated some years ago during a time of crisis, when in the mid 1960s, it was black radio that residents of inner cities turned to for information and opinion about the rioting taking place in many major U.S. cities. Mainstream (white-oriented) news, minority city residents told researchers, was untrustworthy, because it carried a white bias. Indeed, these views were supported by government-



funded research funded, commissioned by President Johnson's Commission on Civil Disturbances. The Commission concluded that the news media had contributed to underlying causes of the riots by failing to convey to the broader society the misery and frustration of those living in black urban communities. The Commission subsequently recommended that mainstream news organizations expand hiring of minority reporters, work more closely with black leaders and the editors of black newspapers, and establish contacts (for use as news sources) in minority communities, among other things (Kerner Report 1968).

Some sources suggest that progress has been made. The *Broadcasting & Cable 2005 Yearbook* (2004) identifies approximately 80 different "radio formats," with more than a third of them named by the ethnic audiences they serve – Albanian, Arabic, Black, Hebrew, Spanish, etc. In addition, "talk radio," defined as "topical programs on subjects including health, finance, and community issues," emerged on both broadcast and cable radio stations in the 1990s as an increasingly popular format in local communities, small and large (*Broadcasting & Cable 2005 Yearbook*, p. D-696). Indeed, such assumptions are grounded in historical events, such as the founding of the nation's first Black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in 1927, by Russworm and Cornish, who wanted a forum for abolitionist views that white-owned newspapers would not carry (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998). Feminists have also championed women's ownership of their own media through the years as a way to better assure the circulation of progressive women's views (Byerly & Ross 2006).

At the present time, the FCC also continues to assume that connection. And yet the strong irony we must note is that women and minorities' ability to own more media outlets remains thwarted. Recognizing that a lack of capital was a great factor, the civil rights organization Minority Media Telecommunications Council (MMTC), which represents more than 50 minority media organizations, has sponsored an annual Access to Capital conference in Washington, DC, for several years. The event, which strives to bring both women and men concerned about ownership together, is aimed at expanding their access to financiers and policy makers (<http://www.mmtc-online.org/access>). Since 1997, MMTC has also sponsored the only minority-owned full service media brokerage in the United States in order to promote minority ownership (ibid.).

Radio, which is less expensive than television to finance and operate, makes it more accessible to those historically marginalized economically – females, racial minorities,

low-income persons. While such accessibility is a positive thing on the one hand, it also signals a serious problem on the other. Television, the most watched medium and the one where millions living in the U.S. prefer to get their news and information, is presently dominated by powerful, elite and nearly all white male owners, as the present report has suggested. Is this, however, a problem for the audience and its search for diversity in programming? Some research (Cass 1981) suggests that the steady growth of cable television signals audiences' quest for choice is being met. But the fact that other research suggests that television content, both public affairs and entertainment, remains marked by a white conservative male bias is troubling. Hunt (2005) notes that race permeates television content in one way or another. He says that:

[T]he black-white binary is particularly powerful because it is so efficient and effective in exaggerating racial difference, in helping to establish order – *a racial order*, if you will. To be sure, those who have a "possessive investment in whiteness"<sup>11</sup> have a fundamental need for blackness (Hunt, 2005, p. 3).

Research must continue to examine the critical junctures and inter-relatedness among race and gender in ownership, employment and content so as to better inform public policy with respect to ownership and messages contained in broadcast news and programming, particularly in an era when demographics are dramatically shifting on the American landscape. Within a few years, the dominance of white media ownership will be an anachronism in a nation soon expected to have a majority non-white population. In addition, the enduring patterns of social marginalization for women and ethnic minorities must be understood as indicating a lack of access to channels of communication, and the ability to participate fully in public discourse, political debate, and the articulation of diverse perspectives and social policies that come with such access. The Federal Communications Commission has a present and urgent task in addressing these inequities through regulation that enables women and minorities to expand their ownership in broadcast media.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Reporting occurred in 2001, 2003, and 2005, pursuant to the Commission's rules at 47 C.F.R. 3615. Reports will be due again in 2007.

<sup>2</sup>FCC 323, Instructions for Ownership Report, June



2002.

<sup>3</sup>We will refer to these together in shorthand as Form 323/E. Form 323 is filed by commercial broadcast stations, while Form 323-E is filed by noncommercial broadcast stations.

<sup>4</sup>We will refer to these together in shorthand as 2005.

<sup>5</sup>Jim Brown and Hossein Hashemzadeh, FCC staff, personal communication, August 25, 2006.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>"Broadcast station totals as of March 31, 2006," FCC news release, May 26, 2006.

<sup>8</sup>Information obtained from S. Derek Turner, Free Press, through personal communication, August 8, 2006.

<sup>9</sup>The author appreciates the assistance of L. Simone Byrd in the compilation and analysis of 2003 ownership data.

<sup>10</sup>"FCC Opens Media ownership Proceeding for Public Comment," (press release), Federal Communication Commission, June 21, 2006.

<sup>11</sup>George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Benefit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

## REFERENCES

*Broadcasting & Cable Yearbook 2005*. (2004). New York: Broadcasting & Cable.

Byerly, C. M. (2004). Women and the Concentration of Media Ownership. In R.R. Rush, C. E. Oukrop, and P. J. Creedon (Eds.), *Seeking Equity for Women in Journalism & Mass Communication Education: A 30-year Update*, pp. 245-262. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

Byerly, C. M. (2002). Gender and the Political Economy of Newsmaking: A Case Study of Human Rights Coverage. In E. R. Meehan and E. Riordan (Eds.), *Sex & Money: Feminism and Political Economy in*

*the Media*, pp. 130-146. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Byerly, C.M. and Ross, K. (2006). *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications.

Campbell, C. P. (2005). A Myth of Assimilation: Enlightened Racism and the News. In D. M. Hunt (Ed.), *Channeling Blackness: Studies on Television and Race in America*, pp. 137-174. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cass, R. A. (1981). *Revolution in the wasteland: Value and diversity in television*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Douglas, S. J. (1999). *Listening: Radio and the American Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Einstein, M. (2004). *Media Diversity: Economics, Ownership, and the FCC*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) website, [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov), accessed numerous times since June 2006.

Folkerts, J. and Teeter, Dwight L., Jr. (1998). *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Hunt, D. M. (Ed.). (2005). *Channeling Blackness: Studies on Television and Race in America*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.,

Kerner Commission. (1968). *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. New York: E.P. Dutton.

Minority Media and Telecommunication Council (MMTC) website, [www.mmtconline.org](http://www.mmtconline.org), accessed August 26, 2006.

Siegelman, P. and Waldfogel, J. (2001). Race and Radio: Preference Externalities, Minority Ownership, and the Provision of Programming to Minorities. *Advertising and Differentiated Products* 10, pp. 73-107.

# DO RADIO COMPANIES OFFER MORE VARIETY WHEN THEY EXCEED THE LOCAL OWNERSHIP CAP?

Peter DiCola

---

## Executive Summary

- *The method by which the FCC defines markets shapes how the local ownership caps will actually be enforced.*
- *From 1992 until 2004, the FCC's signal-contour market definition allowed more consolidation than Arbitron's market definition would have allowed.*
- *Because of mergers allowed during the signal-contour market definition era, in 104 markets there is now at least one radio company or organization that exceeds the local ownership cap.*
- *Station groups that are over the cap and station groups that are exactly at the cap offer less variety in programming for mats than station groups that are under the cap.*
- *Relatively uncommon or "niche" formats like classical, jazz, folk, tejano, and gospel are least common among station groups that are over the cap or exactly at the cap—even though those station groups have the most spectrum to spend on niche formats—while being much more common among station groups that are under the cap.*

## INTRODUCTION

---

In 1996, the U.S. Congress passed a law that launched the transformation of the radio industry over the course of just a few years. The Telecommunications Act eliminated the limit on how many stations one entity could own nationally and raised the limits on how many stations one entity could own locally.<sup>1</sup> Advocates of the bill argued that a radio industry with larger firms would be better for business and for the public.<sup>2</sup> Before Congress relaxed the previous restrictions on radio-station ownership, radio was an industry of small, "mom-and-pop" radio companies, with a few regional companies as well. By 2001, radio had become an oligopolistic industry populated by national and multinational media conglomerates, large regional companies, and a smaller group of "mom-and-pop" companies.<sup>3</sup>

Now, a decade after the Telecommunications Act of 1996, we can assess the more complex aspects and consequences

of the legislation. The FCC's Local Radio Ownership Rule, although relaxed by Congress in the Telecommunications Act,<sup>4</sup> still limits the number of stations that one company can own or control within a local market. But enforcement of this rule depends on the details. Most important among the details is the particular way the FCC defines a local market.<sup>5</sup> The precise definition of what constitutes a local market determines how the FCC actually enforces cap on local radio ownership.

From 1992 to 2004, the FCC used what is known as the "signal-contour" method of defining local markets, based on the overlapping signal coverage areas of radio stations.<sup>6</sup> Because of certain aspects of this method, explained later in this paper, the signal-contour market definition allowed greater consolidation than a geographically-based method market definition—for example, defining local markets to correspond to metropolitan areas—would have allowed.

In the fall of 2004, the FCC switched to a geographically-

based market definition, now borrowing its method of market definition from the Arbitron Company, which provides ratings of radio stations in local markets.<sup>7</sup> The Arbitron market definition is more restrictive when applied to the Local Radio Ownership Rule—it would have allowed less consolidation of ownership if it had been in place since 1992. Owners in excess of the local radio ownership caps in certain markets because of the change in market definition received the benefit of the grandfather clause.

This paper attempts to answer several questions that arise once we notice the profound consequences of the perhaps arcane detail of the FCC’s signal-contour market definition: How many markets have owners whose holdings exceed the local radio ownership cap? How many markets have owners whose holdings put them exactly up to the cap?

What’s more, analyzing such markets can provide answers to other questions about the results of consolidation: Do larger station groups offer more variety? Have the station groups above the cap that are exempted, or “grandfathered in,” taken advantage of their size to offer more niche programming formats than the smaller station groups? As this paper will demonstrate, additional consolidation facilitated by the signal-contour market definition is widespread, but has not provided the public with additional programming variety. In fact, the large station groups above the local ownership cap that were exempted from the rule offer less variety, in aggregate, than smaller station groups.

## THE LOCAL RADIO OWNERSHIP RULE

The FCC’s Local Radio Ownership Rule uses a sliding scale, based on how many stations are in a local market, to determine the applicable limit on station ownership in each local market. There are three facets of the rule. First,

there is a limit on the total number of commercial stations owned in a local market. Second, there is a separate limit on ownership of commercial FM stations. Third, there is a separate limit on ownership of commercial AM stations.

The caps Congress specified in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 remain in force today, and Table 1 describes them.<sup>8</sup> The details of how those caps are applied, however, have changed, as this paper will discuss later.

The rule as described in the last four rows of Table 1 is not spelled out explicitly, but is implied by the limitation that no entity can own more than 50 percent of the stations in a local radio market. The Local Radio Ownership Rule is a limit on the number of *commercial* stations an entity may own—even though the size of a market (the left-most column of Table 1) includes both commercial and noncommercial stations.

A radio company can exceed any or all of the facets of the Local Radio Ownership Rule in a particular local market. For instance, in large markets, the total limit is 8 commercial stations while the AM and FM limits each stand at 5 commercial stations. If one company has a station group with 11 total stations, 6 FM and 5 AM, then that company would exceed the limit with respect to two facets of the Local Radio Ownership Rule (the total cap and the FM cap) while reaching the AM cap exactly. Thus the categories of “station groups exceeding the total limit,” “station groups reaching the FM limit exactly,” and so on, can overlap.

How the FCC applies the Local Radio Ownership Rule depends on another important detail: which stations are considered part of a local market and which stations are not. Applying a local cap to a “market” necessitates that the FCC define what a market is and specify what each market includes. The particular way the FCC defines markets determines how the cap on local radio ownership will be enforced.

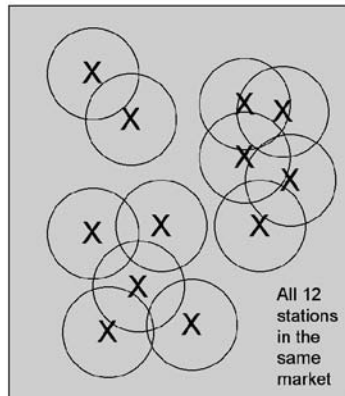
In a market with...	Total Limit	AM Limit	FM Limit
45 or more stations	8 stations	5 stations	5 stations
30 to 44 stations	7 stations	4 stations	4 stations
15 to 29 stations	6 stations	4 stations	4 stations
10 to 14 stations	5 stations	3 stations	3 stations
8 or 9 stations	4 stations	3 stations	3 stations
6 or 7 stations	3 stations	3 stations	3 stations
4 or 5 stations	2 stations	2 stations	2 stations
1 to 3 stations	1 station	1 station	1 station

**Table 1: The Local Radio Ownership Rule**

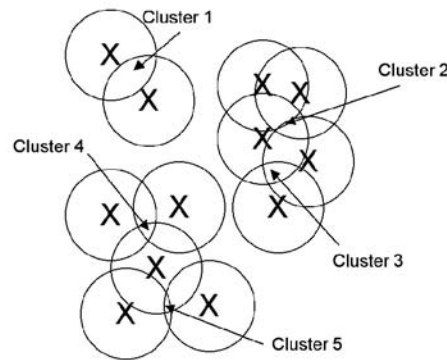
**The FCC had two basic choices to define a “radio market.”**

Suppose there are 12 radio stations in an around a particular city or town. “X” marks the position of each tower, and each circle represents the signal coverage area.

**Option #1:** Define a geographic boundary, i.e. a metropolitan area



**Option #2:** Define markets based on clusters around areas of common overlap.



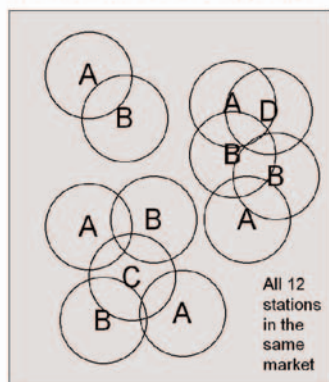
The FCC implemented option #2 in 1992 as its method of market definition. Only in September 2004 did the FCC switch to option #1, using Arbitron markets.

**Figure 1-A. The FCC’s Signal-Contour Market Definition (as used from 1992-2004).**

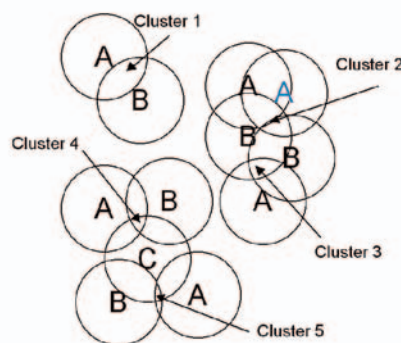
## THE FCC’S IDIOSYNCRATIC MARKET DEFINITION

For many decades until 2004, the FCC used a signal-contour method of defining local markets. Signal-contour methods are based on the overlapping signal coverage areas of radio stations. In 1992, the FCC codified a particular implementation of this method. The signal-contour method worked adequately until the local ownership cap increased—at which point the signal-contour method became something of a loophole.<sup>9</sup> With higher caps, the signal-contour method became more permissive and allowed more consolidation to occur. Figures 1-A and 1-B explain how, in some markets, a market definition based on signal contours allowed more mergers among radio companies to transpire than would have been permissible otherwise.

Option #1 defines a 12-station market, so local cap of 5 applies, following Table 2-3’s sliding scale.



Option #2 defines 5 clusters as markets. Within each cluster-market, no company may own more than half the stations, again following Table 2-3.



Option #1 limits companies A and B to 5 stations. Option #2, with the same geographic area broken into several clusters, permits company A to own 6 stations instead. In our example, this eliminates one independent owner (company D) and allows more consolidation.

**Figure 1-B. The FCC’s Signal-Contour Market Definition (as used from 1992-2004), continued.**



Holdings acquired under the old signal-contour market definition have been grandfathered in. Thus, situations in which some entity exceeds the cap are not necessarily illegal. Such situations illustrate, however, that regulatory details can matter quite a bit. And this highlights another problem with the signal-contour market definition, beyond the way it exacerbated increasing consolidation.

The signal-contour method market definition, in particular, is almost hopelessly complicated to analyze, let alone explain. Signal-contour-defined markets exist only in the most intangible way. For example, a station in Waterbury, Connecticut could be in hundreds of different markets, depending on how many stations' signals its own signal overlaps. Arbitron's method of market definition—assigning each station to exactly one market—is much more practical and intuitive. Thinking of markets in terms of the convoluted and multiplicative signal-contour market definition is like staring at the radio industry through the looking glass.

Moreover, such a lack of clarity makes it difficult for the public to monitor the industry—or for the FCC itself to do so. It was such a big problem, in fact, that the FCC actually had to solve it by switching to the Arbitron definition in September 2004. While FCC saw fit to fix the problem, the results remain from the many years that they used the opaque signal-contour market definition.

## IN EXCESS OF THE CAP, BUT GRANDFATHERED IN

The Arbitron market definition is more restrictive when used to apply the Local Radio Ownership Rule—if it had been in place since 1992, it would have allowed less ownership consolidation. The change in market definition

meant that, suddenly, some radio station owners exceeded the local cap in some markets. But rather than making local owners divest stations held in excess of the local caps, the FCC grandfathered in the excessive holdings.

The issue of market definition explains why radio companies in some markets appear to have radio-station holdings that violate the FCC's Local Radio Ownership Rule. For example, when a company owns nine stations in a market with a cap of seven stations, the signal-contour market definition can often explain the apparent violation. Many owners now exceed the local ownership cap and have been grandfathered in since the market definition changed in 2004. Table 2 shows how many markets and how many owners are in such a situation.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2 shows that, as of fall 2005, at least one radio owner exceeded at least one of the limits of the Local Radio Ownership Rule in 104 different local markets, or over one-third of all Arbitron markets. (There are 297 markets that Arbitron tracks within the U.S., not including Puerto Rico.) That breaks down across the three facets of the Rule as follows: in 56 markets at least one radio owner exceeded the cap on total commercial stations; in 92 markets, at least one owner exceeded the cap on commercial FM stations; and in 3 markets, one owner exceeded the cap on commercial AM stations.

The appendix to this paper lists the individual Arbitron markets in which at least one entity exceeds the cap.

Many more station groups exactly reach, but do not exceed, the local ownership cap. In fall 2005, this situation existed in 194 local markets, or nearly two-thirds of all Arbitron markets. (Note that these 194 markets may overlap with the 104 markets in which at least one station group exceeds the cap.)

Category	Number of Station Groups	Number of Markets	Percentage of Markets
<b>At Least One Station Group Exceeds <u>Overall</u> Cap</b>	60	56	19%
<b>At Least One Station Group Exceeds <u>FM</u> Cap</b>	114	92	31%
<b>At Least One Station Group Exceeds <u>AM</u> Cap</b>	3	3	1%
<b>At Least One Station Group Exceeds At Least One Aspect of the Cap (Overall, FM, or AM)</b>	128	104	35%
<b>Table 2. Markets with Station Groups in Excess of the Local Ownership Cap.</b>			



This breaks down among the three facets of the Rule as follows: in 101 markets, at least one radio owner had holdings that exactly reach the cap on total commercial stations; in 186 markets, at least one radio owner had exactly reached the cap on commercial FM stations; and in 24 markets, at least one radio owner had exactly reached the cap on commercial AM stations.

## EXCEEDING THE CAPS MEANS GREATER CONCENTRATION

Increasing the local caps while using the signal-contour market definition resulted in even higher levels of concentration than increasing the caps while using Arbitron's market definition would have allowed. The concentration of ownership, as measured by the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), is greater in markets with at least one entity in excess of the cap. HHI is equal to the sum of the square of each company's market share, and ranges from 0 to 10,000. A merger between two companies in a local market increases the HHI because the sum of two squared market shares is less than the square of the sum of those two market shares.

HHIs above 1000, and especially HHIs above 1800, have traditionally triggered closer antitrust concern for the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission. Though HHI figures are not used rigidly in antitrust regulation, HHIs in excess of 1800 generally lead to close scrutiny for mergers that would increase the HHI by 50 points or more.<sup>11</sup>

Markets with at least one owner in excess of some aspect of the local ownership cap have an average listenership-ratings HHI of 2868, compared to an average of 2465 for markets

without. HHIs based on stations' advertising revenue show a similar difference: 3741 for markets with an owner in excess of the cap, 3431 for markets without.<sup>12</sup> Thus, markets with cap-exceeding owners have HHIs which are 403 points greater (using shares of listenership ratings) and 310 points greater (using shares of advertising revenue).

This shows how important regulatory details like market definition can become. The differences in HHIs in markets with station groups exceeding the local caps versus those markets without such station groups, if they were caused by a single merger, would be many times larger than the difference generally needed to trigger antitrust concern under the merger guidelines of the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission.

## LARGE COMPANIES OVER THE LIMIT

Which companies tend to stand in excess of, or at the exact level of, the local ownership caps? Table 3 shows the ten largest owners of U.S. radio stations (by market share) and displays the number of local markets in which they are over or exactly any facet of the local radio ownership cap.<sup>13</sup> Clear Channel exceeds the cap in the most local markets, followed by Cumulus, Citadel, and Infinity (now CBS Radio). Markets listed in the two columns of Table 3 can overlap, as described above.

Radio owners with holdings that exceed or exactly reach the Local Radio Ownership Rule thus tend to be national companies, as opposed to regional or local companies. One might define "local" based on the number of metropolitan areas, states, or counties in which a radio company has holdings.

Company	Number of Markets Company is <u>Over</u> the Total, FM, and/or AM Cap	Number of Markets Company is <u>Exactly At</u> the Total, AM, and/or FM Cap
Clear Channel Communications	43	89
Infinity Broadcasting (CBS Radio)	1	13
Citadel Broadcasting Corp. (pre-merger w/ ABC Radio)	6	14
ABC/Disney (before sale of ABC Radio)	0	1
Cumulus Broadcasting Inc.	13	22
Cumulus Media Partners LLC (Cumulus Has 25% Stake)	0	1
Cox Radio Inc.	2	6
Entercom	4	5
Radio One Inc.	1	4
Univision Communications Inc.	1	1
Emmis Communications	1	0
Bonneville International Corp.	0	0

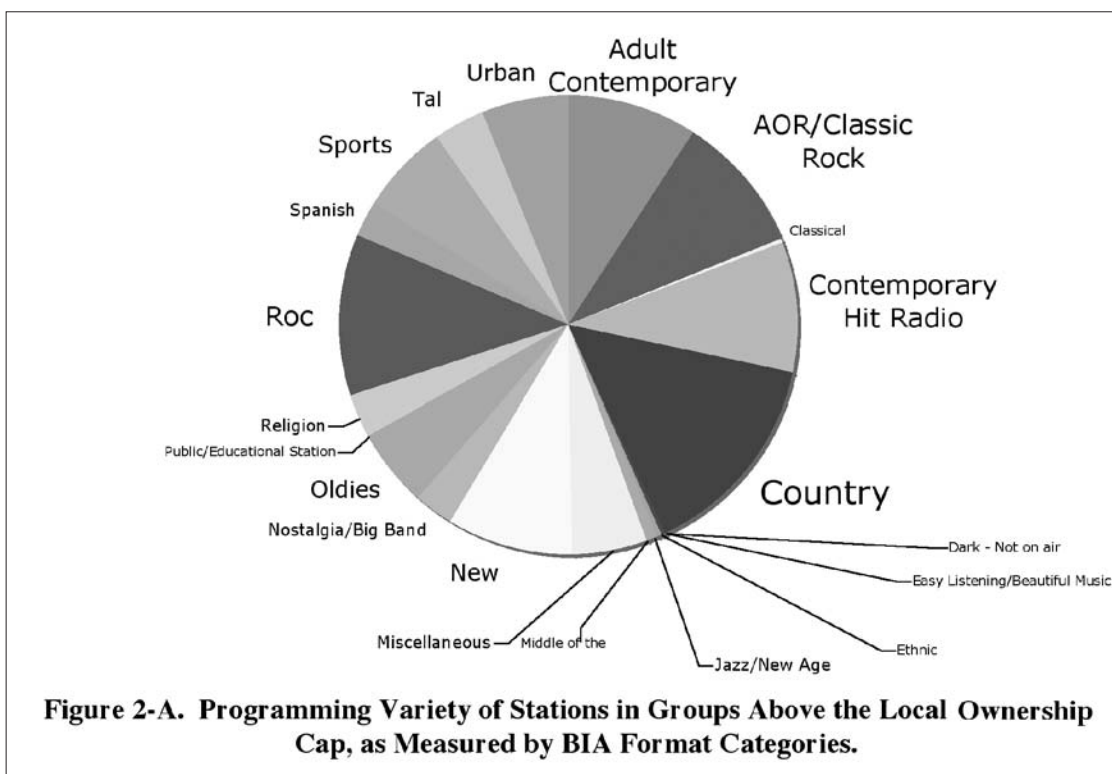
Using this definition of local, only 7 instances of a company exceeding the total ownership cap involve a local company with holdings restricted to a single Arbitron market (out of a total of 60 such limit-exceeding station groups across 56 Arbitron markets). Only 11 instances of a company exceeding the total ownership cap involve companies with all their holdings within a single U.S. state. And only 9 instances of a company exceeding the total ownership cap involve companies with all their holdings restricted to one or two counties.

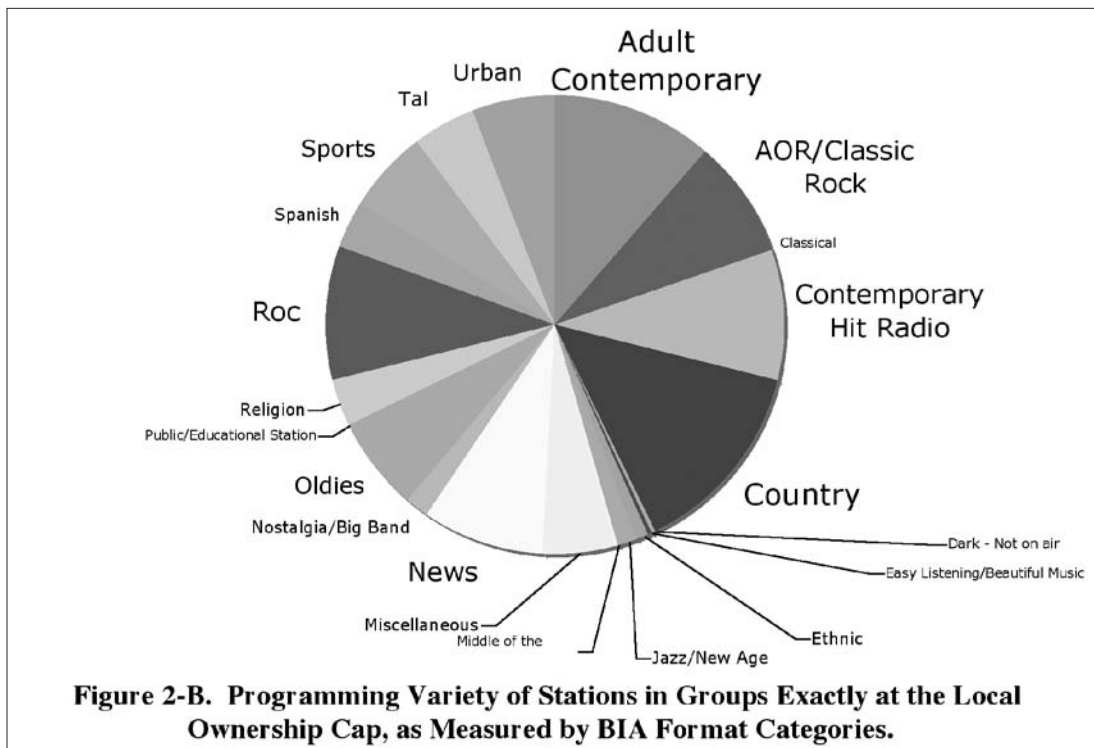
## PROGRAMMING VARIETY

In theory, large station groups offer radio companies an opportunity to offer the widest variety. It stands to reason that a station group containing, say, twelve stations could be more likely to offer a wider variety of programming formats than a station group with only four stations. So one might expect station groups in excess of the local ownership cap to offer programming in a wider range of programming formats. These groups do not simply have large numbers of stations—they also have more stations than their competitors. And the shift to an Arbitron market definition together with their grandfathered status protects them from competitors owning as many stations as they do.

BIA Financial Networks categorizes each U.S. radio station's programming format into one of twenty-one categories. To measure programming variety among station groups in excess of the local ownership cap, one can calculate the frequency of the each BIA format category among them. Despite the hypothesis that larger station groups will offer more variety, the contrary is true. Figures 2-A, 2-B, and 2-C are pie charts showing the programming offerings of the aggregate set of station groups in excess of the cap, the aggregate set of station groups exactly at the cap, and the aggregate set of station groups below the cap, respectively.<sup>14</sup>

The pie charts in Figures 2-A and 2-B are highly similar. The largest station groups—that is, those in excess of or exactly at the local ownership cap—focus on six format categories: Adult Contemporary, Album-Oriented Rock/Classic Rock, Contemporary Hit Radio (Top 40), Country, News, and Rock. The other format categories are underrepresented compared to the rest of radio. Among the largest station groups, Spanish-format stations are relatively underrepresented. Meanwhile

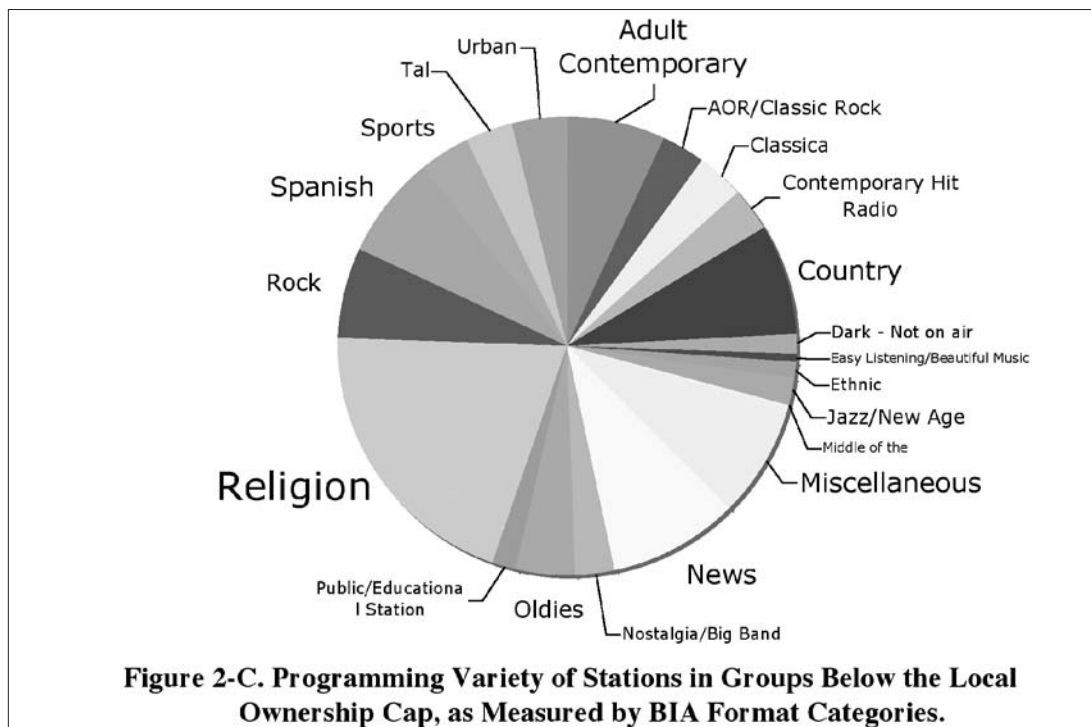




Classical stations or Educational are almost nonexistent among large station groups.

The pie chart in Figure 2-C, on the other hand, differs from the other two charts. Religious-format stations and Spanish-format stations are more common, as are Classical and Jazz/New Age stations. The balance across all programming format categories is generally more even. It appears that a wider variety of programming comes from the relatively small station groups—not the large station groups that resulted from the FCC’s signal-contour market definition. This finding casts doubt on any potential claims that larger station groups will offer the public a wider variety of programming.

## LESS COMMON



Programming Format	Stations In Groups Above the Limit	%	Stations In Groups Exactly at the Limit	%	Stations In Groups Below the Limit	%
Classical	3	0.3%	2	0.1%	187	3.2%
Jazz	2	0.2%	1	0.1%	60	1.0%
Big Band	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	0.2%
Gospel	21	2.4%	27	1.8%	281	4.8%
Christian Contemporary	3	0.3%	9	0.6%	253	4.3%
Folk/Americana/Bluegrass	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15	0.3%
Tejano/Ranchera/Reggaeton/Tropical	1	0.1%	6	0.4%	16	0.3%
Children	1	0.1%	3	0.2%	54	0.9%
Eclectic	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	16	0.3%
Easy Listening/Beautiful Music	2	0.2%	3	0.2%	29	0.5%
Other Formats	853	96.3%	1462	96.6%	4949	84.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1513</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5874</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4. Less Common Music Formats in U.S. Arbitron-Rated Markets.**

## FORMATS

A company allowed to have holdings in excess of the Local Radio Ownership Rule's limits will have the most opportunities to program in specific "niche" formats within the BIA format categories discussed in the last section. For example, if a radio company has 10 stations in a local market in which all other companies are now limited to 7 stations, then those 3 stations in excess give an owner particular flexibility. Thus it is natural to ask whether radio companies in excess of the ownership caps tend to program more diverse or unusual formats. One might think that large, grandfathered-in station groups offer radio companies an opportunity to experiment. As it happens, companies do not appear to take that opportunity.

Looking at a group of ten less common music formats, one can compare the offerings of radio companies in markets where their holdings exceed the local ownership caps to the offerings of all other radio companies. This analysis, displayed in Table 4, looks only at stations in the 297 Arbitron-rated markets in the U.S.<sup>15</sup>

As Table 4 demonstrates, the ten types of less common music formats listed above are actually *underrepresented* among owners with holdings in excess of the ownership caps. This is the case even though radio owners who exceed the Local Ownership Rule have greater flexibility to choose formats in their larger portfolios of stations.

The musical variety across the Arbitron markets is coming from radio owners whose holdings are under the caps, or whose holdings meet the caps exactly. Instead, owners who exceed the local ownership cap tend to program in the more common Country, Adult Contemporary, Top 40, Urban, Rock, and AOR/Classic Rock formats.

## CONCLUSION

The FCC's implementation of the Local Radio Ownership Rule has resulted in a greater amount of consolidation in some markets as compared to others. In 104 markets, at least one radio owner exceeds the Local Radio Ownership Rule. Most instances of exceeding the local ownership caps involve the ten largest owners of radio companies. Yet despite their large portfolios of stations, radio owners with station groups in excess of the local ownership caps do not tend to program in a diverse range of formats. Instead, they focus on a relatively narrow range of format categories. Smaller station groups are the source of a wider and more balanced variety of programming, including so-called "niche" formats like classical, jazz, folk, tejano, and gospel.

Further research on the behavior of large station groups could expand on the findings described earlier in this paper. But to date there is no evidence that larger sta-

tion groups within local markets offer more variety or more “niche” formats. And the evidence of this paper stands to the contrary. Small, not large, station groups supply variety to radio listeners. In light of these findings, the FCC should retain its current local ownership caps for the sake of maintaining a radio industry with as many small station groups and independent (i.e., single-station) owners as possible. The FCC might also consider a policy of mandated divestiture for those station groups in excess of the local ownership cap—since there appears to be no benefit, at least in terms of programming variety, to allowing such large station groups.

## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>1</sup>Telecommunications Act of 1996 § 202(a), (b), Pub. Law No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (codified in scattered sections of 47 U.S.C.).

<sup>2</sup>See PETER DICOLA & KRISTIN THOMSON, RADIO DEREGULATION: HAS IT SERVED CITIZENS AND MUSICIANS? 5-16 (2002), at <http://www.futureofmusic.org/research/radiostudy.cfm>

<sup>3</sup>Cf. GEORGE WILLIAMS & SCOTT ROBERTS, RADIO INDUSTRY REVIEW 2002: TRENDS IN OWNERSHIP, FORMAT, AND FINANCE (Federal Communications Commission, Media Ownership Working Group Study No. 11, 2002).

<sup>4</sup>Telecommunications Act of 1996 § 202(b).

<sup>5</sup>FCC Local Radio Ownership Rule, 47 C.F.R. § 73.3555(a) (2004).

<sup>6</sup>For a helpful overview and explanation, see Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Broadcast Services; Radio Stations, Television Stations, 65 Fed. Reg. 82305 2-4 (Dec. 28, 2000).

<sup>7</sup>A federal appellate court remanded back to the FCC

parts of the rule the agency had adopted as a result of its 2002 biennial (now quadrennial) review of its media ownership rules. *Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC*, 373 F.3d 372 (3d Cir. 2004). But the court upheld certain of the FCC’s proposed changes, including those made to the radio market definition. See Notice of Public Information Collection(s) Being Reviewed by the Federal Communications Commission, Comments Requested, 69 Fed. Reg. 78022 (Dec. 29, 2004).

<sup>8</sup>FCC Local Radio Ownership Rule, 47 C.F.R. § 73.3555(a) (2004).

<sup>9</sup>Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Broadcast Services; Radio Stations, Television Stations, 65 Fed. Reg. 82305 7 (Dec. 28, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>Source data: Media Access Pro (Radio Version), BIA Financial Networks, data as of November, 2005.

<sup>11</sup>FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, COMMENTARY ON THE HORIZONTAL MERGER GUIDELINES 20-21 (2006).

<sup>12</sup>Ratings-based HHIs were calculated from Arbitron 12+ ratings share data. Revenue-based HHIs were calculated from BIA’s proprietary station-level revenue estimates. Source data: Media Access Pro (Radio Version), BIA Financial Networks, data as of November, 2005.

<sup>13</sup>Source data: Media Access Pro (Radio Version), BIA Financial Networks, data as of November, 2005.

<sup>14</sup>Source data: Media Access Pro (Radio Version), BIA Financial Networks, data as of November, 2005.

<sup>15</sup>Source data: Media Access Pro (Radio Version), BIA Financial Networks, data as of November, 2005.



**Appendix: Station Groups Exceeding the Local Ownership Cap and Grandfathered In, Listed Alphabetically by Local Market, Fall 2005.**

<b>Local Market</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Stations Owned</b>	<b>Aspect of Cap</b>	<b>Numeric Cap</b>
Albany, GA	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	8	Overall	6
Albany, GA	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	6	FM	4
Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	Pamal Bestg. Ltd	10	Overall	8
Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	Pamal Bestg. Ltd	8	FM	5
Albuquerque, NM	Citadel Bestg. Corp	8	Overall	7
Albuquerque, NM	American General Media	5	FM	4
Albuquerque, NM	Citadel Bestg. Corp	5	FM	4
Albuquerque, NM	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	4
Albuquerque, NM	Univision Comm. Inc	5	FM	4
Altoona, PA	Forever Bestg. Inc.	6	Overall	5
Altoona, PA	Forever Bestg. Inc.	4	FM	3
Atlantic City-Cape May, NJ	Equity Comm. LP	9	Overall	7
Atlantic City-Cape May, NJ	Equity Comm. LP	7	FM	4
Augusta, GA	Beasley Broadcast Group	9	Overall	7
Augusta, GA	Beasley Broadcast Group	6	FM	4
Augusta, GA	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Austin, TX	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Austin, TX	Emmis Comm.	5	FM	4
Bakersfield, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Bangor, ME	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Bangor, ME	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	4
Baton Rouge, LA	Guaranty Bestg. Company LLC	5	FM	4
Battle Creek, MI	Clear Channel Comm.	4	Overall	3
Beckley, WV	Southern Comm. Corp	6	Overall	5
Beckley, WV	Southern Comm. Corp	4	FM	3
Bismarck, ND	Clear Channel Comm.	6	Overall	5
Bloomington, IL	AAA Entertainment	4	FM	3
Bluefield, WV	Triad Bestg. Company	9	Overall	6
Bluefield, WV	Triad Bestg. Company	5	FM	4
Brunswick, GA	Qantum Comm. Corp	6	Overall	5
Brunswick, GA	Qantum Comm. Corp	4	FM	3
Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY	Entercom	7	Overall	6
Charleston, SC	Citadel Bestg. Corp	5	FM	4
Charleston, SC	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Charleston, WV	West Virginia Radio	7	Overall	6
Chattanooga, TN	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Chicago, IL	NextMedia Group	11	Overall	8
Chicago, IL	NextMedia Group	8	FM	5
Chico, CA	Results Radio LLC	5	FM	4
Clarksville-Hopkinsville, TN-KY	Saga Comm. Inc	6	Overall	5
Clarksville-Hopkinsville, TN-KY	Saga Comm. Inc	4	FM	3
Cleveland, OH	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Columbia, SC	Inner City Bestg. Corporation	5	FM	4
Columbus, GA	Clear Channel Comm.	8	Overall	6
Columbus, GA	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Columbus-Starkville-West Point, MS	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	7	Overall	6
Concord, NH	Nassau Bestg. Partners LP	8	Overall	6
Concord, NH	Nassau Bestg. Partners LP	7	FM	4
Dayton, OH	Clear Channel Comm.	8	Overall	7
Dayton, OH	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	4
Decatur, IL	Cromwell Group Inc, The	4	FM	3
Duluth-Superior, MN-WI	Red Rock Radio Corp	5	FM	4

Decatur, IL	Cromwell Group Inc, The	4	FM	3
Duluth-Superior, MN-WI	Red Rock Radio Corp	5	FM	4
Fau Claire, WI	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Elizabeth City-Nags Head, NC	East Carolina Radio Inc.	8	Overall	6
Elizabeth City-Nags Head, NC	East Carolina Radio Inc.	5	FM	4
Evansville, IN	Regent Comm., Inc	5	FM	4
Fargo-Moorhead, ND-MN	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Fargo-Moorhead, ND-MN	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Fayetteville, AR	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	7	Overall	6
Fayetteville, AR	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	5	FM	4
Florence, SC	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	8	Overall	6
Florence, SC	Qantum Comm. Corp	7	Overall	6
Florence, SC	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	6	FM	4
Florence, SC	Qantum Comm. Corp	5	FM	4
Fresno, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	5
Ft. Wayne, IN	Summit City Radio Group, LLC	5	FM	4
Gainesville-Ocala, FL	Jablamo LLC	9	Overall	7
Gainesville-Ocala, FL	Asterisk Comm. Inc.	5	FM	4
Gainesville-Ocala, FL	Jablamo LLC	5	FM	4
Grand Rapids, MI	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Green Bay, WI	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	5	FM	4
Greenville-New Bern-Jacksonville, NC	NextMedia Group	6	FM	5
Greenville-Spartanburg, SC	Entercom	5	FM	4
Hilton Head, SC	Triad Bestg. Company	4	FM	3
Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY	Clear Channel Comm.	9	Overall	6
Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Jacksonville, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	5
Kansas City, MO-KS	Entercom	9	Overall	7
Kansas City, MO-KS	Entercom	5	FM	4
Killeen-Temple, TX	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	4	FM	3
Knoxville, TN	Horne Radio LLC	5	AM	4
Lafayette, LA	Regent Comm., Inc	5	FM	4
LaSalle-Peru, IL	Mendota Bestg. Inc.	5	FM	4
Laurel-Hattiesburg, MS	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Laurel-Hattiesburg, MS	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Lebanon-Rutland-White River Junction, NH-VT	Clear Channel Comm.	10	Overall	7
Lebanon-Rutland-White River Junction, NH-VT	Nassau Bestg. Partners LP	8	Overall	7
Lebanon-Rutland-White River Junction, NH-VT	Clear Channel Comm.	7	FM	4
Lebanon-Rutland-White River Junction, NH-VT	Nassau Bestg. Partners LP	6	FM	4
Lexington-Fayette, KY	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Lima, OH	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Little Rock, AR	Citadel Bestg. Corp	10	Overall	7
Little Rock, AR	Citadel Bestg. Corp	7	FM	4
Little Rock, AR	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Los Angeles, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	10	Overall	8
Los Angeles, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	5
Los Angeles, CA	Multicultural Radio Bestg. Inc	6	AM	5
Louisville, KY	Clear Channel Comm.	10	Overall	7
Macon, GA	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	8	Overall	7
Macon, GA	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Macon, GA	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	5	FM	4
Madison, WI	Mid-West Family Broadcast Group	8	Overall	7
Madison, WI	Mid-West Family Broadcast Group	5	FM	4
McAllen-Brownsville-Harlingen, TX	Border Media Partners LLC	7	Overall	6
Meadville-Franklin, PA	Forever Bestg. Inc.	10	Overall	6
Meadville-Franklin, PA	Forever Bestg. Inc.	6	FM	4
Montgomery, AL	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	7	Overall	6



Myrtle Beach, SC	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	7	Overall	6
Myrtle Beach, SC	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	6	FM	4
New Orleans, LA	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Oklahoma City, OK	Citadel Bestg. Corp	5	FM	4
Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	Waitt Radio	8	Overall	7
Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	Journal Comm. Inc	5	FM	4
Orlando, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Orlando, FL	Cox Radio Inc	5	FM	4
Palm Springs, CA	MCC Radio LLC	7	Overall	6
Panama City, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Peoria, IL	AAA Entertainment	5	FM	4
Peoria, IL	Regent Comm., Inc	5	FM	4
Portland, ME	Citadel Bestg. Corp	6	FM	4
Portland, ME	Nassau Bestg. Partners LP	5	FM	4
Portsmouth-Dover-Rochester, NH	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Poughkeepsie, NY	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Poughkeepsie, NY	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Raleigh-Durham, NC	Curtis Media Group	10	Overall	7
Raleigh-Durham, NC	Curtis Media Group	5	FM	4
Raleigh-Durham, NC	Curtis Media Group	5	AM	4
Redding, CA	Results Radio LLC	5	FM	4
Roanoke-Lynchburg, VA	Clear Channel Comm.	9	Overall	7
Roanoke-Lynchburg, VA	Clear Channel Comm.	7	FM	4
Saginaw-Bay City-Midland, MI	Citadel Bestg. Corp	5	FM	4
Salisbury-Ocean City, MD	Clear Channel Comm.	8	Overall	7
Salisbury-Ocean City, MD	Delmarva Bestg. Company	8	Overall	7
Salisbury-Ocean City, MD	Great Scott Bestg. Inc	10	Overall	7
Salisbury-Ocean City, MD	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	4
Salisbury-Ocean City, MD	Delmarva Bestg. Company	6	FM	4
Salisbury-Ocean City, MD	Great Scott Bestg. Inc	8	FM	4
San Diego, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
San Francisco, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	5
Santa Barbara, CA	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Sarasota-Bradenton, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	7	Overall	6
Sarasota-Bradenton, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Syracuse, NY	Galaxy Comm.	9	Overall	7
Syracuse, NY	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Syracuse, NY	Galaxy Comm.	6	FM	4
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	Cox Radio Inc	6	FM	5
The Florida Keys, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	6	FM	4
Toledo, OH	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	8	Overall	7
Toledo, OH	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	6	FM	4
Traverse City-Petoskey, MI	Midwestern Bestg. Company	5	FM	4
Traverse City-Petoskey, MI	Northern Broadcast Inc	6	FM	4
Traverse City-Petoskey, MI	Northern Star Bestg. LLC	5	FM	4
Utica-Rome, NY	Clear Channel Comm.	9	Overall	7
Utica-Rome, NY	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
Valdosta, GA	Black Crow Media Group	5	FM	4
Victor Valley, CA	KHWY Inc	8	Overall	7
Victor Valley, CA	KHWY Inc	8	FM	4
Waco, TX	Clear Channel Comm.	4	FM	3
Watertown, NY	Clancy-Mance Comm. North	5	FM	4
West Palm Beach-Boca Raton, FL	Clear Channel Comm.	5	FM	4
West Palm Beach-Boca Raton, FL	Infinity Bestg.	5	FM	4
Wichita Falls, TX	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	4	FM	3
Wichita, KS	Journal Comm. Inc	5	FM	4
Wilkes Barre-Scranton, PA	Entercom	9	Overall	8
Wilkes Barre-Scranton, PA	Entercom	6	FM	5
Wilmington, NC	NextMedia Group	5	FM	4
Wilmington, NC	Sea-Comm Inc	5	FM	4
Youngstown-Warren, OH	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	8	Overall	6
Youngstown-Warren, OH	Cumulus Bestg. Inc	5	FM	4

# NEWSPAPER/TELEVISION CROSS-OWNERSHIP AND LOCAL NEWS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING ON TELEVISION STATIONS: An Empirical Analysis

Michael Yan

---

## Abstract

*This study analyzes the relationship between local newspaper/television cross-ownership and the presence and quantity of local news and local public affairs programming on broadcast television. The analyses, based on a two-week constructed random sample of television programming in 2003 for 226 randomly selected, plus 27 cross-owned television stations, show that cross-owned stations did not broadcast more local news than non-cross owned stations that also provided local news. In addition, cross-ownership had no significant relationship with either the presence or the quantity of local public affairs programming on commercial television.*

## INTRODUCTION

The study investigates the following research question: How is cross-ownership related to the provision of local news and public affairs programming on broadcast television? Answering this question has important policy implications as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reconsiders its major broadcast ownership rules, including the cross-ownership rule (FCC, 2006).

The newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule prohibits common ownership of a full service broadcast station and a daily newspaper if the broadcast station's service contour completely encompasses the newspaper's city of publication (FCC, 2006). In 2003, the FCC lifted the ban and allowed for newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership conditional on the size of a market (FCC, 2003). One of the main arguments the FCC used to justify its decision is that newspaper-owned stations actually contribute more to localism by

providing more local news and public affairs programming than non-newspaper owned stations (FCC, 2003).

The FCC relied primarily upon one of its own studies (Spavins, Denison, Roberts & Frenette, 2002) as empirical evidence. However, although the FCC study found that newspaper-owned affiliate stations aired more local news and public affairs programming than other affiliate stations in the sample (21.9 hours versus 14.9 hours), no statistical analysis was conducted to test the significance of the difference. In addition, the study did not control for other factors such as market size and station rank that may affect station provision of local informational programming. Other aspects of the study have also been critiqued as flawed (Napoli, 2004).

Using a two-week constructed random sample of television programming in 2003 for a random sample of 226 commercial television stations, plus 27 cross-owned stations, this study analyzes how cross-owned stations compared

with non-cross owned stations in the provision of local news and public affairs programming, controlling for other ownership characteristics and market conditions. The results show that while cross-owned stations were more likely to have local news programming, they did not broadcast more local news than other stations that also provided local news. In addition, cross-ownership had no significant relationship with either the presence or the quantity of local public affairs programming on commercial television.

The next section of the paper describes the method and statistical model used in this study, followed by a presentation of the results. The paper concludes with a summary of the results and their policy implications.

## METHOD AND VARIABLES

The data used in this study are a combination of two datasets. The first is a random sample of 233 television stations that was created for previous studies (Napoli & Yan, 2005; Yan & Napoli, 2004). The sampling frame for these

233 stations is a list of 1,447 full-power, English-language television stations published in the *Nielsen Station Index Directory of Television Stations 2003-2004*. The second is a complete list of newspaper cross-owned television stations (see Table 1). The list was compiled based on the Newspaper Association of America's filing with the FCC (2001). There were 27 such cross-owned stations during the time period analyzed. Seven of these stations were already included in the larger data set; thus, 20 cross-owned stations were added to the data set. The final data set has 253 stations.

For each sampled station, a randomly constructed two-week sample of programming schedules from 2003 was obtained from Tribune Media Services (operator of the zip2it.com online television program schedule database). The specific days comprising the constructed two weeks are Jan. 11 (Sat.), Jan. 22 (Wed.), Feb. 17 (Mon.), Feb. 27 (Thu), Mar. 23 (Sun.), Mar. 28 (Fri.), Apr. 22 (Tue.), Aug. 11 (Mon.), Sep. 30 (Tue.), Oct. 18 (Sat.), Nov. 5 (Wed.), Nov. 6 (Thu.), Nov. 9 (Sun.) and Nov. 28 (Fri.), all of 2003. An entire day's program schedule of each station was analyzed for each sampled day.

DMA	DMA Rank	Cross-owned Stations	Net Affil.	Station Rank	Station Owner	Newspaper
New York	1	WPIX	WB	4	Tribune Bcstg Co.	Newsday
New York	1	WNYW	Fox	5	Fox Television	New York Post
New York	1	WWOR	UPN	7	Fox Television	New York Post
Los Angeles	2	KTLA	WB	6	Tribune Bcstg Co.	Los Angeles Times
Chicago	3	WGN	WB	4	Tribune Bcstg Co.	Chicago Tribune
Dallas-Ft. Worth	7	WFAA	ABC	1	Belo Corp	Dallas Morning News
Atlanta	9	WSB	ABC	1	Cox Broadcasting	The Atlanta Journal & Constitution
Tampa-St Petersburg	13	WFLA	NBC	1	Media general Bcst	The Tampa Tribune
Phoenix	15	KPNX	NBC	1	Gannett Co Inc	The Arizona Republic
Miami-Ft. Lauderdale	17	WDZL	WB	5	Tribune Bcstg Co	Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel
Hartford-New Heaven	27	WTIC	Fox	4	Tribune Bcstg Co	Hartford Courant
Cincinnati	32	WCPO	ABC	2	Scripps Howard Bcstg	The Cincinnati Post
Milwaukee, WI	33	WTMJ	NBC	1	Journal Comm	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Columbus, OH	34	WBNS	CBS	1	Dispatch Printing Co	The Columbus Dispatch
Dayton, OH	59	WHIO	CBS	1	Cox Broadcasting	Dayton Daily News
Paducah	76	WPSD	NBC	2	Paxton media	The Paducah Sun
Spokane, WA	80	KHQ	NBC	1	Cowles Publishing	The Spokesman Review
South Bend, IN	87	WSBT	CBS	2	Schurz Comm	South Bend Tribune
Cedar Rapids, IA	88	KCRG	ABC	2	The Gazette Co	The Gazette
Tri-Cities, TN-VA	91	WJHL	CBS	2	Media general Bcst	Bristol Herald Courier
Waco	92	KCEN	NBC	2	Frank Mayborn Enterp	Temple Daily Telegram
Baton Rouge	95	WBRZ	ABC	2	Manship Stations	Baton Rouge Morning Advocate
Youngstown	101	WFMJ	NBC	1	Vindicator Printing	The Vindicator
Fargo-Valley City	118	WDAY	ABC	2	Forum Publishing Co	The Forum
Columbus-Tupelo	131	WCBI	CBS	2	Morris Multimedia	Commercial Dispatch
Idaho Falls-Pocatello	164	KIFI	ABC	3	Post Company	The Post Register
Quincy	166	WGEM	NBC	1	Quincy Newspapers	Quincy Herald-Whig

Notes: 1. Cross-owned television stations and newspapers from FCC filing by Newspaper Association of America (NAA, 2001).

2. DMA rank, station network affiliation, viewing share rank, and ownership information from *Investing in Television Market Report* (BIA, 2003).

Table 1: Newspaper/Television Combinations



### Dependent variables

The dependent variables of the study are the total amount of local news and local public affairs programming broadcast by a station in the sample over the two-week time period (LOCAL NEWS and LOCAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS in Table 2). In constructing the dependent variables, this study relied primarily on the program type and origination classifications utilized by the commercial data provider. Nonetheless, a verification process was also employed to address potential cases of misclassification. In cases of uncertainty, station web sites were consulted and/or the stations were called directly in order to ascertain the nature of the program.

Variables	Definitions	Mean Yes	Std. Dev. No
<u>Dependent Variables:</u>			
LOCAL NEWS	Amount of local news programming broadcast by a station during the two-week sample period (in minutes)	1663.30	87.82
LOCAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS	Amount of local public affairs programming broadcast by a station during the two-week sample period (in minutes)	48.9	7.77
<u>Independent variables:</u>			
<u>Station and ownership variables:</u>			
CROSS OWNED	Whether a station is cross-owned with a newspaper (1=yes, 0=no)	27	214
VHF STATUS	Whether a station is a VHF or UHF station (1=VHF, 0=UHF)	119	122
STATION REVENUES	Station annual revenues in 2002 (mil)	24.43	2.50
BIG FOUR AFFILIATE	Whether a station is a Big Four (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC) affiliate (1=yes, 0=no)	173	68
DUOPOLY	Whether a station is a local duopoly station (1=yes, 0=no)	40	201
LOCAL OWNER	Whether a station is owned by a local media company (1=yes, 0=no)	49	192
BIG FOUR OWNER	Whether a station is owned by the Big Four (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC) (1=yes, 0=no)	25	216
NATIONAL REACH	Percentage of national television households reached by a station's parent company	13.58	1.13
<u>Market variables:</u>			
TVHH	Number of television households in a station's market (000)	908.89	82.57
COMMERCIAL STATIONS	Number of commercial television stations in a station's market	5.17	0.08
PUBLIC STATIONS	Number of public television stations in a station's market	2.25	0.10
CABLE %	Percentage of households in a station's market subscribing to cable television (%)	68.59	0.61
% PTV VIEWING	Percentage of public television viewing in a station's market (%)	1.87	0.09
% OTHER VIEWING	Percentage of non-broadcast television viewing in a station's market (%)	50.38	0.61
% WHITE	Percentage of white population in a station's market (%)	77.98	0.83
Note: Data are for 2003, unless otherwise indicated. Summary statistics are based on 241 commercial stations included in the regression analysis.			

**Table 2: Variable Names and Descriptions**

## Independent variables

A full description of all of the independent variables used in the study is contained in Table 2. These variables include station characteristics, including whether a station is cross-owned with a newspaper in the same DMA, transmits in the VHF band, the amount of its revenues, is affiliated with a big four network, is commonly owned with another local television station, has a local owner, is owned by one of the big four networks, and the national reach of its owners.

These variables were incorporated based on previous research suggesting that station provision of local news and public affairs programming may be a function of a wide range of station characteristics. For example, stations with greater financial resources may be more inclined to run local news or public affairs programming, given the relatively high costs associated with providing locally produced programming – particularly news (relative to the costs of syndicated program options; see Napoli, 2004; Wirth & Wollert, 1979).

---

### station owner size...was positively related to a station's decision whether to air local public affairs programming

---

Station ownership also may affect station content output. Napoli (2002) found that locally based owners performed better in offering public affairs programming than owners based out-of-market (i.e., group owners). Along related lines, some stakeholders have argued that non-local owners such as broadcast networks are particularly insensitive to community needs and are therefore negligent in serving the public interest (Network Affiliated Stations Alliance, 2001). This insensitivity and negligence may be reflected in these stations' commitment to informational programming (Yan & Napoli, 2004).

Ownership patterns such as station group ownership (and group size), network ownership, and duopoly ownership (in which a company owns two stations in a local television market) may influence content output (including local news and public affairs programming) not only because of their potential relationship with the strength of the owner's ties to the local community, but also because they may affect the cost conditions of the station and the revenue/profit levels that can be expected from the provision of local news (see Hamilton, 2004). Wirth and

Wollert (1979) found no relationship between group ownership and the provision of news or public affairs programming. Yan and Napoli (2004), however, did find evidence that station owner size (in terms of percentage of the national television audience reached) was positively related to a station's decision whether to air local public affairs programming, but was not related to the quantity of such programming aired.

Similarly, it is possible that stations that are owned by a national broadcast network could be better-equipped to provide local news and public affairs programming if the national news and public affairs programming experience and infrastructure that these networks already possess could also facilitate the production of local news and public affairs programming. This latter perspective receives support in the Commission's study (Spavins, et al., 2002), though subsequent reanalysis suggests that this relationship holds true only for news and not for public affairs, suggesting that news and public affairs programming possess very different economic characteristics (particularly in terms of their revenue potential) that affect the extent to which structural and marketplace conditions impact their production (Napoli, 2004). Ultimately, it may be that cross-market economies of scale in the provision of local news are not very pronounced, given the extent to which successful local newscasts may truly need to emphasize locally oriented content with little informational value outside of the local market.

It has, however, been asserted that in terms of local newspaper-television cross-ownership, the economies of scale that the two entities would enjoy in regards to local news gathering and reporting would lead to cross-owned stations performing significantly better than non-cross-owned stations in terms of their provision of local informational programming (such as local news and public affairs; see FCC, 2003).

This study also incorporated a number of market-level independent variables, including market characteristics such as the number of television households, the number of commercial and public stations, the percentage of households subscribing to cable, the audience share for public television and non-broadcast television, and the percentage of whites in the market.

These market characteristic variables were employed to account for the fact that local media markets in the United States differ dramatically across a number of characteristics that may be related to stations' provision of local news and public affairs programming (see Hamilton, 2004), as stations attempt to navigate the distinctive economic and structural conditions of the market in which they operate

	Maximum Likelihood Estimation							
	Selection Model				Outcome Model			
	Coef.	Robust	z		Coef.	Robust	z	
		Std. Err.				Std. Err.		
INTERCEPT	-3.889	2.153	-1.81		-295.488	578.61	-0.51	
CROSS OWNERSHIP	7.031	1.107	6.35	***	242.176	203.34	1.19	
VHF STATUS	2.327	0.566	4.11	***	558.448	193.14	2.89	***
BIG FOUR AFFILIATE	1.658	0.321	5.16	***	731.013	238.89	3.06	***
BIG FOUR OWNER	-1.134	0.700	-1.62		535.563	228.96	2.34	**
LOCAL OWNER	0.764	0.421	1.81		-131.392	185.1	-0.71	
DUOPOLY	0.459	0.360	1.28		-461.739	188.77	-2.45	**
STATION REVENUES	0.036	0.019	1.91		11.260	2.6696	4.22	***
NATIONAL REACH	2.706	0.878	3.08	***	-449.606	502.84	-0.89	
TVHH	0.000	0.000	1.34		-0.129	0.1023	-1.26	
COMM. STATIONS	-0.159	0.179	-0.89		248.347	63.463	3.91	***
PUBLIC STATIONS	0.040	0.125	0.32		-87.632	44.133	-1.99	**
CABLE%	0.007	0.016	0.45		4.304	6.4895	0.66	
% PTV VIEWING	0.201	0.150	1.34					
% OTHER VIEWING	0.039	0.028	1.35					
% WHITE	0.002	0.012	0.15					
*** Significant at the .01 level								
** Significant at the .05 level								

<b>Table 4: Results of Regression with Sample Selection - Local News Programming</b>
--

**Table 4: Results of Regression with Sample Selection - Local News Programming**

	Maximum Likelihood Estimation						
	Selection Model				Outcome Model		
	Coef.	Robust		z	Coef.	Robust	
		Std. Err.	z			Std. Err.	z
INTERCEPT	0.067	1.477	0.05		-94.443	152.376	-0.62
CROSS OWNERSHIP	-0.323	0.318	-1.02		83.558	110.535	0.76
VHF STATUS	0.545	0.223	2.45	**	39.693	25.274	1.57
BIG FOUR AFFILIATE	-0.242	0.245	-0.99		-1.640	23.841	-0.07
BIG FOUR OWNER	-1.198	0.370	-3.23	**	-6.565	64.674	-0.10
LOCAL OWNER	0.524	0.246	2.13	**	27.489	31.933	0.86
DUOPOLY	0.355	0.246	1.44		-57.061	23.230	-2.46
STATION REVENUES	0.008	0.004	2.24	**	-0.903	0.811	-1.11
NATIONAL REACH	1.879	0.714	2.63	***	-16.041	93.426	-0.17
TVHH	0.000	0.000	-1.70		-0.002	0.016	-0.10
COMM. STATIONS	-0.009	0.113	-0.08		23.912	20.339	1.18
PUBLIC STATIONS	0.019	0.077	0.25		-0.560	12.632	-0.04
CABLE%	0.003	0.010	0.30		1.658	1.608	1.03
% PTV VIEWING	0.101	0.087	1.16				
% OTHER VIEWING	-0.004	0.018	-0.20				
% WHITE	-0.010	0.009	-1.16				
*** Significant at the .01 level							
** Significant at the .05 level							

Table 5: Results of Regression with Sample Selection - Local Public Affairs Programming							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Table 5: Results of Regression with Sample Selection - Local Public Affairs Programming**



in order to provide the optimal programming mix that effectively differentiates them from their competition for both audience attention and advertising dollars.

Both theoretical program choice models and applied research have shown the effects on program choices of the above-mentioned market variables (Hamilton, 2004; Waterman, 2005). For example, previous research suggests that the intensity of competition from competing program sources may be reflected in a station's informational programming output as stations respond to the program offerings of their competitors (Napoli, 2001, 2004; Powers, 2001). In the area of local public affairs programming, Napoli (2001) found a weak, though statistically significant, positive relationship between the number of commercial broadcast stations in a market and the provision of such programming. Previous research has also found that market size was positively related to station provision of local news and public affairs programming, when these types of programming were considered together (Federal Communications Commission, 1984; Napoli, 2004), suggesting that stations in larger markets face stronger economic incentives to produce informational programming. However, recent research that focused specifically on local public affairs programming found no such relationship (Yan & Napoli, 2004).

The last two columns of Table 2 reports the mean and standard deviation of all of the variables included in the analysis; or, in the cases of categorical variables, the number of stations in each category. Of particular interest to this study is the cross-ownership variable and how it relates to the provision of local news and public affairs programming on television. The other ownership and market characteristics relevant to the quantity of local news and public affairs information provided by broadcast licensees are included as controlling variables in the study.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Results

Table 3 shows the average amount of local news and local public affairs programming on cross-owned stations and on non-cross owned stations. As shown in Table 3, cross-owned stations provided close to 46 hours of local news and 96 minutes of local public affairs programming during the two-week sample period. Non-cross owned stations, on average, provided about 25 hours of local news and 45 minutes of local public affairs.

The result, however, should be interpreted with caution, as other variables may mediate the actual relationship between

cross-ownership and the provision of such informational programming. Table 1 reveals that the majority of the cross-owned stations are affiliates of the big four broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC) and are highly ranked in their market. These are the types of stations that are most likely to be in the local news business. Multivariate analysis is therefore essential before any substantive conclusions about the relationship between ownership and market characteristics and the provision of local news and public affairs programming can be drawn. The multivariate analyses below seek to control for the influence of a wide range of potential explanatory factors.

### Regression Results

The regression analysis estimates how station ownership characteristics (including cross-ownership) and market conditions are related to the presence of local news and local public affairs programming on television and, for stations that provide such programming, the quantity produced. Twelve stations in the sample did not have station revenue data and had to be excluded from the regression analysis. So the total sample size for the regression analysis is 241.

Nearly 22% of the stations in the regression sample (51 out of 241) did not have any local news programming during the sample period. The percentage without local public affairs programming is much higher (57%, or 137 out of 241). To accommodate this "limited" nature of the dependent variables, a sample selection model was used. This involves estimating first the probability that a station decides to provide local news or local public affairs programming, and then the amount of local news or local public affairs provided conditional on the selection having been made. The two estimation steps correspond to the selection model and the outcome model in Tables 4 and 5.

### Results of Regression with Sample Selection—Local News Programming

Table 4 reports the regression results for local news programming. First, the selection model estimates how the independent variables are related to the incidence of local news on a station (i.e., whether or not a station provides any local news). The binary probit results show that cross-ownership, VHF status, big four network affiliation and station owner's national television household reach all increased the probability that a station chose to provide local news. In other words, cross-owned stations, VHF stations, big four network affiliate stations and stations of larger stations groups were more likely to offer local news programming. Other independent variables in the probit model did not have any significant relationship with the stations' decision to offer local news.

The outcome model in Table 4 focuses on the *quantity*

of local news provided by those stations that produced *any* local news. It is this level of analysis that provides a more robust assessment of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (in this case local news provision) given that the focus is no longer on a binary dependent variable and given the greater ability to make apples to apples comparisons between stations in the local news business. The results show that VHF status and big four network affiliation had a significantly positive relationship with the amount of local news programming, as they did in the selection model. Cross-ownership, however, did not have any significant relationship with the amount of local news programming. Thus, while cross-owned stations appear more likely to be in the local news business, such stations do not provide more news than other stations in the local news business. Perhaps the most likely interpretation of these results is that cross-ownership situations are most likely to arise amongst stations already in the news business, but that cross-ownership does not contribute to news programming performance beyond that of the typical news-providing station. Longitudinal data would be needed to investigate this issue further, in order to better isolate possible cause-and-effect relationships.

Big Four ownership, while not significantly related to the probability that a station decided to provide local news, was positively associated with the amount of local news provided by those stations in the local news business. In addition, duopoly ownership had a significantly negative relationship with the amount of local news programming, suggesting that co-owned stations actually perform worse than other stations in the provision of local news. Again, longitudinal data would be necessary to explain this relationship further. Finally, two market-related independent variables showed significant relationships with the quantity of local news provision - the number of commercial stations and public stations available in a stations' market. Specifically, the number of commercial stations in a station's market was associated with an increase in the amount of local news aired by those stations in the local news business (suggesting that competition promotes local news production); the association was negative for public stations (suggesting that stations cede their local news function somewhat in markets with more public television stations).

### Results of Regression with Sample Selection—Local Public Affairs Programming

Regarding local public affairs programming, results from the selection model in Table 5 show that VHF status, station revenues and station owner national reach increased the likelihood that a station chose to provide local public

affairs programming. In addition, big four network ownership significantly decreased the probability of local public affairs programming being available on a station whereas local ownership significantly increased that probability. Notably, cross ownership did not have a significant relationship with the presence of local public affairs programming on television.

Once again, the more important results can be found in the outcome model, which in Table 5 show that cross-ownership did not have any significant relationship with the quantity of local public affairs programming provided. The only independent variable that had any significant relationship with the amount of local public affairs programming is duopoly ownership. As in the case of local news, duopoly ownership was associated with a decrease in the amount of local public affairs programming, again raising questions about the relationship between local co-ownership and station performance in terms of the provision of local informational programming.

## CONCLUSION

---

This study has analyzed the relationship between newspaper/television cross-ownership and the supply of local news and public affairs programming on television. The central research question is: Do newspaper cross-owned television stations provide more local news and local public affairs programming than non-cross-owned stations, controlling for market size, station ownership and other relevant factors? The answer is no, based on the results of the study.

The regression analysis results show that while cross-owned station were more likely to be in the local news business, they did not air more local news than non-cross-owned stations that also provided local news. This latter apples-to-apples comparison of stations that are in the local news business would seem to be of greater significance, given that the cross-sectional nature of the data makes it impossible to determine whether cross-ownership made stations more likely to provide any news – as opposed to, for example, to newspaper-TV combinations taking place amongst stations already in the local news business. In addition, cross-ownership did not have any significant relationship with either the presence or the quantity of local public affairs programming on television. Future research should examine changes in ownership patterns and programming behavior over time in order to better isolate the possible effects of ownership changes such as moves to cross-ownership or duopoly ownership.



In sum, one central issue in the cross-media ownership debate is whether or not cross-owned television stations provide their communities with more and better local informational programming. For example, in deciding to relax the cross-media ownership restrictions in its 2003 report, the FCC concluded that “newspaper-owned television stations tend to produce local news and public affairs programming in greater quantity and of a higher quality than non-newspaper-owned stations” (quoted in FCC, 2006, para. 24). Findings of this study, however, suggest that cross-ownership is not associated with any meaningful improvement (in terms of program quantity) in station performance, relative to comparable stations, in the local news and public affairs arenas.

## REFERENCES

Federal Communications Commission (1984). Revision of programming and commercialization policies, ascertainment requirements, and program log requirements for commercial television stations, 1984 FCC LEXIS 2105.

Federal Communications Commission (2003). 2002 biennial regulatory review. Report and Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 18 FCC Rcd. 13620.

Federal Communications Commission (2006). Further notice of proposed rulemaking. Retrieved September 17, 2006, from [http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/FCC-06-93A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-06-93A1.pdf).

Hamilton, J. T. (2004). *All the news that's fit to sell: How the market transforms information into news*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Napoli, P. M. (2002, August). *Television station ownership characteristics and commitment to public service: An analysis of public affairs programming*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Miami, FL.

Napoli, P.M. (2004). Television station ownership characteristics and news and public affairs programming: An expanded analysis of FCC data. Info: The journal of policy,

regulation, and strategy for telecommunications, information, and media, 6(2), 112-121.

Napoli, P. M. & Yan, M. Z. (2005). Media structure, station ownership, and news programming on local broadcast television. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New York. (To be published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*).

Network Affiliated Stations Alliance (2001). *Petition for inquiry into network practices*. Retrieved September 15, 2004, from <http://www.networkaffiliatedstations.org/3-8-01NASAPETITIONFORINQUIRY.pdf>

Newspaper Association of America (2001). Comments in the matter of cross-ownership of broadcast stations and newspapers. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from [http://www.naa.org/ppolicy/NAA\\_Comments.pdf](http://www.naa.org/ppolicy/NAA_Comments.pdf).

Powers, A. (2001). Toward monopolistic competition in U.S. local television news. *Journal of Media Economics*, 14(2), 77 - 86.

Spavins, T.C., Denison, L., Roberts, S., Frenette, J. (2002). The measurement of local television news and public affairs programs. Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission.

Waterman, D. (2005). The economics of media programming. In A. B. Albarran, S. Chan-Olmsted, & M. O. Wirth (Eds.), *Handbook of media management & economics*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Wirth, M. O., & Wollert, J. A. (1979). Public interest programming: Taxation by regulation. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 23(3), 319 - 330.

Yan, M. Z. & Napoli, P. M. (2004). Market structure, station ownership, and local public affairs programming on local broadcast television. Presented at the Telecommunications Policy Research Conference, Arlington, VA (To be published in the *Journal of Communication*).



The Benton Foundation

<http://www.benton.org>



The Social Science Research Council

<http://www.ssrc.org>

For more information on these studies, please contact:

Rik Panganiban  
Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere  
Social Science Research Council  
Email: [mediahub@ssrc.org](mailto:mediahub@ssrc.org)  
Web: <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/media>