ABSTRACT

Low-power FM radio stations allow organizations broadcast at interval frequencies between those occupied by commercial radio stations. In 2000, the FCC ruled to grant liscences to select community radio stations across the country to broadcast on these airwaves. Given current crises of media conglomeration and a history of political activism from these low-wattage stations, it is imperative to continually understand how these stations function in an ever-changing media landscape. This case-study contains interviews with eight individuals who volunteer as programmers at a single LPFM station aimed at better understanding how contemporary community radio functions. The findings suggest that though participants pride themselves on their independence from the broader radio field, innovations in streaming and volunteer-based political economies in some ways limit LPFM's ability to distinguish itself from commercial constraints. However, despite the changes occurring for programmers, audience engagement and advocacy-based programming are still highly prioritized in unique ways.

Low Power Public Spheres: Localism, Advocacy and Political Economies in LPFM Radio Stations

By Sophie Soloway
Mount Holyoke College, Class of 2023
Thesis in the Program of Critical Social Thought
Advised by Professor Kenneth Tucker

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Critical Social Thought and Sociology departments for filling my time at Mount Holyoke with curiosity and compassion. Thank you to Professor Tucker for guiding me through four years of academic life and this project. Thanks also to Professor Stefana Smith and Professor Townsley for preparing me to look inquisitively at media, for this project and beyond.

Thank you to the organizations on campus that have built my time here and that have made it possible for me to pursue this thesis. Thank you to the Mount Holyoke News for teaching me insurmountable lessons about journalism. No classroom or thesis could have prepared me to study media the way that Thursday nights have. Thank you to the Ice Hockey team for getting me away from my laptop and onto the ice.

Thank you to the family that I've been lucky enough to find on campus. Carrie, Sophie, the Hannahs, Elvis, Madden and Liv – life wouldn't be complete without our family dinners and the support and love you've all shown me. Carrie, I couldn't have done this without you, your solidarity, and our weekly swims. Thank you to Butch and Londie for all of the encouragement.

Thank you to my off-campus family near and far. Mom and dad, thank you for teaching me how to ask questions and for showing me how sweet life can be. Cliff, thank you for paving my way, reading my papers, and reminding me to balance my life with hard work and the most fun a person can have.

Thank you all for being on my team!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Concentration & Conglomeration:

In recent years, enormous changes have occurred that have altered the fabric of contemporary journalism in the United States, ranging from economic restructuring to a reimagining of the platforms and distribution tactics used to reach readers and listeners across the country. The advent of international digital distribution models has merged with cuts to national public media funding and the introduction of capital interests into the nominally not-for-profit journalism sphere (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). David Croteau and William Hoynes' research in *The Economics of the Media Industry* demonstrates that media ownership is becoming increasingly concentrated, with fewer corporations having ownership over media-producing entities like television stations, newspapers, and radio stations. At the same time, media ownership is also becoming conglomerated, with a few media companies buying out their competitors. The once-wide array of corporations and businesses responsible for producing media have been reduced to a small number of umbrella organizations, building a system in which a handful of large corporations control the operations of media producers.

Though these simultaneous processes of corporate media concentration and conglomeration can take different forms, "an institutional approach suggests that such ownership patterns are likely to affect the types of media products created" (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). In general, Croteau and Hoynes warn, these impacts cultivate self-serving marketing and promotional interests within media organizations throughout their production and distribution phases. Most relevant to this project, "The loudest warnings about the impact of conglomeration have come from within the news industry, in part because some news media had traditionally been sheltered from the full pressure of profit making… They were not expected to turn a

substantial profit. However, that changed with the takeover of news operations by major corporate conglomerates during the 1980s" (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019), 44). The news media ecosystem, inclusive of radio shows comprised of talk content, has turned towards profit-making ventures that prioritize timeliness, efficient engagement of audiences, and, according to these authors, the economic interests of the large corporations that now own news companies.

These notions were confirmed by a 2002 study by Peter Nieckarz, Jr., which utilized three case studies of local NPR stations to understand the factors leading to heightened commercial presence in nominally public broadcasting organizations. Within this specific sector of radio media, the presence of commercial interests has long been discouraged to allow for the public service function for which it was founded. However, interviews with public radio journalists revealed that concentration of station ownership has met with demands to compete with other stations for fiscal gains, leading to a stark shift in the media products put forward by these producers. Reported increases in emphasis on audience and listening maximization has, according to its principal researcher, Nieckarz, led to a more homogenized, and less localized, array of public broadcasting content (Nieckarz, 2002).

Adorno's Theory and the impacts of Media Conglomeration:

What dangers are imposed when media becomes conglomerated, and therefore homogenized? The work of Theodor Adorno, a 20th centuryGerman philosopher, addresses these issues. His theoretical interrogations of the culture industry incorporated analyses of mass media. Adorno's work suggests that the culture industry of modern capitalism promotes uncritical thinking and the commodification of culture, and that it even has affinities with fascist states that use mass-consumed media to control its public. This commodification of cultural production molds the minds of followers through the industry's misuse of "... its concern for the

masses in order to duplicate, reinforce, and strengthen their mentality, which it presumes is given and unchangeable," (Adorno & Rabinbach, 1975). In utilizing the mass media as a strategic stage for illustrations of capitalist and even fascistic values and practices, the culture industry's propaganda is enforced consensually. What's more, "this apparatus operates in dictatorial fashion even when no dictatorship is in place: it enforces conformity, quiets dissent, mutes thought" (Ross, 2016). Since Adorno's writing, the political implications of the mass media have been hyper-visible.

Conglomerated Media & the Public Sphere:

With these changes of the media ecosystem in mind, it is important to consider how members of society may be impacted by such media shifts. Here, Jurgen Habermas' writings on the public sphere offer a framework to address these questions. For Habermas, the public sphere is an essential structure within effective democracies – one that invites and platforms participatory discourse amongst citizens on political issues. In his view, this participatory space inherently lends itself to increased and improved participation in the democratic process and allows citizens to form and express public opinions. In turn, these public opinions can influence state action and policies, following the thoughts and interests of the public. Habermas writes that in order to be effective, this sphere must be open to all citizens, who are free to act without the interests of political or corporate influence (Habermas, 1996).

In Habermas' analysis of the public sphere, news-media provides the information and viewpoints in which the public sphere is able to function. "In the early days of journalism, 'private men of letters' (Habermas, 1992, 188) had limited themselves to transmitting the rational-critical debate of private people to a public, without pursuing economic aims. Together with the bourgeois salons, Habermas argues, their journalistic work paved the way for the

creation of a more inclusive and institutionalized democratic public" (Ritzi, 2023, p. 56). However, as Ritzi recounts, Habermas argues that the 19th century brought a restructuring of the journalism field that incorporated corporate interest over public interest: "media contents adjusted to follow the wants and tastes of the masses, which were influenced by the advertising industry, thus blurring the lines between private and public concern in both form and content" (Ritzi, 2023, p. 56). In Habermas's view, the risk of the "colonization of the lifeworld," the undue influence of entertainment and commodification of everyday life, is especially high under the conditions of a commercialized media system. This observation echoes both Adorno and Croteau and Hoynes' findings. In short, the consolidation of media has altered its landscape. Within Habermas' framework, this new landscape detracts from the ability of journalism to fulfill its intermediary function within the democratic public sphere.

What is more, the rise of social and digital media has disrupted Habermas' original understanding of the role that journalism plays in the public sphere. Now, the digitized public sphere is arguably the norm. This digital public sphere can be seen in the countless ways that public discourse takes place on digitized networks, as opposed to the print or interpersonal modes of communication of which Habermas originally theorized. The outcomes of this digitization are, in Habermas' view, multi-faceted. On the one hand, the opening up of public discourse to the international and accessible level of the internet could, in theory, create new spaces for inclusive communication across groups not previously in touch with each other. This kind of international discourse can perhaps best be exemplified by the spread of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring movements.

On the other hand, Habermas notes that the digital public sphere has largely detracted from the democratic purpose with which he charges journalism (Ritzi, 2023). There is very often

little substantive discussion in a world of tweets and hashtags, where individuals increasingly sort themselves into one-sided informational silos. Further, the rise of social media as a platform for international discussion and entertainment has, in the public sphere framework, accelerated the merger of the two formerly distinct social functions of entertainment and communication. When the same social media platforms introduced for the purpose of casual social interactions and performance also become the leading platform for news delivery, expectations about media shift (Kwak et al., 2010). Ritzi notes that this conflation between profit-seeking entertainment and journalistic news delivery creates a sense of competition between the two previously separate realms of media communication. “It is not the (low) quality of mass-media journalism that primarily challenges the democratic functioning of the public sphere, but the competition it faces in compelling the public's attention and, consequently, the economic problems that arise from shrinking advertising revenues"(Ritzi, 2023, p. 57). Crouteau’s and Hoynes’ (2019) concerns regarding rapid conglomeration and the encroachment of capitalist interests onto the media ecosystem suggest that commercial interests in media have removed these core functions, and posed challenges to the media’s ability to host public dialogue, “further eroding the ideal of the public sphere by turning it into an arena of ‘opinion management’ that operates through the ‘engineering of consent’” (Verovšek, 2023, p. 37). This reiterates the notion that areas of media distribution that have not experienced these shifts should be better understood in an attempt to produce and support more effective public spheres. As the digital public sphere continues to expand its grip, scholars must continually seek to understand its impacts on political and personal realms.

Many critics, however, have pointed out other factors that can fundamentally limit the functioning of the public sphere. Specifically, Habermas’ writings on the public sphere are

deeply intertwined with his advocacy for cosmopolitanism, or the notion that all individuals are members of a global community. This desire for democracy and institutional organization to operate at the international level "forestalls pessimism by encouraging us to rethink how ideas of representation, national identity, civil society, and the public sphere that originate at the national level might be replicated at the transnational level," (Fine, 2003). Though this transnational vantage point was welcomed at the time of his writing, critics have since pointed out that, "ironically Habermas risks undermining the very values he wishes to promote, namely, those that support a democratic form of political life, by advocating a European transnational solution which by his own account cannot secure the same degree or at least the same form of democratic legitimacy as the nation-state," (Fine, 2003). In other words, Habermas' views of both the public sphere and the cosmopolitan community downplay the importance and distinctive functions of local communities and grassroots media, while also underestimating the difficulties of translating local cultural and political practices into a larger national or transnational public sphere.

Alternative Public Spheres:

Critics of Habermas' work, such as Nancy Fraser, have identified flaws with Habermas' early visions of the public sphere. Namely, Fraser's historical explorations point out the existence of *alternative* public spheres. Because of the very forms of systemic exclusion that Fine notes, Fraser points out that no single democratic public sphere has ever truly existed. Rather, Habermas' theory mistakenly focused on conversations amongst the privileged elites of various European countries and dubbed them as the primary spaces in which discourse was occurring. As Fraser and other critics note, democratic discussions take place across the various groups and platforms that exist within a society. These public spheres were created by groups from African Americans to workers who were systematically excluded from participation in the bourgeois

public sphere. Fraser discusses various groups of North American women in the 19th century as such a public sphere, for they were widely unable to participate in the dominant public sphere of the time due to misogynistic practices and policies. Though experiences differed by class, these women created their own competing counter-publics, or alternative publics, which not only provided critical discourse regarding social issues through features such as philanthropic groups, but also enacted change in these areas through street demonstrations (Fraser, 1990). Today, countless counter-publics can be seen across the multiple axes of identity by which individuals might be excluded from popular discourse and dominant public spheres. These alternative public spheres challenge the normative values reflected in more hegemonized public spheres.

How does the media relate to alternative publics?

One specific counter-public that has found a home in more mainstream media is that of right-wing radio and podcasting. Recent decades have seen the rise of many new voices of the right-wing movement, who have found enormous success in broadcasting their ideologies and values across the airwaves. This conservative radio history is not distinct from LPFM. Rather, the history of the legalization of micro-radio stations is known for its advocacy from all political persuasions. As Christopher Lucas recalls, "a coalition of alternative media activists allied with fundamentalist churches and conservative groups to debate the merits of LPFM against the politically powerful tandem of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and National Public Radio (NPR)" (Lucas, 2006, p. 51). The former group was uniquely allied with "such strange bedfellows as Prometheus, the National Organization for Women, and the National Rifle Association…" when lobbying the FCC to approve of micro-radio licenses (Dunbar-Hester, 2014, p. 3).

This history is pertinent in two ways. For one, it shows the wide political breadth and potentialities associated with LPFM and the micro-radio movement. Constituents from all political perspectives have recognized the opportunities for communication and advocacy on these low wattages. Because of this diversity of thought and the dangers and opportunities that this provides, the space should be given heightened scholarly attention to understand how politically motivated media can and does operate today. Secondly, these early days of LPFM advocacy, in which rights-based groups were pitted against the National Public Radio, set the scene for critical feelings from micro-radio operators to even those media conglomerates widely dubbed as 'non-commercial.' Lucas puts it this way: "Public broadcasting had long operated on the same logics as commercial radio, relying on competitive positioning, cooperative relations with governing agencies, and technocratic arguments to protect its market position. NPR has faced this commercial-noncommercial binary from its earliest incarnations, forced to justify its operations in terms of the market as well as the public interest." Lucas argues that NPR straddles the commercial-noncommercial binary, operating as a non-profit organization while functioning in the same market-driven ecosystem as its private sector counterparts. Not only have scholars defined LPFM programming as being separate from mainstream media producers, but these monetized stations have also drawn the same line in the sand (Lucas, 2006).

Low-Power Radio as an Alternative Public:

While many scholars have noted the impacts of these changes on the normative journalism sphere, little research has investigated existing alternatives that might be resistant to these changes. Indeed, theorists such as Habermas, Adorno, and Fraser have not interviewed journalists and media producers to see if they have criticisms of the dominant public discourse, and how they might view themselves as a public that could counter some of these problems.

This is especially true of local community media producers. Low-power community radio, or "radio stations not beholden to government, private capital or other authoritative bodies" (Downing, 2002), operates very differently from more mainstream forms of news media. Scholars have long noted that these networks of LPFM radio stations have "the potential to engage a variety of voices either rejected or corralled by major radio operations, now typically in the hands of mega-corporations," (Downing 2002, 7). LPFM radio is legally, fiscally and practically divided from other forms of media, and it has long been noted to participate in its own forms of public conversation. For this reason, my research contends that LPFM programmers operate within an alternative public sphere, sharing and platforming their own distinct discourse while also maintaining awareness and relationality with the more hegemonic journalistic role in the dominant public sphere.

Community radio is generally entirely volunteer-run, removing it from some of the political economies that currently inform for-profit journalism. Beyond this distinction, community radio literally operates at the margins of corporate media. The Federal Communications Commission moved in 2000 to begin licensing micro-radio stations, which had previously been illegal, largely because their operations would either depend on wavelengths 'owned' by private broadcasters or on the frequencies that separated them. The legalization of these micro-stations now permits broadcasters to take up these low, intermittent frequencies, meaning that when listeners are within their small-scale broadcast radiuses, they can tune into LPFM community radio stations at frequencies between commercial stations (Lucas, 2006). As Nina Huntenmann notes in 'A Promise Diminished: The Politics of Low-Power Radio', "Under the new FCC rules, low-power stations still require a license to broadcast, but a significant characteristic of these new licenses is the non-commercial requirement" (Huntenmann,

2003).Resistance to the profitable concerns of other radio stations is written into the legality of community radio stations' existence, suggesting that their standards, practices, and participants operate in ways different from the normative model of mainstream radio.

Prior to this 2000 ruling from the FCC, as Huntenmann notes, low-power radio activity was considered to be a form of piracy, placing the practice within the unique transnational history of pirate radio (Huntenmann, 2003). This illicit variation of community radio that avoids licensing and instead allows programmers to broadcast on others' licensed airwaves has, throughout various periods of history and across different world regions, taken many forms. For example, Last Moyo's 'Participation, citizenship, and pirate radio as empowerment: The case of radio dialogue in Zimbabwe' explores a contemporary Zimbabwean iteration of pirate radio that aided in community engagement (Moyo, 2013). Though this deviant form of LPFM broadcasting will not be studied in my research, its place as predecessor to United States community radio is worth consideration. This paper's findings regarding community engagement support the argument that hyper-local broadcasting can lead to unique relational dynamics and media characteristics. The author interviewed a prominent pirate radio station's team of journalists to understand the processes that shaped their coverage. Their findings demonstrated that a fundamentally participatory framework was deployed to empower both its writers and its listeners (Moyo, 2013).

This echoes another seemingly counter hegemonic characteristic is that traditional community radio is spatially specific; because it exists on low-power frequencies, only nearby community members that are physically grounded in the same geographies are able to tune in, making for a more locally connected listenership. Media studies scholars have long attempted to trace the impacts of localism in broadcasting initiatives, making note of the fact that radio

broadcasts operate on a spatial axis and especially given that much of the Federal Communications Commission's communication policy making is generally based on local geographies (Stavitsky, 1994). For some time, local radio was considered "the most decentralized broadcasting structure in the world" (Witherspoon, 1986) because it has logistically been tied to its spatial surroundings in terms of voices/sources engaged, salient news-story topics, and audience memberships. However, the conglomeration denoted by Croteau has disrupted the place of this localism within the mainstream broadcasting field.

In 'Engaging Diverse Audiences: The Role of Community Radio in Rural Climate Change Knowledge Translation,' authors Abdul-Rahim Abdulai, Vincent Kuuteryiri Chireh, and Roza Tchoukaleyska examine the history of rural community radio stations across Canada and their impact in knowledge transmission in these regions. The findings emerged from the use of low power FM radio broadcasts by the Gros Morne Climate Change Symposium. This symposium, which gathered experts to discuss coastal climate change, broadcasted its programming across nearby airwaves. Though other digital forms of communication are widely available to conferences of this type, these authors found that LPFM broadcasting emphasized place-based identities, a fundamental tool in educating local communities. Though this case follows an institution's usage of community radio, it highlights the spatial significance of the broadcasting strategy in information dissemination and community connections. While many community radio stations have added digital streaming options, their roots and target audiences remain extremely local (Abdulai, et al., 2021). My reading of this suggests that LPFM stations are less subject to the changes that have ensued as news audiences have largely become internationalized and generalized for the sake of profit-making in other journalism spheres.

Other research has elaborated on these differences. In ‘Coming to voice: Community radio production as critical pedagogy,’ researcher Katie Moylan traces the positive impacts of community radio production for marginalized media producers. Specifically, international students at a United Kingdom university were instructed to act as radio programmers on a local community radio station. Framed as an instructional tool with merits for students connecting to new neighbor communities, the radio community was found to have pushed these programmers to consciously identify community groups of interest and to formulate media strategies that connect the programmer and audience member together across the airwaves (Moylan, 2022). Framing low power community radio as an innovative pedagogical tool highlights these capacities for important media-facilitated connections.

Research Interventions

I therefore place my research within Habermas’ theoretical framework of the cosmopolitan public sphere in the hopes of pushing the public sphere to expand and consider the various ways that local community members contribute their voices to such discourses. In some ways, LPFM radio stations can be seen as enacting Habermas’ vision for the public sphere. Namely, I argue that community radio stations offer platforms that answer Habermas’ call for spaces of critical discourse by inviting any and all community members a radio platform on which they are uncensored by capital restraints. Specifically, reflections from participants within this ecosystem seem to self-identify their work as operating within an alternative public sphere that rejects the commercialization of the airwaves. On the other hand, the distinctiveness of the LPFM space corroborates some of the criticisms that have been directed at Habermas’s writing: in maintaining their hyper-local broadcasting goals, classically-understood community radio stations operate at a level different from the cosmopolitan notion of democracy. They provide an

alternative space for public discourse, the sharing of information and music, and the interchange of ideas that does not simply replicate that found in other public spheres, even non-commercial ones such as NPR.

METHODOLOGY

To answer these questions, I interviewed seven individuals who are responsible for programming at a singular LPFM station. Prior to my Institutional Review Board application, I completed an exploratory interview with a board member from a low-power FM radio station. Upon receiving approval from the IRB, I followed the snowball sampling approach to procuring participants: I asked the participant from my exploratory interview if there were any other programmers at the station that might be interested in completing an interview with me. My name, project description, and contact information was distributed to programmers at this station. Though I reached out to other LPFM stations, I was most successful in arranging interviews with other programmers from this initial station. Given this level of interest, I pivoted to arrange my research in the form of a case-study, grounding my findings within the specific organizational dynamics and constraints present at this single station.

This station, kept anonymous for the sake of this project, was founded shortly after the 2000 FCC legalization of LPFM stations across the country. With the help of non-profit organizations of "media activists" who assisted many stations with their FCC applications and "barn-raisings" to start their broadcasting, the station took its place on the airwaves in the mid-2000s. This long history at the station presented this case-study with the opportunity for multifaceted analysis. While some participants have only begun their LPFM programming careers in the past few years, others have been at the station since its inception. With this multiplicity of perspectives on the station itself and the broader LPFM movement, I found that responses could speak to both the organizational sociology at play within this small community, as well as the national operation of these stations.

In total, eight participants granted me access to in-depth interviews with them. This was not a large sample. Though this limits the generalizability of my findings, it allowed me to develop deeper relationships and questions for each participant. Interested participants contacted me via email, and we arranged to meet via Zoom call or in person. Prior to our conversations, I often spent time listening to programmers' shows to understand their approaches to LPFM broadcasting. Participants were granted complete anonymity and confidentiality via written consent forms, and have since been granted aliases for the purposes of this paper. I spoke to each participant for 90 minutes. I entered each interview with an identical interview schedule. Interviews were recorded for the sake of transcription, and I took notes throughout our conversations to guide my coding process. My initial questions revolved around involvement at the station, social structures in place within the sphere of low power fm programmers, and the choices individuals make about their show's programming styles. As my conversations progressed, I also paid special attention to the specific political economies present in participants' work. Following the completion of these interviews, I transcribed our conversations and imported these files into NVivo Software in order to code their content. A codebook was created, and our conversations were effectively transformed into numerical form capable of tracking the most salient points of each individual interview, and throughout the conversations as a whole.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS: LOCAL RADIO, COMMERCIALISM, AND AUDIENCES

This series of interviews revealed some central tensions in the political economy and spatial specificity of this station. First, it became clear that the non-normative fiscal constraints that distinguish LPFM stations from their counterparts impacted several facets of activity at the station, ranging from volunteerism to fundraising efforts. Additionally, innovations in streaming and syndication technologies have in some ways moved LPFM programming away from its original purpose and local broadcasting. There was no consensus among interviewees about the place of these two changes, reflecting the diversity of approaches to these changes and demonstrating the salience of spatiality in this industry.

Finding #1 - Comparisons to Commercial Radio & Political Economy

Perhaps my most salient finding arose from participants' widespread self-comparisons to commercial radio. Just as the literature often defines LPFM stations against their more mainstream counterparts (Lucas, 2006), interviewees often described their work at the station simultaneously within the terms of commercial radio stations and against their norms. Much of these comparisons seemed to stem from the different political economies facing LPFM stations. Participants Matt and Corey put it this way: "I have always been very involved in the co-op movement, I've worked with many environmental groups nonprofits, I've been on boards of directors of nonprofit organizations and I have always been a big supporter of the alternative economy of ... cooperatives. I've had all of my banking in a credit union since 1980. I have not had a bank account. So I believe … this is, you know, kind of the radio equivalent of co-ops and credit unions … the alternative. … It's still part of the capitalist system, but it's the most benign part of it possible, and I think you know the fact that we've been surviving for … [many years] on a really small amount of money" was part of the reason that they chose to stay so involved with the station since its inception. This specific financial situation, which requires volunteering

and fundraising, suggests to participants that the content and programming that they produce functions differently from other radio stations. Will, another participant, told me that the budget at the station is “Not that much, but it was all on volunteer work, and submissions and donations.”

Fundraising:

One characteristic that participants often identified as being different from commercial radio stations was fundraising. Though several individuals acknowledged that commercial and professional radio stations also often take part in fundraising, most participants noted fundraising as the station’s sole mode of income, which was needed to pay fees and maintain its station. Amy spoke to this necessity, saying, “We rely, of course, being a nonprofit at radio station, and we rely on a lot of donations, and of course, part of the community in just you know, a lot of outreach just to keep the radio station going.” Will, who served on the station’s board for some time, explained that much of these fundraising efforts go towards the upkeep of the station, When he was on the board, “We were paying licensing fees and everything. That's why all of us could play whatever music we wanted, because we have different licenses, but we weren't paying like a couple of them, and … we were actually fined, like we had … back pay that we had to do, but because of all that now the stations, because of what I did, because of what finance person did, because of what people that really took charge of getting advertisements, donations and people supporting like this,” the station was able to recover. Amy echoed this idea that listener donations prevent the station from falling into similarly difficult financial situations.“That's why it's so important for me to get more people donating to the station, so we can keep it that way. So we don't have problems like that time.” As Trent put it, “any fine for a small community radio station could close them down.”

Participants' feelings about fundraising varied, with some seemingly disgruntled by the tediousness of the task to others looking to it as an artistic practice. Overall, however, participants seemed to feel that their fundraising experiences differed from those of professional radio programmers. In James' words, "It's a chore. It's something that some people at the station and … community try to avoid. But we do have bylaws here to say if you want to participate as a programmer of the station, you have to be here for the fundraiser." However, according to James, a longtime programmer at a variety of commercial and LPFM stations, this 'chore' is given much more freedom within the latter space. James told me about a technique he'd used for fundraising in the past: "I said no matter how much you give [to the station], I don't care if you give $1 or $100, whatever you give today, I personally will send you a can of lima beans. So whatever your contribution is, you get a free can of mine." At a commercial station, according to James, "... if I do something, … different, which I would call artistically different," he likely would have been laughed at or pushed off the airwaves by executives. At LPFM stations, though, James felt like he was "commended for it. So, that's one of the big difference."

Much of these fundraising efforts take place during annual fund drives. Amy told me that "We're having a fund drive where we need to reach a goal so we can close out any bills for the end of the year, and then also the extra for the next year before we do another fund drive." Each participant expressed various feelings toward this regular event. Matt and Corey identified the community aspect of their radio programming and station as being salient when it came to fundraising. "and then we also do fund drives. And so that is like a community effort, and we used to do those live in the studio." Amy, on the other hand, turns to her community of listeners over the airwaves and through social media to achieve these funding goals."I like to let [my listeners] know, 'Hey, if you like what I do here [at the station], if you like any of the programs

[here], please go to [the station website], donate, and make your contribution anytime you want any amount you want'." Amy, who has a large social media following for her show, also announced these drives to her followers there, which yielded success during fund-drives."People at the station, the boards are like we're getting donations from like Argentina, England. It's like, 'What are you doing?' I'm like 'I'm just playing music, and I'm doing my outreach in a different way than you guys do your outreach'."

Trent, on the other hand, looked at the annual fundraising activities as a more individual endeavor. He identified himself as "one of their big fundraisers … I'm like the top guy [during our] community fundraiser." Trent shared that he did this not primarily through station events like Matt and Corey or through his broadcasts like James, but through his own individual connections and relationships. "My 13 hundred bucks that I pick up from friends and family, and, you know, maybe there's a bank in town that once a year they throw in a little bit so [I'm] like, 'I am supporting the station here. Can you help me out?' [and] they came through." Additionally, Trent often looks to his network of LPFM stations across the country, multiple of which air his syndicated broadcasts. "I contribute to their fundraisers to, you know if I don't get friends, like my partner lived in [the station's region] for a few years, we have friends there. If they don't contribute, I contribute because I'm thanking them for playing my show and they're community radio, you know, they're kind of working on a shoestring, and I just try to help. I'm gainfully employed, so I help." To Trent, this is "part of my role in my home community station … whether it's the board of directors or the programming committee.

Underwriting:

The station also earns its necessary funds through underwriting, which allows local businesses to purchase ads and PSAs to be announced over the station's broadcasts. Matt and

Corey told me that “We do have underwriters, you know, for our show or for the station, and we have a little blurb at the beginning that says, ‘we're underwritten by xyz whatever.” Programmers are tasked with reaching out to these businesses in search of financial support. For example, Trent prides himself on building relationships with local businesses in order to attain these funds from them. “I started doing the underwriting, you know, going around to businesses and saying, ‘Hey, once you support our radio station, throw in a hundred a month [and] we'll play little spots’. It's almost like advertising, but we call it underwriting, since it's community radio.” This distinction between LPFM and commercial underwriting highlights some of the ways in which community programmers consciously distinguish themselves from other forms of media, even when their activities are comparable. Though underwriting is nominally different from the advertising one might find on other radio stations, its function is apparently quite the same: to provide exposure for local businesses in return for funds for the station’s operations. These dissonances emerged quite often for programmers, who viewed themselves as functioning in opposition to commercial radio. This can be seen in discussions of fundraising as well. Participants often referenced the style of fund-drives often heard on public radio, but continued to view their fundraising efforts as being different from those not on the LPFM airwaves. These tensions pervaded much of this case-study, and suggested that this distinct self-identity, though sometimes difficult to trace or confirm, was a salient feature of this station’s culture and content.

Volunteering:

One distinction that seemed perhaps more tangible than that of underwriting or fundraising, and that could explain why these participants defined themselves so distinctly from professional radio, emerges from the fact that all participants in the station operate on a volunteer basis. Of course, this difference in the political economy facing programmers and community

members changes the nature of their work and collaboration. In addition to the volunteer hours spent broadcasting, programmers at the station also accomplish other tasks, including the fundraising and underwriting efforts, that go towards the upkeep of the station, all without pay. In Will's experience, these additional volunteer opportunities fostered a sense of community among people at the station. "That's really what got me deep into [the station], like in doing more volunteer work and more stuff with the board and everything like that." While Will served on the station's board, he aimed to widen the scope of these additional volunteer services. When he began on the board, it was written into the station's constitution that all programmers had to complete a certain number of additional volunteer hours in order to keep their spots secure. However, Will found that few people were completing these hours, so he seeked to expand and oversee this aspect of the station. "We needed to have organization, especially with a station that's so disparate and just so full of personality, you know. And that's one of the big … things I love about it: all these different people, and the thing is that you have people that are in the station, they're not getting paid, they're doing all this work … and all of these different ideas and personalities … and focuses. And just when you do a show on a low power station, it's because you really love what you're talking about."

However, as Will discovered, additional working hours were hard to enforce in a community entirely of unpaid individuals. "I knew that a lot of people just couldn't do, you know, five hours of volunteer work a month - people have lives. So I said, 'Listen. If you don't want to do volunteer work, then you can pay us. Give us thirty dollars a month, you know, like, Give us money a month, and that'll create another revenue stream'." Will's finding was certainly corroborated by other programmers, and points to some of the complications inherent to volunteer-run spaces. Matt, for example, remembered his commitment levels to the station while

he worked. “I had a full time job. So … you know, my commitment continued, but there were times when I was rushing down to make it to the studio … two minutes before the show started.” Trent also shared the challenges that come with balancing his programming work with his full time career and family life: “ I just bring the highest quality product I can every week, and you know it's not without some tension at times, because I put the script together on Thursday night, and then either finish the script and or record on Friday. And then, you know, I've put out like half the shows. I still have to put up my audio port show and my national show which are the ones that go out like Sunday night. So it's time consuming.” For Amy, this tension came to a head as her social media following increased, and so did the influx of requests from her listeners. She quickly became overwhelmed by the time consuming aspects of the requests that were sent to her. “I’m like, ‘hey, you know, i'm not just here for you. I'm here for all the artists that I need to give room for. You know it's. It's only a three hour show. I mean, [the station] is not gonna give me more than that. I said to [the station and to the board members, ‘Hey, if I do a five hour show I need to get paid.’ And they're like ‘three hours max’.”

These constraints associated with volunteering and the inability of the station to compensate its programmers for their work speaks to research that problematizes the notions of Researcher Charlotte Overgaard notes that “volunteering is, in fact and before all else, unpaid labor”. Though seemingly obvious, Overgaard points out that volunteer labor is often compared to a number of other activities before it is acknowledged as a form of labor, one that is not compensated monetarily (Overgaard, 2019). In fact, until recently, much of the available research on volunteerism framed the activity as a *leisure* activity because of the assumption that it is *chosen.* Only recently have researchers begun to recognize the labor activities that comprise volunteer work. This has been amplified by the acknowledgement that volunteers regularly are

charged with the same tasks as paid employees. As Overgaard notes, “Recognizing volunteering as work, as productive labor,” within the realm of organizations with paid employees, “ …instantly brings to the fore another question: When should it be paid?” Nuanced understandings of organizational dynamics suggest that these discrepancies, between paid and unpaid ‘workers’, complicate conceptualizations of compensation-worthy tasks and equity within the workplace. However, LPFM stations operate differently in that *no one* within the organization garners money from their activities, no matter how critical they might be to the survival of the station (Overgaard, 2019).

In this case-study, this raised specific questions about the diversity touted across the station. Who has the capacity to give away hours of their week for an activity that has no trajectory towards profit-making? Who can complete extra volunteer hours rather than paying additional dues? Though volunteers within the LPFM community have long attributed their volunteerism as a positive, the ability to broadcast diverse programming is certainly hindered by the other side of this same coin. These questions become all the more important within the context of Habermas’ public sphere. With criticisms hinging upon the idea of a truly *inclusive* public sphere, research in conversation with his theories point to the many ways that public discourse are in fact gatekept to those with hierarchical power (Fraser, 1990). In this unpaid sector, the call for volunteerism complicates these criticisms. On the one hand, scholars have framed micro-radio programming as distinct from other media conglomerates because their organizational and individual motivations are not tied to economic constraints. However, research on volunteerism and the tensions voiced by participants suggest that this assumption of removal from economic needs is naive. Only those who can ‘remove’ themselves from economic demands, ie. those with the financial privilege to make themselves available for unpaid labor, can

participate in this microcosmic public sphere so freely. Others, like these participants, have to make difficult decisions between profit-making and resistant participation in the public discourse.

Self-Comparison to Commercial Stations:

Overall, these findings must be put in conversation with the overarching tendency to self-compare LPFM work to commercial stations that I observed among participants. This was most highly visible when participants spoke about the impacts of this divergent political economy on their broadcasting practices. There was a widespread disdain for more mainstream forms of media, local and national, against which many programmers seemed to define themselves. For some, this dislike came from the economic practices of these other media producers. As Trent, for example, put it: "Those commercial stations … are awful. I mean … the number of ads that they have … it's really terrible how little music sometimes can be played. … We have a little bit of underwriting here and there, and it's all important public affairs shows whether locally produced or from audioport and great music."

Similarly, Matt and Corey, compared themselves against mainstream podcasts, telling me that "even shows that you would think would be progressive … have Exxon, and you know various corporate sponsors, and it's just pretty disgusting. So I'm glad to be associated with the station that does not do that and we have never been censored for our opinions in the entire time" that the two have served at the station. Contrastingly, the pair prided themselves on participating in a station that maintained more financial independence, suggesting a linkage between underwriting, fundraising and the quality of broadcasts from the two media producers."To run a station on ten thousand dollars a year or fifteen thousand dollars a year – when you compare that to New England Public Radio that needs to raise three million dollars at its fund drive. … I mean

they may have some high quality shows [but] I don't listen to them at all and … I just never listen to commercial radio. I mean, [I] just never have it on. ”

Amy seemed to carry similar beliefs about this linkage between financial independence and quality of content. Much of her understanding about commercial radio stations seemed to derive from her recent education at a broadcasting school. Specifically, Amy told me that she learned in her classes that “commercial radio stations, especially, top forty type billboard type [stations], you know, if they're not on billboards, they're not gonna play them. That's that's their thing.” This showed up prominently for Amy’s show’s focus, which is centered around platforming Asian pop music. Amy seemed to feel that her show filled the gaps left by commercial music stations because she was not tethered to the same constraints that she feels are present in these other stations. “It is a business [and] if they don't have those listeners in their respective regions, why play the music? Which is a shame because there's a lot of these artists that are really good. And so I'm like ‘well, I'm not in commercial media’.” While Amy prided herself on resisting these hegemonic demands found within the mainstream radio industry, she also pointed to the values of the station and the LPFM community beyond as doing the same. “You know the way that some of these programmers have actually made special programming for artists, it's cool because again, that concept is not shown on commercial media. You know, they’re always thinking about ratings and the top ten and the top forties.”

These ideas – about content changes under more restrictive political economies – were corroborated by James, who has had a decades-long career within the commercial radio industry. James compared his experiences within the two forms of radio to me through a variety of anecdotes from his time at a New England commercial station in the 1980s. For one, James remembered when he completed an interview on air that led to a discussion about the AIDS

crisis. “Another woman called me. She wanted to be interviewed. She was from the Red Cross, the local chapter of the Red Cross or something. And she was saying that it was a blood shortage and she wanted to basically be interviewed to encourage people to give blood. Now, in my interview, I'm thinking well, you know, it's in the news. Now, this was in the 80s and AIDS was starting to show its head and there were people who were worried about giving blood because they might get AIDS, you know? So I said to her in the interview on the air, I said, you know, ‘there are some people out there that are worried that if they give blood, they're gonna get AIDS.’ And she said, ‘I am so glad that you asked that question.’ She said that on the air. She laid it all out on the line and said ‘the threat is minimal, if not negligible or even nonexistent. … The interview ended [and] the general manager walks into the studio to see [me]. [He said] ‘Do you realize what you said on here? ... You said AIDS. …You can't be saying AIDS.’ … When these guys confronted me on these issues of AIDS … I couldn't take it. …And I was moving up the ladder too, I was getting promotions to responsible positions.”

James told me that this was not a lone incident. Rather, at each commercial station that James worked at, he experienced similar feelings of censorship, whether it be about music or talk content. James accredited this culture to the stations “thinking about the bottom line. The money and the system… you only had a small amount of songs, records that you could play on here.” Again, James illustrated this observation with an anecdote from one of his professional experiences at a commercial station. In the 1980s, stations, according to James’ memory, “had an actual clock on the wall with a color code. They had like a blue dot between 12:00 and 2:00 [during which programmers had to] find a card with blue to tell you … what songs you could play during that five or ten minutes. Then after that you get like a red dot, meaning you have to go into the file cards … [with] the limited amount of songs you can play. And then they had a

green [code]. So they had a color code of sorts. … The blue one was like the ones in the current top three. … [It was a] very tight format. … So I did something deliberate ... just as a test ... like passive aggressive kind of. When it was time to go through the color code things, I purposely picked out cards [and] went through them to make sure the artists that I was picking out were Black. … I did that for just one hour. Now, I was program director for the FM station [and] I was just helping out on the AM station, so I had some authority there. But when I did that passive aggressive stuff …[the program director] from AM came in the door. He said, 'Do you realize what you just did?' And I said, 'What did I do?' … He said, 'You played a whole hour of Blacks.' … It was just about that time that I said, I can't do this anymore. Nobody said the word 'racist' back then, but … if that wasn't racist. … Now, the people who were listening to the radio station in the commercial radios, not one person anywhere made a peep… but this discreet … nervous program director, he caught on to it right away."

Seemingly for these reasons, James said that "The thing was that I always did that even in those seven years that I was in commercial radio. I kept my affiliation with the community station. So I'd have a Monday through Friday morning gig at a commercial station. But I'd go at least once a week to the non-commercial station to keep my foot in the door. And eventually, I just couldn't do this commercial stuff anymore. … [It] defeats the whole purpose of what radio is. Radio is a magic thing."

As a radio listener, George remembers that these patterns didn't always exist on the airwaves: "Let me speak to how I grew up in the sixties, Yeah, in our seventies, and I loved radio. I listened to WNWFM in New York. That was my station of choice. There were a few others that I listened to and back then, you would hear a black artist. You would hear heavy metal, you know you'd hear Led Zeppelin, and then Marvin Gay, and then Aretha Franklin, and

then The Birds. That was FM radio. That was what I grew up with. And then I believe that commercial radio started to splinter into more genre based. And so if you love mainstream country, you go to the mainstream country station. [Before that,] it was a little bit more like my show where it was just like the genres are all over the place. It's just good music. I think [commercial radio has] kind of morphed in a little bit more of 'we're directing our music toward an audience. The commercials are going to be for that audience.'A lot of commercial radio, if you're driving across the country, and you're just turning the radio on a lot of times you'll hear a pretty genre based thing that has a particular audience in mind. And there's a lot less of the music stations that I grew up listening to, that were just really just all over the map. You could hear anything really." George's memory speaks to the conglomeration trends of which Croteau and Hoynes forewarned. In fact, music radio is particularly prone to conglomeration because "Capitalizing on a song entails repetitive exposure" (Wilcken, 2009), which has long encouraged record labels to pay for repeated plays of particular artists and songs. Despite legal efforts to minimize this tendency, during which "A series of cases found that ownership shapes content. From the 1960s through the '80s and as late as the '90s the United States Congress, the Courts, and the FCC established and upheld rulings that sought to increase minority ownership in radio and television stations," studies have found that the airwaves are not immune to the conglomeration felt in other ends of the media industry (Wilcken, 2009).

This is where LPFM programmers find their point of intervention. As Amy pointed out, these volunteers are not beholden to the same capital concerns as the commercial stations that have, for so long, limited the exposure of more diverse artists. For Will, and for many others at the station, these differences in programming and content are what motivate him to continue within the LPFM space. "It's just so precious to have a resource like this, especially in the [area]

where we really care about different voices, about making sure that the community is heard…. The station, I feel like, is a way to push back against the commercialization of the airwaves, because it's a public resource. And then we really need to make sure that at least in some way, that we have these little power stations to make sure that the public resources are used for the public."

Finding #2 - Changing Spatiality

Syndication

One issue seemingly lying at the forefront of community programmers' decision-making was the issue of syndication. Syndication, which allows a single radio show to be broadcasted from multiple stations, is a common occurrence within the commercial radio industry (Wilcken, 2009). However, since LPFM's legalization in the United States, syndication has been less widely-accepted, largely because syndication disrupts the spatially specific characteristics of LPFM community radio. Early congressional hearings on the subject of LPFM legalization contain multiple arguments about syndication allowances that might be allowed for LPFM stations seeking licensure. Specifically, the comments of Amherst argued that: "Amherst also argues that local content requirements should not apply to any materials that LPFM stations develop and donate or syndicate to each other or larger institutions. According to Amherst, syndication of original material could become a major source of influence or income for LPFM stations, and a way to get innovative, but potentially popular, material to the mainstream."

These congressional comments found themselves within a broader context of localism that permeated the FCC's hearing. As the FCC noted, "In the Notice, we sought comment on whether to establish a local residency requirement, although we were not inclined, at that time, to do so." This proposal would require owners and entities of LPFM radio stations to reside within

the community that the station seeked to serve according to its application, and although the congressional notes acknowledged the difficulties with "how we should define whether or not they are community-based", "Most commenters support a requirement that LPFM licensees be locally based". While the variety of organizations and coalitions that found themselves proposed alternative solutions to the difficulties in defining local community, most cited the same notion that those running community radio stations should be intimately familiar with those issues facing local communities, and many believed that those living or operating within those communities would be best poised to do just that.

In the end, the FCC moved to create an application process that does look to residency as a marker of locality. Applicants are required to either hold their headquarters within a 10 mile radius of the antenna, or their governing bodies are required to have at least 75% of its members living within the same radius. Syndication is allowed, and common, among LPFM stations, further complicating the FCC's and LPFM programmers' notions of localism (Prometheus). This congressional hearing and decision took place in 2000, the same year that the FCC ruled to allow LPFM licensure for the first time in the United States. During my 2022 interviews, though, the issues of localism and syndication still permeated decision-making for LPFM programmers. There was an apparent divide between those programmers that made it their mission to syndicate to other LPFM stations across the country. Others do not wish to syndicate, preferring to remain local. In total, two participants reported no syndication for their shows, while five reported that their shows were syndicated to other stations in some form. One participant did not mention syndication at all, and it did not come up during our interview.

It seemed difficult for participants to name precisely why they chose to syndicate. Some spoke of the subject of syndication with a distinct sense of neutrality. Will, for example, airs his

music-centered show on two other stations. To his memory, though, he did not reach out to these other stations, but was approached by their programming committees after posting his shows to his own website. For Will, syndication was an opportunity that arose for his show, rather than an end-all-goal or something to be considered during programming.

Similarly, Matt and Corey – who run a decades-long political talk show together – have syndicated to a nearby station for some time now. This syndication occurred after the pair "made a connection with the guy … out in the [other] community station … and he was … cool," suggesting that they did not seek out syndication themselves. Furthermore, they were adamant that this syndication was not part of their central vision for the show: "I should point out that we're not really as ambitious about expanding our listenership, perhaps, as we should be, but it takes a lot of work. But there have been other programmers on [the station] who actually used it as a launching pad, and it went national."

This adamancy about not attaching their aspirations to syndication seemed representative of a widespread sentiment resistant to highly-syndicated programming from the station. Trent summarized this feeling, stating, "And yeah, I always thought, 'Oh, God! These guys that syndicate go national. They sell out'." Trent, whose show blends music and talk elements around themes of peace and education, expressed this idea despite the fact that he does hope to grow his syndicated listening base. As opposed to Corey, Matt or Will, Trent recounted stories of actively seeking out stations that might air his broadcasts. From nearby stations to communities that he felt marginally attached to, to a community radio station in a southern city which he has never visited, Trent shared that he is proactive in seeking out syndication. As he put it, "I'm kind of spreading my wings. And it was also again like I said one of my goals, you know. … You have a goal to maybe get married and have a family, you're not hanging out with the kids that you grew

up with necessarily - maybe you still see them once a year. You kind of grow up - so I'm kind of growing up in community radio." Despite the hesitancy to 'sell out', Trent prided himself on the thought of lpfm-listeners from across the country tuning in to his weekly broadcasts.

To achieve this goal, Trent, like other programmers, adjusted his programming. "So my show has changed. But you know um, I'm more you know more national now. … My themes, though, are again more National or international, you know. … It's changed the nature of my show." Whenever the local elements that once comprised his music spots do arise in his more contemporary shows, Trent shares that he doesn't "send that to [the other station], and I don't put that on AudioPort, because it's not really local to those other stations." Clearly, Trent is cognizant of the ways that hyper-local audiences have shaped his programming in the past, and which elements must be removed when taken out of these specific contexts.

On the other hand, Matt and Corey solely alter the beginnings of their broadcasts to fit syndication: "I just edit the beginning of the show. It's just an intro, you know coming to you on [station name], or whatever it is. I can't remember what their number is, but you know. That just gets spliced into the beginning of every show. So it's a little bit personalized for them, but the rest of the show is the same." This reflects Matt and Corey's low prioritization of syndication, and suggests that this attitude may impact the contents and goals of shows that embrace syndication.

Conversely, some participants from the station were not syndicated anywhere. One participant, Amy, seemed particularly uninterested in syndication. When asked why she hasn't pursued this route, Amy shared that, "trying to find somebody who will, you know, syndicate my program for three hours slot only they'll put me at midnight, which seems to be, you know, a lot of programs don't like to be played at midnight, but I was like, you know … give it to me."

Similarly, George shared that though he wanted his show to grow, he did not see syndication as being the necessary path to accomplish this goal: “I don't care if I get syndicated. I only care that I find people who really like my show and understand what I'm trying to do. That would be very meaningful to me. It doesn't count if it's my cousin, you know…. I have a friend from high school who listens, and it's really nice when they say ‘I really like your show’, and all this, but I would want a stranger to do that now.”

Streaming Innovations

It is important to note that Amy was widely referenced by other participants as the programmer with the largest audience. Many referred to the show with an international audience that brought listeners and donations to their station. Interestingly, Amy’s programming had comparatively few local elements. Her show’s focus lies in representing a diversity of Asian pop music on the airwaves, a mission that has, anecdotally at least, brought in a staggering audience. Amy attested to this popularity herself in recounting a particular broadcast during which her listeners overwhelmed the station’s streaming service.

This streaming service, which allows listeners beyond the station’s local radius to tune into its broadcasting online, also works to complicate this station’s local mission. Some programmers, like Amy, have come to understand their audiences primarily through the streaming service. As Trent put it, “there's studies that show that most people don't have radios these days, but you can listen on any handheld device, and most people do. I listen to my show and other shows on my phone a lot of times, a little external speaker and on my computer. So you don't need a radio, you know. But, uh, the healing force of music is there.”

For Amy, the streaming service has opened her show up to a new world of listeners. According to her accounts, her show’s “listeners are mainly international, so not much local, just

because it's from midnight to three am. And then my rebroadcast is from like one am to four. So a lot of my listeners at [the station] is getting is actually international. We're talking about Europe, Asia and whatnot, which is cool."

Amy was able to gauge her audience's locations and range with two methods: through her streaming service and through social media. With streaming, Amy was also able to gauge an approximate number of listeners for her show. This was highlighted in a specific memory during which Amy "broke the streaming one time because it was way too many people listening. … I had a special event for one, a Japanese group and um, So I was promoting it on my socials, and I didn't expect it to have that many people that there was even people tweeting and emailing their radio station, [saying,] 'I can't tune in. I can't tune in. I can't tune in', … so I had to reach out to a few people at midnight from the station. I had reached the maximum …, which is only a hundred listeners through streaming, because I mean not many people did so. We increased it to like five hundred, and even with that there were people still complaining."

Gauging Audiences

These numbers appeared to be the closest estimation that programmers and board members have of what comprises their audiences. As Will put it, this is because, "But the thing with …, especially with a low power station, is, you don't have the resources to do research or … audience studies or anything like that. You don't have the money for that; the only way to know that people are listening are to look at the metrics for um the online streams, because you can obviously look at that." Here, Will referenced the rating systems that are almost ubiquitous among commercial media producers. Commonly referred to as Nielson's Ratings by participants, these rating services provide paying organizations with survey data about the stations and programs that households in the United States tune in to (Nielsen). These rations include

numerical and demographic information about audience members, which are often used to inform marketing strategies and content planning, especially within the commercial media field. As Matt and Corey put it, “We have no way of gauging our audience. It's like Nielson’s ratings for TV - they have a system like that similar for radio, but it costs a fortune to access it… [Their home station] and the other two stations we’re on, they don't have that. So we never know what the the the span of our audience.”

However, even this function seemed to be in low demand from most of the programmers I spoke with. For example, George told me that, “I think we might be able to get some of that information about through the streaming, how many people might be streaming shows,” but had no further guesses about how many listeners tune into his show regularly, and just who those listeners might be. This lack of displayed curiosity about his audience surprised me, given his stated interest in growing his audience base and engaging more strangers with his programming. However, I soon found that George was not alone in this sentiment. Rather than looking to industry-established metrics, many of the programmers at the station looked to other forms of engagement with audiences.

Some primarily referred to call-ins to the station when asked about how they engage with their audiences. Corey and Matt, for example shared that they “have no idea, except that anecdotally, of course, people you know, people say, ‘Hey, Great show. I listen to the show. Great show’.” Similarly, Trent shared that, “as far as listeners, occasionally I would get people calling in and saying, ‘Man, you know I just want to call and say you do an incredible mix of music and talk, and like not too much. I really appreciate it’. I'm like, ‘wow, cool. You know what you know. Thanks, you know. Can I play a song for you?’ You know, I’d get call-ins like that”. These call-ins seemed to be present in many programmers’ minds as a possibility for interaction, but

few could recall specific instances in which they received calls of this kind, especially in recent years.

In place of these call-ins, social media seems to have emerged as spaces in which programmers and listeners could interact. George, for instance, “one of the ways that I might know that anybody listens to it is that they'll contact me through email or Facebook. And I do post my show on Facebook saying, ‘At noon I'm doing this. This is what the theme of my show is. Here are a few of the artists that are going to be [played]’… . I don't get a lot of feedback.” Similarly, though Trent recalled some occasional calls, he mostly turned to Facebook for opportunities for outreach and feedback: “Lately I've been putting into my show ‘You can reach out to the [show’s] Facebook Page if you want to add comments.’ People always seem to like my posts in the Northampton Facebook Page, and like my [show’s] Facebook Page. … So that nurtures me, and it's enough, you know. I'm happy with that, just to get musicians and occasional listener positive feedback.” This contentment with minimal audience interaction was widespread among programmers, suggesting that precise metrics for engagement were less sought after than direct feedback, even when anecdotal.

Amy also engaged with listeners through social media, but appeared to put more concerted effort into this channel. For one, Amy dedicated hours after her show every week to direct engagement with her listeners. “Thanks again for social media. What I have ended up doing after the program is done, is on Twitter I open a space I call '[program name] After-Show'. Those who just want to listen to me, rant, or talk about the playlist, then I'll just, you know I'll go in there and talk about it, and they send me questions. So I do like a question and answer after the show.” Additionally, Amy created a song request form which she would publicize on her

Twitter as well. These interactions, in addition to information provided through streaming, gave Amy a clearer sense of who comprises her audience.

Finally, some programmers reported looking to the station's fund-drives to better understand the station's reach. Will expressed that, "when we do our fund drives every two years, you could see how many people would donate when they would donate, during which show they would donate, and then you'd be able to get kind of a sense of how many people are listening." Similarly, George shared that there *are* "fans of [the station] and one of the ways we know that is, when we have the fund drive, we have people who kick in money because they do listen, and that they're fans of a particular show, or of just the radio in general."

Changing Conceptualizations of Localism

LPFM stations, in the traditional sense, might have had fewer curiosities about the composition of their listenerships. Before the advent of these new technologies and their subsequent complication of localism in community radio, audiences could only tune into stations when they were within a 25 mile radius of the station. Historically, this has functionally allowed programmers to hone in on who comprised their audiences. Today, however, audiences for these LPFM stations are much more muddy. Some tack their hopes onto syndication, adjusting their content to serve the audiences of several LPFM stations across the country. Others have turned to streaming technologies to widen their audiences, at once ascertaining specific visions of their listener communities while also disrupting the classical vision of LPFM. How do these changes alter the mission of LPFM stations?

Amy's reflections on her engagement with her local and global audiences provide some answers. She shared that she often meets Asian listeners of the show within her local community. When she speaks with them, she reflects that, "mainly they all either … work in some kind of

service industry, either a restaurant or a nail salon or a hair salon. So I talk to them, so … when they see me, they're like, ‘Hey - do you still have your show?’, and I'm like, ‘Yes, I do.’ They're like, ‘Hey, there's this new girl popping out. Her name is someone’. So I'm like, ‘Okay. Can I get her on spotify?’ They're like, ‘Yes, here.’… And they even tell me ‘I have told my family about your show, and they listen to your show when they can’. And I'm like, ‘Where are they?’ And they’re like ‘they’re in the Philippines’. I'm like, ‘Oh, geez, that that is cool’.” In addition to bridging this gap between the local and global audiences, these interactions also served Amy’s mission of using her LPFM programming as a form of advocacy.

LPFM radio was founded and legalized under specific assumptions regarding localism, with the FCC mandating spatially-specific requirements in their licensing products (Prometheus). This was the original intention of these micro-radio stations: to populate the extremely local airwaves that exist between wider-spanning commercial stations. Some of the participants in my study seemed to carry on this vision for LPFM programming, and maintained a geographically local scope to their programming decisions. However, the advent of streaming services and syndication has changed this function in some ways. Now, audiences can tune in from around the world or through different LPFM stations, not only from the station's 25-mile radiuses. Some participants have embraced these changes, looking to expand their audience memberships and be heard across the globe. This raises questions about the functions of LPFM radio today, and speaks to the goal of my research to understand how more contemporary micro-radio functions and understands itself given these changes.

Conclusion

Clearly, activities at this LPFM station are fundamentally impacted by its political economy and the technologies available to it. The fiscal constraints placed upon LPFM stations,

required by the FCC, shape the volunteerism dynamics at play. These dynamics limit the participation of marginalized identity groups, while privileging those with the capacity to engage in additional labor activities beyond their occupational responsibilities. These constraints also push programmers to engage in fund-drives and underwriting pledges, each of which might be categorized alongside the activities of other, more commercial radio stations. However, the distinct view that these programmers hold of themselves in comparison to these commercial counterparts prevents them from seeing these activities as similar, and further builds on their notion that their programming operates differently from other radio programmers. These perceived distinctions are augmented by the consciousness of the localism at the station's core. Though international listeners now have access to, and are sometimes invited into, the hyper-local programming at the station, most interviewees still prioritize or think of local audiences in some way throughout their programming decisions.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS: POLITICAL ADVOCACY, REGULATION AND LOCAL RADIO

In addition to these findings, my interviews also demonstrated the centrality of politics, audience communities and FCC policies on LPFM programmers. The purpose of LPFM stations has been tied to countless political activities and efforts across global history. Though this is not a requirement placed upon programmers at this station, advocacy is clearly at the center of many interviewees' consciousnesses throughout their work. At times, this prioritization of social justice issues overlaps with the emphasis placed on local listener communities. Direct engagement with audiences is complicated by the small bandwidth of these stations, and my interviews attempted to understand how these programmers conceptualize their audiences without the support of formalized information. Finally, my research looks to understand the kind of relationship that programmers maintain with the FCC, the ruling body that oversees the activities of all LPFM stations in the country.

Finding #3 - Radio as Advocacy

Most of my participants' shows incorporated some elements of music, which they generally saw as being central to their respective goals for their programming. Specifically, musical programming decisions were regularly linked to visions of advocacy in radio. These observations from interviewees can be contextualized by past research regarding the role of both music and LPFM stations in various advocacy networks. Musical production has a storied history of being connected to changemaking in a variety of ways. Some researchers have cataloged the enormous efforts of artist-activists who use their music to speak to social issues in ways that have often lent themselves to protest and social change. Some musical products have taken on a resistance meaning of their own beyond the original intentions of the artists that made them.

Radio programming has an enormous capacity to platform or silence music that addresses social and political concerns. Many participants seemed conscientious of this phenomena, and aimed to address it through a variety of means.

Amy, for example, views the inclusive nature of her show as a form of activism. She said, "This is my passion. This is my advocacy. My philanthropy, I want to say, is just to give them a voice here in the US." She elaborated on this, stating that "So my program, what I like to use it for is advocating for those Asian artists, you know, like there's other artists that that there's fans, there's huge fans here in the United States alone, not just only for K-pop, but also J. Pop, also from the Philippines right now." Amy continued that,"If it wasn't for [the station] a lot of these artists will not be played on a radio station, you know, or a lot of these fandoms were not, you know they feel inclusive. … They feel inclusive, like somebody in the United States is actually playing their favorite group or artists or whatnot."

Will's musical programming also carries a specific intention for inclusivity. When his show began to expand, he came in contact with many artists in the nerdcore community around which his show is based. When Will "started getting emails from different promoters … [I] get free music, which is awesome. But then I was able to talk to people about the music like why they got into [it], and everything like that, especially black nerdcore artists." Will shared that as a Black nerdcore fan, he often struggled to find a shared community before the station granted him these experiences. This jump started his vision for his show that centered around inclusivity through music and musical conversations.

Other programmers had widely different approaches to their musical activism, but shared this sense that their non-talk programming carried the capacity to make change. Several interviewees felt that, almost opposite to Amy's approach, local music spotlights were a path

towards more inclusive radio. For example, James felt that, “The music that comes out of this local talent musically, in the … greater … area just blows me away.” George echoed this feeling, and shared that the nature of LPFM lends itself to platforming these local voices, as opposed to other radio stations in the area. Where other programs uphold the same homogeneity that Amy discussed, “... that's not at all true at the community level. It's for the community, and it's all over the place, you know. And so if you look at the itinerary of the Djs at [the station] you have a blues show, you have an oldies show. … There's a reggae show … and then there's some that are a little bit more just freeform, a little bit more like mine where they're just not genre based at all.” George shared that the ties between politics and music are apparent at the organizational level of the LPFM station as well. “They have [an] amazingly rich library of social justice music … they just have stuff I've never heard of.”

Talk radio as activism

In addition to musical programming’s perceived capacity for changemaking, every interviewed talk-show host reported a political bent to their time at this LPFM station. In the codebook, ‘politics’ was the second most commonly listed ‘value’ apparent in our conversations, second only to ‘community’. Though the practices that each participant took to enact this value differed, this code presents a throughline in the station, both at the individual and organizational level: the framing of LPFM radio work as an inherently political practice. This finding can be contextualized by literature that speaks to the political edge of talk radio that has permeated broadcasting history, but that has seemingly spiked in recent decades. Brian Rosenwald’s discussions of the rise of talk radio charter the outpouring of discussions of politics on the airwaves, and asserts that this influx has had monumental political impacts, though his discussion largely centers the rise of right-wing talk shows. However, my discussions with

LPFM programmers suggest that, at least on these limited airwaves, left-wing talk shows are also being broadcasted (Rosenwald, 2019).

Matt and Corey, whose talk show followed their individual paths in activism, put it this way: “I mean a lot of … activism, environmental activism [is] outreach, and our radio is a perfect platform for outreach. So it was just an organic evolution. I guess you'd say … we continued the same kind of activism through a different media.” To fulfill this goal, Matt and Corey’s show is arranged around a variety of political segments. These segments included countdowns to the state’s gubernatorial leadership changes, details of negative Republican actions of the week, and their thoughts on the President of the time. According to Matt and Corey, they arrange their show as a whole based on how topical they deem certain issues to be. They start out their show with the most topical information, which is followed by discussions that could be listened to at any time. Following these various segments and interviews, Matt and Corey’s show concludes with calls to action. “The end of the show is our antidote to despair, as we call it, which is activism. And so the last segment of the show is term, ‘the Bus Stop Billboard’, and that is all of the things that you can plug into, all of the activist things that you can do to … get off the couch and get active and make a difference, and get together with other people, and … not be bummed out all the time. But take action. Do something … because … our show is about activism. So that's kind of the way we want to leave people is with that: take action, you know. … Here's all the bad stuff. Here's all the reasons you need to to want to do something about this to change things.”

Trent’s work at the station follows a similar structure in its approach to political advocacy. In our interview, Trent listed a variety of recurring segments aimed at spotlighting various social justice themes. For example, Trent mentioned Prison Radio, an organization that

highlights issues of mass incarceration in “Prison Radio contacted me at one point, and Nicole Henryhan, the head and founder of prison radio. She and her people go into the Pennsylvania prisons and other prisons, and record the voices of Mumi Abu Jamal, who was, you know, wrongfully accused, and he's on as well as other prisoners. And so you know it's like criminal justice. I was an undergraduate in criminal justice in political science, at SUNY Albany, talking about undergraduate school, you know, and a lot of that has stuck with me about, you know, the plight of prisoners in our country. So prison radio, Yeah, you know. Uh I mean that's a goal one day to have Mumi interviewed on my show. To have Nicole Henryhann on my show was just a real thrill because it's the voice of the incarcerated, and I consider it very important.” According to Trent, these issues became especially important to his LPFM work when he became more knowledgeable about issues of mass incarceration during his graduate school coursework, in which he learned about the profound impacts of the prison system on racism in the United States.

Trent, similarly to Matt and Corey, also works to emphasize environmental justice issues. “As I mentioned, global warming is a fact, you know. Now we're seeing the increase in wildfires, the intensity of wildfires, the intensity of storms, the intensity of the hurricanes, the frequency of the hurricanes and flooding and the loss of life and everything else, you know, tornadoes and just you know the droughts and um, you know, uh, and all the workers that come from other countries, you know, to work here are being completely put out their livelihoods, you know. Immigrant jobs here, working in those, you know farming communities are, you know, being, you know they're like destitute now, they have to go into other fields and everything else.” According to Trent, this is done in conjunction with Yale Climate Connection, another organization that puts forward media coverage of environmental topics. “So Yale Climate

Connection is a very important website and a very important topic, so I wouldn't miss having that."

These specific advocacy concerns were present across numerous shows at the station. However, some of these other shows take on politics as their main endeavor, rather than through recurring segments. One of Will's shows at the station takes on a crossfire approach to political discussions. George, whose show mainly attends to musical matters, mentioned this show specifically in his conversation with me, saying, "We also have a local show …, which tries to have a little bit more of - they are in balance, not like Fox, fair and balanced, but like are really like respectful of different opinions about political issues, and that's a locally produced show. And of course, social justice issues are at the forefront of a lot of that, whether it's climate change or Black Lives Matter or LGBTQ - that stuff is right out there."

Will became involved in this show after working at the station for some time on his other program. In connecting with other station programmers, Will found that these political conversations often emerged organically off the air. "So I was starting to do more in the station, I was connecting with more people. … I love talking about politics. … So we would talk about this stuff, and me and two other people were like 'we should do a political show'." From there, Will worked with two other programmers – one a registered Democrat, one a registered Republican, with Will being an Independent in the state – to develop this political show. Generally, the show is run live with the three hosts discussing a variety of local political topics, each speaking from their respective political vantage points. Sometimes, local representatives, advocates or experts are brought on the show to engage in this dialogue. "We had a whole show last week about all the ballot questions in Massachusetts. What we thought about them. And that's something I've always been really interested in ever since I was a kid. …But we have had

local politicians on. We had a couple candidates for Secretary of State on there like over the past year, like we've had a bunch of people on."

To Will, shows like these demonstrate that the station has the capacity to serve as a public resource. "It's just … so precious to have a resource like this, especially in the [area] where we really care about different voices, about making sure that the community is heard. The station, I feel like, is a way to push back against the commercialization of the airwaves, because it's a public resource. And then we really need to make sure that at least in some way, that we have these little power stations to make sure that the public resources are used for the public." What's more, the station is able to serve this function because of its small capacity, only operating at a 25 mile radius level. "There is a freedom in flying under the radar. We like - there's a lot of things that we can do that a larger station that requires more donations that requires more power that requires more resources wouldn't be able to do, because we're nimble. We can switch on a dime, you know."

Social Justice Programming in the Station's History

Will's participation in this politically oriented talk show is clearly not rare within this LPFM station's current programming. Rather, it seems that in recent memory, social justice has been encouraged across this station and its community of programmers. Amy, whose show is oriented towards music, still echoed a similar sentiment: "We want to make it free speech, inclusive, informative for the community." Another illustrative example is that of George's introduction to the station's community. In his first weeks, a more senior programmer invited him over to share CDs with him. During their talk, he remembers that "I think through that one woman who invited me over, and I got the box of CDs, we talked about social justice stuff. I

think, when I made my application I mentioned social justice, and I think they said, ‘Oh, we're so glad that you have an interest in that’.”

What’s more is that shows of this ilk are not novel to the station, either. According to several participants, advocacy has long stood at the center of programming and the community of the station. As Will put it, “The people that started the station, they wanted free speech and they’re not giving to us people. That's important. You need to keep that. You have to keep that the older shows in that older sense of rebelliousness, you know, like this was a rebellion and it was a huge, huge deal in the [area] at the time, in 2005. It was a huge deal.”

Matt and Corey have been active at the station since its ‘rebellious’ inception at this time, and remembered the community’s response to the station’s broadcasts. Specifically, the pair recalled one of the first shows that aired at the station. This show was based on an international social justice movement occurring at the time, and served as some of the grounding impetus for the station’s existence as a whole. Both Matt and Corey, as well as several other interviewees, got their start at the station by contributing to the highly collaborative show in some way. The show still stands today, having been passed through various programmers’ hands in the decades since it began. In the time since, the number of politically-themed shows at the station has only grown.

Matt remembered the first day that the station broadcasted as a community venture: “We had a parade that went into town. They had a big giant switch that we put on the back of my truck, and [other programmers] were on the back of the truck with me, and they threw on the switch, and … somebody would tell people downstairs in the studio that it's time to start [the station], and it was all very symbolic and [an] awful lot of fun, and so we filled up the entire parking lot with tents and festivities. And then had to parade through town. You know it's just a

little … town, it's a village. It was excellent. It was really good. It was such a community spirit." This image seems representative of a sweeping consensus maintained by my participants: Despite a wide array of forms of interactions with audience members, these programmers consistently expressed that their work at this LPFM station is intrinsically linked to the local community.

A social justice lens was seemingly present for all programmers in some form or another, and was reportedly encouraged at the organizational level of the station. For some, this took shape through music programming, with specific attention being paid to the diversity of sound broadcasted from the station. Others expressed their political aspirations through music that is explicitly socially-oriented. Talk-show hosts often expressed desires to address their own political concerns through programming. Each of these sources situated themselves within the station's history and current mission to broadcast politically-conscious programming. This trend corroborates past research suggesting that music and talk radio often has political aspirations and impacts, and can supplement discussions of the expansive right-wing talk show industry.

Finding #4 - Audience/Community Interaction

Local Content:

This constant acknowledgement of the local scope of their programming permeated interviewee's consciousnesses in various ways. For some, content decisions were largely or often driven by events and concerns present in the geographic space encapsulated by the station's broadcasting radius. As James stated during the interview, "I like to really keep the word community in mind. I mean, we're known as a community radio station. But within the framework of a community radio station, a person can come here and do a radio show that has very little to do with the community. On the other hand, for me, I, in my preparation before I get

here … I go through …the [local] newspaper … and they have a pretty comprehensive listing of events going out every single day… and I pull out the ones that are specific to the greater … area. … And then if it's anything going [on in other areas of the state], I kind of eliminate [it] to. So I tried to, it's very easy to find musical events, but I also want things that are events and have nothing to do with music, like children's show..."

Similarly, Matt and Corey shared their programming decision making process. "There's always some kind of local tie in. For the most part, you know, when we talk when we talk about things, we try to bring it down to the you know the local listeners levels. Yeah, whenever we can.. And most of our events are regional events." Additionally, the pair's program "focus[es] a lot on [the area] … and we expand east at times and … throughout the northeast. But it's for the most part kind of local-based."

George's musical programming has also often been centered around his local audience. "I feel like there's an enormous amount of talent that doesn't get [attention], and some of that is the local talent in the … area. … I was thrilled with the amount of talent, especially in the singer-songwriter world, which is very lyrically driven." For their part, Matt and Corey explained these decisions by stating that "You know the old cliche, you know. Think globally, act locally. That's what we're kind of putting in practice right?"

Amy approached this local audience in a different way, likely due to her large international following. To her, the purpose of her program is to be "inclusive" and to "just to let you know you are part of this community as well. You know we might be in the United States, but wherever you are at, you are part of this community … I mean if they're taking their time to be on their cell phone or their laptop listening to me through streaming … you're part of this community, no matter where you are." Though this conceptualization of her audience varies

from the consensus that's apparently present for most other participants, it reflects the overall influence of direct engagement between audience members and these programmers.

Audience Interactions:

Under Habermas' vision of the public sphere, journalism should be engaged in a symbiotic manner by its audiences. Theoretically, a healthy public sphere should have readers and listeners that not only consume media, but also contribute and speak to their respective media producers (Habermas, 1996). Journalism studies scholars have noted that this engagement is most illustrious when it goes beyond consumptive engagement. As Chris Peters and Tamara Witschge note, "This demands we distinguish between minimalist and maximalist versions of participation through interactive tools, as there is a significant distinction between technologies that allow individuals to control and personalize content (basic digital control) and entire platforms that easily facilitate the storytelling and distribution of citizen journalism within public discourse" (Peters & Witschge, 2015). In other words, it is clear that programmers at this station have little numerical understanding of who is tuning into their broadcasts. What Peters and Witschge suggest, however, is that these ratings might matter less than the tangible connections programmers hold with their audiences (Peters & Witschge, 2015). Does LPFM programming's small scale and niche broadcasting abilities serve the second goal within public discourse?

Answers to this question are exemplified by observations made by multiple participants in this case study. For example, Amy shared that "I listen to the fans. They actually introduce me to groups that are in the area, and in [their] respective countries. … I tell them if I'm able to get the music ... I'm able to play them at [the station]. And so I do things for the fans here in the United States, and then they tell their friends out in … other countries, and they're like, 'Oh, no

way.' … And then they just, you know, find me on social media and help you know my program and also help [the station] which is amazing."

Amy often engaged fans through social media use. Trent, for example, has pivoted to Facebook since the COVID-19 pandemic pushed him to pre-record his shows from home. He told me that when he primarily broadcasted from the studio, "as far as listeners, occasionally I would be get people calling in and saying, 'Man, you know I just want to call and say you do an incredible mix of music and talk, and like not too much, really appreciate it'. I'm like, 'wow, cool. You know what you know. Thanks, you know. Can I play a song for you?' You know, I'd get call-ins like that." However, since "going home" to his own house studio in recent years, Tren has "...been putting into my show 'You can reach out to the [show's] Facebook page. If you want to add comments.' People always seem to like my posts in the [town] Facebook page, and like my [show's] Facebook page and I asked people to do that. So that nurtures me, and it's enough, you know. I'm happy with that, just to get musicians and occasional listeners positive feedback."

Will echoed this sentiment, sharing that although the station and his programs don't always get overwhelming amounts of feedback from listeners, there is a sense that what they do get is "enough". "... what I always thought was, If someone contacts you about your show then there are like five people that are listening." Though Will clarified that "That was my assumption that that that's not based on any science or anything like that," this assertion speaks to a broad sense of trust that became apparent in this study. Though many participants struggled to remember specific interactions with local audience members, especially since "going home" in the post-COVID world, each programmer expressed some form of vision of their audience, which they credited as the reason for their continued efforts at the station.

This sensibility was also present, according to Matt and Corey, at the organizational level of the station. “The studio or the station participates in community events like the gay Pride march, and you know other things. … I mean, that's not our show specifically doing that, but it's part of the bigger radio community community station efforts. And yeah, our Board is, for I think our Board is very good at participating in those sorts of things.”

Finding #5 - FCC Adherence

Since micro-radio’s legalization in 2000, LPFM programmers have acclimated to the policies instituted by the FCC. Prior to this legalization, micro-airwaves were often filled by illicit broadcasters who illegally broadcasted their programming without governmental licensing. Though this still exists, many scholars have drawn a throughline between this history of non-state-sanctioned activity and today’s LPFM stations (Lucas, 2006). Given this complex history of micro-radio and legality, I entered the case-study with interest in today’s programmers’ attitudes toward the federal institution.

Compliance:

Overall, most participants reported general compliance with the FCC’s legislation. This arose in the context of a variety of specific policies, as well as generally compliant attitudes towards the ruling institution. One such policy was that of the “safe harbor”, which identified specific hours of the day during which “indecent broadcasting” was permitted. During these night hours, songs or talk with explicit verbiage can be heard across all airwaves, including LPFM stations’. Outside of these hours, swear words are generally not heard on the airwaves. Programmers like Trent, whose show airs outside of safe harbor hours, are required to be scrupulous in preventing this from occurring. In Trent’s case, this looks like editing out explicit language for his pre-recorded shows. “Every time when I'm recording my show I hear something

even a faint ‘SH’ … I make a note for it, and then I go back, and when I'm doing my editing before I send it out to the station, I get that out of there.”This policy was certainly present in the decision-making of interviewed programmers, though some admitted that they weren’t always perfect in following it.

For example, Will shared that he pursued late-night shows explicitly in order to have more freedom in his musical broadcasts. “I moved to the nine o'clock slot, and I started to incorporate … nerd-core hip hop at the second hour because of FCC regulations, and… the safe harbor rule. So the nine o'clock hour was all video game remixes, and then the ten o'clock hour was all nerdcore, because then I wouldn't have to edit the songs.” This represented a culture of compliance with FCC regulations that impacted programming decisions at the interpersonal level, such as Will’s decision, and at the organizational level. In this second case, Amy described how before her program was accepted to be broadcasted on the station, the programming committee “worried about … if I play, let's say some K-pop song, and let's say there's a Korean song that might [have] the ‘F word’, or anything like that, and I just did not know it would have played in, and somebody must have heard who are native on that language, … you know, we still need to [go] by the FCC rules.” Amy explained that, “We could get fined if somebody does report [the station].” For this reason, Amy’s show eventually found itself during the safe harbor times to ameliorate these concerns. In his interview, George shared that he had also heard that those broadcasting in non-English languages “have the difficulty of also having the language fit FCC standards,” suggesting that these concerns have perhaps permeated other programming committee decisions, though no other specific instances were mentioned throughout the course of interviews.

Tensions in Compliance:

This mention of FCC fines was not solitary. In fact, most participants who spoke of the FCC guidelines explained their compliance and self-monitoring through the context of these consequences. As Will put it, when speaking of his time on the station's board, "I was really into like making sure everybody follow the rules and everything like that, so we wouldn't get sued or lose our license." Trent echoed this sentiment, telling me that despite some difficulties with guidelines,"It's just something that we all comply to, and nobody wants to get fined or shut down, or anything like that." The difficulties that Trent mentioned ranged from slight inconveniences to larger challenges to his programming. Specifically, Trent mentioned specific tensions he felt with a certain FCC policy, the Sound Adherence Act: "I'm kind of a stickler. I follow the Sound Adherence Compliance which is a House of Representatives rule, so I don't have any more more than four songs of one artist. But when an artist like Weir is with a number of different bands, you know, playing his songs, I can do that over two hours and put some covers in, and so I follow the kind of the stickler, you know i'm totally legal, you know."

When he first heard about the rule, Trent said "I hated it when I heard that I was like, 'you gotta be kidding me, I've got this new thing. It's pandemic based, and I'm working from home. How am I going to do that in the two hour show?' It's exasperating." But after some time complying with the rule, Trent shared that "It's there, and we just live with it. So it doesn't stop me from playing great music … and having a great time doing it." Trent acknowledged that he doesn't perfectly consistently follow these rules. "Maybe with some exceptions, like with Sting I just put them all up there. Nobody's really checking on it. But um, you know the national stations like that. And one of the stations actually helped train me in that area about the Sound Adherence Compliance Act of I think 1995."

Trent explained that part of his frustrations with this policy in particular come from the fact that he feels its reasoning is outdated. “It's kind of silly because I mean it protects those recorders. … They don't want to have people recording from the radio, and I can't even mention the playlist until I've played the songs, so they don't like run and get the recorders. But who does that? I mean that was like something … we did that when I was growing up in the seventies. You know we’d have our recorders there, and we record if there was a show on some artist. Now everybody just streams it and downloads stuff, and it's kind of antiquated, but I like to follow it.”

In fact, Trent does more than merely follow this rule, despite his frustrations with it. When he learned about this rule from other programmers, he began to share it with other stations and broadcasters as well: “ I consider that an important part of what I do is to speaking up to stations, or you know I've mentioned at the stations, and they're like ‘Well, nobody's really, [checking] up on it’, or whatever i'm like. Okay, you know, as long as you know, my show is at that standard, you know. … But just know that again it's not okay to like to publicize that.” Trent carries this mission beyond this single rule, also sharing with me that he regularly reaches out to fellow programmers when he hears profanities air on their shows outside of safe harbor hours. “If I’m listening and I hear a profanity – because I listen to our station a lot, you know – I’m like ‘[I]got to talk to this guy.’ [Once] I heard two in one hour, I said, ‘you know we could get hit with … I don't know, five hundred bucks for each instance. That's a thousand. But you know … that hurts’, you know. So I talked to that guy and made sure he cleans up his metal show.”

Trent’s understanding of these laws and interactions with fellow programmers seemed to come from a larger sense of community that he shared with LPFM broadcasters across the country. By “just keeping an eye on the LPFM Facebook Page,” Trent gets “notifications … just to see what's going down. I mean it might be a station getting sanctioned, or it might be FCC

saying, ‘Hey, your broadcast hour is too far from your station’ - like what's the difference, you know. But but it's got to be a certain proximity, and you know i'm just listening and watching. And if I see anything I'll email the board … or my contacts on the board to say, ‘Hey, I saw this. Did you see it,’ You know, just to help the station, stay on the up and up and make sure we're following all the rules or any FCC determinations that are coming down that might impact us.” Despite his frustrations with some FCC rulings, Trent seemed to find awareness and community with this online group.

Will also monitored the activities of some other programmers and reported keeping an ear out for non-compliance on the station. For Will, this tendency emerged specifically during his time serving on the station’s board, and seemed to come from a concern for the wellbeing of the station as a whole. He told me that, “if you do enough of this bullshit, then you're going to get us taken off the air. There's going to be fines. There's going to be lawsuits or something.” He attempted to confront these kinds of issues and apprehensions by expanding the training required for new programmers entering the station, building from his personal experience with the Safe Harbor rule. “I tried to expand training … when I was in charge of training, but you know you only get like a day, and then you're thrown to the wolves. So I know my one of my first shows like in my first year I wasn't paying attention to what Mp3s were playing on my computer, and there was like, probably like fifty minutes of like Snoop Dogg, or something uncensored before the Safe Harbor – [I] completely messed up. No, it was after Safe harbor, but still, like it was again like the stations like you can't play that sort of thing like it was like, and bombs drop, and everything you know It's stupid.” However, Will noted that “Not a lot of people heard it, and … we didn't get any complaints, so that that gives you a little more more wiggle room in how skillful your your Djs have to be, or your programmers as we call them, have to be, and how

strict you have to be with making sure that someone is listening on air all the time, you know, like making sure that people are being monitored and things like that."

Here, it seems that a tension emerges between the self and fellow monitoring practices of some programmers with the real or perceived lack of enforcement administered by the FCC. Will put it this way: "There is a freedom in flying under the radar. The station - there's a lot of things that we can do that a larger station that requires more donations that requires more power that requires more resources wouldn't be able to do, because we're nimble. We can switch on a dime, you know." Though most participants reported an overall intention to comply with FCC regulations, it was clear that mistakes were made. Many seemed to carry a sense of responsibility to self-monitor about their adherence to these rules. However, when few consequences are present, as many participants sensed them to be, there seemed to be a shared sense that mistakes were largely admissible. These nuanced attitudes towards the FCC demonstrate the strides that the legalization of LPFM have made in the previously contentious relationship between legal structures and micro-radio.

Conclusion

Like most media producers, political agendas, audience engagement and legal regulation dictate much of what is broadcasted from this LPFM station. In these specific cases, however, some interesting distinctions become apparent. Because of the history of social justice advocacy within the LPFM community at large and at this station in particular, interviewees each made unique attempts to incorporate this tradition into their own programming work. This prioritization impacts not only on the interpersonal dynamics of the station, but also on the programs that it broadcasts on the airwaves and on its streaming platform. Though I hypothesized that this might complicate the relationship between the station or its programmers

and the FCC, most of the sources spoke to the importance of following its guidelines. Many attributed this compliance to the fact that noncompliance could bring about serious repercussions for the station as a whole, including fines or a removal of the station's license. Finally, programmers took up a variety of methods to engage with and conceptualize their respective audiences. Some trusted that they had listeners with little corroboration from direct engagement or ratings. Others took to social media to connect with or seek out audiences. No matter their approach, it was clear that each programmer had a vision of their audiences, whether or not those visions were made evident by external sources.

CONCLUSION

My series of interviews presented me with five substantial findings, ranging from the distinct political economies present at contemporary low-power FM radio stations to engagement between audiences and programmers. Each of these findings came with their own specific set of tensions, often pointing to the conflicting values and missions at the heart of these programmers' work. From these five specific findings, larger conclusions can be drawn regarding the dynamics present in this ecosystem, at times echoing and at other times disputing findings of previous research on LPFM radio within the United States.

Similarities with prior research

Distinct self-view

One such finding similar to most LPFM research was the shared sense of distinction from other forms of journalistic and music-based media. Whether it be due to political economies, small wattages or the content of broadcasts, almost all interviewees identified specific characteristics that they defined against more dominant models of media. Though this case-study did not compare programming from this station to other forms of radio and media in the area, the tightly-held, distinctive view shared amongst interviewees suggests that LPFM programmers operate in some ways differently from their mainstream counterparts. I argue that this distinction suggests that programmers' operations influence the form and content broadcasted from the station. Each locus of comparison suggests different means by which LPFM programming might indeed operate separately from the mass media.

First, my analysis yields comparisons of the political economies present at LPFM stations. As suggested by past research and echoed by programmers at this New England station, LPFM stations do not operate within the profit-driven framework of more mainstream media

producers (Lucas, 2006). This is not a coincidental occurrence at the station. Rather, it is a legal requirement imposed upon all licensed LFPM stations. The FCC's 2000 law requires these stations to be staunchly non-commercial, separating these micro-radio producers even further from other radio operators who straddle the commercial-noncommercial binary of which Lucas writes (Lucas, 2006, p. 52). Where public and explicitly commercial radio stations look to capture audience attention in the hopes of gaining more capital, LPFM stations are not permitted to make any form of profit. With no salaries to pay, these stations are able to operate from small budgets brought about through fund-drives and local underwriters. Therefore, stations of this sort do not yield their broadcasts to advertising slots.

What is more, as some interviewees have noted, programmers do not *have* to shape their programming around the perceived desires of listener audiences. I argue that this distinction leads to a second distinction between these two forms of media: a perceived lack of censorship. Rationalized by, but not solely due to, this freedom from fiscal restrictions, interviewees at this station expressed a freedom in their programming decisions that they did not feel - whether from experiences, academic instructions, or outsider perspectives - would be tolerated at more commercially-driven media production spaces. As interviewed programmers astutely observe, this liberty in decision-making has impacts on audiences and musicians. Take, for instance, Amy's descriptions of the profit-driven censorship that occurs at other music stations. Her understanding of the music radio industry suggests that less exposed musical artists have to overcome tremendous obstacles to gain radio air-time. Without pre-existing acclaim, the artists that she plays would likely not be heard in popular music stations, especially those in the United States resistant to airing non-native and rising musical artists. However, the success of Amy's show suggests that there is in fact an audience demand for these artists, demonstrating that

LPFM stations are able to occupy and platform the spaces and voices that have historically been gatekept from the popular airwaves. James' professional experience in the commercial radio business reinforced Amy's beliefs. His stories about station managers expressing anger at mentions of the AIDS crisis or at programs solely playing Black artists corroborates research that has shown the limitations facing and imposed by commercial broadcasters (Downing, 2002, 7). Given these echoed findings, it is safe to assume that few other programs in the station's area carve out 2-hour programs during which only Asian artists are played, such as in Amy's show. In the dramatically politicized realm of news and music media, these constraints surely have impacts on both listeners and musicians, who may look to the radio landscape as reflective of the talents and topics currently available.

Finally, direct audience engagement has been a central component of past research on LPFM broadcasting. Early proponents of the practice emphasized this point, arguing to the FCC that the spatial specificity of these stations inherently lends itself to a hyper-local lens through which programmers *must* be tuned into their audience memberships. This appeared in a variety of forms amongst this study's participants. Some took their programming cues from direct conversations with local listeners. Amy's practice of engaging with local residents and asking for musical recommendations to be incorporated into her show is perhaps the most straightforward representation of this characteristic of LPFM radio. Through these face-to-face interactions, Amy anchors her musical programming in the local desires of listeners, despite the international audience that her programming and social media activity has found. Though this global reach disrupts the findings of more traditional studies of LPFM radio, a nuanced look at her practices shows that distinctive local broadcasting practices remain today.

Others expressed this local engagement in different ways. This is especially due to the fact that most programmers recounted far fewer interpersonal interactions with listeners than Amy did. Rather, most of the programmers included in this study created a sort of invisible face to their audience, one that allowed them to program with the local community in mind despite not having very much information about precisely what that community might want to listen to. For example, Matt and Corey's show often lists local activism outlets for audience engagement. Though no audience member has requested this local function, Matt and Corey view it as an integral part of delivering the climate news to which their show is devoted. James' broadcasts always include readings of upcoming local events, and though no audience member has reportedly reached out to request or appreciate this habit, James feels that it is central to his service to the community. Since the start of his show, George has sought out local performers to play on his show.

The fiscal limitations that restrict these programmers from understanding their audiences in more concrete ways can allow for broadcasters to make their own assumptions about what the local community wants, a perspective that would surely be undesirable in other media landscapes. If programmers are viewed as outsiders when they enter the station, this could severely limit the ability of these stations to serve one of their central functions. However, I argue that individuals' ties to local communities are not severed upon broadcast. Rather, my findings suggest that programmers at this station can be seen exemplifying the participatory journalism framework. This concept, which was first introduced into the media studies vernacular in 1995 by Nicholas Negroponte, describes the emergence of audience engagement and participation in news-sharing (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Because of the advent of the digital public, scholars have noted that news audiences are now able to participate in creating and

spreading stories through a variety of means. Some share their versions of events on comment sections of news stories. Others have utilized social media as a means to platform their own stories, while still others have found an increased ease in pitching stories to outlets (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Though media producers maintain concerns about the implications of this trend, many scholars have lauded this new means of engagement for its broadening of the long-exclusive journalistic establishment (Mulligan, 2022). In short, participatory journalism dissolves the binary between producer and audience, and interpolates listeners and readers into the news-making process. Similarly, LPFM programmers hold simultaneous identities upon their participation in these micro-stations. Participants spoke to me not only as members of the station community, but often also as listeners of the station and always as members of the local community to which they broadcast. Because of the local requirements made of these micro-programmers, I argue that LPFM journalism should be included under this theoretical umbrella.

Political capacity of LPFM

These distinctions pointed programmers to understanding their work at the station as inherently political. Indeed, most individuals described their shows as having some form of social justice goal. From Amy and Will's inclusive music and interview programming to Matt, Corey and Trent's talk programming, various methods were taken to create an equitable airwaves space during each person's broadcasts. What's more, many interviewees also reflected on the encouragement of social justice programming by the station's board. From its inception at the height of 2000 media advocacy to the programming committee prioritization of social justice topics, politics have always been at the heart of this station's work. This trend speaks to the historically cataloged political edge to LPFM programming (Lucas, 2006). Links can be drawn

between the legalized practice today and the history of piracy that predated this specific station, as well as the presence of micro-radio today (Dunbar-Hester, 2014).

As Christina Dunbar-Hester stated in an interview with Radio Survivor, “unlicensed micro broadcasters, some of whom called their transmissions ‘free radio,’ were hugely influential for LPFM. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was no way for a small-scale broadcaster to obtain a license from the government, so a lot of folks took to the streets, by which I mean the airwaves, launching all these little stations as explicit electronic civil disobedience” (Fauteux, 2015, p. 3). Radio piracy, the practice of illicitly broadcasting on unoccupied airwaves, has long been used to serve various political interests, from far-right to far-left. The lack of regulation and traceability on these interval frequencies has incentivized organizers to spread their messaging and plans across them. Dunbar-Hester succinctly notes this diversity of pirate radio advocacy when she writes, “‘Klansmen used their radios to better organize their racial terror activities by reporting to each other on the whereabouts of law enforcement or of their latest targets,’ writes Art Blake. Likewise, African American groups used CB to coordinate defense of their communities and organize resistance” (Dunbar-Hester, 2014, p. 9). Today, radio piracy is still used for resistance and movements against oppression, though the United States Legalization of LPFM has largely moved this practice to other areas of the world. One recent example comes from Myanmar, where Burmese activists have united to overtake unutilized airwaves to broadcast anti-coup messaging and information about resistance movements (Guest et al., 2021). The parallels between these political functions of radio piracy to the current social justice initiatives taken on the LPFM airwaves reflects prior scholarly work that has alluded to their political potential.

New(er) findings

However, the political potentials and realities of LPFM are not the only area in which a critical lens should be applied. Little of the research on the subject of LPFM has explored the volunteer aspect of this workforce. Research in other fields, however, has noted the complicated labor relations that arise in workspaces that operate on volunteer workers. As Overgaard's research notes, much of the work done for free in the United States is comparable to that which is paid, calling into question the workers and work-quality that is valued enough for compensation (Overgaard, 2019). These volunteer workers are often from marginalized identities suffering from systemic oppression. Yet I found that the requirement of extensive volunteer hours limits the inclusivity possibilities at the station. This problem within the LPFM space has not been recorded previously, and proved to be a pertinent factor in interviewee's work at the station. The diversity of my sample alone might speak to this limiting factor, as only two participants identified as people of color and only one participant identified as a woman. While these two individuals expressed heightened awareness of this volunteer issue, almost all participants spoke to the strenuous nature of programming for a weekly show while also maintaining occupational responsibilities outside of the station. Future research in the realm of LPFM should inquire into how volunteerism impacts the organizational dynamics and the equity of individual stations.

Additionally, little LPFM research has been published since streaming and syndication technologies emerged. As my findings suggest, these new forms of broadcast have fundamentally altered the spatiality that is so central to the LPFM function. Much of the classical LPFM research was devoted to the spatial specificity inherent to low wattage radio (Lucas, 2006). Assumptions about the merits of LPFM have long been tied to the ways in which

programmers must cater to specific and geographically close audiences. However, the prevalence of both syndication and streaming complicate these previous findings. While some participants resisted these new technologies and strived to continue to serve this initial purpose, others hoped to spread their wings and expand their audiences nationally and internationally. The content from this latter group did appear to broaden from the hyper-local lens once commonplace on these airwaves. However, I argue that this change does not entirely take away from the mission of LPFM programming. Rather, a national community of micro-radio programmers has emerged due to syndication, allowing individuals to speak to and broadcast to the various geographical areas that they feel akin to in some way. Furthermore, some participants have used these technologies to broaden their definitions of inclusivity. Amy specifically treats all of her audience members, whether miles away or in different countries, as participants in a single community dedicated to a specific musical niche. These findings suggest that the LPFM mission has not been lost in recent years, but expanded to fit today's complicated digital media landscape.

Furthermore, prior research has not often interrogated the relationship between LPFM programmers and the FCC. Upon entering this study, I thought that programmers might have complicated feelings toward the governmental institution that grants them access to the airwaves while also limiting the ways in which they can engage them. The widespread protests and controversies that predated the FCC legalization of LPFM licensing suggested to me that programmers might approach the subject from a variety of perspectives. What's more, many of the programmers at this station have identified themselves as critics of governmental entities like the FCC, and I was curious to understand how these complicated relationalities might show up in this station's work. I was surprised to find that despite this nuanced history, a general sense of

compliance with FCC regulations was expressed. Though some programmers admitted to making mistakes in the past, almost all of them seemed to carry neutral-positive sentiments towards the institution. Some credited their regulatory compliance to a hope to protect the station from fines or loss of license, while others held their own standards for their own shows. Because little research has investigated this relationship, a more in-depth analysis of the relationship could be fruitful in future studies.

Finally, most of the programmers that spoke to me expressed left-of-center values which were surely reflected in the station's broadcasts. Right-wing radio programming has become very popular in recent decades, giving the political movement a viral platform with which they share their ideologies and values in casual and approachable ways. Little research has been devoted to analyzing more leftist programming, largely because it is not as visible on the mainstream level. However, my research suggests that this hyper-local space might be the environment in which this political programming can excel. Though my study cannot speak to the reach of this left-wing programming, it does demonstrate that left-wing radio shows are alive and well - they are just not often platformed by profit-driven stations across the commercial-noncommercial binary.

Contributions to Theory

My research aimed to put LPFM programming into conversation with social theorists who have shaped today's conceptualizations of media communication and consumption. I placed my analysis of this station in the context of Habermas' public sphere framework, for the station constitutes a public arena where people can come together and address common concerns and issues. I argued that LPFM programmers identify themselves as an alternative public sphere intended to serve hyper-specific audiences and media purposes distinct from mainstream media.

In some ways, my findings corroborate the criticisms leveled against Habermas' early work. Fraser specifically discussed a diversity of public spheres in opposition to Habermas' description of a singular democratic public sphere (Fraser, 1990). Programmers' relationships to the mainstream media reflected their senses of exclusion and alienation. In response, several of these programmers looked to the independent micro-radio station as an alternative platform through which they share their ideas and contribute to local public discourses, echoing the concept of alternative publics still active today.

Additionally, much of the impetus for my research derives from Adorno's disconcerting description of the culture industry's standardized and commodified content that replaces citizens with consumers.. His writing warns that the nature of mass media under capitalism can potentially lead to the reproduction of fascistic narratives and values on a universal scale that can influence the public at large (Adorno, 1975). When combined with Croteau and Hoynes' descriptions of the impact of media conglomeration and consolidation, the picture of the contemporary landscape displays alarming trends towards misinformation, exclusion and capital interests (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). These sentiments were certainly reflected in the widespread resistance to being grouped with mainstream media that I found across participants. These respondents reflect the previously documented feelings of distrust in popular media, but rather than retreating into isolated social media silos, they offer a potentially rich democratic alternative in local radio.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

Demographics

My study included eight individuals. Only two of these individuals identified as people of color and only one of these individuals did not identify as male. Though these demographics might be representative of the station as a whole, it does not reflect a diverse sampling from which to draw conclusions. This can also speak to and corroborate the concerns often associated with volunteerism; involvement at the station can be limiting in its requirements for volunteer hours. Future research on this population should more deeply interrogate the racial and gendered dynamics present at LPFM stations. Additionally, this case-study sample consisted only of eight individuals. While this reflects the small size of the station as a whole, generalizability is limited by this small sample size.

Location

Another limitation of this study is based on the location of the station chosen. This station operates from a small, progressive city in New England. Several participants spoke of the area as a political 'bubble' in which audiences are not only open to the left-leaning programming from the station, but actively seek it out as audience members and programmers alike. The history of LPFM programming is not so singular. Rather, the activism that led to the LPFM legalization decision is unique in its bipartisan support. This reflects the wide-spanning nature of LPFM programming, with some broadcasting hate messaging and others organizing against it, perhaps across the very same airwaves. This study does not represent this political breadth, and therefore cannot speak to the further complications that might be present for other micro-broadcasters in the country.

Future Research

These limitations speak to the lingering questions left unanswered from this study. Further research should look to more representative and larger samples within the national LPFM community in order to understand the practice's role within the United States. This research should deeply interrogate the intersectional identities at play within micro-radio stations operating across the country. Further research should also diversify the location and political contexts in which these stations find themselves to better represent the wide breadth of LPFM programming occurring today. This political diversity is especially necessary given the popularity of right-wing radio broadcasting on the mainstream level. Future inquiries should also look into the complicated relationships that these stations might share with the FCC, with volunteer labor, and with other mainstream media producers in respective local areas.

NVIVO CODEBOOK

Name	Description	Files	References
college		4	10
community		1	1
audience interaction		6	39
collab with other lpfm programmers		6	49
musiciantalent		4	9
non-lpfm interactions		3	11
family influence		2	8
FCC compliance		0	0
compliant		3	10
mixed		4	11
non-compliant		1	1
journalism experience, values		1	2
lpfm leadership		2	2
board involvement		4	12
programming committee		4	11
other media mention		6	28
pandemic		6	14
political economy		2	4
fundraising drives		5	14
other expenses		4	10
under-writing		2	4
volunteering		5	13
show involvement		1	1
Occupy the Airwave		2	2
social movement		1	4
specific musical artist mention		3	15
syndication		1	15

Internet Archive		1	1
other stations		3	6
streaming		1	2
tech		3	12
values		0	0
community		6	31
free speech		3	11
music		5	16
politics		5	28
religion		1	7

WORKS CITED

Abdulai, A.-R., Chireh, V. K., & Tchoukaleyska, R. (2021). Engaging Diverse Audiences: The Role of Community Radio in Rural Climate Change Knowledge Translation. Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, 13(3), 108-121.

Adorno, T. W., & Rabinbach, A. G. (1975). Culture Industry Reconsidered. New German Critique, 6, 12–19. https://doi.org/10.2307/487650

Bowman, S., & Willis, C. (2003). How audiences are shaping the future of news and information. We media, 10.

David Croteau, and William Hoynes. "The Economics of the Media Industry." Media/Society: Technology, Industries, Content. and Users, 6th ed., SAGE Publications, 2019, pp. 62–105.

Downing, J. (2002). Radical media projects and the crisis of public media. Networking Knowledge for Information Societies, 6, 320-327.

Dunbar-Hester, C. (2014). Low power to the people : Pirates, protest, and politics in fm radio activism. MIT Press.

Fauteux, B. (2015, July 30). Low Power Radio and media activism: An interview with Christina Dunbar-Hester. Radio Survivor. Retrieved April 16, 2023, from https://www.radiosurvivor.com/2015/07/low-power-radio-and-media-activism-an-interview-with-christina-dunbar-hester/

Fine, R., & Smith, W. (2003). Jürgen Habermas's theory of cosmopolitanism. Constellations, 10(4), 469-487.

Fox, Juliet. Community radio's amplification of communication for social change. Springer, 2019.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. Social Text, 25/26, 56–80. https://doi.org/10.2307/466240

Fuchs, C. (2016). Beyond Habermas: Rethinking Critical Theories of Communication. In Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet (Vol. 1, pp. 177–206). University of Westminster Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv5vddf2.8

Guest, P., Lawal, T., Joshi, A. R., & Brandom, R. (2021, April 13). Young Burmese activists are broadcasting anti-coup messages on pirate radio. Rest of World. Retrieved April 16, 2023

Habermas, Jurgen. "Chapter 8." Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy, MIT Press, 1996, pp. 360–79.

Huntemann, N. (2003). A promise diminished: The politics of low-power radio. Communities of the Air: Radio Century, Radio Culture, 76-92.

Kwak, H., Lee, C., Park, H., & Moon, S. (2010, April). What is Twitter, a social network or a news media?. In Proceedings of the 19th international conference on World wide web (pp. 591-600).

Lucas, C. (2006). Cultural policy, the public sphere, and the struggle to define low-power FM radio. Journal of Radio Studies, 13(1), 51-67.

Martin, E. N. (2021). Can public service broadcasting survive Silicon Valley? Synthesizing leadership perspectives at the BBC, PBS, NPR, CPB and local US stations. Technology in Society, 64, 101451.

Moylan, K. (2022). Coming to voice: Community radio production as critical pedagogy. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 25(1), 217–237. https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211003203

Moyo, Last. "Participation, citizenship, and pirate radio as empowerment: The case of radio dialogue in Zimbabwe." PIRACY CULTURES: How a Growing Portion of the Global Population is Building Media Relationships Through Alternate Channels of Obtaining Content (2013).

Mulligan, K. (2022). Digital inclusion, online participation and health promotion: promising practices from community-led participatory journalism. Global Health Promotion, 17579759221126150.

Nieckarz Jr, P. P. (2002). The business of public radio: The growing commercial presence within local National Public Radio. J. Radio Stud., 9, 209.

Nielsen families: TV and radio ratings. Nielsen. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2023, from https://markets.nielsen.com/us/en/about-us/panels/ratings-and-families/#:~:text=Is%20it%20legitimate%3F,or%20done%20over%20the%20phone

Overgaard, C. (2019). Rethinking volunteering as a form of unpaid work. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 48(1), 128-145.

Peters, C., & Witschge, T. (2015). From grand narratives of democracy to small expectations of participation: Audiences, citizenship, and interactive tools in digital journalism. Journalism practice, 9(1), 19-34.

Ritzi, C. (2023). The hidden structures of the digital public sphere. Constellations, 30, 55– 60.

Rosenwald, B. (2019). Talk Radio's America: How an industry took over a political party that took over the United States. Harvard University Press.

Ross, A. (2016, December 5). The Frankfurt School knew trump was coming. The New Yorker.

So you want to apply for a low-power FM license. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2023, from https://www.prometheusradio.org/so-you-want-apply-low-power-fm-license

Stavitsky, A. G. (1994). The changing conception of localism in US public radio. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 38(1), 19-33.

SQUIER, SUSAN MERRILL, ed. Communities of the Air: Radio Century, Radio Culture. Duke University Press, 2003. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11sn7mp.

Verovšek, P. J. (2023). Authorship and individualization in the digital public sphere. Constellations, 30(1), 34-41.

Waltz, Mitzi. Alternative and Activist Media. Edinburgh University Press, 2005. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g0b3wz.

Wenzel, A. D. (2021). Sourcing Diversity, Shifting Culture: Building “Cultural Competence” in Public Media. Digital Journalism, 9(4), 461-480.

Wilcken, L. (2009). “Pay for Play”: The Redistribution of Payola for Music Diversity in New York State and Its Implications for Sustainability in Music. The World of Music, 51(1), 55–74. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41699863