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OUTLINE OF RESEARCH ON RELIGION AND TELEVISION

The collaboration between research teams from The Annenberg School of Communications and the Gallup Organization has resulted in a revised plan of research, a synthesis of the original, separate proposals. This research plan draws on the strengths of each organization and reflects the most important contributions of the earlier proposals. Readers are directed to those earlier documents for more complete literature reviews, and extensive discussions of conceptual justifications underlying the theoretical and methodological approaches.

This revised statement of direction describes which aspects of the two earlier proposals will be conducted by our joint endeavor, and presents a timetable for the research.

Overview

The revised study of Religion and Television will consist of (1) content analysis of national and local religious programs in two cities, Atlanta and Philadelphia, conducted by researchers at The Annenberg School of Communications, (2) in-depth local surveys of viewers and non-viewers of religious programs in Atlanta and Philadelphia, also by researchers at The Annenberg School, and (3) a national survey of viewers and non-viewers of religious programs conducted by The Gallup Organization. These studies will be fully interrelated and interconnected, and will

be analyzed within the context of the institutional structures of the various broadcasting organizations involved. The content analysis will reveal the stable and recurrent theological and ideological frameworks of various classes of religious programs, and their images, values, themes, and appeals. The surveys will relate these messages to audience viewing patterns, the uses and functions of religious viewing, and its consequences on local church involvement, social networks, personal religious intensity, and a wide variety ^{of} general and religious orientations and behaviors.

Content Analysis. The content analysis phase of the research will analyze approximately 115 hours of religious television programming, representing about 80 individual programs broadcast each week in Atlanta and Philadelphia. These two cities were chosen for the range of programs they offer, their demographic diversity, and the relative economy and ease of videotaping the samples. A tentative list of the programs appearing in each (and both) of the research sites is attached; week-to-week changes in the schedules of both cities may lead to slight differences.

Our plan is to tape and analyze two weeks of the (nationally syndicated) programs which appear in both cities, and one week of the programs which appear only in Philadelphia and one week of the programs which appear only in Atlanta.

The content analysis instrument is designed to provide

reliable, objective data on the aggregate, underlying religious themes and patterns which may be expected to cultivate audience perceptions and actions. Results from classes of programming, rather than individual programs or episodes, will be analyzed and reported. Modifications and suggestions of the Design Team will be incorporated in the coding instrument presented in the original proposal of The Annenberg School of Communications. This instrument will be pilot tested on ten or more programs.

Once this instrument has been finalized, we will hire a staff of about 12-14 coders. Coders will be divided into randomly assigned coding teams of two each and will undergo 3 to 4 weeks of extensive training. In all coding (training programs and the sample programs) coders will be able to view the videotape as often as they wish and will turn in a single coding form. A subsample of the programs in each sample will be coded independently by two coder-pairs to provide double-coded data for reliability assessment.

Local Surveys. Following preliminary analysis of the data from the message system analysis, survey instruments will be developed which reflect content findings. In-depth telephone surveys of 750 viewers of religious programs and 500 non-viewers of religious programs will be conducted in both Atlanta and Philadelphia. This will yield a sample of 1500 respondents who view religious programs and 1000 who do not. The interviews will last 15-20 minutes.

The interview schedule used in the local surveys will be developed in consultation with the Design Team. It will follow the draft questions in both proposals and the theoretical goals of the study. Arbitron will draw the samples from their extensive viewer diary archives and collect these data. Arbitron's samples of respondents in Philadelphia and Atlanta will be divided into those who do and those who do not watch religious programs according to criteria determined by the researchers and the Design Team. Representative random samples will be drawn from these data bases. These surveys will provide in-depth assessments of the nature and functions of religious television in the two cities, as related to any variations in their programming, and document the general stability of religious viewing patterns over time.

National Survey. A national personal interview survey will be administered by the Gallup Organization, as part of two successive Omnibus surveys. The interview schedule will include 30 questions in addition to demographics. The sample will include an estimated 900 viewers and 1100 non-viewers of religious programs.

The data from all surveys will be compiled and analyzed in conjunction with content data, and a report will be issued by January 31, 1984.

Differences from Earlier Proposals

This combined approach offers advantages over either earlier proposal. Among these strengths is the combination of in-depth surveys with message analyses in two local markets, and the use of an abbreviated national survey instrument that will amplify relevant aspects of the local studies. Conducting the content analysis in two markets necessitates a reduction in the overall size of the samples coded, but provides a much broader range of programming, particularly local programming. This broader overall view of programming in two cities, combined with the in-depth audience surveys in those sites will greatly improve the quality, value, and range of data gathered.

Coordination

The Design Team appointed by the Committee on Religious Broadcasting Research will be of particular help in the initial stages of program sampling and in the development of the content and survey instruments.

We have prepared a memorandum (attached) regarding the schedule of payments required by the University, and the schedule of payments proposed by the Gallup Organization.

The Timetable

June, 1982	Preparation and planning
July-September, 1982	Taping of program samples
August-September, 1982	Message analysis instrument preparation, pilot testing, and coder hiring and training
September-December, 1982	Collection of Message Data (Coding)
January-February, 1983	Initial Analyses of Message Data
March, 1983	Local Surveys Administered
April 15, 1983	National Survey Instrument Prepared
April-May, 1983	National Survey Administered
June-December, 1983	Analysis of All Data and Writing of Final Report
January 31, 1984	Submission of Final Report