

POPULAR RELIGIOUS RADIO PROGRAMS
(A Content Analysis)

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POPULAR RELIGIOUS RADIO PROGRAMS

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This study explored the content of popular religious radio programs. The top 20 syndicated programs were recorded over a five-week period, using Monday programs for week-one, Tuesday programs for week-two, and so on. Content was divided into six categories - Spiritual/Religious, Political, Social, Fund-raising, Promotion, and Other. General findings showed that 72% of religious programs content was purely spiritual or religious (mostly teaching/preaching programs), 14% was social (mostly call-in talk shows), and 1% was devoted to political discussion. 6% of air-time was used for fund-raising, while 4% was used for promotion and 3% for other. A more detailed interpretation of the findings is included in the study.

Accepted by: John V. McLaughlin, Chair

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CHAPTER ONE

Religious programming has been a part of American broadcasting since 1921. On January 2nd of that year, Calvary Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania began broadcasting a regular Sunday evening service over KDKA radio (Fore, 1989).

Religious broadcasting, which began with radio, now includes television, cable, and satellite distribution. Erickson (1992) noted, "Religious broadcasting, now over 70 years in existence, has grown from being merely an appendage of commercial broadcasting to a major, multi-million dollar industry in its own right" (p. 17). According to the 1995 Directory of Religious Broadcasting, there are now over 1500 religious radio stations in the United States and nearly 300 religious television stations. Also, with nearly 700 religious program producers in the U.S., it is obvious that religious broadcasters have the potential to exert significant influence on American culture.

There have been relatively few studies on the subject of religious broadcasting, and more specifically, religious radio. This is surprising, if only because religious programming has been a part of the American broadcasting scene for so long. Schultze (1988) stated, "Studies of contemporary religious broadcasting erroneously assume that the electronic church is a new

phenomenon, while broadcast histories wrongly imply that evangelical radio was a minor aspect of U.S. broadcasting and culture" (p. 291).

The lack of research on the subject led Horsfield (1984) to conclude,

"There have been no substantial analyses of the content of religious programs, for example, to indicate objectively the presence or nature of common content forms or patterns in religious programs, how these may have changed over time, or how they relate to other variables influential in the process such as the sponsoring tradition or the method by which the program acquires its funding. Such an absence of objective data on program content is surprising, considering that intense discussion of the message of religious programs has been taking place for almost a decade" (p. 84).

Of the studies that have been conducted on the subject of religious broadcasting - many of which involve an analysis of program content - virtually all deal with television. This could be due to the highly publicized scandals of the late 80's involving religious

television personalities, as well as the increasing influence of television on our society.

Several researchers (Abelman & Neuendorf, 1985; Frankl, 1985; Winzenburg, 1992) have conducted content analysis studies on religious television programs to determine the proportionate amount of time spent on fund-raising, political content, and spiritual content. These studies have provided the direction for a similar descriptive study of religious radio programs.

This study, or content analysis, sought to answer the following questions about religious radio programs:

- 1) What percentage of broadcast time is spent on purely spiritual/religious content?
- 2) What percentage of broadcast time is spent discussing political issues?
- 3) What percentage of broadcast time is spent on fund-raising and promotional activities?

These questions were based on Winzenburg's (1992) study of religious television programs. A fourth question, based on a study of religious television programs by Abelman and Neuendorf (1985), is:

- 4) What percentage of broadcast time is spent on social issues?

Common perceptions of religious broadcasters are

that they use airtime to promote a specific political agenda, or that broadcasts are primarily fundraising programs. In regard to criticism of religious radio broadcasters, Wineke (1971) stated,

"Perhaps the complaint most often heard about religious broadcasters is that they are constantly pleading for money for themselves. A listener to a Christian radio station may during a single morning be subjected to thirty or more appeals. The listener may begin to feel that all he is getting are pleas for contributions to continue the broadcasting of pleas for contributions" (p. 3).

This study was designed to provide objective answers to the four previously stated research questions. Although there were some modifications of the methodology of the researchers previously mentioned (to make the study adaptable to radio), their content analyses of religious television programs provided a good framework and model for this study of religious radio programs.

In their study of religious television, Abelman & Neuendorf (1985) discovered that "75% of programming content on religious TV has a religious theme, while only 2% is overtly political" (p. 98). Winzenburg (1992)

found that 74% of the airtime was used for spiritual content, 4% was political, and 22% was used for fund-raising and promotion.

Abelman (1990) conducted a study of religious television, which explored the political content of the "700 Club", hosted by one-time Presidential candidate Pat Robertson. Abelman & Pettey (1988) also investigated the political content of religious television prior to the 1988 Presidential election. Both studies used content categories that served as a basis for the content categories in this study of religious radio programs. Wulfemeyer (1982) studied the content of late-evening local newscasts in San Diego and Los Angeles in order to determine both the categories of news content and the percentage of time devoted to each category. And Dominick, Wurtzel, & Lometti (1975) used a content analysis to determine the percentage of time allocated to various topics on local "Eyewitness" news formats.

This study of religious radio programs sought to determine how religious radio broadcasters use airtime. The goal was to provide information as to what kinds of topics are being discussed, and the percentage of time devoted to each. Since this study was primarily descriptive, it should serve to provide a foundation or framework for critical and prescriptive studies on

this subject.

METHODOLOGY

A purposive sample of the radio programs with the largest syndication (including radio stations, translators, and satellators) was used for this study. The top 20 programs were analyzed. A list was obtained by using data in the 1995 Directory of Religious Broadcasting, and was verified by follow-up phone calls to each ministry or their advertising agency. After the top 20, syndicated figures drop dramatically. Stempel (1969) used a similar sampling technique in a study of the top 15 daily newspapers in the United States, in which the so-called "elite papers" were analyzed for content regarding Presidential campaign coverage.

Arbitron, the primary ratings service for radio, does not provide audience ratings for individual programs, as Nielsen does for television programs. Therefore, popularity must be based on station and listener demand for the program, which is reflected by the syndication list. The top 20 list is as follows (note: syndication number includes radio stations, translators and satellators):

The Top 20 Syndicated Religious Radio Programs

<u>Title of program</u>	<u>Broadcast outlets</u>
1. Focus on the Family	2300
2. Insight for Living	1158
3. In Touch	852
4. Haven	558
5. Grace to You	542
6. Truths That Transform	516
7. Thru the Bible	505
8. Back to the Bible	419
9. Point of View	317
10. Radio Bible Class	300
11. Key Life	295
12. Faith Seminar of the Air	270
13. Living Way	260
14. Minirth-Meier New Life Clinic	225
15. Gateway to Joy	219
16. Parent Talk	198
17. Voice of Prophecy	155
18. Upwords	145
19. The Art of Family Living	141
20. Talkback	140

This study was designed to investigate only daily programs that are 15-minutes or longer. This is because daily programs shorter than 15-minutes are usually informational or news-oriented. Weekly broadcasts (those which air once per week, usually Saturday or Sunday) were not included, primarily because these are typically local church broadcasts, regional ministries, or national broadcasts of major denominations (such as the Southern Baptists or United Methodists) in which funding is provided through organizational budgets. Also, the bulk of religious radio programs with the largest syndication are daily broadcasts. These programs represent much of the primary content of the nation's "full-time" religious formatted stations.

This study analyzed two primary types of broadcasts:

- 1) Paid time broadcasts - "those religious programs that are produced by largely independent, evangelical organizations, syndicated nationally, and aired on time purchased from local stations, and financed primarily by audience contributions" (Horsfield, 1985, p. 90).
- 2) Barter broadcasts - those religious programs that do not purchase air time on local stations, but require the local station to air a specific number of national advertising spots, as well as allowing the local station to air a specific number of their own local advertising

spots.

In the early days of religious broadcasting, most programs were based out of the larger denominations or were revival-oriented. Today, however, parachurch professionals and specialized Christian ministries have dramatically changed the structure and sound of religious broadcasting on radio (Kennedy, 1994). Therefore, the programs in this study included broadcasts that feature preaching, teaching, interviews, live call-in segments, music, and professional counseling. (Note: Syndicated music programs were not included.)

The selected programs were recorded on cassette tapes over a five-week period from May 15 through June 17, 1995. In week one, programs were recorded on Monday, week two on Tuesday, week three on Wednesday, week four on Thursday, and week five on Friday. (The only exception involved the program "Parent Talk", which was recorded on Saturday due to conflicting air times of other programs in the study. However, the Saturday edition of this program is virtually identical to the daily version.) This process allowed for random sampling of the selected programs from each broadcaster. This is consistent with Stempel and Westley's (1981) recommendation that each day of the week appear equally often in the sample. This procedure is also similar

to the one used by Hinkle and Elliott (1989) in their study of major daily newspapers in the U.S., in which papers were selected over a five-week period with a different day represented for each week of the study.

Using another procedure from previous research (Lowry, 1981), the primary coding was done by the author of this study. Four assistants were used as check-coders, coding every fourth randomly-selected program, in order to maintain reliability. A pilot study was also conducted using graduate student-coders for the purpose of refining and testing categories and obtaining an acceptable intercoder reliability estimate of .80 or better. Using Holsti's (1969) formula, reliability in the pilot study was calculated at .92, and in the actual study at .81.

Program topics were placed in one of six categories. Each program was divided into 5-minute segments for easier analysis and each minute was coded for content. The goal was to obtain the amount of time (percentage) each broadcaster spends on each of the six categories. This measurement allows for fair comparison of all broadcasts, regardless of length.

Five of the six categories are similar to those used by Winzenburg (1992) in his study on religious television. They are: 1) Spiritual/Religious,

2) Political, 3) Fund-raising, 4) Promotion, and 5) Other. Further study revealed the necessity for another category, based on the study of Abelman & Neuendorf (1985). That category was referred to as Social.

Spiritual/Religious topics include "discussions of or references to the service, structure, function, or faith of organized or unorganized individuals dedicated to an adherence to God or the supernatural" (Abelman & Neuendorf, 1985, p. 104). Generally, preaching and/or teaching of the Bible or biblical principles, prayer, music or theme songs, and general discussion of religious activities and issues fall into this category. For example, "God is calling us to repent and serve Him."

Political topics include "discussions of or references to local, national, or international government structure, the conduct of management, and act of or against a government or political system" (Abelman, et al., p. 103). This includes specific references to political candidates, specific legislation, commentary on the policies of a government official and/or discussion or critique of the activities of those serving in government. An example would be, "If this bill is passed by Congress, it could limit our freedom

of speech." Issues that were based on or frequently interspersed with a specific Biblical text were considered to be "spiritual/religious".

Social topics include "discussions of or references to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society" (Abelman, et al., p. 102). This will typically involve the discussion of current social issues such as crime, single-parenting, education, and so on. Generally, these are issues that are of interest to the general public regardless of religious affiliation or background. For example, "Violent crime among our youth is increasing, and is a threat to the future of America." If the discussion of a social issue was based on or frequently interspersed with a specific Biblical text, however, it was coded as "spiritual/religious".

Fund-raising includes specific requests for money (Winzenburg, 1992). These financial appeals may be direct requests for money or may also include an item or service in exchange for a donation. In other words, a donation is necessary to obtain the item. This category also includes time spent promoting a book, tape, or other item for the purpose of offering it in exchange for a donation. (An interview with the author of a book in which the actual content was discussed

was categorized as either "spiritual/religious", "political", or "social" depending on the subject matter.) An example would be, "We'll send you a copy of this new book in appreciation for your gift of twenty dollars or more."

Promotion includes the offer of an item or service without the necessity of a donation (Winzenburg, 1992). This could include the offer of a book, pamphlet, or other item that is available free upon request by the listener. It also includes the sale of books, tapes, or other items in which the words "cost" or "price" are mentioned. For example, "Today's broadcast is available on cassette tape. The cost is five dollars. Be sure to mention radio offer number 100 when you call or write."

The Other category includes all topics or items that do not fit into the first five categories, such as independent network commercials, network newscasts, guest introductions, and so on.

Following is an example of how the same subject matter would be coded and placed in different categories based upon the context in which it is used:

Subject: Education

Spiritual/Religious: Discussion of the importance of an adequate education in order to fulfill the

"call of God" upon one's life.

Political: Discussion of current legislation before Congress and the importance of its passage or defeat in regard to local school districts.

Social: Discussion of the importance of a quality education in order to obtain a job in one's chosen field of endeavor.

The cost for conducting this study was rather small, due to the availability of local radio facilities and associated resources. Most of the program tapes needed in the study were available through a local radio station. Those that were not available were recorded from radio stations in the immediate listening area. All of the programs needed for this study were available and were included.

The primary audience for this study includes anyone involved in or interested in religious broadcasting, such as program producers, program hosts/speakers, listeners and supporters of religious radio programs, and radio station personnel involved with the operation, programming, and funding of religious formatted stations. Scholars with an interest in broadcasting, specifically religious broadcasting, should find the results of this study beneficial for use in future studies on this subject.

CHAPTER TWO

PILOT STUDY

The primary purpose of the pilot study was to test and refine, if necessary, the content categories designed for this study. It was also intended to be a practice version of the actual study. Any problems encountered during this phase could then be corrected before beginning the next phase.

As part of an assignment for a graduate research class, four students agreed to participate in the pilot study. They were to assist in additional research on the topic. However, their primary role was to serve as coders for the study. They will be referred to as Coder A, Coder B, Coder C, and Coder D.

An initial training session for the coding procedure was held and attended by only two of the coders - A and B. During the session, coders were introduced to the scope and purpose of the study and each was given a set of coding instructions, a coding worksheet, and a list of category definitions. Samples of several programs were played to illustrate and identify content as it related to the study. Two programs were then played in full, with Coders A and B actually coding the content of each program. After, coding sheets were compared, problems and questions were discussed, and final instructions were given for the next step in the

study.

A subsample of three programs was selected for analysis in the pilot study. This represented 15% of the sample of twenty programs selected for the actual study. The subsample consisted of the top three ranked programs from the Top 20 list and included "Focus on the Family", "Insight for Living", and "In Touch". Two broadcasts of each program were recorded on cassette tapes, one from a Friday broadcast and the other from a Monday broadcast. This represented two separate weeks of broadcasts for these three programs.

Next, each coder was given a packet that included three cassette tapes (6 total broadcasts, 2 for each program), six coding sheets, instructions, and a list of content categories and definitions. Coders C and D were given brief instructions, but did not receive the same training as Coders A and B. All coders were given one week to complete and return their packets.

Each coder was to listen to each broadcast in full. Each minute of the broadcast was to be coded according to its content in relations to the designated content categories.

After coding sheets were returned, they were examined in order to determine intercoder reliability (as compared with the author of this study). Using

Holsti's (1969) formula, the following intercoder reliability estimates were calculated:

Coder A - .92

Coder B - .94

Coder C - .90

Coder D - .69

Overall reliability estimate was .86. If Coder D is dropped, then reliability becomes .92.

Using Scott's (1955) pi index, the following intercoder reliability estimates were calculated:

Coder A - .73

Coder B - .80

Coder C - .67

Coder D --.03

Overall reliability estimate was .54. If Coder D is dropped, then reliability becomes .73.

An average of the two estimates yields a reliability estimate of 82.5%. The goal of achieving a reliability level of .80 or better was therefore reached.

Following is a summary of the data which includes the name of the program and the percentages allocated for each category:

	<u>Spir/Rel</u>	<u>Pol</u>	<u>Soc</u>	<u>F.R.</u>	<u>Pro</u>	<u>Other</u>
Focus on the Family	59%	0	33%	1.5%	3%	3.5%
Insight for Living	93%	0	0	3.5%	3.5%	0
<u>In Touch</u>	<u>96%</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0</u>
Mean per category	83%	0	11%	1.5%	3.5%	1%

The pilot study proved to be very beneficial in helping to achieve the primary objectives - testing the content categories for accuracy and achieving acceptable intercoder reliability estimates.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The procedures used in the actual study were very similar, if not identical, to those used in the pilot study. The author of this study coded all the selected programs (a total of 99). One program, "Talkback", discontinued broadcasting their two-hour daily talk show at the end of week four, and began a new one-hour program with a different format and title. Therefore, the program from week five was not included in the study, since syndication figures changed as a result of the change in the program.

Four check-coders were recruited and agreed to each code five programs, which was actually every fourth program on the list. This allowed for each program to be coded at least once by someone other than the

primary coder. Intercoder reliability varied among the four check-coders, with Coders A and C receiving more training and instruction than Coder B, and Coder D receiving very little training. Therefore, not all were able to participate at the same level of commitment. This was due in part to time constraints and other obligations of each participant.

Intercoder reliability estimates for the four check-coders was as follows:

Coder A - .82

Coder B - .70

Coder C - .92

Coder D - .64

Overall reliability estimate is .77. If Coder D is dropped, then reliability becomes .81. Although this number was expected to be higher, it still exceeds the level of .80 which was pre-determined. These estimates were calculated using Holsti's (1969) formula, due to its simplicity and applicability to this project. Scott's (1955) pi index was not used due to its emphasis on chance selection of categories. While it was incorporated into the pilot study, its use was deemed unnecessary to this study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Although there were no surprises in this study,

several patterns began to emerge as the data was tabulated and arranged in various tables. For example, programs that emphasized preaching and teaching of the Bible as their primary format, typically used the vast majority of their airtime for purely Spiritual/Religious content. The programs that featured call-in talk and discussion as their primary format, generally had less Spiritual/Religious content and more Social content. Only four of the twenty programs devoted any time to Political content. In the Fund-raising category, one program far exceeded all the others by devoting one-third of their broadcast time to raising money. Otherwise, the amount of time spent fund-raising ranged from none at all to 9.5%. Those broadcast ministries which emphasized teaching in their format, tended to use more time for Promotion than the others, typically offering a series of teaching tapes on a particular subject for a specific cost. Programs with call-in talk formats generally devoted more time to the Other category. Data are arranged in the following tables: TABLE 1) Overall Results, TABLE 2) Spiritual/Religious, TABLE 3) Political, TABLE 4) Social, TABLE 5) Fund-raising, TABLE 6) Promotion, and TABLE 7) Other.

TABLE 1 - OVERALL RESULTS

	<u>SPIR/REL</u>	<u>POL</u>	<u>SOC</u>	<u>F-R</u>	<u>PRO</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
Focus on the Family	41%	2%	41%	8%	2%	6%
Insight for Living	85%	0	6%	5%	1%	3%
In Touch	94%	0	0	0	6%	0
Haven	88%	0	6%	2%	4%	0
Grace to You	92%	0	0	0	8%	0
Truths That Transform	72%	0	19%	8%	0	1%
Thru the Bible	95%	0	0	4%	0	1%
Back to the Bible	90%	0	1%	4%	5%	0
Point of View	9%	15%	47%	3%	1%	25%
Radio Bible Class	93%	0	0	0	6%	1%
Key Life	85%	0	5%	3%	6%	1%
Faith Seminar	88%	0	0	3%	9%	0
Living Way	88%	0	0	4%	8%	0
Minirth-Meier Clinic	30%	0	57%	0	8%	5%
Gateway to Joy	89%	0	3%	0	8%	0
Parent Talk	16%	0	62%	9.5%	1%	11.5%
Voice of Prophecy	77%	0	14%	3%	5%	1%
Upwords	79%	0	8%	6%	7%	0
Art of Family Living	82%	1%	8%	6%	3%	0
Talkback	40%	2%	7%	33%	0	18%
Mean Per Category	72%	1%	14%	6%	4%	3%

TABLE 2

SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS

1. Thru the Bible (95%) - (Teaching)
2. In Touch (94%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
3. Radio Bible Class (93%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
4. Grace to You (92%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
5. Back to the Bible (90%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
6. Gateway to Joy (89%) - (Teaching)
7. Haven (88%) - (Teaching/Music/Interview)
8. Faith Seminar (88%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
9. Living Way (88%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
10. Insight for Living (85%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
11. Key Life (85%) - (Teaching)
12. Art of Family Living (82%) - (Teaching/Interview)
13. Upwords (79%) - (Teaching)
14. Voice of Prophecy (77%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
15. Truths That Transform (72%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
16. Focus on the Family (41%) - (Discussion/Interview)
17. Talkback (40%) - (Call-in talk)
18. Minirth-Meier Clinic (30%) - (Call-in talk)
19. Parent Talk (16%) - (Call-in talk)
20. Point of View (9%) - (Call-in talk)

TABLE 3

POLITICAL

1. Point of View (15%) - (Call-in talk)
 2. Focus on the Family (2%) - (Discussion/Interview)
 3. Talkback (2%) - (Call-in talk)
 4. Art of Family Living (1%) - (Teaching/Interview)
- All others 0% -

TABLE 4

SOCIAL

1. Parent Talk (62%) - (Call-in talk)
2. Minirth-Meier Clinic (57%) - (Call-in talk)
3. Point of View (47%) - (Call-in talk)
4. Focus on the Family (41%) - (Discussion/Interview)
5. Truths That Transform (19%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
6. Voice of Prophecy (14%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
7. Upwords (8%) - (Teaching)
8. Art of Family Living (8%) - (Teaching/Interview)
9. Talkback (7%) - (Call-in talk)
10. Insight for Living (6%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
11. Haven (6%) - (Teaching/Music/Interview)
12. Key Life (5%) - (Teaching)
13. Gateway to Joy (3%) - (Teaching)
14. Back to the Bible (1%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
15. In Touch (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
16. Grace to You (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
17. Thru the Bible (0) - (Teaching)
18. Radio Bible Class (0) - (Teaching/Discussion)
19. Faith Seminar (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
20. Living Way (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)

TABLE 5
FUND-RAISING

1. Talkback (33%) - (Call-in talk)
2. Parent Talk (9.5%) - (Call-in talk)
3. Focus on the Family (8%) - (Discussion/Interview)
4. Truths That Transform (8%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
5. Upwords (6%) - (Teaching)
6. Art of Family Living (6%) - (Teaching/Interview)
7. Insight for Living (5%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
8. Thru the Bible (4%) - (Teaching)
9. Back to the Bible (4%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
10. Living Way (4%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
11. Point of View (3%) - (Call-in talk)
12. Key Life (3%) - (Teaching)
13. Faith Seminar (3%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
14. Voice of Prophecy (3%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
15. Haven (2%) - (Teaching/Music/Interview)
16. In Touch (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
17. Grace to You (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
18. Radio Bible Class (0) - (Teaching/Discussion)
19. Minirth-Meier Clinic (0) (Call-in talk)
20. Gateway to Joy (0) - (Teaching)

TABLE 6

PROMOTION

1. Faith Seminar (9%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
2. Grace to You (8%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
3. Living Way (8%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
4. Minirth-Meier Clinic (8%) - (Call-in talk)
5. Gateway to Joy (8%) - (Teaching)
6. Upwords (7%) - (Teaching)
7. In Touch (6%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
8. Radio Bible Class (6%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
9. Key Life (6%) - (Teaching)
10. Back to the Bible (5%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
11. Voice of Prophecy (5%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
12. Art of Family Living (3%) - (Teaching/Interview)
13. Focus on the Family (2%) - (Discussion/Interview)
14. Haven (2%) - (Teaching/Music/Interview)
15. Insight for Living (1%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
16. Point of View (1%) - (Call-in talk)
17. Parent Talk (1%) - (Call-in talk)
18. Truths That Transform (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
19. Thru the Bible (0) - (Teaching)
20. Talkback (0) - (Call-in talk)

TABLE 7

OTHER

1. Point of View (25%) - (Call-in talk)
2. Talkback (18%) - (Call-in talk)
3. Parent Talk (11.5%) - (Call-in talk)
4. Focus on the Family (6%) - (Discussion/Interview)
5. Minirth-Meier Clinic (5%) - (Call-in talk)
6. Insight for Living (3%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
7. Truths That Transform (1%) - (Teaching/Preaching)
8. Thru the Bible (1%) - (Teaching)
9. Radio Bible Class (1%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
10. Key Life (1%) - (Teaching)
11. Voice of Prophecy (1%) - (Teaching/Discussion)
12. In Touch (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
13. Haven (0) - (Teaching/Music/Interview)
14. Grace to You (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
15. Back to the Bible (0) - (Teaching/Discussion)
16. Faith Seminar (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
17. Living Way (0) - (Teaching/Preaching)
18. Gateway to Joy (0) - (Teaching)
19. Upwords (0) - (Teaching)
20. Art of Family Living (0) - (Teaching/Interview)

In order to illustrate the actual content, as defined by the categories, excerpts of several different programs have been transcribed. Each excerpt is exactly one-minute of program text.

This is an example of Spiritual/Religious content taken from the "Thru the Bible" program, which features the teaching of the late J. Vernon McGee:

"Now friends, we come back to this final study here in Second Peter. And what we have here is the world that was (we've seen that destroyed by water), the world that is (the one that we're living in today) is likewise to be destroyed. The words that Peter uses sound very much like an atomic explosion. It looks as if the Lord Jesus will untie these little atoms - they call it atomic fission today. They've broken into this little fellow - contains an abundance of energy and it all is done with great heat and a great sound (and that's the word that Simon Peter uses by the way). Now again, let me drop back and pick up verse nine. He makes it very clear he's not trying to use scare tactics with us at all, that one day with the Lord is as

a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. It's coming. Even if the Lord took the Church out of the world today, it would still be a thousand-and-seven years before this would take place."

Next, here is an example of Political content which is taken from the call-in talk show "Point of View" with Marlin Maddoux:

"A lot of people don't know it, but the Clinton administration on Monday created a new post - and that's White House Liason to Gay and Lesbian Groups. And Tuesday, members of the administration held briefings (now this is in the White House) for forty lesbian and gay elected officials from around the nation. Thursday, the administration was expected to name a council whose thirty members will advise President Clinton on issues related to AIDS and HIV. Last week, the Justice Department declined to join a legal battle against a Colorado constitutional amendment that bans the enactment of specific civil rights protections for gays and lesbians. And that was a decision that infuriated several leaders of gay and lesbian organizations.

What you've got here is an elevation by the Clinton administration of people who simply, uh, the only thing they have that tie them together is their practice."

An example of Social content is found in the program "Parent Talk" with host Randy Carlson:

"Maybe you're sitting here on the day before Father's Day wondering why do I have this recurrent memory of my Dad from my childhood - even though he may be gone or maybe he lives down the road. Why do I remember my Dad the way I do? Well, as you'll discover this hour, our memories of our fathers - our "father memories" - have as much to say about us today in our personality as it does our fathers and how they have imprinted our lives. So if you have a memory of Dad you'd like to share (now, tributes, of course, will be a part of the hour as well), but maybe this is a troubling memory of your father or one that just concerns you some, join us. Call now and we'll get you on with your "father memory". The telephone number is area

520-544-2222. Area 520, and then call 544-2222. You call us and we'll take your call and we'll call you back at our expense and get you on the air.

Sally's ready for your call this morning so give us a buzz."

Although this text includes some content that could be coded as "Other" (such as the solicitation for phone calls), the majority of this one-minute segment is dominated by the theme of "father memories", which deals with relationship issues. Discussions involving issues of relationship were typically coded as Social.

Content that was coded as Fund-raising is best illustrated by the following excerpt from the call-in talk show "Talkback with Bob Larson":

"Yesterday was a pretty tough day behind this microphone. A lot of folks let us down. I've run into days like that when people just are not there. They're just not there. I need you to be there for this ministry today. I need you to get to a phone and call right now at 1-800-223-CLUB, because the vision that God has given for taking on these issues and giving solid Biblical answers, the vision God has

given me of taking on everybody from the Devil's crowd to the Clinton crowd is a vision that I believe you believe in. But you've got to back it and you haven't been doing it the last couple of weeks and you certainly didn't do it yesterday. Now I need some folks out there who will be regular partners, regular members of the Victory Club sharing twenty dollars or more a month. I send my confidential commentary cassette out to these folks every single month. This month, the cassette is called "Can a Christian Have a Demon?" - a step-by-step spiritual, scriptural analysis of the question. You see, I believe they can. And if that shocks you, you need to hear the tape and understand the scriptural explanation for that."

An example of content in the Promotion category is found in the program "Faith Seminar of the Air" with Kenneth Hagin:

ANNOUNCER: "You have been listening to Faith Seminar of the Air with Reverened Kenneth Hagin. This week, we're using excerpts from Kenneth Hagin's cassette

album "Casting Your Cares Upon the Lord". We have a special radio offer for this week only. For only thirteen dollars and ninety-five cents, you can receive Kenneth Hagin's cassette album and book "Casting Your Cares Upon the Lord". This cassette contains the complete unedited messages of "Casting Your Cares Upon the Lord", plus "How You Can Be Worry-Free". And Kenneth Hagin's book, Casting Your Cares, is more than a book - it's an experience. If you know any world-champion worriers, this book is for them. Find out about the sin of worry, dealing with anxiety, turning loose of your problems, and the prayer of committment. To order this special radio offer, "Casting Your Cares Upon the Lord", send thirteen dollars and ninety-five cents and request radio offer number 907. Address your request to Kenneth Hagin Ministries, P.O. Box 50126, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74150. That's Kenneth Hagin Ministries, P.O. Box 50126, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74150. You can also place your order by using your credit card. Have your MasterCard or Visa ready when you phone our toll-free

number, 1-800-54-FAITH. Phone 1-800-54-FAITH and request radio offer number 907 for thirteen dollars and ninety-five cents."

The content category labeled "Other", primarily consisted of network commercials aired within a specific program, network newscasts, lengthy guest introductions, generic (or, non-religious) theme music, or any other content that could not be placed into one of the other five categories. However, such content was required to have been the dominant theme during at least one-minute of air time.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The results of this study suggest that the content of religious radio programs is, indeed, dominated by the discussion of spiritual/religious issues. The criticism that religious radio consists primarily of political activism and fund-raising may be unfounded. Perhaps that critical impression arises from the popularity of certain programs that do spend an unusual amount of time on non-spiritual content.

"Talkback" with Bob Larson, a two-hour daily call-in talk show that originates from Denver, Colorado, spends nearly as much time requesting financial assistance as on actual spiritual/religious content. One-third(33%) of Talkback's air time is devoted to fund-raising. A listener to this program could very easily form the opinion that religious radio is all about accumulating more money for one's own ministry. However, this is not meant to judge the motives of Bob Larson or any other religious broadcaster.

The average amount of time devoted to on-air fund-raising was 6%. This primarily consisted of:

- reminders that financial support was needed to keep a program on a particular station in the listener's city;
- the offer of a book by the program speaker

or program guest to anyone making a minimum donation to the ministry;
-everything from lengthy discourses on the ministry's financial condition to brief mentions of ten seconds or less at the very end of the program.

Promotional content constituted 4% of religious radio broadcasters' airtime. This was more common among programs that featured a strong teaching/preaching format. Generally, the conclusion of the broadcast was devoted to the offer of a tape or set of tapes, a book, or a combination of tapes and a book. This is popular due to the inability of a broadcaster to feature an entire "message" on a radio program as a result of time constraints. Tapes were typically priced at \$5.00 per tape. The cost of books varied.

Only 1% of religious radio airtime was given to discussion of political issues. The only program that used any significant amount of airtime for this type of content was "Point of View" with Marlin Maddoux. This is a two-hour call-in talk show that is driven by current social, religious, and political issues. The program host attempts to interpret these issues in light of a Biblical world view. Political content generally consisted of critiques of the policies of the Clinton

administration, the actions or policies of Senators or members of Congress, and caller response to a specific headline issue in the news on that day.

The content of call-in talk shows was often driven by the callers that were placed on the air. However, the program hosts rarely allowed lengthy discussion of a topic that was not the featured subject for that day. The only exception was a program that featured "open-line" calls, in which callers could talk about any subject of interest to them.

Religious radio broadcasters spent 14% of their airtime discussing social issues. Social topics included a wide range of subject matter. Among the social topics were: suburban gangs, anger, sterilization, marriage problems, family secrets, television, advice for mothers of toddlers and pre-schoolers, abortion procedures, absentee fathers, violence among youth, father-daughter relationships, childhood depression and behavior problems, multiplebirth families, fatherhood, and dealing with authority.

It is worth noting that certain tendencies are evident when observing the list of programs (from Tables 2 through 7) from each category. In the Spiritual/Religious category (Table 2), the top 15 programs all emphasize a teaching or preaching format.

Programs 16 through 20 are all "talk/discussion" oriented. This confirms what would seem obvious - that "teaching/preaching" programs contain the most spiritual content, simply because they are teaching or preaching about the Bible or Biblical principles.

Table 3 indicates that only one program, "Point of View", actually features any significant amount of time on political issues. Since only four programs out of the entire twenty in the study devoted any time to Political content, there is very little support for the argument that religious radio broadcasters as a whole are preaching a gospel of conservative, right-wing politics. While most religious radio programs espouse a conservative viewpoint on many issues, it is also true, as Hadden and Swann (1981) suggested, that not all conservative programs are political.

Table 4 spotlights the attention given to Social content by the programs that feature a call-in talk or discussion/interview format. As indicated by the list of social topics listed previously, many of these programs offer counseling or advice from trained experts in a particular field. The religious aspect of these programs may be evident in the Christian world view and Biblically-based advice given by the program speakers. However, many of the subjects discussed are generally

of interest to a wide cross-section of the population.

Tables 5 and 6 do not seem to indicate any strong patterns in either the Fund-raising or Promotion categories. This seems to primarily be a function of the operation procedures of a particular ministry. Some ministries apparently receive the bulk of their support from listener donations, and therefore devote more time to direct appeals for financial assistance. Some simply choose not to "sell" books, or any product, on their programs, but prefer to give an item in appreciation for a donation. However, many of the "teaching/preaching" formatted programs find it more beneficial, and possibly more necessary, to package and sell their tapes and books for a set price.

The order of the programs on the list in Table 7 makes it clear that "call-in talk/discussion" formats use more time for content regarded as Other. This is generally due to the delivery system for the program (usually satellite transmission over an established network) and the accepted station format requirements for one and two-hour broadcasts. Since several of the programs that use a "call-in talk" format do not purchase air time directly from the radio stations (time is bartered, giving stations local inventory to sell and requiring them to air national commercials), a certain

amount is allocated to commercial inventory. Therefore, commercials, newscasts, and various other elements are present in these types of program, as opposed to "teaching/preaching" programs, in which commercial breaks would not be appropriate.

When comparing the results of this study with those of the television study (Winzenburg, 1992) from which the idea for this one was based, several conclusions can be drawn. Both religious radio and television programs use about the same amount of airtime for purely Spiritual/Religious content - 72% for radio, 74% for television. However, both Fund-raising and Promotion content on television is more than twice the amount on radio - 22% for television, 10% for radio. Because television time is more expensive than radio time, this could explain this difference. This may have also contributed to the negative image of some TV preachers, which has then been sometimes unjustly applied to radio ministries as well.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the descriptive nature of this study, it is expected that the results will lead to several new questions regarding the content of religious radio programs. Some of the possible questions raised could include: 1) What are the most and/or least frequently

discussed spiritual or religious topics? political topics? social topics? 2) How does amount, frequency, type, or manner of fund-raising positively correlate with the amount of donations received? 3) How does broadcast content change when circumstances change (i.e., Presidential election year, natural disasters, seasonal changes, and so on)? These are just a few of the possible research questions that could arise from this study.

This is the type of study that could be repeated annually or even every other year, similar to Winzenburg's (1992) content analysis on religious television programs. Comparison studies would be interesting, in order to observe how different forms of religious media (radio, television, magazines, etc.) cover the same subject matter. A study could also be done to observe how the same subject matter or issue is covered or treated by religious and non-religious media.

More research is needed on the subject of religious radio and religious radio programs. It is hoped that this study will serve as a catalyst for further research on this increasingly influential area of modern communication.

CONCLUSION

Religious broadcasting on radio has endured many changes since its inception. However, with the

introduction of satellite and computer technology, the ever-changing political climate in America, increased competition among the media, and lifestyle changes evident in today's society, broadcasters have begun to look for new and innovative ways to communicate their message. In other words, religious radio no longer consists primarily of screaming preachers and tent-revival crusades. As Kennedy (1994) states,

"The unofficial alliance between Christian and secular conservatives on political issues has become a highly potent and nationwide force. The attention to political issues has shifted the focus of religious broadcasting toward closing the cultural divide in America and catering to the felt needs of listeners" (p. 47).

This study was an attempt to explore a broadcast genre that has been given a rather small amount of attention by communication researchers. Descriptive research has been sadly lacking on religious broadcasting, and specifically radio, and is obviously much needed. This study will provide some necessary descriptive data and provoke ideas for future research on this subject.

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