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Redefining The Impact of Public-Access Media in Worcester, MA

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REDEFINING THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC-ACCESS MEDIA IN WORCESTER, MA

ANTHONY ORTIZ

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A MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,
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Environment

And accepted on the recommendation of

Ramon Borges-Mendez, Chief Instructor

ABSTRACT

REDEFINING THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC-ACCESS MEDIA IN WORCESTER, MA

ANTHONY ORTIZ

This research presents findings from a study of how Worcester's current public-access media center can serve as an anchor institution for two-way communication between the producers and the audience. More generally, it addresses two questions: 1) How to ensure maximum participation and 2) How can active communication be preserved (or maintained) between the producers and the audience. Drawing on case studies done around the U.S. this paper offers a model of community based media that can be essential for empowering people to serve as active receivers of information. The concept for community based media should allow as a grassroots oriented approach to creating viable media content. I discuss the implementation efforts for a sustainable, multi-faceted public access media model to educate, inform and mobilize any community in Worcester.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews the potential of modifying the current public access infrastructure in the City of Worcester in order to provide the opportunity to develop a network space for two-way communication in particular for the Latino community. In order to provide space for collaboration and community engagement to happen, public access media institutions need to reach beyond the conventional demographics of viewers. Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) channels are designed to provide their communities with daily and resourceful information from state and local institutions. Ideally, the concept of public access media should allow for public oriented programming in order to apply mission-driven content completely designed for the people.

The current state of public access programming in Worcester is limited in meeting the needs of their intended audience, particularly the Latino community. By examining the structure of public access television and the production of the media content for the Latino community, it is clear that there is a noticeable gap in the distribution of information that addresses issues surrounding social equity. Without accurate and language-centered information of how local government, educational, and health policies affect their lives, the Latino community is less likely to fully participate in city life in a proactive way. As a result, this research will seek to explore newer methods and approaches that will encourage greater Latino involvement in their own community with a sustainable adoption and use of community base media. The Latino community in Worcester, once informed, can then position themselves to demand change in public policies that establishes a transparent PEG structure to support the production of relevant social justice content.

I examine Worcester's PEG structure from the perspective of users of the services. More specifically, I ask: (1) What are the benefits or limitations of in these services in the context of

increasing local activity in this media platform (2) Is the current structure being used effectively? (3) What newer ideas might maximize the use of Worcester's public channel toward creating better content? (4) What would be the objectives for the change and for what purpose?

This paper investigates the impact of the current PEG system in Worcester, measured through a brief case study that reviews its governance, structure, audience and programming. This report recognizes and expands on the theory of maximizing its access to encourage newer ideas with a community focused model. Across the country the community-based media structure has influenced the delivery of relevant content to the communities at the local, state and federal level. The review of similar case studies done in Michigan, Texas and Washington State has provided evidence on successful implementations of community media centers. The updated community based model discussed in the literature review dismisses the conventional public access television framework and focuses on advancing community participation in the production of media content.

This paper determines whether Worcester's regulatory PEG system can focus on creating alternative ways to increase the relationships between the producers and the Latino community effectively through a community-based media model. To ensure maximum participation, it is important for community access media to always preserve the existence of two-way communication. This paper also encourages a substantial focus on the needs of the target audience. Finally, the transition to a community based media is achieved through access provided by local institutions to the community. The general framework identified in this report provides the essential social inclusion strategies to enable communities and expands opportunities for them to actively participate in their communities. A sustainable community based media structure empowers people rather than creating passive receivers of information. Through the case study of

Worcester, I examine the potential of securing a multifaceted community media center to serve as an anchor institution that ensures a constant connection between the producers and the public.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 SCOPE OF THE MEDIA SPACE

The increase in technological innovation over the past fifty years has introduced opportunities for improving the quality of life. McLuhan (1960) suggests, that in order to take advantage of technology driven opportunities, people must have affordable access to telecommunications outlets and digital equipment. However, community individuals must have access to learning opportunities in order to assess the value of and take advantage of modern technology. The advancement in technology has influenced the way the world thinks and communicates, Marshall McLuhan, the greatest media theorist, coined the terms of “Global Village” and “the medium is the message” to describe the effectiveness of technology. The people oriented media landscape represents the public’s opportunity to use the infrastructure to produce its own quality media content.

The next medium, whatever it is - it may be the extension of consciousness – will include television as its content, not as its environment, and will transform television into an art form. A computer as a research and communication instrument could enhance retrieval, obsolesce mass library organization, and retrieve the individual’s encyclopedic function to flip it into a private line to speedily tailor the data of a saleable kind (McLuhan, 1960).

McLuhan (1960) argues that technologies are not simply inventions but are means by which people are invented. The global village theory generates the idea of electric media in the new age, humankind will move from individualism and fragmentation to a collective identity. The significance of McLuhan’s argument is the idea that technology is a tool that profoundly shapes an individuals, and by extension, a society’s self-conception and realization.

Much of the literature on substantial change suggests that external factors may inspire or encourage people to think about the need for change. Change implies that teaching and learning usually occurs before the change begins to take place. However, modern advances in multi-media communication have created an environment that requires civic activism to produce and disburse imperative media content. A robust telecommunication infrastructure can serve to harness change within communities around the context of political, social, and economic issues. Furthermore, creating valuable local services (in business, education, and government, etc.) that might be provided electronically to other places could help combat isolationist tendencies or other tactics that limit opportunities for learning and exchange. Modern technologies are just tools, powerful, and persuasive, and necessary for serving a community.

Technology serves as a catalyst for intervention implementation and motivational strategies on behalf of social, economic and political change. At the center of community change exists the question of power and the development of human relationships. Collectively, people seem to accept the need to learn about new telecommunication technologies once they consider what it allows them to do differently. Technology provides the people with an arena to rethink an activity, whether social, economic, or educational, from for profit or nonprofit perspective.

A desired vision of change is essential as is the constant communication of that vision. This approach is absolutely necessary to keep a new narrative growing with frequent explanations provided to the citizens about the benefits of the changes they will see. Developing a community for a new age is fairly common. For community development partners, it seems that the time for two-way engagement processes has indeed arrived, just as many good learners are required for the task at hand.

This study analyzes the theory of public access media and examines the capabilities for providing community-based services in the U.S. A sound community-based media system offers a theoretical framework for explaining how to empower the individuals within marginalized communities while creating an outlet that demonstrates the complexity of the civic experiences. Rhinestone (2010) reviews the concept of public-access media, outlines the case studies done across the U.S. and analyzes the content of public access media programming designed for the participation of local residents.

The Federal Communications Commission FCC, concerned that common ownership of media restrains diversity and viewpoints, has placed limits on the number of broadcast stations (radio and TV) an entity can own, as well as limits on common ownership of broadcast stations and newspapers in the same local areas. As required by Congress, the FCC reviews its media ownership regulations every four years in order to determine whether the rules are in the best interest of the public. During the 2010 quadrennial review, the FCC held public workshops encouraging input from the public, academic industry stakeholders, and local community representatives on a variety of media ownership issues and the methods exercised by the FCC developed to address the need. The Cable Communication Act of 1984 provided benefits for Public, Education, and Governmental (PEG) channels, as it barred cable providers from employing editorial control over the content produced from PEG channels.

Pertinent to the Telecommunication Act 1996, section 611, local franchising authorities have the right to allow cable operators to set aside channels for public educational, or governmental use. Cable television operators generally dictate which channels and programs are to be distributed to subscribers in response to the public demands. Franchising authorities may require cable operators to provide services, facilities, or equipment for the use of PEG channels. In accordance

with general franchise agreements, local franchising authorities may adopt non-content-based rules which govern the use of PEG channels. This includes but is not limited to: the adoption of rules allocating time among competing applicants on a reasonable basis other than content of their programming; Minimum production standards may be require, as well as users undergoing training. Federal laws (47 U.S.C. §559 and 18 U.S.C. §1468(a)) respectively prohibit the use of PEG channels from knowingly transmitting or distributing obscene materials over and by means of the cable television system.

2.2. REGULATORY STRUCTURE

Public access channels emerged in the 1970s as a component of municipal policies that sought to strengthens local controls, and a community's ability to communicate through the cable system (Fuentes-Bautista, 2013). Municipalities are entitled to provide the funding for PEG access as determined by the law. PEG channels are not mandated by federal laws. Instead they are given the right to become a designated franchising authority that can choose to exercise those rights. Therefore, the decision whether to require cable operators to carry PEG channels is delegated to the local franchising authority. Franchising authorities may also require cable operators to set aside channel outlets for educational or governmental use on institutional networks (channels only available to schools, libraries, or government offices.) The content for public access channels is not controlled by the cable operator. However, cable operators may refuse to transmit any public access program, or portion of a program, that the cable operators believe to contain any obscenity. At their best, PEG channels reflect the interests and character their respective local communities, producing essential programming not provided by other media. The following describes the role for Public, Educational, and Governmental channels as determined by the FCC:

Public: The public access channels are designated for the use of the general public and are administered either by the cable provider or by a third party designated by the franchising authority (cable provider). In Worcester, the public access channel is provided through WCCA TV.

Educational: Educational access channels are administered by local educational institutions mainly for the production educational programming. Typically, the educational access channel allocates time amongst local schools, colleges, and universities as determined by the cable operator. Other notable services include: the capacity for schools to train in media and video production, present council/committee meetings, and provide other educational based productions.

Government: Government access channels are operated by the local government (City of Worcester). Typically, government access television is tasked with streaming city council meetings, election programming, local emergency announcements and other municipal valued programs.

Municipality franchise agreements prevent cable service providers from creating any monopolies through the agreements. Large communities similar to Worcester often consider having separate organizations for each PEG channel. The structure of PEG channels are designed to be run by grassroots groups, individuals, private non-profits, or government institutions. Because PEG organizations are neutral, PEG channels reserve the right to be inclusive, content neutral and uphold a free speech ideology. Users of public access television may also participate at most levels of this structure, with the capacity to make content of their choosing. As public-access television becomes filled with programming, the designated franchising authority, may offer more television channels in order to satisfy the demands. Public-access organizations are

allowed to develop their own policies and procedures concerning the media content of the programming.

PEG channels and community media centers help communities develop the capacity to communicate effectively. In general, PEG channels can approximate a kind of blogging with high production values, cable distribution, and promotion of social inclusion. Most centers provide media production and literacy training, increasing the ability of community members to communicate well amongst others.

2.3 EXPANDING PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMMUNITY MEDIA

In Howley's et al.'s (2005) revision of community media theory, he suggests that the grassroots or locally oriented media access serves to expand the overwhelming dissatisfaction with mainstream media. In efforts to secure that the content remains dedicated to the principles of democracy, the author examines the factors in which local communities make use of various technologies for the purpose of community communication. Continuing with his argument, Howley (2005) makes a case for community media; a popular and strategic intervention into the cotemporary media culture committed to the media structure, forms and practices. Howley (2005) considers the needs of communities and how media can be utilized to create a system that is relevant to their everyday lives. His work highlights communities and/or community media in its current state and recommends community media as a theoretical framework for bringing communities and media together as a response. Similarly, the Manhattan based Downtown Community Television (Howley 2005) maps the relationship between community media and local residents while referencing Robert Mc Chesney's suggestions of public participation in communication policy-making.

Fuentes-Bautista (2014) expands on a participatory approach to municipal telecommunication that can lead toward a sustainable adoption and use of the digital media. The case study of ChannelAustin argues for broadband becoming a transient solution to the long-term issues for the advancement of local media. In regard to a participatory approach, he suggests that cities commit to using resources such as digital video franchising to retool the PEG services demonstrate an active civic participation for creating digital content. Fuentes-Bautista (2014) suggests that transmitting community media content. Digitally similar to ChannelAustin, can help municipalities satisfy information needs of diverse local groups, while also promoting advanced digital technologies, economic opportunities and civic engagement (Fuentes-Bautista, 2014).

According to Fuentes-Bautista (2014), regulators can represent two main problems at the federal level. First, Fuentes-Bautista (2014) suggests that the decision-makers and regulators should work together to remove the regulatory barriers that restrict local use of video franchising revenue. Increasing the funding avenue for local digital outlets can eliminate the limitation for digital access media and allow grant funds to reach local organizations that create digital opportunities and foster digital inclusion. Second, this study suggests that municipalities benefit from a clear national agenda for broadband adoption. This recommendation addresses the current state of federal policies and the need for them to offer specific guidelines that local decision-makers and community development practitioners can use to rethink their programming and intervention strategies. In fact, the “open-access” approach to community-based media provides local institutions and groups a better position in which to thrive. Thus, this allows municipal governments to serve as the connector for partnerships and networking to take place between local institutions and residents for a successful digital community access center.

Brody (2003) expands on the relationship between the government and its residents. Research implies that there is a demand by residents for more interaction with their local government, greater accuracy with information and greater access to government organization and structure. In a successful democracy, governments realized that they needed the support and active participation from the citizens in the development of public resources.

Currently, cable provides the delivery of services that weren't imagined 15 years ago (Miller 2012). The author makes the argument of shifting the creation of community programming from its current public-access structure to accommodate for the growth in technology. In today's technological advancement, the term "access-TV station" represents an archaic approach that does not reflect the world today. The author suggests that the critical business model for the future of community use of media should not be anchored by the concept of a TV station but rather the reality of community media centers. Therefore, in order to operate a viable PEG access station, it needs to be considered as a community institution like a library, church, or school. As a community media center, the institution can provide services for all its community needs. This structure offers a collaborative approach, removing the PEG silos while providing a community with local content and the tools needed to create content.

Community media centers all over the country offer specialized media services designed to teach individuals how to create and produce media content. For example, the Cambridge Community TV in Cambridge, MA created a state of the art computer lab (ComputerCentral) for the public use with free access to computers. In Olympia, WA, Thurston Community TV offers a multi-dimensional source for content delivery in cable with the edition of OnDemand, YouTube, iTunes features or sites thereby increasing the community's accessibility to their media content.

Miller (2012) explores the technological differences made to the cable industry's business model which leads to business opportunities and additional revenue streams allotted to the designated cable operators. The article states the same changes should be applied to the non-profit sector (PEG) business model. However, the author suggests that during the conversion into community media, their goal must continue to serve communities rather than generating large sums of funds. Miller (2012) provides total revenue figures from the U.S. Cable industry which generated \$98 billion dollars, tripling the amount generated in 1998. With the vision of PEG access expanded into a community-based media business model, local cable franchises can assure that there exists dedicated funding available for community media centers and the overall development of local media community centers. In addition, the collaborative community access model is suited to attract additional funding.

The Full Spectrum of Community Media by the Alliance for Community Media (ACM) demonstrates a proven theory that ties public access to public benefits. Ninan-Moses (2011) introduces new tools for public access communities by elaborating on a multi-platform approach that features a strategic plan with long-term implications. In order to sustain a successful community media center through the provision of local media networks, the traditional public access center must transition into a multi-dimensional platform, allowing access from cable into a limitless broadband. Ninan-Moses (2011) connects public access to the communication infrastructure and sustainable production of local content through open networks.

Community media centers have asserted their positions in communities through a participatory self-assessment and local franchising authority which is a powerful model for matching community needs and resources with the right communication infrastructure (Ninan, 2011). The report focuses on community engagement in the digital world as the author describes

the internet as a form of local medium. However, municipalities must be responsible for constructing their own networks to address local needs. Community media center's role should be considered as a local anchor institutions, influencing local networks. Broadband adoption is important because bringing new communities online will expand their ability to distribute their own content. Therefore, with an established track record as training providers, community media centers are a sensible vehicle for digital literacy programs (Ninan, 2011).

This report highlights the work of the Alliance for Community Media (ACM) which analyzes programs, defines the public interest agenda, mobilizes a grassroots base of support, educates policymakers, and establishes best practices for community governance. Currently, a typical public-access center produces an average of 1,100 hours of original programming per month ("Future of Media", 2010). In a world where media content is produced and uploaded to "YouTube" every minute, many Americans still consume video content from television; the numbers for online video have been increasing rapidly. Given the current state of public access, the author defines "YouTube" as a form of access in the 21st century, and its existence means that every access center has a new competitor. A strong consensus of the literature suggests the idea of how innovation can help PEG better serve their communities through the digital age. Community media centers are launching new collaborations with local organizations, community activism and schools that generates civic awareness and diversify local media content. These centers are designed to provide more than public access to cable television, as well as embracing the easy access to information. This inclusive community approach presents much greater public access to cable television, by fully embracing digital production. (Rhinesmith, 2010).

In 2009, the city of Grand Rapids launched the "Rapidian" in partnership with community based organizations. This project is largely a result of social media and community coming

together to create the platform in response to what the people were asking and looking for. Other PEG access TV organizations have begun to adopt this model as well as a medium to attend to civic concerns. The Grand Rapids Community Center (CMC) is an initiative designed to create effective two-way communication between the center and the community. As an institution, CMC defines their role as a media and technical assistance non-profit organization in the community. The design of the CMC works towards the goal of facilitating information and effective communication on an equitable level in its community. CMC follows a holistic problem solving approach to create sustainable solutions in the community. The author describes their mission as a way of approaching each program in the community and fostering the right tools and right partnerships to serve the community.

The dissemination of local news services and public affairs programming is generally deemed the most important function of local broadcasting. However, in community media productions, local entertainment and cultural activities typically make up the greatest portion of content (Fuentes-Bautista 2013). Community oriented programs are seen as an expression of the motivation and ability to produce, cultivated by community members. In Worcester, the religions/faith based programming dominates the public content. In governmental access channels, city council meetings, committee meetings, share a great amount of lengthy content. It's hard to imagine any parent sitting through two hours of footage with low quality production. One solution is to present edited clips or key highlights of the meetings and then lead people to a full program available digitally. Because the information can be very dense, public-access expansion into a community media model can design better access approaches. If more public programming can adjust to modern interpretation of news, it would increase the local participation while connecting community members. Traditionally, PEG access channels consider viewership of cable access as

a main indicator of outreach. However, community-based media can offer multiple opportunities (Fuentes-Bautista 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study addresses whether local broadcast media (public-access television) can serve the education of the Latino community of Worcester. This research helps us to understand the impact of current public access media in the modern era and how a transition to digital media can serve as a tool for community development. The question whether the Latino community in Worcester can transition from passive to active receivers of information within a community-access model. This research was conducted in three primary steps: a literature review and establishment of best practices; a series of key informant interviews conducted to provide a community perspective of the current PEG system for Worcester, and an extensive case study designed to primarily inform the results.

3.1 REVIEWING EXISTING LITERATURE

A review of cases studies from cities such as Grand Rapids, Austin Texas, and Seattle WA was done to seek the best practices for the implementation of community-based media. The diverse sources of data will help inform whether the use of community media can be developed in Worcester to serve as a tool for community development. In order to understand the feasibility of whether public access television serves as an adequate amount of social justice programming for the Latino community of Worcester, the following steps were taken. A review of existing literature which outlined the role of television programming community participation in media literacy and the public image of Latinos in the media was explored. Several significant topics emerged from the literature including the scope of the media space; the regulatory structure of broadcast media

including the PEG sector; potential indicators on how public access media can increase community participation in media literacy, and the potential for expanding public access television to community (digital) access media. Research for this paper examined the literature for recommended best practice models with the premise that community access centers could be considered an effective multi-faceted platform to transferring information to local residents. Archival data was also drawn on in order to understand the Latino population and the extent in which most families research information using public access media in the city of Worcester.

3.2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

For a direct source of information and feedback, several key informants who are involved in community work were interviewed. Also, in order to understand different perspectives on programming and viewership in the city of Worcester, the participants provided their ideas of how to maximize the use of public channel toward creating better content. The participants were asked whether the current structure of public access media was being used effectively; what newer ideas might maximize the use of the public channel toward creating better content, and what content would they prefer to see on public-access channels. The participants included people with experience working with the local public access channel (WCCA TV):

- Esperanza Donovan-Pendzic (Esperanza Y Su Exito)
- Hilda Ramirez (Latino Education Institute)
- Raquel Castro-Corazzini (City of Worcester Employee)
- Mauro DePasquale (Executive Director of WCCA TV)

3.3 CASE STUDY

In order to find data to support or disprove my hypotheses, I conducted a brief case study Worcester's public-access regulatory infrastructure and programming. The data collected for this

project was gathered through key informant interviews with Worcester community members and the findings will explore indicators in the ‘adoption of a new community-based’ in Worcester. The brief case study reviews the content of the general public-media programming, including a breakdown of Latino programming. This case study addresses questions pertaining to how effectively Worcester’s PEG has been functioning, and whether or not advanced ideas and objectives can help to maximize better content while fostering more diverse media programs.

3.4 LIMITATIONS

The methodological limitations of my research are outlined below. These limitations point to the need for further research and additional work. As it pertains to this research project, the lack of available/consistent data that informs the transition from conventional public access media into community hampers this case study. Such information can determine the feasibility of a multi-faceted digital conversion to update the current structure. Finally, another important limitation concerns the type of viewership /subscription information available from WCCA. Because the channel’s analysis is largely qualitative and narrative in nature, it lacks the quantitative and demographic data needed for this research project.

4. CASE STUDY FOR WORCESTER

4.1 GOVERNANCE, STRUCTURE, AND FUNDING

Worcester’s public-access channel WCCA, was born out of the public access movement that established cable television during the 1970s. It was through this movement that community members were given a rights of way opportunity; a chance to present their stories, concerns and needs. Every city and town was given the right to ask the cable provider for public access and every cable company was required to include provision for public access. The City of Worcester

has become the service provider for public access is the city of Worcester, allowing the municipalities a share of the funding. WCCA began in 1986 and was the first channel to provide youth involvement and training that included interested residents as well. It was also the first to offer hotspot for digital recording and wireless technology for the area. WCCA's mission is to provide media democracy. One hundred percent of WCCA programs reflect the community and they are given a space to create their own media content. Media literacy is a strong component of WCCA and it remains important because it allows information to be distributed to the community. WCCA trains people in how to create video content and provides the tools needed. In fact, dozens of shows are produced on a weekly basis by people from the communities. Youth groups learn how to use technology and make connections around the community (city officials, businesses, and colleges), which leads to career development and networking opportunities.

Public-access offers a platform for free speech, free of political whim and corporate retribution which makes it a great tool for local activism and community development. Public access can be very empowering because it allows one the opportunity to compete in the digital world. One significant moment in WCCA's history involved a youth group having issues with gang violence around the city in the early 90s. Community member, Father Pafardo, founder of the local community organization, Centros Las Americas, helped the youth group create and submit a video to City Hall as a sign of protest. At the time, public access was transformative in community organizing as it gave local residents the platform to air their opinions. Currently, the organizational structure of WCCA continues to foster a diverse selection of programming including, but not limited to, religious, sports, business, culture and youth with no restrictions.

Worcester Cable Service Division is liable for receiving and distributing information and monitoring compliance with the cable operator to provide PEG access channels; it includes the

operation of the Government access channel. Also included without limit is the coverage of City Council meetings, Standing Committee meetings, press conferences and other governmental information. The Cable Services Division collaborates with all city departments to create informational video programming or public service announcements for the general public (Cable Services | City of Worcester, MA, 2016).

The most common accessory observed in all government-access channel is that all government access channels offer regular listings of public meetings and events. This includes information on services such as winter parking ban notices, street sweeping schedules, etc. Additional responsibilities include consultation with the Cable Television Advisory Committee. The Cable Service Division proposes recommendations annually to the City Manager about the distribution of the funds received under the cable franchise agreement for the PEG channel operations (Cable Services | City of Worcester, MA, 2016).

The Educational access channel is designated by the franchising authority to be used by the educational institutions and/or educators to present non-profit educational programming to the public. The channel, operated by the media department at the Worcester Technical High School, Offers programs such as Homework Hotline and others designed to provide students with vital information related to the MCAS and other exams. High school commencement and Veteran's Day ceremonies are also showcased through the channel. Education access channel offers internships to enable students to produce their own media content. The overall cost of the educational channel appears at \$200,000, which is covered by the allocation given from the cable provider.

All revenues of any form are based off a formula which is generated by the activeness of the city's cable system including the distribution of any services and operational cost. Similar to

thirty-seven other states, cable providers meet with the local licensing board to discuss the distribution of the funding. Charter Communications, the city’s cable service provider pays the city a \$1.5 million capital grant over its five-year contract for the cable system’s PEG channels. The public service channel in Worcester remains a 501c3 non-profit organization (Federal Cable Act) and receives provisions from the cable company. Worcester’s funding is distributed to the city for the government channel and the city then subsidizes the rest of the funding to the public access channel for their operations. The funding that Worcester receives is generated based on the number of subscribers. Given that Massachusetts has the most public access centers In the U.S., the state varies MA varies as how the funding goes on a yearly basis. Worcester receives less funding as compared to Cambridge and Somerville, which are the most successful Public Access Centers.

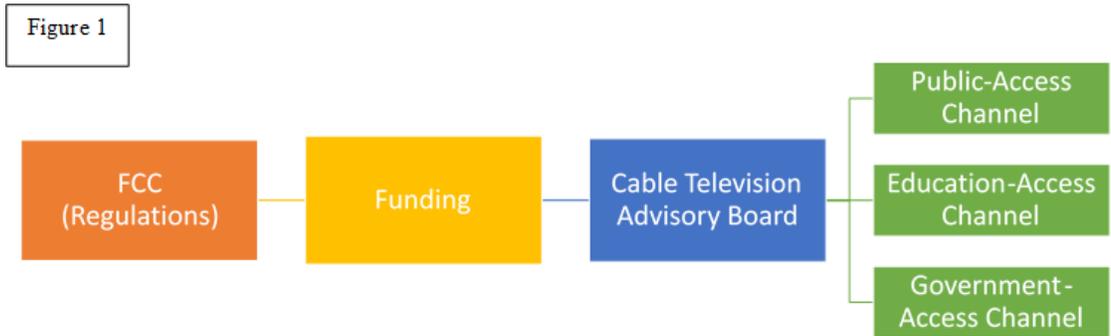


Figure 1 Current FCC regulatory structure for Pubic, educational, Governmental (PEG) Access Channels in Worcester. The Franchising Agreement is settled between the franchising authority and cable operator. The funding is then distributed based on current FCC regulatory laws. A portion of the funding is formulated and designated to each PEG channel outlet.

The franchise fee that Worcester receives from Charter is used to fund the City’s public access, education, and government channels (PEG). The City is not required by Federal law to use the franchise fee for PEG; in fact, federal law states that a “federal agency may not regulate the amount of the franchise fees paid by a cable operator, or regulate the use of funds derived from such fees. According to the Massachusetts Cable Division’s interpretation of M.G.L. Charter provides \$1.6 million in capital funding for the cable system's "PEG" channels, public access

(WCCA-TV), the education channel operated by the Worcester Public Schools, and the city government's channel. Representatives of WCCA have long been pushing for the channel's programming to be shown in other Central Massachusetts communities served by Charter. As the franchising authority, Charter has worked closely with the city to establish a financially feasible system that protects the interests of Worcester residents. The city has traditionally negotiated ten-year contracts with Charter, though in 2008 it broke from that practice and negotiated a five-year deal. It was the city's contention at that time that a shorter-term deal was in its best interest because technology, competition and regulations for the cable industry were evolving rapidly. However, as part of its preparations for negotiations, the Cable Advisory Committee recommended that the city go back to offering ten year contracts.

The Cable Advisory Committee serves to assist the City Manager in the performance of the duties and responsibilities vested in the City Manager as the licensing authority for cable television franchises in Worcester. One of the responsibilities of the committee is to consult with the City Manager to discuss the disbursement of the funds received under the cable franchising agreements among the PEG operations. The director of Cable Services serves as a staff liaison to the Cable Advisory Committee which includes six other members.

4.2 AUDIENCE

Currently, the majority of Worcester's alternative language programming is primarily in Spanish to eliminate language and cultural barriers. WCCA and Esperanza Y Su Exito (EYSE), a Spanish language program designed around sharing valuable information and resources to minimize the gap and the social divisions within the Latino communities. As with all groups of people, there are subcultures based either on social or economic status. The Latino community in

Worcester is made up of people from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Honduras and other Latin countries.

Spanish language programs offered by WCCA and EYSE are intentionally designed to involve and help Latino leaders in building civic participation within the community in general. The Latino public very seldom engages with political and civic officials while creating local action groups. In fact, social exclusion is a realistic factor that Latino and other communities of color have to face. However, as they become stronger and better informed, they can develop effective strategies to combat negative issues afflicting their community. This effort will reduce the tendency to see themselves as helpless victims. Latinos face the challenge of developing stronger connections with the mainstream society. Various community organizations such as Centro Las Americas and Esperanza y Su Exito have collaborated with WCCA in the past to provide a space for Latino professionals to share substantial information to the community.

The validity of this project is based on the end result of a deeper understanding of the Latino community and its connection with public access television. The host and creator of EYSE, Dr. Esperanza Donovan-Pendzic offers a program that identifies the struggles between Latino parents who look for strategies focused on keeping their children in school and where to locate local professional help. Community members and community investors like the fact that EYSE is in a position to help identify, and improve community issues and benefit, not only the Latino community, but also other minority communities in the city of Worcester. EYSE is orientated toward understanding the root causes of many of the Latino community's struggles involving education, healthcare and politics. Thus, EYSE is always sharpening and improving its practices in informing the Latino community on important procedures, instructions and outcomes in areas of education. Often EYSE asks new questions while trying to provide new areas of understanding

and of understanding with a deeper insight in practice. EYSE looks forward to facilitating more meaningful discussions in the community and about new opportunities for everyone.

4.3 PROGRAMMING

In Worcester, WCCA programming has created an innovative entertainment platforms such as music presentation, soapbox segments and special offerings such as Open Mic, an editorial program open to public participation. Program producers develop content around Worcester initiatives and programs, many of which also air regularly. WCCA produces a numerous weekly projects while highlighting a variety of community based organizations. Programs also air third party content produced by private individuals. The channel utilizes a centralized maximum solution for storing all of its digital assets, and is searchable through the video archive. The move to digital was pioneered in Worcester, transferring video thru Wi-Fi while possessing the largest archive of video content online. WCCA also houses a computer lab with digital content available to members. Currently, WCCA programs include interest areas such as: art, business, careers, current news topics, education, electronics, history, heritage, hobbies, journalism, movies, multicultural, music, politics, religion/spirituality, school events, science / technology and self-help. Current WCCA resources include access to a state of the art television studio, Adobe Editing Suites, Linear Editing Suites, classes and workshops and an adequate meeting space.

WCCA is determined to provide programming that reflects the diversity of the city of Worcester. There is a great deal of media content in what could be called “effective” use of PEG channels for the provision of useful information to the communities. A recent scan of PEG channel offerings shows the following types of ethnic community programming: Albanian, Arabic, Cambodian, Spanish, Greek, Haitian, and Vietnamese. Other media content produced by private individuals include political issues, news, cooking, various forms of entertainment, and youth and

religious focused segments. There are a number of religious programs featured on WCCA. For many, religious programs provide a way to keep in touch with their local spiritual institutions, due to their inability to attend religious services. WCCA can provide locally produced programming presented with the highest percentage of content covering local News/Information at 31%; Religious at 24%; Entertainment 12%; and Cultural at 11% (Programs - WCCA TV, 2016).

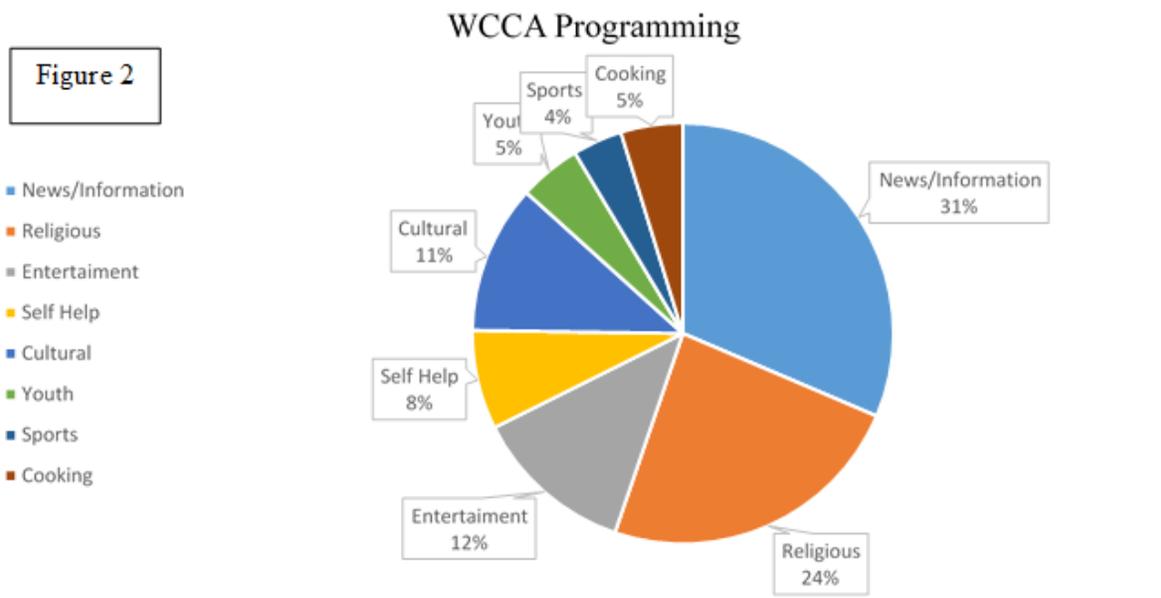


Figure 2 : This graph demonstrates the distribution of media content currently produce by WCCA TV 2015.

A key provision of the new license is that it will result in the increased picture quality of the three PEG channels. Charter will no longer be required to provide for and maintain an "institutional network." Instead, PEG access studios will transmit signals by a direct fiber link or by equivalent technology, which will result in better picture quality for those channels.

Uniquely, WCCA provides widespread Spanish language programming that is informative to the Latino community (see Figure 3). According to the WCCA website, the Latino community recognizes the religious content as the most viewed program within the Latino community with

50%. Youth programming follows with 13%; Community Lifestyle Issues are at 13%; while food and political content reach 8% of the programming schedule. Again, Latinos in Worcester are most likely or intend to watch religious/faith based programming aired on public airways.

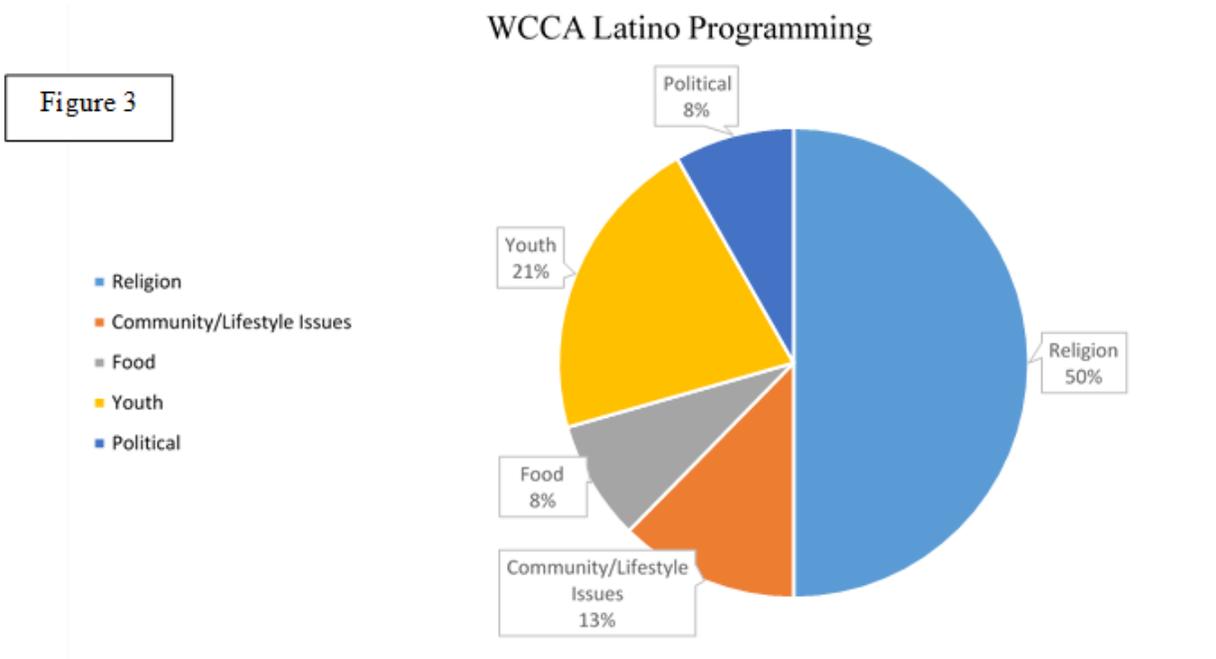


Figure 3: This graph demonstrates the current percentage of media content distributed in Spanish for WCCA 2015.

Additionally, WCCA Latino programming includes Camino a la Verdad, Colores Latinos TV, Conquistando, El Joven, El Mundo, El Sembrador, Nuestra Esperanza, Pasos al Futuro, Portafolio Eclesiástico, Restaurados por la Palabra, Tiempo de Dios, Todo lo Puedo, and Unidos para Evangelizar. Furthermore, still more programs are designed for the Hispanic community feature topics on such issues as health, education, government, religion and culture.

The EYSE program is utilized as a media tool or as a catalyst to help empower the Latino community. One of the program’s objectives is to provide an outlet for clear communication for Latin Americans in their own native language, and focused not only on pressing issues, but also

what they can do about them. EYSE succeeds in providing the most basic information needed and offers a platform for cultural expression (music, literature, cultural activities key to community growth, etc.). The program is a visual media that helps to make the Latino community aware of their rights and the deplorable conditions that affect their children and family members. The design, impact and effectiveness of this program has been evaluated as recently as last year. Dr. Donovan-Pendzic's approach to the production of the programming involved the use of a reflective process that relied on the collaboration of various members of the Latino community. The viewership data allowed EYSE to generate a strategic plan for the creation of its program content (Noffke & Stevenson, 1995). This in turn, afforded EYSE the direction of the Latino community's growth in Worcester, via public-access media.

The work of Dr. Donovan-Pendzic documented how active participation of the community, as well as several Latino establishments, allowed a reflective process which helped to modify perceptions of the Latino community among themselves and individuals in the larger community (Johnson, 1995). EYSE continues to play a role in whatever course of action the Latino community takes in order to address its needs. EYSE programming is designed to benefit of the Latino community with a "for us, by us" working philosophy.

Much of EYSE program content includes collaboration between Worcester Public Schools (WPS), and the Latino Education Institute (LEI) at Worcester State University. In the past, the director of the adult education program at LEI and WPS has utilized the platform of EYSE to film key informational forums and presentations as a part of various formal and informal programs created for their adult education program. These community partners and community investors noticed the influence EYSE has for its audience. As a result, EYSE has opened doors to new conversations and opportunities for improving communication between these institutions and the

Latino community. For instance, EYSE was invited to showcase a summer school English Learner Proficiency group which served middle school students. This project taught the students how to create media content and understand media literacy. By the end of the hybrid summer session, the students produced a video package of their progression. EYSE has also filmed and produced a video featuring a forum for Latino parents sponsored by a local university. The parents spent several hours participating in a stress-release and relationship building training.

Finally, EYSE has the flexibility to tailor programs to fit the community intended. This type of programming might be influential in changing the landscape in addressing social problems affecting the Latino community in Worcester, Massachusetts. Broadcast media at its best can be a powerful tool for educating the public. Research suggests that television is seen as a key distributor of visual information to the mass public because it appeals to the human senses more than the printed word. Dr. Donavan- Pendzic assures that Latinos can capture the message of the information because they can understand visualizations easier due to language barrier. As a private organization, EYSE continues to work in collaboration with the LEI and WPS while working with WCCA TV to produce informative and substantial programming. To sum it up, EYSE data suggests the potential to increase awareness regarding political, civic, economic and educational action in the Latino community. Since its creation in 2004, has always shown an unswerving commitment to the Latino community. The program plans to continue to serve as an outlet for building and remains a sustainable distributor of information for the Latino community in Worcester.

4.4 DISCUSSION

Currently, public-access programming in other cities such as Cambridge, Fall River, New Bedford, and Fitchburg are very similar to WCCA and Worcester's PEG programming. They

feature similar kinds of ethnic, religious, news and informational programs. Most reports indicate that PEG channels are broadening their deliverable products by facilitating the use of new technologies in the community. Worcester's PEG access channel stood at the forefront of finding creative uses for all technologies, including digital, to expand the reach of the delivery of PEG programming. In other cities, PEG channels are produced in one studio. In Washington State, the Telecommunications Department runs the public-access channel and the government channel. Worcester's PEG channels are, for the most part, utilized effectively for its mission of providing useful news and information to the communities. Uniquely, Worcester's PEG channels provide a large variety of second language programming that is critical to the local community. Given the large number of channels that cable provider offer, they certainly provide more variety than any other television mediums.

As mentioned, Worcester provides local information to the different local communities. Representatives of WCCA have long been pushing for the channel's programming to be shown in other Central Massachusetts communities served by Charter. This step would be similar to the Time Warner approach in New York State. Time Warner argues that PEG channels should be shared across several communities to increase their impact. Worcester's PEG channels has been embedded in this community as a source for local government, educational and other nonprofit information while increasing the potential to reach new subscribers with its transfer into digital media. WCCA proceeds with constant evaluations of new technologies while introducing ways to use the new technology for PEG programming. The approach has been transformative in this new era of broadcast media. Additionally, the local government channels have also adopted digital technology as a means for city and council meetings to be viewed by the public at any time. Finally, there are a wide range of innovative approaches involving WCCA and other non-profit, as well as

for profit entities. These factors lead the Executive Director to believe that there needs to be an increase in funding to help support the need for the community.

As mentioned earlier, the mission of Worcester public access channels is to provide the community with on-going access, training and exposure to rapidly developing technologies. Currently the channels have the positional to add a more dynamic type of content and programming. Many segments of the community are always looking for space to network and perhaps advertise available resources in Worcester. Existing components can be set up to update current systems. It's really a matter of who manages the channels and how willing those individual are in exploring new and innovative ways to accurately represent the Worcester community.

Public access is a resourceful way to get the kind of product in place that will open more opportunities for funders to get involved. Businesses would want to advertise or have a strong presence in programs like these, especially the smaller businesses. Because this service is provided to the public for free or at low cost on a first-come, first-served, non-discriminatory basis, funding can be limited. However, a venue can be created for businesses that will want to invest time and effort into when used effectively. At its best, public access organizations have adopted an Action-oriented roles in their respective communities to serve as possibly one of the last venues for local and community focused programming. Many organizations serve as protectors of the right to free speech and value the specific diversities of their constituents. Many also strive to include the under-served and under-represented populations of their city.

In today's Internet age, the ability of the audience to act as information producers while bypassing the obstacles/barriers embedded within mainstream media is better than it's ever been. The current state of public media access makes it easier for community activists to flourish, produce and rapidly disseminate their own messages. This digital age of public access offers users

unprecedented levels of participation, empowering a diverse population while affording them negotiating power over media content. Because of the internet, individuals can simultaneously control their own message and reach the mass audience by taking this innovative approach. The Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC), San Francisco's public access television, offers media production classes and youth media programs along with new found ways of bringing able access into the digital media. BAVC's public access website is modeled after a community based approach providing the outlet the ability to share their local media alongside other video archives.

These innovative community-based projects show the potential of PEG access TV stations to redefine themselves as community based media centers in the new digital age. Worcester's PEG access center needs a broadband police framework that supports such pioneering local media initiatives. In keeping with public access media's primary goal, again PEG is often the best place on TV for residents to access and produce relevant information while gaining media literacy training (broadcasting, journalism, etc.)

An important contribution to learning key tools on civic duties is made by the public media sector. Aside from the invaluable support that public access media offers, very often, the chance to work with media attracts people who are not commonly reached by the formal networking system. The presence of active participation in community media ensures that the community is represented as the heart of the project. In addition, the PEG media sector further serves as an opportunity for strengthening multicultural relations. It allows for such a wide variety of diverse programs and content. There are areas in which public access television could an even more active role in their communities. Best practices support the idea of expanding multicultural programming and audiences in mid-size cities in order to lobby and organize events that raise the profile of the community. Also, encouraging training programs as part the center's long-term learning and media

literacy, will open up the possibility of collaborations that produce more youth development programs.

Current action-based approach allows community members to focus more effectively on creating change within their communities. With a stronger public-access channel, a dialogue on the distribution of key information into the community can begin to occur. This access can be extended to many other communities beyond television. Media literacy is a vehicle in place to assist communities in developing an acute cross-examining process that is crucial to themselves and their families. Furthermore, communities need to have an understanding of the implicit messages that they are receiving from different political, economic and pedagogical resources (Horton & Freire, 1990). Building community through media context begins with evolving the public access TV into a multi-platform media and including the variety of local organizations. The newest format of public access gathers new tools and knowledge to teach and serve the media needs of the residents, organizations and other local collaborations. Multi-platform media promotes diversity and inclusion by providing multitude of media resources for communities and organizations on an intentional and inclusive basis.

It becomes clear that by introducing newer public access formats, local PEG channels further enhance community engagement, cultural expression and growth. The end result could lead to a multi-faceted model that could assist community members in developing a formidable television and internet media outlet. This, in turn, could produce further benefits, reduce communication barriers and increase self-efficacy. PEG media's priority is to change perceived barriers, increase self-efficacy and create tangible benefits that would effectively influence the behavior of others. In a successful PEG system, motivate others through an active presence in its local media and create a relevant community context.

Community based access (an extension of PEG access) is dedicated to empowering voices in the community through the media. Similar to PEG, community access media offers the tools and trainings for people and organizations that go beyond those learn in a conventional television studio, giving the members access through the internet. This format is most effective when it complements the community with the power of media. On the local level, the media should create and distribute high-quality content that puts the interests of the community first.

The ability of local residents to participate in the political life of the local community and the decision-making processed of local political representatives is key to democracy building. However, for participation to occur at the local level, those conditions include, but are not limited to: 1. legal framework of the operation; a clear sense of citizen trust in the local government, bolstered by the presence of a strong community. Additional support would include a solid backing by a reasonable number of city-wide political actors, and local political actors, a profound level of transparency on the part of local city government to meet the needs of the community. All of the above steps are needed to establish a successful public programming entity, wherein community participants have access to information. Well informed residents become one of the most important motivational factors in the development of meaningful civic participation.

In summary, these four points are necessary to develop not only a literate, productive and collaborative democracy at the ground level but also serve as a primary source for understanding the work of local government. From a community perspective, all of these factors help contribute to a greater sense of pride in participating in public life and an even greater sense of belonging within the larger community.

Public access centers can improve the quality of their programming by increasing their capacity. For instance, Worcester's PEG channels are at three separate venues. Combining them,

however, would allow for an increase of staff available for programming purposes. A lot of the current concern with PEG channels has to do with consistency, which is one of the issues many tried to deal with in the past. Research suggests that the recent migration away from conventional media towards multi-platform strategies, makes content delivery more resource intensive. However, adaption to a multi-dimensional outlook requires investment in staffing and the production of diverse media content. Generally, low commercial returns affect the funding for PEG channels. Research also points out that the economic advantages to be had from a multi-platform model are significant and will likely increase the value of the content offered. This is due, in part, to extended opportunities for the consumption of the content while also improving the audience experience, and creating active receivers of information.

From the youth perspective, students feel that there is no control over the narrative on TV in terms of the stories that are being told, and who is telling them. Youth media represents a powerful and exciting field of practice with widely differing organizational structures; producing a diverse content in ranges of subjects. Youths conceiving, developing and producing video content have been shown to foster important individual outcomes such as: critical thinking, research, literacy, writing, and broader career development outcomes. Members of the Youth Opportunities Office are planning to work on their own digital campaign that rallies around developing an optimistic view of Worcester. Further, youth media has the potential to influence how their voices are received and valued within media outlets, as well as beginning to shape the youth image within our broader society.

In general, a major disadvantage of the current PEG system is that it lacks the ability to be more accessible to its audience. The extent to which some forms of content and some audience segments are better suited could be expanded by capitalizing on the potential to increase the current

capacity of the public station. As part of the family outreach initiative of the Youth Opportunities Office has produced a number of shows and interviews that have not been received or transmitted to the public. An innovative approach to the presentation of the stored footage would be to developed small clips of each program and present them on social media with a link available to those who want to view the entire story. The current WCCA website is not user friendly

In order for public access programming to be successful in Worcester, it all depends on the participation by the active, trained members who use video communication tools in order to independently reflect their ideas. Due to limited staff time, WCCA TV cannot provide a higher quality video production service for the community members or organizations. Additional staff will assist community members in assembling production crews. Public Access TV is an important part of our media justice movement. Centers like WCCA TV offer unique facilities that allow community members the space to come together to build, connect, become media literate and share their stories. One fundamental principle of PEG stems from it's grass-roots approach to its programming, and it's allocation of tens of thousands of hours of local content produced by the stations on a weekly basis. The station also maximizes it's influence of public access voices in our community, with programming for immigrants, communities of color, and low-income which can be heard on similar stations across the country. As a non-profit public access television center there is much more clarity of their mission which uniquely contributes to encouraging and rendering inclusiveness and community participation free and or very affordable access to the tools, training, studio space, and equipment. WCCA TV empowers all who avail themselves of it. In doing so, they work well in building community and improving the quality of life in Worcester.

WCCA TV is the only local broadcast station that provides vital information to the community on a TV by using 'for and of the people' model. In order to maximize the effects of a

non-profit public access station the FCC should continue to implement rules and regulations that ensure local broadcasters fair compensation for their work. This content, such as the local news broadcasts we watch every day, is a vital source of information for everyone including the Latino community. It's also important to note that when looking at local originated television programming, public access television produces more quality content compared to all the network stations, even considering every channel on cable television. In practice, WCCA TV offers a diverse set of programming content and speaks to as diverse population as well. This includes public service, media sponsorships, providing affordable training, learning opportunities, professional production support, collaborative initiatives and partnerships, and outreach to many non-profit organizations. As indicates, research shows that one of the greatest challenges hindering public access is the lack of sufficient funding being allocated to the PEG channels. Many public-access channels produce a wide range of media content with an annual budget that couldn't afford a thirty second spot during events like the Super Bowl.

A significant challenge with the broadcast of PEG channels relates to the funding available annually to cover the operating cost. The annual cable franchise funding is calculated from a percentage of the cable company's gross annual revenues. Therefore, the city of Worcester distributes about 2 million dollars to support the PEG channels. Of that WCCA receives about \$747,000 for building maintenance, occupying studio space, production equipment and staff. Funding is needed to improve means of measuring and comparing the value of the programming to the organizations overarching mission and vision. Having this knowledge could create more opportunities for local businesses to make contributions to public-access channel, in exchange for quality air-time. This model can be used to maximize the use of public channel's ability to create better content.

Worcester's current system would have to further identify the role of the executive directors and producers of the PEG channels and how can they foster a more contemporary environment for learning. How do we create collaboration with the three PEG channels to come together and increase the quality of the programming? One possible solution is to operate the PEG out of the Worcester Tech High School, and include students to the operations on a volunteer basis. This idea could lead to an increase in staffing which would hinder the ability to produce high quality programming. Furthermore, the data obtained in this research shows local community programs have featured the strong attributes that its people can contribute to the airways.

In line with the community based approach, it would be substantial to have a platform in which the youth and other community members can learn how to effectively produce video content for today's needs. The concern that WCCA TV faces is that the equipment is outdated, therefore the students aren't given exposure for learning contemporary methods of media literacy. Further considerations would have to review possible means of acquiring more modern technology through an incentives approach. Worcester benefits from having a wide inventory of community organizations with bright/creative minds that can come in and add to the image of the public-access studio. East Boston has a community based state of the art studio that generates its revenue through an adjacent performance arts wing stemming from the creation of "Orale con Veronica" a local grassroots show in Boston. The program introduces local political figures, health professionals and community advocates to its viewers. Veronica Gala (creator of the program) compliments her programming by adding a theatre and performing arts component wherein teaches youth to produce shows/plays and then airs them through her show.

Beyond networking, local communities constitute the main information about local events, including candidates and more issues pertinent to local government. As a result, the likelihood for

residents to know more about local politics is increase. In Worcester, a stronger implementation for community based media can result in higher civic engagement with local politics. Programs can have a segment dedicated on politics and the civic life of Worcester. It is evident that informed residents are better equipped should they ever desire to engage in local politics. The media can also influence the decision to vote or get involved when community members act as mobilizing agents.

Donavan-Pendzic (2014) indicates that Latino household tend to watch television as a family, rather than individuals. When family members have varying levels of English proficiency, the whole family is likely to watch Spanish language programming-particularly for news. As a result, 57% of all bilingual (Spanish-English) Latino adults prefer to watch primarily Spanish languages news programming on television (Goldfarb 2003). Therefore, the public access channel needs to be consistent in transmitting access to information. For example, José Pérez was an advocate involved in creating community based organization here in Worcester for Latinos. Not many residents understood the significance of his work. Mr. Perez presented key figures to the public in a formidable way. This is one of the many examples of the interesting stories Worcester has to offer. By diversifying the approach to community based programs, Worcester can allow for more innovative ways to feature our leaders. Also, by concentrating on the young people, rather than just producing the negative news and creating negative language, WCCA can help shift to a positive representation of the youth in Worcester. The media should reflect the community in all its facets, not only in the daily life, in community challenges, but also in featuring what's working. Focus is need on services available, learning projects, food and nutrition, etc. Consistency of programming content that is diverse can help produce higher quality programming.

Local residents in Worcester rely to an extent on local media for pertinent things such as school events, city ordinances, parking, etc. However, research has shown that they're not completely satisfied with the quality of the content. In this context, the growth of the local media will largely depend on their ability to adapt to a proactive community based approach, again, they will benefit from the new media technology (internet) in generating more viewership. An important issue concerns how often recordings of past forums, meeting and segments are aired. Since the information is dated, viewers are not encouraged to continue watching. Keeping broadcasted programs updated and current is absolutely necessary for highlighting and it means increasing the obligation of producing relevant media content.

The information gathered in this study can be utilized by many outlets to create a sustainable PEG channel for Latinos, a fast growing population. This case study proposes that Worcester's PEG infrastructure can be innovatively changed into a multi-platform outlet. By adopting a new community-based media structure that can maximize the potential for PEG media. This case study assumes that effective local media can help people and give them the necessary tools to participate in the democratic processes and shape the narrative of their local communities.

5. CONCLUSION

This case study attempted to analyze the adoption of a multi-platform community based media by the City of Worcester. PEG channels provide an opportunity to elevate discussions and develop a space for collaboration and community engagement. Public access media institutions need to reach beyond the conventional demographics of viewers in order to mobilize the public and help organize communities. Collectively, PEG channels need to serve their community daily, providing vital information to the mass audience. The emergence of community access centers in

the US demonstrates the need for a public oriented platform to air standards and mission-driven values completely designed for the people.

An advanced public access center serves as a core function for a democratic public and supports agendas at national, state, and local levels. The open digital platform allows a space for people across the city to join in conversations about local politics. Programs in a community access media can enable all members of the community to become more media literate and they can use the platform in principle to create their own communication with the mass public. At its best, community access media creates a space to build relationships and engaged public while supporting the development of standards and tools for hosting a new platform for actions. A greater understanding on the public's part about why the conversion of our current PEG infrastructure needs to be sustained and nurtured by the community members themselves is absolutely necessary for the future. The impact of public-access media in Worcester, MA is measured through the quality of programming it provides. Although this report recognizes Worcester's current PEG structure, including the training and support for enabling more community members to use community based media and public access, with better funding, it could expand its scope to encourage the community. Community televisions plays a role in delivering locally relevant content to the communities across the city that is fundamentally different from the conventional public access television framework, particularly with regards to community participation. Thus, in this context, an effective community based media approach will embrace the avenue for two-way communication within the media distributor and the mass audience. Rather than isolating its audience, Worcester can seek to build relationships between the broadcaster and its local residents by embracing a commitment to ensure the medium is used for their welfare, and to establish a process of participatory broadcasting. A truly successful community based media channel is

achieved once communities identifies themselves with the station and its programming. To ensure maximum participation, it is important for community access media to always preserve a consistent two-way communication, to the level of continuous interaction. This framework encourages a strict focus on the needs of the target audience.

With the transition to a community based media that ensures access to local communities, the general framework identified in this report provides the essential social inclusion strategies that enable communities to learn, ensure access to multi-platform media operations, increase diversity in multi-faceted media content, and expand opportunities to actively participate in their communities. At the macro-level, community media exists to fill gaps left by mainstream media. Community media, at its basic core, represents access to and the distribution of vital information. Further, it provide a means to share information to and from communities and local officials. A strong community media platform will seek to empower people rather than create passive receivers of information. Therefore, the medium will be one that enhances and sustains community participation. People can have the opportunity to compile their own information that can address their needs and to assist them in improving their communities. By allowing access to information, a successful community access center can foster the access to power.

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