

# Radio as a Successful Local Storyteller in Los Angeles: A Case Study of KKBT and KPCC

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*This case study examines the local storytelling practices of two radio stations in Los Angeles: one a commercial hip-hop station, the other a public radio station managed by Minnesota Public Radio with a news-talk format. Interviews with station staff and direct observation of station practices provide data that reveal specific practices showing how stations can apply communication infrastructure theory in attempts to forge the connections between the media, community residents, and the local organizations that bind neighborhoods. Obstacles to sustaining these practices are noted, including commercial pressures and journalistic principles that may hinder advocacy.*

Recent research has demonstrated that local media play a crucial role in forging people's connections to one another and to local organizations that foster civic engagement and the experience of "belonging" in their neighborhood, but it is not clear how the media decide to undertake storytelling practices that are associated with these outcomes. This case study examines two radio stations in the Los Angeles region that not only produce a significant amount of their material locally, but label and advertise themselves as stations that play a significant role in the communities they serve. These stations were singled out for study based not only on their public claims of a community orientation, but also because in early interviews with station personnel each station claimed either a high level of success or significant improvement in both ratings and financial stability traced at least in part to this orientation. The goals of this study are (a) to determine how each radio station decided to commit itself to

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community storytelling, (b) to identify specific practices through which each radio station fulfills its commitment to community storytelling, (c) to learn how the community responds to each station's commitment to community storytelling, and (d) to trace how the commitment of each station to tell community stories affects that station's success in conventional terms (i.e., higher ratings and financial stability). Community infrastructure theory would predict that the practices the stations consider most successful in pursuit of their community-service goals would be those that increase the integration of the storytelling network by establishing and strengthening connections between the stations, local organizations, and listeners.

## Deregulation and the Changing Radio Landscape

Following passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in which the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) loosened the restrictions on the number of radio stations a company may own in a particular market, the structure of radio ownership has changed dramatically. Massive consolidation has significantly reduced the number of different owners of radio stations throughout the country, and the majority of stations are owned by only a small group of companies. Although research has shown an increase in the number of formats available to listeners in many markets, it has also shown a significant reduction of direct competition between stations using the same format, resulting in less diversity of programming (Chambers, 2001, 2003; Wirth, 2001, 2002). Formats that do not attract large audiences and substantial advertising revenue are often altered or eliminated. Urban and minority formats are often seen by the industry as attracting an audience less likely to purchase products, providing the owners of these stations with less advertising revenue potential, and making it more difficult for these formats to survive in a competitive marketplace (Huntemann, 1999; Napoli, 2002). The concept of radio as a public service to be used in the public interest (the primary concern of the Radio Act of 1927) has now diminished in priority compared to benefiting corporate interests (Proffitt & Brown, 2004). Rules requiring documentation of public service by stations and their contribution to the public interest have been greatly relaxed, resulting in significantly fewer public service announcements (PSAs), which are now geared more towards corporate branding and advertising revenue (Bishop, 2002; Fairchild, 1999).

In addition, the service radio provides to local communities has been significantly affected. According to Fairchild (1999), deregulation has broken the bonds between stations and the localities they once served. Owners with large numbers of stations often consolidate newsrooms that now broadcast local news, weather, and traffic from a location far from the community itself. Eliminating the local newsroom is one of the easiest ways for stations to save money and increase profits, but it has greatly affected listener access to community news (Hickey, 2003; Huntemann, 1999). Even National Public Radio, an organization created to provide community service and minority viewpoints, has shown a trend in recent years to grow more standardized and homog-

eneous, and to reduce the number of stories about fringe groups and minorities, in order to maintain a high enough volume of listeners to gain sufficient fundraising revenue and corporate underwriting (Loomis, 2001; McCauley, 2002; Nieckarz, 2002). The trend has been to eliminate community-access shows and community-oriented local news programs (Nieckarz, 2002).

## Communication Infrastructure

Research has shown that the media—particularly local media—play a critical role within the *communication infrastructure* of a given community (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Kim, 2003; Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2003). In a richly textured study of neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Ball-Rokeach et al. found that if the media are in close contact with and develop significant relationships with key organizations and with residents of a community, they are in a much better position to produce material that is relevant to the issues and day-to-day happenings that residents of the community consider noteworthy. Upon hearing, reading, or seeing information that specifically relates to their own community, residents are much more likely to make that information a part of their daily conversation with others who live in the same community. The process of gathering, processing, and disseminating such local information is what Ball-Rokeach et al. call *storytelling neighborhood*, using the broadest possible sense of the word “storytelling” in order to emphasize the combination of utility and emotional importance that this concept includes. The more residents are informed about what happens in their own community, and the more those residents share their knowledge and experience of what is happening in that community, the more likely it is that they will have a strong experience of *belonging* to the community in which they live (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001).

In the 20th century, much criticism of the mass media was directed toward their seemingly placeless quality. Broadcasting in particular was accused of producing a communication experience that failed to recognize the physical realities surrounding its audience, preferring instead to produce generic programs that could be aired anywhere. In this line of criticism, broadcasting was seen to produce a variety of negative outcomes for its audiences, including (a) a dulled consciousness that reduced impulses toward collective action or identity (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1978; Williams, 1983); (b) a distorted image of places or events to which broadcasters could not commit sufficient resources for the production of accurate or comprehensive stories (Epstein, 1973; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994; Parenti, 1993); (c) a general demystification of physical separation that challenges traditional boundaries between people who occupy different social statuses (Meyrowitz, 1985); and (d) a subordination of national or local identity in favor of a corporate (and mostly American) sameness that was at best bland and at worst imperialistic (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1991; Mosco, 1993).

Communication infrastructure theory proposes that in all media forms, including broadcasting, there exists a potential for an orientation toward local storytelling that can foster strong communities and civil society (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim, 2003; Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2003). Communication infrastructure theory explains the role of local media in the process of forging connections between members of communities that are not placeless but rather are rooted in the residences, schools, jobs, and gathering places that people occupy. The theory also offers a critique of media that fail to forge those connections—a critique that is not inconsistent with earlier media theory, but one that offers a strategy for media intervention when community building is among the goals of a media outlet.

Residents of a community are capable of connecting to local media that tell stories about the place in which they—the media and the residents—live, and by doing so activate conversation among the residents. Local media and residents are able to forge connections to local organizations that also serve to generate storytelling, as well as offer resources for accomplishing goals in the community. This combination of local media, local organizations, and residents is called the *storytelling network*. This storytelling network is indelibly linked to a physical location that includes people who are likely to share characteristics beyond proximity, such as ethnicity, class, and regional conditions (e.g., a business climate or access to social services).

Storytelling networks vary according to the extent to which the local media, organizations, and residents share mutual connections to one another. A fully *integrated* network, in which all three elements are connected to one another, maximizes the level of belonging that residents are likely to experience (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). When potential connections are missed, such as when local organizations are unable to get the attention of local media, the potential for stories about local conditions to circulate is diminished (Wilson, 2001). Research into the role of Chinese- and Spanish-language newspapers in Los Angeles showed how conscious such media can be of their ability to link their readers to organizations in their neighborhood, and how their coverage of local events can provide the spark that ignites community action to address problems, such as discrimination against recent immigrants and the need for children's activities in the public recreation system (Power, Ball-Rokeach, & Loges, 1996).

The storytelling network is embedded in a *communication action context*, in which various factors encourage or discourage connections within the storytelling network. Physical factors such as basic infrastructure (e.g., safe parks or well-equipped libraries), social-psychological factors such as beliefs that the neighborhood is safe or pride in the neighborhood, sociocultural factors such as shared languages and customs, economic factors such as stable jobs with livable wages, and technological factors such as the presence of high-speed Internet access or cell phone coverage all contribute to the ability of residents, organizations, and local media to connect with one another easily and frequently.

A communication action context can be described as *open* to the extent that the factors that influence storytelling facilitate connections in the storytelling network,

and *closed* to the extent that such connections are constrained. A communication action context can also be described as *positive* to the extent that it invites favorable stories about the neighborhood, and *negative* to the extent that unfavorable stories are invited—a qualitative reference. These qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the communication action context can be present in any combination, but we propose that an open, positive communication action context is most likely to enhance life in the neighborhood. However, in an open communication action context, even negative stories can produce positive action when people are motivated to action by communication about problems in the neighborhood.

A communication infrastructure is “a storytelling system set in its communication action context” (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001, p. 396). Developing and maintaining a communication infrastructure that facilitates open, positive communication between residents, local media, and community organizations is essential not only to promote belonging, but to encourage civic participation (such as voting and petitioning), collective efficacy, and political participation (Kim, 2003; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001).

The potential for any medium to engage the local storytelling network rests in its ability to maintain productive connections with local organizations and residents. Radio stations are able to do this in a variety of ways, but they do not necessarily have to adopt such strategies to be financially successful. This case study was designed to look for evidence that the stations under investigation were forging the connections between themselves, individual listeners, and community organizations that are theoretically involved in enhancing community life. The extent to which station practices that contribute to an open, integrated communication infrastructure are sustainable under conditions of intense competition and concentration of ownership is also explored.

## The Stations in This Study

KPCC-FM, a public radio station broadcasting news and information programming exclusively, was selected due to a recent increase in listenership and fundraising, as well as its self-identification through labels such as “community-building station,” “centering institution for Southern California,” and “the place to go for local news in Los Angeles.” KKBT-FM (“The Beat”), a commercial station with a mostly hip-hop music format, was selected because of the following characteristics: (a) an unusually large proportion of on-air content that focuses on locations, events, and issues affecting the city of Los Angeles; (b) the self-identification of the station as “L.A.’s Community Action Station”; (c) the consistently high ratings for its morning show, *The Steve Harvey Morning Show*; and (d) the relatively high ratings for the station as a whole. Both stations served neighborhoods that have been systematically studied in the project that introduced communication infrastructure theory (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001), KKBT in the Greater Crenshaw area and KPCC in South Pasadena.

The case study of KPCC and KKBT was designed to answer the following research questions:

- RQ<sub>1</sub>: How did each radio station decide to commit itself to community storytelling?
- RQ<sub>2</sub>: Through which specific practices does each radio station attempt to fulfill its commitment to community storytelling?
- RQ<sub>3</sub>: How does the community respond to each station's commitment to community storytelling?
- RQ<sub>4</sub>: What is the impact of community storytelling on the station's success?

## Method

A variety of research methods were used to investigate the research questions (Yin, 1994). Interviews with management, on-air personalities, and behind-the-scenes staff were conducted to obtain a first-hand account of the inner workings of the stations, their decision-making processes, and relevant historical information. Newspaper articles and press releases concerning each station were collected, and the World Wide Web pages of each station were examined thoroughly. Flyers, brochures, and press materials of all kinds were collected, including on-site at the station itself. When available, ratings and financial information was obtained, as well as letters and e-mail from listeners to help determine some of the ways in which listeners respond to specific programming. Broadcasts from remote locations, staff meetings, and fund drives were all observed directly.

Each station's general manager was contacted in October 2002 to introduce the project and gain the compliance of the station. Visits to the station were arranged, and the scope of cooperation the station would provide was negotiated. The interviews and direct observations of station activities were largely concluded by April 2003.

Semistructured interviews (Hammer & Wildavsky, 1993) were audiotaped and transcribed, and often conducted by two trained interviewers. Permission to quote and attribute quotes was obtained from all interviewees. Three kinds of station personnel were of particular interest: (a) present and former station management, (b) on-air personalities, and (c) support staff (e.g., program producers, office assistants, and volunteers). Interview protocols were developed for each, often with identical or similar questions so that responses could be compared. Table 1 details the interview participants at each station.

## Results: KKBT-FM ("The Beat")

### How Did KKBT Decide to Commit Itself to Community Storytelling?

The Beat was a successful commercial station targeting Los Angeles's African American radio audience in the early 1990s, but a civic crisis and the station's initial failure to play a role in the community's recovery prompted the station to change its policies. After the civic unrest that followed the April 1992 acquittal of four police officers accused

**Table 1**  
**Interview Participants From the Radio Stations**

KKBT ("The Beat")		KPCC	
Participant	Title	Participant	Title
Nancy Leichter	General manager	Doug Johnson	Operations director
Dominique DiPrima	Host, <i>Street Science</i>	Bill Davis	President, Southern California Public Radio
Leonard McGee	Promotions department	Larry Mantle	Host, <i>Air Talk</i>
Lawrence Young	Producer	Kitty Felde	Host, <i>Talk of the City</i>
		Cindy Young	Former general manager
		Paul Glickman	News director

of unlawfully beating Rodney King, The Beat took it upon itself to respond to the resentment that lingered in the African American community after the unrest itself had subsided. The station hired personnel and created programs that would more directly speak to its listeners' community-level concerns while still providing entertainment in its urban, hip-hop format (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

On-air personality Dominique DiPrima had been an award-winning television host and community activist in the San Francisco area, and in 1994, as part of The Beat's strategy to respond to its critics, she was asked by then-program director Keith Napoli to host a Sunday morning talk radio program (*Street Science*). In addition, she was allowed to create a department that focused on serving the community. According to DiPrima, the process did not begin as smoothly as she had expected, but it was successful due to the sincere commitment of the management of the station:

They hired me to do a Sunday morning show, gave me a free hand, and told me to create a department. ... So what Keith did at the time was, and with the backing of the general manager at the time was, step in with two feet in a way that hadn't been done before. (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003)

### **How Does KKBT Fulfill Its Commitment to Community Storytelling?**

KKBT fulfills its commitment to storytelling by (a) assigning personnel to maintain connections to community organizations and activists, (b) airing programs specifically devoted to community issues, and (c) involving community organizations in the station's programs. Each of these methods represents a commitment of station resources to the storytelling neighborhood, and moreover they represent actions that go beyond the FCC licensing requirements of an entertainment-oriented commercial radio station.

*Connecting with the community.* DiPrima was given the opportunity to create a community action department, which over time grew from one part-time staff member to three full-time staff (besides DiPrima herself) devoted entirely to interaction with people and organizations in the community. The department organized a wide range of community activities and events. Free summer arts classes were offered in several communities simultaneously. Several months prior to the Million Man March in October 1995, KKBT was promoting the event. The station even teamed up with local rock station KROQ—ostensibly a competitor—to air a show debating affirmative action. An awards banquet with celebrity guests was organized to honor approximately 15 young people nominated by community organizations. Although many of the events were given publicity on the air and gained corporate sponsorships, many of the department's activities were completely behind the scenes:

At one point we even had a meeting where ... we brought in some of these former gang members just in order to get them to sit down together. This is something that happens behind the scenes that probably doesn't get any play for the radio station, but it got us a lot of love on the streets. (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003)

Besides coining the terms "Community Action Station" and "The People's Station" as descriptors of KKBT, the community action department introduced the slogan "no color lines" in 1994. "We respect everyone, and ... we include everyone in our radio station. We participate in African American events, Latino events, Asian events, gay and lesbian events. I feel like it's more than just radio" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003). The department also organized a series of "no color lines" town meetings to bring different groups together. "We'd have speakers from different communities come in and talk about what they don't like that's in the media and what they'd like to see more of and tell a little bit about their community" (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

One of the biggest changes that took place at KKBT was the sale of the station to Radio One in 1999. Radio One was founded by Catherine L. Hughes in 1980 and has become one of the largest chains of radio stations in the United States and the largest chain targeting an African American audience (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002; Wirth, 2001). Nancy Leichter noted that Radio One is "extremely female friendly, minority friendly" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003), in no small part because it is owned by an African American family and directs its programs at African American communities all over the United States.

Despite the community orientation of Radio One, however, sustaining three full-time positions devoted entirely to community action (in addition to DiPrima) was not a part of the new business plan. The three full-time employees in the community action department were absorbed into the promotions department in January 2001. The promotions department now handles most of what the community action department used to do. The promotions van is still sent out to visit schools in

the community, and calls to the station for references to organizations are still answered, but on a much more limited basis. Leonard McGee, who has taken on much of the role the community action department used to play, explains how even with the best of intentions it is impossible to continue doing what so many people had time to do previously:

Anytime that you take a full-fledged community department and you cut it down—two or three people—and you cut it down to someone else who already has specific duties to do, there's going to be a lot that's cut. (L. McGee, personal communication, February 18, 2003)

*Community programming.* Although most radio stations fulfill their FCC requirement for public service by programming a very early Sunday morning talk program for 30 or 60 minutes, KKBT made available to DiPrima a 3-hour time slot between 9 a.m. and noon on Sunday mornings for *Street Science*, a talk program devoted to community action. The show gradually began to gain an audience and, according to DiPrima (personal communication, February 13, 2003), was consistently one of the top five programs during its time slot.

DiPrima admits to the difficulty in making a program about community popular, but she uses specific techniques in her programs to ensure an audience. Taking a program that is meant to be informative and adding entertainment value allows the program to reach a larger audience:

I use conflict to keep people's interest, but I do it ... only when I feel it's necessary. ... And it's important to me to make issues that are normally considered either too boring or too complicated accessible to our listeners, many of whom don't listen to news and don't read the paper. (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003)

Another way that DiPrima connects with her audience is by framing topics in a way that will be of interest to her listeners:

Say I want to talk about domestic violence or sexism in relationships. I could do a show called "domestic violence and sexism in relationships," but no one's going to listen to it. Not our listeners. But if I do "why do girls love gangstas?" they're going to listen to it. (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003)

Although the new management team at Radio One was not willing to absorb the cost of a community action department, general manager Nancy Leichter did manage to convince them of the value in investing in comedian and morning talk show host Steve Harvey. What the community action department was able to do on a grassroots level, the *Steve Harvey Morning Show* is able to do on a much larger scale. His program ends with a 5-minute sermon that emphasizes personal and community well-being and improvement. In addition to her other duties, Dominique DiPrima was a regular member of Harvey's cast until the spring of 2003. Because of his popu-

larity as an entertainer, Steve Harvey is able to compete for, and often achieve, the highest ratings among English-language morning radio programs in Los Angeles. Harvey brings in a huge listening audience; however, he also makes community action a major part of his morning show.

Steve Harvey innovated KKBT's "Hoodie Awards," which recognize the most popular businesses and organizations in the community. The event involves a multiweek nomination and voting period during which the listeners vote for local favorites, such as their favorite Mexican restaurant, barber, church choir, or high school teacher, culminating in an awards ceremony on a grand scale that includes celebrity participation and sponsorship. The awards not only motivate the listeners to participate by nominating and/or voting, but provide considerable publicity for the businesses and organizations in the community.

*Involving community organizations in programming.* The Hoodie Awards are a major part of Harvey and KKBT's present plan for community action, but they are by no means the only part. *The Steve Harvey Morning Show* frequently broadcasts from local high school and college campuses. They often broadcast from locations to promote local events, such as broadcasting live in Inglewood from the big top of the UniverSoul Circus, the only all-African American circus in the country. It was at one of these neighborhood broadcasts that Harvey got the idea to have a fund drive for schoolbooks. At many remote broadcasts on location, Harvey has people in the audience speak, although most of this is off the air during commercial breaks. One of these events was at the Challenger Girls and Boys Club on Vermont Avenue and 7th Street:

[We] did the remote and when we were there these two kids said they were from local high schools in the hood and they made a comment that they don't have books, and Steve said "What?" He said "We'll get you some books." ... And so he's been trying ever since to raise money. We both have—Steve and the radio station—to raise money to get books for the inner city schools. (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003)

One of the biggest contributions the station makes to the community is the number and frequency of PSAs, a characteristic of the station that is in stark contrast to recent trends of the radio industry (Bishop, 2002). Rather than grouping large numbers of PSAs into a small period of time simply to meet the FCC quarterly report requirements, KKBT chooses two PSAs and runs them each six times per day for one week. Leonard McGee notes that KKBT treats PSAs with an advertising-like strategy: "We'll run twelve a day and then one organization will run six times a day, and the other organization will run six times, so it's like every four hours" (L. McGee, personal communication, February 18, 2003). McGee estimates the value of these PSAs at nearly \$60,000 weekly for a station such as KKBT.

Bishop (2002) noted that PSAs produced by grassroots groups are often considered too unprofessional to air, but KKBT specifically aims its charitable interests at grassroots organizations, "because we feel like those are the people who really need the money. We really try to focus on smaller, grass-roots because, you know, you give something to American Cancer Society, that money's not going to affect the minority communities" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

### **How Does the Community Respond to KKBT's Commitment to Community Storytelling?**

One of the easiest ways to see how a community is responding to a particular program's attempt at local storytelling is to look at the ratings. *The Steve Harvey Morning Show* regularly runs in the top five in its time period, and near the time of the interviews, it was the number one English-language morning radio program in Los Angeles (Carney, 2002). Although ratings figures by themselves do not distinguish between those listening because of the community-oriented content and those primarily drawn to the humor and music, all listeners are, at the very least, exposed to the community-building objectives of the show and not driven away by those themes. In the same way, the fact that *Street Science* could maintain ratings in the top five for the time slot, despite having been originally created as a way to curb criticism rather than produce listenership, shows considerable approval from the listeners in the community. The program also draws an unusually diverse audience in that it attracts both older listeners and young "street people" (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

The slogan "no color lines" appears to describe the audience of the station, in that the audience consists of approximately one third African American, one third Hispanic, and one third other ethnicities, although the average per hour is closer to 65% African American because they tune in for longer periods of time (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003). Even more telling is the willingness of listeners to go beyond listening to the program or station and to participate actively in a program. At one event observed during this research, the Harvey show aired live from the UniverSoul Circus. There were approximately 75 people waiting in line at 6 a.m. and many more arriving steadily throughout the morning, attracted by both the broadcast and the circus.

DiPrima and McGee each related stories of listeners who had contacted them to describe surprising ways that stories on *Street Science* and the *Steve Harvey Morning Show* had touched them—from middle-aged white men to "scary looking gangsters." Sometimes the most effective responses are not from the listeners themselves, but from the guests on the shows and the community organizations involved in the broadcast or event: "A lot of our guests end up hooking up and collaborating. People who would never have met each other, and I've seen that time and time again, which is very rewarding" (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

## How Does Community Storytelling Affect KKBT Financially?

According to many different sources at KKBT, their community orientation has a complex effect on their financial stability, but most people characterized the effect as positive. Although the station has many goals that are related to community action, the station is a commercial business and is obligated to return profits to its owner, Radio One. "We send big profits back," says Leichter (personal communication, February 13, 2003). At the time of this study, the station was the sixth-billed radio station in Los Angeles, and much of the credit belongs to its reputation for being community focused: "One of the biggest selling points of the station is the community aspect. It's what makes us different. It's what makes us unique, and it ... gives us credibility. [The advertisers and sponsors] want to be a part of it" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003). "I think typically African Americans have used radio as their news source. It's almost like they turn to the radio for everything. ... For advertisers to advertise to our audience—they will use your product. It's an extremely active audience" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

Besides advertising, another key way in which the station can maintain profits is through corporate sponsorships of events. "For something like the Hoodies, we sell. Everybody wants to be involved. We sell so many sponsorships" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003). So confident is Leichter in the appeal of *The Beat* to sponsors, the day before our interview she scheduled a promotional activity without bothering to secure a sponsor first. "I said 'no, let's just do the thing and they'll come.' When they see what a great thing this is, they'll want to be a part of it" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

Even *Street Science* managed to make a profit with its commercial spots, even though "it's a very expensive show to produce. It's profitable, and at times it's been even more profitable because we've done special sponsored broadcasts and different things" (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

When asked if the station would be more profitable if they reduced the number of community activities, Leichter responded with a plain and simple "No." When asked if the station was losing revenue by doing community action, Leichter responded, "Absolutely not. I don't know how we could. I mean, I don't think the ratings would be good. ... Advertisers see it as a good thing" (N. Leichter, personal communication, February 13, 2003). DiPrima agrees, noting that community action builds "brand loyalty among listeners" (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

Occasionally, conflicts arise between the idealism of community broadcasting and the profit needs of a commercial radio station, such as DiPrima's policy of refusing ads for alcohol on *Street Science*. However, DiPrima also admits that the problem is no different at KKBT than at any other community organization. "If you don't think that big community organizations have to deal with conflicts between the desires of their corporate sponsors and their ultimate unadulterated idealism, then you're living in a dream world" (D. DiPrima, personal communication, February 13, 2003).

## Results: KPCC-FM

### How Did KPCC Decide to Commit Itself to Community Storytelling?

Since its inception in 1957 as a campus FM radio station at Pasadena City College (PCC), where it was created to provide a laboratory for experimentation as a part of electronics classes, KPCC has had three major incarnations: (a) as a campus laboratory, (b) as an underfunded and understaffed National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate with an eclectic schedule, and (c) in its current incarnation as a well-funded affiliate of Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). Its transitions from stage to stage have often been tumultuous, mostly because of conflicting notions of the purpose of the station held by the station's staff (including its faculty managers), its listeners, the board of trustees of PCC, and others (such as MPR's president Bill Kling) who saw untapped potential in the station. Ironically, it is only in its most recent stage as an affiliate of a national radio network that KPCC has realized the rewards of a commitment to local storytelling.

Conflicts over the station's mission and identity came to a head in 1998, when the station faced a budget deficit of \$170,000. At that time, the station featured two successful news-talk programs hosted by Larry Mantle, *Air Talk* and *Local Edition*. A third show, *Talk of the City*, had been launched in 1996 to lead into NPR's *Talk of the Nation*. The success of these shows was used as an argument to make a complete change in the station's format and its relationship with PCC. The college considered selling the station, but after receiving several bids, the college's trustees realized the value of the station. Rather than selling KPCC, the college entered into a management contract with MPR in December 1999. Under the agreement, PCC leased its license to MPR through a newly created entity, Southern California Public Radio (SCPR). SCPR provided \$175,000 per year for 4 years to KPCC, in part to support a digital training academy (Russell, 2000).

In addition, MPR changed the format of KPCC to all news and information. KQED in San Francisco and WNYC in New York had already demonstrated that a news and information format could succeed for public radio stations in large markets. This news and information format was largely absent among public radio stations in Southern California, leaving all parties involved with the expectation that KPCC would be able to successfully fill the void (D. Johnson, personal communication, February 7, 2003).

### How Did KPCC Fulfill Its Commitment to Community Storytelling?

KPCC's commitment to community storytelling has been demonstrated in six primary ways: (a) devoting financial and other resources from MPR to local news and commentary, (b) directing staff to an upgraded newsroom and to more live remote broadcasts from around Los Angeles, (c) changing the station's mission statement to

emphasize local news and community building, (d) inviting listeners to provide news tips about neglected stories in their neighborhoods, (e) using the station's Internet site to provide additional information and links to community organizations, and (f) broadcasting public meetings and debates regarding current issues.

MPR took control of KPCC on January 1, 2000. Consultants from MPR were brought in to make marketing and fundraising more efficient, and a new software system for development was implemented. However, perhaps the biggest immediate change by MPR was the increase in staff at the station. Almost immediately a significant number of employees who had been hired into part-time positions or who had been independent contractors were given salaries with benefits. The news department was increased from three part-time reporters and a part-time news director to nine full-time reporters and staff within the first 6 months.

The first major programming changes took place in March 2000. The new programming schedule included *Air Talk*, *Talk of the City*, and *Marketplace* (a new, nationally syndicated program produced in Los Angeles devoted to business news) as well as NPR's morning and afternoon news programs. All evening and weekend music programs were eliminated, as were all of the programs hosted by students and a few other community-access shows. Weekend programming at KPCC was replaced entirely by NPR and MPR national programming.

In June 2000, KPCC's new board of directors made a commitment to hire a full-time news director and three additional full-time reporters in order to increase the local news coverage of the station. Paul Glickman was hired as news director in August 2000 and arrived just in time to participate in *Talk of the City's* on-site coverage of the Democratic National Convention at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Although *Air Talk* had occasionally done on-site broadcasts (two in 1999), the convention (along with some coverage of the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia) represented the first on-site broadcasts for *Talk of the City* and began a practice that was to become a staple of KPCC broadcasts. KPCC airs on-site broadcasts for one of the two talk shows nearly every week. By April 2003, 17 of KPCC's 43 full-time employees were assigned to the newsroom. They produced more than 1,000 minutes of local news and stories that were inserted into the broadcasts of *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* in 2002. In addition, *Air Talk* and *Talk of the City* devote approximately one quarter to one third of their airtime to discussions related to local issues (as opposed to national, world, or special interest topics). Each of these two talk shows has three full-time producers devoted to research and preparation. *Air Talk* host Larry Mantle (personal communication, December 9, 2002) specified more and better guests and more fresh ideas as benefits that sprang from the added staff. The larger staff allows the program to do more local news segments on *Air Talk*, although Mantle explains that doing more segments is not the main improvement: "I don't know about saying 'much more [local news segments]' but certainly more. ... It's a harder news show than it was" before January 2000 (L. Mantle, personal communication, December 9, 2002).

The types of stories aired by KPCC also reflect its commitment to telling stories on the local level. In addition to regularly providing information on Los Angeles and Cal-

ifornia politics, KPCC will also consider stories related to more specific areas. One example is a series of news reports and talk segments related to a recall election of allegedly corrupt city officials in the Los Angeles County city of South Gate. The situation was newsworthy to the entire Southland due to South Gate's unique situation as one of the area's few local governments comprised of Latinos, who are a majority of residents in South Gate. Although the scandal involved South Gate directly, the issue was of concern to many other residents in the area. Former general manager Cindy Young describes how KPCC decides whether to give significant coverage to an especially local issue: "[Will] something that's going to play as an issue in Orange County, in L.A. and Pasadena, be of concern everywhere? Local to us is a bigger, bigger scene that just Pasadena" (C. Young, personal communication, February 10, 2003).

KPCC has created a phone line and e-mail address to receive ideas from listeners about stories that KPCC might be interested in covering. This tip line is promoted on air as an invitation to listeners to draw the station's attention to stories in their neighborhoods that are not being covered in the media. Although several people at KPCC admit that having reporters out in the communities talking directly with residents is the best way to know what is going on in those areas, news tips provide another way that listeners can make known to KPCC issues they feel should be covered in a story.

Besides archiving all of the programs and stories locally produced by KPCC, the station also uses its Web site as a community information page for topics that may be of interest to listeners. For instance, during elections, KPCC creates a special election page that contains links to all of the stories and segments KPCC produced regarding the election, as well as general election information and links to other election Web sites. In addition, during the first anniversary of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, KPCC not only contributed to NPR's national coverage of commemorative events, but also posted a list that contained all the commemorations and the ceremonies that were going to be taking place in Southern California.

For the people that go on the talk shows and talk about anything now, the information will wind up on our website to take the place of it so you could learn more about it or hook up with people involved in something. (P. Glickman, personal communication, November 26, 2002)

Bill Davis, president of SCPR, considers the station's online resources valuable: "If we go out and do a remote ... we ought to be able to provide our audience with an opportunity to continue that discussion and that debate online" (B. Davis, personal communication, November 14, 2002).

KPCC also will often broadcast community discussions and forums in the evenings or as a part of *Air Talk* or *Talk of the City*. In addition to covering meetings that others have organized, these forums may be events organized by KPCC. Examples include a debate on Hollywood and San Fernando Valley's secession from Los Angeles (a major issue in the city and the subject of a referendum in November 2002) or a public forum held in Watts. These broadcasts establish connections between KPCC and commu-

nity organizations, not necessarily to promote the organizations themselves, but to allow listeners to hear points of view they might not come across in other local media.

### **How Does the Community Respond to KPCC's Commitment to Community Storytelling?**

There are several indicators of community reaction to KPCC's decision to commit itself to community storytelling: (a) attendance and participation in public meetings regarding the change; (b) changes in ratings for particular programs and the station overall; (c) awards and honors from professional organizations; (d) involvement by listeners, including news tips, on-air telephone calls, and comment or criticism by mail or e-mail; and (e) financial contributions to the station from listeners, businesses, and organizations.

*Reactions to the transition.* Initially there appeared to be a significant public outcry against the programming changes KPCC made as it became an all-news-talk station. Crowds showed up to voice their complaints at PCC board meetings when certain programs were canceled. However, the public response to the programming changes was not entirely negative. Johnson notes that the *Los Angeles Times* began paying more attention to the station when a new antenna strengthened KPCC's transmissions and the newspaper supported the transition to the new format. Other local institutions took note as well and began to get involved in the station.

*Ratings.* In early 2000, during the implementation of new programming after MPR's acquisition of KPCC, approximately 40% of the programs on the station were eliminated (particularly music and ethnic programs) and replaced with news and information programming. During that time, KPCC's listenership dropped less than 10%, from around 240,000 listeners weekly to about 220,000. Since that time, listenership gradually grew to approximately 400,000 listeners weekly in the fall of 2002 (B. Davis, personal communication, November 14, 2002), with the core listener averaging 7 hours per week listening to the station (C. Young, personal communication, February 10, 2003).

The increase in audience for the station as a whole can also be seen in the ratings for the two main programs on the station that discuss local topics extensively: *Talk of the City* and *Air Talk*. Both programs were moved to different times of the day during this transition, and the change became a major issue for several critics. But less than 3 years later, both shows have seen a significant increase in total audience. *Talk of the City* host Kitty Felde explains:

If I'm reading [the numbers] right, the audience for [*Talk of the City*] has grown by 50 percent over the past three years. Hits to our website ... [are] up 90 percent from ... about a year ago when we started. ... I have the youngest audience of the station, and

I have the most diverse audience of any other show. ... So that makes me feel that if our goal is to reach out to various communities in Southern California, they are hearing and responding. (K. Felde, personal communication, December 16, 2002)

However, *growth* in the audience for *Talk of the City* appears to not be adding up to a total audience size that meets KPCC's goals. In late 2002 the program showed the lowest number of listeners of any program on KPCC between the peak morning and evening drive times on weekdays, despite its 50% growth in audience over a 3-year period. This may be one of the reasons *Talk of the City* was reduced from a 90-minute to a 60-minute program in early 2004, although Felde points out that a change in format for the show to include shorter, exclusively news-driven segments made the program more suitable to fit within one hour (K. Felde, personal communication, May 18, 2004).

*Air Talk* has seen significant increases in its ratings as well. Although the program is no longer the station's top-rated show, its overall ratings have increased. Host Larry Mantle explains:

I would bet that the audience is probably 30 percent larger now ... and *All Things Considered* in the afternoon has raised that time slot's audience considerably as well. So *All Things Considered* is doing much better than I did in that time slot and I'm doing much better in the morning than I ever did in that time slot. (L. Mantle, personal communication, December 9, 2002)

However, Mantle does note that the audience for his show, although larger, changed in composition when he moved from the evenings to his current morning time slot:

I think we had a more politically balanced audience [in the evening] because we were not opposite Rush Limbaugh. So I had many more interesting conservative callers in the evening than I now get in the morning, unfortunately. So I think we have taken a hit in that sense—in the quality of the calls. It's pretty much exclusively liberal callers, being opposite Rush Limbaugh in the morning. And that's unfortunate because I loved the political mix we had at night. (L. Mantle, personal communication, December 9, 2002)

*Honors and awards.* KPCC's new programming has resulted in many awards for the station since spring of 2000. In June 2002 the station won nine awards from the Los Angeles Press Club including its second consecutive Unity Award, bestowed on a station that shows a commitment to covering diverse communities; KPCC was one of four stations to be recognized with a national version of the award. Kitty Felde was awarded Journalist of the Year. In addition, reports from the station won three Edward R. Murrow Awards in March 2001, three Associated Press Television–Radio Association of California awards in February 2001, seven Golden Mike Awards from the Radio and Television News Association of Southern California in January 2001, and six

in 2002. In addition, KPCC was honored in May 2002 by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration with its President's Award for the station's commitment to public service. Nearly all of the stories that won awards focused on issues directed at residents of Southern California.

*Listener involvement.* According to news director Paul Glickman, suggestions for stories are given to the station through their news tips phone and e-mail address daily. Bill Davis, president of SCPR, notes that getting stories from the residents of the communities themselves is a highly effective way for the station to understand the major issues of the community: "We don't just look at the A.P. date book and what's in the *LA Times*, and what's been on other media. Our audience is probably the best resource for story ideas—what's going on in the community" (B. Davis, personal communication, November 14, 2002). Although most of the stories are too locally specific to benefit a larger Southern Californian audience, several suggestions have been used as stories by the station. One example is a tip from a member of the entertainment industry that led to a report by Steve Julian exposing a series of illegal workshops that were charging actors for auditions with casting directors and producers. The report by Julian won one of the nine Los Angeles Press Club Awards received by KPCC in 2002.

KPCC's employees put such a priority on promoting civic action through listener involvement with the station that they sometimes make decisions to do so at the expense of their finances. Perhaps the best example was when the station postponed an entire week of on-air fundraising to air the U.S. Congress's debate on the war in Iraq in its entirety. Instead of the usual \$1 million raised, the station took in just over \$300,000. However, the station took great satisfaction in knowing that the number of faxes and e-mails sent to congressional offices at the time was significantly increased due to their coverage. For on-air hosts Kitty Felde and Larry Mantle, the number of calls received during particular programs sometimes means more to them in terms of community response than ratings do: "Call-ins are huge. With listeners being able to interact, right there that's huge community building" (L. Mantle, personal communication, December 9, 2002).

## **How Does Community Storytelling Affect KPCC Financially?**

With a 58% increase in audience size between the beginning of 2000 and the end of 2002, and with the assistance of some fundraising consultants provided by MPR, KPCC was able to increase its revenue per fund drive from just over \$300,000 in 2000 to two consecutive \$1 million fund drives in 2002. The increase in funding is attributed most directly to the increase in audience (particularly the number of core listeners), and the increase in audience is attributed most directly to the unification of format:

We basically had three formats at KPCC, and the problem with that is any given time two-thirds of your listening audience don't like what you have on the air, so they don't feel a particular connection with your station. ... So what happens? We unify our programming, we become one station, one format, and we've had two back-to-back million-dollar fundraisers. (D. Johnson, personal communication, February 7, 2003)

In addition to the increase in listeners and, consequently, in membership funding, the amount of funding received by KPCC from foundations nearly doubled between 2001 and 2002. Former general manager Cindy Young attributes much of this to KPCC having its own board of directors, whose members are able to provide considerable assistance in fundraising. At least some of the financial support the station has received can be traced to the station's significant commitment to local storytelling: "Let me single out the California Community Foundation. They have been very pleased in response about this. Our mission actually parallels theirs. I think their motto is 'One community out of many,' and so there's an obvious overlap there" (B. Davis, personal communication, November 14, 2002). The California Community Foundation gave KPCC \$450,000 in 2002. According to Davis, the approval of the community focus of KPCC must be a primary reason for corporate support simply because the limited abilities of KPCC to promote corporations on-air could not justify the large amounts of money being donated. "There is some corporate underwriting that we have that basically supports our mission because the companies that are underwriting are not getting ... any measurable return on their investment" (B. Davis, personal communication, November 14, 2002).

Several people at KPCC also believe the station's dedication to community and local news has motivated individual listeners to become donating members of the station. Cindy Young states, "I think especially in the era of satellite radio and all, what is going to make public radio unique and distinctive, and therefore fundable, is localism" (C. Young, personal communication, February 10, 2003). Operations director Doug Johnson states, "That's the number one reason—there's some sort of cognitive connection between what it is they're listening to and then the message that this costs money ... and that's how you hope everybody reacts" (D. Johnson, personal communication, February 7, 2003). Bill Davis agrees:

There's another public radio station in town, KCRW. ... They don't do local news, and so if you really don't want local news in your *All Things Considered/Morning Edition*, you've got a place to go. And so people who listen to us primarily and support us make that contribution. (B. Davis, personal communication, November 14, 2002)

KPCC takes a firm stand on several internal issues that affect the station financially. For example, the station will not take money from companies related to liquor or firearms, from organizations on either side of controversial political issues, or from organizations expecting promotion of a particular issue. The station is very careful about making sure its financial goals do not interfere with its journalistic integrity. Both Davis and news director Paul Glickman noted that this journalistic standard extends to

decisions regarding where on-site broadcasts are held and which organizations are brought into discussions.

## Discussion

### KKBT in the Communication Infrastructure

The programs and practices that KKBT adopted in the interest of contributing to the health of community life in Los Angeles are in many ways illustrative of the community infrastructure theory. By deliberately forging relationships between the station, listeners, and local organizations, KKBT brings to life a storytelling network that is fully integrated. The station also concentrates attention on aspects of the communication action context such as good schools, local businesses, and public health, highlighting positive aspects and appealing for action to improve negative aspects. KKBT's approach to community service favors an open context in which the connections the station forges in the storytelling network can be used frequently and effectively.

In the late 1990s, data gathered in Los Angeles showed that the highest level of belonging was found in the African American community of Greater Crenshaw (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). Ball-Rokeach et al. showed that belonging is predicted by a highly integrated communication network. The Beat's core audience is African American, and the station's programs and practices encourage the very connections that communication infrastructure theory predicts will be associated with belonging. This finding strengthens confidence in the theory. Despite Crenshaw residents' awareness of problems in their community, they expressed the strongest propensity (compared to other Los Angeles neighborhoods—including Caucasian Pasadena, where KPCC is based) to engage in the behaviors and adopt the beliefs associated with "belonging" in their neighborhood.

In the period covered by our case study, KKBT engaged in identifiable programs and practices that activated connections in the storytelling network of which they are a part. As a commercial station that is not primarily engaged in journalism, The Beat could advocate businesses such as the UniverSoul Circus or winners of the Hoodie Awards, or conduct interviews on shows such as *Street Science*, without being concerned that their integrity was being compromised. Steve Harvey and Dominique DiPrima could call attention to causes and organizations they support while still engaging in conventional commercial activities to support the station's sponsors and investors.

### KPCC in the Communication Infrastructure

KPCC's practices illustrate an approach to building an integrated storytelling network that is not available to a commercial station such as KKBT. Listeners to a public

radio station are invited to become *members* of the station through direct contributions, thus establishing a relationship with the station that would be incongruous with a commercial station. By stabilizing its programming format, KPCC deliberately (and successfully) sought a more committed audience, one more likely to develop an attachment to the station that would be expressed not only in financial contributions but also in greater participation in the whole life of the station.

KPCC's ability to strengthen connections with local organizations differs from KKBT's. Journalistic objectivity can sometimes demand neutrality toward organizations that the entertainers at KKBT may not feel obligated to provide. A local business, foundation, or service organization that is sympathetic to KPCC's goals may feel that the most helpful way to demonstrate that sympathy is by making a donation. However, establishing this relationship may make KPCC's staff wary of appearing to favor contributors.

Although *The Beat* directly urges listeners to join organizations or patronize businesses, it could be that KPCC's listeners are already engaged in civic activity above the norm: Bill Davis (personal communication, November 14, 2002) claims that the voting habits of KPCC's audience indicate that they are particularly active, at least in the dimension of civic affairs that includes electoral politics. If that level of activity is replicated in other parts of their lives, chances are that KPCC's audience is already integrated into the entire storytelling network and less in need of the station to foster such connections than the younger audience at *The Beat*. Nonetheless, the distance that KPCC must establish between itself and its financial supporters may complicate its ability to urge listeners to connect with some businesses, foundations, and organizations.

KPCC's attention to the communication action context in Los Angeles also reflects its journalistic orientation. Issues such as education, the economy, and public health receive attention through "coverage," rather than the advocacy campaigns typical at *The Beat*. KPCC can devote considerable journalistic resources to an issue such as education and address the issue in a variety of ways, including (a) straight news coverage, (b) segments of shows such as *Air Talk* that include on-air discussions and debates, (c) listener participation shows, and (d) the broadcast of public forums. This is a wider range of options than *The Beat* has, but in each case KPCC is more likely to serve as a moderator than an advocate. The moderator role is certainly consistent with a journalistic orientation, but the distinction to *The Beat's* approach is worth noting. Of course, KPCC certainly "advocates" education, a healthy economy, and public health in themselves, but the station is unlikely to rally behind a particular school, business, or clinic the way *The Beat* does from time to time.

## Evaluating the Stations

Radio serves a unique role in its ability to provide listeners with local, community-based stories. A radio market as large as Southern California (the second largest

market in the United States, according to Arbitron) provides an opportunity for radio stations to remain competitive by featuring programs that focus on issues exclusive to the Los Angeles area. Despite the recent trend for radio companies to consolidate ownership of stations and fill airtime with programs that do not focus on any particular place, KKBT and KPCC serve as examples of how local community-based programming can be successful at two different types of stations (commercial and public) serving two different audiences.

The strategies adopted by each station and their potential for success can be evaluated through the communication infrastructure theory, which calls attention to the connections the stations foster between themselves, their listeners, and local organizations, as well as the role the stations play in maintaining a communication action context that encourages storytelling. Interviews with staff at each station are replete with references to the satisfaction they take from the nature of the connections with listeners that their commitment to community building involves. Both stations also point to the way their commitment to their local community has generated deeper and more sustained connections to organizations that share their commitment, to the benefit of both the stations and the organizations. By serving as bridges between those organizations and their listeners, the stations exemplify the unique potential that communication infrastructure theory ascribes to local media to strengthen a storytelling network to the benefit of the community it serves.

Although each station began its focus on local storytelling for different reasons, both stations perceived that this type of programming suited their goals. KPCC slowly expanded on the success of its locally produced talk program *Air Talk*, which began as a half-hour local news program and grew to be the top-rated program of the station. KKBT, responding to criticism for its lack of involvement in its audience's community, took a sincere and active approach to community involvement to gain respect among its listeners and its critics. Both stations dramatically expanded their amount of local community involvement over several years because of the positive effects that such involvement had.

However, as both stations were expanding their community coverage and involvement by increasing and lengthening programs, each station also had to make significant changes to the approach it took to fulfill its community objectives in order to achieve other goals at the station. New owners at KKBT could not justify the expense of an entire department devoted to off-the-air community action. Although Radio One was sympathetic with a community approach to business, it did not feel that the community action department as it was structured was the most effective form of community action to fulfill its business objectives. The *Steve Harvey Morning Show*, however, offered Radio One the opportunity to continue a community-based approach to its programming while boosting its ratings with a highly popular and entertaining host. Likewise, KPCC chose to eliminate a series of low-rated weekend programs that, despite serving specific ethnic communities, alienated much of the station's core listenership. The station focused on solidifying a format, at the expense of local weekend programs that did not fit that format.

Both stations admit that keeping a community focus to their programming is more expensive than playing music from a studio, but both stations mention a significant benefit to providing community-based programs that outweighs the expense. KPCC gains additional money from corporate underwriting and a portion of their membership specifically because of the community approach they take. Likewise, KKBT receives sponsorship for community events and broadcasts, and enjoys the benefits of brand loyalty and recognition based on its community focus. Listenership has increased for both stations following additions and/or changes in their community programming and events. The general belief at both stations is that eliminating the local and community aspects of their programming would not benefit their stations.

Both KPCC and KKBT mentioned that to be successful at community radio, it was important for representatives of the station to be out in the communities, learning from the residents themselves the issues that most affect them in their daily lives. Although both stations found grassroots organizations to be important, the nature of radio in a large urban setting meant that both stations had to find ways to relate to the Southern Californian community at large, as opposed to singling out specific geographical areas. KPCC did this by finding local community stories about issues in a particular neighborhood or area that affect a greater number of residents at large, as opposed to doing stories that may be very interesting to a small fraction of the audience and of little interest to others. KKBT relates to their community by using such slogans as "no color lines" to imply that all listeners, not just those of a certain ethnicity, are invited to listen to and get involved with the station, as well as to support organizations that encourage racial harmony.

Although both stations do significantly more local community-based programming than most radio stations in Los Angeles, community programs constitute a small percentage of both stations' airtime. KPCC and KKBT have taken pains to combine their community focus with shows that offer other gratifications, including entertainment and national and international news. The merger of community-based and entertainment-based content appears to be one of the keys to successful local radio programming. KPCC uses breaks during the popular *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* programs as an opportunity to embed a few short local news reports, as opposed to replacing 30 straight minutes of the program with an all-local-news program, which most likely would not fare as well with listeners. In the same way, KKBT chooses to make portions of the *Steve Harvey Morning Show* very community oriented, but mixes these with segments that have nothing to do with community building. The show is successful because it is entertaining to its listeners. Aspects of community action are made a part of the entertainment, not put in contrast to it. Likewise, Dominique DiPrima sought to find an entertaining way to educate her listeners on certain topics. In this way both KPCC and KKBT use popular programs as opportunities for brief but effective community action and information.

It is also significant that both stations depend on out-of-state entities to provide financial stability, and are thus to one extent or another at the mercy of the goals of Ra-

dio One or MPR. In each case, the resources these entities were willing to provide to the stations played important roles in guiding the stations' managers as they organized their staffs. At The Beat, ownership goals meant folding the community action department into a more conventional marketing department. At KPCC, ownership goals meant adding staff to the news department and eliminating eclectic music programs. Thus, neither station is immune from the industry trend of consolidation and the prospect that experimentation at the grassroots level will be stifled in a consolidated radio landscape (Chambers, 2001; Wirth, 2001).

KKBT and KPCC are successful at being local storytellers primarily because they have both found ways of including local community issues in their programs in ways that allow them to fulfill their idealistic and business goals. Commercial pressures complicate The Beat's ability to remain committed to strategies that detract from the bottom line. KPCC faces different financial constraints but may have more freedom to remain committed to practices that do not produce short-term financial benefits. The entertainment focus of The Beat frees the station to engage in occasional advocacy in ways that journalists at KPCC might find inconsistent with news programming. Each station balances its interest in community building with its other goals, and each has demonstrated an instinctive grasp of the importance of developing an integrated storytelling network that can maximize the ability of residents to improve their community.

This article reports the accounts of those most closely involved with the programming decisions that these stations credit for serving their communities. Certainly a more complete appreciation of the performance of these stations must include data from other perspectives (e.g., from listeners) and content analysis. The case study approach is, by nature, limited in its ability to produce generalizable conclusions (Yin, 1994). By interpreting our observations through the prism of communication infrastructure theory, we hope that the significance of these observations is widened beyond mere description of two stations. It is the practical steps each station takes to integrate the storytelling network in which they operate (i.e., by forging connections between themselves, listeners, and local organizations) and to foster an open communication action context (e.g., good schools, ethnic harmony, and civil discourse) that are of significance from a theoretical standpoint. Hearing radio professionals describe the practical pros and cons of these practices is valuable in itself, but it is not the whole story. Future research should seek a balance between the present account and other points of view.

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