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RADIO IN THE OLD COLONY: HOW FAMILY TIES, FINANCES, AND POLITICS IMPACT CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, information radio in Puerto Rico has increased their opinion programming and downsized newsrooms. As a result, partisan commentators' opinions dominate the audiences' information diet. Using the hierarchy of influences model, this study examined how forces at the media organization level shaped news/talk radio content. In-depth interviews with radio workers revealed that ownership, finances, and editorial leaning impacted content, causing the displacement of formal news programs and the consolidation of an offer based on political commentary and opinion.

Keywords: news/talk, politics talk, radio, hierarchy of influences model, media organizations

RESUMEN

En los últimos años, la radio de información en Puerto Rico ha aumentado su programación de opinión y ha reducido sus salas de redacción. Como resultado, las opiniones de los comentaristas partidistas dominan la dieta informativa de las audiencias. Utilizando el modelo de jerarquía de influencias, este estudio examinó cómo las fuerzas a nivel de la organización de los medios daban forma al contenido de la programación radial. Entrevistas en profundidad a trabajadores de radio revelaron que la titularidad por propiedad, las finanzas y la inclinación editorial impactaron contenidos de manera que provocaron el desplazamiento de los informativos formales y la consolidación de una oferta basada en el comentario y la opinión política.

Palabras clave: noticias/programas de radio, programas de política, radio, modelo de jerarquía de influencias, organizaciones mediáticas

RÉSUMÉ

Ces dernières années, la radio d'information au Porto Rico a augmenté sa programmation d'opinion et réduit ses salles de rédaction. En conséquence, les opinions des commentateurs partisans dominant le régime informationnel du public. En utilisant le modèle de la hiérarchie des influences, cette étude a examiné comment les forces au niveau de l'organisation des médias ont façonné le contenu des nouvelles/

programmes radio. Des entretiens approfondis avec des travailleurs de la radio ont révélé que la propriété, les finances et les préjugés éditoriaux ont eu un impact sur le contenu qui a conduit au déplacement des bulletins d'information officiels et à la consolidation d'une offre basée sur l'opinion et les commentaires politiques.

Mots-clés : nouvelles/programmes radio, programmes politiques, radio, hiérarchie du modèle d'influence, organisations médiatiques

Introduction

In Puerto Rico, a Spanish-speaking territory of the United States, radio is a powerful medium that often makes sense of local politics (Jamieson and Cappella 2008; Rodríguez-Cotto 2017a; Sepúlveda-Rodríguez 2014; Vargas 2012). The purpose of this study is to examine how ownership and the current business model impact information radio content. The focus is on Puerto Rico because of the influence of radio (Nielsen 2017).

Based on Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) Hierarchy of Influences Model, a content analysis of the programming grids from 2000 to 2016 and in-depth interviews with radio workers explored the changes in information radio content from news to politics talk. This study's contribution to the debate lies in filling a void in researching Puerto Rican information radio's organizational practices (Subervi 2016). Furthermore, Puerto Rico offers a good case study because, despite being regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the socio-cultural and economic context directly impacts management and financial practices in local media industries. From media sociology standpoint, this analysis estimates constraints explicitly imposed at the media organization level (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) play a significant role in shaping information radio content so that politics talk shows have superseded the amount and quality of news.

Literature review, hypothesis, and research question

Development of Puerto Rico's Radio Industry

Puerto Rico inserted itself in the nascent radio broadcasting industry during the 1920s as the fifth country in Latin America to have a stable commercial radio station with a strong social presence (Merayo Pérez 2009). Hernand and Sosthenes Behn, owners of telephone companies in Puerto Rico and Cuba, founded WKAQ in December 1922 (Nido Nylund 2007; Tirado 2007). By 1928, radio had an audience of 25,000 and WKAQ

started its commercial operation billing parties for political broadcasts and airing sponsored content such as *radionovelas* (Tirado 2009).

The radio industry blossomed in the subsequent decade. The second radio station WNEL inaugurated in San Juan in 1934, while WPRP and WPRA started operations in Ponce and Mayagüez in 1936 (Tirado 2009). In the 1940s, the Puerto Rico Communications Authority (ACPR, for its Spanish acronym) sought to centralize and regulate the telegraph and phone services as part of the government's modernization of public communications (Rosario Albert 2006). What started as educational programming in the existent commercial radio stations know as *La Escuela del Aire* turned into Radio WIPR in 1949 (Rosario Albert 2006). Its purpose was not to compete with the commercial radio stations but to increase literacy and stimulate artistic and cultural activity (Rosario Albert 2006). By the 1950s, there were 24 radio stations in the archipelago (Kingson and Cowgill 1951). Radio dramas, family comedy, political satire, and sports (baseball and horse-racing) were among the audience favorites until the advent of television (Kingson and Cowgill 1951; Tirado 2009).

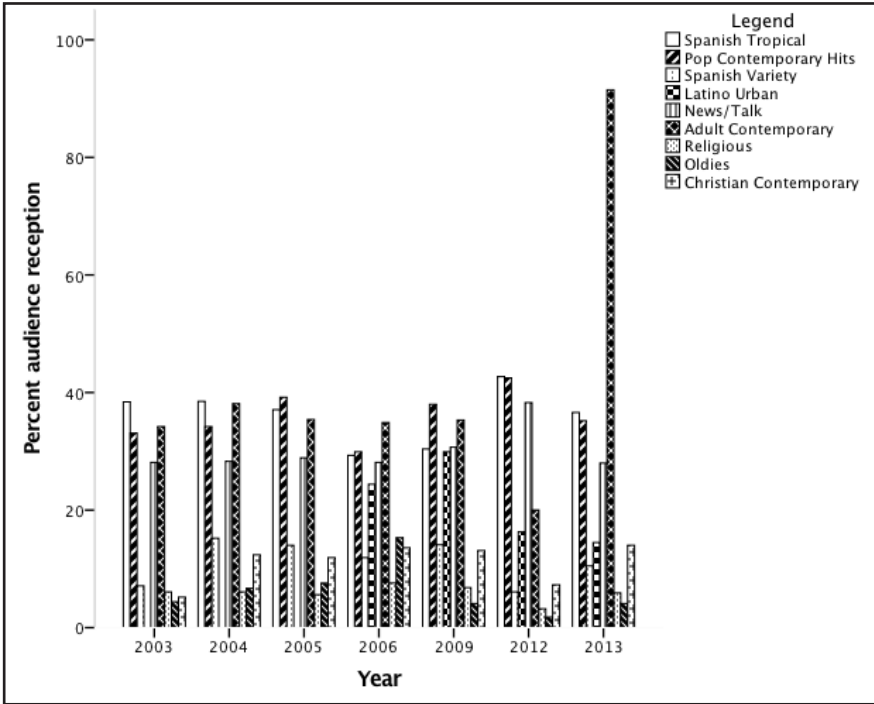
Specialization began in the 1970s, dividing the spectrum into the talk, musical, and religious themes (Tirado 2007). Presently, there are 127 radio stations in Puerto Rico; five are not-for-profit public stations, while the remaining are commercial for-profit (Collado Schwarz 2009; El Nuevo Día 2014; Sabes Turmo 2005). Despite its status as a territory of the United States, Puerto Rico's broadcasting industry does not resemble that of the mainland (Sabes Turmo 2005). Whereas radio station ownership in the continental United States is concentrated on a few investment groups and corporations, individuals and small groups own the bulk of radio stations in Puerto Rico (Albarrán 2004; Collado Schwarz 2009; Straubhaar, LaRose, and Davenport 2012; Subervi-Vélez and Hernandez-López 1990).

In this context, information radio in Puerto Rico appeals to a niche audience that is politically engaged. News/talk content is among the most consumed radio formats alongside other popular music formats such as Spanish Tropical and Contemporary Music (Fig. 1). This study considered radio stations defined as News/Talk as its subject of analysis.

Hierarchy of Influences Model

The Hierarchy of Influences Model states the reasons for the changes in information radio and its impact on the content (See Fig. 2). In this research, I focus on how financial and editorial practices work at the organizational level and more closely relate to the increase of politics talk shows. Precisely, through semi-structured interviews to radio station

Figure 1: Puerto Rico Format Listening



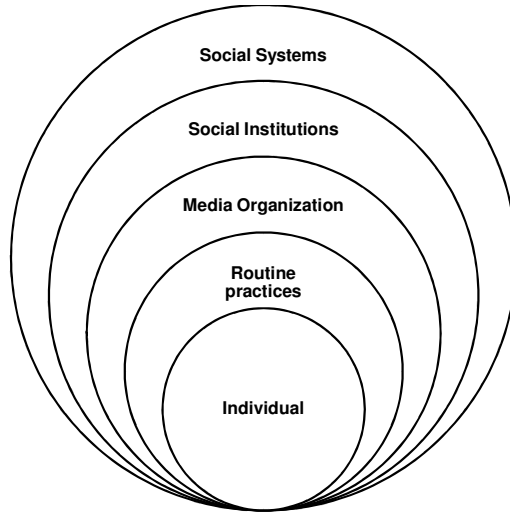
Source: Puerto Rico Radio Today¹

managers, producers, and journalists, I assess how the corporate-level forces in news media organizations shape the content.

The Hierarchy of Influences Model illustrates the pressures that drive media content production. When approaching the reasons for the existence or lack of journalists’ government oversight or the emphasis on sensationalized information content, it is crucial to evaluate the broader framework of power within which media develops. Based on media sociology, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) affirm that different level forces, from the social system to individual journalists, impel media products.

The influences are part of a hierarchy. Thus, the social system’s level has priority over the other strata as all levels conform to it (Duan and Takahashi 2017; Giddens 1979; Reich 2014; Shoemaker and Reese 2014). In Puerto Rico, the idea of a permanent political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States has become engrossed in the ideological discourse broadcast through the airwaves. On the other

¹ The information corresponds to available data from Arbitron’s Puerto Rico Radio Today from the years 2003-2006, 2009, 2012 and 2013.

Figure 2: Hierarchy of Influences Model

hand, extra-media forces in the social-institution level also compel the individual communicator. For example, in Latin America and Eastern Europe, journalists decry government pressures on their reporting and some self-censor to avoid reprisals (Milojević and Krstić 2018; Saldaña and Mourão 2018).

This study focuses on the organization level, where media ownership impacts routine journalistic practices. The media enterprise's structure and its organizational policy (Giddens 1979; Reich 2014; Shoemaker and Reese 2014) will define the rigor with news information is broadcast. Specifically, the radio's financial part allocates economic resources on politics talk shows, restricting quality journalistic content development. For instance, in Latin America and Eastern Europe, financial arrangements with government and business influence journalistic practice; consequently, some reporters self-censor to avoid reprisals (Milojević and Krstić 2018; Rely and Bustamante 2013; Saldaña and Mourão 2018).

Following is the most immediate constraining and enabling structure, or routines, within which the individual operates, labeled as the routines level (Giddens 1979; Reich 2014; Shoemaker and Reese 2014). While radio workers claim adherence to journalistic norms, routine practices condition the availability of quality news content. According to Carpenter (2008), these constraints affect professional journalists working in media organizations and not citizen journalists. Finally, at the center, at the micro-level, lies the individual communicator whose personal and professional characteristics impact content (Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011; Reese 2001).

*Impact of Federal Communications Commission Policies
on Puerto Rican Radio*

Today, the radio business is a multi-platform marketing operation designed to attract listeners to the broadcast station and a repackaged and recycled content (Pierce and Potter 2012) through websites, social media, online streaming, podcasts, etc. However, a combination of technological, economic, and policy transformations contributed to a rising interest in information radio in the last two decades of the 20th century. In the 1980s, broadcasters felt free to engage in controversial topics when the Fairness Doctrine, an FCC policy that required radio stations to cover all sides of public issues, fell prey to the deregulation efforts under President Ronald Reagan's administration. A massive migration of music content to the FM band put financial pressures on information radio stations in the AM band, which risked airing syndicated talk personalities with hard-lined and biased political opinions (Pierce and Potter 2012).

The 1996 Telecommunications Act allowed media companies to consolidate radio station ownership as it raised the cap on the number of stations they could own nationally (Albarrán 2004; Bednarski 2003; Drushel 1998; Oxenford 2011). Spanish-language media companies in the United States benefited from this policy. Univision Radio runs one of the largest Latino radiobroadcast networks in audience and delivery with 62 stations in leading Hispanic Markets.² Similarly, the Spanish Broadcasting System operates 27 radio stations³ (Nuñez 2006; Serratore 2004). Yet, at the local level, owners are limited in the number of stations they can own depending on the number of signals available in that market. Considering news/talk formats are one of the most expensive to operate and maintain, consolidation enabled radio to become financially stable at the expense of reducing personnel to generate budgetary efficiencies (Albarrán 2004).

The overall process of deregulation and digitalization of radio in the United States has brought about an increase in the offer of talk show formats (Ekstrom 2011) across a wide array of communication technology platforms. In general, audio content (news, talk, music, and sports) has continued to rise for terrestrial, online, and satellite radio in the United States (Ross 2016; Shearer 2017; Vogt 2016). For the past 15 years, commercial radio network has increased the politics talk content in

² Univision owns two radio stations in Puerto Rico: WKAQ 580 AM and KQ 105 FM.

³ The Spanish Broadcasting System (SBS) owns four radio stations in Puerto Rico: *La Mega* 106.9, *La Nueva* 94, *Z93*, and *Estereotempo*.

Puerto Rico (Acosta Lesprier 2008; Brugueras 2015; Estrada Resto 2002; Lalo 2016; El Nuevo Día 1997, 2003; Primera Hora 2009, 2011b, 2011a; Santiago Caballero 2004; Torres Torres 2017a; Valle 2002). Politics talk discusses current issues at the local, state, national, and international levels (Eastman and Ferguson 2013). Thus, public affairs issues become a commodity in information radio as content in political commentary shows rest on events that transpire in the political arena.

Consistent with this notion, Subervi (2016) adds that Puerto Rico is the jurisdiction where more political news and commentary programs are broadcasted. The content of information radio is highly politicized, and the discussion focuses mostly on the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States (Sabes Turmo 2005). Nearly during the 2016 election cycle, Puerto Rican radio networks purposely increased the partisan content as a strategy to raise their audience base (Rodríguez-Cotto 2016b). Accordingly, in the interest of fairness and balance (Eastman and Ferguson 2013), information radio stations include programs with spokespersons identified with the dominant political ideologies who analyze the latest issues: pro-statehood, pro-free associated state, and sometimes pro-independence (Lalo 2016; Sabes Turmo 2005).

For years, Puerto Rican information radio stations have effectively downsized their news staff (Rodríguez-Cotto 2017) due to economic pressures associated with the production costs of maintaining a newscast instead of opinion programming. AM radio stations seldom conduct investigative reporting while broadcasting the same volume of hours as to when they had fully staffed newsrooms (Rodríguez-Cotto 2017b; Torres Torres 2017b). Content production relies on excerpts from political commentary programs. In respect thereof, Berry and Sobieraj (2014) conducted a quantitative content analysis of the most popular political commentary talk radio programs in the United States and found that in 90% of these radio shows, the outrage was “not part of the content, but the content” (5).

Undeniably, the social uses of information and media enhance civic engagement (Tufté 2014). Yet, changes in FCC policy regarding ownership of radio stations, organizational pressures, and ever-changing technological challenges have affected radio, both economically and in the way it produces content. Considering the circumstances mentioned above, I pose the following hypothesis, and research question:

H 1: Radio in Puerto Rico has seen a decline in news, and an increase in talk shows over time.

RQ 1: How do ownership and financial structures at the media organization-level force information radio content change?

Methods

This study's base population is 35 AM stations in Puerto Rico that broadcast under the news/talk format and are listed by the Audio Division of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). I verified the list with <radiostationworld.com>, a search engine that catalogs radio stations according to format (Lacy et al. 2013; Wu 2017). First of all, to ascertain changes in information radio content, a compilation of the programming grids of WKAQ 580-Univision, NotiUno, and Radio Isla in General Election years 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 was executed. The information was acquired visiting the station's web sites in the referenced years using the Internet Archive's Way Back Machine available at <<http://archive.org/web/>>. I verified gaps in the information through in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with radio workers. The data was then organized in a spreadsheet by radio station call letters, year, program duration, program schedule, program name, program host, and program type (Radio Network Programming Grids are available upon request).

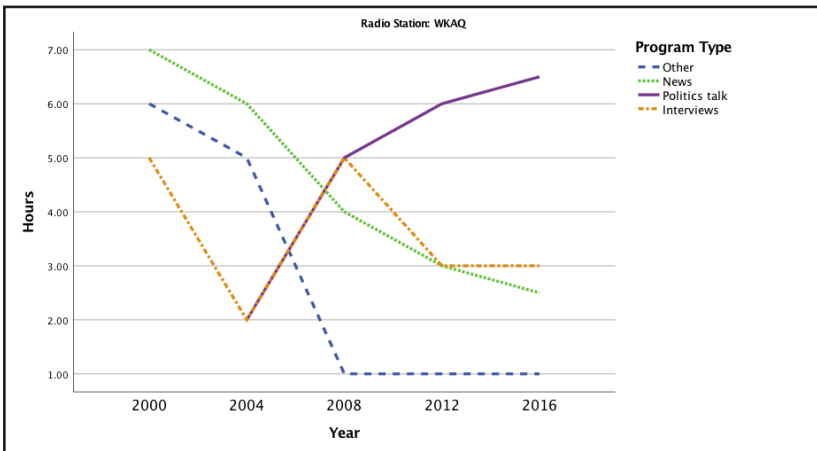
Secondly, for the in-depth semi-structured interviews, I selected San Juan based-radio networks *WKAQ 580-Univision Radio*, *WUNO 630-Uno Radio Group*, *Cadena Radio Isla 1320-Media Power Group*, and *Cadena WAPA Radio 680* that broadcast island-wide. *WPAB 550* in Ponce that broadcasts to a broad and loyal audience in the southern part of the island; and Mayagüez-based *WPRA 990* and *WKJB 710*, which serve audiences on the west coast, are part of the sample. Data were collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with radio station managers, producers, and journalists. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed and translated from Spanish to English for analysis. These lasted 25-80 minutes.

I used a purposive and convenience sampling approach to select radio personnel. Since I worked as a television news producer, I chose Radio workers within my professional network. Initial contacts referred to additional names of potential interviewees following a snowball process. A total of 16 radio station managers, producers, and journalists collaborated with the study. Semi-structured interviews lightly followed questions aligned with Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) Hierarchical Model of Influences. This approach facilitates understanding of content production in information radio, focusing on the organizational level's influences. In this instance, the relationship between the radio station's economic goals, editorial policy, and an organizational structure that assigns distinct values and roles to newsrooms and journalists, politics talk programs, and their hosts ultimately shapes how and who presents content on air.

Findings

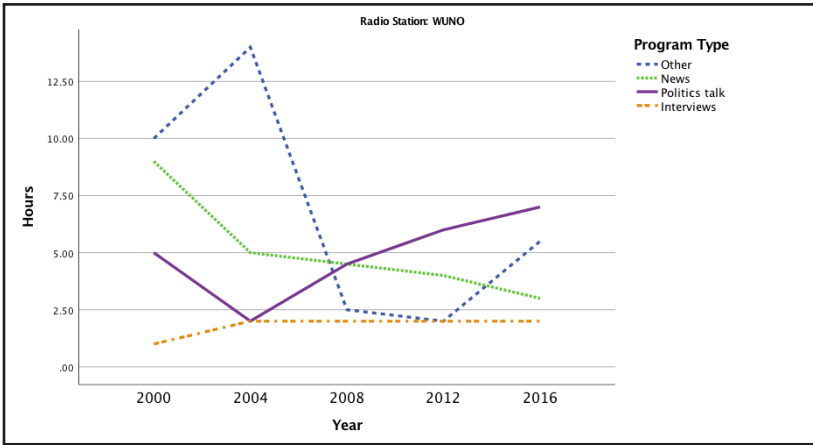
Hypothesis 1 postulated that Puerto Rican radio had seen a decline in news, and an increase in talk shows over time. An analysis of programming grids of the three major commercial radio networks, WKAQ 580-Univision, NotiUno, and Radio Isla from 2000-2016, supports this hypothesis. The trend is seen more clearly in WKAQ 580 programming. In 2000, Puerto Rico’s first radio station broadcasted a morning, midday, and afternoon newscasts and no politics talk shows from Monday through Friday. With time politics talk shows increased exposure, by 2016, WKAQ 580 offered various political commentary programs and only one newscast during the morning (See Fig. 3). Similarly, newscasts in competing station NotiUno have declined, and politics talk shows increased (See Fig. 4). In Radio Isla, newscasts and politics talk shows had equal airtime when the station started broadcasting in 2004; however, later politics talk shows maintained primacy (See Fig. 5).

Figure 3: WKAQ-Univision Programs 2000-2016



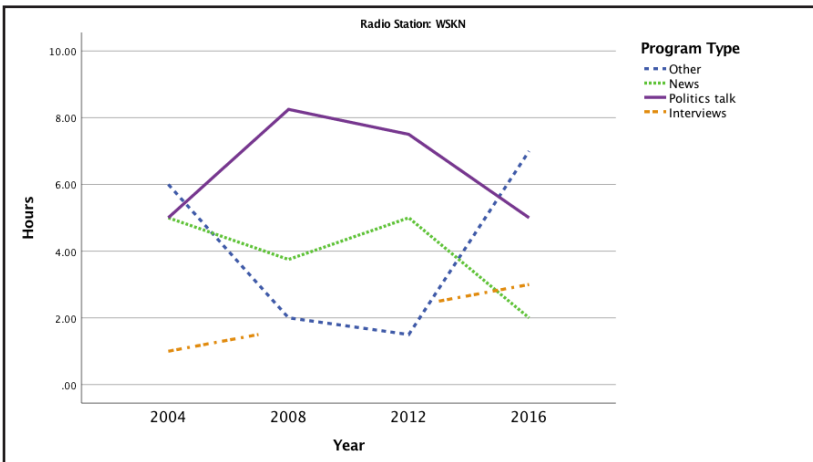
Hours per programming type from 2000-2016 for commercial radio network *WKAQ-Univision Radio*. Their hybrid nature interview programs, which discuss the news of the day with newsmakers, government officials, politicians, and political commentators one-on-one or in a panel, were coded separately from news and politics talk shows. The ‘Other’ category includes formats such as entertainment, sports, call-in, health/help, and faith talk shows.

Figure 4: NotiUno Programs 2000-2016



Hours per programming type from 2000-2016 for commercial radio network *NotiUno*.

Figure 5: Radio Isla Programs 2004-2016



Hours per programming type from 2004-2016 for commercial radio network *Cadena Radio Isla*. Unlike *WKAQ-Univision Radio* and *NotiUno*, this station began broadcasting in 2004.

Turning to the in-depth interviews, research question 1 inquired about the forces that caused changes in information radio content in Puerto Rico. Drawing from the Hierarchy of Influences Model, this section discusses how pressures at the media organization level (organizational structure, editorial, economic) have a more significant influence on content. The radio stations as businesses value news and politics talk programs in terms of financial gain. Furthermore, economic goals

and editorial policy assign distinct roles to journalists and politics talk program hosts, ultimately shaping how and who presents content on air.

Organizational structure

With one exception, stations that are the objects of this study are family businesses. According to ownership records in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), WAPA Radio is the largest radio network with six stations across the island.⁴ It is a family business headed by Cuban exile Wifredo G. Blanco Pi and Jorge Blanco Galdó. The broadcasters have a tight grip on management, as Blanco Galdó is Programming and News Director and engineer. The station focuses only on the news:

This station does not have analysts, beyond some little programs here and there in the afternoon and a program one [the owner] hosts. Analysts are not paid—they are invited. Where you hear the news all the time, information all the time is in this station. Here they cut ads to broadcast news. In other stations where I have worked, they cut news because they have to broadcast ads. In this station, the news is first. (1, Journalist, WAPA).

Uno Radio Group is a Puerto Rican firm that owns news/talk and FM music stations.⁵ As it appears in FCC records, the Soto family runs the business under ARSO Radio Corporation (Uno Radio Group 2012). NotiUno's main studios are in San Juan. Local stations in Mayagüez (WORA 760) and Ponce (WPRP 910) may broadcast their programming and sell their commercial spots catered to their audience. Contrary to WAPA, Uno Radio has a set organizational structure, "I started as an engineer, but today I'm Senior Executive. I work more frequently with the technical aspects, the sales and accounting departments, and the programming directors. The programming directors are the ones in charge of each station" (Senior Executive, UNO Radio Group).

Media Power Group owns Cadena Radio Isla, a Puerto Rican network comprised of three stations.⁶ But, another five stations hold a membership contract with Cadena Radio Isla, amplifying its broadcast range.

⁴ WAPA Radio network stations are located in San Juan (WAPA 680), Arecibo (WMIA 1070), Guayama (WXRf 1590), Mayagüez (WTIL 1300), Morovis (WVOZ 1580), and Ponce (WISO 1260).

⁵ UNO Radio network stations are news/talk NotiUno (WUNO 630), as well as FM music stations Cadena SaSoul (WRIO 100.1), Fidelity 95.7 (WFDT 100.5), and Hot 102 (WMIO 102.3).

⁶ Radio Isla network stations are San Juan (WSKN 1320), Cayey (WLEY 1080), and Yauco (WKFE 1550).

This is the status of another local station considered in this study. WKJB 710 in Mayagüez, consistent with FCC records, belongs to Radio Station WKJB AM-FM, Incorporated broadcasts some content from Radio Isla.

PAB 550, a news/talk station in Ponce, is also a family business: Alfonso Giménez Porrata is the owner, while his son, Alfonso Giménez Lucchetti, is the manager of *WPAB Incorporated*. Although its signal covers all of Puerto Rico, they cater to audiences in Ponce and neighboring towns. WPAB management keeps a distance from corporate media's way of operating as evidenced in the content analysis results where politics talk shows supersede newscasts:

There is a difference between corporate media and those who are not. All media can belong to a corporation that represents them in the Department of State. Now, referring to a corporation with other businesses that are not information businesses with different interests: financial interests in commercial franchises such as restaurants, construction companies, advertising, entertainment, and other interests outside of Puerto Rico. That is what I mean by corporate media. [...] These corporate media that operate from San Juan prioritize opinions, advance their agenda opinions, and advance their agendas. (News Department Director, WPAB)

Finally, the largest Spanish-language broadcast group in the United States, Univision Communications Inc., owns television, AM and FM stations.⁷ According to FCC records, Univision is licensed under WLII/WSUR License Partnership. News/talk radio station WKAQ 580 is the most popular with a clear advantage in audience ratings over its AM and FM competitors (Radio Online: The Industry's Front Page 2017).

While journalists and news department directors claim they have the freedom to practice journalism, management revealed a certain level of interference. "In the content? 100%. Anything that happens, the lawsuit will be on our behalf. We're always supervising, always monitoring what is going on. No program goes to air unless it has our blessing and that of the sales department" (Senior Executive, NotiUno).

Similarly, NotiUno's Programming Director intervenes in the News Department. "If I listened to the newscast and maybe saw, 'Look we have too much politics' or 'Every day, we have the same sources,' then I stepped in. 'Let's vary a bit.' I sort of guided them, but this didn't happen frequently."

⁷ Univisions network stations are WLII (Tele Once) in San Juan, WSUR (Channel 9) in Ponce, FM radio station KQ 105 (WKAQ 104.5), and AM radio stations WKAQ 580 in San Juan, WYEL 600 in Mayagüez, and WUKO 1420 in Ponce (Santiago Caballero 2004).

Editorial Policy

Table 1: Summary of Station Call Letters, Names, Ownership, and Status

Station Call Letters	Station Name	Owner	Political leaning	Political Status Preference
WAPA	WAPA Radio	Wilfredo Blanco Pi	Right	Statehood
WUNO	NotiUno 630	Arso Radio Corporation	Right	Statehood/ Free-Associated-State
WSKN	Radio Isla 1320	Media Power Group, Inc.	Center	Free-Associated-State
WKAQ	WKAQ 580	Univision	Right	Statehood/ Free-Associated-State
WPAB	PAB 550	WPAB, Inc.	Left	Independence

WAPA Radio. WAPA Radio has a right-wing, pro-statehood, editorial line (Rodríguez-Cotto 2016a). The station logo showcases a United States flag to highlight its allegiance. Also, the station plays the national anthem when the clock strikes noon. In his program “Dándole Casco al Tema,” which airs from Monday through Friday at 8:30 am, station owner Wilfredo Blanco Pi openly promotes statehood and comments on public issues using that lens. However, they have lost the support of the *Partido Nuevo Progresista* that supports annexation:

They [WAPA Radio] have fallen into an obsessive fanaticism. People have lost respect for them. They have fallen into absurd ideas such that it is a sin to wave the Puerto Rican flag after hurricane María, that sort of stuff. Even the party ignores them (1, Journalist, WAPA).

NotiUno. Likewise, NotiUno holds a right-wing editorial line. The opinion programming showcases pro-statehood and pro-free-associated state voices. NotiUno considers itself an advocate of the people and often employs an aggressive style when holding government officials accountable in politics talk shows and newscasts (Primera Hora 2010). Nonetheless, Puerto Ricans perceive NotiUno as pro-statehood, and journalists have a hard time distancing their work from that status ideology: “Well everyone knows that NotiUno has an open right-wing editorial line. Sometimes people will say, ‘Those journalists are statehooders.’ No, it’s not the journalists; it’s the media organization or UNO Radio, not the journalists” (News Department Director).

Radio Isla. Radio Isla’s Senior Executive claims the station upholds a liberal editorial line. In this case, opinion programs highlight pro-free-associated state and pro-independence voices. Although openly tied to

the *Partido Popular Democrático*, management often issues editorials in favor of figures who represent autonomy or separation from the United States.

We assumed a position about Óscar López Rivera. Years ago, we were the first station to support the movement to release Óscar López Rivera, knowing that it could negatively affect. It is one of the few instances when I have taken a stance as [Senior Executive]. Later, other media followed. [...] When Filiberto Ojeda was assassinated, we also spoke out. [...] When we see acts of injustice and violence... for example, now with Hurricane María, I aired an editorial calling to join the Governor, to give him space, in other words, to lay politics aside. (Senior Executive, Radio Isla)

Univision Radio. Radio workers refrained from expanding on WKAQ's editorial line, yet generally, Univision leans to the right, openly criticizing left-leaning governments in Latin America and the Caribbean (Fox 1996). Politics talk show host on Univision Radio either favor Puerto Rico's current status or statehood and lean to the right.

WPAB. Local station WPAB 550 upholds a liberal ideology and is pro-independence. One Senior Executive revealed having participated genuinely in recent *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* conventions after receiving an invitation: "Everyone knows I'm *independentista*. [...] We're liberal, nationalists, who defend Puerto Ricanness" (Senior Executive, WPAB). This station's smaller opinion programming is left-leaning.

Editorial policy influences more saliently politics talk show content. For instance, news/talk radio networks Univision Radio and NotiUno offer only pro-statehood and pro-free-associated state commentary relegating pro-independence voices.

Before three people were talking from three different political perspectives, we saw this as a distraction. In our opinion, devoting 33 percent of airtime to something that represents 2 percent of voters... if we think about ratings, I'm boring my audience with that participation because, in the end, it is all about appealing to audiences. So, we focused on the two main [status ideologies], and the discussions were more dynamic because sometimes they would turn into a two-to-one, and it was not the [pro-free-associated state]. Indeed, it has paid off. (Senior Executive, UNO Radio Group)

Media in Puerto Rico are anti-independence, pro-establishment and pro-what we have, "status quo." That anti-independence is masked as an anti-PIP [Spanish acronym for the Puerto Rican Independence Party]. Any comment towards independentism they attack the PIP, "That they do this or do that is not democratic," because the PIP is the only organized party. (2, Journalist, WAPA)

On the other hand, WPAB programming is distant from the news and talk show formula that its competitors embraced. Today, WPAB offers few and far between politics talk programs and has banned politicians who oppose their political inclination. In tune with its pro-independence editorial line, the station often takes a stance on public issues.

That stuff about objectivity... that is to say, we assume a position. We were against the U.S. Navy.⁸ We issued editorials and conducted news coverage. We are against the coal ashes.⁹ (**Interviewer: Do you publish editorials to establish the station's stance regarding those topics?**) For example, regarding the coal ashes, we did not issue an editorial per se, but the [lean of the] coverage is straightforward. And that stuff about looking for the other side... scientists have said it is toxic. I'm not granting equal airtime to AES, so they can tell the compounds found in there are in a Centrum vitamin because that would be an insult to people's intelligence. (Senior Executive, WPAB)

Neither the station nor I pick people thinking about ideological balance. Granted, here I have some *independentistas*, but am I forced to look for an *estadolibrista* and a statehooder? That is not the criteria here. It's topics and people who are capable of discussing them... Probably, most people think they are all *independentistas*. (News Department Director, WPAB)

Economic

Whether it is news or opinion, information is a commodity; as a manager for WKAQ acknowledges: "Primetime is the cash register of any radio business because it is where we generate money... during the morning driving time" (News and Content Director, WKAQ). His counterpart in Radio Isla agrees: "This is a rating business. There is even a careful analysis of what an ad will cost per thousand population. In other words, so many people are listening, so the ad cost so much per thousand population" (News Director, Radio Isla).

Puerto Rico's financial bankruptcy and the rise of alternative media have combined with decreasing advertising revenue in the Radio Industry. While 20 years ago, the radio generated \$90 million, by 2016, profits had dropped to \$60 million (Rivera Cruz 2017). Additionally, Puerto

⁸ The death of civilian security guard David Sanes in Vieques during a bombing exercise in 1999 (The Associated Press 1999) triggered calls for the exit of the US Navy from different sectors of the civil society and the Puerto Rican Government. The Navy used Vieques for target practice during 60 years (Stanchich 2013).

⁹ Residents of the southern town of Peñuelas demand the closing of AES coal-fired power plant and stop dumping toxic coal ash (Gottesdiender 2017).

Rican broadcasters face rising operational costs that have forced reductions in personnel and their salaries (Torres Torres 2017b). Nonetheless, there is a blatant difference between what journalists and politics talk show hosts earn. “In general, it is \$8.00 per hour for a reporter. The producer position pays a little more” (News Department Director, NotiUno). A veteran radio journalist was outraged by how much more politics talk show hosts earned while a news department director recognized there is a lack of investment in news.

It is not cheaper. Speaking an hour a day, stations pay these lawyers what a journalist only dreams of making in a month. Journalists are paid poverty wages, while analysts earn two or three thousand dollars a month [...]. We, journalists, make much less, working eight, nine, and ten hours a day. (1, Journalists, WAPA)

Not that analysts cease to exist; I think the investment made in the analysis is disproportionate, and the selection we make of those analysts is not always the best. It is excessive with respect to the number of journalists hired, what they get paid, and the availability of resources to conduct investigative journalism. (News Department Director, Radio Isla).

Since information is a commodity, the prime criteria for selecting the content is ratings and revenue.

When the moment comes to create a program and see what we are going to do, we consider how popular it will be with audiences. We design programming seeking ratings in the moment of truth. (Senior Executive, UNO Radio Group)

Another element that guarantees the audience’s demand is satisfied, that there is financial revenue, and that it is cost-effective, and that is polarization. We have discovered that audiences show great interest in polarizing content. So, our offer is geared to generating polarizing content. That’s what we talked about earlier, problematizing, and explaining social phenomena. We look for content that is so extreme that it wakes the audience’s interest. (News and Content Director, WKAQ)

Within the economic strain context, the current advertising economic model forces radio to depend on municipal and state government publicity (Torres Torres 2017b). This phenomenon is common in Latin America. Financial dependence on government is both open and covert, the latter occurring in countries where airtime commercialization for electoral campaigning has been regulated (Cobos 2017; Espino Sánchez 2016; Galarza Molina 2014). In Central America, where most ads come from the government, media owners fear critical journalistic reports might cause a loss of financing (Rockwell and Jonus 2001). Furthermore, elites and government forces that control advertising threaten

journalists' economic stability (Rockwell and Jonus 2001). This financing model keeps low-paid workers encouraging constant personnel turnover that results in a lack of monitorial journalism (Rockwell and Jonus 2001). Whereas it is uncertain if economic interests drive the content, politicians and their surrogates gain more prominence, and the amount of news content decreases (Rodríguez-Cotto 2017b, 2017d). Censorship has arisen,

[s]tatements restrict the information that questions or challenges the government's discourse about how they handle the hurricane [María], and that takes advertising. If I don't have ads, I have to maintain a station, so I will limit the questioning... the information that questions the government's discourse. Since there are ads from the Department of Health, the Department of Social Services, the Power Authority, what they are doing is that they are overriding the news department's ability to be critical. (2, Journalists, WAPA)

That's the business, no? If you have a program in which [an insurance company] has scheduled to run an ad, you will not put [the insurance company] down. Undoubtedly, advertising [is essential] in any media organization, print, radio, or television, because it is a business... and you do not want that sponsor to leave. But that does not mean that you don't cover topics news or opinion-wise. If there is a problem, you will not conceal it; you will not hide it. You will have some considerations in the sense that you will invite the person, or you will call him or her beforehand, something like that. But that they buy an ad space does not make them immune. (Senior Executive, Radio Isla)

Local station WPAB claims to buffer the influence of ads on the content. Nonetheless, the pressure imposed by a financial interest is present, 'as commercial media, we rely on advertising and sponsors'. (News Department Director, WPAB)

There is a firewall between the sales and news departments. [...] [Someone from the news department] asks, 'I'm looking for someone to discuss this health topic.' And I say, 'why don't you call this person who works in a medical group and knows the subject very well?' They say, 'that's a great idea.' Then I say, 'hold on one moment. Let me check with sales because they were going to sell him some airtime. You talk to him first, and after he says he is available, we sell him the airtime, so he doesn't mistake his participation as paid. (Senior Executive, WPAB)

Discussion, conclusion, and limitations

Pressures at all levels impact news/talk radio station content, but particularly at the media organization level. Media corporations own some radio stations in Puerto Rico. Others are family businesses and keep executive positions within relatives. Irrespective of ownership,

proprietors dictate and enforce editorial policy upon newsroom administrators, impelling the producers (Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011) and finally program hosts and journalists. For instance, the organizational chart in WAPA Radio enforces and legitimizes the Blanco family's authority, whose primary goal is to advance the cause for statehood (Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011; Rodríguez-Cotto 2016a). This station enforces a right-wing conservative editorial line that inevitably shapes which stories are considered newsworthy, how they are prioritized, and how they are framed (Reese 2001; Rodríguez 2018).

Similarly, politics talk shows in WKAQ 580 (Univision Radio) and NotiUno offer only pro-statehood and pro-free-associated state commentary relegating pro-independence voices in politics talk shows. On the other side of the ideological spectrum, local station WPAB has banned some pro-statehood politicians from their programming and news coverage because their editorial line is liberal and left-leaning.

Finances are another factor that affects content. Like in the United States, the primary revenue source for Puerto Rican Radio stations is advertising. Accordingly, this economic Model compels radio to rely on municipal and state government publicity (Torres Torres 2017b). Radio workers recognized government officials threatened to cancel or terminated advertising when the stations broadcasted damaging or unsympathetic information. This practice became public during the 1990s when then-Governor Pedro Rosselló canceled \$4.5 million worth in advertisements to a daily newspaper following a report that highlighted a corruption scandal (Navarro 1997; Quintero 2014). The government continues spending millions of dollars on advertising. In 2017, agencies and public corporations spent over \$15 million on advertising, public relations, and events (López Alicea 2017). As long as the advertising model remains the primary source of revenue, information may be subject to financial pressures. Although Puerto Rican radio stations have increased their presence on the Internet through online streaming and social media, stations have yet to transform the Internet into another revenue (Albarrán 2004). Thereon, a Senior Executive from UNO Radio Group, recognized their online presence is growing; however, it only represents 12 percent of the dollar spent on overall media advertising.

Administrators in Radio Isla and Univision Radio confirmed radio is a rating business. News and talk formats represent a large percentage of a station's operational costs, as they need more staff, equipment, and resources (Albarrán 2004) than other radio formats. Fueled by Puerto Rico's financial bankruptcy, broadcasters have been forced to reduce their news departments. Still, most radio workers agree the difference between what journalists and politics talk show hosts make is abysmal. Whereas most radio technicians, production and news personnel income

has not risen in more than a decade, political commentators increase in number and wages (Rodríguez-Cotto 2017b). In this respect, NotiUno's news department director expressed concern about the constant turnover in personnel. Many reporters move on to work for government agencies and politicians who offer a more competitive salary.

Insofar as information is a product, the main criteria to select the content are ratings and revenue; thus, political commentary has precedence. Extant literature shows a positive relationship between a media organization's investment in newsrooms, quality content, and profits (Chen, Thorson and Lacy 2005; Lacy 2000). For instance, WAPA Radio's listenership and advertising increased 300 percent in the aftermath of Hurricane María (Bell 2017) because it was the only media available for a population of 3.4 million. An army of experienced journalists volunteered to cover the cyclone for WAPA Radio (Lugo 2018; Torres 2017). According to two journalists interviewed for this study, senior management did not recognize the potential of having high-quality content by investing in news, and the project did not continue.

Conversely, between pre and post-María, Radio Isla's commercial breaks doubled in length from four to eight minutes (Bell 2017). Although Radio Isla was the station with more political talk shows between 2004 and 2016, the management has increased journalist-led programs after this experience. Future research should examine how news investment relates to listenership and advertising revenue in the Puerto Rican media context.

This study's findings are relevant to Puerto Rico information radio and cannot be generalized because of the small sample size for the media workers' interviews. However, one of the motivations to conduct this study was the shrinking of traditional media spaces to practice journalism in Puerto Rico. In the last decade, 35 media organizations have closed, leaving 1,200 communications professionals without a job (Rodríguez-Cotto 2017b). Replacing journalists with non-communication professionals to opine on the day's news adds to the global media credibility crisis (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2009) because commentators with ties to economic and partisan interests push their agendas into the public sphere.

There is a need for a commentary that considers solutions to problems that affect wide-ranging sectors of Puerto Rican society. Journalists play a crucial role in giving a voice to historically marginalized groups and holding power accountable to the public. While mainstream news media sidelines journalists, more reporters take advantage of mobile and online platforms to practice investigative and advocacy journalism that exposes government mismanagement and corruption at the people's expense. However, the influences outlined by Shoemaker and Reese

(2014) in the Hierarchy of Influences Model exert pressure in traditional and digital, corporate, and entrepreneurial media outlets' content. These new forms of journalism cannot settle on just disseminating information but must practice an active advocacy role that caters to their audiences' needs and challenges the status quo.

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APPENDIX
RADIO WORKER INTERVIEWEE LIST

Call Letters	Station Name	Ownership	Broadcast Range	Position	Code
WAPA	WAPA Radio	Wilfredo Blanco Pi	Puerto Rico	Journalist	1
WAPA	WAPA Radio	Wilfredo Blanco Pi	Puerto Rico	Journalist	2
WKAQ	Univision Radio	WLII/WSUR LICENSE PARTNERSHIP	Puerto Rico	News & Content Director	3
WKAQ	Univision Radio	WLII/WSUR LICENSE PARTNERSHIP	Puerto Rico	Producer	4
WKAQ	Univision Radio	WLII/WSUR LICENSE PARTNERSHIP	Puerto Rico	Announcer	5
WSKN	Cadena Radio Isla	Media Power Group	Puerto Rico	Senior Executive	6
WAPA	Cadena Radio Isla	Media Power Group	Puerto Rico	News Department Director	7
WSKN	Cadena Radio Isla	Media Power Group	Puerto Rico	Host	8
WSKN	Cadena Radio Isla	Media Power Group	Puerto Rico	Journalist	9
WUNO	NotiUno	Arso Radio Corporation	Puerto Rico	Senior Executive	10
WUNO	NotiUno	Arso Radio Corporation	Puerto Rico	Programing Director	11
WUNO	NotiUno	Arso Radio Corporation	Puerto Rico	News Department Director	12
WPAB	PAB 550	WPAB, Inc.	Ponce	Senior Executive	13
WPAB	PAB 550	WPAB, Inc.	Ponce	News Department Director	14
WPRA	La Primera	WPRA, Inc.	Mayagüez	Host	15
WKJB	Cadena Radio Isla	Radio Station WKJB AM-FM, Inc.	Mayagüez	Journalist	16

