

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 041

UD 017 399

AUTHOR Allen, Richard L.; Fielby, William T.
 TITLE Blacks' Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Television.
 INSTITUTION Wisconsin Univ., Madison. Inst. for Research on Poverty.
 SPONS AGENCY National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C. RANN Program.
 PUB DATE Aug 77
 GRANT RANN-NSF-01757
 NOTE 34p.; Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism (Madison, Wisconsin, August 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; *Black Attitudes; *Blacks; Demography; *Media Research; Socioeconomic Status; *Television Research; *Television Viewing

ABSTRACT

This study explores differences among black adults in their attitudes and behavior towards television and the social processes which determine these differences. A recursive structural equation model was employed to interpret patterns of direct and indirect effects among a set of variables representing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, general and race-related attitudes, television exposure, preference, and evaluation. Results indicate that variation in attitudes and behaviors toward television (especially those related to perceived bias and perceived bad points of black-oriented situation comedies) is systematically related to differences among black adults in their exposure to the medium, subjective orientations, and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. One of the most powerful predictors in the model was education. A relationship was detected between education and every television attitude and behavior, save choice of black-oriented shows as favorite. The effects of education on viewing selectively, public affairs viewing, perception of bias in television, and evaluation of one kind of black-oriented programming suggest that differences among blacks in the intellectual climate surrounding television attitudes and behavior may contribute substantially to differences among blacks in attitudes and behaviors. (Author/AM)

 * Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
 * materials not available from other sources, ERIC makes every effort *
 * to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
 * reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
 * of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
 * via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
 * responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
 * supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

ED145041

Blacks' Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Television

Richard L. Allen
Stanford Research Institute

William T. Bielby
Institute for Research on Poverty

August 1977

Presented to the Association for Education in Journalism
Madison, Wisconsin, August 1977

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Institute for
Research on Poverty*
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM

6D017399

This study was supported by a grant from RANN-NSF (No. 01757) to the Cablecommunication Resource Center, Mr. William Wright, principal investigator, and in part by funds granted to the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare pursuant to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Mr. Wright's thoughtful and unselfish assistance to the authors in the completion of this study is greatly appreciated. Also providing valuable support were Beverly Parks, Steven Millner, Olivia Frazier, Joyce Reeves, Javon Jackson, Carl Word, Doug Fuchs, and Lee Ruggels.

ABSTRACT

Most studies that examine attitudes and behavior of blacks toward mass media emphasize the differences between their attitudes and behaviors and those of whites. Such studies implicitly assume a relatively homogeneous black perspective. In contrast, this study explores differences among black adults in their attitudes and behavior towards television and the social processes accounting for these differences. A recursive structural equation model was employed to interpret patterns of direct and indirect effects among a set of variables representing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, general and race-related attitudes, television exposure, preference, and evaluation. Results indicate that variation in attitudes and behaviors toward television (especially those related to perceived bias and perceived bad points of black-oriented situation comedies) is systematically related to differences among black adults in their exposure to the medium, subjective orientations, and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Overall, this study exemplifies the importance of taking into account the diversity within the black community.

Blacks' Attitudes and Behavior Toward Television

Recent analyses of public opinion among blacks is informed by an implicit assumption of a relatively homogeneous black perspective (Barger, 1973). That is, it is assumed that most blacks have similar views on most political and social issues. Moreover, on issues related to race, there has been a tendency within social science literature to give primary attention to the thought processes of whites. Schuman and Hatchett (1974) maintain that the basis for this position may be traced to the idea expressed by Myrdal (1964) that the racial problem in the U.S. is basically a white man's problem; consequently, any solution to the problem resides in understanding whites. While this premise has considerable merit, we believe that black attitudes, beliefs, and action warrant the same descriptive and analytic attention as those of whites if we are to better understand the relationships between public opinion, mass media, and race relations in the U.S. (cf. Schuman and Hatchett, 1974 for a similar view). Consequently, the purpose of our paper is to fill the gap in past research by specifying the factors that lead to differences in attitudes and behaviors toward television among blacks. A second purpose is to highlight the way in which orientations (not only those related to race) may influence or modify the factors that lead to these attitudes and behaviors.

1. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The Kerner Commission Report (1968) pointed out that this country has always existed as two separate and unequal societies--one black and one white. This characterization was attributed to all the institutions

within the society, including the mass media. On the other hand, the Report described the media as one institution in society equipped to bridge these two societies. There has not been, however, an adequate correspondence between potential and performance (Baker and Ball, 1969; Lyle, 1967). This suspect performance has come under serious attack with respect to the presentation of blacks (Clark, 1969; Dominick and Greenberg, 1970).

Since the media have been credited with intensifying social disturbances in the black community (Kerner, 1968; Allen, 1968), lowering blacks' self-esteem (Clark, 1972), and teaching blacks to be uncompromising in the quest for equal rights (Hayakawa, 1968), it would seem to be important to investigate the relationships between attitude, behavior, and media use among blacks. Nonetheless, this has typically not been done. The media have been primarily treated as independent or explanatory variables. Seldom have the mass media been cited as the problematic issue. Kassarian (1973) has suggested that this tendency has persisted because, until recently, blacks have not been viewed as interpreters of mass media.

Research on blacks' media attitudes and behavior has emphasized black-white comparisons. Greenberg and associates (1967; 1969, 1970a) have shown that poor blacks view more television than poor whites. Carey (1966) reported that blacks and whites exhibited similarities in what shows are liked least and what constitutes a bad show, which he speculated to be due to differences in preferred viewing times. More recent studies have been able to capitalize on the presentation of blacks on television. Greenberg et al. (1970b) found that blacks more often than whites listed as the most liked shows those which featured a black actor or actress.

Although our knowledge of blacks' media attitudes and behaviors are enhanced by these comparative studies, only a few have concentrated on blacks as a distinct group. Allen (1968) studies the relationship of media attitudes and behaviors toward four different media--television, newspapers, radio, and magazines--among black adults. He reported that blacks depend heavily on television evening news for information outside the black community, and this news was not supplemented by information from other media.

Shosteck (1969) reported that the primary sources of news about the black community were television and newspapers, in that order. Those media were used most often by high status blacks; talking to people was used most often by low status blacks. Moreover, "militant" (as compared to "less than militant") blacks were less likely to use television or newspapers as sources of black community news and were more likely to receive their news from talking to fellow blacks and through the radio, in that order. Also, militants showed a stronger interest in receiving more black-oriented programming.

Although Shosteck's findings are suggestive, the author presented percentage differences without any tests of statistical significance. It was difficult, therefore, to determine whether or not these findings were chance occurrences. Moreover, these relationships were not examined within a multivariate framework. The bivariate relationships reported may disappear in a more complex model where other relevant variables are controlled.

In brief, the available literature has been not only of limited comprehensiveness, but it has shown methodological inadequacies (Greenberg et al., 1970; Sharon, 1973-1974). Many studies have included too few blacks

4

to justify some of the comparisons between the black and nonblack populations. Moreover, these comparisons have generally failed to control for the lower socioeconomic position of blacks. For example, a frequent approach has been to compare media behavior and attitudes of a group of low status blacks to a group of whites undifferentiated on socioeconomic variables. Further, the majority of the studies have investigated a narrow range of media behavior and attitudes (Lyle, 1967; Sargent and Stempel, 1968). Finally, the studies have been almost entirely descriptive (Dervin and Greenberg, 1972).

Few studies have focused simultaneously on the relationship between various background variables and media attitudes and behaviors, and on how these relationships may operate through various orientations. We have elected to study television, as opposed to the print media, because this medium receives the greatest share of the public's free time (Baker and Ball, 1969). The study reported here examined the determinants of television attitudes and behaviors of a sample of black adults. The determinants investigated were demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and general and race-related attitudes of blacks. The media attitudes and behaviors investigated were television exposure, preferences, and evaluation. The general attitudes were termed anomie and personal control. Race-related attitudes included black identity and alienation from white society, these two categories of variables we have termed subjective orientations. Demographic and socioeconomic factors included sex, age, education, and socioeconomic status.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE PRESENT STUDY

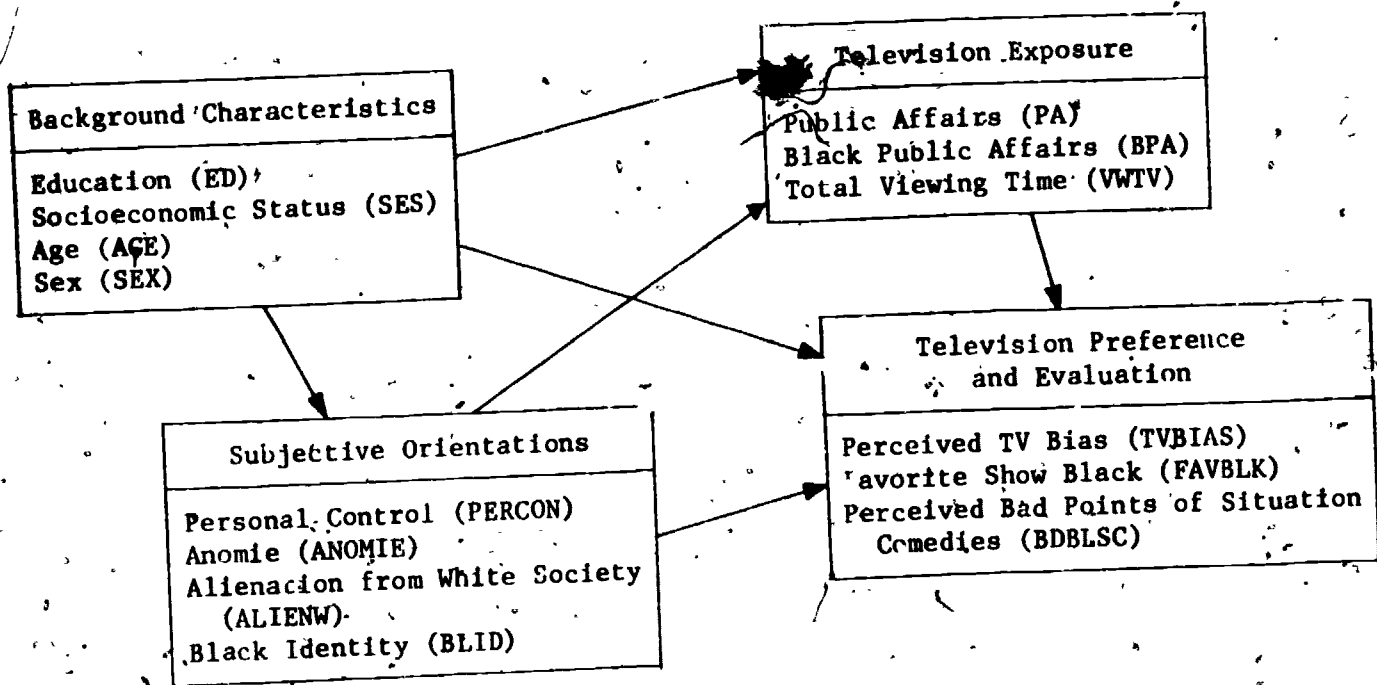
The objectives of our research project were (1) to construct a model representing the process whereby preference and evaluation of television by blacks are determined by the extent of exposure to television, general and race-related attitudes (subjective orientations) and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and (2) to substantiate empirically the relationships implied by our model.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of what we assume to be the conceptual relationships among the four categories of variables in our model. Proceeding from right to left in Figure 1, note that we assume television exposure to be predetermined with respect to television preference and evaluation. Television exposure is divided into measures of time spent with a given medium and attention to various kinds of content (public affairs and black public affairs). Past attitudes about the media certainly affect future exposure to them, but our study has been designed to detect current, and presumably transient, television preferences, perceived bias and evaluation, while controlling more stable, permanent patterns of exposure to television.²

When evaluation and effects of other variables on preference are assessed statistically, it is desirable to control exposure to television so that effects of these attitudes may be examined without the confounding effects of variation in exposure (see McLeod and Becker, 1974 for the rationale and empirical support for this approach). Consequently, exposure is presented as an independent or predetermined variable in the prediction

Figure 1. Schematic representation of conceptual relationships among black adults.



of preference and in the evaluation of television. Additionally, past empirical studies suggested that media exposure and attitudes toward the media be treated as separate domains (Clarke and Ruggels, 1970; Chaffee and McLeod, 1971).

Figure 1 also shows that we take demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as subjective orientations to be predetermined with respect to the television outcome variables. That is, television exposure and television preference, and evaluation are assumed to be influenced directly by socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and subjective orientations, and those factors indirectly influence preference and evaluation through their effect on exposure.

Race-related attitudes have been found to extend into many spheres of life not racial in manifest content (Schuman and Hatchett, 1974). Specifically, racial identity (or black identity) has been shown to be one of the more consistent predictors for a wide range of social attitudes held by blacks (Brink and Harris, 1969; Marx, 1969). Also, detailed and thorough analyses have demonstrated that "alienation from white society" is related to nonracial questions such as lack of confidence in government officials, approval of gambling and divorce, and opposition to the Vietnam War, just to name a few. Schuman and Hatchett (1974) asserted that this scale may be viewed as tapping not only black-white relationships but also the broader issue of the institutions traditionally supported by and represented by white "Middle-Americans."

Research has shown that another subjective orientation, personal control (one aspect of the internal-external concept), explains several different goals, motivations, and performance among black adults (Gurin et al., 1969). This variable, along with the race-related attitudes, is a

useful predictor of quite diverse attitudes and behaviors among blacks, and it is reasonable to assume that these variables may have an influence on the attitudes and behaviors toward a medium as prevalent as television.

Anomie has been examined as a predictor of media behavior. Singer (1973) found an inverse relationship between anomie and use of participatory media, writing letters to the editor and calling in on a radio talk show. Since television is considered a relatively nonparticipatory medium, it is reasonable to assume that this relationship operates in the reverse. That is, the greater the anomie the greater the tendency to watch television.

Finally, we assume subjective orientations are an outcome of demographic and socioeconomic background variables. A number of recent studies have found age, and to some degree education, to be related to race-related attitudes among blacks (Gurin and Epps, 1974; Schuman and Hatchett, 1974; Paige, 1970). Similarly, we expect such demographic and socioeconomic indicators of social position to influence the attitudes and behaviors of blacks toward television. While the relationship between demographic and socioeconomic background and subjective orientation is not of substantive importance in our study, incorporating it into our conceptualization allows us to examine the degree to which socioeconomic variables directly affect television variables and indirectly affect them through their influence on general and race-related attitudes.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The data used in this study were collected as part of a larger project examining a wide range of media variables within a sample of black adults from San Francisco. The data for this large project were collected over

three points in time. Data for waves 1 and 3 were used in this study. The respondents received \$5.00 for their participation in the first wave, and \$10.000 for their participation in wave three.

Sixteen contiguous census tracts in San Francisco were selected as the primary area for this survey. Each tract contained at least 20% black population according to 1970 census data. Within each census tract, specific blocks were eliminated if their population was less than 20% black. The resulting modified census tract area contained 58,537 people, of whom 34,821 (60%) were black. This represented 8.2% of the total population of San Francisco, but it included 36.2% of the black population of the entire city. Sample size was set at 600, giving an expected 360 black households (600 x .6). In each tract, the sample size was proportional to the number of blacks in the total sample area. Each sample point was drawn from a reverse telephone directory by first selecting N random numbers to specify each of the N sample points in a tract. To ensure that bias due to unlisted phones and homes without phones were eliminated, listers contacted the next housing unit (home or apartment) immediately above the address drawn from the directory.

Of the 391 personal interviews attempted, 83% were conducted in the first wave; there were 48 (12%) refusals. Nineteen (5%) were not interviewed because they had moved, were ill or had died.

On the third wave, 268 reinterviews were completed from the possible 299 (90%). Of the 25 who were not interviewed, 15 (5%) were ineligible because they had moved, were ill or deceased. There were 10 (3%) refusals. The 268 respondents reinterviewed on the third wave represented 69% of the original sample of 391.³



For this study, nine scales and indices were constructed from 45 questionnaire items. All items were forced-choice questions of various kinds. Items were sorted into indices by content; the appropriateness of the groupings was checked by calculating corrected item-total correlations.⁴ The nine scales and indices and five single items were intended to tap the following dimensions:⁵

Background Characteristics⁶

- (1) Education (ED): Respondent indicated the number of years of schooling completed.
- (2) Age (AGE). Respondent indicated age at last birthday.
- (3) Sex (SEX). By observation, the sex of the respondent was noted (male dummy coded as 1).
- (4) Socioeconomic Status (SES) was a weighted composite of occupational status, income, and perceived class standing (3 items).

Subjective Orientations⁷

- (1) Anomie (ANOMIE). Respondent indicated whether he/she agreed or disagreed with statements concerning his/her discontent with society. High scores indicate greater anomie (5 items).
- (2) Personal Control (PERCON). Respondent indicated whether he/she perceived having control over his/her life. High scores indicate greater personal control (4 items).
- (3) Black Identity (BLID). Respondent indicated on a 5-point scale the degree of agreement with statements concerning the distinctness of blacks as a group. High scores reflect greater black identity (3 items).

- (4) Alienation from White Society (ALIENW). Respondent indicated the extent to which he/she was discriminated against because of his/her race and whether things are changing in a more positive direction. High scores indicate greater alienation (6 items).

Exposure⁸

- (1) Public Affairs Viewing (PA). Respondent indicated on a 5-point scale the frequency of watching national news broadcasts, current events shows, local news broadcasts, and interview shows. High scores reflect greater public affairs viewing (4 items).
- (2) Black Public Affairs Viewing (BPA). Respondent indicated on a 5-point scale the frequency of watching a program pertaining to news about blacks. High scores reflect more black public affairs viewing (1 item).
- (3) Total Television Viewing (VWTV). Respondent indicated the amount of time spent watching television on the average day, yesterday, and the day before yesterday. These three variables were collected at two points in time. High scores indicate more time spent watching television (6 items).

Preference

- (1) Favorite Program Black (FAVBLK). Respondent indicated the three most favorite programs in order of choice. The first most favorite program was dummy coded as to whether it was a black-oriented program (1 item).

Evaluation⁹

- (1) Perception of Television Bias (TVBIAS). Respondent indicated the extent to which he/she perceived television to be biased or unbalanced against blacks. High scores indicate a greater perception of television bias (7 items).
- (2) Perceived Bad Points of Black-Oriented Situation Comedies (BDBLSC). Respondent indicated whether there were any bad points in black-oriented situation comedies (dummy coded). Higher scores indicate greater perception of bad points (3 items).

4. RESULTS

If the relationships in Figure 1 are assumed to be linear and additive, they can be represented by a series of linear equations, where each variable can be represented as a linear combination of those variables that are predetermined with respect to it. Since the model is recursive--involving no reciprocal effects among groups of variables--the coefficients of the equations can be estimated by applying ordinary least squares regression to each equation (see Alwin and Hauser, 1975).

Thus, proceeding from left to right in Figure 1, we estimate regression coefficients as follows: (1) Each of the four subjective orientation variables is regressed upon the four background variables. (2) Each television exposure variable is first regressed on the background variables and then on both the background and subjective orientation variables. The former regressions assess the total effects of demographic and socioeconomic background on media exposure, i.e., direct influences

plus those operating indirectly through general and race-related attitudes. The latter regression yields direct influences on media exposure of both groups of variables. (3) The hierarchical regression strategy is applied in a similar manner to each television preference, perceived bias, and evaluation variable--it is regressed first upon background variables to assess their total effects, then subjective orientation variables are entered, and finally exposure variables are included to assess direct influences of variables in each of the three groups (see Alwin and Hauser, 1975 for a detailed discussion of this strategy for estimating recursive structural equation models).

In order to retain a parsimonious representation of the process involved, an independent (predetermined) variable is dropped from a regression equation for a dependent variable if the absolute magnitude of the standardized coefficient of the independent variable is neither larger than .10 nor greater than twice its estimated standard error. That is, we impose both substantive (greater than .10) and statistical (greater than twice the standard error) criteria for retaining an independent variable in the analysis of a given dependent variable; those that meet neither criteria are assumed to have trivial effects.

The first four columns of Table 1 assess the effects of demographic and socioeconomic background variables on general and race-related attitudes among our sample of blacks. Demographic and socioeconomic background variables explain 5% or less of the variance in the two general attitudes. There is a small tendency for blacks of higher socioeconomic status and higher educational attainment to be more personal control-oriented, and a

Table 1

STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS OF A MODEL OF TELEVISION ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS AMONG BLACK ADULTS^a

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		DEPENDENT VARIABLES ^b															
		SUBJECTIVE ORIENTATIONS				TELEVISION EXPOSURE			TELEVISION PREFERENCE AND EVALUATION								
		ALIENW	BLID	PERCON	ANOMIE	PA	BPA	WTV	TVBIAS	FAVBLK	BDBLSC						
Background Characteristics	ED	--	.14*	.10	-.13*	.11	.29*	.27*	-.24*	-.19*	.11	.17*	--	--	.30*	.28*	.19*
	SES	.10	--	.15*	--	--	--	--	-.16	-.13	-.06	-.14*	--	--	--	--	--
	AGE	-.27*	-.33*	--	--	.36*	--	--	--	--	-.26*	-.09	--	--	-.26*	-.21*	-.20*
	SEX	--	--	--	-.13*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.10	-.11	-.11
Subjective Orientations	ALIENW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.59*	.16*	.17*	--	--	--	--	--	--
	BLID	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.16*	--	--	--	--	--	.16*	.11	--	--
	PERCON	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.13*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	ANOMIE	--	--	--	--	--	-.15*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Television Exposure	BPA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.13
	WTV	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.15*	--	--	--	-.22*
R ²		.10	.16	.05	.04	.12	.08	.10	.12	.16	.10	.40	.03	.05	.22	.29	.30

^aN = 268^bFor each dependent variable, the left-most column presents total effects; others present net effects as intervening variables are introduced into the model. No separate column of coefficients is present when an entire set of variables have no substantial total or net effects.

*Coefficient at least twice as large in absolute value as its estimated standard error.

slight tendency for less educated blacks and black females to express more anomie attitudes. The background variables are slightly more successful in accounting for race-related attitudes. Ten percent of the variance in alienation from white society (hereafter referred to as alienation) is accounted for, with a weak net positive association between socioeconomic status and alienation and a somewhat stronger negative net relationship between age and alienation. Further, there is a modest tendency for young blacks to express stronger black identity attitudes in addition to alienation, and for more educated blacks to exhibit stronger black identity attitudes. Education and age together account for 16% of the variance in black identity.

Turning to the exposure variables, we find that older and, to a lesser extent, more educated blacks view more majority public affairs programming. However, subjective orientations were not significant determinants of majority public affairs viewing. More educated blacks also are more likely to view black public affairs programming, and net of education, blacks expressing less anomie attitudes are more likely to be exposed to black public affairs programming. Four variables account for 16% of the variance in exposure to television in general. Less educated blacks and, net of that, blacks of lower socioeconomic status tend to view television more often. Moreover, blacks expressing less black identity and less personal control view television more often. The two subjective orientations mediate very few of the effects of education and socioeconomic status on television viewing.

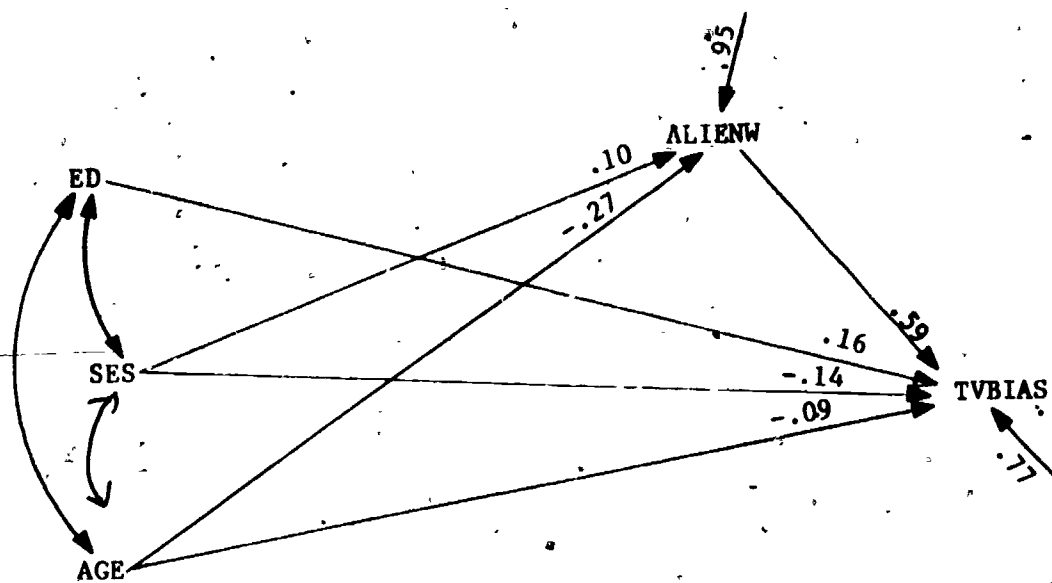
Relationships become somewhat more complex when we examine the determinants of television preference and evaluation. Three background variables, education, socioeconomic status, and age, explain 10% of the

variance in perception of television bias, and adding just alienation increases the proportion explained to 40%.

Insert Figure 2 and Table 1 about here

The path diagram in Figure 2 helps clarify the relationships. First, education has a small positive direct effect, unmediated by alienation. That is, for blacks of given status, age, and alienation, those with more education are somewhat more likely to perceive bias on television. Socio-economic status has a negative direct effect--those better off economically perceived less bias on television but this is offset partially by a small ($.10 \times .59$) positive indirect effect through alienation--those better off economically are slightly more alienated and for that reason perceive more bias on television. Consequently, the total effect of socioeconomic status of $-.06$ in Table 1 (which combines the offsetting direct and indirect effects of socioeconomic status) is smaller in magnitude than the direct effect of $-.14$. In contrast, age has reinforcing direct and indirect effects on perceived bias of television. The direct effect is negative--controlling effects of other background variables and alienation, older blacks perceive less bias on television. In addition, older blacks are less alienated, which in turn results in less perceived television bias. Thus, for age, the total effect on television bias of $-.26$ is substantially larger in magnitude than the direct effect of $-.09$. Finally, by far the largest direct effect on television bias is from alienation ($.59$). As we have already noted, those more alienated perceive more television bias, and this effect serves to transmit small indirect effects of age and socioeconomic status.

Figure 2. Path diagram of determinants of perceived television bias among black adults.



Five percent of the variance was accounted for in whether or not a respondent's favorite show was black-oriented. Blacks who view television more and those who are more alienated are more likely to have a black-oriented show as their favorite. No demographic or socioeconomic variables were related to having a black-oriented show as the favorite. Somewhat surprisingly, we did not find that those with higher black identity are more likely to have a black-oriented show as their favorite. However, results in Table 1 show that those expressing more black identity view less television, and results presented in Figure 3 show that expressing more black identity and viewing less television both result in a tendency to be more critical of one type of black-oriented programming--black situation comedies. That is, these results suggest that the black viewer

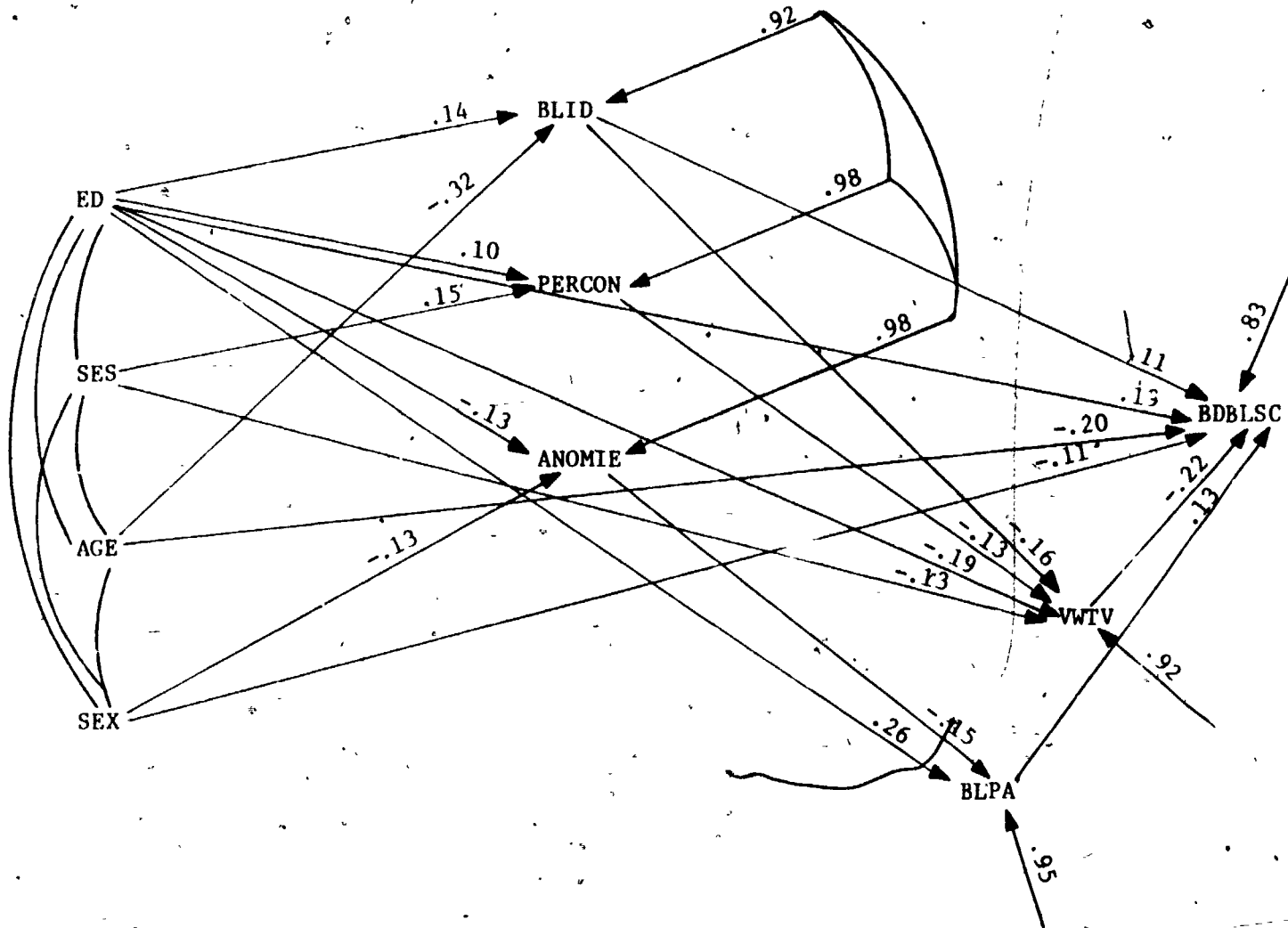
Insert Figure 3 about here

with considerable black identity is more selective and more critical of black-oriented programs in his or her viewing behaviors, and perhaps as a result is no more likely than other black viewers to have a black-oriented program as favorite.

Our model is quite successful in accounting for the degree to which black viewers find bad points in black-oriented situation comedies. Background variables alone account for 22% of the variance in finding bad points in these situation comedies; adding black identity and two exposure variables increases the proportion to just over 36. The path diagram in Figure 3 is useful for disentangling the rather complex relationships involved.

Educated blacks are apparently more critical of black-oriented situation comedies; there is a modest direct effect (.19) of education on detecting

Figure 3. Path diagram of determinants of perceived bad points of black situation/comedies among black adults.



bad points in black situation comedies. There are also a number of indirect effects in the same direction. More educated blacks tend to express greater black identity which leads to a more critical view of black-oriented situation comedies (.14 x .11) and also leads to less (more selective) television viewing, which again leads to the more critical perspective (.14 x -.16 x -.22). A similar (though smaller) indirect effect of education operates through personal control and selective viewing (.10 x -.13 x -.22). In addition, the model suggests that education leads to less anomic attitudes-- leading to more viewing of black public affairs programming. This, in turn, leads to the critical view of black-oriented situation comedies (-.13 x -.15 x .13). As a consequence of the various indirect effects, the total positive effect of educational attainment on perceived bad points of black situation comedies (.30) is more than 50% larger than the direct influence of education (.19).

Socioeconomic status has no direct effect on perceived bad points of these situation comedies, but small indirect effects exist through total television viewing--higher status blacks are more selective in viewing and in turn are more critical (-.13 x -.22), and through personal control via total television viewing--higher status blacks express more personal control leading to selective television viewing and more critical evaluation (.15 x -.13 x -.22). However, these two indirect effects are too small to be detected as a total effect in Table 1 (note that socioeconomic status does not appear in the equation on perceived bad points of black situation comedies).

Age has a modest direct influence (-.20), with older blacks being less critical of black situation comedies. Also, older blacks express

less black identity, which in turn leads directly to a less critical perspective ($-.32 \times .11$) and indirectly through less selective viewing, total television viewing ($-.32 \times -.16 \times -.22$). Males are slightly less likely to be critical of black situation comedies ($-.11$), although there is a quite small offsetting indirect effect through anomie and black public affairs viewing ($-.13 \times -.15 \times .13$).

In summary, there appears to be a "viewer sophistication" effect among blacks determining their evaluation of one type of black programming --black-oriented situation comedies. Selective viewers, those exposed to more black public affairs programming, younger, more educated viewers, and those expressing black identity attitudes all tend to be more critical of one kind of majority-controlled television fare that is aimed towards blacks. Apart from their direct effects, black identity, selective viewing, and black public affairs viewing appear to be transmitting indirect influences of the sophistication of young and more educated black viewers.

4: DISCUSSION

In this paper, we have gone beyond the typical concern with the amount and content of viewership and looked at the background and orientations leading to television attitudes and behaviors by a sample of black adults. Our study sought to determine constraints or impediments to communication and the conditions that produce them. Our strategy was to investigate what blacks do with television as distinct from what television does to them. Stated differently, we examined the active role of this audience in controlling and seeking messages appropriate to their needs. The overall results depict a rather active and participating audience. For example, if

television fare directed explicitly at black audiences--namely, black-oriented situation comedies--is investigated we find that differences among blacks in viewing selectively are rather strongly related to the degree to which they are a critical audience.

One of the most powerful predictors in our model was education. A relationship was detected between education and every television attitude and behavior, save choice of black-oriented shows as favorite. The effects of education on viewing selectively, public affairs viewing, perception of bias in the television, and evaluation of one kind of black-oriented programming suggest that differences among blacks in the "intellectual climate" surrounding television attitudes and behaviors may contribute substantially to differences among blacks in those attitudes and behaviors.

We have concentrated on the heterogeneity within the black population. This approach has been instructive. We have found that variation among blacks with respect to attitudes and behaviors toward television (particularly those related to black-oriented programming) are systematically related to differences among blacks in exposure to the medium, subjective orientations and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. This is especially true for perceived television bias and perceived bad points of black-oriented situation comedies. The latter variable should be interpreted in the light of an overwhelming percentage of our sample mentioning the existence of good points in black-oriented situation comedies.

Our findings pointed to the importance of taking into account the diversity within the black community. Black-white comparisons on television outcome variables are useful in answering certain research questions and yield valuable information, but this approach has received a disproportionate

share of the attention. In addition, too often these comparative analyses have served as the basis for inferences on the television attitudes and behavior of blacks.

Our model allowed us to interpret patterns of direct and indirect influences of background characteristics, subjective orientations, and exposure on blacks' attitudes and behaviors toward television. While previous research has rarely examined the relationship between more than one kind of subjective orientation and media attitudes and behaviors, our conceptualization allowed us to examine simultaneously how four quite different types of subjective orientations transmit the effects of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. To cite just one example, we found that the negative relationship between age and perceived bias in television media among blacks is mediated almost completely by alienation from white society: younger blacks are more alienated from white society, and more alienated blacks perceive more bias in television.

Some of the more general conclusions of past research have been supported by our findings:

- 1) Less-educated and lower status blacks tend to view more television.
- 2) More-educated blacks tend to view majority and black-oriented public affairs programs more often.

Both of these relationships also tend to be found in the general population.

Almost a decade after the Kerner Commission Report (1968) argued that the media are perceived as biased and part of the "white power structure," it was found that the same relationships persisted among the more educated, the less economically well-off, and the younger blacks. Moreover, if the presentation of black-oriented situation comedies may

be viewed as the television industry's attempt to accomodate or cater to blacks, it appears that it has failed among certain crucial elements of the black community: those more educated, those of a younger age, males, those with more black identity, those who watch black public affairs programs more often, and those who spend less time viewing television.

Finally, more research is needed to determine the influence of variables included in our model, and others, on adolescent blacks. Further, a useful investigation of many of these variables may be carried out within the context of the print media. Unlike television at the present time, an investigation of the print media would allow an adequate comparison of the black-controlled versus majority-controlled media.

NOTES

¹This tendency has not been confined to black audiences (for a comprehensive critique, see McLeod and O'Keefe, 1972).

²For example, one of the three exposure variables--Total Television Viewing--was composed of three different variables (average, yesterday, and the day before yesterday television viewing) collected at two points in time.

³To explore the possibility of bias being introduced by attrition, a comparison was made on all the demographic and socioeconomic status variables between those who participated in the wave 1 study only and those who participated in studies 1 and 3, where all the included variables were taken. The attrition pattern appeared to be random across all of these variables, and there were no statistically significant differences.

⁴Missing data for all scale and index items were replaced by their means.

⁵The reliability coefficients (coefficient alpha) were obtained for all scales and indices included in this study.

⁶The Socioeconomic Status index showed a reliability of .53; the range of the corrected item-total correlations was .21 to .63.

⁷The subjective orientations--Anomie, Personal Control, Alienation from White Society, and Black Identity--showed reliability coefficients of .67, .58, .65, and .64, respectively. The corrected item-total correlations for the indices presented in the above order ranged from .35 to .57, .35 to .42, .32 to .50, and .22 to .51.

The Anomie Scale (or Srole scale) was taken from Singer (1973). Personal Control items were obtained from the Gurin et al. (1969) internal-external scale. Items for the Alienation from White Society index were

taken from an abbreviated version (minus one item) of the scale, created by Schuman and Hatchett (1974), bearing the same name.

⁸The reliability coefficient for Public Affairs Viewing was .73, and .85 for Total Viewing Time. The corrected item-total correlation ranged from .42 to .69, and .59 to .68, respectively. The frequency of watching black-oriented situation comedies was also included in our questionnaire. Almost everyone said that they watched them "very often," or "often"; thus, the variable showed little variance.

⁹Perception of Television Bias showed a reliability coefficient of .76; the corrected item-total correlations ranged from .54 to .75. The three situation comedies included were: Sanford and Son, Good Times, and The Jeffersons. The reliability coefficient was .57; the corrected item-total correlations ranged from .34 to .63. It should be noted that the respondents were also asked whether there were any good points of black public affairs and black-oriented situation comedies. Little variance was shown; i.e., most blacks agreed that there were several good points. Given the paucity of information aimed specifically at blacks and the emphasis placed on an improvement in this area, we expected that most blacks would state that there were some good points. Moreover, there is empirical support for this view (see Dominick and Greenberg, 1970; Dervin and Greenberg, 1972).

REFERENCES

- Allen, J. H. (1968) "Mass media use patterns in a Negro ghetto." Journalism Quarterly 45: 525-531.
- Alwin, D. F. and R. M. Hauser (1975) "The decomposition of effects in path analysis." American Sociological Review 40: 37-47.
- Baker, R. K. and S. J. Ball (1969) "Mass media and violence." Staff report to the National Commission on the causes and prevention of violence. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- Barger, H. M. (1973) "Images of political authority in four types of Black newspapers." Journalism Quarterly 50: 645-657, 672.
- Brink, W. and L. Harris (1969) The Negro Revolution in America. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Carey, J. W. (1969) "Variations in Negro-white television preferences." Journal of Broadcasting 10: 199-212.
- Chaffee, S. H. and J. M. McLeod (1971) "Adolescents, parents and televised violence." Presented to American Psychological Assn., Washington, D.C.
- Clark, C. (1969) "Television and social controls: some observations on the portrayal of ethnic minorities." Television Quarterly 8: 19-22.
- Clark, C. (1972) "Race, identification and television violence," in Eli A. Rubinstein and John P. Murray (eds.), Television and Social Behavior V: Television's Effects: Further Explorations. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- Clarke, P. and L. Ruggels (1970) "Preferences among news media for coverage of public affairs." Journalism Quarterly 47: 464-471.
- Dervin, B. and B. S. Greenberg (1972) "Communication environment of the urban poor," in F. Gerald Kline and Phillip J. Tichenor (eds.), Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Dominick, J. R. and B. S. Greenberg (1970) "Three seasons of blacks on television." Journal of Advertising Research 10: 21-37.
- Greenberg, B. S. and B. Dervin (1967) Communication and Related Behaviors of a Sample of Low-income Urban Adults Compared with a General Population Sample. Project CUP, Report 1: Michigan State University.
- Greenberg, B. S. and J. R. Dominick (1969) Television Behavior among Disadvantaged Children. Project CUP, Report 9: Michigan State University.

- Greenberg, B. S., J. Lowes, and B. Dervin (1970a) Communication and Related Behaviors of a Sample of Cleveland Black Adults. Project CUP, Report 13: Michigan State University.
- Greenberg, B.S., J. Bowes, and J. Dominick (1970b) Use of the Mass Media by the Urban Poor. New York: Praeger.
- Gurin, P., and E. Epps (1974) Achievement and Identity. New York: Wiley.
- Gurin, P., G. Gurin, R. C. Leo, and M. Beattie (1969) "Internal-external control in the motivational dynamics of Negro youth." Journal of Social Issues 25: 29-53.
- Hayakawa, S. I. (1968) "Television and the American Negro," in David M. White and Richard Avernson (eds.), Sight, Sound, and Society: Motion Pictures and Television in America. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kassarjian, W. M. (1973) "Blacks as communicators and interpreters of mass communication." Journalism Quarterly 50: 285-291, 305.
- Kerner Commission (1968) Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. New York: Bantam.
- Lyle, J. (1967) "The Negro and the news media," in Jack Lyle (ed.), The News in Megalopolis. San Francisco: Chandler.
- Marx, G. T. (1969) Protest and Prejudice. New York: Harper.
- McLeod, J. M. and G. J. O'Keefe, Jr. (1972) "The socialization perspective and communication behavior," in F. Gerald Kline and Phillip J. Tichenor (eds.), Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- McLeod, J. M. and L. B. Becker (1974) "Testing the validity of gratification measures through political effects analysis," in Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz (eds.), The Use of Mass Communications. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Myrdal, G. (1964) An American Dilemma. New York: McGraw-Hill Paperback Edition.
- Paige, J. M. (1970) "Changing patterns of anti-white attitudes among blacks." Journal of Social Issues 26: 69-86.
- Sargent, L. W. and G. H. Stempel (1968) "Poverty, alienation and mass media use." Journalism Quarterly 45: 324-326.
- Schuman, H. and S. Hatchett (1974) Black Racial Attitudes. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research.

Sharon, A. W. (1973-1974) "Racial differences in newspaper readership."
Public Opinion Quarterly 38: 611-617.

Shostek, N. (1969) "Some influences of television on civil unrest."
Journal of Broadcasting 23: 371-385.

Singer, B. D. (1973) Feedback and Society. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington
Books.