Local media and political participation: An empirical investigation.

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LOCAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

by
Margaret Young

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
Through the Department of Communication Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

LOCAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

by

Margaret Young

This thesis examines the relationship between access to local sources of local mass communication (television, radio, daily and weekly newspapers) and levels of political participation in municipal elections in Ontario using macro and micro level data.

Aggregate level data was generated by combining a dataset containing information from all the 1985 municipal elections in Ontario with information about each municipality's local media. This lets us examine elections which take place simultaneously and within the same general political and cultural context but with widely varying configurations of local media present. The aggregate level measures of political participation used are: whether the head of council is elected or acclaimed, the turnout rate, the percentage of incumbents on council and the percentage of council positions contested.

Micro level data was gathered from surveys done in the city of Windsor, Ontario before and after the city lost its only televised source of local news. This allows us to examine political participation at the individual level with access to media physically varied. At the survey level two measures of political participation and two levels of
community involvement are used: interest in local politics, voting in local politics, attending local government meetings and awareness of local issues. Examination of micro level data allows us to identify spurious relationships which may appear with ecological correlation done on aggregate data and to examine the processes which underlie relationships identified at the aggregate level.

The survey analysis indicates that television and newspapers in Windsor did not have noticeably different effects on political and community involvement when local news was still being produced by a local television station. After the cessation of local news production residents who relied on television for local news were less likely to be involved in their community than were those relying on newspapers. Data also give weak support to the hypothesis that there is a relationship between medium relied on and political involvement. Individuals who watched “local” television news as well as using another medium are less likely to be interested in local politics and less likely to vote than those who only used the other medium. There is general strong support for the hypothesis that local news plays a part in the development of political participation.

Aggregate findings indicate that the presence of local media affects levels of political participation. In rural areas of the province local media is generally limited to weekly newspapers which usually have positive effects on participation. Urban centres have many different combinations of local media present. The same medium may have different effects on municipalities of different sizes and on different types of political participation, suggesting that the underlying process may be different. There is no clear support for the hypothesis that the number of different types of media present has an effect, although findings suggest different combinations of media may have different effects.
To Hersch,

who has shared every step in the road

vi
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LIST OF SYMBOLS

\( \chi^2 \) Goodness-of-fit chi square

\( \lambda \) Goodman and Kruskal's lambda
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

This thesis will examine the relationship between access to communication sources and political participation in municipal elections. This will be studied at both the aggregate (macro) level and at the individual (micro) level. At the macro level the availability of local media in Ontario municipalities will be correlated with turnout and competition in local elections. If access to sources of mass communication affects levels of participation in local politics, then there should be aggregate differences between the actions of those who live in communities with sparse availability of local media and those who live in communities rich in local media. At the micro level, political interest, political participation and community involvement of individuals surveyed in Windsor will be examined before and after the closing of the city’s only local television station.

There have been many large scale studies using aggregate data to study political participation at the national level. In contrast, studies of political participation in local politics have generally used survey data and focused on one community, or a small number of communities. There are, however, factors which may affect political participation, such as the availability of local mass media, which vary from one community to another but are invariant within communities. In order to study these factors using survey data a large number of cases would have to be included and surveys would have to be carried out in widely ranging communities during a fairly circumscribed period of time. Without the contextualization of aggregate data, the results of any
survey of a community may not be considered generalizable to the world beyond that community.

The examination of aggregate data will allow us to look for the existence of systematic differences in levels of political participation between communities that have different configurations of local media. This variation is one of the elements required in order to demonstrate correlation. Although aggregate data will allow us to determine whether something has indeed happened, it will not be useful in explicating the underlying processes. Survey level data allow us to study those processes, to test the intermediary steps in the theoretical model which has been developed. Aggregate data allow us to determine that people are doing something, survey level data allow us to identify which people, how, and sometimes even why.

Information from all of the municipal elections held in Ontario in 1985 will allow us to look at variations in demographics, competitiveness of elections and the nature and number of accessible local media. All municipal elections in the province are held on the same day in the same year and all are administered under the same legislation. Eligibility requirements for electors and candidates do not vary from one municipality to another. Elections in each municipality take place in the same general political and cultural context. We will thus be able to examine change in the relevant variables while statistically holding the other (independent and process) variables constant.

Examination of data at the individual level is useful in avoiding problems attendant with ecological correlation done at the aggregate level (Robinson, 1950), and allows insight into and checks of hypotheses about underlying processes. Study of the responses to the Windsor surveys will allow us to investigate an instance in which the independent or intervening variable, access to mass media, has been varied physically
rather than statistically. In December 1990 the city lost its only regular source of televised local news. Examination of surveys completed before and after that event will allow us to study individuals living in the same community under differing media environments.

2. Democracy and Information

Since the days of the early Greeks there has been a recognition of the relationship between democracy and communication. For democracy rests upon the assumptions that citizens are rational, informed and involved (Spitz, 1984, p. 4), and it is through communication that the individual is both informed and socialized. In the modern world much of that communication will take place through the mass media. The uninformed citizen will be incapable of making rational decisions which appropriately respond to the real problems of the state or community.

During the time of the first “democracy” (that of Athens) there was less concern about the basic question of informing the citizen than there is today. The audience and the orator in Athens stood, quite literally, upon the same ground. The question under debate was not “what is” but “what should be done”. Facts were quite often not only mutually understood, but also mutually experienced. For Athens was a city state; the enfranchised lived in and experienced a shared environment. The orator tried to influence what the voters would make of the facts, but far less often was called upon to establish just what those facts might be. Where it was difficult to decide, it more often came down to whether or not one believed witness A or witness B as to what had happened at some distant court or battle.
The franchise in modern democracies is not limited to a small number who have an opportunity to know each other or to expend large amounts of time and effort at the process of self-education. Today most voters do not, in the same sense, stand upon a mutually experienced ground. Nor do they have the opportunity of knowing personally, and as a neighbour, those who would run for office and represent them within the government. That which was once acquired through interpersonal communication must now be culled from the mass media: initially through newspapers, and more currently through publications as well as broadcasting.

3. Democracy and Communication Policy

Much of Canadian policy toward media (and their regulation) is predicated upon the premise of effective political communication. According to the Kent Commission (Canada, 1981, p. 1), the people have a “right to inform themselves”, and “from that right follow all the special rights and privileges we extend to the press” (p. 27). The Commission states that “informed and opinionated newspapers have been fundamental to the development of modern Western democracy” (p. 135) and that, “the essential connection between a healthy, independent, and diversified press and democratic vitality has been noted since state authorities in Europe gave up licensing printed matter” (p. 136).

These opinions are not limited to Canada. The International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems (the MacBride Commission) said that:

Democratic societies are based on the concept of the sovereignty of the people, whose general will is determined by an informed public opinion. It is this right of the public to know that is the essence of media freedom of which the professional journalist, writer and producer are only custodians. (quoted in Canada, 1981, p. 26)
The broader influences of the media have also long been recognized. In 1932 Canadian Prime Minister R. B. Bennett stated that, "properly employed, the radio can be made a most effective instrument in nation building, with an educational value difficult to estimate" (cited in Raboy, 1990, p. 39).

Thus the communication media have been recognized both as disseminators of information and as socializing agents. This recognition has been translated by governments into policy and regulation aimed at promoting, influencing or preserving the mass media. This thesis will attempt to examine the premise underlying these efforts by studying some differences in the way local democracy functions within differing media environments.

4. The Multi-Media Environment

The assumptions that underlie this thesis, as it was originally conceived, did not capture the complexity of the media environment in which we live. The mass media have been much studied in North America, but often in ways that do not reflect the experiences of ordinary people. Most studies have focused on the effects of an individual form of mass communication, yet most individuals live in an environment where many types of media operate simultaneously, affecting them in different ways and with different intensities at different times (Choi & Becker, 1987). We are influenced by local and non-local media simultaneously, and "local media" is itself an elusive concept. Local events, and localized phenomena operate within a regional, provincial and even national context, and local and non-local factors blend together. An awareness of this underlying complexity is required if one is to effectively analyze the interactions between the media and political participation.
5. Outline of the Thesis.

Chapter Two begins with a brief review of the relevant literature that will allow us to place political communication within mass communication theory, and within theories of political participation. This will allow us to develop a model of the role mass media availability plays in the development of political participation in municipal politics, and to generate a series of research questions that will structure the rest of the thesis.

In Chapter Three we will discuss the nature and distribution of local media in Ontario, their demographic characteristics and the levels of political participation with which they are associated. The number and nature of the municipalities in the province will be outlined, communities will be organized into “types” to aid discussion and analysis and their demographics and typical levels of political participation will be presented.

Chapter Four will present the methodological underpinning of the thesis. General concerns about statistical analyses will be addressed, the generation of survey and aggregate data will be described and important variables will be operationalized.

A detailed analysis of the aggregate data will be presented in Chapter Five. The effects of four kinds of media (television, radio, daily newspapers and weekly newspapers) on four measures of political participation (turnout rate, incumbency rate, council competition rate and electoral status of the head of council) will be examined. Relationships will be examined in their bivariate form and as part of a general regression model. Effects are assessed in each type of municipality, for each kind of media and for each form of political participation.
Chapter Six contains the analysis of the survey level data. The effects of reliance on television or the newspaper for local news are contrasted before and after the December 1990 cessation of local television news production in Windsor. Levels of community and political involvement before and after December 1990 are compared. The effects of using different combinations of media are also examined.

The aggregate data analysis in Chapter Five will be combined with the survey level data analysis of Chapter Six, and summarized, in Chapter Seven. This will be followed by a reconsideration of the original research questions, and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER II

DEMOCRACY, PARTICIPATION AND MASS COMMUNICATION

1. Introduction

In this chapter we will develop a theoretical model to explain how the mass media, the independent concept, affect the level of political participation in a community, the dependent variable. In order to do this we will first locate political communication, and its hypothesized strength, within mass media theory. We will then look at the theoretical role assigned to communication within studies of political participation. Finally we will present a model of the relationship between the availability of mass media and participation in local politics, and consider the research questions that arise from it.

2. Communication Theory

Basic mass communication paradigms have generally been situated somewhere on the spectrum between the powerful and the limited effects models. At one end of the spectrum are the theories of the dominant or hegemonic media which instill particular attitudes and beliefs in the audience; at the other are the theories of the media as the facilitator of processes already inherent in the audience. The development of these theories can be divided into three main phases (McQuail, 1977). First, the powerful media model, which lasted from the beginning of this century to the end of the Second World War. It was replaced by the limited-effects model, which lasted until the 1960s and the subsequent rise of the moderately powerful media model. This last phase
has been marked by a growing awareness of the scale on which media effects take place and the time required for those effects to become visible.

Early studies of the political effects of the mass media arose out of a particular historical environment in which people were reacting to the apparent power of propaganda in the First World War (Bauer, 1964; Eaman, 1987) and the rise of demagogues between the two world wars (Becker, McCombs & McLeod, 1975). Research focused on the techniques of propaganda; the effectiveness of the media and the passivity of the audience were generally accepted (Bauer, 1964; Becker, McCombs & McLeod, 1975; Delia, 1987).

Harold Lasswell was among those who were attempting to understand the methodology of successful propaganda. The “hypodermic needle” model of mass communications arose out of this work:

Lasswell suggested that the power of the propagandist lies in his [sic] special ability to translate the nonrational urges within his own subconscious into concrete symbols that appeal directly to the subconscious of his audience. In this way, the propagandist is able to inject his message directly into the mind of the masses like serum from a hypodermic needle. (Eaman, 1987, p. 9)

This model suggested that messages, if properly designed, would change the attitudes or the actions of virtually all who received them. This led, not surprisingly, to a concern about and interest in the effects of mass communication media on the political process. Would a piece of communication be able to change the way that people thought about an issue and if that were so, would it also be able to change the way that people acted? Would politics in future boil down to a simple question of which candidate was able to gain the greater access to the channels of communication? Would he or she who communicated most effectively win in each election, or even most elections?
At the same time the persuasive power of communication also became of great interest to the many companies that were investing large amounts of money on advertisements in the expectation of attracting customers. In the 1930s Lazarsfeld, for example, did work for commercial concerns while still at the Rockefeller Foundation (Delia, 1987). The experience gained in commercial advertising then became a factor in the development of political campaigning as figures moved from advertising firms into the political world (for example Chester Bowles of Benton & Bowles who was elected governor of Connecticut in 1948) and as candidates hired advertising firms first to produce commercials and later to organize entire campaigns (Fox, 1984). In recent years the influence of commercial advertising has been especially visible in the growth of negative or attack commercials.

In 1944, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet published *The People's Choice*, the results of a panel survey study of voters in Erie County, Ohio in the months preceding the presidential election of 1940. Lazarsfeld et al. found that a small group of people, the “opinion leaders”, were both more likely to discuss politics and to pay attention to political information in the mass media. This led to the development of the “two-step flow”, a communication model in which the media influenced most people indirectly through their personal interactions with opinion leaders in their communities (Bauer, 1964; Eaman, 1987; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944/1968). Klapper (1960, quoted in McCombs, 1972), in a seminal re-examination of media effects, also came to the opinion that “mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences” (p. 176). For theorists who followed Klapper’s lead, the audience “was active only in the sense of seeking consonant and avoiding discrepant information” (McLeod & Becker, 1981, p. 69).
Later theories have emerged which place the power of the media somewhere between the automatic authority of the hypodermic needle and the marginal influence suggested by Klapper. Proponents of the "Uses and Gratifications" model, for example, envisaged a much more dynamic audience, one that actively sought out communication which would provide pleasure or fulfil a need (McQuail & Windahl, 1981). The uses and gratifications sought by the audience are "intervening variables" which stand between the mass media and their effects on that audience (Carey & Kreiling, 1974). Each individual in the audience functions as her or his own gatekeeper, using selective attention, perception and retention in order to filter out that which is neither useful nor gratifying.

The agenda-setting theory of the press (understood to embrace all information media) also assumes the existence of gate-keeping, although in this case the gatekeepers are the individuals who decide which items will be included in the news and how much prominence will be given to them. McCombs and Shaw (1977) defined it as "the hypothesis that the press itself has some power to establish an agenda of political issues which both candidates and voters come to regard as important" (p. 3). The theory has two main underlying assumptions: 1) that the press does not merely mirror reality and 2) that the audience comes to see those items which have been repeated and stressed in the media as having more salience:

media emphasis on certain subjects over time does influence the number of citizens concerned about these subjects. This is, of course, not the same thing as saying that the press sets an agenda of issues or subjects for the individual citizen or voter. (Weaver, 1987, p. 180)

McCombs and Shaw (1977) argued that the earlier findings of "minimal consequences", arose out of researchers' decisions to study the short-term attitudinal effects of communication rather than its structuring and informational effects. "The
mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about" (p. 5; emphasis in original).

Critical studies of the mass media developed out of analyses of their place and functions in the political-economic structure of society. These cultural analyses focused their attention on the long term effects, rather than the short-term effectiveness, of the media industries. Those theories which are severely hegemonic are the equivalent of the hypodermic model or the transmission theory of communication. Those which posit an audience with an almost limitless ability to rewrite resistant messages into the media parallel the limited-effects models of communication. Those which focus on negotiated responses to the hegemonic messages approximate the moderately powerful media model.

In *Manufacturing Consent* Herman and Chomsky (1988) put forward a theory which embraces both the long-term socializing power of the mass media and its short-term power to establish salience. Individuals construct their images of the world and their knowledge of what is currently happening in their constructed universe through the information they get from the mass media. Individuals within the media decide which events are newsworthy and how important each event is out of a nexus of determinants which include knowledge of the political outlook of media owners (which may have a conscious or unconscious effect on the reporters and editors), the routinization of news coverage which leads to reliance on official news sources, internalization of the prevalent values of society and fear of the consequences of challenging accepted political wisdom.

Cultural studies theorists see a more complex relationship between the audience and the message. The effects of the message are limited by the nature of the audience. Fiske and Morley, for example, hold that communications are polysemic texts which
audiences will interpret differently given different political and social contexts. Fiske posits an audience that inserts its own meanings and readings into the communication process. The shared reality of the groups to which an individual belongs informs the way in which that individual perceives information. Individuals have a variety of possible reactions to texts; they may passively accept the dominant message as presented, they may intertwine their own meanings into the text to arrive at a negotiated message, or they may construct a meaning antithetical to the dominant reading (Turner, 1990).

A difficulty associated with many attempts to study the effects of the mass communication media is that “the range of audience opinion and attitude on any measurable item is likely to be virtually random within any group of media users” (Wagner, 1983, p. 410), and the differences are likely to be an effect of the differences between the type of people who use different media. To study the effects of the media we have to find a situation in which the availability of different media varies. Our aggregate level data will allow us to study different communities with different combinations of media available. We will be able to hold constant those determinants of political participation which are part of the local environment and thus vary from place to place. We can infer that systematic differences between the political participation rates of communities which have different combinations of media available are due, at least in part, to the differences in the media.

3. Political Participation

In order to assess the role of mass media in the development of political participation we will need to situate it, and its relative strength, in relationship to the many other determinants which are known to affect participation. The effects of these
determinants must be factored out in an attempt to isolate effects due to the availability of local mass media.

Forms of political participation can be divided into two categories, voting and non-voting. Many democratic theorists consider voting to be the key or central form of participation in a democracy (Coleman, 1989, p. 198; Riker, 1982, p. 5) and it is widely used as a measure of political participation (Almond & Verba, 1963; Bowen, Broh & Prysby, 1975; Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960; Clarke, LeDuc, Jensen & Pammett, 1991; Conway, 1985; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie 1972). Voting did not fall within Burstein’s (1972) definition of political participation as the “use of resources (including time) to influence political outcomes” (pp. 1090-1091) because he found it “to be another sort of variable, only weakly related to other sorts of political activity” (p. 1095n). Milbrath and Goel included it among their measures of political participation while noting that “studies found voting to be a separate mode of participation from party and campaign activity. . . . The act of voting does not require as much information and motivation as do most other political activities” (p. 12). Therefore voting can be considered one among many forms of political participation, not merely one way among many of measuring political participation.

At the aggregate level, voting is extremely easy to measure; it is the number, or proportion, of ballots cast in a particular election. At the individual level voting is measured by asking individuals whether they intend to vote in an upcoming election, or if they did vote in a particular election.

During this century, turnout in Canadian federal elections has ranged from 66.4 percent to 79.4 percent while at the provincial level it has ranged from less than 60 percent to more than 80 percent. Higgins (1986) considered the norm at both levels to
be approximately 75 percent turnout. The range at the municipal level in Canada has been from 20 percent to 65 percent. "The level of citizen participation in local government in Canada is often described and decried as being low in relation to that in federal and provincial contexts" (p. 261).

The level of non-voting participation is much lower. Mishler (1979) estimates that approximately 5 percent of Canadians run for political office or solicit money and approximately 25 percent take part in some less intense non-voting form of participation. Only a "tiny fraction" of the population even works for a political party or candidate (Clarke et al., 1991).

There is a wide variety of ways in which people can participate in politics beyond voting. These include talking about politics (Clarke et al., 1991; Campbell et al., 1960; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Mishler, 1979), making contact with a politician or elected official (Clarke et al, 1991; Evans & Hildebrandt, 1979; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972), belonging to or working for a political party (Campbell et al, 1960; Conway, 1985; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978), running for political office (Clarke et al., 1991; Crewe, 1981; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Mishler, 1979), attending a political meeting (Campbell et al., 1960; Clarke et al., 1991; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972), signing a political petition (Clarke et al., 1991; Mishler, 1979), taking an interest in, or being knowledgeable about political campaigns (Clarke et al., 1991; Lambert, Curtis, Kay & Brown, 1988; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944/1968), trying to influence whether, or how, someone else will vote (Conway, 1985; Evans & Hildebrandt, 1979; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972) and contributing money to a candidate or campaign (Campbell et al., 1960; Clarke et al., 1991; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978).
At the aggregate level non-voting measures of political participation can be difficult to measure directly. The number of uncontested council positions in municipal elections, the rate at which incumbents remain in office and whether the head of council is elected or acclaimed are all indications of the number of people in the community who are willing to run for office or to support the campaigns of others running for office. At the survey level non-voting political participation has be measured by asking respondents whether they attend public meetings, whether they have opinions about public officials or local issues, and by directly asking them to assess their level of political interest.

The factors which have been found in various studies to determine or influence levels of political participation can be divided into those which are part of an individual's larger environment and those which are particular to an individual (Milbrath & Goel, 1977).

The larger environment consists of things which exist separate from the individual: the political system, the culture and the actual physical environment. Since these things do not vary within a community and do vary among communities, they are best studied at the aggregate level.

Turnout rates tend to be lower than average where the political system lacks competition or is dominated by one party (Powell, 1980). In any particular election, competitiveness among candidates or parties tends to raise interest levels among voters and produce a higher turnout (Campbell et al., 1960; Conway, 1985; Crewe, 1981; Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Turnout tends to increase with the perceived importance of the election (Conway, 1985; Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Turnout rates are lower when there is no obvious way to differentiate between candidates or parties (Choi & Becker,
Secrecy within government structures in the community have been found to decrease the level of turnout (Price, Hildebrandt & Czilli, 1989).

Various aspects of the environment of the community have been found to have an effect on levels of participation: population size (Higgins, 1986; Powell, 1982; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972), density (Eulau & Prewitt, 1973; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978), and proximity to large communities (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978).

In Canada, those who live in rural communities are most likely to vote and to run for a political position. Inhabitants of the larger cities are more likely to vote than those in smaller cities and less likely to be involved in community affairs (Mishler, 1979). In municipal politics, larger populations generally have lower turnout rates (Higgins, 1986).

The environment may also provide individuals with sources of political information and stimulation. Verba and Nie (1972) found that those communities which had higher ratios of external communication networks to internal communication networks had lower rates of local participation. Milbrath and Goel (1977) found that, generally speaking, "the more stimuli about politics a person receives, the greater the likelihood he [sic] will participate in politics, and the greater the depth of his participation" (p. 35) and, they noted, "the greater the number of political stimuli available in the environment, the greater the likelihood that an individual will pick them up" (p. 36).

In this thesis general environmental political participation factors will be measured at the aggregate level both directly (population size and density, adjacency to large urban centres) and indirectly. The perceived importance of an election in a
community will be operationalized as whether the more "visible" elective positions, such as head of council, are contested, and the perceived competitiveness of an election will be operationalized as the percentage of council seats which are being contested. Note that in these cases it is not only necessary that a position be contested but also that the public knows that it is being contested, which depends upon the presence of sources of interpersonal or mass communication.

The second group of factors which determine levels of political participation are particular to an individual's social position in life, immediate environment and personal attitudes and beliefs (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Since these vary from person to person they have to be studied at the survey level.

Persons who occupy a higher social position (class, socio-economic status) in life tend to be more politically involved (Campbell et al., 1960; Lijphart, 1980; Marsh & Kaase, 1979; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972). Various aspects of an individual's life can be considered to have an influence on political participation directly or indirectly, through determining social position, including: income (Conway, 1985; Lambert et al., 1988; Mishler, 1979 and Verba & Nie, 1972); education (Almond & Verba, 1963; Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989; Higgins, 1986; Kennamer, 1987; Marsh & Kaase, 1979; Meadow, 1980; Shaffer, 1981) and occupation (Campbell et al., 1960; Crewe, 1981; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Mishler, 1979). Mishler found that, in Canada, the relationship between education and participation was not linear, those with high school educations having the highest rate of participation. He theorized that those with lower levels of education lacked personal efficacy and those with higher levels of education tended to be cynical. Class differences in Canada were more likely to be manifested, if at all, by the intensity of political participation rather than in its direction. Working with American data Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) found that the effect of occupational
status was small when variations in education were controlled for, "the effect of occupation is greatest for the least educated and dwindles almost to nothing for college graduates" (p. 27). Religion, ethnicity and linguistic background have also been found to have an influence on political participation (Lijphart, 1980; Marsh & Kaase, 1979; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972).

Age has been found to have an impact on the likelihood of political involvement (Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989; Conway, 1985; Kennamer, 1987; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Shaffer, 1981; Verba & Nie, 1972). The likelihood that an American will vote increases with age until he or she is over sixty, and this relationship has been found to be independent of education (Campbell et al., 1960). Both Mishler (1979) and Crewe (1981) consider it possible that this is, at least in part, a generational effect, but lifecycle effects are equally likely.

The turnout rate among women tends to be lower than that of men (Campbell et al., 1960; Lambert et al., 1988; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978). Kay, Lambert, Brown and Curtis (1987) also found a higher level of campaign activism and a greater level of political interest on the part of men than women. Canadian women are also less likely to vote, to be elected or to take part in political campaigns than are Canadian men (Mishler, 1979). However, when women are among the candidates the turnout increases, although it is not clear whether this is due to increased voting on the part of men, or women or both, or to contextual or spurious factors (Price et al., 1989).

The relationships between individuals and their immediate environment have also been found to have an impact on their level of political participation. Those who develop strong ties to their communities or to community organizations are more likely
to participate than those who do not (Burstein, 1972; Greer, 1962; Milbrath & Goel, 1977). Verba and Nie (1972) found that those communities which had a high density of voluntary organizations had higher participation rates than those which did not.

The immediate environment of individuals may be full of sources of political information and stimulation, but the degree to which an individual responds to or utilizes these sources will depend upon personal attitudes and beliefs.

Those who are more interested in politics are more likely to participate in politics (Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989; Campbell et al., 1960; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972; Weaver, 1987). Individuals who have preferences about who wins are more likely to participate politically than those who have no preferences (Campbell et al., 1960; Conway, 1985; Mishler, 1979; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba & Nie, 1972). Those who are more interested in politics in general and those who prefer one party or candidate to another are more likely to perceive and retain information than those who have no interest in or dislike politics (McCombs, 1972; Milbrath & Goel, 1972). Individuals who feel they are well informed are also more likely to participate in politics (Conway, 1985; Kennamer, 1987; Lambert et al., 1988; Milbrath & Goel, 1977, Mishler, 1979).

Strength of party identification or partisan intensity affect the level of political participation (Bowen, Broh & Prysby, 1975; Campbell et al., 1960; Mishler, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972). There is evidence, however, that party identification is becoming weaker as a major influence of political participation (Choi & Becker, 1987; Conway, 1985; Ranney, 1981). In Canada, the close association between party identification and voting has been less stable over time than in the United States (Jenson, 1974).
One of the advantages of studying participation at the municipal level of government in Ontario is the diminished importance of political parties.

There has always been a bias against local party politics in Ontario. . . . Historically, neither the national political parties nor locally organized parties have become involved in an institutional way in local politics in Ontario. . . . there has always been a tacit agreement among local politicians that they leave their party affiliations at the door of the council chamber. (Siegel, 1990, pp. 158-159; emphasis in original)

The likelihood of an individual participating politically is also affected by their sense of civic duty or obligations (Campbell et al., 1960; Clarke et al., 1991; Conway, 1985; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Mishler, 1979), their feelings of political efficacy (Burnham, 1980; Clarke et al., 1991; Conway, 1985; Mishler, 1979; Shaffer, 1981), and membership in local organizations (Crewe, 1981; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba & Nie, 1972).

Political participation factors particular to individuals, such as age, level of education and gender will be measured at the survey (micro) level. There are a number of reasons why these factors should be taken into account when examining the relationship between media presence and political participation. First, it is important to contextualize the media variables within the many other influences we know exist. Second, because there are differences between the audiences of the various media in terms of the very factors we know affect political participation. For example, people who rely on television for news tend to differ from people who rely on newspapers in terms of occupation, income and education levels (Choi & Becker, 1987; Conway, 1985; Miyo, 1983; Wade & Schram, 1969). Finally, these factors give us a theoretical logic for expecting and testing for possibly spurious relationships.
4. Mass Media and Political Participation

The mass media are not independent forces creating political participation on their own, they are the means through which other forces influence levels of political participation. The effects are a result of "the process by which audience members use mass media, create their pictures of candidate, and arrive at their voting decisions" (Choi & Becker, 1987, p. 270). The communication media affect cognitions which in turn influence political participation (Kennamer, 1987). Individuals may learn through mass media sources that an election is competitive, that important positions are being contested, who the candidates are and the differences between them (Conway, 1985). Simply by stimulating the interest of possible voters, the mass media may foster higher levels of involvement (Weaver, 1987). The provision of information may allow people to develop the sense of competence and confidence necessary to making political decisions (Kennamer, 1987). The media also play a role in the development of community ties.

Measurement of the effects of mass communication on political participation requires an adequate conceptualization of the magnitude of effects it would be reasonable to expect. Given the many social, psychological and environmental determinants discussed above, it is unreasonable to expect the mass media to be a major factor in explaining variations in levels of political participation.

Voters who, due to party identification or structural determinants, already know how they will vote in advance of any information will, quite rationally, seek out information that will confirm their viewpoints and ignore, discount or re-interpret contrary information. If a large part of the electorate has pre-existing party loyalties, then the numbers who are open to being persuaded or even informed are comparatively
small. An overwhelming success among these undecided might still be barely visible to measurement for the population as a whole.

In a study of the 1974 Canadian federal election Clarke, LeDuc, Jenson and Pammett (1979) found that only 45 percent of the electorate made up their minds how to vote during the election campaign. The figure for the 1979 Canadian federal election was 49 percent, in 1980 35 percent, in 1984 41 percent and in 1988 43 percent (Clarke et al., 1991). In the United States and Great Britain less than a third of the electorate make up their minds during the election campaign (Clarke et al., 1991; Nimmo, 1970). Consequently the effects of the media may be less evident when studied over the short-term.

Eaman (1987, p. 14) points out that although the research that Lazarsfeld did in the 1930s was seen to demonstrate the limited power of the media, while at the same time the results of this research were being used by those within the media to more effectively persuade the audience to buy advertised products. The standards which commercial advertisers use to judge the efficacy of a message may be quite different than those of communication researchers since among commercial advertisers an increase of 1 percent of market share can be worth a fortune (Bauer, 1964). In politics similarly small fluctuations in support can change the outcome of an election, “when one considers that the outcome of the 1976 U. S. Presidential election hinged on fewer than 15,000 persons in Ohio and Hawaii . . . the importance of a relatively small group of highly interested and decided voters is apparent” (Weaver, 1987, p. 187). It has also been suggested that some of the conflicting results of commercial and political attempts at persuasive communication are due to the fact that many in the audience do not view politicians as trustworthy sources of information (Andreoli & Worchel, 1978, p. 60). Andreoli and Worchel found that television was the most persuasive medium when the
spokesperson was considered trustworthy, and the least persuasive when the spokesperson was seen as untrustworthy. Becker, McCombs and McLeod (1975) argue that it may not have been appropriate to focus research on the persuasive power of communication because “most of the resources of newspapers and news staffs of television and radio stations are devoted to informational transmittal, not persuasion” (p. 22).

Noelle-Neumann (1973) has argued that the apparently limited effect of the mass media is, to a degree, an artifact of the design of laboratory experiments, designs which fail to replicate some of the most important aspects of the media environment of the general population, i.e. “cumulation”, “ubiquity” and “unrealistic consonance”. Selective perception is difficult when the message is ubiquitous. Selection also assumes that there is a range of options available, which is unlikely given the “concurring assumptions and experiences of journalists of all levels and from all fields regarding the criteria for the acceptance of their material by the public” (p. 81). Where no range of opinions is visible, adherents of unspoken viewpoints are less likely to express their attitudes publicly, and the less an opinion is publicly supported the less likely it will be seen to be feasible. Thus the effects of the mass media are only apparent when those factors usually missing from laboratory experiments are considered.

When determining mass media effects one must also consider whether the form of the medium is of consequence. Some treat the various media as interchangeable. For example, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation announced in December 1990 that it was reorganizing its television and radio news services, and terminated the production of local television news programs. The organization argued that radio and television could best service the public by functioning “complementarily” rather than by duplicating each other’s efforts. Radio would refrain from covering international news in order to
supply "local focus and exposure", while television would "concentrate on regional, national and international programming" (Canada, 1991).

Myrowitz (1988), however, argues that there are real differences in the effects of the various media:

Recent polls show that many people will vote for a candidate they disagree with on the issues because they say they like the candidate personally. This dichotomy of response to personality and stands on the issues makes sense only in the television culture. If we read a candidate's speeches in a newspaper, it would be insane for us to say, "This is all nonsense, but you know something, I like the guy". (p. 61)

The different media are used in different ways by different groups of people in different circumstances. A 1987 Environics survey found that 47 percent of Canadians are dependent on television for news, 31 percent depend on daily newspapers, 15 percent on radio while only 4 percent depend on weekly newspapers, regional newspapers or on magazines for their news (Adams & Levitin, 1988, p. 5). Of these, television was ranked most objective by 42 percent, newspapers were considered most objective by only 18 percent, and radio by 15 percent. Television was also considered the most accurate medium by 43 percent of Canadians while newspapers fell far back at 21 percent followed by radio at 9 percent. Television, newspapers and radio were ranked for their in-depth analysis in the same order at 35 percent, 23 percent and 6 percent (p. 6).

Palmgreen and Clarke (1977) found that newspapers and television had different relative agenda-setting strengths at the local and the national level, newspapers being more influential at the local level and television more influential at the national level.

There are substantive differences in the way the different media cover news. Patterson (1980) found that 71 percent of newspaper election news articles were
primarily descriptive, which he characterized as "best described as a string of related facts that an editor can cut almost anywhere in order to fit the story into the available news space" (p. 25), while 14 percent were mainly interpretive, which he describes as placing a "greater emphasis on the why than the what, attempting to explain rather than to describe" (p. 26). Television election news items were 31 percent descriptive and 57 percent interpretive.

Studies have shown that there are comprehension and retention differences between those who are dependent on television and those who are dependent on newspapers. Those who were dependent on newspapers for political news retained more (Clarke & Fredin, 1978; Miyo, 1983) and comprehended more (O'Keefe, 1980) than did those dependent upon television. Newspaper readers know more about local issues (Becker & Whitney, 1980; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991), are more likely to vote, and know more about the local candidates (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland). Reading newspapers has been found to be more strongly related to political knowledge than using other media (Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989; Lambert et al., 1988). It is also more demanding than watching television (Schaffer, 1981), and the detailed coverage of issues may foster increased political concern (Smith, 1987) or interest (Shaffer).

Conway (1985) suggested that newspaper readers may simply avoid reading about subjects they find uninteresting while television viewers are more or less constrained to the agenda set by the television show. He raised the possibility that television coverage may actually decrease the level of political participation, through the negative image of politics which is fostered by the way in which television usually covers campaigns. However Kennamer (1987) considered that television may have a greater influence on intention to vote than newspapers.
People do not interact uniformly with the media. Simple transmission of information does not insure reception. The hypodermic needle and the agenda-setting models of communication fail to allow for the possibility of a large number of contradictory messages being received by the audience within a relatively short space of time. Do individuals careen back and forth between the messages or do they learn to discount or ignore the many conflicting messages? The audience receives any message as one among many, and it seems more reasonable to assume that the responses to messages "will be "complexly determined" (Moletch, Protes and Gordon, 1987). Ironically, it is usually those who already have a high level of knowledge who make use of and benefit from additional information (Converse, 1988):

The cost of absorbing the same piece of political information can vary dramatically from one person to the next. . . . if you already have command of a great deal of political information, absorbing new information seems quite effortless, like breathing out and breathing in. The notion of absorption cost itself seems odd. But if you have very little information already stored, any obligation to retain new information requires real work . . . those who lack political information find it hard to accumulate, and their potential interest is dampened because a lot of what they hear is not very intelligible to them. What we have here is technically called a positive feedback system; or in the vernacular, it is a process of "them what has, gets". (pp. 288-89)

Therefore local media sources are necessary but not sufficient if we are to have an informed electorate. We may hypothesize that those who are least informed are most likely to learn from the medium which involves the least effort. We might also hypothesize that the amount of information learned (or retained) will be quite small.

Mass media audience members have considerably more latitude in communication behavior than is implied in the experimental effects literature. . . . Not only may the person ignore or misinterpret the messages that impinge on him [sic], but he can more actively cope with media by controlling and seeking messages appropriate to his needs. (McLeod & O'Keefe, 1972, p. 122)
The audience selects what it will attend to. Since people generally listen to and read things they are interested in, these usually are topics on which they have a good deal of information and fixed opinions. Hence the very people most likely to attend to a message are those most difficult to change; those who can be converted do not look or listen. (Bauer, 1964, p. 321)

Therefore, at the aggregate level, essentially all that can be said for sure of anyone is that they do or do not have access to a source of information about the area in which they live, not whether they make use of it. At the individual level of survey data, we can ask the individual whether they read a newspaper or watched or listened to the news. We cannot know what use was made of them, short of tracking each individual in order to observe what contact they have with information sources. If someone does not personally subscribe to a local paper they may have access to one at work. If someone does not personally read, listen to, or watch the local news they still may receive the information contained in those sources through interpersonal contact. But if no mass media sources exist then it is impossible for people to have local knowledge or information except through personal experience or interpersonal relationships.

5. Community Ties, Mass Media and Political Participation

The mass media can also affect political participation indirectly through the influence it has on the development of community ties. A number of studies have indicated that there is a correlation between strength of community ties and level of newspaper use (Jeffres & Dobos, 1983; Jeffres, Dobos & Sweeney, 1987; O’Keefe, 1980; Stamm & Weis, 1982). Newspapers are among the connections which allow people to make contact with others, to develop bonds with the people and organizations around them. If, as in the case of Stamm and Weis (1982), one assumes that people who wish to form long-term commitments in a neighbourhood use the local newspaper to facilitate
the development of those ties, then one can speculate that where there are no community newspapers those ties develop more slowly, less deeply, or not at all.

Merton (1949) found that people who were primarily oriented towards the community in which they lived were more likely to read newspapers which stressed local news and less likely to read those newspapers which stressed news from outside the community than were those people who lived within the community but were primarily oriented to the world beyond it. Forty years later Neuwirth, Salmand and Neff (1989) undertook a study to determine, among other things, if Merton’s findings would still hold true in an age dominated by television, a medium just beginning to make an impact at the time of the original study. They found that “Localites were more likely to subscribe only to the local community paper, whereas Cosmopolite respondents were more likely to read newspapers from outside the local community” (p. 35). Those who read out-of-town newspapers were less likely to be happy with their location than those who did not.

Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1983) noted that, “in a number of studies positive correlations have been found between newspaper use and variables indicative of the individual’s community ties” (p. 1). In their 1983 study Jeffres and Dobos found that “people highly involved in their communities also are more likely to subscribe to several newspapers . . . and to have voted recently” (p. 36). Causally this relationship could run in either direction; that is, that the reading of newspapers may foster the creation of community ties, or those who have or wish to have community ties may use the newspaper as a means to foster or develop those ties. If an area does not have a local newspaper then there is a catalyst missing for the creation of community ties; similarly if someone wishes to use a newspaper in order to develop or foster their community ties they will not have access to one. The effect is functionally the same.
Jeffres and Dobos (1983), looking at urban communities within a city, found that the newspapers which served the entire city tended not to cover events which took place in or were of specific interest to these smaller neighbourhoods. Newspaper circulation areas are not always coincident with electoral communities and people in urban areas may carry out the different activities in their lives in different communities within the larger urban area—living in one, working in another, shopping in yet another, and thus may use newspapers for a variety of special purposes (Stamm & Fortini-Campbell, 1983).

Some media outlets which do not normally cover the local news of a particular area may begin to do so as the municipal election campaign periods loom. This very intermittent coverage is not likely to foster the type of community ties which, apparently, encourage political participation. The occasional story carried on regional level television will most probably be an event focused story, as will occasional mentions of a community in a newspaper from outside that community.

6. Mass Media and Competition

Candidates for municipal election in Ontario are unlikely to be running under the aegis of a political party. In order to be credible they must become known in the community, they must have supporters to canvass for them and they must be able to raise money (Higgins, 1986). The first agenda-setting function of the press is to acquaint the public with the candidates' names (Weaver, 1987). Advertising is also one of the major ways in which candidates and their stands on issues become known to the community (Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989; Conway, 1985). Thus in order for a community to have electoral competition, it must be either small enough that interpersonal communication will allow the candidate to become known to the constituency, or there must be internal sources of mass communication. Candidates in
communities which do not have their own local newspapers or television stations and who are forced to buy space in an out-of-town newspaper or a television station which originates from a large nearby community, may find that they cannot afford the rates or that they are paying to make themselves known to large numbers of people outside of their own community.

The low level of political participation on the part of most individuals is at least partially due to "the relative absence of perceived opportunity . . . many citizens appear to be unaware of the opportunities available" (Mishler, 1979, p. 43; emphasis in original). One of the roles that the media can play is to make citizens aware of those opportunities and to stimulate them to support or become involved in community groups (Conway, 1985). Mass communication sources can serve as intervening variables between psychological and sociological factors and various forms of "neighborhood [sic] mobilization" (Jeffres & Dobos, 1984). Neighbourhood media form the networks which allow residents to find out the concerns of others in their community and to organize groups and advertise group meetings. Burstein (1972) found "that the best predictors of level of political participation are measures of types of communications among people" (p. 1105).

Mishler (1979) described the most politically active Canadians as

among the most likely to have acquired an appreciation of the personal relevance of political decisions, a sense of political efficacy, substantial information about politics and public policy, a strong sense of community, and a high level of political interest. (pp. 115-116)

To the degree that the presence of local media foster these factors, the development of political competition within the community is also fostered. Competition requires that people know of local problems, that there be people who are motivated to work for
candidates and that more than a small elite feel that their actions can affect the future of the community.

In the data analysis section of this thesis, aggregate level measures of competition in a community (incumbency rates and percentage of contested positions) will be considered both as dependent variables, measuring levels of political participation, and as independent or intervening variables influencing the turnout rate.


The development of political participation is the result of a complex series of interactions among the physical environment, political environment, socioeconomic characteristics, personal attributes, personal characteristics and community involvement of an individual (see Figure 2.1, page 33). Communication, either interpersonal or through the mass media, facilitates and enables the processes involved.

The physical environment in which individuals live may have a direct effect on their levels of political participation (for example, it may be difficult for someone living in an isolated area to get to the polling station). It may also indirectly affect political participation by influencing either the perceived political environment, the personal characteristics of residents, or the levels of community involvement they are likely to develop. The physical environment may play a role in determining the actual type of political environment that may develop and can affect the degree to which individuals will be able to learn about their political environment through personal experience and the degree to which they will have to rely wholly, or in part, on interpersonal or mass communication networks.
FIGURE 2.1 Communication and Political Participation

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
- Population
- Density
- Location

SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS
- Income
- Occupation
- Education

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES
- Age
- Gender

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
MASS COMMUNICATION

PERCEIVED POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
- Competitiveness
- Importance of election
- Candidate differentiation
- Open gov't structures

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
- Organizational involvement
- Knowledge of issues

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
- Political knowledge
- Political interest
- Sense of civic duty

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
- Running for office
- Supporting a candidate

VOTING
Similarly, an individual’s socioeconomic background and personal attributes will play a part in the development of personal characteristics, perceptions of the political environment and levels of community involvement. Socioeconomic characteristics and personal attributes affect the type of interactions that individuals may have with their political environment and their communities. Some individuals will have personal interactions with government officials and local community organizations, others will be dependent upon interpersonal and mass communication networks.

The physical environment determines, to some degree, the type of interpersonal and mass communication networks individuals will have access to, and these communication networks, along with personal experience, influence the interactions among an individual’s environment, socioeconomic characteristics and attributes that result in the final decision whether and how to participate in the local political process.

The perceived political environment influences the development of personal characteristics such as political interest, political knowledge and a sense of civic duty or obligations as well as the level of community involvement. Similarly personal characteristics effect perceptions of the political environment and the development of community involvement, just as involvement in the community influences personal characteristics and perceptions of the political environment. Perceptions of the political environment, personal characteristics and community involvement all have an effect on the degree to which an individual is likely to vote or to otherwise take part in local political activities.

Although individuals are shaped by personal attributes, socioeconomic characteristics and their environment, their decisions are made and their actions take place in the context of what they perceive reality to be. Much of the information out
of which their reality is constructed comes through the mass media or interpersonal communication rather than personal experience. In large urban environments, or when people move frequently or live and work in different communities, individuals may not be part of interpersonal networks of communication and thus, even at the local level, may become dependent upon the mass media for information about their communities. The presence of communication networks does not "cause" political interest or political participation, but their absence can interrupt, slow or prevent its development.

8. Research Questions

A number of broad research questions arise out of the discussion above. Does the availability of local media affect the level of political participation at the local level? Does it matter what forms the local media take? Does the nature of the local media affect the development of community ties? Will the loss of a major local medium affect the political participation or the community involvement of the individuals in that locality? Will the inclusion of media variables improve the predictive value of the social and psychological determinants of political participation? These questions will be investigated by examining the following hypotheses:

\[ H_1 \] The nature (type and number) of the local media will affect the level of local political participation (turnout rate and level of competition).

\[ H_2 \] The predictive value of a turnout model built with competition, demographic and institutional measures will be increased by the inclusion of media variables.

\[ H_3 \] Individuals in Windsor who are more dependent on local television news will have lower levels of political participation and community involvement.

\[ H_4 \] Among the groups in Windsor who are more dependent on television for local news, the likelihood of voting, and the levels of political interest and community involvement will be lower after the closing of the local TV station than they were before it closed.
H₅ Reliance on media internal to the community will tend to increase community ties and thus increase political participation while media external to the community will tend to decrease community ties and thus decrease political participation.
CHAPTER III

ONTARIO COMMUNITIES AND THEIR MEDIA

1. Introduction

This chapter will describe the local media available in Ontario communities, their distribution and associated levels of political participation. The range of population size and density among municipalities will be outlined and a categorization of communities into four basic types will be presented. The demographics and levels of political participation characteristic of each category will be discussed. This will provide the context for later findings and organization for the data analysis. Four measures of political participation will be used in these descriptions: the turnout rate, the incumbency rate, whether a community's head of council was elected rather than acclaimed, and the rate of council competitiveness (the percentage of positions on council that were contested in the election). Increases in incumbency rates signify decreases in political participation; increases in the other measures indicate increases in political participation.¹

2. Ontario Municipalities

The province of Ontario is broken down into 839 municipalities. Thirty-nine of these are “upper tier” municipalities which are collections of lower tier municipalities (e.g. regional or district governments). The lower tier municipalities with eligible

¹Unless otherwise specified, the statistics and information in this chapter are from 1985.
electors are divided into different types of communities by the Ontario government: boroughs, cities, towns, separated towns, villages and townships². Villages are characterized by low population and moderate to low density. Townships range more widely in population but generally have very low densities. Cities, towns and boroughs are all characterized by high population and high density. The categorization of an urban municipality as a city, town or borough is often based on historical or other non-demographic and non-theoretical concerns. Almost 70% of Ontario’s cities have smaller populations than the largest community designated as a town and almost 20% of Ontario towns are larger than the smallest city.

Because of this great variation in size and density of municipalities across the province we will examine the relationships between the media and different types of municipalities as well as against the province as a whole. Municipalities will be grouped into four categories. For the smaller population units we will be using the official provincial designations of villages and townships. Because of the overlaps in the size and densities of the municipalities in the various urban categories we have also created two municipal categories, large and small urban centres. When Ontario cities and towns are pooled together 42 (or approximately 20%) have populations over 40,000. These 42 communities have been designated large urban centres and the remaining 153 urban communities have been designated small urban centres (see Table 3.1, page 39).

Two-thirds of the province’s population lives in the 5% of communities designated large urban centres. These municipalities are the most likely to have elected heads of council (83.3%) and have the highest rates of competition for council positions in the province (90.4%), both indicators of high levels of political participation (see

²Metropolitan Toronto is an upper tier municipality which is made up of six lower tier municipalities, each of which is dealt with as a separate community in this analysis.
TABLE 3.1 Ontario Municipalities by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Municipality</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
<th>Average Population</th>
<th>Average Density</th>
<th>Percentage Elected Council Heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>142,441</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>8,986</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>2,902</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All municipalities*</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11,211</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Municipalities without eligible electors are not included.

Table 3.2, page 40). They also have the lowest turnout rates (36.3%), an indication of low levels of political participation.

The small urban centres, which are less densely populated than the larger urban centres, rank second in likelihood of having an elected head of council (60.8%), council competitiveness (77.5%) and turnout rate (47.4%). Villages have the highest turnout rates in the province (57.9%) but they also have the second lowest rate of council competitiveness (68.6%) and are least likely to have an elected head of council (41.2%). Townships have the second lowest turnout rate (38.6%), rank third in likelihood of having an elected head of council (48.7%) and have the lowest rate of council competition (68.4%).
### TABLE 3.2 Participation Statistics by Municipal Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality Type</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Turnout Rate</th>
<th>Council Comp. Rate</th>
<th>Incumbency Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>63.</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=153)</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages (n=119)</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships (n=478)</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario (n=792)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>43.03</td>
<td>71.33</td>
<td>59.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the different forms of political participation fluctuate in absolute value and relative strength from one municipal category to another. It appears that some of the factors which are systematically different among the categories influence levels of political participation, and that different kinds of political participation are affected in different ways by these factors.
3. Local Media in Ontario

In this thesis the phrase "local media" is used in a special and restricted sense. It is the relationship between the medium and its audience, rather than ownership or simple location, which makes an outlet "local". Media produced in one municipality and consumed in another are not considered to be local to the second community. The primary audience of the medium must be voters in its area of geographical focus. Television stations that produce no local shows are not considered to be local media, nor are radio stations that are available only on cable, or regional editions of daily newspapers.

There are four forms of local media in Ontario: television stations, radio stations, daily newspapers and weekly or community newspapers. These are not distributed equally among municipal categories (see Table 3.3, page 42). Mass media, not surprisingly, tend to be found where there are large numbers of people in relatively close proximity. Although only 28.8% of Ontario municipalities have any local form of mass media, 81.2% of the population of the province has local media in their municipality (see Table 3.4, page 43). The mean population of a community with some form of media is 20,000 more than the provincial average and the mean density of communities with media is 7.1 compared to the provincial mean of 2.7.

Sixty-two percent of communities with media had an elected head of council, compared to the provincial average of 51.8. The mean turnout rate for communities with media was slightly higher than for the province as a whole, the council competitiveness rate was almost 9 percentage points higher and the incumbency rate was marginally lower (see Table 3.5, page 44).
TABLE 3.3 Local Media Sources by Type of Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Municipality</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>T.V.</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(42)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(153)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(119)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(478)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All municipalities</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Television

Out of the 23 local television stations, 3 are located in small urban centres and there are none in villages or townships (see Table 3.3). Therefore the effect of television stations will be examined statistically only in large urban areas. Just less than half of the province's population has access to local television, however the mean population (174,997) and mean density (18.7) of communities with television are quite atypical for the province (see Table 3.4). Television is found primarily where there are large numbers of people living in close proximity. The council competition rate of these communities (91.7%), their likelihood of having an elected head of council (82.6%) and their incumbency rate (64.1%) are above the provincial average, while the turnout rate (38.9%) is below the provincial average.
TABLE 3.4 Demographic Statistics for Media in Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Media Present</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
<th>Average Population</th>
<th>Average Density</th>
<th>Percentage Elected Council Heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>174,997</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>78,993</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Newspapers</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>107,270</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Newspapers</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>27,466</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Local Media Present</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>31,636</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(28.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Local Media Present</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>2,954</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(71.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Municipalities</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11,211</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Radio

All but three of the 76 radio stations are found in urban centres and therefore examination of the effects of this medium will be limited to the urban centres (see Table 3.3). Two-thirds of the province's population has access to a local radio station (see Table 3.4). Although less so than in the case of television, communities with radio stations are generally larger and more dense than the average Ontario community. They are more likely than the average community to have an elected head of council (73.7%), but less likely than are communities with television or with daily newspapers. The turnout rate (41.1%) of municipalities with radio stations is lower and their incumbency
TABLE 3.5 Participation Statistics by Type of Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Present</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Turnout Rate</th>
<th>Council Comp. Rate</th>
<th>Incumbency Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=228)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=23)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=76)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=46)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=202)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Media</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=564)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rate (61.2%) and council competition rate (91.5%) are higher than the provincial average.

(c) Daily Newspapers

All of Ontario's daily newspapers are located in urban centres, therefore examination of their effects will be limited to the two corresponding categories (see Table 3.3). Over half of the population of the province has access to a local daily newspaper (see Table 3.4), although the extent of local coverage may be limited (e.g. the cities around Toronto, see discussion Chapter 7, page 126). As was the case with television and radio, daily newspapers are generally found where there are many people in a comparatively small area. Communities with daily papers have a very high likelihood of having an elected head of council (82.6%), and are characterized by high council competition rates (92.6%), higher than average incumbency rates (67%) and lower than average turnout rates (39.6%).

(d) Weekly/Community Newspapers

Weekly newspapers are the most widely available type of local media (see Table 3.3). Sixty-eight percent of Ontario cities, 78 percent of towns and 42 percent of villages have at least one weekly local newspaper. They are the only medium found with any frequency in either villages or townships and thus will be the sole medium statistically examined for these categories. They are also the only medium that will be examined in all categories of municipalities, although by virtue of low frequency they may have less impact than more frequent media in places where the latter exist. Communities with weekly newspapers are less likely to have an elected head of council (61.4%) than were communities with other forms of media, however their rate exceeds that of communities
with no media at all. Their turnout rate (47.2%) is higher than the mean rate of communities with other media and their council competitiveness rate (78.5%) and incumbency rate (58.9%) are lower, although both are higher than the provincial mean.

Unlike daily newspapers, weeklies are not always made up of paid circulations. Some are available, or delivered for free, funded solely by those who advertise within them. Of the 202 weekly newspapers about which circulation information was available, 185 had at least a partial paid circulation.

(e) Media Diversity

With two exceptions, combinations of different types of local media are found only in urban centres\(^3\) (see Table 3.6, page 47). Combinations of at least two forms of media are found in 83.3% of large urban centres and 23.5% of small urban centres. Only 5.4% of the 478 townships have any local media, and only 0.4% have more than one. Villages with any local media (34.5%) have only one type of medium present. Therefore, the effects of media diversity, or combinations of media, will be examined only for the province as a whole and in urban centres.

Various combinations of media are not equally likely to occur. Neither television nor a daily newspaper ever occurs alone. A large urban community is most likely to have at least three different types of local media present, and small urban centres are more likely to have only one. The most common media “configuration” in a community is to have at least one weekly newspaper, the second most common is to have local radio and a weekly newspaper.

\(^3\)The township of Atikokan in the Rainy River District and Marathon Township in the Thunder Bay District each had radio and weekly newspapers. In 1988 the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs changed the municipal status of Marathon to a town.
### TABLE 3.6 Media Present by Type of Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Any Media Present</th>
<th>Large (n=42)</th>
<th>Small (n=153)</th>
<th>Villages (n=119)</th>
<th>Townships (n=478)</th>
<th>All (n=792)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(452)</td>
<td>(564)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>(228)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Media Present</th>
<th>Large (n=42)</th>
<th>Small (n=153)</th>
<th>Villages (n=119)</th>
<th>Townships (n=478)</th>
<th>All (n=792)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(452)</td>
<td>(564)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(155)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Combinations</th>
<th>Large (n=42)</th>
<th>Small (n=153)</th>
<th>Villages (n=119)</th>
<th>Townships (n=478)</th>
<th>All (n=792)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no media</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(452)</td>
<td>(564)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radio only</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekly only</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(82)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tv, radio</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>radio, daily paper</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
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<td>(2)</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>tv, radio &amp; daily paper</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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<td>1.1%</td>
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<td>(7)</td>
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<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tv, radio &amp; weekly paper</td>
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<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radio, weekly &amp; daily paper</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>all media present</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(f) Summary

The population of Ontario is not distributed evenly among its communities, nor is access to local mass media. Eighty-three percent of the population is found in urban centres, the remaining 17% is scattered among 605 rural municipalities. Dyck argues that the size of the province and the remoteness of parts of its population has been overcome:

by various forms of communications. Some 175 radio stations and thirty television stations operate in the province, including the government's own TVOntario, along with cable and pay-TV systems which provide a wide range of fare. (Dyck, 1990, p. 22)

However, not all of those radio and television stations are in different communities--there are 564 municipalities without any local media at all. Not all television stations produce local news shows, some merely rebroadcast shows produced elsewhere. For most communities TVOntario, cable and pay-TV are transmitters of shows from outside the community. In Ontario, Toronto speaks to itself, Toronto speaks to the towns in Southern Ontario or Northern Ontario, but there are not always mass media structures in place to allow these towns to speak to themselves. In the following chapters we will attempt to find out whether possession of that internal voice makes a measurable difference in the levels of political participation in municipal elections.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

In this chapter some general and specific concerns associated with the types of data to be used will be discussed. The generation of the aggregate and survey data will be described. Key concepts will be operationalized and appropriate methods of analyses will be selected.

2. General Background

In order to examine the research questions posed in this thesis a dataset will be used which includes the results of municipal elections held across the Province of Ontario in 1985, along with details of the local media available in each of the municipalities in question. The appropriate hypotheses and the processes underlying the aggregate data findings will also be tested using individual level data compiled from surveys of individuals living in the City of Windsor in three different years: 1990, 1991 and 1992. Both micro and macro level data are used because each has particular strengths which can offset the weaknesses of the other.

Nachmias and Nachmias (1987) state that “the demonstration of causality involves three distinct operations: (1) demonstrating covariation, (2) eliminating spurious relations, and (3) establishing the time order of the occurrences” (p. 109). According to Shoemaker and McCombs (1989):
Establishing a causal relationship requires: (1) showing covariation between the presumed cause and the presumed effect; (2) establishing appropriate time order, that is, that the cause precedes the effect and not the reverse; (3) ruling out alternative explanations for the observed relationship; and (4) controlling error variance, that is, keeping errors to a minimum. (p. 154)

The empirical quantitative study of the effects of the media on politics requires variation across circumstances which are sufficiently similar to allow comparison. Where they are not able to hold factors constant, researchers attempt to control for them statistically. However, as Shoemaker and McCombs point out this, "is only as good as the researcher's ability to identify and measure possible alternative explanations" (pp. 154-155).

Researchers attempting to study the effects of mass media on political activity have found it difficult, outside the laboratory, to truly hold factors constant. They have either had to find circumstances which are basically similar, with the exception of the variation they wish to study, or to attempt to hold factors constant using statistical techniques. Cross-national studies designed to study the effects of media on political participation suffer from a lack of similar circumstances. Not only do the media vary from country to country, the electoral landscapes of these countries also vary widely. To attempt to sort out all of the differences between the countries being studied in order to pinpoint the precise effects of the various media involved on the voters of the countries in question is beyond the power of "statistical control". Thus researchers are not able to fulfil the requirement "that other factors be ruled out as rival explanations of the observed association between the variables under investigation" (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987, p. 111).

Studying media effects at the Ontario municipal level, however, provides variation and also ensures comparability. Municipal elections are all held on the same day,
administered under exactly the same election laws, and the province has, to a great
degree, a shared political culture. In most cases, the candidate runs alone, independent
of any political party. Individual cities, towns, villages and communities have different
configurations of local (non-network) media and at the municipal level we do not have
to concern ourselves with the compounding effects of the blanket of national or
provincial media coverage of the elections. Since there are no official parties at the
municipal level national or provincial media cannot cover the various races in any
general way. Individual races may catch the interest of the greater media, but in general
they will not be able to cover all the issues or candidates involved. Consequently one
can discount the effect of the provincial and national media for the greater part (except,
of course, as a distraction) and assume that what material individual voters may get on
the municipal elections will be received either through interpersonal communication,
including door-to-door canvassing, or through the local media. Since all the elections
are being held at the same time, all voters are going to the polls under the same general
economic and historic circumstances—although there will, of course, be some variation
in the effects of those general circumstances on the specific places. Therefore there will
be general contextual similarity across cases and sufficient variation in local structural
and media contexts among them. Using statistical techniques it is possible to study the
varying effects of media while holding other factors, such as size of community,
constant—or we can study one type of medium holding the other variables constant.

Robinson (1950) noted that those who conduct studies at the aggregate level are
usually interested not in what groups do, but what individual members of groups do.
Yet the statistical analyses of aggregate data are carried out at the ecological rather than
the individual level. "In an ecological correlation the statistical object is a group of
persons. . . . The variables are percentages, descriptive properties of groups, and not
descriptive properties of individuals" (p. 351; emphasis in original). Ecological correlation does not demonstrate individual correlation because:

there are a large number of individual correlations which might correspond to any given ecological correlation, i.e., to any given set of marginal frequencies. . . . Thus there need be no correspondence between the individual correlation and the ecological correlation. (p. 354)

Therefore in order to avoid committing an ecological fallacy, survey level data will be examined in order to verify that relationships found at the group level are also present at the individual level.

3. Aggregate Level Data

Aggregate level data were compiled from a number of sources. Variables of measuring interest were extracted from a previously existing dataset compiled at the University of Windsor and materials available from public sources.

The previously existing dataset was compiled from municipal election year data provided by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs by Trevor Price, Kai Hildebrandt and Edward Czilli at the University of Windsor. These data were originally gathered through questionnaires sent out by the Local Government Organization Branch of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs after the local elections of 1980, 1982 and 1985 to various municipalities in the Province of Ontario. Because municipal clerks were responding to government "requests", this is an unusually complete and reliable set of data. The data include information not only on turnout, but also on other aspects of political participation, such as the number of second calls for nomination, the number of incumbents standing for re-election, the number of candidates who ran unopposed, the gender of office-holders on boards and councils, the number of municipal boards and
councils, the number of non-resident voters, the number of referenda on each ballot, the number of votes cast in each race and many others (Price et al., 1989). The data were originally compiled separately for each election year. Price et al. merged these into a single dataset and added supplementary information including the population and size of the municipalities.

In order to add media variables to the dataset, a list of the television stations (excluding rebroadcast stations) and radio stations existing in the Province of Ontario in 1985 was compiled from the listings published in *Broadcaster*. Since the focus of this study is the effect of local media coverage on communities, television stations were only counted if they were listed as having news directors, or there were other indications that news was being produced and aired locally. Communities were listed as having a television or radio station only if they were specifically identified as the primary market of a station. If two communities were listed as the primary markets, for example, each was considered to have a local television or radio station.

Circulation information about the daily newspapers published in the Province of Ontario in 1985 was extracted from the appropriate Audit Bureau of Circulations' *Canadian Newspaper Circulation Factbook*. This information included circulation in the newspaper's primary market, in the county in which the newspaper was published and in other counties. Estimates of the number of households in each county or market are also provided. If a daily newspaper was listed as serving more than one municipality its circulation was pro-rated among those municipalities based on their populations.4

4Metropolitan Toronto is made up of six separate municipalities. Any television or radio station or daily newspaper which is available in one of those municipalities will be available in all of them. Weekly newspapers frequently confine themselves to serving a particular portion of the larger metropolitan area.
A list of the newspapers published in the Province of Ontario at least once a week and fewer than five days a week was compiled from the December edition of *Canadian Advertising Rates and Data* for 1985. Newspapers which contained less than 25 percent news content were excluded from this study (this is the categorization used by *Canadian Advertising Rates and Data* to separate advertising circulars from newspapers). Circulation information was also collected.

A community was considered to be served by a weekly or community newspaper if its name was included in that of the newspaper or if it was identified as a primary market of a newspaper. Some newspapers indicated in their names that they served more than one community, other newspapers were listed in the *Canadian Advertising Rates and Data* for more than one location. In these cases each community was recorded as being served by one paper and the circulation, if available, was pro-rated by population among the communities.

4. Survey Data

Data generated through surveys conducted in the city of Windsor allow us to add individual level textuality to the aggregate results. Peculiar historical circumstances make these data particularly appropriate for this study. Until 1990 the city had a local Canadian television station, a local newspaper and 6 local radio stations. In December 1990 the CBC announced that it was closing the local operations of CBET, the CBC station in Windsor, Ontario. The local CBC television station immediately ceased the production of local news shows and became a rebroadcast network station. The CBC regional newscast from Toronto was substituted for the local newscast previously carried by the station.
Although no other Canadian television station is situated within 200 kilometres of the city many Windsor residents can receive a number of television stations without antennae or cable. Included among these are the stations which broadcast from the city of Detroit which is located across the Detroit River, north of Windsor. These include affiliates WJBK, a CBS affiliate; WDIV, an NBC affiliate; WXYZ, an ABC affiliate; WKBD, a Fox network affiliate and WTVS, a PBS station. There are 11 radio stations in the City of Detroit, and 54 in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Three-quarters of Windsorites listen to one of these stations. For the person who wishes to get the weather forecast for the next morning, or to hear the latest local sports news, the local American newscasts are more likely to give detailed information than would a Canadian show which originated 400 kilometres away. Many Windsor residents have also grown up following the Detroit sports teams, consequently sports fans are liable to turn to Detroit stations to get detailed sports reporting as well.

Studies have shown that for most people, the principal source of information about politics is television (Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts, 1978; Lambert et al., 1988). In this particular situation, accessing sources of local news is not necessarily going to bring detailed information about the city in which the audience lives and in particular about the politics of that city. Those who have become dependent upon television for their news may find information which is relevant at the provincial or national level without getting information relevant to Windsor. In these circumstances watching local television news (news shows which primarily focus on news other than national or international) after the closing of CBET Windsor would not have a positive effect on the development of local community ties to Windsor.

Undergraduate students in the department of Communication Studies of the University of Windsor had, for some years, been carrying out surveys of the population
of Windsor under the direction of Dr. Hildebrandt. These had routinely included questions about media use, political interest and likelihood of voting. In all cases the questionnaires were administered by telephone. Telephone numbers were generated by adding a set increment to numbers randomly selected from the most recent Windsor telephone book. Only private residences were included in the surveys. The person in the household to be interviewed was generally randomly chosen by asking to speak to the adult (person over 19) with the most recent birthday. This practice of conducting surveys had begun before and was continued after the closing of CBET. Thus there is the opportunity to study the same community before and after a major change in the availability of local media. The results of these circumstances approximate a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Survey data (turnout and gender breakdown of the adult population) can be compared with the same values for the population of Windsor from official sources in order to identify sampling or measurement error. The 1986 Canada census reports that the population of Windsor is 50.8% female, and 51.6% of those over the age of 19 were female. The Windsor City Clerk reports that 44.39% of eligible Windsor voters cast ballots in the municipal elections in 1991.

Four surveys will be used in this thesis. The first survey, 'Fall 1990' took place in November 1990 and 58.8% of its 209 respondents were female. The second survey, 'Winter 1991' was conducted in March. There were 319 respondents, 57.1% of them female. The third survey, 'Fall 1991' took place in November of the same year and had 271 respondents. Fifty-six percent of them were female and of those eligible to vote in the municipal elections taking place that month, 58.7% stated that they planned to do so. The final survey being used in this analysis, 'Winter 1992' was completed during
April, 1992. There was a total of 239 respondents, 57.7% of them were female and 62% claimed to have voted in the municipal election in November of 1991.

The consistently high proportion of women among survey respondents suggests that these deviations from the true Windsor mean are not solely due to sampling error, even though the percent of women for each individual survey is within the margin of error. The while discrepancy between the actual number of Windsorites who had voted and the rate of voting reported by those surveyed, however, is more likely due to measurement error than sampling error, as people overestimate the likelihood that they will vote, misremember that they did vote or seek to answer the question in a socially acceptable manner. These are problems inherent in studying effects through surveys. Because use of the media and political participation are not being studied in a laboratory environment, we are dependent upon the self-reports of the respondents for all of our information. This inevitably involves some form of measurement error. Respondents will give answers which do not give the correct information to the researchers even when the respondent is making every attempt to do so. This is sometimes due to simple misunderstanding, if the question was heard or understood to mean something other than it was intended to mean (Converse & Presser, 1986, p. 56). Even when respondents understand the question, their answers may not be accurate. Studies have shown that when political participation is measured through self-report, the responses will overstate the number who voted by 15 to 25 percent (Katosch & Traugott, 1981, p. 325). Overstatements of behaviour which has a positive normative value and understatements of behaviours with negative normative values are considered to create a systematic bias in survey responses (Bradburn, Sudman, Blair & Stocking, 1978). In this particular circumstance we can compare the reported turnout in our sample with actual turnout in the municipal election in question, and are therefore able to estimate the amount of some of our measurement error.
Even with the clearest understanding of the questions being asked and the best of intentions to answer them accurately, the respondent may still be unable to give the researcher an accurate answer to a question.

Recalling an event or behavior can especially difficult in any of several circumstances: if the decision was made almost mindlessly in the first place, if the event was so trivial that people have hardly given it a second thought since, if questions refer to events that happened long ago . . . there is evidence that recall of even "important" events either fades with time, or requires specific cues to bring them into focus (Converse & Presser, 1986, p. 20).

This is a particular problem with activities which are seldom consciously quantified, such as number of hours spent watching television, number of minutes listening to the radio or how much time is spent reading the daily newspaper. All too often the respondent is telling the researcher either how many hours she or he thinks they were supposed to have spent accessing one of these media, or how many hours they think the average person will answer, or they give a completely honest and inaccurate answer based on their own misconceptions of what the truth actually is.

We can expect that those people who do lie or misremember will usually do so in the same direction—generally people are more likely to say that they have voted when they have not than the reverse, and people are more likely to underestimate the number of hours they spend watching television than the reverse. Therefore, while we cannot expect to generate an accurate number for either figure we may assume that, in general, those who admit to watching five hours of television actually watch more television than those who admit to watching two hours.

This problem is somewhat mitigated in this case since we know that there was no regular local television news during the year preceding the 1991 municipal election. We
know that the local media availability did vary between the two elections and we know that if respondents answer that they were, in 1991, dependent on local television for Windsor municipal election news, there is measurement error. Thus the findings of the survey data can tell us what individuals did, with a large margin of possible measurement error, and the aggregate dataset can give us a very accurate picture of what actually existed and happened without allowing us to determine what any individual did.

5. Statistical Analyses

Four measures of political participation will be analyzed using the aggregate datasets. The turnout rate is measured by calculating the number of ballots cast as a percentage of the total eligible electorate in a municipality. The incumbency rate is calculated as the percentage of members of council serving for at least a second term. The competition rate is calculated by determining what percentage of council positions were contested in a given election year. Finally, a dummy variable is created with a value of 0 if the head of council is acclaimed and 1 if the head of council is elected.5

A basic model explaining the variations in political participation will be used as a benchmark against which the power of the media variables can be tested. The physical environment (population size and density, proximity to large population centres and percentage of nonresident voters) and institutional factors (level of secretiveness in local government) are used to explain fluctuations in the incumbency rate and the

5The data is not weighted to reflect the differing populations of the municipalities. Thus the Village of Thornloe, population 166, has the same weight as the City of North York, population 556,308. If one wanted to gauge how many people were affected by the various media conditions each municipality should be weighted by population size. For example, 90% of the municipalities have no local daily media, however this affects only 31% of the population. In contrast, only 3% of the municipalities have local television but 45% of Ontario’s population lives in these communities.
likelihood of having an election for head of council. The incumbency rate is added to these factors to explain variations in the percentage of positions on council contested. Physical environment, institutional factors, the importance of the election and the competitiveness of the current election are used to explain variations in the turnout rate. Since the aggregate data does not contain attitudes, opinions or perceptions, competitiveness rates are included on the assumption that there will be a correlation between the level of competitiveness and the perception of competitiveness among the electorate, even if those perceptions aren't absolutely accurate.

Levels of competitiveness are operationalized as the rate of council competitiveness and the percentage of contested positions on the public and the separate school boards. The importance of the election is measured by whether the position of head of council is being contested. The degree of secretiveness in government is measured through dummy variables which are coded 0 if a council's standing committees or its committee of the whole meet openly, and 1 if they meet some or all of the time in closed session.

In analyzing the aggregate data, we will use regression to test for the existence of bivariate relationships between the presence of media and turnout rates, to assess the strength of these relationships when other relevant factors are held constant and to assess whether the addition of media variables will increase the explanatory power of a model based on that of Price et al. (1989). The same strategy will be used to test the effect of media on the degree of competition for positions on council and on the incumbency rate. Logistic regression will be used to test the effects of media on the likelihood that the head of council will have been elected rather than acclaimed. Regression will also be used to analyze the relationships between the penetration rates of the daily and weekly newspapers and the levels of political participation.
With the exception of age and education, there are few interval level variables in the survey level data. Analysis will focus on the use of crosstabulations, and logistic regression. Within each set of survey data, the existence of bivariate relationships between the various types of media use and local political interest, and between type of media use and intention to vote will be tested. The marginals of the groups with different patterns of media use will be compared between the surveys before and after the closure of the local television station in Windsor.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF AGGREGATE DATA

1. Introduction

In this chapter the effect that the presence of media has on levels of local political participation will be examined using aggregate level data. For each of the four measures of political participation the relationship will first be examined in simple bivariate form, then the effect of the addition of media variables to a regression model including relevant variables will be considered. It will then be determined whether the addition of the relevant media variables adds to the explanatory power of our basic regression model.

The following factors will be held constant when examining the effects of media on the incumbency rate and the likelihood of having an elected head of council as these are the significant factors in Price et al. (1989): population size and density, secretiveness of government, proximity to large population centres and percentage of nonresident voters among eligible electors. When examining the effects of media on the rate of competition for council positions, we will add the incumbency rate to the factors already listed. When examining the effects of media on turnout we will add the competitiveness of the local election and the importance of the election to the factors already listed.

The relationship between the presence of media in general, or a particular medium, and the various measures of political participation will generally be analyzed
using regression. In regression one attempts to reflect a theoretical model in an equation:

\[ Y = \text{constant} + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \ldots + B_kX_k \]  \hspace{1cm} (Eq. 5.1)

where \( Y \) represents the value of the dependent variable and each \( X \) represents an independent variable. When the independent variable is dichotomous, the regression coefficient (\( B \)) represents the amount of change in the dependent variable when the independent variable (\( X \)) changes from 0 (not present) to 1 (present), and all other independent variables are held constant. The sign of \( B \) indicates whether the dependent variable increases or decreases as the independent variable increases. If the independent variable is interval level, \( B \) represents the amount of change in the dependent variable when the independent variable increases by one unit. The beta weight, or beta coefficient, is a standardization of \( B \) and indicates the relative importance of each independent variable in explaining change in the dependent variable (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). The impact of media variables will be examined in a single bivariate relationship with the dependent variables, and with the appropriate other relevant factors held constant. \( R \) is a measure of the multiple linear association and \( r^2 \) can be interpreted as the amount of variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables in the regression equation. If the \( r^2 \) of the regression equation including a media variable is larger than the \( r^2 \) of the same model without the media variable, then the inclusion of the media variable has increased the explanatory power of the model. The beta weight associated with a media variable after all factors in our regression models have been held constant indicates the relative "importance" of the media variable in predicting or explaining the value of the dependent variable.
Since some of the dependent variables do not fulfil the assumptions of multiple linear regression (e.g. normal distribution, interval level variables), other techniques will also be used (Blalock, 1979). Logistic regression, which measures the odds of a particular event being correctly predicted, will be used to examine the relationship between the head of council being elected or acclaimed, and the presence of media. In this procedure we attempt to determine the regression equation that maximizes the likelihood of predicting the correct value of a dichotomous dependent variable where:

$$\frac{\text{Probability of an Elected Council Head}}{\text{Probability of an Acclaimed Council Head}} = \left[ \frac{P}{(1-P)} \right]$$  \hspace{1cm} (Eq. 5.2)

and:

$$\text{LOG}\left(\frac{P}{(1-P)}\right) = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \ldots + B_kX_k$$  \hspace{1cm} (Eq. 5.3)

The regression coefficient $B$ represents the change in the log odds of correctly predicting the value of the dependent variable which corresponds to an increase of one in the value of the independent variable (Aldrich & Wilson, 1984). $R$ represents a partial correlation of the relationship between the dependent and independent variable and reflects the relative weight of the independent variable in the prediction of the dependent variable.

To examine whether inclusion of media variables will improve the predictive value of the original model the odds of making a correct prediction will be given for the original model and for that model with media variables added.
Because the aggregate data is a census not a sample, since all units (of the province) are represented, significance levels can only be used as indicators of strength and cannot be used for hypothesis testing.

2. Turnout

When we examine the effect across the province of the simple bivariate relationship between media presence and the turnout rate we find that the turnout mean of communities with media is 4.9 percentage points higher than that of communities without media (see Table 5.1, page 66). The relationship is significant but not strong (beta is .15). The presence of a weekly newspaper is associated with a 5.6 percent point increase in the turnout rate. This relationship is also significant with a weak beta. The fact that one medium alone has a more positive effect on the turnout rate than all media together leads one to suspect that either some media are negatively related with the turnout rate or that a medium may have a positive effect on turnout in one type of municipality and a negative effect on turnout in a different type of municipality.

Examination of the relationships between media and the turnout rate in large urban centres supports both of these suppositions. All relationships between media and turnout are nonsignificant, and all have weak betas. Weekly newspapers reverse the direction of their effect from that for the province as a whole. There is now a small negative relationship between weekly newspapers and the turnout rate. The presence of radio is also associated with decreases in the turnout rate. Television and daily newspapers both increase turnout, the latter approximately doubling the effect of the former on the turnout rate. When all four media are taken into account, the overall presence of media has a small positive effect on the turnout rate. This demonstrates
### TABLE 5.1 Turnout by Municipality and Media

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<th>Province</th>
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<th>With Factors Held Constant</th>
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<th>Model with Media Added</th>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.86</td>
<td>.15⁺</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.17⁺</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Any Media</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.91</td>
<td>-.05</td>
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<td>3.34</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>-4.66</td>
<td>-.15⁺</td>
<td>-4.17</td>
<td>-.14</td>
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<td>Radio</td>
<td>-4.55</td>
<td>-.17⁺</td>
<td>-4.57</td>
<td>-.17⁺</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>-3.38</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-2.54</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages (n=102)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-36</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships (n=458)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>.12⁺</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁺ p ≤ .1,  * p ≤ .05,  † p ≤ .01,  ‡ p ≤ .001
that the effects of different media may cancel each other out and be overlooked if they are not examined separately.

Media presence has a significant, moderately sized negative effect on the turnout rate in smaller urban centres. All three individual forms of media found in communities of this size decrease the turnout rate. The largest effect is that of radio, daily newspapers have a slightly less negative effect and weekly newspapers have the smallest decrease associated with them. Radio is the only individual medium to have a significant relationship with the turnout rate, and both the size of change in turnout rate associated with it (B), and its beta are very similar to those of media presence in general. Radio is seldom the only medium present in one of these communities, 90% of the time (35 out of 39 times) there is at least one other medium present, yet the all other media have smaller effects. This suggests that radio itself has a strong tendency to decrease the turnout rate, or that radio stations tend to exist in areas where, due to other factors, there is a low turnout rate.

Outside urban areas the only medium available with any frequency is the weekly newspaper, and its effect in villages is the opposite of its effect in townships. In the first type of community there is a tiny nonsignificant decrease in turnout where weekly papers are present. In townships there is a large (6.93 percentage points) and significant increase in the turnout, although the associated beta is quite weak.

In general, looking at the bivariate relationship between media and turnout rates in Ontario one is struck by a number of things. First, the relationship between “any media” and the turnout rate for the province as a whole is significant without reflecting the underlying reality of what is happening in the different types of communities. Second, large and small urban communities do not necessarily respond in the same way
to the presence of the same media, nor do villages and townships. Third, all forms of media decreased the turnout in the smaller urban centres. Finally, radio was the only medium that had a consistent effect on the turnout rate (decreasing it).

In order to see whether the (weak) effects of the media hold up once other factors are included in the model, the variables listed on page 62 were added to the regression model. If some of the media effects were actually due to underlying factors that influence both the turnout rate and the likelihood of media being present, then we would expect that the bivariate effects of media would now be moderated. For example, for the province as a whole, the size of the effects of “any media” decreases from 4.86 to .63, while its beta decreases from .15 to .02 and ceases to be significant. There are, however, dramatic exceptions to this expectation. In the larger urban areas the effect of television and radio is doubled. The presence of radio now decreases the turnout by 7.08 percentage points, with a moderate beta of -.27. In the smaller urban centres, the effect of radio on turnout is virtually unaltered from its bivariate form, and it is now the only significant relationship in any type of community. In villages, weekly newspapers now increase the turnout by 3.03 percentage points instead of decreasing it marginally.

In summary, the negative effect of radio on the turnout rates in smaller urban centres is the only significant relationship that remains when the complete regression model is used. Again we note that the relationship across the province between media and the turnout rate does not reflect the underlying reality of the different types of communities. Radio is still the only medium which always effects the turnout rate in the same way (decreasing it) and even after the inclusion of the other variables, all forms of media decrease the turnout rate in the smaller urban centres.
Our final "test" of the value of our media variables is to compare the explanatory power of a regression model of turnout with and without the media variables included. \( R \) is a measure of linear association and \( r^2 \) measures the amount of variation in the dependent variable, in this case turnout, explained by the independent variables. The basic regression model explains 57.2% of the variation of the turnout rates in large urban centres \( (r^2 = .572) \). If the presence of TV is added to the regression model, \( r^2 \) rises to .590 and if radio is added to the model \( r^2 \) rises to .608. In the smaller urban centres the inclusion of any media variable to the regression model increases its explanatory power to some degree, "any media" adds 1.3 percentage points and radio adds 2.1. In villages the addition of weekly papers increases \( r^2 \) to .511 from .502.

In summary, in the larger urban centres broadcast media variables, in smaller urban centres radio and "any media" and in villages, weekly newspapers enhance the power of the general regression model. However, no media variable increases the explanatory capability of the general regression model by more than 2.1 percentage points.

3. Council Competition

There is a significant positive relationship between any form of media and the level of competition for council positions on a province wide basis: when there is local media the degree of competition for municipal council positions rises (see Table 5.2, page 70). This relationship is significant for any media and for weekly papers, although in both cases beta is weak. As with turnout rates, this relationship cannot be generalized to the various types of municipalities within the province. In smaller urban centres the competition rate rises in the presence of media, and this relationship is also significant,


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province (n=792)</th>
<th>Bivariate Relationship</th>
<th>With Factors Held Constant</th>
<th>Original Model</th>
<th>Model with Media Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>12.26</td>
<td>.18‡</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>.13‡</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-5.92</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-1.84</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-1.98</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=153)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>18.15</td>
<td>.28†</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>17.68</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-3.13</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages (n=119)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-2.45</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships (n=478)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>19.86</td>
<td>.14†</td>
<td>11.72</td>
<td>.08†</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .1,  †p ≤ .05,  ‡p ≤ .01,  ‡‡p ≤ .001
however in the larger urban centres the relationship is negligible, negative and nonsignificant.

In large urban centres, none of the bivariate relationships between the individual media and the competition rate are significant, although all media, except weekly papers, increase the competition rate. Daily newspapers have a slightly more positive effect than radio (6.86 to 5.30 percentage points), while both have a greater effect than television.

In the smaller urban centres, radio, daily newspapers and media in general all have significant positive effects on the competition rate which is over 18 percentage points higher in the presence of radio and increases nearly as much in the presence of a daily newspaper. The beta of radio is moderate at .28 and that of daily newspapers is a weak .19.

Once again, as with turnout rates, the effect of weekly newspapers on the competition rate is diametrically opposed in villages and in townships, competition decreasing marginally in villages where weekly papers are present, and increasing significantly and by a large amount in townships where weeklies are present.

In general one may note a number of things about the bivariate relationship between media and council competition rates. First, the significant relationships across the province of "any media" and weekly papers with the competition rate are not "typical" of the same relationships in the different types of municipalities. Second, the direction and the magnitude of the effects of media were not the same in large and small urban areas, just as they differed between the two types of non-urban municipalities.
In order to test the bivariate effects of the media variables, we once again examine the relationships, with the additional variables listed on page 62 added to the regression model. We expect that the bivariate effects of the media variables will generally be moderated.

This is true for the province as a whole and for villages and townships. The presence of weekly newspapers in townships increases the competition rate 11.72 percentage points, which is down from its effect in the bivariate model but still significant. This is the only significant relationship that now remains. The effect of weeklies is now the same in villages and townships.

In the smaller urban centres, the only effect that is not moderated is that of weekly newspapers, which now decrease the competition rate by a greater amount than they increased it in the bivariate relationship. Beta is extremely weak. In the larger urban centres, the size of the effect moderated for television, radio and daily papers, but in the first two instances the direction reversed from that of the bivariate relationship; both now decrease the competition rate. The overall effect of media in large urban centres is now negative.

In summary, the positive effect of weekly newspapers on the competition rate in townships is the only significant relationship that remains when the complete regression model is used. The relationship of media in general with competition rates across the province is not typical of the relationships found in the different types of municipalities. The daily newspaper is the only medium that always affects the competition rate in the same way (increasing it), and the presence of media tends to decrease rather than increase the competitiveness in large urban centres.
We now "test" the value of our media variables by comparing the explanatory power of a regression model of competition rates with and without these variables. The basic regression model explains 33.2% of the variation of competition in large urban areas. "Any media" increases that to 34% and daily newspapers increase it to 35.1%. In small urban centres adding radio to the regression model increases the amount of variation explained from 19.5% to 21.1%; and in townships the addition of weekly papers increases $r^2$ from .155 to .161.

In summary, the addition of media variables does not generally increase the explanatory power of the general regression model. Small increases in $r^2$ can be achieved by adding "any media" or daily newspapers to the model for large urban centres, radio to the model for smaller urban centres and weekly papers to the model for townships, however in no case is the increase more than 1.9 percentage points.

4. Incumbency

Unlike the previous measures of political participation (turnout rates and council competition rates), the level of political participation decreases as the incumbency rates increase.\(^6\) Therefore a medium which is associated with higher incumbency rates, for example, daily newspapers, actually has a depressing effect on the level of electoral competition.

The presence of media has a negligible effect on the incumbency rates across the province (see Table 5.3, page 74). This does not reflect the effect of media in the

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\(^6\)Lulau and Prewitt (1973) consider incumbency rates to be measures of electoral competition—the lower the incumbency rate the higher the "eviction rate". Therefore media which tend to increase incumbency rate, decrease this type of competition and thus depress one form of political participation.
TABLE 5.3 Incumbency Rates by Municipality Type and Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Bivariate Relationship</th>
<th>With Factors Held Constant</th>
<th>Original Model</th>
<th>Model with Media Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-1.40</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>32.11</td>
<td>.45†</td>
<td>41.87</td>
<td>.59‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>10.28</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>17.72</td>
<td>.38′</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>11.44</td>
<td>.27′</td>
<td>17.31</td>
<td>.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=153)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-2.19</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>.14′</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
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<td>Weekly Paper</td>
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<td>-.03</td>
<td>-2.64</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages (n=119)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-6.71</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships (n=478)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-4.85</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-4.60</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† p ≤ .1, * p ≤ .05, † p ≤ .01, ‡ p ≤ .001
different types of municipalities. In villages and townships the incumbency rates decline in the presence of weekly newspapers. Both relationships are nonsignificant and have very small betas, which means that weekly newspapers carry very little weight in determining the final incumbency rate.

In small urban centres the overall effect of media is to increase the incumbency rate. Of the individual media, only the daily newspaper has a significant relationship; incumbency rates rise by 9.19 percentage points in its presence, although once again beta is weak.

When we turn to the larger urban areas, however, we find that the presence of "any media" has a very large and significant relationship with the incumbency rates, which rise 32.11 percentage points in its presence; beta is a strong .45. This means that in large urban communities with media, there is comparatively little turnover of office-holders. Individuals tend to be able to stay in power for a long time, they become well-known, and a star system may develop which makes it more difficult for "unknowns" to challenge the established politicians.

All individual media increase the incumbency rates. The effect of daily newspapers, which is significant, is the largest of the four, followed closely by radio. The beta weights of these media are not, however, particularly strong. Television and weekly papers have smaller effects and weak beta coefficients.

When we examine the relationships between media and the incumbency rate using the full regression model we do not, in general, find that the bivariate effects have been modified. In the non-urban areas, the presence of media continues to decrease the incumbency rate, and in villages this effect is enhanced when the full regression model
of incumbency is used. It appears than in these communities the effect of media is the opposite to that found in the large urban areas. In the smaller urban areas media has a mixed effect on incumbency. radio and weekly newspapers decrease it, the daily newspaper increases it.

In larger urban areas the positive effects of media are even more apparent in the full regression model. The presence of any media, radio or daily newspapers are all significant, and all have strong betas. Incumbency rates increase by 41.87 percentage points in the presence of media, and by more than 17 percentage points in the presence of radio or daily newspapers. It may be pertinent that in local elections, radio and daily newspapers are frequently used for political advertising.

The original regression model had an $r^2$ of .077 for large urban centres. When media variables are included this soars to .344 ("any media"), .162 (radio), .204 (daily newspapers) and .092 (weekly newspapers). Only the presence of television fails to add substantially to the explanatory power of the regression model. With the exception of villages, however, media variables outside of the larger urban communities fail to explain more than tiny amounts of the variation in the incumbency rate. When the presence of weekly papers is added to the regression model for incumbency rates in villages, the amount of variation explained rises to 7.6% from 6.2%.

In summary, the only relationships which remained significant after the full regression model was applied were those of "any media", radio and daily newspapers in large urban centres. The explanatory power of the original regression model was noticeably enhanced in large urban centres.
5. Election of Head of Council

On a province-wide basis we find that the relationship between the presence of media and the likelihood that the head of council is elected rather than acclaimed is significant and positive (see Table 5.4, page 78). That is, where there is any form of media present it is more likely that more than one person ran for head of council. The province-wide relationship between the presence of weekly newspapers and the likelihood of having an elected head of council is also positive and significant.

Among the different types of municipalities there is only one other instance when media presence has a significant effect. In townships there is a better chance of having an elected rather than an acclaimed council head where weekly newspapers are present. The relationship in villages is negative and nonsignificant.

In large urban centres no media has a significant relationship with the dependent variable although the direction of the effects of media were positive with one exception. The presence of radio stations decreased the likelihood that the head of council is elected rather than acclaimed.

In small urban areas, media apparently add little to the probability of contested elections, as none of the relationships are significant. The presence of any media, or of weekly newspapers, has a negative relationship with the head of council being elected rather than acclaimed, although in the latter case the effect is so small as to be negligible. Radio and daily newspapers have a positive effect.

In order to test whether these very weak relationships hold true when other factors are considered, the variables listed on page 62 were added to the logistic regression model. Both significant province-wide relationships now disappear, although
TABLE 5.4 Elected Head of Council by Municipality Type and Media
(Logistic Regression)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Bivariate Relationship</th>
<th>With Factors Held Constant</th>
<th>Original Model</th>
<th>Model with Media Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=142)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Media</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.319</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Paper</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages (n=112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships (n=433)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Paper</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .1,  * p ≤ .05,  † p ≤ .01,  ‡ p ≤ .001
the direction of the relationship does not change. The positive effect of weekly newspapers on the likelihood of a township having a contested election for head of council remains significant, although the magnitude of the effect, which was not large to begin with, has been reduced.

In large urban centres the presence of media in general, and all the individual media, with the exception of daily newspapers, is now negative. A community is more likely to have an acclaimed head of council when any of these media is present. In the case of radio stations, this relationship is also significant.

It is difficult to intuitively interpret the results of logistic regression. B reflects the change in the log odds of correctly predicting the dependent variable, in this case the head of council being elected or acclaimed, and R reflects the amount of weight the independent variable carries in making that prediction. If the initial odds of making a correct prediction were very small, a large change in the log odds could still result in a very low probability of making a correct prediction. One method of assessing whether the addition of a variable to an existing logistic regression model adds to its power, is to note whether the addition of that variable raises the overall odds of making a correct prediction using the regression model.

The odds that the original regression model would correctly predict whether the head of council was elected or acclaimed, were 61.81. The addition of media variables increases those odds to 62.36 when any media is present and 62.64 when weekly papers are present. In villages the odds of making a correct prediction are also increased when the presence of weekly newspapers is added to the logistic regression model, while in small urban centres only the addition of the "any media" variable increases the odds.
The addition of media variables to the model does not, however, always have a positive effect. In townships the addition of the media variable decreases the odds of making a correct prediction. In the larger urban centres the addition of television increases the odds of making a correct prediction while the addition of radio has no effect and the addition of any other media variable decreases the odds.

In summary, the only significant relationships which remained after the full logistic regression model was applied were those of radio in large urban centres and weekly newspapers in the townships. The original regression models odds of correctly predicting whether the head of council was elected or acclaimed were improved noticeably in a number of cases, but they were also decreased in a number of cases. The addition of media variables to the logistic regression model does little to enhance our understanding of the dependent variable.

6. Media Diversity

Media diversity refers to the number of different types of local mass media which are available in a community. There is some research which indicates that one type of media is not necessarily able to substitute for another. Other studies indicate that different types of people utilize different media. There is also the possibility that media function differently in combinations than they do individually. Therefore, we will examine whether there are any systematic differences in levels of political participation based on the number of different types of media available in a community. We will only look at large and small urban centres since no other type of municipality has sufficient numbers of communities with multiple local media available.
In large urban centres there is a positive relationship between number of types of media in a community and the turnout, competition and incumbency rates as well as the likelihood that the head of council is elected rather than acclaimed (see Table 5.5, page 82). The turnout rate, the competition rate and the likelihood of having an elected head of council increase slightly for each additional form of media available. The incumbency rate increases by 4.23 percentage points for each additional type of media present in a community. This relationship is significant and has a moderate beta. It is worth noting that increases in the incumbency rate are actually decreases in political participation, therefore this relationship runs, in a sense, in the opposite direction to the first three.

If we repeat this examination using the full regression model, with the relevant factors listed on page 62, the effect of media on the incumbency rate remains the only significant relationship. The positive effect of increased numbers of media on turnout and competition rates remains but is now negligible and the effect on the likelihood that the head of council is elected becomes very slightly negative. The positive effect of media diversity on the incumbency rate is enhanced and beta is now strong. Therefore, examined in the full regression model, the overall effect of increased diversity of media on participation rates is mixed.

The addition of media diversity to the original regression model of turnout and competition rates fails to make any difference in the explanatory power of the models. The addition of media diversity to the regression model for incumbency rates appears to create a dramatic increase in its explanatory power. However, if we refer back to Table 5.3 we find that media diversity does not increase \( r^2 \) as much as the addition of two other media variables, "any media" and daily paper. Adding media diversity to the
### TABLE 5.5 Political Participation and Media Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable*</th>
<th>Bivariate Relationship</th>
<th>With Factors Held Constant</th>
<th>Original Model</th>
<th>Model with Media Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURNOUT RATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=147)</td>
<td>-2.41</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-2.71</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNCIL COMPETITION RATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=153)</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCUMBENCY RATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=42)</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=153)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNCIL HEAD ELECTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Centres (n=41)</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.57</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Centres (n=142)</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .1,  *p ≤ .05,  †p ≤ .01,  ‡p ≤ .001

* Each horizontal section of the table represents a different dependent variable (type of political participation) by the same independent variable (number of different types of media present)
large urban centre logistic regression model to predict if the head of council is elected actually decreases the odds of making a correct prediction.

The turnout rate in small urban centres decreases significantly with each additional form of media available in a community. The competition rate rises significantly with each additional type of media available. The effect of increased diversity on incumbency rates and likelihood of having an elected head of council is positive but not significant. As in the case of large urban centres, the effects of additional media on participation appears to be mixed.

When we study the same relationships using the full regression model the only significant effect is that of media diversity on the turnout rate. Turnout rates decrease 2.71 percentage points with each additional form of media in a community. Additional media now decrease the incumbency rates in small urban centres. The explanatory power of the original regression model for the turnout, competition and incumbency rates is increased with the addition of a media diversity variable, but in each measure of participation, the addition of the presence of at least one single variable (radio in the case of turnout) yields a greater increase in the explanatory power of the original regression model. The original logistic regression model is not improved at all by the addition of the media diversity variable.

Therefore there is a slight indication that there may be some effects of media diversity on particular types of political participation in certain types of communities, but no more substantive conclusion than that can be reached.
7. Summary

We will conclude the analysis of the aggregate data by summarizing the way the different measures of political participation were effected by the presence of media; the different effects associated with each medium; and the way different types of municipalities were effected by the presence of media. This will be followed by a discussion of some of the implications of these findings.

(a) Measures of Political Participation

To facilitate summarizing the effects of various media on the different types of political participation, key data from Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 are presented in graphical form (see Figure 5.1, page 85). For the turnout and council competition rates the shaded areas in the graph represent the multivariate beta weights. For incumbent eviction rate the shaded areas represent the inverse of the incumbency multivariate betas.\(^7\) For the electoral status of the head of council, the shaded areas represent multivariate R. Because there are only 2 cases in which R does not equal 0 arrows have been added to indicate the direction of B, the multivariate regression coefficient.

The turnout rate did not respond the same way to all media, and responded to the same media differently in different environments. In large urban environments it increased in response to television and daily newspapers and decreased in response to radio and weekly papers. It increased in response to weekly newspapers in villages and decreased in response to the same medium in large urban centres. All media in small

\(^7\)The incumbency rate is a negative measure of political participation. In Figure 5.1 the incumbent eviction rate (the inverse if the incumbency rate) is used so that for all four measures of political participation, participation rates increase above the line and decrease below it.
FIGURE 5.1 Participation Rates by Municipality and Media

TURNOUT

COUNCIL COMPETITION

INCUMBENT EVICTION

HEAD OF COUNCIL ELECTED

A Any Media  T Television  R Radio  D Daily Newspaper  W Weekly Newspaper

a The incumbent eviction rate is the inverse of the incumbency rate (see footnote page 84).

b When multivariate R equals 0 arrows are used to indicate the direction of multivariate B
urban centres had a negative effect on turnout. The only significant relationship between media and turnout that remained after the complete regression model was developed, was the negative effect of radio in small urban centres. The explanatory power of the original regression model for turnout was slightly enhanced in some, but not all, circumstances.

The council competition rate did not respond uniformly to all media, to the same media in different types of municipalities or to different media in the same type of municipalities. Weekly newspapers had a negative effect on the competition rates in large urban centres and a positive effect on the competition rates in townships. In small urban centres daily newspapers had a positive effect on competition and weekly newspapers had a negative effect. The only relationship which remained significant after the full regression model was used, was the positive effect of weekly newspapers in townships. The explanatory power of the original regression model was occasionally enhanced, but the value of $r^2$ was never increased by more than 1.9 percentage points.

The interaction between media and the incumbency rate followed a very different pattern from those of the two participation measures already discussed. Media uniformly increased the incumbency rates (and therefore decreased the participation rates) in large urban centres. In small urban centres the response to media was mixed and in villages and townships the presence of media increased levels of participation and decreased levels of incumbency. After the full regression model was applied "any media", radio and daily newspapers continued to have a significant effect on the incumbency rates in large urban centres and the explanatory power of the original regression model was noticeably enhanced in those same communities.
Little is gained by using media variables to predict whether a municipality's head of council will be elected or acclaimed. A significant relationship remained in only two cases after the application of the full logistic regression model. In large urban centres radio had a negative effect on the likelihood of having an elected head of council and in the townships the presence of weeklies was positively related to having an elected head of council.

The various measures of participation did not co-vary. Each appears to have an independent interaction with the presence of media, and media which have a positive influence on one type of political participation may have a negative influence on another.

(b) Media Variables

Television had a positive effect on the turnout rate in large urban centres, and a negative effect on all other measures of political participation. Radio had a negative effect on turnout in large and small urban centres. Its effect on political participation in small urban centres was otherwise positive, while its effect in larger urban centres was uniformly negative. Radio had significant effects on participation rates more frequently than any other medium, and in all cases that effect was negative.

In large urban centres, weekly newspapers had a negative effect on all forms of political participation. The effect of weekly newspapers in smaller urban centres varied with participation measures. In townships weekly newspapers always had a positive effect on participation and in villages weekly newspapers had a positive effect on all participation measures except having an election for head of council.
Daily newspapers had a positive effect on having an elected head of council and on council competition rates in general. They increased the incumbency rate, and therefore decreased the participation rate associated with it.

(c) Municipalities

In large urban municipalities the effects of media on all forms of political participation tend to be negative. The daily newspaper, which only has a negative effect on the participation rate associated with incumbency rates, is one exception to this rule. In the smaller urban centres the effects of the different media on the different forms of political participation vary considerably, although all types of media have a negative effect on the turnout rate. In villages, weekly newspapers have a positive effect on all forms of political participation except having a contest for head of council, and in townships, the effect of weekly newspapers on participation rates is uniformly positive.

(d) Implications

These findings lend support to the model of communication put forward in Chapter Two (see Figure 2.1, page 33). The various media do not function as independent variables. Rather their presence expedites the effects of certain factors, while their absence may prevent other factors from having their full effect.

In the many Ontario townships with an extremely low density, weekly newspapers may be the only way of getting information about local issues. Because of the physical environment no other form of local media is likely to develop. But if there are no existing community structures and organizations, or if there is no nascent desire for a
homegrown communication channel among the residents of the township, then the weekly newspaper will never come into existence, or will not long survive.

In Toronto, weekly newspapers may develop to serve smaller communities found within the city. But to the degree that these weeklies serve their audience, they may also be forestalling any need for members of those communities to learn about the bigger city around them, or to develop a sense of interest or involvement in problems of the larger environment. In a small urban centre, radio stations may provide an affordable channel of communication for candidates for municipal office. Advertising rates are low and one or two radio stations can blanket the municipality. In large urban centres large amounts of money are required to buy advertising time. Audiences are large and fragmented. Time bought on one station will reach large numbers of people not in the same municipality, and the cost of buying time on all outlets will keep all but a few candidates off the air.

In each of these cases it is not the medium itself which influenced the level of political participation, but rather the environment in which the medium was situated, or the socioeconomic characteristics or personal characteristics of its audience. Thus the media do not actually "effect" the participation rates. They function as channels for the underlying processes and can serve only as indicators of the existence of such underlying processes.
CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter aggregate level data was examined in order to determine whether the presence of local mass media had a measurable effect on levels of political participation. In this chapter some of the processes that underlie those effects will be examined. Having found that some relationships exist at the ecological level but that others, although expected, do not, we will now attempt to confirm the relationships at the individual level and seek reasons for the unexpected results as well. We will also try to better understand the processes involved.

Until December 1990, news and information about Windsor and its municipal government were included on a regular and frequent basis in the Windsor Star and on the news show produced and broadcast by CBET, the local CBC television station. After that date CBET no longer produced or broadcast a local Windsor news show, although “local” television newscasts which originated from other cities and which did not regularly cover Windsor could still be seen. In order to determine whether levels of political and community involvement vary with reliance on television or newspapers, we will first examine individuals in Windsor at a time when both television and newspapers provided local news. Next we will compare the levels of political and community involvement of groups in Windsor before and after it lost its only source of local television news. Then we will consider in some detail the consequences of reliance on out-of-community news-sources for “local” news. In each case we will first consider the bivariate relationship between media use and the participation measure. When the
bivariate relationship is significant we will then examine it using a regression model which includes relevant demographic factors (age, education, gender and length of residence in Windsor) in order to recognize spurious relationships and examine underlying processes.

Academic research has focused on the relative effects of television and newspapers on levels of political cognition and affect, and the roles these media may play in the development of community ties. There is comparatively little information about the cumulative effect of relying on more than one form of media for news, and little on the effect of radio, alone or in combination with other media. Therefore, we will focus primarily on the differences between television reliance and newspaper reliance although we will also consider and comment on the effects of other media and of media combinations.

There are many reasons why a Windsor resident who relies on television for local news may choose to watch a “local” news show from another city. A sports fan is likely to choose a news show that covers sports well. Windsor does not have any local big-league sports franchises, and many people in the city follow Detroit or Toronto professional teams. The local news from both of these cities is available in Windsor. Other people listen to the local news for weather broadcasts and Windsor and Detroit generally share the same weather. Many Windsor residents go to movies, plays, concerts and other cultural events in the cities whose “local” news shows they watch. Others may simply watch the news on the channel that they happen to have been watching, or which they plan to watch latter.
2. Media Reliance and Political Participation

In order to isolate the effects of television and newspaper use on political participation only the 160 respondents in the Fall 1990 survey who relied exclusively on either television or newspapers for local news are considered in this analysis. The 85 respondents who relied exclusively on television had an average of 13 years of education, averaged 40 years of age, their mean length of residence in Windsor was 29.7 years and 54% of them were female. The 75 respondents who relied exclusively on newspapers had an average of 12.4 years of education, averaged 42 years old, their mean length of residence in Windsor was 29.4 years and 62% of them were female. Therefore the principal demographic difference between the two groups is the higher number of women who are newspaper reliant.

(a) Political Involvement

Previous research suggests that those who are reliant on newspapers for news are more likely to comprehend and retain information. Thus we would hypothesize that poll respondents who relied principally on newspapers for local news would show higher levels of political interest and be aware of more local issues than would respondents who were television reliant. This did not, however, prove to be true. On the contrary, there was no significant difference between the two groups. Of those who were reliant on television 58.9% were at least fairly interested, as opposed to 52% of those who relied on newspapers (see Table 6.1, page 93). The mean score for the television group was fractionally higher than for the newspaper group, 2.61 to 2.55.

---

8 Forty-two of the remaining respondents used radio or a combination of media. Of these 61.9% per cent were interested in local politics, 35.7% were able to name 2 local issues, 54.8% were able to name 1 local issue, 38.1% were active members of community groups and 16.7% had attended a local government meeting.
### TABLE 6.1 Degree of Political Interest by Media Reliance - Fall 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEGREE OF POLITICAL INTEREST</th>
<th>MEDIUM FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4]</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3]</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2]</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1]</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 4.5 \text{ (ns)} \]

| Interested (4 + 3)          | 58.9%     | 52.0%     | 55.6%     |
| Mean Score                  | 2.61      | 2.55      | 2.58      |

An examination of the relationship between medium relied on and knowledge of local issues similarly fails to support the literature, as no relationship exists. Respondents were asked to name the more important problems facing Windsor.\(^9\) Up to two answers were coded. Only 3.5% of the television reliant were unable to name any issue, compared to 12% of the newspaper reliant, and the mean number of issues named by the television reliant was 1.3 while the mean for the newspaper reliant was 1.2 (see Table 6.2, page 94). Both of these relationships are in the opposite direction to

\(^9\)This item is highly dependent on the quality of the interviews and may be substantially affected by measurement error.
TABLE 6.2 Issue Awareness by Media Reliance - Fall 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. OF ISSUES</th>
<th>MEDIUM FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = .12 \text{ (ns)} \]

that hypothesized, therefore there is no support for the hypothesis that the newspaper reliant have higher levels of political interest or knowledge.

The 42 respondents who relied on a combination of media actually had a higher rate of membership in local groups (38.1\%) than either these groups, and were only slightly less likely to attend local government meetings (16.7\%) than those who relied only on television.

(b) Community Ties

There has been theoretical support for the hypothesis that local media may influence political participation indirectly by fostering the development of community ties. Newspapers have been considered to have an especially important role in this process; therefore we would expect those who rely exclusively on newspapers for local news to have higher levels of community involvement than those who rely on television.
### TABLE 6.3 Community Involvement by Media Reliance - Fall 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Activity</th>
<th>Medium Used</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV only</td>
<td>Paper only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Community Group(^a)</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend local gov't meetings(^b)</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) \chi^2 = .00 (ns)
\(^b\) \chi^2 = 2.08 (ns)

This should be visible in the relative percentages of active membership in community groups and attendance at local meetings among those who relied on different media for local news.

When we examine those relationships, however, we find that the two groups have virtually identical rates of active membership in community groups. (see Table 6.3). There was a difference in the relative rate of attendance at local meetings, however those who relied on television were actually somewhat more likely to have attended a meeting than those who relied exclusively on newspapers. Once again neither relationship is in the predicted direction and therefore there is no support for the hypothesis that newspaper use fosters the development of community involvement.
(c) Media Use

Not only would we expect a relationship between whether or not one uses a medium and political involvement, but degrees of political involvement should vary with the degree to which a medium is used. Therefore we would expect that those who read the Windsor Star more frequently will be more interested in politics and more likely to vote than those who read less frequently. When we examine the relationships in detail we find that each is positive and statistically significant. The relationship between increased use of newspapers and likelihood of being interested in local politics only deviates once (slightly) from a pattern of monotonic increases (see Table 6.4, page 97, upper panel). The relationship between increased newspaper use and increased likelihood of voting deviates twice from monotonic increases but is still very strong (see Table 6.4, lower panel).

When the relationship between frequency of Windsor Star reading and interest in local politics (dichotomized into interested and not interested) is included in the full logistic regression model, we find that only length of residence in Windsor and frequency with which the paper is read are statistically significant. Use of the paper carries more weight than residence in predicting interest ($R = .23$ to $R = .08$). This makes sense if, as theorized, those who wish to learn about their community consciously use the newspaper to do so. The longer people live in one place the more likely they are to develop community ties, and thus use the newspaper to keep informed. If newcomers to the community are also using the paper in order to develop community ties, then they will dilute the relationship between length of residence in a community and newspaper use.
### Table 6.4 Political Involvement by Use of Paper - Fall 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politically Interested</th>
<th>Numbers of Days Windsor Star is Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bivariate Relationship**

\[ \chi^2 = 27.37^* \]

\[ \lambda = .18 \]

Cramer's \( V = .32 \)

**Logistic Regression**

\[ R = .23^{\dagger} \]

### Table 6.4 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voted</th>
<th>Numbers of Days Windsor Star is Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bivariate Relationship**

\[ \chi^2 = 19.13^* \]

\[ \lambda = .16 \]

Cramer's \( V = .28 \)

**Logistic Regression**

\[ R = .15^{\dagger} \]

\* \( p \leq .05 \)  
\( \dagger \ p \leq .01 \)  
\( \ddagger \ p \leq .001 \)

* Age, Education, Gender and Length of Residence in Windsor are included in the Logistic Regression model predicting Political Interest and Voting, respectively.
When logistic regression is used to examine the relationship between the use of the paper and the likelihood of voting, both length of residence in Windsor and use of the *Windsor Star* are again statistically significant, and carry roughly equal weight in predicting whether the respondent will vote. Therefore there is impressive support for the hypothesis that greater use of the newspaper will correlate with higher levels of political involvement.

Consequently, although there is no support at the individual level for the hypothesis that reliance on different forms of local mass media will have different effects on the development of political participation, there is confirmation that increased use of a medium is related to increased levels of political involvement\(^\text{10}\).

3. *The Effects of Changing Media*

If there is a relationship between media presence in a community and the levels of political participation, then one would expect that major changes in media availability would be followed by notable fluctuations in levels of political participation.

In the city of Windsor, a local television signal was still available after December, 1990, but the local (Windsor) news show was no longer being produced or broadcast. After that date those who used television exclusively for local news no longer received local Windsor news on a regular basis. It was as if, for these particular purposes, television no longer existed. Therefore we hypothesize that the levels of political interest among the television and the newspaper reliant would vary from a poll done before the closing of the local television station to a poll done after the closing.

\(^{10}\) A relationship might also be expected between frequency of watching the local television newscasts and levels of political participation, but the surveys did not contain variables which could have been used to test this.
We will continue to use the Fall, 1990 survey results to study levels of political participation before the television station closed. We will be using three other polls, Fall 1991, Winter 1991 and Winter 1992 to study levels of political participation after the station closed.

(a) Voting

We will first examine whether those who are reliant on different media have different voting patterns. Just over one-third of those who relied on television voted as opposed to just under two-thirds of those who relied on newspapers (see Table 6.5).

**TABLE 6.5** Voting by Media Reliance - Fall 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIUM USED</th>
<th>TV only</th>
<th>Paper only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTED</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>(77)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bivariate relationship  
\( \chi^2 = 6.96^* \)  
\( \lambda = .18 \)  
Cramer's \( V = .25 \)

Logistic regression*  
\( R = .23^† \)

* \( p \leq .05 \)  
† \( p \leq .01 \)  
‡ \( p \leq .001 \)

* Age, Education, Gender and Length of Residence in Windsor are included in the Logistic Regression model predicting Voting
The relationship is significant and remains so when we hold other factors constant using logistic regression ($R = .23, p \leq .01$).

The percentage of respondents who claimed to have voted in 1991, (58.7% of the entire sample, 55.5% of those who depended on television or newspapers), is significantly higher than the actual official turnout rate (44.4%) and thus well outside the expected range of sampling error for a poll this size (38.49% - 50.29%, 95% level of confidence). Thus the only direct measure of political participation at the survey level is liable to a substantial degree of measurement error. Other measures may not capture political participation as directly but are subject to lesser degrees of measurement error.

(b) Political Involvement

There was a large fluctuation in the relationship between media reliance and interest in local politics from Fall 1990, when the relationship was not statistically significant, to Fall 1991 when it was significant (see Table 6.6, page 101). The overall number of those interested dropped by 21 percentage points over the year. The number of politically interested respondents who relied exclusively on newspapers dropped by 6 percentage points and the number of politically interested respondents who relied exclusively on television dropped 42 percentage points. The newspaper group went from being somewhat less likely to be interested in politics than television viewers to three times more likely.

When the full logistic regression model is used to test the relationship in the Fall 1991 poll between interest in local politics and media reliance, the media variable is the only statistically significant factor ($R = .21, p \leq .01$).
TABLE 6.6 Degree of Political Interest by Media Reliance by Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEGREE OF POLITICAL INTEREST</th>
<th>MEDIUM FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
<th>FALL 1990</th>
<th>FALL 1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>PAPER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 4.5$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested (4 + 3)</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIUM FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
<th>WINTER 1991</th>
<th>WINTER 1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>PAPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(71)</td>
<td>(145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 4.45$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested (4 + 3)</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .05  † p ≤ .01  ‡ p ≤ .001
In 1990 those who were reliant on newspapers were slightly less able to name any local issue than were those who relied on television but equally likely to be able to name two issues. In Winter 1992 those who were reliant on newspapers were more likely to be able to name two local issues than were those who were reliant on television (see Table 6.7, page 103). The overall percentage of those who could name 2 issues had risen from 30% in Fall 1990 to 45.4% in 1992. The number of those reliant on television who could name two issues had increased by 8 percentage points, while the percentage among the newspaper reliant rose by 20 points.

Thus in both measures of political involvement we found that after December 1990, when local news production ceased, the level has risen among those who were dependent on newspapers. However, it is uncertain how much weight we should put on these findings. The percentage of respondents who are politically interested appears to plummet in the fall of 1991, although by the beginning of 1992 the level had risen once again. The distribution of the responses of those who relied on television is also unusual in the Fall 1990 poll. Yet we cannot presume that the true level is closer to that found in the winter polls since it is possible that political interest fluctuates in yearly cycles. It may be significant that in all three surveys after the closing of the local television station the ratio of newspaper to television users is approximately 2 to 1, while the ratio in the Fall 1990 polls is close to 1 to 1. This could be due to a number of things: the Fall 1990 poll took place before the closing of the local television station and the change in ratio may reflect ensuing changes in the viewing habits of Windsor residents; the differences could be due to small changes in the wording of the question; they could be due to sampling error, or a combination of these.
TABLE 6.7 Issue Awareness by Media Reliance by Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. OF ISSUES</th>
<th>MEDIUM FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
<th>FALL 1990</th>
<th>WINTER 1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>PAPER</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(160)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .12 \text{ (ns)} \quad \chi^2 = 1.79 \text{ (ns)} \)

(c) Community Involvement

In Winter, 1992 there was a statistically significant positive relationship between being newspaper reliant and being an active member of a community group. Only 12% of the television reliant were involved, compared to 28.7% of the newspaper reliant (see Table 6.8, page 104). This is in marked contrast to the results of Fall, 1990 when there was absolutely no difference between the two groups. In the Winter 1991 survey the percentage of respondents who relied on television and were actively involved in community groups had dropped slightly, while the percentage of actively involved respondents who relied on newspapers had risen, even though the overall rate had declined slightly. It appears that those who rely exclusively on television are becoming less involved with community organizations, while those who rely on newspapers are
TABLE 6.8 Active Membership in Community Groups by Media and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SURVEY</th>
<th>MEDIUM USED</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TV only</td>
<td>Paper only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(85)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>(160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall, 1990a</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(71)</td>
<td>(142)</td>
<td>(213)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1991b</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(101)</td>
<td>(151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1992c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = .00 \)

\( \chi^2 = .22 \)

\( \chi^2 = 5.25^* \)

\( * p \leq .05 \quad \dagger p \leq .01 \quad \ddagger p \leq .001 \)

becoming more involved. The overall percentage of those who were actively involved has fluctuated less than a percentage point from 1990 to 1991.

However, when we test the relationship between media reliance and involvement in community groups by using the full logistic regression model, we find that media reliance is no longer statistically significant. The only factor which does have a significant relationship with active membership in a community organization is years of education. Therefore it appears that the relationship between media reliance and organizational membership is actually spurious, due to the fact that those who relied on television had a different level of education from those who relied on newspapers.
TABLE 6.9 Attending a Government Meeting by Media and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SURVEY</th>
<th>MEDIUM USED</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV only</td>
<td>Paper only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall, 1990^a</td>
<td>18.8% (85)</td>
<td>10.7% (75)</td>
<td>15.0% (160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1992^b</td>
<td>10.0 (50)</td>
<td>14.9 (101)</td>
<td>13.2 (151)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a $\chi^2 = 2.08$ (ns)

^b $\chi^2 = .69$ (ns)

The relationship between media reliance and attending local government meetings was not significant in either Fall 1990 or Winter 1992, however the direction of the relationship reversed (see Table 6.9). In 1990 those who relied only on television were more likely to have attended a government meeting. In Winter 1992 those who relied on newspapers were more likely to have attended a government meeting. The overall percentage of respondents who had attended a meeting fluctuated by less than 2 percentage points.

In the survey of Fall 1990, the average respondent who relied on newspapers was two years older than the average respondent who relied on television, in the survey of Fall 1991 the respondent who favoured newspapers was, on average, four years younger than the respondent who favoured television. Among the respondents in the Winter 1992 poll, those who favoured newspapers were on average 6 years younger than those
who favoured television. It seems possible that the make-up of the audience for each medium had changed from 1990 to 1992.

In summary, there are some indications that the behaviour of the audiences who relied on television and newspapers changed between Fall 1990 and Winter 1992, however there are also some concerns about the polls involved. There are also indications that the media have not changed the behaviour of their audience, rather that the audiences have selected different media. It seems possible that the people who rely exclusively on television for “local news” in 1992 differ from the people who relied exclusively on television for “local news” prior to December 1990. If this is true, then media variables may not be explaining the behaviour of the public but rather be identifying the nature of the audience.

4. Media Combinations and Out-of-town Media

The responses to the Fall 1991 survey were coded to report not only those who relied primarily on television or newspapers for local news, but also the specific combination of media used by respondents who relied on more than one medium. Analysis of these responses will allow us to determine whether different combinations of media are associated with different levels of political participation. Since all television news after December 1990 originated from and focussed on communities other than Windsor, we will also be observe if those who rely on local media have different levels of political participation and community involvement than those who rely on out-of-town media.

Among respondents to the Fall 1991 survey who relied only upon television or newspapers, one third of those dependent solely on television voted in the municipal
TABLE 6.10 Likelihood of Voting by Media Use - Fall 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOTED</th>
<th>MEDIA USED FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.0%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 13.98 \quad \text{Cramer's } V = .24 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOTED</th>
<th>TELEVISION</th>
<th>RADIO</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some TV</td>
<td>Other Media</td>
<td>Some Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(140)</td>
<td>(107)</td>
<td>(90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 7.06 \quad * \]

\[ \chi^2 = 1.26 \quad \]

\[ \chi^2 = 4.08 \quad \]

\[ \lambda = .00 \]

\[ \text{Cramer's } V = .17 \]

* p ≤ .05  † p ≤ .01  ‡ p ≤ .001

* column has an n of < 15

... election; those who relied only on television voted less than any other group, including those who used no media at all (see Table 6.10, upper panel). Those who relied on combinations of media which included television (television and radio, television and newspapers, and all three media), were less likely to have voted than those who relied on any other medium or combination of media, although the relationship between the extended media variable and voting was not statistically valid. However, when "the use of television" is isolated (against the 44% who do not use television) it is confirmed (see Table 6.10, lower panel). Just over 51% of those who relied in some way on television
said they would vote, while 68% of those who used no television were likely to vote. Chi
square is significant at the p ≤ .05 level. The “use of television” continues to be
significant (R = .11, p ≤ .05) when we test this relationship using the full logistic
regression model.

When “use of radio” or “use of paper” are similarly isolated, neither is
statistically significant. However, in both cases those who did use the medium in
question were more likely to vote than those who did not.

The pattern is remarkably similar when we look at interest in local politics.
Those who relied solely on television were less likely to be very interested than were
those who relied on any other media or combination of media (see Table 6.11, page 109,
upper panel). This relationship is significant in its bivariate form and remains so when
it is included in the logistic regression model of political interest (R = .12, p ≤ .01).

When “use of television” is isolated it approaches significance (p = .07) in the
bivariate relationship with political interest (see Table 6.11, lower panel), and when it
is included in the logistic regression model it is significant (R = .11, p ≤ .05). Both the
“use of newspaper” and “use of radio” have significant bivariate relationships with
interest in local politics. In the logistic regression model newspaper use continues to
have a significant effect on the likelihood that a respondent will be interested in politics
(R = -.11, p ≤ .05), but “use of radio” becomes not significant.

It is particularly interesting that those who rely on television and another medium
are less likely to vote or be interested in local politics than those who rely on the “other”
medium only. In 1991 the only television station in the city of Windsor was not
producing a local news show, yet people were still saying that they relied on television
### TABLE 6.11 Level of Political Interest by Media Use - Fall 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICALLY INTERESTED</th>
<th>MEDIA USED FOR LOCAL NEWS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>TV only</td>
<td>Radio only</td>
<td>Paper only</td>
<td>TV/ Radio</td>
<td>TV/ Paper</td>
<td>Radio/ Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20.0% *</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>46.2% *</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>10.0% *</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 25.83^* \quad \text{Cramer's} \ V = .31 \quad \lambda = .14 \]

---

### POLITICALLY INTERESTED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TELEVISION</th>
<th>RADIO</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some TV Media</td>
<td>Other Radio Media</td>
<td>Some Other Paper Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (n)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>(153)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 5.34 \quad \chi^2 = 12.0^* \quad \chi^2 = 10.7^* \]

Cramer's \( V = .21 \) \quad Cramer's \( V = .20 \)

\( \lambda = .17 \) \quad \lambda = .00

---

* \( p \leq .05 \)  
† \( p \leq .01 \)  
‡ \( p \leq .001 \)

* column has an \( n \) of < 15

---

Completely, or in part, for local news. Because there is no television news show which truly covers Windsor those who still report relying on television for local news are not getting news about Windsor. However, as discussed previously, they may getting useful information about weather, sports and entertainment.
The person who watches the "local" news from Toronto, Hamilton or Detroit, may have only a certain amount of time and effort which they are willing to expend on acquiring information. If much of that time is expended on information sources which do not provide news about the city in which they live then they will end up knowing less about their own community than they would have if they had spent the same amount of time (or even less) on acquiring truly local news. Thus those who are watching "local" news and using a second media are acquiring less information about Windsor than those who merely use the other media. Functionally, watching the news becomes a negative factor which diminishes the likelihood that community interest or knowledge will develop.

5. Summary

Though there was initially little support for the thesis that television, as a medium, had a different effect than do newspapers on the development of political and community involvement, there is clear evidence that the level of political involvement in Windsor was affected by the closure of the local CBC station. However, the extreme speed of altered responses given the time usually involved in the socialization process lead one to suspect that what has happened is not only a case of a medium affecting people, but also of different types of people using the medium. There was a change in the audience make-up. People who wished to be informed about their community were no longer able to rely only on television for their local news. That some who had relied on television entirely or in part switched to using only the newspaper for local news. Therefore, the percentage of those who both relied on the newspaper and were involved was swelled by these media shifters. There is also some indication that those who continued to rely on television for "local" news were less likely to be involved in local
affairs than those who always used newspapers or who switched to that medium to obtain local news.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

1. Introduction

This thesis began with a deceptively simple question. What effects do the mass media have on levels of political participation at the municipal level? Like many other simple questions, this one led to further questions, uncertainty and a growing awareness of how much is not known and how much still needs to be investigated in this area.

In this chapter we will summarize the research findings, return to look at the research questions put forward in Chapter Two, consider some of the serendipitous findings that came our way, suggest further research indicated by these findings and then conclude with some final thoughts.

2. Research Findings

At the conclusion of Chapter Two we posed a number of research questions which arose out of a discussion of the literature, and developed five hypotheses with which we could investigate those questions. Two of these hypotheses required aggregate data and three required survey data. The findings which arise from each type of data will first be discussed separately and then together.

(a) Aggregate Data

$H_1$ The nature (type and number) of the local media will affect the level of local political participation (turnout rate and level of competition).
Turnout rates in smaller urban centres are depressed by the presence of any form of media, while in the larger urban centres television is associated with increased turnout, radio with decreased turnout, and daily and weekly newspapers have, respectively, marginally positive and negative effects on turnout (see Figure 7.1, page 114\textsuperscript{11}). In both villages and townships the turnout rate increases in the presence of weekly newspapers (the only medium available with any frequency), although the effect is quite small in the townships. The greatest additional amount of variation in the turnout rate explained by adding media variables to the general regression model is 2.1 percentage points.

Council competition is increased in large and small urban centres by daily newspapers and decreased by weekly newspapers. In the townships, weekly newspapers have a positive effect. The broadcast media have virtually no effect in larger urban centres while radio has a positive effect in the small ones. The greatest amount of increase in explanatory power achieved by adding media variables to the general regression model of council competition is 1.9 percentage points.

Incumbency rates are more consistently affected by the presence of media than are any other measures of participation. In the large urban centres the incumbency rate increases when local media are present, while elsewhere it generally decreases. However, increases in the incumbency rate mean decreases in the turnover or “eviction” rate among positions on council, and indicate a decreasing level of this form of political participation. Therefore, in large urban centres, the media have a negative effect on this type of political participation, and in other areas they have a generally positive effect. The greatest increase to the explanatory power of the regression model is 26.7

\textsuperscript{11}This graph originally appeared in Chapter 5 as Figure 5.1. It has been repeated here to aid in summarizing the aggregate data findings.
FIGURE 7.1 A Graphic Summary of Aggregate Data Findings

**TURNOUT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Prov</th>
<th>Large Urban</th>
<th>Small Urban</th>
<th>Vill.</th>
<th>Townsp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COUNCIL COMPETITION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Prov</th>
<th>Large Urban</th>
<th>Small Urban</th>
<th>Vill.</th>
<th>Townsp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INCUMBENT EVICTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Prov</th>
<th>Large Urban</th>
<th>Small Urban</th>
<th>Vill.</th>
<th>Townsp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HEAD OF COUNCIL ELECTED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Prov</th>
<th>Large Urban</th>
<th>Small Urban</th>
<th>Vill.</th>
<th>Townsp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Any Media  T Television  R Radio  D Daily Newspaper  W Weekly Newspaper

* The incumbent eviction rate is the inverse of the incumbency rate (see footnote page 84).

* When multivariate R equals 0 arrows are used to indicate the direction of multivariate B
percentage points. However, the presence of media appears to have little effect on the likelihood of having an elected or an acclaimed head of council.

The direction and magnitude of effects often differ sharply between large and small urban centres, and the effects of bivariate relationships often differ dramatically from the effects of better-specified regression models. The likelihood that some form of media exists in an area is not random. Economic, geographic and demographic factors all play a part in determining whether a municipality will have any local media, and what form (or forms) it is likely to take. These same factors have been shown to have a direct effect on levels of political participation. Thus much of the apparent effect of media on participation is merely a reflection of the effect of underlying factors on both likelihood of local media availability and levels of political participation. It is only after holding those factors constant that we can isolate the actual effect of the media. Thus, where lack of variation, corrupt data\(^\text{12}\), or multicollinearity among media and other independent variables make it impossible to use the appropriately specified regression model, it becomes equally impossible to determine how much of the change in the dependent variable (the measure of political participation) is actually due to the presence of media.

The difference in the effects that a given medium has on one measure of participation in different types of municipalities suggests that the underlying processes are not the same. For example, the dramatic effect of media on the incumbency rates

\(^{12}\)Datasets such as the one used in this thesis depend upon the accuracy with which the original forms sent out by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs were completed by clerks in each municipality. These individuals were not trained and there is no way of knowing how accurate this coding was. Under certain circumstances bad data can be identified, for example, when the turnout rate is greater than 100%. Datasets from election years other than 1985 were also considered for this thesis, but rejected, when key independent variables had very high percentages of missing data.
in large urban centres is not duplicated in smaller urban centres. It is possible that in
the larger media markets the increased cost of advertising raises the cost of political
campaigning in general, or, that the visibility conferred by media upon incumbents is
difficult to achieve for challengers. Both factors may discourage challengers from
centering municipal politics and give an additional advantage to incumbents.

Different forms of political participation respond differently to the presence of
media variables, although radio tends to have a negative effect wherever it is found,
perhaps because of the way in which most listeners use radio. Radio may be listened
to more for entertainment than for information, or it may be that those who use radio
exclusively disregard the information radio offers and tend to use it only as a form of
entertainment, while those who use it for information use other media as well. Radio
may function as a form of "noise" which limits the amount of time people will have to
take in other forms of communication. Weekly newspapers tend to have a positive effect
in non-urban municipalities, where they are often the only form of media and have an
effect on the development of community ties, especially in less densely populated areas
where face-to-face contact is less feasible (townships rather than villages).

The physical environment of a community, the predominant socioeconomic
characteristics of its population, the prevailing attitudes towards government and the
existence of networks of interpersonal communications probably all play a role in
determining the "effect" of mass media. Where communities have more of these factors
in common, the presence of mass media will tend to have similar effects.

The number of different local media available in a municipality has varying
effects, depending on the type of participation and the type of municipality being
studied. The addition of media diversity to the original regression models either has
negligible effects or less of an effect than inclusion of any other media variable (such as the presence of a particular medium, or of any medium at all). Therefore one cannot conclude that media diversity (the number of different media present) is related to the level of political participation.

It is difficult to examine this question statistically because there is little variation in the diversity of local media in the province. Over 70% of all municipalities in Ontario have no local media at all. Of those municipalities with media, 68% have only one type present (in all but 6 cases, weekly newspapers). In only 5% of municipalities, all of them urban centres, more than 2 forms of local media were available. Most large centres (61.4%) have at least 3 forms of media present, while most smaller centres (94.8%) have fewer than 3 types. The addition of a different medium has a positive effect on the turnout and incumbency rates in large urban centres and a negative effect in small urban centres, while the addition of a different medium has a negative effect on the likelihood of having an elected head of council in large urban areas and a positive effect in small urban centres.

Each type of urban municipality is characterized by different "typical" combinations of media. These different combinations, the differences in the two environments, or some combination of these two factors probably lead to the different effects of media presence in the large and small urban centres.

In summary, there is support for the hypothesis that the presence of local media has an effect on the level of political participation, although the direction and size of the effect varies depending upon the type of municipality. There is no clear support for the hypothesis that how many types of media are present affects levels of political participation, although different combinations of media may have different effects.
In general, we can conclude that the media often have an effect on levels of political participation, but we cannot generalize as to the magnitude, or sometimes even the direction, of the relationship. It is contingent on many factors, including the size and density of the community.

\[ H_2 \] The predictive value of political participation models (for turnout, council competition, incumbency and likelihood of having an elected head of council) built with competition, demographic and institutional measures will be increased by the inclusion of media variables.

When media variables are added to the original turnout models for the entire province and for each type of municipality, their explanatory power is increased by amounts which vary from .1 to 2.6 percentage points. The result is a small, but consistent, improvement in the amount of explained variation in the turnout rate.

There is a similar pattern for the regression models for council competition rates. The explanatory power of the original model for the province as a whole, and for every type of municipality except villages, was improved slightly by amounts which varied from .2 to 1.9 percentage points.

The regression models for the incumbency rates across the province, and in the different types of municipalities, are affected somewhat differently by the addition of media variables. Across the province as a whole there is in no improvement. However, in large urban areas the amount of variation in the incumbency rates explained soars dramatically by 26.7 percentage points from 7.7% to 34.4%. In the other types of municipalities there are small, but consistent increases in explanatory power, ranging from .3 to 1.4 percentage points.
The likelihood of correctly predicting whether a municipality will have an elected head of council is variously affected by the inclusion of media variables. Across the province, in small urban centres and in villages, the odds are increased very slightly, in townships they are decreased slightly. In large urban centres the addition of some media variables increases the odds of making a correct prediction and the addition of others decreases those odds. Therefore, media variables do not consistently improve the predictive value of the original logistic regression models.

In summary, for three of the four measures of political participation we considered (turnout, council competition and incumbency rates), the hypothesis that adding media variables to the original political participation models would increase their predictive value was supported. Since the media tend to co-vary with other variables in the regression model (such as population size and density), these numbers are conservative estimates, since some media effects (e.g. joint effects of population and media) are statistically attributed to the non-media factor since its bivariate relationship is usually larger than that of the media factor.

(b) Survey Data

$H_3$: Individuals in Windsor who are more dependent on local television news will have lower levels of political participation and community involvement.

Survey data gathered in the fall of 1990, before the television station in Windsor ceased production of local news, does not support this hypothesis. Respondents who relied only on the newspaper for local news were actually less likely to be interested in local politics, less likely to be able to name one important local issue and less likely to attend local government meetings than were those who relied on television only.
Newspaper readers and television viewers were equally likely to be a member of a local community group, i.e., the medium had no effect.

\[ H_1 \] Among the groups in Windsor who are more dependent on television for local news, the likelihood of voting, and the levels of political interest and community involvement will be lower after the closing of the local TV station than they were before it closed.

As noted above, respondents who relied on television and those who relied on newspapers were equally likely to be active members of community groups in the Fall 1990 survey. In the poll taken in March 1991, newspaper readers were more likely to belong to a group than television viewers, although the size of the difference was quite small. By the Winter 1992 poll that gap had increased and become statistically significant.

The relative percentages of respondents who had attended government meetings also changed after the station closed. In the fall of 1990 respondents who relied on television were more likely to have attended a meeting than were those dependent on newspapers. By the winter of 1992 this had reversed; those dependent on newspapers were more likely to have attended a council meeting.

Both measures of community involvement indicate that those who were dependent on television for local news were less likely to be involved in the community after the closing of the local television station than they were before, which supports the hypothesis.

The relationship between the level of local political interest and the closing of the local television station is less clear cut. The percentages of those politically-interested respondents who relied on television and those who relied on newspapers shifted
dramatically from Fall 1990 to Fall 1991, from the television group being slightly more interested to the newspaper group being far more interested. A Winter 1992 poll agrees with the Fall 1991 poll that those using newspapers were more interested in local politics, but the difference between the two groups was not as large as in the Fall 1991 poll, nor was it statistically significant. There are also reasons to suspect that the Fall 1990 poll may be “unrepresentative” (see discussion in Chapter 6). Therefore these findings add only weak additional support to the hypotheses.

\[H_3\] Media internal to the community will tend to increase community ties and thus increase political participation, while media external to the community will tend to decrease community ties and thus decrease political participation.

One of the most fascinating findings to emerge is the apparently negative effect of watching “local” Windsor news on television on overall levels of political participation after December, 1990. After the demise of the local CBC newscast most respondents who relied on television for “local” news must have watched news programs produced outside the official boundaries of the city of Windsor.\(^{13}\) Even individuals who used television along with another medium were less likely to be interested in local politics, and less likely to vote, than individuals who only used other media. There are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon.

Individuals may consider news broadcasts from Detroit stations or from regional Canadian stations to be “local news”, or because these broadcasts are the best sources for certain types of information (for example, local weather forecasts), or because they are most comfortable with television as a medium. Watching these quasi-local

\(^{13}\)A small number of Windsor residents watched the local Community Cable news show (Kelly, 1992).
broadcasts may subtract from the amount of time and attention people can pay to the Windsor news over the radio or in the newspaper. It is also possible that some individuals are unwilling or unable to obtain information about local politics from sources other than television. In either case, the closing of the local Windsor television station leaves those who prefer television as a local news source only with media external to the community: this group shows lower levels of political and community participation than those who rely on media internal to Windsor.

There is also a strong relationship between the actual use of a Windsor-based source of local news, and levels of political participation. In Fall, 1991, the more frequently a respondent read the *Windsor Star* the more likely they were to have voted and to be interested in local politics.

In summary, there is strong support for the hypothesis that local news plays a part in the development of political participation. Because there was effectively no local Windsor news (apart from Community Cable), those who continued to rely on television for local news after December, 1990 had lower levels of political interest, knowledge and community involvement compared to those who relied on the newspapers. Watching truly local news may help to develop interest, knowledge and involvement in the community, or maybe those who wish to develop community ties use local television news to do so. When there is no locally produced television news the television audience will be less involved in Windsor's community and political life.

(c) *General Findings*

Based on the analysis of our survey and aggregate level data we can conclude that communities without information networks that spread the required information will
have a lower level of political participation than those that do. However, this information need not be carried on mass communication channels; in fact, communities that are small and dense enough for interpersonal communication to function well, have quite high levels of political participation.

In a community the size of Windsor, however, interpersonal communication cannot serve as a replacement for local television news. Since some individuals will not turn to alternative Windsor-based sources for local news, the closing of the local television station has deprived a certain percentage of Windsor residents from having any source of truly local news, and lessened the likelihood that they will become interested in local politics or involved in the community.

Analyses of both aggregate and survey data indicate that one cannot speak about "the effect of mass media" on the political process as if there were one type of effect. Different types of municipalities were affected in different ways by different media. It is clear that diverse underlying processes are involved, and that these processes do not always run in the same direction.

Council positions seldom go unfilled in large urban areas where office-holders may become local media stars. In 1985 the mean competition rate in large urban areas was 90.4% and the lowest rate was 41.2%, while the mean rate across the province was 71.3% and the lowest rate in small urban centres, villages and townships was 0%. In small urban centres, where 59.3% of council positions were filled by incumbents in 1985, the local media may provide an outlet through which newcomers to municipal politics may become known, while in larger urban centres, where 63.7% of seats were held by incumbents, the cost of advertising and the effort needed to be noticed in the local media may be prohibitive to all but incumbents. In villages, the existence of effective
interpersonal communication networks may make local media unnecessary, while in the less densely populated townships mass media may provide the only communication networks.

Interpersonal communication also plays a role in political communication in communities of all sizes. In the larger urban areas interpersonal communication may function largely as a method by which information originally presented in the mass media is disseminated (as in the two-step or multi-step flow model of communication). In villages interpersonal communication may play a much larger and more independent role in political communication, and weekly newspapers may be little more than the written summation of information that has been passed by word of mouth throughout the community. When a source of mass communication becomes available in a community, people may rely less on interpersonal communication for information, and consequently the personal networks are weakened.

The media themselves do not create effects—their presence filters, focusses or modifies the influences and processes that determine political participation. However, the addition of media variables to the basic models for political participation does improve our ability to understand and predict variations in turnout, competition and incumbency rates.
3. Serendipitous Findings

A number of interesting points came to light in the process of doing this research.

(a) The Complex Media Environment

The media environment of most communities in Ontario is not exclusive or well delimited. Some, like Windsor, live with a cacophony of other voices in their environment. Most do not actually have local news in the sense that it would be understood in Toronto, Vancouver, Boston, Chicago or many other big cities. Local news on television is the local news from other communities. Even local news in the paper is frequently, although less so than with television, the local news from another community. Many media voices are neither clearly local nor non-local: they include radio stations that primarily cover the town from which they are broadcast but make an effort to include county and township news and aren’t very news oriented for the most part, nor listened to for news; newspapers that include weekly supplements to serve bedroom communities filled with a readership their advertisers are interested in; and television stations that know they are being watched via cable in communities halfway across the province. The residents of most communities in Ontario receive these many conflicting signals all the time. Local news competes against news that is almost local and local events must compete with world events.

Much of the literature and research on the relationship between mass media and political involvement has been done at the national level. Much of the research on the municipal level has been conducted in large American cities with a wealth of local media. Research has tended to focus on a single medium, or the varying effects of dependence on television or the local newspaper. There is every indication that many
residents of Windsor use more than one medium on a regular basis, and that the use of a combination of media has effects on levels of political participation in the community that cannot simply be deduced from effects of the individual media which make up the combination.

(b) The Urban Media Desert

These problems are not simply a function of the size of a community. Windsor is one of the larger cities in the province of Ontario. But it is situated next to Detroit, a much larger city and one with a comparatively massive media structure already in place. In the shadow of such a community it is difficult for a home-grown media market of any power to develop or subsist. Listeners may be attracted to this neighbouring media market by many things such as up-to-date weather reports and more sophisticated sports coverage, especially if these stations are already favoured for entertainment over Canadian stations. When three-quarters of the radio stations received in Windsor are from Detroit, by sheer chance radio users will find themselves listening to an American station.

Windsor’s situation is mirrored in that of Scarborough, East York, Etobicoke and many other large cities that are part of metropolitan areas. A poll published October 20, 1991 in the Toronto Star, less than a month before the November 12 municipal election, reported that only 21% of Scarborough residents, 17% of Etobicoke residents and 14% of York residents knew who their Metro councillor was (“Byers,” 1991, p. 1). The City of Toronto, the heart of the Metro region, received such overwhelming coverage in the municipal elections of 1991 that:
one prominent television reporter was moved to confess in mid-October, that he couldn’t remember if Scarborough Mayor Joyce Trimmer was being challenged.

The lapse wasn’t lost on Trimmer. On election night she wryly remarked that most of the incumbents in Scarborough were re-elected because the media hadn’t been paying attention to her city. (“Weiers,” 1991, p. 17)

The only peripheral city around Toronto that received any amount of coverage in that election was York, where a number of incumbents had been charged with criminal offenses. In the City of Toronto the turnout in the election was 41.7%, in York it was 33% (“Weiers”). It seems possible that the Toronto media actually had a depressing effect on the participation rates in York. The residents of York receive several daily newspapers and have local radio and television stations, but they do not have a voice in those media. For all practical purposes they are without local media in an environment where the mass media outlets are an essential requirement for the delivery of the information necessary for participatory democracy to function.

(c) The Phantom Local News

In Windsor there has not been a local news show since December 1990, yet people still respond to the question “Where do you get your local news?” with the answer ‘television’. In Fall, 1991, 12 of the 37 people who said they relied only on television for local news stated that they watched local news on Channel 9, the local CBC station, and 3 said they watched it on the CTV affiliate available on cable. Neither of these channels carried local Windsor news. The local CBC channel rebroadcasts “regional” newscasts produced in Toronto for CBC affiliates in Southern Ontario. These did not cover any city outside of the Toronto area on a regular basis. The regional news on the CTV affiliate concentrated on the area around Kitchener-Waterloo, with additional items from areas such as Windsor when the news warranted. Over half of the respondents who
reported relying on television for local news watched "local" newscasts from Detroit. Consequently, the local news that they would get of Windsor consisted only of those items of interest to an American audience; thus one would expect any items about Windsor would be about crime or sports.

This is an interesting case of "measurement error"—when a word has a very different meaning for the researcher who devised the question and the respondent who answered. To the researcher the question means 'where do you get information about the community in which you live?' - to the respondent it may mean 'where do you get something called the local news?' The researcher has operationalized a function, the respondent has responded with a hierarchical placement—local news being that news which is not international, national, or provincial. Or, one can say that the researcher has defined 'the community in which you live' as the area within the legal boundaries of the city of Windsor—that is, the researcher is using 'the community in which you live' and the 'municipality in which you vote' interchangeably. Each respondent, on the other hand, uses different boundaries to define that community; for many Windsor residents, the community in which they live is the Windsor-Detroit area. Detroit is a place where they may work, shop, and go regularly for entertainment. Judged by this standard, news from Detroit is indeed local. Individuals seldom define themselves as living within a legal entity. Communities in which people live may not exist for communication purposes which are driven by the logic of mass media; municipalities in which people vote are often historical artifacts which may not exist in the sense of communities either as defined by the people living there or by the media. This non-overlap has important consequences for the ability of media to fulfill useful information functions, and points out some of the problems created by artificial political borders.
4. Areas for Further Research

A number of questions that suggest further research arise directly from the findings in this thesis. How much can we generalize our findings from Windsor to other communities, even other communities in Ontario? Does the negative effect of television in this community have more to do with the fact that the city lies next to a huge media market than it does to the lack of truly local television news? What are the experiences of other Ontario communities near the American border, and what are the experiences of similarly sized Ontario communities which do not lie near the border? Do smaller communities adjacent to large Canadian media markets have the same types of problems as Windsor? Surveys administered in the appropriate Ontario communities during the next set of municipal elections (in 1994) could do much to answer these questions. Similar studies in other provinces would indicate whether our findings can be extrapolated to Canada or are only valid within Ontario.

An obvious and necessary line of inquiry could focus on the effects of combinations of media. Are the media interchangeable, and does it matter if we use one or more media regularly? Our findings indicate that it is possible that different combinations of local media have different effects, and that the effect of a medium, or combination of media, may differ from one type of municipality to another. For example, we found that those Windsor respondents who read the daily newspaper more frequently were more likely to participate in local politics. Similar surveys undertaken in other Ontario cities with daily newspapers will be necessary in order to determine whether this can be generalized to all daily newspapers. Are frequent newspaper readers in Toronto more likely to be involved in local Toronto politics regardless of whether they read the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Sun or the Toronto Star, or does any of these papers differ in fundamental ways from the Windsor Star? Similarly, radio in Windsor
had a positive effect on political involvement, yet on a province-wide basis, radio had a generally negative effect on political participation. Further research will be necessary to determine why radio functions differently in Windsor than it does in many other Ontario municipalities.

The possibility that the media do not function interchangeably is of particular relevance given the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's recent decision that the network's radio and television stations should "complement" rather than duplicate each other, that is, that communities would be equally well served by either medium and did not require both (see discussion, page 24). The demise of local broadcasting at CBET was one of the first implementations of this policy. The findings of this thesis suggest that a significant proportion of Windsor residents have not found the local CBC radio station to be an acceptable or adequate replacement for their closed television station.

Weekly newspapers present another area for further research. These papers range in character from news oriented papers which come out less frequently than dailies to ones that are dominated by advertising, with just enough editorial material to keep them from being simply advertising flyers. Are the weekly newspapers found in townships basically the same as those found in the other types of municipalities? Does the sheer existence of a paper with the community's name in its banner help people to identify themselves as members of a particular community or is the content of the paper important?

Finally, one further area for research suggests itself, one which was completely unforeseen. The confusion surrounding the meaning of the word "local" indicates a need to investigate how people actually define their local environment. For example, do people in Windsor visualize themselves as living within the actual boundaries of the
city of Windsor, or do they see themselves living in a community which may include portions of the city of Detroit and exclude portions of the official city of Windsor? What does the word “local” mean to residents of towns surrounding large metropolitan regions or to people who live in areas that are largely bedroom communities to other municipalities? There may be serious ramifications for municipal governments if most, or even many, Ontario residents do not associate themselves with the community in which they vote.

In the last decade there has been an explosion in the number and variety of media available to the average household in Ontario. How will the concept of “local” television or newspapers survive when cable subscribers receive channels from across the province and from two countries, when the owner of a satellite dish can watch stations from around the world, and when daily newspapers published in other countries are available within hours? Do we become citizens of the world at the cost of being citizens of our neighbourhoods?

5. Final Thoughts

Most communities in Ontario do not have any form of local media at all. While this is not unexpected in the sparsely populated townships in Northern Ontario, it comes as a surprise to find that 3 communities of over 40,000 have no local media at all, that only 23 communities, including the 6 cities within Metro Toronto, have television stations that produce local news shows, or that most towns in Ontario do not even have a daily newspaper.

In their pioneering work The Civic Culture, Almond and Verba (1963) chose to examine citizen participation through involvement in the local community because:
the local community seemed to be a good place to begin, since political
and governmental problems tend to be more understandable, the organs
of government less distant, the chances of effective participation for the
individual citizen greater on the local level than on the level of national
government. In fact, it has often been argued that effective democracy
rests on the ability of the individual to participate locally, for it is only
here that he [sic] can develop some sense of mastery over political
affairs. (p. 121)

Local government may act as a training ground for political competence.
Where local government allows participation, it may foster a sense of
competence that then spreads to the national level—a sense of
competence that would have had a harder time developing had the
individual's only involvement with government been with the more distant
and inaccessible structures of the national government. (p. 145)

The citizen of a democracy, according to these authors, “is supposed to be well
informed” and democratic competence itself “is closely related to having valid
information about political issues and processes” (pp. 29, 57).

By these standards, the findings of this thesis raise some concerns. If the
“voicelessness” of local governments, the “silence” of local media and the lack of fit
between municipal boundaries and media communities continue, then we can expect that
the problems of urban areas will become more urgent and that fewer citizens will
develop a sense of competence or involvement at any level of government. Therefore
the decisions of regulatory bodies, such as the Canadian Radio-Television and
Telecommunications Commission, may have a major impact on the health of democracy
in Canada.
REFERENCES


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