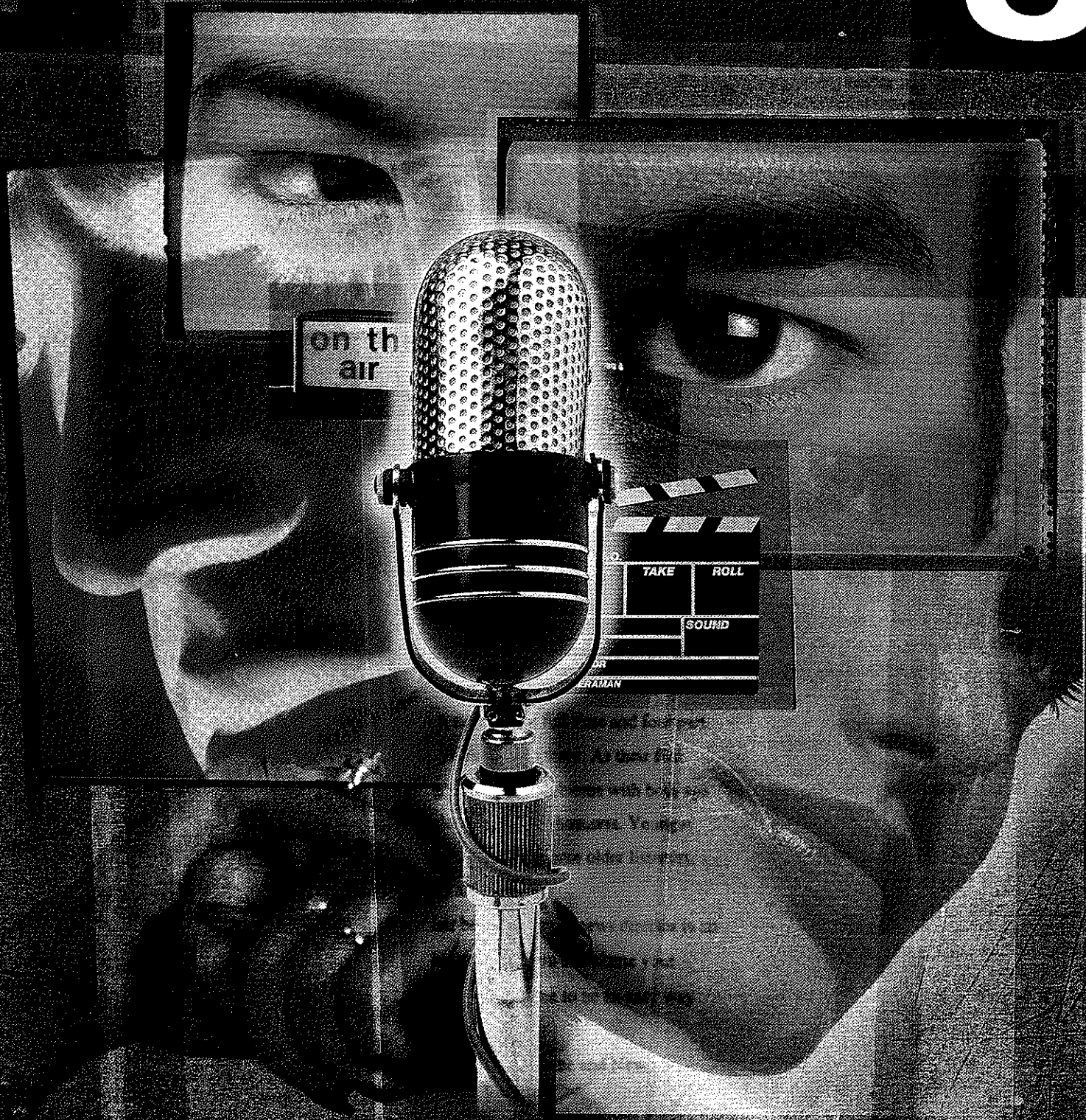


Moving



Forward Falling

More minorities are working in TV news, but in most other categories, the number of women and minorities in radio and TV remain the same or drop.

Back “P

By Bob Papper and Michael Gerhard

People who think we're where we ought to be—they are part of the problem," says Dave Roberts, news director at WXIA-TV in Atlanta. And according to the annual RTNDF/Ball State University Survey, the "problem" has not yet been solved. The overall percentage of minorities in television news went up again—from 19 percent to 21 percent. But all other figures stayed the same or fell slightly. The percentage of minorities in radio news was unchanged at 12 percent. The percentage of both TV and radio news directors who are minorities slipped slightly from 9 percent in 1995-96 to 8 percent this past year. And minority television news directors were more than eight times as likely to work at an independent station (34 percent) as a network affiliate (4 percent).

Women in Local Television News

	News Staff with Women	Women News Directors	Women % in Work Force	Average No. of Women
All Television	96%	14%	37%	10.7
ADI 1 - 25	96%	21%	36%	18.7
ADI 26 - 50	95%	27%	41%	18.0
ADI 51 - 100	96%	12%	35%	10.4
ADI 101 - 150	100%	12%	37%	8.3
ADI 151+	92%	11%	40%	6.6
Staff 51+	100%	18%	37%	28.1
Staff 31 - 50	98%	19%	36%	14.6
Staff 21 - 30	100%	10%	37%	9.8
Staff 11 - 20	100%	11%	39%	6.5
Staff 1 - 10	74%	17%	42%	2.0
Net affiliates	99%	13%	37%	11.6
Independents	77%	25%	38%	4.2
ABC affiliates	100%	15%	38%	10.3
CBS affiliates	100%	6%	35%	11.1
Fox affiliates	94%	10%	34%	12.5
NBC affiliates	98%	19%	32%	13.0

The total percentage of women in TV news remained the same in 1996-97—as it did in 1995-96. That is the first time in recent surveys that it hasn't gone up. The percentage of women news directors dropped from 17 percent to 14 percent, and women are almost twice as likely to be news directors at independent stations than at network affiliates.

Getting the Job

"I've never had any trouble as a minority or a woman producer finding a job," notes Willy Walker, news director at WBMG-TV in Birmingham, AL. When she was hired in Baltimore, Walker says, the station was clearly looking for a minority producer. Although she came

with experience, Walker thinks the station would have hired a minority who didn't have it. She believes that being a minority was "a plus" for getting into management. "It has opened doors."

Shedd Johnson says being a minority has closed some doors for him. Johnson is news director for Colonial

Broadcasting: WLWI-FM (country), WMXS-FM (mixed), WMSP-AM (sports) and WNZZ-AM (oldies) in Montgomery, AL. He has three full-time staffers and one part-timer for those stations; he has another two full time for the new Alabama Digital Satellite Network. He has been in the business for 17 years, including nine years with Colonial.

"I feel in a lot of ways that I could have made it to the 'big time' by now if I were not a minority," Johnson says. "[I] get calls back and send my picture, and [they] say, 'You're not quite what we had in mind for TV.' But that's water under the bridge. I look at it as their loss."

Kurt Davis, news director at WDSU-TV in New Orleans, says he had a similar experience of not getting a news director job after a station learned he was African American. "I had been a news director for three years and assistant news director in Dallas for two years, and they told me I needed more experience. And this was a small news department." But, Davis adds, "For the most part, [being a minority] probably helped me."

Beyond Good

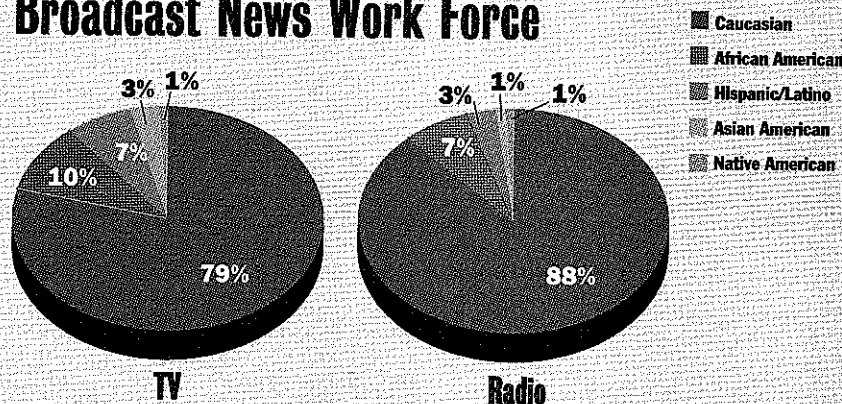
If being a minority can help land a job, almost all the minority news executives we spoke with say they also are also under greater scrutiny and must achieve a higher level of competence than their white counterparts.

Being a minority "has opened doors," says Walker, "but I have had to try twice as hard to prove myself in the management arena. It's a lot easier for a white man."

"I don't look at whether it's helped or hurt," says Roberts. "I've tried to focus on the reality: Being African American means that I have to work harder to achieve the same level of success as others."

Randall Yip, morning executive producer at independent KPTV in Portland, OR, says dealing with stereotypes has made the move into management harder. "Asian Americans are seen as quiet and passive, and leaders are not supposed to be quiet and passive," he says. Yip says he loves this first experience with management after 17 years in

Broadcast News Work Force



For the second straight year, the minority population in television news rose 2 percent—to 21 percent. African Americans and Hispanic/Latino each gained a percent from the year before. Radio remains unchanged overall, although African Americans went up a point from last year and Hispanic/Latino went down by one.

the business, but he didn't look for jobs all across the country because he didn't want to move far away from the Asian American culture he's comfortable with.

Henry Chu took the opposite approach. "In places like San Francisco, you might be hired for your skills or because you fit someone's [minority] hiring needs. In Austin and Kansas City I don't fit anybody's [minority] hiring needs." Chu has spent much of his 22-year career in Buffalo, NY, Austin, TX, and now as assistant news director at WDAF-TV in Kansas City, MO. He says he wasn't sure how he would be received when he left the West Coast, but, "It's been very positive. In broadcasting, people are mostly interested in whether you can do the job, and you just have to go in and prove it."

Bernadette Chato started as news director this past summer at KTNN-AM on the Navajo Reservation in Window Rock, AZ. Chato says Arbitron ratings show an audience of 25,000, but she believes it is a lot bigger because most of the 200,000 people on the reservation don't have phones. The Navajo Reservation is the largest in the country—about the size of New England, sprawling across parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. KTNN plays country music; its sister KWRK-FM plays light jazz. Chato spent 11 years in public radio, mostly in Albuquerque, NM.

"You're constantly having to prove yourself," Chato says. "Some goes with the territory in broadcasting, but it's double, because if you're Native American, a lot of people assume you don't have the skills or knowledge. You have to prove yourself. They always expect you not to do that well. You've got to have a thick skin generally, and especially as a minority."

Many of the industry's minority news directors, especially Hispanics in radio, work at all-Spanish stations. Diego Rinza has been in the United States since the mid-1980s, first in Miami and for the past four years at WNYG-AM in Long Island, NY. Before that, Rinza spent 17 years in radio in his native Colombia. He's the only news person at the all-Spanish station.

Minorities in Local Television News

	News Staff with Minorities	Minority News Directors	Minority % in Work Force	Average No. of Minorities
All Television	87%	8%	21%	6.1
ADI 1 - 25	89%	13%	26%	13.3
ADI 26 - 50	95%	9%	30%	13.2
ADI 51 - 100	89%	5%	18%	5.5
ADI 101 - 150	88%	3%	15%	3.4
ADI 151+	80%	7%	20%	3.3
Staff 51+	100%	5%	22%	16.6
Staff 31 - 50	94%	2%	24%	10.0
Staff 21 - 30	94%	8%	17%	4.5
Staff 11 - 20	89%	10%	19%	3.2
Staff 1 - 10	49%	14%	29%	1.4
Net affiliates	90%	4%	19%	6.0
Independents	71%	34%	60%	6.7
ABC affiliates	92%	4%	15%	4.0
CBS affiliates	89%	2%	17%	5.4
Fox affiliates	86%	10%	12%	8.3
NBC affiliates	90%	3%	23%	7.7

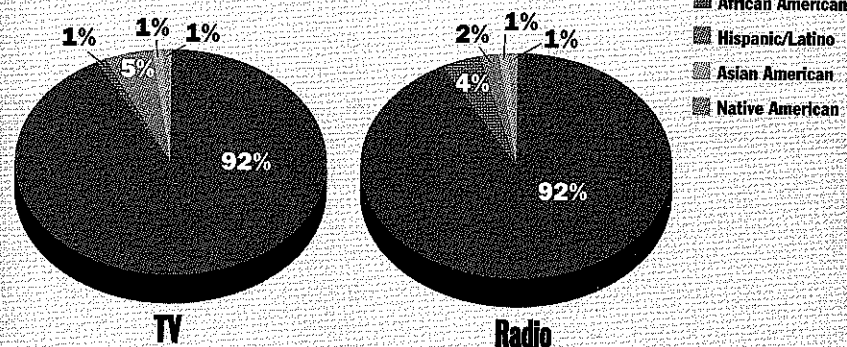
The total minority work force went up to 21 percent in 1996-97 from 19 percent the year before. The percentage of TV stations with minorities also rose—from 81 percent to 87 percent. But the percentage of minority news directors slipped slightly, from 9 percent to 8 percent, and minorities were more than eight times as likely to be news director at an independent station as at a network affiliate.

Johnson's experience has been mixed. "It's not always been a bed of roses, but, by and large, it's been fun when they find out you can perform," he says. "Like my boss says, 'It's what comes out of the box.'" Johnson has worked in country radio on and off, and "til they [the audience] see me,

most don't realize that I'm black. It's a big shock for some of them. The stereotype says blacks should sound a certain way. I've opened a few mouths when they find out, and I take utter delight in that. I get a good laugh."

Davis agrees. "Once people realize that you know what you're talking

Broadcast News Directors



Minority news directors in both radio and television slipped a percentage to 8 percent in 1996-97 from 9 percent the year before. In the case of TV, Hispanic/Latino rose from 4 percent to 5 percent while both Asian American and Native American slipped from 2 percent to 1 percent. The change in radio reflects a 1 percent drop in African American radio news directors.

about—and it's not just the color of your skin—the respect is there and you don't have any problems," he says. "For the most part, [being a minority] probably helped me, but we still have to be better; we have to get up earlier; we have to work harder because people don't expect as much. The same things can happen with women."

Women at Work

For the first time in years, the percentage of women in local television news remained the same from one year's survey to the next. In both 1995-96 and 1996-97, women made up 37 percent of the TV work force. In radio, the percentage of news staffs with women increased from 31 percent to 34 percent. But for both radio and TV, the percentage of women news directors dropped. In radio, it fell from 26 percent to 23 percent. In television, it dropped from 17 percent to 14 percent. And in TV, women were almost twice as likely to be news directors at independent stations (25 percent) as at network affiliates (13 percent).

Cathy Taylor has spent the past two years as news director at WTKS-FM in Orlando, FL. She has been there nine years and in the business for 17 years. In 1987 her station had 10 people in news. Today, she is the only one. The station is entertainment/talk—and very successful. "The biggest challenge is to be taken seriously," Taylor says. "You try not to be too sensitive. Because of both [being a woman and African American], there are going to be questions about your news judgment. You have to jump through hoops to prove you know this business



and know what you're doing."

Gayle Hill has been news director at KWES-TV in Midland, TX, for almost six years. She says she knew they were making progress when she attended the last NBC affiliates meeting, "and there was a line for the women's bathroom." She said she's had to be innovative. "No one hands you a book and says 'Here are the rules.' I was given the opportunity to create my own management philosophy."

Carolyn Fessler is the executive news director at KOTV in Tulsa, OK—just a few months into her first news director job after eight years as EP at WFAA-TV in Dallas. Fessler started in the late '70s as a writer at KDFW-TV in Dallas. "All the women were writers; all the producers and assignment managers were men." High turnover led to her becoming the 5 p.m. producer in the late '70s. "I may have been the first woman producer at KDFW. There were no women reporters at the time."

Teresa Snow, news director at KMIZ-TV in Columbia, MO, has worked at the station most of her career. She has been

news director for five years and also anchors the 5 p.m. news. She thinks being a woman "might have helped in [getting into] management" because it looked good for station management. "Women anchors with blondish-brown hair are a dime a dozen. You compete with everybody." That is not the case as a news director. Snow says she's faced no problems as a woman manager, but "maybe it's just making good decisions—hiring people who can work with a woman manager."

Amanda Wilson is news director at WHBC-AM/FM in Canton, OH. The AM is "full service" with "lots of news"—every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day. The FM is adult contemporary, also with a lot of news. Wilson has a staff of five full time and four part time plus freelancers. She has spent nine of her 14 years in radio there. As their first woman news director, it has been "kind of interesting"; she has had problems with both age and gender. "It's more difficult to be accepted by older men in the business. Younger men don't seem to have much of a problem with a woman boss. Some older listeners, too, have not responded well to female voices on the air."

The Diverse Newsroom

"Minorities can bring talents that are unique to an organization," says WXIA's Roberts. And those benefits go well beyond having a minority voice that is heard. It also "means that nonminorities get a greater sensitivity to minority communities—an unspoken benefit to the community and the newsroom."

"Birmingham was a unique situation," says Walker. "The station had a

The Print Perspective

The American Society of Newspaper Editors doesn't track women in newspapers, and it doesn't track minorities the same way the RTNDF/Ball State University Survey does, but some comparisons can be made.

ASNE reports that the percentage of minorities in daily newspaper newsrooms "inched up" to 11.4 percent in 1996 (from 11 percent the

year before)—compared with 21 percent in television newsrooms. The minority numbers actually were unchanged; the slight increase in percentage came solely because the total newspaper workforce shrank. Nearly 57 percent of daily newspapers employ minority newsroom professionals—compared with 87 percent for television news.

ASNE reports that 8.9 percent of "supervisors" are minorities. That's a fairly broad category in newspapers. In the 1995-96 survey, minorities held 9.3 percent of the top four news positions at TV stations.

proven track record of problems in the minority community. [It had been] targeted by the NAACP. [It] had 15 employees in the news department—while others had 65 to 70—and there were no minorities on the air and only one in the news department.

New ownership and management have changed things. Now the news department is at 41 (and heading to 70 by the end of the year) and “very diverse”—both on and off the air. Walker says it is all translated to “being balanced, being fair, looking at issues that concern everybody in the community, doing positive stories on people in the community. We were not doing that before.”

Diversity is a plus, agrees Chu, but “it runs well beyond ethnic diversity. Single and married, younger—Generation X—and baby boomers. They all see different news stories.” Chu says WDAF’s 110 staffers are a diverse group in all respects. “We’ve got this melting pot thing working in the heartland of America.”

WDSU’s Davis believes having a “minority perspective” is important for any newsroom. “There are good people even in bad neighborhoods.”

Davis, who has been news director for four years and in the business for 17 years, says he can remember when he was one of the first African Americans in television news in Arkansas. “I’d walk in to a news meeting and would be told, ‘We don’t do stories in that [African-American] area.’ It has come a long way.” Davis says he has a balanced, diversified newsroom (which was not the case when he arrived there).

Fessler doesn’t see women as a minority in news, although they “may be” in news management, but she believes having a diversified newsroom is important. “You just don’t always have the same perspective as your viewers when you’re talking in a group [if] the group is all white news managers. You don’t realize you’re insensitive or missing something. We need to reach out to other people.”

“I wish gender or race were not an issue,” says Wilson. “It’s not an issue for me when I hire.” Wilson’s staff is evenly split between men and women and includes several minorities. “It matters

Women in Local Radio News

	News Staff with Women	Women News Directors	Women % of Work Force	Average No. of Women
All Radio	34%	23%	31%	0.6
Major market	57%	30%	39%	1.8
Large market	37%	31%	31%	0.8
Medium market	34%	22%	31%	0.5
Small market	24%	20%	24%	0.3

Minorities in Local Radio News

	News Staff with Minorities	Minority News Directors	Minority % of Work Force	Average No. of Minorities
All Radio	13%	8%	12%	0.2
Major market	43%	15%	21%	1.0
Large market	22%	15%	13%	0.3
Medium market	9%	5%	6%	0.1
Small market	8%	3%	7%	0.1

The percentage of women in radio news rose 3 percent from the year before, but the percentage of women news directors dropped 3 percent. Minority percentages for radio news are virtually unchanged from 1995-96 to 1996-97.

in terms of relating to a general audience. It’s important to have different perspectives.” When she started at the station, they had the same size staff—but all white and only one woman. “It all changed. It wasn’t a planned thing,

just sort of happened.”

Johnson says he has a highly diverse staff, and it helps make them better. “When a school wants me in for career day, I jump at the chance,” says Johnson. “I want to show the kids, minorities

Women in Local TV News by Region

	News Staff with Women	Women News Directors	Women % of Work Force	Average No. of Women
Northeast	100%	17%	39%	11.2
Midwest	99%	12%	37%	9.8
South	96%	16%	38%	19.3
West	87%	14%	35%	9.7

Minorities in Local TV News by Region

	News Staff with Minorities	Minority News Directors	Minority % of Work Force	Average No. of Minorities
Northeast	78%	4%	11%	3.2
Midwest	82%	4%	12%	3.2
South	97%	11%	28%	8.8
West	85%	13%	29%	8.0

Demographic Shifts over the Next 10 Years

Group	1997	2002	2007
White (non-Hispanic)	72.9%	71.0	69.1
Black	12.7	13.0	13.3
Hispanic	10.7	11.9	13.1
Asian	4.6	4.6	5.7

Projections are for the United States; percentages vary greatly by region
Credit: U.S. Census

especially, that you're only limited by your ambition. You can do anything."

Not There Yet

One problem Davis sees is that most people—including minorities—want to be in front of the camera. "They think they'll make a bazillion dollars if they're on the air." Davis sees a lot of work ahead, including more to encourage young people to look at off-air positions. "Affirmative action...was necessary, is necessary to ensure all people get their fair shake."

Taylor sees other problems, too. "Radio news is a dying breed, especially in FM." She is attracted to the new media and has been writing for an Internet service. By the time this story is published, Taylor expects to have left radio for what she sees as better opportunities in new media.

As Atlanta's first African-American

got a college education, I need to give back to the [Navajo] community," says Chato. "They wanted someone who was Navajo to get more people involved in the station and to train them." Neither of her two staffers has done news before.

"There are so many problems with all the Indian people getting higher education, struggling to make a good living. You need to have skills in both languages—English and Navajo—but I don't see that happening. They talk about education, but they're not really doing much about it. I'm criticized for speaking English too well and losing my identity. It's unfortunate that some people see it that way."

Mary Ayala says she sees things differently. She's news director at KOGO-AM (news/talk) and KSDO-AM (information you can use) in San Diego. "I happen to be both [a minority member and a woman], but I'm not

TV news director, Roberts believes his hiring has "made a difference" in the community. "The [color barrier] has been broken, and others won't have to undergo the spotlight of being first."

"I felt that as a Navajo person who

About the Survey

The RTNDF/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 1996 among all 1,186 operating, nonsatellite television stations and a random sample of 843 radio stations. Valid responses came from 653 television stations (55.1 percent) and 351 radio stations (41.6 percent). The research was supported by the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University and the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation.

interested in either as an issue. It has never been a personal issue with me, so I cannot relate to people having problems." About 20 reporters, anchors, writers and editors report to Ayala. This is the only station she's worked for—starting as an intern in 1982 and moving up to news director about five years ago. Ayala has never wanted to be on the air, and she never has. She found editing and producing more interesting.

"I thought in the beginning, 'Will they think less of me or pay less attention because I'm a woman?'" But, she says, they saw she knew what she was doing, and it never was a problem. "Some people think that I'm a lot more sensitive to minority issues than I am. But I don't even speak Spanish. My parents are not from outside the United States. My mother is from San Diego; my father is from Puerto Rico. So, no, I don't identify with issues [like illegal aliens] as a minority. Let's look at it from just a story standpoint." Ayala says she doesn't belong to any Hispanic association. "I went to one meeting, but I don't buy into a lot of the 'oh, woe is me' stuff."

Roberts says he'd like to see a society where more good people are color-blind. He says things are moving in the right direction in Atlanta and in Gannett, but that overall, "We still have a considerable ways to go." ■

Bob Papper is associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. Michael Gerhard, Ph.D., is associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State University with extensive industry and research experience.

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Association for Women in Communications (formerly Women in Communications)

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International Women's Media Foundation

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