

A SURVEY OF RADIO LISTENER DEMOGRAPHICS
AND PROGRAMMING PREFERENCES FOR
RADIO STATION KOSU-FM
STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA

By

KEITH ALAN SWEZEY

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Central State University

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Thesis Approved:

Charles A. Fleming

Thesis Adviser

Philip E. Paulin

William J. Rugg

Norman N. Dushon

Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

Valid research information gives radio station management the knowledge they need to make intelligent programming decisions based on likely outcomes. This study was designed to provide that information for KOSU radio in Stillwater, since valid research data for small market radio stations is rarely available.

I am grateful to many people who have helped me during my graduate study. The patience and support of my thesis advisor, Dr. Charles Fleming, is particularly appreciated. I am also grateful to Dr. Phillip Paulin and Dr. William Rugg for serving on my thesis committee.

Underwriting of this study by KOSU radio made possible a larger sample than might have been feasible otherwise, and special thanks go to KOSU-FM general manager Craig Beeby for arranging financing of portions of this study.

To my wife, Dixie, and my children, Christopher, Patrick and Erin, I thank you for your love and patience during my graduate study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the first radio stations went on the air in the 1920s, broadcasters have been faced with the problem of finding out how many people are listening to their stations, and the demographic profile of that audience. Radio stations needed the information to help their sales staff sell advertising and program time to finance station operations. Radio produced an intangible service, though, with no record of purchase by the user, and a new method of measurement had to be developed. Increasing competition, as more stations went on the air, increased the need for audience research to help stations measure their listenership.¹

Audience measurement research for radio was first commissioned by advertisers looking for a way to evaluate the potential of what promised to be an important selling tool. Archibald Crossley developed the first radio ratings, available only to advertisers, in 1929. Crossley used telephone interviews to gather data, asking respondents what programs and stations they had listened to in the past 24 hours.²

The first radio research done specifically for broadcasters was started by Clark-Hooper, Inc., in 1934. Clark-Hooper originally reported both magazine and radio audiences using a telephone survey method. In 1938, C.E. Hooper, Inc. split off from this company and began providing monthly ratings of sponsored network programs. Hooper's method of telephone survey involved selecting numbers at random from telephone directories and asking the respondents what they were listening to at the time of the call. The "Hooper" ratings were very influential through the 1940s.³

The A.C. Nielsen Company entered the area of radio research in 1942, with considerable previous experience in marketing research. Nielsen developed a system of audience measurement using an "Audimeter," a black box that attached to a radio set and recorded dial settings on photographic film. Nielsen purchased C.E. Hooper's radio rating service in 1950. Nielsen dropped radio ratings in 1964 to concentrate on television ratings.⁴

Two other ratings services were started in the 1940s, The Pulse and the American Research Bureau. The Pulse began using aided recall methodology in face-to-face interviews with radio listeners in New York in 1941, and turned in the first national ratings in 1944. The Pulse went out of business in 1978. American Research Bureau (later known as ARB and later still as Arbitron) was founded in 1949 and established the diary method for radio

listening data collection. Arbitron's methodology requires listeners to fill out diaries of their radio listening and mail them back to the researcher.⁵

One other audience measurement firm that serves radio is Birch Research Corporation. Established in 1979, Birch uses the telephone survey method of research first used by Hooper in the 1930s. Birch expanded the scope of responses from telephone surveys by also asking respondents questions about personalities and music on the station or stations they had listened to in the last 24 hours.⁶

Commercial radio stations need to measure the size and characteristics of their audience to determine how much to charge for advertisements. Public radio stations, which do not carry advertising, need to know about the size and characteristics of their audience to effectively solicit underwriting and donations from businesses and individuals. Any broadcast station represents an expenditure of resources, and unless the proper research is done to find out if objectives are being met, there is a chance that those resources will be wasted.⁷

Ratings provide an organized measurement of how many people listen, when they listen, what they listen to and which stations they listen to most often. Ratings are done primarily to measure audience so stations can set advertising rates. The ratings are a "medium of exchange" between buyer and seller. Secondly, the ratings are used to determine which personalities or formats are most

popular, and as a basis for programming changes. Ratings are a common reference point for decision-makers within the industry; they make it easier to understand the value of a program or format.⁸

Public radio stations do not depend on size of audience to sell commercials, but management of public radio stations needs to know the size of the audience and its demographic characteristics for other reasons. Public radio stations need to know if their programs are reaching their intended audience, even though audience size supposedly is not a basis for offering programs on public radio. Whether those programs appeal to certain groups in the audience is valuable information, however, because fund raising and promotional efforts must be properly targeted to increase donations by audience members inclined to support public radio.⁹

The two audience measurement services surveying the most radio markets nationwide today are Arbitron and Birch. Both provide detailed demographic information about the markets they measure and about the respondents to each survey. Listening is measured in "dayparts" that range in length from 15 minutes to 24 hours. The ratings for radio provided by these services show the audience size for a particular daypart and how long individuals spend listening to a station during that daypart. These audience surveys cannot, however, tell a broadcaster why someone listens to a particular program or why listening is done at a certain

time of day. The data provided are almost entirely quantitative, and it is difficult for stations to make programming decisions based on audience measurement alone.¹⁰

Not all radio markets are included in ratings surveys, however, leaving stations in smaller markets without ratings information readily available. Radio markets are typically defined as small, medium or large based on the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. The top 50 SMSA markets are defined as large markets by Arbitron Ratings Company. The next 210 are medium markets. All markets below the top 260 surveyed by Arbitron are considered small markets for radio ratings purposes.¹¹ Contracting audience research on an individual basis is possible, but often prohibitively expensive for most small market radio stations. Ratings services are affordable for stations in larger markets mainly because several stations subscribe to the service and share the cost. This means that information needed to prepare advertising rates and make programming decisions is very difficult, if not impossible, for the small market radio station to obtain.¹²

Statement of the Problem

Audience measurement for public radio stations has traditionally been even more difficult to obtain than for

commercial stations. Arbitron and Birch reports include listeners for public radio stations only in their total of "persons using radio." Demographic information and time spent listening are not included, as with commercial stations. In addition, a public radio station located in a small market, with only small markets in its primary coverage area, does not even have this limited information available, since Arbitron measures listening in the top 260 markets and Birch measures the top 100.

Public radio stations need to measure audience size and program preference just as commercial stations do, but the reasons for measurement differ. Many public radio stations depend on audience contributions for at least a portion of their operating budgets. This means the station must provide programs listeners like, so they will contribute, and must know key demographic information about those listeners so promotions and fund-raising solicitations can be properly targeted.¹³

Small market radio stations that can't afford or choose not to conduct audience research often rely on listener phone calls and letters or personal and business contacts within the community to determine audience size and reaction to programming. This type of volunteered information often comes from biased or vocal minorities who don't represent a true cross-section of the station's audience. Station resources can easily be wasted by bad decisions based on such information.¹⁴

Thus, a small market radio station, whether commercial or non-commercial, must make programming decisions without the benefit of audience measurement by ratings services. Even if such services are available, they are often too expensive for the small market station to use.

Based on the current lack of ratings service to both small market and public radio stations, there seems to be a lack of research to measure audience size for radio stations in either of those two areas. Since KOSU radio, a public radio station in Stillwater, Oklahoma, is located in a small market, there is currently no valid audience measurement available for that station. KOSU does not have access to any ratings service, because the station falls into both the public radio and small market categories, which are currently not served by commercial ratings companies.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study will be on radio listening within the primary coverage area of KOSU, a public radio station in Stillwater, Oklahoma. This primary coverage area encompasses six counties in north central Oklahoma that are also served by a number of other radio stations. KOSU is a National Public Radio (NPR) network affiliate, and carries information and entertainment programming from NPR, in addition to classical music and locally produced news programs.

This study is designed to measure radio listening by respondents within the KOSU primary coverage area, regardless of whether they listen to KOSU or not. The preferences of respondents for news and music programming on all stations within this area are of interest in this study. This study will seek to determine if there is any relationship between demographic characteristics of respondents and their preferences for a specific radio station, format, news and information programming and whether they do or do not listen to public radio.

National Public Radio has conducted nationwide research on public radio audiences, but most public radio stations are located in or near metropolitan areas. This is not the case with KOSU. Differences in public radio audience demographics in the national survey and in the KOSU audience will also be of interest in this study.

This study was done in response to a need for valid audience measurement for KOSU radio. KOSU management agreed to underwrite the cost of printing and mailing surveys for this study.

Value of the Study

With the information in this study, KOSU management can more effectively make programming and promotional decisions targeting the preferences of current listeners. Information about non-listeners will allow KOSU management to promote the station to potential listeners, that is,

those who fit demographic characteristics of current KOSU listeners but for some reason do not listen to KOSU at the current time. KOSU management can also use the information in this study to enhance their fund-raising activities by programming and promoting the radio station more effectively to current and potential listeners, with the purpose of prompting members of the audience to make more contributions to the station.

Other public radio stations located in small markets may be able to copy the methods used in this survey to produce information about their audiences that is not available to them now. A cost-effective way to evaluate their audience would be helpful to most public radio stations, especially in markets not served or minimally served by rating services.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the area contained in KOSU radio's primary coverage pattern, the radio stations that serve that area and their current programming. The geographic area is contained in six counties in north central Oklahoma: Payne, Pawnee, Noble, Kay, Logan and Lincoln.

Four-hundred respondents were contacted through a self-administered mail questionnaire. The sample for this study was taken from telephone directories of the five largest towns in the KOSU primary coverage area:

Stillwater, Ponca City, Guthrie, Perry and Cushing. The telephone exchanges in all of those towns extend beyond the city limits, so respondents may not live within the corporate limits of any town. These five telephone directories also contained listings for other smaller communities, and these were included in the sample frame.

Plan for the Study

This study was planned to meet the need of KOSU radio for valid audience size measurement within their primary coverage area in north central Oklahoma. Other research on audience measurement is discussed in the next chapter. This includes research on both commercial and public radio audiences, since in some cases the studies are applicable to both.

Chapter III outlines the methodology used to choose from the population of north central Oklahoma the households to receive the survey instrument, how the questionnaire was administered and explains the rationale for questions contained on the survey instrument.

Chapter IV details the findings from the returned questionnaires and contains a statistical analysis of those findings.

Chapter V contains a summary of the study along with conclusions reached from the data collected and recommendations to the management of KOSU about how the data might be used and suggestions for further research.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Noncommercial or educational radio stations were first set apart as a separate entity by federal law in the 1930s. The stated purpose of such stations was to advance educational work, and most were licensed to educational institutions for that purpose.¹ By the 1960s it had become clear that additional funding and a more structured governing system would be needed if educational broadcasting was ever to move beyond strictly instructional programming.²

Public radio was established as a separate entity from educational radio by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The original idea behind both public radio and television was to provide cultural and informational programming that was not available on commercial stations. The goal was to serve diverse audiences through unique programming. The reality, though, is that public radio stations, much like their commercial counterparts, have frequently chosen programming that attracts the largest audience. While providing programs that are in fact unique, most research indicates that public radio stations tend to provide programming that is remarkably similar from one market to

another. The Carnegie Commission Report on Public Broadcasting in 1979 noted that a majority of public radio stations program all classical music, or a combination of classical music and National Public Radio news and information programs.³

Ratings for Public Radio

KOSU in Stillwater, Oklahoma, fits this description of the majority of public radio stations. KOSU's programming consists of classical music and selected programs from National Public Radio (NPR). Attracting audience is necessary for KOSU, as with other public radio stations, because they must make sure their resources are being put to good use, and because contributions from their audience are an important part of the station's budget.⁴

Not surprisingly, as pointed out in recent research commissioned by National Public Radio, "The number of people who support public radio is a direct function of the number of people served by public radio. The larger the audience...the more successful on-air appeals for support will be."⁵ Building audience, therefore, is a necessity for many public radio stations, even though the stated objective of most public radio stations is to fill a programming void left by commercial radio stations, without regard to audience size.

The issue of whether public radio should be in the

business of cultivating larger audiences through programs that appeal to the largest group of listeners is still being debated, and is not of concern to this study. The reality is that stations are being encouraged to build the size of their audiences both by financial need and by National Public Radio itself.⁶ In their report to NPR stations in 1988, National Public Radio researchers indicated that fund-raising is one of the main reasons for their audience research:

By identifying particular kinds of people that are heavily represented in the public radio audience, and learning more about their values and lifestyles--it is possible to develop new programming and fundraising efforts that will have a special appeal to such listeners--encouraging them to listen more and to give more. Equally important, if not more so, this knowledge can be used to help stations devise strategies to attract new listeners and supporters.⁷

Programming on Public Radio

Public radio stations typically offer "block" programming. This type of programming does not attempt to develop a sound image of the radio station as is done in "formula" programming used by most commercial stations today, but rather offers blocks of different types of programs designed to appeal to as many different people as possible.⁸

Public radio stations typically offer blocks of information programming, from NPR and locally produced, and blocks of music programming. This type of format works

well for both NPR news, which runs in half-hour and hour-long blocks, and classical music, which requires long blocks of time so longer musical works can be played in their entirety. However, public radio programmers have found that these blocks of programming must be fairly consistent, as far as beginning and ending at particular times, and must contain predictable program elements if the station is to draw a larger audience.⁹

In the past, public radio stations often offered programs that differed markedly from one block to another in quality and content. Minnesota Public Radio was one of the first public radio systems to provide predictable, high-quality programs on a consistent basis. This system eventually produced the tremendously successful "Prairie Home Companion" program. Once predictable, high-quality block programming was started, audience grew for Minnesota Public Radio and so did contributions. The lesson here is that unpredictable, eclectic programming tends to serve very small audiences and alienates people who may like one program, but be offended by the quality and nature of one that precedes or follows their choice. As with commercial radio, public radio programmers have learned that people want to know what they're going to hear when they tune to a particular station.¹⁰

Programming by the Numbers

Broadcasters commonly base decisions about what programs to run and how to increase audience size, and therefore income, on research data.¹¹ Audience ratings are the only scientific method of audience feedback available to radio stations. No other reliable way exists to find out how many people are listening to programs and their reaction to those programs.

Although most audience ratings provide only an either/or type of audience reaction to programs (listeners are either tuned in or they aren't), the popularity of programs can at least be judged in terms of how many people are listening, and the demographic characteristics of that audience can be analyzed. Other means of audience feedback for broadcasters, mostly in the form of telephone calls and letters from listeners, do not provide even a close approximation of a valid measurement of audience response.¹²

Critics of ratings complain that ratings are not accurate, that samples are too small, listeners give biased or partial answers, interviewers are not trustworthy, returns of diaries are too low, ethnic groups are poorly represented, and so on.

The controversy over the reliability of audience ratings does not end there, though. A study done for one national advertising firm indicates that Arbitron and Birch

Radio, the two local market radio audience measurement services, provide "significantly different pictures of the radio medium," when compared in the same market. The Katz Radio Group analysis shows that Arbitron's diary methodology tends to show higher listening levels for stations targeting listeners age 35 and older, and Birch Radio's telephone methodology tends to favor stations with formats targeted to young adults. Apparently, older people tend to fill out diaries more often than younger listeners.¹³

Ratings services have tried to address the complaints about not providing qualitative data about radio audiences, but without much success. In the 1950s, Nielsen tried to launch a system to track the use of products advertised in programs respondents listened to on the radio. Arbitron included product use information with its ratings reports from 1967 to 1971. Arbitron eliminated that feature because many stations felt the added time respondents spent keeping a product use diary lowered response rates and hurt the accuracy of program listening data.¹⁴

In 1980, Arbitron introduced "Qualidata," a reinterview telephone survey of people who had returned their radio diaries. Qualidata provided information on product use, socioeconomic status, and use of other media. Subscribers complained about cost, low response rate and out-of-date data and the service was discontinued in

1984.¹⁵

A major problem in establishing qualitative ratings may be that there is little agreement on what "qualitative" means, and what should be measured. Qualitative ratings must also rely on what people say they like or don't like, leaving open to interpretation what the listener means by "quality programs," "like," or "dislike," and other abstract terms. Several well-known researchers have argued since the 1930s that enough qualitative information can be gleaned by properly analyzing and interpreting quantitative ratings to make additional research unnecessary. Among other things, by comparing which programs appeal to audience members with certain demographic characteristics, a profile of the kind of audience particular programs will attract can be made.¹⁶

Audience Research for Public Radio

Relatively little research has been done specifically on public radio audiences. Most of the research that exists was done on a national basis, commissioned by National Public Radio. Although public radio listeners are among those surveyed by both Arbitron and Birch Radio rating services, the responses concerning public radio are not analyzed in detail in reports from either service. In the Arbitron market report for the Oklahoma City metro area in Spring of 1988, a total of 1,237 diaries were returned

by listeners. Only 147 of the returned diaries came from the KOSU primary coverage area, or 11.8% of the total returned diaries. Twenty of the returned diaries mentioned KOSU.

The vast majority of the returned diaries did not come from KOSU's primary coverage area, leaving the station with only minimal audience information. Additionally, the KOSU primary listening area is part of the non-metropolitan survey area for Arbitron, and is not the primary focus of their research.¹⁷

One other audience survey has been done specifically for KOSU in the past few years. This study, in April 1986, was based on a telephone survey of Stillwater residents chosen randomly from the Stillwater telephone directory. The survey did not include any of KOSU's primary coverage area outside of the Stillwater telephone exchange. A total of 192 calls was completed for this survey. While 68% of the respondents said they had heard of KOSU, only 38% stated that they listened to the station.¹⁸

KOSU radio routinely mails surveys to known contributors asking their opinions about programs currently on KOSU and programs that might be added to KOSU. The surveys also request some demographic information from listeners. This is a good way to solicit opinions from known listeners who are also contributing to the radio station, but it doesn't truly measure who is listening or

point out potential contributors and listeners.

Previous research done for Florida State University's public radio station indicated that surveys of contributor lists did not provide responses typical of public radio listeners in the general population and were not helpful in identifying potential listeners.¹⁹

Public radio audiences are normally smaller than audiences for commercial radio, based on the limited audience measurement available, and therefore harder to reach. A larger sample than that used for commercial radio audience research may be needed to assure sufficient numbers of the public radio audience for analysis. So far no effective way has been found to isolate sample frames likely to contain large numbers of public radio listeners that don't also bias the research because they are not representative of the listening population in general.²⁰

The commercial ratings services, however, typically use samples that yield only very small numbers of public radio listeners. The 20 mentions of KOSU from 1,237 respondents in the Oklahoma City Arbitron survey gives an indication of how small the numbers of public radio listeners may be in such a survey.

Although the number of responses for commercial stations is typically much larger in ratings reports, even those sample sizes have led to much debate about the

validity of audience measurement that is currently being done by Arbitron and Birch. Some radio station managers have threatened to organize a national boycott of ratings services unless new statistical standards are established for the audience research done for radio station clients.²¹

There are also indications that commercial ratings services do not effectively measure classical music audiences, something of importance to KOSU and many public radio stations, since a large part of their block programming is devoted to classical music. Classical-music lovers are reluctant to fill out diaries or participate in telephone surveys, and so may be underrepresented in Arbitron and Birch ratings reports. Classical music station programmers have claimed that their listeners simply are not motivated to participate in ratings by the small monetary incentives typically offered, with some listeners indicating such participation is beneath them. However, classical radio station managers say they are able to send mail questionnaires to that same audience and receive a meaningful number of responses.²²

There are also claims that national research has little meaning for public broadcasting, because of the diversity of programming, and because public radio stations are now free to run programs from NPR and other sources at any time of day they choose. This makes comparisons of ratings from the same time of day difficult, because there

is no guarantee the same program is being heard at that time on most NPR affiliates.²³

For now, the best audience information available on public radio is from research done for National Public Radio in 1988. Little audience research had been done for public radio prior to 1978, when a study was started to find out what the public radio audience would like to hear in a morning news show. This show eventually became "Morning Edition," and along the way public radio programmers found out that a lot of their assumptions about what the audience wanted, and who was in their audience, simply weren't correct.

One assumption, that access to the airwaves guaranteed a vast audience, was put to rest quickly. Public radio's audience was very small, less than 10 percent of the total radio audience in most cases. Public radio listeners liked news and information, and the news shows generally received higher ratings than the music programs they replaced.²⁴

Since that original study, National Public Radio has sponsored several nationwide research studies to measure the size of public radio audiences. The national research done for NPR is useful, to a degree, for comparison of audience demographics and the popularity of certain programs between national audiences and the audience measured for KOSU.

Some indications about the audience from the NPR

research: Sixty-two percent of public radio listeners have college degrees, 53% are employed in "white collar" occupations, 62% have an annual household income of more than \$30,000.

News programs provide the best return on investment for public radio stations, in terms of increased listener contributions and corporate underwriting.²⁵ Public radio has a lot of infrequent listeners who typically aren't measured by commercial ratings services, because they don't tune in often enough to be counted during normal rating periods.²⁶

National Public Radio-sponsored research has also found over the years that the longer someone has been listening to public radio, the more likely they are to contribute financially to public radio stations. People who have been public radio listeners for eight years or more are twice as likely to give money to their local public radio station.²⁷

Using a segmentation technique called VALS, an acronym for Values and Life Styles, the 1988 audience study for National Public Radio claims that 54 percent of the public radio audience are "Inner-Directed" types. They define "Inner-Directeds" as people who conduct their lives in accord with their inner values and concern for personal growth. Both long-term and newer public radio listeners tend to fit this profile, according to the NPR study, and

these listeners are mainstays of the audience for classical music and information programming.²⁸

What little research that has been done for individual public radio stations tends to confirm some of these characteristics of public radio listeners, but certain deviations exist because of local conditions that need to be taken into account.

A listener survey for KUNR, the public radio station in Reno, Nevada, indicates that their listeners fit some of the profile characteristics in the NPR studies, but not all. For instance, 62 percent of the KUNR audience preferred classical music, consistent with NPR findings nationally. KUNR listeners also rated NPR programs "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered" very highly, also noted in the NPR studies. The income profile did not match, however, with KUNR listeners reporting a lower mean income than the 1988 NPR study shows nationally. If other differences existed, they were not mentioned in the study.²⁹

Some of the other statistics from the NPR research are instructive when considering the coverage area of KOSU, and the Stillwater station's current and potential audience. While 78.8% of the public radio audience nationally lives in either urban or suburban areas, neither of those type neighborhoods (as defined in NPR's research) exist in the KOSU primary coverage area.

The remaining 21.2% of public radio listeners nationally live in towns or rural areas typical of KOSU's coverage area. These statistics indicate that the "typical" public radio listener as defined by NPR's research may be not at all the "typical" listener for KOSU.³⁰ This further indicates the need for local research for KOSU and other public radio stations not located in or near metropolitan areas.

Summary

Audience research is vital to both commercial and public broadcasters as they try to find programs that will appeal to larger audiences, who in turn will provide more revenue for the station. If a public radio station does not appeal to a large enough audience, it can lose important funding in the form of donations.

Research, done properly, can give a station both quantitative and qualitative data about the success of their current programs, the audience they are now reaching and people who match the characteristics of current audience members and might be potential listeners. Small market stations and public radio stations both suffer from a lack of valid audience information. They are not served by national ratings firms, and often lack the expertise, money, or both to do their own audience research.

The review of the literature indicates that reliable audience research for KOSU, as both a small market and public radio station, is only available through local research of some kind. Various methods could be used, with varying degrees of success. This study will conduct a mail questionnaire survey of the largest towns within the KOSU primary coverage area in north central Oklahoma. A description of the survey is contained in Chapter III.

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¹⁴Beville, Audience Ratings, 132.

¹⁵Ibid., 139 - 140.

¹⁶Dr. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Public Opinion Quarterly 4:2 (June, 1940): 195.

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¹⁸Alan S. Gordon, et al., unpublished marketing research report, Oklahoma State University, 1986.

¹⁹Wenmouth Williams, "Public Radio Audience Measurement: An Empirical Study of Various Methodological Approaches" (Ph.D. diss., The Florida State University, 1974.) 179 - 182.

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²¹Jerome Gillman, "Better Measures for Measuring Radio," Advertising Age, 4 February 1985, 16.

²²Kevin L. Goldman, "Radio's 48 Weeks of Panic," New York, 17 March 1980, 13 - 14.

²³Cater, The Future of Public Broadcasting, 211 - 213.

²⁴David Giovannoni, "Radio Intelligence," Current, 30 March, 1988, 20.

²⁵David Giovannoni, "Radio Intelligence," Current, 22 December, 1987, 6.

²⁶David Giovannoni, "Radio Intelligence," Current, 15 June, 1988, 6.

²⁷David Giovannoni, "Radio Intelligence," Current, 23 November, 1988, 6.

²⁸Liebold, Audience 88, 4 - 5.

²⁹John Wheeler, "Survey of Listener Programming Preferences for Public Radio Station KUNR-FM Reno," (M.A. thesis, The University of Nevada, Reno, 1987) 39 - 54.

³⁰Liebold, Audience 88, 7 - 9.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Through careful analysis of research information about its audience, a radio station, public or commercial, can make some important determinations about the people it is reaching and the programs it is offering. While such research cannot answer every question about the radio station's audience, it can offer guidelines for decision-making.

This study attempted to determine what radio stations listeners in north central Oklahoma prefer, whether the respondents listen to public radio or not, if they contribute to public radio or not, their music preferences, news and information preferences and the demographic characteristics of respondents. By analyzing any relationship between demographic characteristics and the stations, formats, and other variables mentioned, KOSU management should be able to determine what characteristics are common to their current audience and be able to identify potential listeners, as well as identify programs that are popular with their current listeners and reasons current listeners contribute to KOSU.

Research Design

The independent variables in this study are the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Those variables are gender, age, income, occupation, place of residence and education, as defined on the questionnaire. The dependent variable is the listening preferences of the respondent. The levels of that variable are preferred station(s), music preference, news/information preference, public radio listener/non-listener, and public radio contributor/non-contributor.

Data Collection Plan

The 400 respondents surveyed for this study were selected as a stratified random sample from the telephone directories of the five largest towns in the KOSU primary coverage area. The five strata were the residential listings in the phone directories of the five towns. Those towns are Stillwater, Ponca City, Guthrie, Cushing and Perry. The number of respondents selected from each telephone directory was determined by calculating the number of listings in the residential section of each directory, then listing that as a percentage of the total residential listings in all five directories. That percentage of 400 total surveys yielded the number of respondents that needed to be selected from each directory.

The names of people to be sent a survey were then

randomly selected from each directory, thus resulting in a stratified (by directory) random sample. This random sample was chosen by determining how many columns were on each page of the phone directory, how many names were in each column and calculating the approximate total number of names in the directory. The total was then divided by the sample size for that directory, giving the number for "N." Using a random numbers table a page was chosen to start the count, and, again using a random numbers table, a listing was chosen as the place to begin the count. Every "Nth" name following the starting point was chosen until the sample was filled. If the name of a business was selected, a coin was tossed; heads, the listing above was selected, tails, the listing below was selected. This procedure was used for each town's phone directory.

The Research Instrument

The 400 respondents chosen were each mailed a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire package consisted of a cover letter, the questionnaire, and a postage paid return envelope. The cover letter explained that the survey was for academic research, requested the respondent's help in studying radio listening in north central Oklahoma, and promised that the responses would be confidential.

The questionnaire contained 14 questions about the respondents' radio listening habits and demographic

characteristics. To ensure an acceptable response rate, a follow-up mailing of 226 surveys was sent to respondents who had not replied within three weeks of the first mailing. This follow-up mailing contained the same cover letter and questionnaire, with a highlighted border across the top of the cover letter, explaining that since the respondent had not sent back the first survey, a second survey had been mailed because their response was important to this research. One hundred forty surveys were returned after the first mailing, and 67 were returned after the second mailing, for a total of 207 returned surveys and a response rate of 58 percent. This return rate, while less than desirable, was about as predicted using average mail questionnaire return rates.

The survey procedure took six weeks from first mailing until the cut off date for accepting returned questionnaires. The follow up mailing took place three weeks after the first surveys were mailed. No responses received more than three weeks after the follow up mailing were included in the analysis because of time considerations.

On the questionnaire, respondents were asked to list the radio stations they listened to the most, in rank order of preference, with up to five responses possible. This allowed an analysis of the number of times stations were mentioned as well as a mean ranking of each station.

Respondents were asked to check one of six response

choices for the type of music they preferred on the radio. Their choices were rock and roll, country, classical, easy listening and a category for "don't listen to music." These categories are adequate to characterize the formats of all radio stations within the KOSU primary coverage area. The responses were analyzed according to the number of respondents who checked each category, and were used to determine the most popular format among all respondents, as well as among KOSU listeners only.

Another question asked respondents to indicate what length of news/information programming they prefer. Their choices ranged from five-minute newscasts to one-hour programs as well as a category for all-news format. The answers to this question apply to KOSU because most of their news and information programming is long-form (half-hour or hour-long) and knowing the preferences of their listeners is useful to management.

Respondents were asked to name their favorite programs and if there are any programs they would like to hear on the radio that aren't available right now. The popularity of certain programs on KOSU and other stations can be measured by analyzing the number of times each program is mentioned.

Respondents were asked how much time they spend listening to the radio on each weekday, and on the weekend, to determine how much KOSU listeners use radio and if KOSU listeners spend more or less time listening to the radio

than people who don't listen to KOSU. The amount of time spent listening is one indication of how important the medium of radio is to listeners.

To find out how many of the KOSU listeners contribute money to public radio and what prompts those contributions, respondents were asked to rank five response choices regarding programs or promotions by KOSU, or to note that they did not contribute to public radio. The respondents were asked if music, news, special programs, or membership drives prompted their contributions, or to specify any other reason. Analysis of the answers to this question will show which aspects of programming or promotion on KOSU prompted contributions from these respondents, information that can be used to solicit future contributions.

The demographic section of the survey asked the respondents a series of questions. These demographic characteristics were important for analysis of the other data collected, so KOSU management can get a profile of their audience, as well as information about why people listen and what stations or programs may be their favorites.

Respondents were asked their gender; their occupation; whether they lived in a city, suburban or rural area; their educational level; their age range and their household income range. Several of these factors, particularly income and educational level, have been identified in past

research as predictors in determining what audience members are most likely to support public radio.¹

Measurement of Data

The answers of respondents on the questionnaire were coded according to the type of question asked. Most questions resulted in nominal data, with a frequency count of respondents noted for each category. This allowed analysis of those questions through complex chi square calculations, to determine if there is a significant difference between one or more of the levels of the variables. If a significant difference was found, calculations of phi and contingency coefficient were made to determine the strength of the relationship between variables.

A crossbreak similar to Table I was used to display data from these questions. Data regarding demographic characteristics of both KOSU listeners and non-listeners were displayed in this type of table.

TABLE I
ANALYSIS PARADIGM ILLUSTRATING
MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

AGES OF KOSU LISTENERS				
<20	20-34	34-49	50-64	>64
Male				
Female				
Overall				

From the interpretation of the paradigm and complex chi square analysis, it could be determined if there were significant differences in age ranges among KOSU listeners overall and between male and female listeners.

Two of the questions, about station preference and reasons for contributing to public radio, resulted in rank order data, and were analyzed according to the mean rank of each station mentioned, or reason for contributing, as illustrated in Table II.

TABLE II
ANALYSIS PARADIGM ILLUSTRATING
MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

RADIO STATIONS RANKED BY KOSU LISTENERS	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX ...
Mean rank				
Male				
Female				
Overall				

From interpretation of the paradigm the mean ranking of radio stations mentioned by KOSU listeners can be determined, as well as the relationship between gender of respondent and ranking of station.

The question about time spent listening to the radio gave score data that was compared with independent t-tests to determine differences in times spent listening for respondents who do and who do not listen to KOSU.

Comparison of differences in KOSU listeners and non-listeners on demographic variables was done using crossbreaks as illustrated in Table III.

TABLE III
ANALYSIS PARADIGM ILLUSTRATING
MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

GENDER OF RESPONDENTS		
	Male	Female
KOSU Listener		
KOSU Non-listener		
Overall		

In the cases of the open-ended questions in which the respondents were asked to list their favorite news/information programs, and programs they would like to hear but don't hear now, a number of levels of the variable may be produced. The open-ended questions were coded by listing the programs respondents mentioned, and analyzing a frequency count of the mention of each program by complex chi-square tests to determine any significant differences.

Limitations

The results of this survey must be limited to the sample population and not generalized to the entire radio listening audience in north central Oklahoma. The reasons for this include the sample frame, and survey methodology.

The sample frame, using residential listings in telephone directories from five towns, has some inherent weaknesses. Telephone directory listings are limited to the residents of an area who have telephones and who wish to be included in the published directory. While no figures are available for smaller towns or rural areas, as many as 40% of telephones are unlisted in some metropolitan areas. Telephone directory listings also become progressively out of date, an average of 2% per month in most cases.²

The one-shot field survey, in this case a questionnaire, also has limitations. The randomness of the survey is threatened by surveys that are not delivered and the tendency of some people to return surveys, while others do not.³

ENDNOTES

¹Building Audience for Public Radio, Donald P. Mullally, Chairman (Washington, D.C.: National Public Radio, 1986), 7 -9.

²David Lenthold and Raymond Scheele, "Patterns of Bias in Samples Based on Telephone Directories," Public Opinion Quarterly 35 (1971): 249-257.

³Jack B. Haskins, How to Evaluate Mass Communications (New York: Advertising Research Foundations, 1968), 17.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study was designed to measure the preferences of respondents for news and music programming on all stations within the KOSU primary coverage area, to outline the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to determine what programming on KOSU prompts certain respondents to contribute money to help underwrite KOSU's operations.

In an attempt to answer these questions, a questionnaire was designed and mailed to 400 randomly selected households in the five largest towns within KOSU's primary coverage area. Two-hundred seven people responded to the survey, and these findings are based on analysis of those returned questionnaires. There were 46 surveys returned by the post office as undeliverable for various reasons, and those were subtracted from the total of the 400 surveys mailed before the response rate was calculated. A total of 354 delivered surveys, with 207 returned, gives a response rate of 58 percent.

Respondents were classified by demographic variables of gender, age, income, education, place of residence, and occupation. For purposes of this study, these variables

were divided between respondents who indicated they did listen to KOSU and those who indicated they did not listen to KOSU.

Differences Between Gender

Table IV shows the percentage of respondents by gender, according to whether they do or do not listen to KOSU. These data indicate that more men than women responded to the survey, and that more of the respondents who are KOSU listeners are men.

However, chi square analysis of the data showed that the difference in the number of men and women respondents could be due to chance more than five percent of the time.

TABLE IV
DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER AND
WHETHER THEY LISTEN/DON'T LISTEN TO KOSU AS
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES

N = 191			
	Male	Female	Total
KOSU Listeners	11	4	15%
Other Listeners	49	36	85
TOTAL LISTENERS	60	40	100%

The computed chi square of 5.286 is not significant at the .05 level. Of the respondents who indicated they do listen to KOSU, 72 percent are men and 28 percent are women.

Differences Between Age Groups

The age of radio listeners is also important for radio station management to know. The data collected show no significant differences in the ages of respondents, as they were grouped in five different categories. A calculated chi square of 5.374 is not statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

TABLE V
DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS BY
AGE BASED ON KOSU LISTENERSHIP
BY PERCENTAGE

N = 189					
Age ranges	<20	20-34	35-49	50-64	>64
KOSU Listeners	0	4	4	2	5%
Other Listeners	0	21	20	20	24
TOTAL LISTENERS	0	25	24	22	29%

However, the size of numbers in some of the cells is very small (<5) and the significance tests may be questionable. Table V shows the distribution of ages, in percent, of KOSU listeners and other listeners. There were no respondents who are KOSU listeners who were in the youngest age bracket (19 or younger), and the largest number of KOSU listeners were in the oldest age range (65 or older).

Differences Between Income Groups

Another question posed by the study involves the income of radio listeners, and whether there are differences between public radio listeners, in this case KOSU listeners, and the commercial radio audience.

Contrary to research on public radio audiences nationwide that was cited earlier in this study, no significant differences were found between income levels of commercial radio listeners and public radio listeners among respondents to this survey. While slightly more of the KOSU listeners were clustered in the higher income brackets, as shown by the percentages in Table VI, a computed chi square of 5.374 indicates that the differences in income among KOSU listeners and comparing KOSU listeners to other radio listeners are not statistically significant.

However, because some of the numbers in certain cells are so small, the reliability of the significance tests may be questionable.

TABLE VI
DIFFERENCES IN INCOME LEVELS OF KOSU LISTENERS
AND OTHER RADIO LISTENERS
BY PERCENTAGES

N = 178			
	KOSU	Other	Overall
<\$10,000	10	16	15%
\$10,000 but <\$20,000	11	22	20
\$20,000 but <\$30,000	31	17	19
\$30,000 but <\$40,000	21	18	19
\$40,000 but <\$50,000	10	9	9
\$50,000 or more	17	18	18
TOTAL	100	100	100%

Differences Between Education Levels

Other research indicates public radio listeners usually have more education than most commercial radio listeners. Is this true of respondents to this survey?

Significant differences were found between educational levels of commercial radio listeners and KOSU listeners among the respondents, but no significant difference was found between educational levels of KOSU listeners alone. Table VII provides a breakout of percentages of listener educational levels for both KOSU listeners and other listeners.

TABLE VII
DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS
BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

N = 189			
	KOSU (N=29)	Other (N=160)	Total (N=189)
Not a High School Graduate	0	15	13%
High School Graduate	7	28	24
Attended College	17	17	18
College Graduate	35	29	30
Post-graduate Degree	41	11	15
TOTAL	100	100	100%

The statistically significant differences found in education levels show that KOSU listeners are more likely

to have a post-graduate degree than other listeners, and that other radio listeners are more likely to have only a high school diploma or not be high school graduates at all compared to KOSU listeners.

A phi of .375 and a contingency coefficient of .351 show there is a moderate relationship between educational level and whether a respondent is a KOSU listener. This means KOSU listeners are more likely to have a higher level of education than other radio listeners. Again, however, the significance tests are suspect because of the low number of cases in some cells.

Differences Between Place of Residence

This study was also concerned with where radio listeners live, particularly KOSU listeners. Data from survey respondents show a majority live in cities or towns, but chi square analysis of differences between where KOSU listeners and other listeners live show no statistical significance.

The small number of responses in some categories, though, makes this test of significance questionable. There were significant differences found between places of residence among KOSU listeners who responded to this survey, with significant differences between city and suburban dwellers and city and rural residents. The percentage breakout of place of residence is shown in

Table VIII, indicating most KOSU listeners say they live in a city or town.

Computed chi squares in both cases were larger than a significant chi square of 3.8, indicating the difference would be due to chance less than five percent of the time. These differences may be due, however, to the larger number

TABLE VIII
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF KOSU
LISTENERS AND OTHER LISTENERS

N = 189			
	KOSU (N=29)	Other (N=160)	Total (N=189)
City or town	86	82	83%
Suburban	10	5	5
Rural	4	13	12
TOTAL	100	100	100%

of questionnaires sent to KOSU listeners who live in cities or towns compared to the questionnaires mailed to suburban or rural residents, based on the listings in the telephone directories from which the sample was taken.

Differences in Occupation

Are there differences in occupations among KOSU listeners and between KOSU listeners and other listeners? Some statistically significant differences were found among KOSU listeners. There were no service workers and only a few homemakers and blue collar workers compared to white collar workers among KOSU listeners who responded. A statistically significant difference was found between service workers, homemakers, blue collar workers and white collar workers among KOSU listeners, with most KOSU listeners saying they were employed in white collar occupations.

There were statistically significant differences found between KOSU listener's occupations and the occupations of other listeners as well. The differences show there were more service and blue collar workers among other radio listeners than KOSU listeners, as well as more respondents who said they are retired.

However, sparse frequency counts in some of the cells make the significance tests suspect, and a phi of .237 and a contingency coefficient of .231 indicate a very weak relationship between occupation and whether someone is a KOSU listener or not, meaning occupation is not a very good predictor of what type of radio listening a respondent does.

Differences in Format Preference

The music format preferred by listeners is very important to most radio stations, including KOSU, because for many stations music makes up a large percentage of their on-air product.

Among the respondents to this survey, there are differences in formats preferred by KOSU listeners and differences between formats preferred by KOSU listeners and other listeners. KOSU listeners favor classical music, with rock and roll and easy listening in second place. However, chi square analysis shows no significant difference between those three categories of music among KOSU listeners. There are significant differences, however, between the number of respondents who favor classical music and the number who prefer country music, with a computed chi square of 4.17 and between those who favor classical music and KOSU listeners who do not listen to music on the radio, with a computed chi square of 4.16. As shown in Table IX, there are also significant differences between music formats preferred by KOSU listeners and other listeners.

The significant difference between format preferences among KOSU listeners and other listeners may be questionable, however, because of sparse counts in some cells. With a phi of .551 and a contingency coefficient of .483, a moderate relationship is indicated between format

preference and whether a respondent is a KOSU listener. This means a KOSU listener is most likely to prefer classical music when compared to other radio listeners, and least likely to prefer country music, while other listeners are most likely to prefer country music.

TABLE IX
DIFFERENCES IN MUSIC FORMAT PREFERENCES
OF KOSU LISTENERS AND OTHER LISTENERS

N = 188

	KOSU (N=29)	Other (N=159)	Total (N=188)
Rock and Roll	21	27	26%
Country	3	32	28
Classical	38	2	7
Easy Listening	21	29	28
Other	14	4	6
Don't Listen to Music	3	6	5
TOTAL	100	100	100%

Differences in News Program Length Preference

Respondents were asked about their preferences for length of news and/or information programs on the radio, and while no statistically significant differences were found among KOSU listeners, there were statistically significant differences in preference for length of news and/or information programs among other listeners and between KOSU listeners and other listeners.

KOSU listeners did not overwhelmingly favor longer newscasts, and in fact a nearly equal number favored five or 10-minute newscasts as favored hour-long programs, as shown in Table X.

The significant differences among other listeners in news length preference are between those who favor five minute newscasts and those preferring all news, half-hour or hour-long programs, with a computed chi square of 20.47, and between those favoring 10-minute newscasts and all news, half-hour or hour-long programs, with a computed chi square of 9.63. Most other radio listeners responding preferred five or 10-minute newscasts.

A statistically significant difference in news length preferred was also found between KOSU listeners and other listeners, but because of the low frequency count in some cells, the significance tests are questionable. KOSU

TABLE X
NEWS PROGRAM LENGTH PREFERENCE OF
RESPONDENTS IN PERCENTAGES

N = 175

	KOSU (N=28)	Other (N=147)	Total (N=175)
Five Minute Newscasts	21	49	45%
10 Minute Newscasts	29	32	31
All-News/News-Talk	18	9	10
Half-hour Programs	11	7	8
Hour-long Programs	21	3	6
TOTAL	100	100	100%

listeners responded that they favored hour-long programs more often than did other listeners.

With a phi of .798 and a contingency coefficient of .624, a moderate to strong relationship is indicated between news length preference and whether a respondent is a KOSU listener. This means that while KOSU listeners show about equal preference for five or 10-minute news programs and hour-long programs, they are much more likely to favor hour-long programs than other radio listeners.

Favorite Programs

Respondents were asked to list up to three of their favorite radio programs in an open-ended question on the survey instrument. Only 32 responses were made by KOSU listeners to the question and 35 responses from other listeners. A listing of programs mentioned, and number of mentions by all respondents is contained in Table XI.

All of the programs mentioned by KOSU listeners, except Paul Harvey and Talknet, are programs carried by KOSU.

TABLE XI
FAVORITE RADIO PROGRAMS MENTIONED
BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

N = 67			
	KOSU	Other	Total
Paul Harvey	4	30	34
All Things Considered	14	0	14
Morning Edition	8	0	8
Talknet	1	5	6
Monitor Radio	4	0	4
BBC News	1	0	1
Radio Reader	1	0	1

Differences in Time Spent Listening

Respondents were asked about the amount of time they spend listening to the radio, both on an average weekday and on the weekend. Calculated means of time spent listening (TSL) show that KOSU listeners spend slightly more time listening to the radio than do other listeners, as shown in Table XII.

An independent t-test between KOSU listeners and other listeners measuring time spent listening, however, showed no significant differences between the two groups.

TABLE XII

DIFFERENCES IN TIME SPENT LISTENING TO THE RADIO AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	Mean TSL in Minutes	
	Weekday	Weekend
KOSU Listeners	164	187
Other Listeners	136	163

KOSU Listeners' Radio Station Choices

The other stations that KOSU listeners also choose is important information for station management to know, as is the ranking given KOSU among the respondents' station

choices. Respondents were asked to rank the stations they listen to most often on a scale of one through five, with one being the station listened to most often and five the station listened to least often. The number of times a station was mentioned by KOSU listeners is shown in Table XIII. The mean rankings for KOSU and the other top stations mentioned by KOSU listeners are as shown in Table XIV. Twelve KOSU listeners chose KOSU as the station they listen to the most, five placed KOSU second, four chose KOSU third, five selected KOSU as their fourth listening choice, and one put KOSU fifth in station rankings.

TABLE XIII
RADIO STATION CHOICES OF
KOSU LISTENERS

Station	Number of Mentions
KOSU	27
KSPI	8
KMOD	4
KKNG	4
KLOR	3
KVRO	3
KBEZ	3
KMGL	3

TABLE XIV
RANKING OF RADIO STATIONS
BY KOSU LISTENERS

Station	Mean Ranking
KMOD	1.75
KSPI	2.00
KKNG	2.00
KMGL	2.00
KOSU	2.19
KBEZ	3.00
KVRO	3.33
KLOR	3.33

Reasons for Contributing to KOSU

Since KOSU radio depends on listener contributions for part of its programming budget, the things that prompt listeners to give money to the station are of interest to station management. KOSU listeners were asked on the survey form what programs prompted their contributions to public radio. They were asked to rank five choices in order of importance, with one as most important and 5 as least important. Most contributors ranked only three or four of the categories. The ranking of reasons for contributing by respondents to the questionnaire are in Table XV.

TABLE XV
 RESPONDENTS' REASONS FOR CONTRIBUTING
 TO PUBLIC RADIO BY MEAN RANK

	Number of Mentions	Mean Rank
Music	12	1.33
News	17	1.76
Special Programs	11	2.45
Membership Drives	4	3.25
Other Reasons	0	0.00

Obviously, news and music programs are important to KOSU listeners, with music ranked slightly higher as a reason for contributing by respondents to this survey. Table XVI shows the percentage of respondents who identified each reason for contributing to public radio.

Whether a KOSU listener contributes to public radio or not is not dependent on gender, age, income, place of residence, or education among the respondents to this survey. Chi square analysis shows only one statistically significant demographic characteristic in connection with contribution, and that is occupation. White collar workers are the most likely among KOSU listeners to contribute to

public radio. Once again, though, because of low frequency counts in cells, the significance tests are questionable in this regard as well.

TABLE XVI
RESPONDENTS' REASONS FOR CONTRIBUTING
TO PUBLIC RADIO BY PERCENTAGE

N = 44

Reason for Contributing	Percentage
News	37%
Music	27
Special Programs	25
Membership Drives	9
TOTAL	100%

A phi of .552 and a contingency coefficient of .483 indicate a moderate relationship between occupation and whether a KOSU listener contributes financially to public radio, with white collar workers more likely to contribute than those in other occupations.

SUMMARY

Analysis of the demographic data from survey respondents shows that significant differences were found among KOSU listeners or between KOSU listeners and other radio listeners in the areas of occupation, education and place of residence. KOSU listeners, among those responding to this survey, generally work in white collar jobs, are more educated than other radio listeners and live in cities or towns.

Music preferences of KOSU listeners show most prefer classical music, but a number of other KOSU listeners list rock or easy listening music as their first choice.

News program length preference by KOSU listeners shows a tendency to prefer shorter news programs than are commonly available on KOSU, although longer programs were accepted by a number of KOSU listeners as well. Other radio listeners showed a significant preference for five or 10-minute newscasts.

Music and news are important reasons for contributing listed by KOSU listeners who indicated they contribute financially to public radio. The low ranking of membership drives as a reason to contribute may be something KOSU management would want to investigate.

Recommendations for use of this data and a summary of conclusions are contained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Audience research is difficult for radio stations in small markets, and for public radio stations in particular, to obtain. This study was designed to meet the needs of radio station KOSU for an audience survey in north central Oklahoma, specifically the audience in KOSU's primary coverage area. Respondents to the survey were questioned about their news and music preferences and about their demographic characteristics.

As the findings in Chapter IV show, KOSU's audience favors classical music, although rock and roll and easy listening music run a close second in music preference. These widely differing second place music choices (rock and easy listening) should be taken into account by KOSU management as they program the station's music offerings.

Preference of news program lengths shows KOSU listeners about evenly divided between five or 10-minute newscasts and hour-long program preferences. These choices might indicate that short news updates would be desirable on a more frequent basis, along with the long-form National Public Radio news programs now carried by KOSU. More research should be done on this possibility.

Analysis of demographic information shows that many KOSU listeners, among the respondents to this survey, are men, although that difference may be due to chance. KOSU listeners are about evenly divided among age groups between age 20 and 64, with a similar percentage of KOSU listeners 65 and older. Those age group sizes are about the same as for other radio listeners.

There is not an important difference in the income levels of KOSU listeners and other radio listeners, although KOSU listeners tended to have slightly higher incomes.

One area where important differences were found is in educational level. Most KOSU listeners have more education than other radio listeners, with a large number holding post-graduate degrees. This information could be important to KOSU management as they target information segments that are locally produced, keeping in mind that their audience tends to be much more educated than the average radio listener.

Most KOSU listeners live in cities or towns, although that is also true of the other listeners who responded to this survey, and may simply be an anomaly caused by distribution of questionnaires. KOSU listeners are usually employed in white collar jobs, an important difference between the KOSU listener and other radio listeners. This occupational difference should be considered by KOSU

management as they promote their station to potential listeners and to corporate underwriters.

The favorite programs mentioned by KOSU listeners can be helpful to KOSU management in developing future programming strategy, although the low number of responses to that question should be taken into consideration. The National Public Radio information programs All Things Considered and Morning Edition are obviously the most popular among KOSU listeners, and were mentioned more often when all responses are considered than any other program except Paul Harvey.

KOSU shares listeners primarily with one local Stillwater station, and several easy listening and "light rock" stations. The formats of these other stations might be analyzed to find out if any program elements that appeal to KOSU listeners on the other stations would be useful for KOSU.

The reasons KOSU listeners contribute financially to public radio should be of interest to KOSU management, although the number of responses to this question was low. The number of KOSU listeners who contribute to public radio should also be of interest, since 38% of those who listen to the station do not contribute. News programming seems to be most important among listeners as a reason for contributing, while membership drives were ranked at the

bottom of the list. This might prompt some rethinking of fund-raising methods by KOSU management.

Recommendations for Further Research

One of the biggest problems with research in the public radio audience area is finding enough listeners to constitute a sample that can be tested with reliability. This was apparent in this study, with only 29 KOSU listeners among 207 respondents. While the percentage of KOSU listeners among the respondents, 14%, is about typical of the number of public radio listeners in the total radio audience, the low number of actual responses makes the accuracy of the analysis questionable in some cases.

There are several ways to get around this problem. The sample of listeners could be drawn from known public radio listeners, based on lists of contributors from KOSU. However, that sample would not contain those who listen but don't contribute. The best solution would be to draw a sample of radio listeners large enough to contain a sufficient number of public radio listeners for analysis.

A telephone survey might be the logical next step in audience research for KOSU. Such a call-out procedure would be more expensive than a mail questionnaire, but it would allow researchers to pre-qualify respondents as public radio listeners, to ensure a useful sample size.

The telephone survey would also allow asking of more complicated questions, with followups or clarification if needed. This could provide more detailed information about specific programs and other qualitative data from KOSU listeners.

With continued cuts in government funding for public radio likely, and an increased reliance on contributions and underwriting, valid audience research will continue to be a necessity for public radio stations. Although paying for original research is expensive, and public radio stations have limited budgets, in the long run gains in audience size and contributions from careful application of that research should make the expense worthwhile.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

OKLAHOMA MEDIA RESEARCH SURVEY

Dear Survey Participant,

I need your help with an important media survey. As part of a graduate study at Oklahoma State University, we are conducting a survey of radio listening in north central Oklahoma. You were selected to receive one of our questionnaires to help with this research. This is not a sales gimmick, and you won't be called or asked to buy anything if you complete this survey.

The primary purpose of this survey is academic research. Your returned survey will be processed anonymously. No one will know how you, individually, answered. The results of the survey will be made available to the public through the O.S.U. library, but only as totals of numbers. No names of anyone surveyed will be released.

There is a number in the corner of each survey. This helps us keep track of the surveys that are returned. The number will be removed before the surveys are tabulated. Please complete this short questionnaire, place it in the postage-paid envelope, seal the envelope and mail it back within three days if possible.

If you have any questions about the survey, please call or write to me personally. My address and phone number are:

Keith Swezey
Oklahoma State University
School of Journalism and Broadcasting
Paul Miller Building 204A
Stillwater, OK 74078-0195
Phone: (405) 744-8263

Your assistance with this survey is appreciated.

Thank you,

Keith Swezey
Researcher,
Graduate School
Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

MEDIA RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

School of Journalism and Broadcasting
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078-0195

You can help us with an important academic study of media listening habits in Oklahoma by answering the following questions. Your answers will remain confidential. When you have completed the questionnaire, place it in the postage-paid envelope, seal the envelope, and mail it back within three days.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions you should call (405) 744-8263 and ask for Keith Swezey.

1. List the radio stations you listen to the most. Put the station you listen to most often on the first line, the station listened to next most often on the second line, the station you listen to next on the third line, your next listening choice on the fourth line and your fifth choice of stations on the last line.

1) _____ 3) _____ 5) _____
2) _____ 4) _____

2. What kind of music do you prefer to listen to on the radio? Check the one type you most prefer.

___ Rock & Roll ___ Easy Listening
___ Country ___ Other (specify) _____
___ Classical ___ Don't listen to music

3. What kind of news and/or information programming do you like to listen to on the radio? Check the one type that best describes your preference.

___ Five minute newscasts ___ Half-hour programs
___ 10-minute newscasts ___ Hour-long programs
___ All-news or news/talk

4. Please give us the names of some of your favorite news and/or information programs.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____

--SURVEY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE--

MEDIA RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

pp. 2

5. Are there any programs you would like to hear that you don't hear now on the radio? Tell us what you would like to hear.
-
-

6. About how much time do you spend listening to the radio each day Monday through Friday?

Hours _____ Minutes _____ Don't Listen _____

7. About how much time do you spend listening to the radio each weekend?

Hours _____ Minutes _____ Don't Listen _____

8. If you contribute to public radio, what programs prompt your contributions? Please number the answers according to how important these programs are to you, with 1 as most important and 5 as least important.

_____ Music	_____ Other reasons
_____ News	(please specify) _____
_____ Special Programs	_____
_____ Membership Drives	_____ Don't contribute

 It will help our research if we know a little more about you. Your answers to these questions will also be confidential.

Please check the appropriate category.

9. What is your gender?

___ Male ___ Female

--SURVEY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE--

MEDIA RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

pp. 3

10. What is your current occupation? Check the category that best describes what kind of work is done by the person completing this survey.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Examples</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> A.	[Barber, cook, waiter, child care, maid, fireman, police, janitor]
<input type="checkbox"/> B.	[Homemaker]
<input type="checkbox"/> C.	[Factory, railroad, postal, baker, farm (owner, worker), mechanic, trucker, serviceman]
<input type="checkbox"/> D.	[Builder, contractor, accountant, banker, bookkeeper, educator, ministry, sales, public official, doctor, lawyer, architect, manager]
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	_____

11. Check the description that best fits the area where you live.

City or town

Suburban

Rural

MEDIA RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

pp. 3 (cont'd)

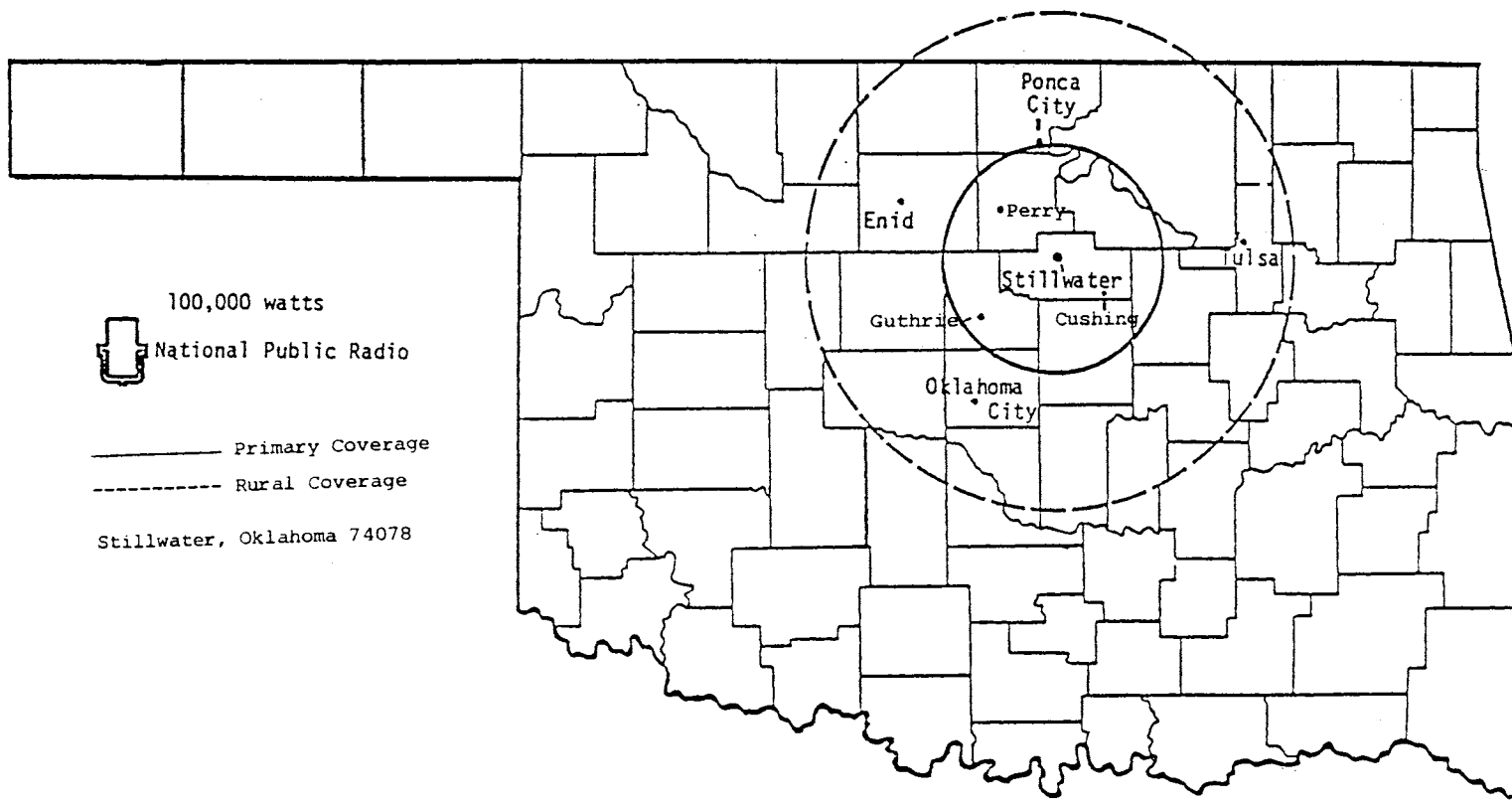
12. Which of the following describes the last grade of school you completed?
- Did not attend high school
 - Attended high school, did not graduate
 - Attended college
 - Graduated college
 - Post-graduate degree
13. Please check the range that includes your age.
- 19 or younger
 - 20-34
 - 35-49
 - 50-64
 - 65 or older
14. Please check the range for your household's current yearly income before taxes. Combine income of all household members, including income from salaries or wages, interest and all other sources.
- Under \$10,000
 - \$10,000 but less than \$20,000
 - \$20,000 but less than \$30,000
 - \$30,000 but less than \$40,000
 - \$40,000 but less than \$50,000
 - \$50,000 or more

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS.
PLEASE SEAL THE SURVEY IN THE POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE
AND MAIL IT.

APPENDIX C

KOSU-FM COVERAGE MAP

kosu 91.7 FM



VITA

Keith Alan Swezey

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: A SURVEY OF RADIO LISTENER DEMOGRAPHICS AND
PROGRAMMING PREFERENCES FOR RADIO STATION
KOSU-FM STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Enid, Oklahoma, July 15, 1952,
the son of Harold and Ruth Swezey. Married to
Dixie Ainsworth on August 11, 1973. Two sons,
Christopher Alan and Patrick James, and one
daughter, Erin Elizabeth.

Education: Graduated from Enid Senior High School,
Enid, Oklahoma, May 1970; received Bachelor of
Arts Degree in Oral Communication from Central
State University in Edmond, Oklahoma, in May,
1974; completed requirements for the Master of
Science degree at Oklahoma State University in
July, 1989.

Professional Experience: Capitol Correspondent, KOMA
radio, Oklahoma City, October 1975 to August
1976. Public Affairs Editor, Assistant News
Director and News Director, WKY radio, Oklahoma
City, August 1976 to April 1988. Lecturer,
School of Journalism and Broadcasting, Oklahoma
State University, August, 1988 to June, 1989.

Professional Organizations: Member of Oklahoma
Broadcast Educators Association, December, 1988
to present. Member of Radio-Television News
Directors Association, January, 1983 to present.