Access by Local Political Candidates to Cable Television: A Report of an Experiment

Herbert S. Dordick and Jack Lyle

A Report prepared under a Grant from

THE JOHN AND MARY R. MARKLE FOUNDATION
Views or conclusions contained in this study should not be interpreted as the official opinion or policy of the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation.
Access by Local Political Candidates to Cable Television:
A Report of an Experiment

Herbert S. Dordick and Jack Lyle

A Report prepared under a Grant from

THE JOHN AND MARY R. MARKLE FOUNDATION
Bibliographies of Selected Rand Publications

Rand maintains a number of special subject bibliographies containing abstracts of Rand publications in fields of wide current interest. The following bibliographies are available upon request:

Aerodynamics • Africa • Arms Control • Civil Defense
Combinatorics • Communication Satellites • Communication Systems
Communist China • Computer Simulation • Computing Technology
Decisionmaking • Delphi • East-West Trade • Education
Game Theory • Health-related Research • Human Resources
Latin America • Linguistics • Maintenance • Middle East
Policy Sciences • Pollution • Population
Privacy in the Computer Age • Program Budgeting • Public Safety
SIMSCRIPT and Its Applications • Southeast Asia
Space Technology and Planning • Statistics • Systems Analysis
Television • Transportation • Urban Problems • USSR/East Europe
Water Resources • Weapon Systems Acquisition
Weather Forecasting and Control

To obtain copies of these bibliographies, and to receive information on how to obtain copies of individual publications, write to: Communications Department, Rand, 1700 Main Street, Santa Monica, California 90406.
PREFACE

One of the major potential applications of broadband cable with its many channels is permitting access of political candidates to the television medium at far lower cost than is possible by over-the-air broadcast. Moreover, where the broadcasting station transmits over thousands of square miles, and frequently across state boundaries, the limited coverage of cable permits political candidates to pinpoint the particular audiences they seek.

Many questions arise as to how useful, in fact, cable is for this purpose. Although viewers have long been exposed to costly and well prepared presentations by candidates running for major offices, would they show much interest in viewing political candidates unaccustomed to using television in their campaigns and unable to afford the sleek exposures that up to now have been characteristic of the television medium? To what extent do political candidates take advantage of the opportunity when channel time is made available free of charge? Aside from the cost of channel time, what other impediments exist to the use of the video medium for political campaigning?

The purpose of this study is to report briefly on an experiment conducted in Waianae, Hawaii — an economically depressed area but one with a cable system covering most of the community. The experiment involved free channel access to a number of candidates for the city council and state legislature, with questionnaires and interviews designed to address such questions.

This is one of a series of publications in Rand's Communications Policy Program. Previous reports include:


N. E. Feldman, Cable Television: Opportunities and Problems in Local Program Origination, R-570-FF, September 1970;

Rolla Edward Park, Potential Impact of Cable Growth on Television Broadcasting, R-587-FF, October 1970;
Leland L. Johnson, *Cable Television and the Question of Protecting Local Broadcasting*, R-593-MF, October 1970;

Rolla Edward Park, *Cable Television and UHF Broadcasting*, R-689-MF, January 1971;

Leland L. Johnson, *Cable Television and Higher Education: Two Contrasting Case Examples*, R-828-MF, September 1971;


Herbert S. Dordick is an independent research consultant. Jack Lyle is Professor of Journalism at the University of California at Los Angeles, and a consultant to The Rand Corporation.
SUMMARY

Unlike over-the-air broadcast television with its relatively few channels, cable television (CATV) has enough channels to carry a wide range of programming to meet local community needs as well as programs of national significance. One attractive prospect for public service is in providing access to the medium at no cost to local political candidates. One such experiment, with the opportunity to watch, measure, and evaluate, was made available to the authors. This experiment was carried out during the November 1970 elections in the community of Waianae on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. It provided an opportunity to obtain some insights into the problems and prospects of using cable for locally originated political programming.

Success of the programs was measured in terms of audience impact and satisfaction of the candidates. Replies were obtained from about 12 percent of the subscribing homes. Despite the lack of advance promotion, the crude program production facilities, and technical difficulties, a surprisingly large number of cable subscribers -- perhaps 28 percent or more -- watched one or more of the ten programs presented before the November elections. Among the men who watched at all, 19 percent watched one program, 22 percent watched two programs, and 48 percent watched three or more programs. Most significant was the critical question of the programs' effect on voters' attitudes. Over 60 percent of both the men and women who watched reported that it helped them make up their minds in voting. This suggests that the programs did play a useful role in the electoral process.

With respect to the candidates themselves, of the four who were interviewed, three expressed no more than a lukewarm attitude toward the use of cable as one of the several alternatives available for exposure to the electorate. A major problem brought out in the interviews was that even if a large proportion of the cable audience is reached, the absolute number of viewers is small because of the limited number of subscribers to the cable system in Waianae. The candidates also pointed out that they were handicapped by (1) the
lack of advance promotion to inform cable subscribers of the existence of the programs, (2) the fact that the channel used for the political broadcasting had previously been unused for other purposes and hence people were unaccustomed to tuning to it, and (3) the fact that the candidates had inadequate experience in the use of the television medium.

Three considerations are particularly important to future use of cable for locally originated political programming. First, viewers should be made aware of the programming schedule well ahead of time. This is a particularly important problem when a channel normally unused is to be activated for this special event. Clearly, free channel time by itself is not enough. The necessity for advertising and promotion constitutes a substantial burden to the political candidates in terms of cost and time per viewer reached, especially in the case of small cable systems that in any event would deliver only a small audience.

Second, the candidate for office representing an area much larger than that served by a single cable system may have good reason to seek to use his resources to reach a larger number of voters, perhaps by newspaper or by broadcasting station, than can be covered by the single cable system. This suggests the importance in the future of interconnecting cable systems to cover metropolitan or even statewide areas if candidates are to reach the particular audiences they seek.

Third, even for candidates campaigning for offices representing areas satisfactorily covered by a single cable system, or by a set of interconnected systems, major impediments to use of free cable time may arise from lack of training and ability by candidates and their assistants to utilize the medium to best advantage. These impediments are likely to become less serious as candidates become accustomed to using the medium, which up to now has been prohibitively expensive.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Mr. Gene Piety, Manager of CableVision, for his excellent cooperation in the performance of this experiment. Without him, this project could not have been undertaken. They also wish to thank the candidates and the viewers who were so cooperative. Leland L. Johnson and Malcolm Palmatier of Rand provided insightful comments both substantive and editorial. Finally, the authors are grateful to Oleg Hoeffding and C. E. Phelps of Rand for their helpful critiques.
CONTENTS

PREFACE. ........................................ iii
SUMMARY. ....................................... v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. ........................... vii

Section
I.  INTRODUCTION. ............................. 1
II.  THE COMMUNITY ............................ 3
III. THE PROGRAMS AND THEIR COST .......... 8
IV.  VIEWER RESPONSE .......................... 11
V.   THE RESPONSE OF THE CANDIDATES ....... 17
VI.  SOME LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE .......... 22
   Audience Coverage .......................... 22
   The Importance of Advance Promotion ......... 23
   The FCC's Equal Time Rule .................. 24
   Future Local Program Origination .......... 25
I. INTRODUCTION

In March 1970, the Manager of CableVision in Waianae, Hawaii offered one of the authors of this report the use of seven of his unutilized cable channels for experimentation along the lines described in an earlier Rand Report.* CableVision serves an economically depressed area that has qualified for a Model Cities grant. Many of the educational, social, political, and economic problems addressed in the earlier Rand Report exist in this area. Since it is now wired for cable television, it offers a relatively low-cost possibility for experimentation with local program orientation.

An earlier study described in some detail how these seven channels could be used.** Included was a suggestion for a channel to be provided specifically to political candidates for the 1970 city council and state legislature elections. Significantly, the recent redistricting of the Waianae area created a new legislative district, the 21st, whose representative would be elected for the first time in this contest. In view of the continuing debate about the impact of television on political activity and the high cost of television for political candidates, it seemed appropriate to see if a controlled experiment focusing on the impact of local political broadcasting on the voters in a small, well-defined community could make a significant contribution.

Although Hawaii has characteristics that set it apart from the Mainland -- features that could make transfer of experimental results difficult and dangerous -- we concluded that the value of local political origination to the system operator and to the community would be of considerable interest to other system operators and communities throughout the United States. Furthermore, any information gained


about the impact of television programming on political awareness and attitudes in the community would be of general interest to political analysts of mass media.

Of course, a number of cable systems on the mainland are originating programming, and some system operators have in the past provided free access to political candidates prior to elections. However, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no systematic evaluation of the effects, the costs, or the problems encountered in using channels for political purposes.

CableVision implemented the experiment in October 1970 with its offer of free cable time to all candidates until the election in November 1970. Cameras, videotape/equipment, studio facilities, and other equipment were supplied and operated free of charge by the cable operator. A questionnaire survey was begun approximately three weeks after the election to obtain viewer reaction to the effort. Interviews with candidates were conducted in March 1971.

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiment and to draw implications for use of cable elsewhere. It briefly discusses the geographic and demographic nature of the community, the programs that were carried and their cost, the nature of viewer response, the reactions of candidates -- both those who did and those who did not choose to accept the offer of free time -- and lessons to be drawn from the experience.
II. THE COMMUNITY

The Waianae Model Neighborhood area which CableVision serves could have been considered until quite recently a semi-rural area. But expansion from Honolulu along the Farrington Highway beyond Pearl Harbor has converted Waianae into a suburb of Honolulu. It is, however, relatively physically isolated and is characterized by economic deprivation: high unemployment, low income, limited health care facilities, low educational levels, inadequate job skills, and poor access to outside areas of employment. Although Waianae is only 30 miles from the center of Honolulu, its isolation has been caused more by the single, crowded highway than by distance. The Waianae Model Neighborhood area falls within the contiguous city and county limits of Honolulu but is a suburban slum.

According to the 1968 Model Cities Survey, the Waianae area has approximately 26,500 residents. Their ethnic distribution is given in Table 1. Caucasians and Hawaiians make up two-thirds of the ethnic groups in Waianae. One of the major reasons for the large number of Hawaiian residents in Waianae is the existence of several homestead areas -- areas specifically set aside by the Hawaiian Land Reform Act of 1868 for those who can prove part-Hawaiian ancestry.

The 1968 Model Cities Survey estimated a total of 4,380 families in the Waianae coast area. An income survey made in 1964-1966 showed that almost 50 percent of the families had yearly incomes under $5,000 and 20 percent had incomes under $3,000 per year. The $3,000 and $5,000 demarcations are somewhat inappropriate for Hawaii, since living costs are higher than those generally encountered on the mainland. Table 2 gives a comparison of the Waianae service area with the rest of Oahu in more detail.

Politically, Waianae has been isolated. Most government and service agencies have classified it into the Leeward District. In actual fact, it constitutes only a small part of the area and population of the Leeward District and is quite physically isolated by mountains. Farrington Highway is the only public road joining it to
Table 1

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION — WAIANAE MODEL CITIES AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Estimated Population</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10,760</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
<td>6,780</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

FAMILY INCOME FOR OAHU AND WAIANAE MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD, 1964-1966
(percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income During Preceding 12 Months</th>
<th>Oahu</th>
<th>Waianae Model Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All families</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000 - $1,999</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,000 - $2,999</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,000 - $3,999</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,000 - $4,999</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000 - $6,999</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7,000 - $9,999</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $14,999</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 and over</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hawaii State Department of Health, Hawaii Health Surveillance Program Survey, special tabulation of data for 17,847 persons sampled on Oahu between April 1, 1964 and March 31, 1966.
the rest of the district (although there is an additional military road that be used by people with passes). The fact that it constitutes only a small portion of the total Leeward District means that the area usually comes off second best in terms of public services and political action.

There is no local government. All of Oahu constitutes the City and County of Honolulu and is governed by a nine-member council. The Waianae area contains only about one-fourth of the population of the councilmanic district of which it is a part. The major political identity stems from the fact that the area is the 21st District for the House of Representatives. Thus, the people of Waianae have better representation in the State Legislature than they do in the city and county governments.

The schools are part of the Leeward District, which, in turn, is part of the centralized statewide Department of Education. The only opportunity for a local voice in school management is through a District Advisory Board, which has no legal power.

Voter registration in the Waianae area is low, but voting rates among those registered appear to be at the same high level as is true elsewhere in Honolulu. However, participation in community-oriented voluntary organizations appears to be quite low in Waianae, which has a high rate of tenancy and transiency. Participation in planning activities for the Model Neighborhood area in Waianae has been low; attendees are often there because of an immediate and narrow self-interest and very rarely come back to subsequent meetings. Community Action Programs as well as social service and educational agencies have emphasized direct service rather than organizing low income residents to participate in the planning and formulation of programs. Thus, residents often see programs as being beyond their control and influence and their participation is further discouraged. The centralized electoral process does not provide for effective representative relationship between elected city officials and Model Neighborhood residents. In general, despite Waianae's remoteness from the Mainland, these characteristics are not unlike those typically encountered in low income Model Cities neighborhoods elsewhere.
The area served by CableVision runs some 10 miles along the southwestern coast of Oahu, with the population concentrated in a strip along Farrington Highway parallel to the coast. There are four bulges that might be thought of as geographic communities: Nanakuli, Maili, Waianae, and Makaha. Each corresponds to the mouth of a valley; each is separated from its neighbors by high mountain ridges bordering these valleys (and which, incidentally, make TV reception difficult and thereby enhance cable's attractiveness to residents).

There appears to be little cohesiveness among or within these communities. In the past, the only general force has been the single high school serving the entire area. That is now being modified with the opening of a new high school in the eastern section.

About 5,050 homes are passed by cable in the Waianae-Nanakuli area, CableVision currently serves approximately 2,600 or 51 percent of these homes with a 12-channel cable system. Of these 12 channels, three carry the major networks (NBC, CBS, and ABC), one is devoted to educational television, and one to Japanese language broadcasts. Seven channels are unused. Of these, Channel 6 was designated for the experimental political broadcasts.
III. THE PROGRAMS AND THEIR COST

Ten programs were broadcast featuring seven candidates, four for the seat in the legislature and three for City Council. The following table relates television exposure to the full field of candidates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21st Legislature</th>
<th>City Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>Dem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearing on Channel 6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the format of the programs varied, all were extremely simple. Indeed, they could hardly have been otherwise in view of the modest production facilities available. Six of the candidates appeared "live." One recorded his appearance in advance. In some cases, the cable system manager introduced the candidate who carried on alone for the duration of the program. Most candidates had someone appear with them, to ask questions that generally had been formulated in advance. Some of the candidates also invited phone questions. In most cases, these were handled by their studio companion who attempted to screen the questions and re-state them for the candidate. Generally, the more phone calls, the longer the program.

The programs were open-ended, varying from about an hour to an hour and one half. Two of the seven candidates made two separate appearances and one program was repeated on videotape. Thus, there were ten separate broadcasts on the cable system.

As one might expect, the simplest operating procedures were used in order to keep programming costs as low as possible. Two black and white cameras and one audio mixer were used. In most instances, the candidate was seated at a table next to his manager or companion with the telephone on the table for questions from viewers. When the telephone rang, either the candidate or his companion would answer -- there was no screening of the messages at the switchboard and the audience did not hear the caller. The system manager operated one camera and his
aide operated the other; the system manager acted as the producer, director, and in several cases the announcer for the program. Another community member operated the audio mixer.

The equipment used by CableVision, listed in Table 3, represents what one can certainly call the result of a high degree of ingenuity and bargain hunting. As shown in Table 3, total investment and operating cost for the series of ten performances (8 live, one prerecorded, and one repeated on videotape) ran to about $340, or to $34 for each.* (The cost of the video tape is not included since it was erased and reused for other purposes.)

The system manager indicated what he believed he would need in order to have a more "professional" presentation allowing for a bit more flexibility in program format. For this purpose, he suggested that three black and white cameras could be used; all programs would be video taped for replay; there would be a phone operator and general clerical staff to handle the incoming phone messages and transfer them to paper to be handed to the candidate or his assistant; and a director-producer who could handle a more relaxed, free roaming candidate on the screen. Using the same basis as before to determine the cost of the programming, this arrangement would amount to about $65 per hour. One additional piece of equipment the station manager felt would add greatly to the program would be the investment of about $500 for delayed tape recording equipment for incoming phone calls so that the audience would be able to hear the questions.

---

*This is well within the range of costs encountered in Dale City, Virginia, and on the Canadian systems reported in N. E. Feldman, Cable Television: Opportunities and Problems in Local Program Origination, R-570-FF, The Rand Corporation, September 1970.
Table 3
PROGRAMMING COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment and Facilities</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Channel modulator</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and white camera, 2 at $300</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripod</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lens</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio mixer</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microphones (2) and cables</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videotape machine(^a)</td>
<td>2,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quonset hut-studio/office</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6,720</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assume straight-line amortization of equipment and facilities over 5 years at 10 percent interest for a total annual cost of $1,680, or $140 monthly.

Labor Cost

For each of 9 live performances (including one prerecorded):

1 camera operator, 2 hr at $5 $10
   (station manager operated other camera)
1 audio-mixer operator 2 hr at $5 10

Total, 9 performances $180

For each of 2 Videotaped sessions (including pretaping of one performance):

Videotape operator 2 hr at $5 $10

Total, 2 tape sessions $20

Total Cost for 10 Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment and facilities (assume equivalent to one month of use)</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total $340

\(^a\)On loan from Department of Education.
IV. VIEWER RESPONSE

The invitation to listeners to phone in questions provided evidence that an audience existed. Unfortunately, no accurate record was kept of the number of phone calls. One program is known to have stimulated more than 30 calls. (It should be noted that 33 of the respondents to the questionnaire discussed below stated that they thought of calling, but did not. Of these, seven said they actually tried but got a busy signal. There was only one phone line available to the studio.) Since the phone calls gave no indication of how large this audience might be, a more formal survey was undertaken following the election.

Because of limited funds and time, it was not possible to mount a study using a well-controlled sample. A questionnaire, shown in Table 4, was distributed in two ways: It was enclosed with the subsequent month's billing of each subscriber with the request that it be filled out and returned. Replies were received from 105 subscribing homes. Persons who pay their monthly fee at the cable television office were asked to fill out the questionnaire at the counter. This procedure provided another 209 responses. In total, replies were obtained from about 12 percent of the 2,600 subscribing homes.

Our approach does, of course, raise serious problems of self-selection in replies. In the mail survey with uncontrolled response, people who watched the programs and who were strongly interested were more likely to go to the time and expense of returning the questionnaires by mail than those who did not watch. (For the latter group it would have been all too easy simply to throw the questionnaire into the wastebasket.) Hence, a tabulation of mail replies could lead to gross overestimates of the viewing for the entire group of cable subscribers.

The over-the-counter replies are less vulnerable to the problem of self-selection. Almost all the counter customers who were asked to fill out the questionnaire did so on the spot. Although there is some self-selection with respect to those who do and do not pay by mail, the
Table 4

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO CABLE SUBSCRIBERS

During the election campaigns, we let local candidates use Channel 6 to speak to the people in Waianae. The channel was offered free to all candidates. We need to know how useful this service was. Please help us by answering the following questions and returning this to CableVision by mail or when you come in.

1. Did you know that these programs were being presented?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

2. How did you hear about them?
   ( ) Announcement on TV
   ( ) Just happened to tune in
   ( ) Someone told me
   ( ) Read about them in paper

3. Did you or someone in your family watch any of these programs?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

4. How many programs did you watch?
   ( ) One
   ( ) Two
   ( ) More than two

5. Do you remember which candidates you saw?
   ( ) Joy Ahn
   ( ) James Aki
   ( ) Stan Burden
   ( ) Calvin Ontai
   ( ) George Piliwale
   ( ) Tats Yamanoha

6. Did you phone in a question?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

7. If you called did you get a good answer?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

8. Did you think about calling?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

9. Do you think the programs were fair to the candidates?
   ( ) Yes  ( ) No

10. Do you think seeing these programs helped you decide how to vote in the election?
    ( ) Yes  ( ) No

11. Did you talk about the programs with anyone afterwards?
    ( ) Yes  ( ) No

12. Did you vote in the primary?
    ( ) Yes  ( ) No

13. Did you vote in the general?
    ( ) Yes  ( ) No

14. Please check the following information:
    ( ) Man  Age ( ) Under 30
    ( ) Woman  Age ( ) 30-39
                ( ) 40-49
                ( ) 50 or over
selection is not likely to have the same effect on the proportion of subscribers who did and did not watch this particular series of programs.*

The tabulation of counter and mail replies shown below discloses that the percentage of those who did not know of the programs was larger for the counter group than for the mail group and that the percentage of those who watched one or more programs was larger for the mail group. However, although these figures are consistent with the self-selection process noted above, the differences are not statistically significant.** Thus, although the problem of self-selection is bothersome, it seems not to be of overwhelming importance as indicated by the comparison of counter and mail replies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counter Reply N=209</th>
<th>Mail Reply N=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn't know of the programs</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew but didn't watch</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did watch one or more programs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One could hypothesize that those who pay over the counter, usually in cash, are likely to be poorer than those who can afford checking accounts and postage to pay by mail. (On the other hand, geographical location of the subscriber relative to the cable office could play as large or larger a role.) But these income differences, if they have any impact at all on viewing habits, are likely to affect them in the other direction. Poorer people are less likely to have seen announcements of the programs in advance in the newspapers, and they may be generally less motivated to watch political programming, to the extent that they feel that they have little control over political processes. (This latter point is supported by the fact that in the U.S., typically, low-income groups do show relatively small percentages of voter registration.) Thus, if the counter replies were biased in favor of low-income groups (and this is still a matter of conjecture) the responses would likely be underestimates rather than overestimates of viewing for the whole group of subscribers.

** On the null hypothesis of no difference between counter and mail replies, the probability of not knowing of the programs is estimated as \( p = (0.67 \times 209 + 0.62 \times 105)/(209 + 105) = 0.653 \). The standard error of the difference in proportions between two samples drawn from a binominal distribution is \( \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n_1} + \frac{p(1-p)}{n_2}} = 0.057 \). The actual difference in proportions, 0.05, is considerably less than two standard errors and could easily have occurred by chance even if there is no difference between counter and mail replies.
The striking aspect of this tabulation is that even for the counter group alone (where self-selection is not likely to be a major factor) a large percentage -- 28 percent -- watched one or more of the political programs. Within the television broadcasting industry this would be considered a fair performance. If we are safe in concluding that roughly 28 percent of all cable subscribers watched at least one of the ten programs, then each would have had an average audience "rating" of 2.8 (computed by dividing the 28 by 10). This rating, defined as a percentage of subscriber homes tuned to the program, is higher than many programs shown on independent broadcasting stations (particularly UHF) not affiliated with the networks.*

The result is all the more striking in view of the lack of promotion of the presentations and the austerity of the programs themselves. At the start of the series, the only advance notice was an announcement inserted among the "classified ad cards" normally shown on a rotating disc on Channel 6. As the series continued there were articles in the weekly paper distributed in the area.

The majority of the people in the area remained unaware of the series. Of those who did watch, most either heard about the program from friends or just happened to tune in while changing channels. At least ten of those not knowing about the programs added comments to their questionnaires saying that they would have been interested and would have watched had they known about them.** As shown in the tabulation above, the value of promotion is highlighted by the fact that a large majority of those who knew about the programs did watch at least one.

The usefulness of announcements on Channel 6 itself could be questioned since several of the survey respondents pointed out that

---

* The rating of 2.8 is an underestimate since, as noted subsequently, many respondents watched more than one of the ten programs.
** As shown by the questionnaires, one candidate whose campaign workers actively promoted his appearance through handbills and roadside placards was watched by over twice as many people as any other candidate.
until receiving the questionnaire, they had been unaware that there was any programming on that channel. In effect, a new channel was opened to the viewers who had, over the years, become accustomed to a "standard" five channels of television.

Finally, technical problems affected the reception of Channel 6, stemming from the marginal quality of the studio equipment, particularly the camera. Because of these problems, sets in some homes receive only the sound signal on the channel and others receive neither picture nor sound, or, at best, erratic signals.

Taking both the mail and counter responses together, we should consider several other interesting characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't know of the program</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew but didn't watch</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did watch one or more programs</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large percentage of the men knew of the programs and a larger percentage watched, but neither difference is statistically significant.*

What was the number of programs watched? The data suggest continuing interest among the viewers. If they watched at all, the chances were good that they watched several programs. This was particularly true of men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watched</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 program</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 programs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more programs</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Using the procedure footnoted above, the standard error of the first difference is calculated to be .054. The actual difference of .07 is less than two standard errors, so could have arisen by chance at the .05 level of significance. The standard error of the second difference is .052, considerably larger than the actual difference of .03.
Again, this result is all the more surprising in view of the poor promotion given the programs and of the technical problems in transmission. However, it might also be argued that the potential audience for this type of programming is composed of people who would take the trouble to seek it out.

What was the impact? Three questions concerning impact and evaluation of the programs were included.

Did they think the programs were fair to the candidates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large majority rated the programs fair. The large percentage of "no reply" is troublesome, particularly among women. Of the few who thought the programs unfair none stipulated the reasons. On the other hand, many of the majority did write in reasons why they thought the programs were fair, usually a variation on the theme that the candidates conducted the program pretty much on their own.

Did they discuss the programs afterwards?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that the programs did stimulate a considerable amount of discussion. Most frequently the discussion was said to have been with friends, although family and co-workers were also frequently mentioned.

Did the programs help them make up their minds as to voting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was, perhaps, the most critical question concerning program effects. The results indicate that the programs were a positive force in the electoral process.
V. THE RESPONSE OF THE CANDIDATES*

The real measure of "success" of the programs is in the audience they drew and the impact upon the audience, which is discussed in the preceding section. Drawing a parallel to commercial television, success might also be thought of in terms of the satisfaction of the "clients" -- the candidates.

In this situation the "clients" had neither Neilsen nor other audience ratings, but we felt that their conversations with supporters and voters in the district would provide some basis from which to judge.

The only City Council candidates who appeared on the cable were local area residents, all of whom were, in effect, "underdogs" in the race for the seat representing a district in which Waianae constitutes less than a fourth of the population. The main candidates from "outside" refrained from campaigning in Waianae altogether, considering it not worth the time and the effort.

Interviews were obtained with four persons who ran for office, including two candidates for the 21st Legislative District in the State House, one unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for the State House, and an unsuccessful candidate for the City Council. (Three of these had chosen to use the cable, one had declined.)

The City Council candidate pointed out that ordinarily television time costs too much for local candidates to use it. Therefore free time on the cable was a great opportunity, he said, for free exposure. However, he noted numerous drawbacks, some inherent in cable, some specific to the local cable system. Still others were inherent in the nature of local campaigning.

He noted that cable, being a "closed medium," does not reach all homes but only those subscribing. In this case, that meant the candidate has lost almost half the local homes to start with. But in

*We wish to acknowledge the contribution of Richard A. Stone, Dr. Iyle's graduate research assistant, who conducted these interviews.
addition, he stated that the lack of regular programming on Channel 6 further reduced the potential audience since even subscribers were not accustomed to viewing programs on that channel. This situation, he felt, was made worse by the lack of promotion prior to the broadcasts.

In his own situation he was told about the cable opportunity by a friend running for the Democratic nomination for the House seat. He appeared on the cable only three hours after learning about it, which gave him no time for either preparation or promotion.

During the course of his appearance he invited telephone calls and received only a few. He felt that it would have been better to have had opposing candidates meet on the program, perhaps in debate format. However, he also stated that he would not appear on such a program unless he felt sure he would "win."

The fact that the broadcast was on a weekday was also a handicap in his opinion, since he felt that weeknights are not the best time for political presentations.

This candidate further felt that most people have less interest in politics at the local level and hence are less likely to watch local politicians on television, although he did feel that if his program had been on a commercial channel it would have been more effective. He stated that because of its unproved effectiveness, in any future campaign he would use the cable only if the time were offered free. He said that a candidate must still invest time and money in radio and newspaper promotion, despite the availability of cable.

Another of the interviewees was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for the legislative seat. He appeared at the direct invitation of the cable manager and had a full month to prepare and decide on format. He said his staff did promote the appearance by word of mouth. His appearance ran about 45 minutes during which he said he was able to adequately present his platform. He asked for phone calls, but received only two — and one of these was from a personal friend. He was satisfied with the content of his program, but felt that it would have been more effective on a commercial channel.
Estimating that no more than 40 or 50 persons watched his presentation, he did not think the cablecast was effective as a campaign medium. His campaign staff asked some 50 persons afterward if they had watched, and only three said that they had. The candidate, discounting his own word of mouth campaign, blamed this largely on the lack of promotion and the lack of regular programming on Channel 6.

In general he dismissed the effectiveness of the cablecasts because of (1) the lack of saturation of subscribers, (2) the competition from the commercial stations, and (3) the lack of promotion. He flatly stated that if he had to pay for cable time, he would not use it because he felt the payoff was too low.

The winner of the Democratic primary did not use the cable. He did purchase time on a Honolulu station in both the primary and general elections. In the interview he recounted that he had appeared by invitation on a Honolulu station's talk show. During this appearance he had been considerably shaken by an embarrassing and unexpected question. This shook his confidence about another live appearance on television. (It should be noted, however, that one candidate made arrangements for pre-taping.)

He estimated that his not appearing on cable cost him no more than 2 or 3 percent of votes cast. Generally he discounted the cable as an effective campaign medium because "not many people watch it." Part of the lack of effectiveness, he felt, was due to lack of advertising, an effort he felt should have been taken by the cable company rather than the candidates. If he were to run again for office he might or might not use the cable: it would depend upon the time and his self-confidence.

The attitude of one Republican who scored an upset victory differed dramatically from the other candidates. His campaign manager grasped the cable invitation and made the appearance an integral part of the overall campaign. Prior to the cablecast his staff conducted an opinion survey in the district to establish relative interest in various issues. It was decided to use the cablecast as a key announcement of the candidates' stand on those issues. Since the campaign
manager felt the candidate was lacking in television experience he arranged to have the program pre-taped. The format was an interview in which the campaign manager fed the candidate questions on the issues pinpointed in the opinion poll. In this way the campaign manager was able to guarantee program quality.

Underlining the importance of the broadcast as a possible turning point in the campaign, the candidate's staff mounted an intensive effort to promote the cablecast. Ads were put in both Honolulu daily papers and placards were placed along Farrington Highway, the lifeline of the area. This promotion was responsible, according to the campaign manager, for generating a fairly large audience. Although the campaign manager did not feel that the cablecast was the reason his candidate succeeded in winning, he felt it was a contributing factor.

In discussing the possibility of future campaigns, the candidate stated that he would appear live since his manager felt he now had sufficient experience and confidence in front of a camera. Further, telephone questions would be invited.

Several points can be made in summary:

All the candidates interviewed felt that one of the most serious drawbacks to the cablecasts was the fact that they appeared on a channel where there was no regular programming. The unsuccessful candidates used this to support their contention that the programs had little effect. They also strongly argued that the responsibility for building the audience — and advertising the individual cablecasts — rested with the cable system management. In contrast, the winning candidate's campaign manager took the initiative for promotion using his own staff resources. The results suggest that his effort paid off.

The contention put forth by two of the candidates that the programs would have done better on a regular Honolulu commercial channel is questionable. Audience ratings generally show that political broadcasts — regardless of channel — have deflated audiences. Further, the candidates did not seem to realize that no Honolulu channel could possibly provide open-end time, as did the cable, to all local candidates.
Finally, they did not take into account that they themselves would also have to promote paid broadcasts on commercial channels since the stations are prohibited from doing so by law (unless the candidate himself pays for such promotion).

Those candidates who did not use the cable channel discounted the potential numbers of votes in Waianae and the potential for financial contributions from such a relatively poor area, and they were generally wary of the offer of "free" time. They were willing to buy time on a commercial channel because they felt that the increase in number of viewers more than compensated for the higher cost. Judged on a total cost per voter, including the cost of the candidate's time, Channel 6 would not necessarily have rated highly. The candidate's campaign schedule is crowded (all the more just before an election) and the expected audience is an important consideration even if there is little or no associated cost to the candidate in the distribution of the program to the viewer.
VI. SOME LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The preceding discussion highlights a number of issues relating to audience coverage, the necessity for advance promotion, the "equal time" rule currently enforced by the Federal Communications Commission for political candidates using broadcasting facilities, and the effective use of the television medium by political candidates in the future.

AUDIENCE COVERAGE

First, we should note the disparity between the reasonably good audience ratings shown by the questionnaire survey and the complaints of the candidates themselves about the limited audience they were reaching. The crucial distinction is between the percentage of cable viewers as against the actual number of voters reached. Even with a fairly good audience rating as discussed earlier, the actual size of the audience may be too small to hold much appeal for a candidate badly pressed for time just before an election.

This situation suggests a problem with cable systems in the United States. Most of them are small, encompassing no more than a few thousand subscribers, they are not interconnected to provide wide regional or metropolitan coverage, and many residents choose not to subscribe (cable penetration rates typically run from 30 to 70 percent of homes located where cable service is available). An offer of free channel time on existing systems may frequently not be enough to attract those political candidates seeking an audience that cuts across the coverage of several separate cable systems. As cable systems grow in major metropolitan areas to encompass subscribers numbering in the tens of thousands, this problem will be somewhat alleviated. But it is likely not to be eliminated. There is a tendency on the part of some municipalities to carve up the city into two or more franchises, while leaving scattered unincorporated areas around the city to be franchised by the county. Unless adequate provision is made to interconnect the various separate systems, it is not possible to provide flexibility in covering both large and small groups to fit
the needs of particular political candidates. (Nor would it be possible to provide many other services on cable.) But it is troubling to note that plans for interconnection are not easy to implement, especially if the separate cable systems are designed to different technical specifications. Questions of compatible technical standards and interconnection of systems cutting across the traditional local and state jurisdictions are among the most important problems to be faced in the future development and utilization of cable technology.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVANCE PROMOTION

A theme running throughout the above discussion relates to the great importance of advertising and promoting the appearances of political candidates ahead of time. The problem was serious enough in the Waianae system that provides only one-half dozen active channels to viewers. It will be all the more serious in advanced metropolitan systems now being designed and built where 20 or more channels will be competing for audiences.

The cost of effective promotion and the cost to the candidate of his own time can far outweigh the modest cost of program production itself. Whether this effort will be justified, in comparison with alternative media open to the political candidate, will depend crucially on the audience coverage provided by cable. Here, as above, we face the question of ensuring that the political candidate is able to reach the audience he seeks through use of cable channels.

These observations also carry implications for the recent proposal of the Federal Communications Commission that all cable operators be required to provide one free, dedicated, non-commercial public access channel at all times on a non-discriminatory basis. According to these rules, program production costs (of the sort noted previously in the Waianae case) may be charged to users except for brief live studio presentations not exceeding five minutes in duration. * However,

*These proposed rules are contained in a letter from Dean Burch, Chairman of the FCC, to Congress dated August 5, 1971. The provisions relating to public access are contained on pp. 28-29 of the letter.
serious questions arise about the effective use of this channel. Certainly an individual appearing with little advance notice to make a presentation before the camera for five minutes can expect little in the way of coverage -- all the more since the public channel will be competing with dozens of other channels including mass entertain-
ment. But if promotion is important, who will be expected to pay? Under the proposed FCC rules, the cable operator is not required to do so. Many of the users most anxious to gain access to the television medium have neither the money nor the skills required for effective promotion. Without adequate provision for advance promotion, the potential value of this public access channel may be seriously reduced.

THE FCC'S EQUAL TIME RULE

Today, when a political candidate buys time for personal appearance on a commercial broadcasting station the station must stand ready in accordance with FCC rules to make an equal amount of time available (under equivalent broadcasting conditions) to other opposing candidates willing to buy time at the same rate. Since the broadcasting station operates on only a single channel, and in most cities since only a few stations are in operation, the equal time rule sometimes gives rise to serious problems. The station must be careful not to sell so much time to a particular candidate that not enough is left for others. This is particularly a problem when stations give preferential rates to polit-
tical candidates to increase exposure in the public interest. Under these circumstances, the demand by candidates for channel time increases and it becomes all the more difficult to assure the availability of equal time to all.

However, the situation in the Waianae case was quite different. The programs varied considerably in length, from about an hour to an hour and one-half, depending largely on the number of telephone calls. Moreover, two candidates made two separate appearances and one program was repeated on video tape. Yet, although some candidates had much more exposure than others, there were no complaints in the interviews that this was a problem. The time was offered for free, each candidate
was able to use as much as he pleased, and that was that. Moreover, the questionnaire responses suggested that the majority believed that the programs were fair to the candidates. Their feelings stemmed largely from the fact that the candidates were able to conduct the programs essentially as they pleased without any particular time limit.

This suggests that with the large channel capacities available in the future on cable systems, the equal time rule, predicated on the notion of channel scarcity, will become increasingly less important. Non-discriminatory access under equivalent conditions will be relatively easy to maintain, and the success of the candidates in using the medium will depend largely on their own skills before the cameras and the extent to which they engage in effective advance promotion and program preparation.

FUTURE LOCAL PROGRAM ORIGINATION

The Waianae experience demonstrates that extremely low-cost origination is possible, and that despite all the handicaps an impressive number of cable subscribers can be induced to watch when the material being presented is of strong interest to the community. Still, one has reason to hope for more sophisticated program presentation in the expanded future use of cable for political exposure. Poor equipment and noisy studios detract from the presentation. The viewer looses touch with the program content, while the candidate is distracted enough to make his discomfort felt by the viewers. This is not to say that highly polished, high cost professional programs are the only way to provide political information to the voters; but certainly in the large metropolitan cable systems being planned and constructed something more than the bare minimum put together by an innovative operator is what one would expect.

Interviews with the candidates showed up their lack of experience and knowledge about how to use the medium. Many of their critical comments about cable are equally valid with respect to broadcast television. This is not difficult to understand. Candidates for local
office do not have staffs skilled in the use of media, and only rarely does one find a candidate himself who is especially knowledgeable about the subject. We may be faced simply by the fact that communications tools and technologies becoming available have outstripped the candidates' abilities to use them, and it will take time and training to catch up.