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Sent: Wednesday, September 19, 2007 1:50 PM
To: Jonathan Levy
Subject: Re: Revision of peer Review #2

20 September 2007

Peer Review of FCC
Study 14

A CASE STUDY OF WHY LOCAL REPORTING MATTERS: PHOTOJOURNALISM FRAMING OF THE RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA IN LOCAL AND NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS

Is this study reasonable and objective? Yes. This is a fine study if one accepts the assumptions that the authors posit. That is they compare newspaper coverage as done by New Orleans newspapers and then out of town newspapers -- in a vacuum. But accepting the assumptions, they demonstrate that more extensive, local coverage of a catastrophe by accepted journalistic standards seems to be done more completely on a local level than are national summaries. But I am not sure how this raises concerns about the combination of a business which might both own a newspaper and a TV station.

Is it consistent with standard economic methodology? Yes. Newspaper economics means profit making and local coverage is less costly and draws more buyers and so means more profits.

Are the data relevant to the question at hand? Yes -- as far as they go. The authors point out that Internet access changes the basic assumptions. The authors thus offer no data as to how many people used the Internet to access the newspaper coverage by the New Orleans newspapers than from outside the city. In a natural disaster this might be considerable.

Are the data sufficient quality? Yes -- as far as the limitations of the data can take them. The collection of the data relies on coding of the photo images. This adds a subjectivity to the analysis.

Do any of the conclusions reached follow from the analysis, the basic questions at issue?
It is too harsh -- to use the author's language -- to say that non-New Orleans newspapers simplified, exaggerated and distorted (which implies intent) the image of the Katrina disaster. All other things being equal, people would have been better off to have read the coverage of the events from both a local and national view points of view.

But so long as the Internet is open, affordable, and is part of many newspaper's operations, then they can.

That race matters in the USA hardly needs to be demonstrated. But reading multiple sources of information with an open mind has always been the answer and the Internet makes this easy for those who can afford connection and who have the necessary time.

Simplifying is not bad, just a matter of allocating that most precious of goods: time.

Winning Pulitzer Prizes should be ignored as a criterion.

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