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The Financial Interest and Syndication Rules and Changes in Program Diversity

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Abstract

This article examines the extent to which program diversity has changed over time on prime time, broadcast network television. This issue is analyzed through the rubric of the financial interest and syndication rules, Federal Communications Commission regulations that were enacted to increase program diversity. Diversity is assessed using quantitative methodologies and concludes that although program diversity on prime time broadcast television has fluctuated over time, it is not significantly different today than it was in 1966. This is so even though the industry has become more consolidated. This article argues that it is the economic structure that makes broadcasters dependent on advertising revenue for support that leads producers to create programming that will generate large audiences. By definition, this leads to an undiversified television landscape.

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