

**BLACKOUT! MEDIATED PUBLIC DELIBERATION AND  
DESEGREGATION IN HOUSTON**

A Senior Honors Thesis

by

CARRIE A. JACOBS

Submitted to the Office of Honors Programs  
& Academic Scholarships  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

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Group: History and Cultural Studies

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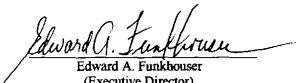
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## ABSTRACT

Blackout! Mediated public deliberation and desegregation in Houston. (April 2001)

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Mediated public deliberation involves professional communicators communicating with the public to ensure that the public's policy preferences are informed, enlightened, and authentic. In a basic sense, good information can lead to informed public decisions, while poor mediated public deliberation appears to do the opposite.

The Civil Rights movement was a watershed in this nation's history. People like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks and places like Little Rock, Arkansas, and Montgomery, Alabama, might come to mind when discussing the Civil Rights movement. Houston, Texas, typically does not. Thomas R. Cole, whose documentary, *The Strange Demise of Jim Crow*, chronicles the desegregation of public accommodations, says in his film that Houston is typically regarded as a place where "nothing happened" during the Civil Rights movement. However, the movement was really quite active in Houston; interestingly enough, no one knew about it.

Three media blackouts occurred in Houston during the 1960s, which prevented coverage of sit-ins and establishment segregation from reaching the public. My thesis focuses on research into how these media blackouts affected mediated public deliberation in newspaper coverage of desegregation and integration in Houston.

My research consisted of tracking racial-violence and civil-rights-related coverage during 1960, the year of the first media blackout. By monitoring the coverage over the entire year, I felt I would be able to create a better picture of how the elite press covered the events. I hypothesized: I would find a decline in the amount of coverage that the civil rights movement in Houston received, Houston would receive a relatively large share of the media attention, and local protest coverage would be replaced by positive national racial integration stories.

All the hypotheses I selected in my methods section were unsupported by the research for this project. Though there appeared to be significant effects on mediated public deliberation, both the amount of coverage and the types of data needed to support these hypotheses were unavailable. From the available information, though, it is clear that the media blackout was successful—by chance or design, Houston left little behind to speak of the interesting arrangement that took place.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to:

- Those I know and those I've known at Texas A&M University.
- Those I love and those who love me, friends and family both. The line between those who were born kin and those who were not has since become slight.
- To the Blackhole, without whose constant encouragement, support and entertainment this thesis would have been done a whole lot sooner.
- To my Girl Scouts, Mopac, et al; Give freely and receive in abundance.
- To my Student Y staff, for being so understanding of my time constraints during the past year and supportive in my endeavors.
- To the poor saps who work at *The Battalion*, who are truly all kinds of crazy.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

In our society, the media are responsible for describing and recording events that take place. The media then take this information and disseminate it to the public. This role inherently gives the media some power over how the actions and events that shape our world will be presented.

Word choices like “tragedy,” “slaying,” “celebration,” “monumental”— all convey distinct connotations— some negative, some positive— and these are but one of the choices the media make. Choices about which people should be interviewed, what quotes should be included, what visual elements should be incorporated, where the stories are placed, and even what stories will actually receive coverage are all made by the media to structure their stories. This structure is directly linked to how the media involves itself in “public deliberation.”

### **Public deliberation defined**

Public deliberation in this context can loosely be defined as the social process where people are collectively presented with information so they can participate in intelligent discourse, make decisions and form opinions (Page, 1996). Benjamin Page points out that in modern societies like ours, however, this deliberation is mediated. This assertion means professional communicators are largely responsible for presenting the information to the public through mass media of communications (1996). Page goes on



to point out the potential problems of this mediation. He questions whether the nature of professional communicators' actions accurately portrays events, or if they are instead misleading or failing to communicate necessary information. He states, "Even if the public is capable of a high level of rationality and has good sense, public opinion is bound to depend, in good part, upon the political information and ideas that are conveyed to it. ... But if the political information provided to the public is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading, or full of outright lies, then perhaps even a rational public can be fooled."

#### **Why should mediated public deliberation be studied?**

Communications scholars debate over what impact the media have. Paul Lazarsfeld and others like him hold to the truth of the *limited effects paradigm*. This paradigm states that "the effects of the media are mitigated by the processes of selectivity in attention, perception, and recall, and that these, in turn, are a function of predispositional and situational variables such as age, family history, political affiliation, and so on. (Katz 1987)" This process created a two-step flow of information; it was not a process that was dependent upon the media's actions. Lazarsfeld and his followers believe that, "in spite of the blind belief of advertisers, politicians, some academics, and the public that media campaigns are capable of inducing massive change in opinions, attitudes, and action--always somebody's else's, not one's own (Davison 1983). However, even 50 years after Lazarsfeld, his hypothesis is still debated and changed; as Okada

(1986) said, many changes tweak the theory. Some critiques prefer influence to information, talk between equals instead of opinion leaders, multiple steps over two steps, etc.

Scholars have suggested several alternative paradigms. These alternative theories discuss the great effects the alternatives' proponents claim the media do have. The first alternative, the institutional paradigm, says the media does influence "what to think about" (McCombs and Shaw 1972). The critical paradigm, a second alternative, says the media has powerful effects, and that power comes from slowing change and maintaining the status quo (Gitlin 1980). This paradigm's basic sentiment is that the media's goal is to tell the public "what not to think." The technical paradigm -- "how to think" or "where to belong" is another alternative. Its basis lies in the belief that "the technologies of communication connect us to each other in ways that are largely independent of their messages" (Katz 1987).

However, whether one is a disciple of Noelle-Neumann, Iyengar and other believers of a powerful effects paradigm or a follower of Lazarsfeld's concept of limited effects, all theorists seem to agree that the media do consciously make some decisions that the public receives entangled with its information from them. These decisions, mediated public deliberation at its core, should be studied, so that people may continue to have a greater understanding for how the media disseminates important information about the events that shape the world.

## **A LOOK BACK: HOUSTON**

The Civil Rights movement was a watershed in this nation's history. People like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks and places like Little Rock, Arkansas, and Montgomery, Alabama, might come to mind when discussing the Civil Rights movement. Houston, Texas, typically does not. Thomas R. Cole, whose documentary, *The Strange Demise of Jim Crow*, chronicles the desegregation of public accommodations, says in his film that Houston is typically regarded as a place where "nothing happened" during the Civil Rights movement. However, the movement was really quite active in Houston; interestingly enough, no one knew about it.

During the 1960s, three media blackouts occurred in Houston that prevented coverage of sit-ins and establishment segregation from reaching the public. The blackouts were the result of complex trades and compromises between three groups of people: black student protesters; prominent black businessmen working behind the scenes; and white business owners and leaders who wanted segregation to occur peacefully and in a way that would not damage them, or Houston, economically.

### **Why Houston?**

By the 1950s, Houston had become the largest city in the American South. However, city leaders and business leaders did not think that Houston was receiving the respect it deserved; to most of the country, Houston was still considered a provincial Southern town. A movement began among the city's elite to improve Houston's national

reputation; plans for a major league baseball franchise, the country's first domed stadium and the construction of NASA began to be laid. Leaders hoped these new developments would draw the nation's attention to the thriving metropolis Houston had become. However, the rampant and rigid segregation in place in Houston, threatened to destroy the new and modern image these leaders envisioned. As a *Houston Chronicle* reporter of the times said, Houston was experiencing such growth and development in the 1960s that it became very pretentious and highly concerned with its public image.

African-Americans were a full twenty-five percent of the city's population, but, despite their large numbers, they still were forced to remain second-class citizens. Black workers made barely half of what white workers did. Houston's African-Americans had rates of home ownership, levels of income and business opportunities that compared favorably with those of blacks in any southern city. However, Houston blacks were still separated from their white counterparts by segregated lunch counters, restaurants, restrooms and hotels.

Houston's African-American leaders had not accepted segregation silently. Blacks in Houston and Harris County had a successful legacy of fighting segregation in the courts—in 1940, *Smith v. Allwright* went to the Supreme Court, who ruled the state Democratic Party's all-white primary violated the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution, which opened up the primary to black voters. In the late 1950s, Houston's citizens saw the election of Hattie Mae White to the Houston school board, the first black since Reconstruction elected to a significant public office in Houston. Lulu White, a black Houston woman, was the leader of the Texas chapter of the National Association

for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, the younger generation of black Houstonians was not content with the developments the older leaders had made; they wanted more change, more quickly.

Lurking in the minds of many opponents of change was the memory of the race riots of 1917. During the conflict, one hundred members of an all-black infantry regiment stationed at Camp Logan, near Houston, marched into town and fought with white police officers, citizens and other military units, killing sixteen whites, including five policemen. Leaders of the 1950s and 1960s were children at the time, but they still vividly remembered the period of martial rule and panic that ensued. Consequently, some Houston businessmen were wary of the results desegregation would have. Rioting and violence had already proven themselves to be both possible and deadly.

Thus, the proverbial battle lines were drawn. The movement toward racial desegregation and equality was destined to spark heated conflict that could quite possibly shatter the lofty image Houston was trying to project for itself to the rest of the nation. Those people who would protest the segregated conditions in Houston would come in direct opposition against those who wished and worked to maintain the status quo and keep the economic prosperity of Houston booming along—and a blackout was born.

## Key desegregation figures

The following is a short list and description of people who played important roles in the desegregation protests and negotiations in Houston. Their involvement will be discussed more fully in the next section of this paper.

*Eldrewey Stearns*: young black Texas Southern University (TSU) student who would become leader for the student protesters in Houston

*Quentin Mease*: director of the South Central YMCA in Houston; became a protest mentor for Stearns

*Louis Cutrer*: Houston's mayor; attempted to threaten students into compliance

*Dr. Sam Nabrit*: president of TSU; member of Mayor Cutrer's biracial panel; supporter of student protest

*Bob Dundas*: Foley's executive who was influential in setting up the first media blackout

*John T. Jones*: chairman of the endowment that owned the Houston Chronicle

*Judge Roy Hofheinz*: leader within the Houston Sports Association (HSA) and former Harris county judge and mayor.

## How to build a blackout: A summary of events

The following list describe the sequence of events that led to the creation of the media blackout scheme in Houston. This list is a condensed version of the timeline

provided in *No Color is My Kind: the life of Eldrewey Stearns and the integration of Houston*, by Thomas R. Cole.

*August 1959:* Stearns is pulled over, arrested and charged with not having a valid driver's license. His poor treatment by the police gave him the personal convictions that would later propel him into leadership of civil right's movement.

*February 1960:* Mease becomes Stearns mentor and encourages him to act, not just speak, about justice. Mease encouraged Stearns to organize sit-ins like those that were occurring other places.

*March 4, 1960:* Students in Houston held the first sit-in west of the Mississippi River. Stearns made students wait until both the press and the police arrived before beginning the protest. The students received both the press coverage and the protection they wanted.

*March 7, 1960:* Only three days after the first protest, violent retaliation occurs. A TSU student is abducted, hung by his feet, and his captors carve the letters "KKK" on his abdomen.

*March 25, 1960:* Students picket city hall while a foreign ambassador visits. The students then file into the city hall cafeteria and ask to be served. They were. Mayor Cutrer is furious and claims he will arrest students if they continue. However, the police chief says the mayor will have to make these arrests without police assistance because the students are breaking no law. The mayor is forced to reassess the situation and calls a 37-member biracial panel to study the problem.

*April 1960:* The biracial committee votes 19 to 37 in favor of immediate desegregation.

*May 1960:* The Saturday before Mother's Day, blacks boycotted and picketed downtown stores, including Foley's. Dundas realizes that segregation is bad for business, but desegregation and subsequent protests could be potentially disastrous. Begins meeting with Cutrer and press leaders and devises a plan where all downtown lunch counters will desegregate on the same day, but without the bad press, or any press for that matter, that might spark conflict, for one week following desegregation.

*Aug. 25, 1960:* Downtown Houston desegregates its lunch counters. Without press coverage, students have no need for protests. Segregationists, also, are left without motivation to continue their battle—it was too late for this; segregation was at an end.

*Winter, 1961:* The HSA involves prominent African-Americans, including Stearns and Mease, in its campaign to pass a bond that would support the building of its new domed stadium. The black leaders assist the HSA, on the condition that the new stadium open completely racially integrated.

*April 1, 1962:* Hofheinz and other HSA and city leaders realize that the new stadium will bring ball clubs from other cities to Houston and that segregated hotels for the players will be unacceptable. Hofheinz and Jones work together and Houston hotels desegregate, while the media remain silent for the second time.

*May 15, 1963:* Gordon Cooper departs on the last and longest flight in Mercury series and is set to return to his hometown of Houston on May 23, amid an



internationally televised tickertape parade. Students in Houston, fueled by recent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, planned to stage a protest of Houston's segregated movie theaters and restaurants during the parade, unless the owners would agree to integrate. At the last moment, owners agreed to cooperate with desegregation plans and the student protest was called off. Protesters were disappointed that they lost their chance for national media attention, but their demands from the city would soon be quietly met.

*June 1963.* Restaurants and movie theaters quietly desegregate, using a plan devised by Dundas, Jones, Mease and others.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section of the paper is designed to introduce the reader to concepts of media theory and to provide background information about my topic. This section is therefore divided into two sub-sections: Mechanics and Criticism. The Mechanics section will focus on general media theory and terminology, and the Criticism section will focus on what media theorists and researchers have said about the presence and effects of mediated public deliberation.

### **MECHANICS**

#### **What is the role of “news”?**

News tells the public what it does not (and sometimes cannot) experience directly, allowing them to make these events that have not been personally experienced observable and meaningful (Molotch and Lester 1974). Media generated’ images of the world are used by information consumers as a means to create an understanding of political and social issues for themselves (Gamson, 1992). The media is the supplier of most of the information about public events that the public receives; ultimately, the press is also the supplier of the raw material from which public opinions are shaped (Graber 1986). Therefore, as Molotch and Lester said, “an individual’s conceptions of the history and the future of his or her collectivity come to depend on the processes by which public events get constructed. ... The work of historians, journalists, sociologists and political

scientists helps to accomplish this task...by making available to citizens a range of occurrences from which to construct a sense of public time." In western, formally uncensored societies, the media's role is one of "reporter-reflector indicators of an objective reality," and departures from this ideal are perceived as bias (1974).

One of the most famous models of the role of the media in society comes to us from Harold Lasswell (1971). He defines the media as an institution with **four principle functions in society**:

- **Surveillance:** The media monitors information for people, providing them with the information that is most important, from news about impending disasters to stock quotes.
- **Correlation:** This process imposes order on the surveillance activity and signifies the relative importance of what is reported, giving it meaning in the average person's life.
- **Socialization:** The media transmits social norms and culture to people, creating unity and social cohesion.
- **Entertainment:** The media offers different types of rest and relaxation for all types of people, dependent upon how they can access it (i.e. stories for literate people, visual images for the illiterate).

The media is more than just a conduit of information. As Robert Danton, an eighteenth century scholar once remarked, "what a society writes, publishes, and reads is a guide to its culture." This statement fits nicely with media research in the past 20 years. During this time period, media scholars have broadened the scope of their research to

include the societal implications and effects of the media on particular societies and communities. A famous quote by Will Rogers—All I know is what I read in the newspapers—further illustrates the dependence of Americans upon the media to connect them to their world.

Graber defines the press through the functions she believes it possesses that allow it to contribute to American democracy and the general welfare. Her survey of political leaders and the opinions of Supreme Court justices and First Amendment scholars have produced her list of **the five functions of the press**:

- A free press provides a forum for discussion. This publicized interchange allows the adoption of the best ideas.
- A free press furnishes citizens with the information needed to responsibly perform their civic duties.
- A free press is the public's agent in communicating with government officials.
- A free press provides an outlet for public expression of unpopular minority views.
- A free press constitutes the citizens' eyes and ears to detect and report corruption, abuses of power, and other misconduct by government officials (1986); playing the role of **media watchdog**.

These functions will be important to consider later when evaluating how well the media carries out its duties. Indeed, the hegemony model of the media gives the media additional responsibilities, defining it as an integral part "of a process of economic, political, social, and cultural struggle" (Kellner, 1990). Justice William O. Douglas, in

Branzburg v. Hayes, wrote that “the press has a preferred position in our constitutional scheme... to bring fulfillment to the public’s right to know.”

### **How do the media function in society?**

In examining mediated public deliberation, it is useful to investigate the processes that newsgatherers use to create their product. To many people these processes may seem so normal, that they are ultimately invisible. However, this media invisibility is precisely why they should be studied; the lens through which they pass their images is not neutral, nor can it really ever be (Gamson et al, 1992). Furthermore, the nature of the ways in which the media work, and the professional and economic limitations of this structure, is inextricably tied to the content of published news (Tuchman 1972). These predispositions of the media toward the background and tendencies of its owners and reporters are also important to remember when examining instances of media coverage of events.

Typically, when evaluating how news works, media scholars first examine the type of media system that is present. Fred Siebert et al. developed a theory whereby all media systems are broken down into four categories:

- **Authoritarian:** This system stems from the philosophy upholding the absolute power of the monarch. The chief purpose of this system is to support and advance the policies of the government in power and to serve the state, thus criticism of the government is prohibited. Anyone with a royal patent was permitted to access the

media, and the media is considered to be the instrument for perpetuating government policy, even though the press is not necessarily government-owned.

- **Libertarian:** This system grew from the writings of Milton, Lock, Mill and the general philosophy of man's natural rights. A "self-righting process of truth" and a "free market place of ideas control this system" and its purpose is to inform, entertain and sell, but mostly to help discover truth and monitor the government. In this system, anyone with the economic means to purchase a press may enter the system. The libertarian system's main difference from the other four system lies in the fact that its role is that of monitoring the government and meeting other needs of society (i.e. entertainment, community).
- **Social responsibility:** This system developed in the United States from the guidelines developed by the Commission on Freedom of the Press, media professionals, and media codes. This system's chief purpose was to raise conflicts to the realm of public discussion and deliberation. In the social responsibility rationale, anyone with something to say is permitted to enter the media system. This system is based on the assumption that the media must assume obligation of social responsibility; and if the media does not fulfill this role, someone must ensure that this occurs.
- **Soviet totalitarian:** This system was produced by Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist thought, combined with Hegel and 19th century Russian thought. This system's main purpose was to contribute to the success and continuance of the Soviet socialist system. Loyal and orthodox party members are permitted to enter this system, and

the system's difference from the other three categories lies in its responsibility to act as the arm of the state.

The main concern for Western, and especially American, critics is deciding between the Libertarian and Social Responsibility theories, and many American media outlets tend to lie somewhere between the two categories.

### **How does the media create "news"?**

One prominent theory that helps to explain the functioning of the media machine is the "media framing" theory. **Media frames** are generally unwritten guidelines by which journalists organize the news they report (Gitlin, 1980). Goffman goes on to remark that though the media does frame events, so do the information consumers. He asserts that though the information the public is presented with is already processed, they are still free to reinterpret the information into their own frames of reference, especially if they realize the formatting changes the information has already undergone (1974). Lance Bennett expanded on the framing theory by proposing that media framing took place over time, as the news stories created a "situation" for an event (1975).

**Agenda setting** is another common media theory that asserts that by the choices the media make, they determine the public's agenda for political discourse. Audiences learn and accept the priorities that the media seem to assign to issues and events (Tebbe 1980). Research has indicated that newspaper agenda-setting is especially influential at the local level (Palmgreen and Clark 1977). **Gatekeeping**, another commonly studied

media theory, is a natural offshoot of agenda setting. Wherein agenda setting chooses the events that make news, gatekeeping involves how journalists' concepts "news" select the events fitting with those themes. Journalists evaluate events as worthy, interesting and informative events, filtering them through a number of "news gates" before it reaches the public, allowing only the information that best conforms to these standards to ultimately be presented to the public (White et al 1964).

Another theoretical design for how the media operates is Marilyn Lester's concept of **generating newsworthiness** (1980). She describes this operation as "a reflexive process whereby: (1) accounts of newsworthiness organize and give meaning to occurrences as events and stories; (2) accounts of occurrences, events and stories elaborate the meaning of accounts of newsworthiness; and (3) the preceding items (1) and (2) are used to display newswriters' professional and rational methods for doing their work." She later goes on to discuss how this task is usually accomplished by media framing, a concept discussed earlier in this section.

### **Types of news**

Research has indicated that the type of news (how it occurs) will influence the way it is reported (Boorstin 1961). The media's routines in covering events also help to explain how news "works" Tuchman (1973). She states that newspeople categorize events by the structure in which they occur and then use these categories to "routinize" the news. She describes five categories of news:



- **Hard news:** Events potentially available to analysis or interpretation; information that people should have to be informed citizens; timely and urgent news
- **Soft news:** Human interest and feature stories
- **Spot news:** A type of hard news; unexpected
- **Developing news:** Another type of hard news; stories where there is a time period of coverage where facts are still emerging and being gathered, while the event remains the same, news accounts of the event change
- **Continuing news:** A series of stories on the same subject based on events occurring over a period of time (e.g. the passage of a bill)

In discussing news routines, both Tuchman and Lester discuss how many editors will choose hard news over soft because it seems more straightforward and important. Both also discuss how developing news tends to flow in a cycle called the **issue-attention cycle**, where the issue gathers more prominence after it is introduced, but that prominence then eventually declines along with the amount of coverage the issue receives.

Another way of classifying the events that comprise news involves evaluating how those people who seek to create public events by promoting their events access the press. There are events where the event promoters have *habitual access* to news assemblers, events where event promoters are seeking to *disrupt* the routine access of others to disseminate their message, and events which the media *creates* (Molotch and Lester 1974). While these types of events are relatively routine things, Molotch and

Lester go on to discuss several types of non-routine events: accidents, scandals, and serendipitous events.

### **Who makes the news?**

In 1973, Sigal found that journalists tend to rely on “official sources and routine channels” in stories, allowing these sources to have a loud voice in what became news. He also stated that, in many cases, these sources manage to have the newsgatherers “insert information into the news or to propagandize.” Later, Gans would argue that these official sources, coupled with the newsgathering processes previously discussed (which are needed for journalistic efficiency), actually are the driving force in determining what is news (1972).

Additionally, Tuchman was the first to investigate the role of “beats” in newsmaking. The beat system is a practice in which different newsgatherers are all assigned particular areas of society to routinely monitor and report on. Typically, reporters with more experience or a better background are assigned to more prominent beats, while novice reporters are assigned to human interest stories or what media owners consider smaller stories. This experience deficit can then affect how stories are presented. Since the experienced professional better knows what the editor is looking for, he or she gives his or her story a better chance of being published and further perpetuating the presence of prominent entities in the press.

Molotch and Lester define three principal groups who work to create the news. First, they discuss the *news promoters*. They describe this group as “those individuals and their associates who identify (and thus render observable) an occurrence as special, on some ground, for some reason, for others.” The second group they list is the *news assemblers*. News assemblers take the information provided by the news promoters and use it to create public events through publication or broadcast of the accounts they create from it. Assemblers assess stories The third group, the *news consumers*, are the readers or viewers of the media’s products.

## CRITICISM

### **Does mediated public deliberation fulfill its duties?**

In the past decade, research has shown that the media typically do not fulfill the role of an ideal forum for Page’s concept of mediated public deliberation. As Gamson et al summarizes, “The overwhelming conclusion is that the media generally operate in ways that promote apathy, cynicism, and quiescence, rather than active citizenship and participation” (1992). Paletz & Entmen (1981) went so far as to say that while they also felt the public was adversely affected by media depictions, the consequences they noted were “frustration, misdirected anger, and apathy.” Clearly, Page’s fears of an uninformed public are close to being realized, and Gamson goes on to say that these media trends appear to be getting stronger.

Some critics and postmoderns believe that **media framing** excludes cultural effects and relevant events outside the concept of the frame, causing the fragmentation of information (Bennett 1988). Iyengar & Kinder provided some convincing evidence for the validity of the effects of framing in their 1987 study. They conducted an experiment where two groups were shown actual news broadcasts of events, carefully edited to be comparable yet representative of different media frames. The results showed that the focus of the television news spotlight affected how the viewers evaluated presidential performance.

Iyengar went on to conduct another study where he examined how the different formats of news presentation affected whom the public held accountable for events. His study (1991) split event coverage into two categories: the “episodic” and the “thematic.” He stated that the episodic form, which is more common, “depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances.” He explained that the thematic form tended to show general outcomes, conditions, and statistical evidence. Iyengar’s findings showed that exposure to episodic format makes viewers less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problems and less likely to hold them responsible for solving the problems. Also, the viewers were more likely to hold victims, not societal forces, responsible for problems. As Gamson et al stated in his paper *Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality*, “these results provide additional evidence for the fragmentation effects described above and for its primary consequences of obscuring the operation of societal power relations.”

Other critics label the inevitable side effect of media competition and economic restraints, **pack journalism**, as another factor in the media's failure to provide quality mediated public deliberation. Pack journalism is term for the tendency of reporters to all go after the same news targets and use the same news interpretations whenever stories promise to have mass appeal (Graber 1986). Pack journalism harms mediated public deliberation in that if the elite press, the acknowledged leaders of the pack, choose to focus on one sensational stories, other major stories will go unnoticed, and the other members of the press will follow suit, curbing the release of the important information. Also, in the pack, errors or misinformation that originate in the elite press can sometimes trickle down into the smaller papers, disseminating the information to an even wider audience. Graber gives the early coverage of the Vietnam War as an example of this type of compounded mistake. The situation the elite press described, of a struggle between the free world and the communist powers that threatened American security, made public deliberation seem almost unnecessary and American intervention a foregone conclusion.

Pack journalism and other media structures previously discussed can contribute to a lack of diversity. Lichtenberg says this problem is not surprising, and that it manifests itself in two ways. First, the lack of diversity will create a lack of adequate exposure to information and ideas that are true or interesting or useful, making the range of views that appear in the mass media very narrow (1987). The second consequence is the reinforcement of established power, or the support of the status quo.

Thomas Patterson, in his paper *The News Media's Capacity as Electoral Intermediary* points out some additional failures he noted about the media's performance in providing election information to the public. He blames the media for failing to provide three types of information needed in making sound electoral decisions:

- Information about the likely consequences of political actions
- Facts that would alert citizens to historical patterns and give their potential decisions some sense of political perspective
- Explanation of presented "facts" which only hold true under certain conditions.

Some scholars remark that the media's effectiveness in fulfilling its role may be dependent upon how motivated the public is to obtain the information it needs. In 1988, Graber conducted a series of interviews with a panel of respondents to determine what they paid attention to in the media and how they used the information they absorbed. "Media impact, she concludes, depends on the salience of specific issues to the individual. While people's attention is influenced by media cues about what is an important story, they 'evaluate news in light of past learning and determine how well it squares with the reality that they have experienced directly or vicariously' " (Gamson, 1992).

While not consistent, the media has occasionally performed the watchdog function (discussed earlier in this paper) very well. Exposing things like Watergate, the Mylai massacre, federal government excesses, and revealing the misdeeds of various politicians and officials are all times when the media have fulfilled this role. However, as Graber (1986) states, while investigative journalists occasionally make these finds

independently, usually the press wait to be tipped off by insiders before they even begin their fact-finding missions. “Neither the public’s need to know the facts nor concerns about institutional failures have been major criteria for pursuing an investigative story” (Graber 1986), especially about government officials. The media tends to be easily manipulated by these officials, as it is part of the media’s routinized processes to rely on official statements and press releases to cover the news. This reliance can at times make the press nothing more than a government mouthpiece (Lichtenberg 1987).

Marxist media critics also hold the belief that the media tends to espouse and support only capitalist ideology (Graber 1986). Other “unpopular” ideologies, such as radical forms of labor unionism, are also ignored in press support (Lofton 1981). Graber also faults the media for failing to seek out average Americans to report on their concerns and opinions and instead reporting on the beliefs of officials and political elites. This treatment is a key reason it is difficult for average citizens to obtain the information they need to make good decisions (1986).

However, Graber goes on to say that the media’s failure at adequately doing its duties in mediated public deliberation is not wholly its fault (1986). She claims that the media system was not designed to perform these functions, and a very different type of system would be necessary to satisfactorily complete the necessary tasks.

W. Lance Bennett echoes Page’s skepticism of mediated public deliberation. He describes four ways journalists knowingly and unknowingly bias the news.

1. **Personalizing the news:** Creating stories that put events and issues on a personal level, which often causes a loss of societal meaning.

2. **Dramatizing the news:** Structuring stories to create a single “conflict” narrative, complete with building action and resolution.
3. **Fragmenting coverage of related issues:** Taking issues and events from the context where they occurred, also resulting in a loss of meaning.
4. **Normalizing news stories:** Discussing an issue, and ending with “problem solved” conclusion.

Bennett goes on to say journalists are more concerned with more immediate goals than with giving people an accurate and useful picture of their world. Often, journalists' goals are strongly tied to economic goals. For example, stories that can attract readers and sell more papers may be favored over stories that could give people “accurate and useful” pictures of their world.

Bennett also says, “On the one hand those who pay serious attention to the news run the risk of absorbing its subtle political messages, accepting its familiar stereotypes and adopting its rigid modes of thinking. On the other hand, people who avoid the news may suffer the social stigma of ignorance, the guilt of being poor citizens, and the confusion of not knowing what is happening in the world.” Bennett offers one final critique of mass media news by describing its function as “setting limits on the imaginable and the politically possible; arriving too late (and doing too little) to educate people and get them involved in policy making.”

**How is mediated public deliberation limited?**



Economic and market pressures have caused the current state of the press to be one of near monopoly. According to Graber, of the 1750 daily newspaper published in the U.S. in 1986, more than 65 percent, representing more than 73 percent of the nationwide circulation, were controlled by national and regional chains. This system of control means that the number of possible independent voices in news reporting has been greatly reduced. Graber goes on to say that the high profitability of media enterprises has attracted many people to the industry who are mainly interested in profit, not information production (1986).

*“The nearer the press comes to a condition of monopoly, the harder it is to maintain the free marketplace of ideas and the self-righting process of truth on which our theory of press freedom depends; and in this situation the press can hold on to its freedom only by maintaining a high level of responsibility,”*

Wilbur Schramm

The study of press freedom and censorship is one of the first issues scholars began to examine, and the first published articles on the subject date back to almost 60 years ago. In 1947, the Commission on Freedom of the Press was created, and after its founding, no media scholar could write or research the press without being aware of the ties between economics, freedom, and press responsibility (Schramm 1957). Economic constraints limit print space, air time and many other factors, and make it difficult for the media to comply with demands for access. Because of those restrictions, “*which* views get covered, and in what way, depends mainly on the economic and political structure and context of press institutions...” (Lichtenberg 1987). The larger the enterprise, the

greater the motivation to avoid controversial material; people who are offended or bored by a media outlet are not likely to buy the media outlet's product or patronize the outlet's advertisers. Consequently, the media give the public what it appears to want — “mostly froth and little substance” (Graber 1986).

**Censorship** can, of course, be another limitation to press freedom. Censorship typically comes in two forms: private, or self, censorship and government-imposed censorship. Jerome Barron, an advocate of citizens' right to access the media, has said, “... increasingly, private censorship serves to suppress ideas as thoroughly and as rigidly as the worst government censor.” A. J. Liebling, author of *The Press*, would likely agree based on his famous quote: “Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.”

#### **How are racial issues affected during mediated public deliberation?**

Danzger (1975) shows that differential location of wire service offices across U.S. cities biases newspaper data on racial conflict frequency and concludes that other studies (particularly of racial disorders) that rely on news sources are similarly invalid. However, Snyder and Kelly developed an alternate method of assessing the validity of racial issues, particularly racial violence. Using this new method, they found that previous coverage of racial violence was not biased, it was simply highly responsive to the intensity of the events and the sensitivity of the local media to conflict events (1977).

In accordance with conclusions about how media outlets avoid some topics to prevent mainstream readers from being offended, it is thus somewhat reasonable to assume that by that reasoning some stories about racial strife and protest would go unreported. Graber (1986) agrees, stating that in most cases media coverages tends to show respect for the established order, which supports the status quo and hinders the growth of opposing opinions. John Lofton, a researcher who studied the effects of the press during times of minority suppression, said “except when their own freedom was discernibly at stake, established general circulation newspapers have tended to go along with efforts to suppress deviations from the prevailing political and social orthodoxies of their time and place rather than to support the right to dissent” (1981). In fact, Lofton said that the press mainly chooses to spout the importance of First Amendment rights when it is the rights of the press, not minorities or other groups, that is being infringed upon.

According to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the media’s failure to adequately report racial problems during the civil rights movement may have been a major factor leading to the urban riots of the late 1960s. The frustration of the rioters was amplified by their feelings of neglect from the media. This minority neglect is not an isolated event either; the media’s neglect of the federal government’s forced relocation of Navajo Indians, the largest relocation since that of Japanese-Americans during World War II, went largely unreported (Kammer 1986).

**What other research has been done on media blackouts?**

Singer and Ludwig conducted research related to the impact a government-imposed ban on photographic and sound recordings in the South African press. Like the blackout in Houston, the press ban in South Africa was designed to keep protesters from the international limelight, which the government hoped would both reduce the level of protest activity and violence and "soften negative world opinion toward the South African government by censoring graphic depictions of the intensity of the conflict and of the harsh official confrontation and repression of protest activity." Several of the hypotheses Singer and Ludwig tested were similar to research questions I posed in this project. For instance, they hypothesized that the ban would result in a decrease in coverage of protest-related stories, a slow decline in the volume of coverage, and a reduction in "prominence" of the South Africa story. They assumed these changes would occur partially as a result of a forced change in journalist behavior and changes in the behavior of those at international news bureaus "who have the power of 'deciding what's news (Gans, 1979).'" Other items of interest to Singer and Ludwig included questions of media effects, a subject that was not broached in my research because of the difficulty in gathering accurate information about public opinion before and after the blackouts.

In their study, Singer and Ludwig found that the government restrictions on the press did not have the coverage effects they predicted; namely, relative to levels of political violence in South Africa, coverage levels did decline, but that this decline was a gradual process that began before the press restrictions were in place. A December 29, 1985 article in *The New York Times*, which partially inspired the Singer study, described

how the press restrictions affected the journalists and news executives of the time. The article gives insight into why the decline in coverage occurred. For instance, quotes from several journalists reveal that in some cases stories on South Africa did not run because they lacked the compelling visual images that would attract viewers and readers.

However, other journalists and news people stated that the South Africa coverage was due for a decline in prominence (due to the cyclical nature of event coverage) before the ban was implemented, and some even stated that the ban prompted some U.S. media outlets to run the stories simply as a statement against censorship.

Another case study of the media's role in the public deliberation was written about the events that took place in the wake of the Rodney King trial and subsequent rioting in Los Angeles. The study looked at all texts or transcripts of all news stories and commentaries for several television networks, sixteen newspapers and eleven magazines following the announcement of the King verdict. The analysis focused on monitoring how coverage changed after White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater made the public statement that "liberal" Democrats in Congress had prevented Bush and Reagan from changing welfare policies and social programs that might have helped avoid the riots.

The negative reactions to Fitzwater's comments came quickly, with 75 percent of the media outlets espousing a clearly negative opinion. Page summarized his findings, saying, "Putting together the great prominence and frequency with which the *Times* and *Post* discussed Fitzwater's charge, [and] their unmistakably negative reaction to it ... one is left with the distinct impression that editors and columnists at the *Times* and *Post* hammered away at [the '1960s program did it' idea], presumably in order to convince

readers of the Bush administration's cynicism and irresponsibility...." Techniques Page said the media used to accomplish their goal include prominence and big headlines (or the opposite). He also noted that it was either followed in great length and detail or dropped quickly, and stories typically used phrases like "failure of the Great Society" or discussed the "political nature of Fitzwater's charge." In Page's study he also said that the sources and quotations used in stories were typically agreeing with the editorial line.

### **Implications for Houston**

The previous information gave me a greater understanding of the many factors at work during the creation and duration of the media blackouts in Houston. How the press creates the news, and how society uses that news are tightly interwoven into a relationship where each can deeply influence the other. Singer's study, especially, seemed to show a very strong connection with my research, and that study and the Rodney King case study gave me an excellent idea of the types of things I should look for in my analysis.

## METHODS

The media blackouts of the 1960s present a unique opportunity to study mediated public deliberation. The restrictions on coverage on the local level create a break in the timeline, so that a clear “before” and “after” could be determined. I attempted to compare these two portions of the coverage to determine how pre- and post-blackout coverage differ and how local coverage differed from the national coverage. My original research design included analyzing the coverage using a content analysis of the relevant articles, a more quantitative approach. However, sufficient data was unavailable, and thus my research shifted to a more qualitative, exploratory approach.

My research consisted of tracking racial-violence and civil-rights-related coverage during 1960, the year of the first media blackout. By monitoring the coverage over the entire year, I felt I would be able to create a better picture of how the elite press covered the events.

First, I located an Index for the *The New York Times* and looked for subject headings related to my topic. I recorded the frequency and location of the civil rights events that were covered in the *Times* to monitor to what areas the paper allotted coverage. I also recorded information about where in the paper the story appeared to analyze what prominence the paper gave to the stories. Stories that focused on Houston or were related to my topic were printed from the microfilm copies of the paper.

I then used the index of the *Houston Chronicle* to find the stories it ran on the civil rights and protest events. I then evaluated and analyzed each story, looking for

specific examples of the different types of media shaping I discussed earlier in this thesis. I was unable to obtain an index for the *Houston Post*, but I collected articles from this newspaper by manually pulling all articles from its issues from one week before and one week after the blackout that dealt with racial issues. These articles were used as isolated contrast examples; their limited scope made them unusable as units of analysis for long-term trends, but these articles provided a useful counterpoint to the coverage in the *Chronicle*.

For a final comparison, I also researched finding a Southern city similar to Houston so that I could observe any differences in how the cities were covered in the news. This comparison city could then serve as a modified control for Houston. I eventually chose to look at both New Orleans, Louisiana, and Montgomery, Alabama, because both cities were undergoing similar events of the desegregation process (i.e. school desegregation, sit-ins, and civil rights litigation).

In my research, I hypothesized I would find a decline in the amount of national coverage that the civil rights movement in Houston received around the specific time of the first media blackout, August 25, 1960. I assumed that the cease in production of Houston-based stories on the local level would be transferred to the national media, resulting in this decline. Since Houston's population made it one of the largest cities in the South in 1960, I also hypothesized that it would receive a relatively large share of the media attention. I assumed Houston's large African-American population would make it an ideal news target, in that with such a high concentration of African-Americans activities and events would likely be frequent and large-scale. I also hypothesized that



local protest coverage would be replaced by positive national racial integration stories. I thought that since the media were so concerned with image and racial unrest that they would take the lapse in coverage as a chance to fill the gap with more positive messages, to further decrease the chances of a negative backlash resulting from the blackouts.

## RESULTS

All the hypotheses I selected in my methods section were unsupported by the research for this project. I was unable to find any definite coverage trends regarding the events in Houston in the national media. In large part, the trends were too difficult to trace because there were insufficient units of analysis (stories about Houston) to discern any noticeable effects.

**Table 1. National Press Coverage of Civil Rights and Protest-Related Events**

	Non-regional	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	New York	Total
<b>Number of articles</b>	113	23	23	498	8	12	677
<b>Honors &amp; achievement</b>	8	5	4	5	1	2	25
<b>Percent total coverage</b>	16.69%	3.40%	3.40%	73.56%	1.18%	1.77%	100.00%
<b>Percent positive</b>	7.08%	21.74%	17.39%	1.00%	12.50%	16.67%	3.69%

Source: *Washington Post* Index for 1960, subject headings: Negroes, Segregation, Racial Protest

The table above summarizes the observations I made from the *Times*. The first row represents the total number of articles related to my topic for that area for the year. The divisions are the same divisions the *Times* used in the Index, except for the Misc. column, which was renamed from the “General” listing it used. The second row, titled “Honors & achievement” is a subhead the *Times* uses in the Index. I noted this data because it represents the proportion of the total coverage related to largely positive coverage. The last row is the percentage of the area’s coverage that came from the “Honors & achievement” section. The South column, the region that Houston was grouped into, received 73.56 percent of the nationwide coverage; however, only 1 percent of this coverage was positive, compared to the total average 3.69 percent. Non-

regional coverage made up the next biggest percentage of the total coverage, at 16.69 percent. The positive coverage of this category was higher than the total average by almost twice as much. The West region received the smallest proportion of national coverage, but its proportion of positive coverage was still 12.50 percent. However, since there were relatively few articles in this category, the sample size is really too small to conclude much useful information.

However, I did notice several other cities that seemed to receive a relatively significant proportion of national coverage. In the Conclusion section, I will propose possible reasons for this trend.

**Table 2. Regional coverage compared with population statistics for 1960**

	Houston	Montgomery	New Orleans	Texas	Alabama	Louisiana	Total
Number of articles	6	49	6	19	61	31	677
Population	1,243,158	169,210	627,525	9,579,677	12,846,417	3,257,022	178,554,916
Percent total	0.89%	7.24%	0.89%	2.81%	9.01%	4.58%	100.00%

Sources: *Washington Post* Index 1960, 1960 U.S. Census Report

Table 2 shows a comparison of several cities and the national coverage they received regarding their civil rights and protest-related events. The total number of articles is from the same data as Table 1, and that number (677 total articles nationwide) was used to calculate the “Percent total coverage” row. The population data refer to the data of the county in which the city is located, so the actual population of the listed cities would be smaller than the numbers that appear here.

While almost story fell under all of the following categories, the following media theory trends which are related to mediated public deliberation were noted in the units of analysis for my research:

- The role of the media watchdog
- The act of media framing
- The presence of elite press agenda setting
- The process of media gatekeeping
- The continued use of hard, spot news in place of soft, developing news
- The possibility of pack journalism

Each of these facets of the coverage will be more thoroughly discussed in the next section of this paper. In the next section, I will also discuss the trends I noticed in how the local media supplanted its local coverage during the media blackout period.

## DISCUSSION

First, I will discuss how the national media coverage related to the events that occurred in Houston. Unsurprisingly, Southern cities were the location of a large proportion of the nationwide coverage. This trend is not surprising because it follows through with historical and societal beliefs that relegate the majority of civil rights activity to events that took place in Southern cities and states. Interestingly enough, the *Times* ran enough stories on civil rights and protests in New York so that that city was its own region. With a population of 16,782,304, and a high proportion of that coming from New York City, a large urban center with a county population of 1.5 million, 397,000 of which were African-American adults, it seems natural that this city should experience some of the effects of the growing movement toward racial equality this country was experiencing at this time in its history.

Southern cities received 73.56 percent of the nationwide coverage. Only 1 percent of this coverage was positive, compared to the total (national) average 3.69 percent. While this data does not necessarily suggest that the South was definitely more violent or chaotic in its desegregation, it does suggest that during 1960 many civil rights-related events occurred in that region that received national attention for one reason or another. For example, many integration “firsts” were taking place at that time in the South, and short stories on these events commonly made headlines in the elite national media. The low positive coverage could be the result of many different factors; it is plausible to assume that, since so much other “news” was taking place and because of the general attitude of many news outlets that hard news is superior to soft news, the

elite press chose to focus on hard news stories on specific events than on soft news stories on leaders and accomplishments, which tended to be the stories which made up the bulk of the Honors & accomplishments section of the *Times* Index.

The second table provides several cities and Houston for comparative purposes. The data practically beg the question: Why would cities that are both smaller in population and in relative population proportion to their states be more nationally prominent than a larger city? Answering questions like this would require firsthand testimonial from the newsmakers of the time; anything else is merely a supposition. However, there is some correlational data from the articles that suggest that the national attention may have chosen to focus on these smaller cities for several different reasons. First, in Montgomery, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana, the events in that city were representative of the civil rights struggle in the entire state. In both these states, the governors of the states were working hard to uphold segregation in their domain. Governor Wallace of Alabama has since become famous for his actions trying to prevent the desegregation of the University of Alabama, and Governor Jimmie Davis acted similarly to prevent desegregation of schools in his state, though his efforts are perhaps less infamous than those of Wallace. Also, desegregation in these states was slower and more painful than that of Houston or Texas as a whole. By the start of 1960, several Texas cities had already peacefully desegregated, and Texas was really the first state in the South to be able to make that claim. Another possibility for the relatively smaller coverage of Houston may be that the national media thus saw its events as less

“newsworthy,” since the city was simply following in the tradition of other cities in Texas.

Therefore, the blackout played a relatively minor role in how coverage was shaped. Since there was little coverage before the blackout, it is almost impossible to learn if the dearth of information from Houston to the national media had any effect on the elite press. Also, since the events took place in Houston without much media support, it is reasonable to submit this as further support for Lazarsfeld’s limited effects paradigm.

As discussed earlier, the media play the role of media watchdog and gatekeeping when they report corruption, government and officials’ abuse of power, or general misconduct by important officials. Much of the national and local coverage I found in my research fell under this category. The *Chronicle* and the *Times* both had a heavy emphasis on stories that involved a government official (e.g. a governor or school superintendent) who was refusing to follow national, presidential or Supreme Court admonitions to desegregate facilities and schools. In the local coverage, in fact, the stories became continuing news; readers were updated daily on the progress (or lack thereof) that other Southern cities were having in their move toward desegregation. For example, during a two week period in March, 11 stories ran in the *Chronicle* discussing the events taking place in Montgomery. The *Times* was no different, and the situation in Alabama garnered recognition approximately every other day for almost a month.

The media framing in these stories was more noticeable on the local level, possibly because stories that ran in the *Times* were typically less than half as long as

those that ran in the *Chronicle*. While the *Chronicle* might devote four to five column inches of its paper to coverage of the New Orleans school desegregation court battle, the *Times* would instead summarize all the information into one to two column inches. The typical framing the media used for civil rights and protest-related stories, when noticeable, tended to be that of presenting the event, then discussing how the racial frustration of African-Americans in that community had led to the event. If the story was focused on the desegregation process, the media tended to frame these stories in a manner of stating what change was on the verge of taking place, then putting this event in a historical context, so the reader could have perspective on how long it had taken for this change to take place and how the area in the story compared time-wise to other cities. For example, in a Tuesday, August 30, 1960 story in the *Post*, the paper ran a story discussing a “racial outbreak” in Jacksonville, Florida. The story begins by explaining the circumstances of the death, stating the boy had been shot at a downtown service station and that police were investigating. Then, the story goes into discussing that an “uneasy quiet had settled over Jacksonville after a week end of disorders and vandalism that followed 10 days of sit-in demonstrations by Negroes at downtown lunch counters.” The story then goes on to discuss what movements were being made toward desegregating the lunch counters and how business owners felt about desegregating, based on what they had seen happen in other places.

The cities and areas that appeared to receive more attention on a national level also received more attention on a local level. This statement lends credibility to the ability of the elite press to become an agenda setter, but in this instance, it is also



reasonable to assume that the *Chronicle* may have chosen to run stories about what happened in Montgomery and Louisiana because of those areas proximity to their readers. *Chronicle* owners may have decided that their readers would be more likely to identify with their Southern neighbors or know more people affected by the Southern changes than these same readers would if the newspaper had run a story about an event in a city farther away.

These tendencies also generate some support for an assumption of at least small-scale pack journalism. For my purposes, it was interesting to note that Houston, for the most part, was unnoticed by the pack. Despite its large size in its large state, and despite the desegregation events I learned about in my research that were obviously taking place, during 1960 those cities and states that received prominence tended to stay in the limelight. Even aside from continuing coverage of certain events, the portion of the *Times* that was devoted to quick summaries of national desegregation events tended to frequently choose cities from the same areas. For example, in the winter of 1960, cities in North Carolina were mentioned more frequently than cities in any other state, despite the fact that it was hard to discern what, if anything, was unique about the desegregation events that occurred there.

An additional event that is important to note at this time is the 1960 court case *The New York Times v. Salisbury*, which was debating a libel claim by an Alabama police official. It is possible that other media outlets were afraid that similar suits could be brought against them if they became too entangled in the civil rights movement or too outspoken against desegregation opponents. Also, the national media closely monitored

the case, and much of the coverage on the case also tended to mention the status of racial unrest in the state. Many areas might also be likely very willing to avoid this kind of attention, and might monitor their coverage accordingly. The *Salisbury* case would later establish a precedent for the conditions of what constitutes libel for a public official, including the condition of actual malice.

Another interesting trend that I noticed in regard to local coverage involved how the local papers functioned while during the blackout period. The local papers appear to have attempted to make the news blackout as unobvious as possible. In place of local coverage, they used national stories with headlines that were either fairly generic or those that appeared to make the stories seem much closer to home. For example, during the blackout, the *Houston Post* ran a story titled "More Protests Set by Negroes." The story then goes on to describe sit-ins and protests in other Southern cities, conveniently omitting the fact that lunch counter desegregation was simultaneously taking place in Houston. Also, the local coverage tended to place the racial stories, even those not from Houston, either on the front page or closer to the front page more frequently than did the national media, where desegregation and racial protest stories tended to appear around page eight of the first section. Local coverage also tended to present more racial coverage each day, while the national media usually just had one or possibly two stories, with one of those stories typically being a short collection of events from around the country.

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, by chance or by choice, the media blackouts in Houston accomplished what the media owners and community leaders had hoped for: A discreet entry into the desegregation of public accommodations. Despite the fact that Houston was a large, Southern city with an active protest movement, most of the nation was oblivious to the changes that took place there.

While it is difficult to determine how the public was affected by the changes in the way it was presented with its mediated public deliberation without doing extensive survey research and witness accounts, clearly, some changes were made. However, there were definitely limited effects—national media coverage of the events in Houston was sparse both before and after the blackouts; their existence may not have had any effect on national coverage.

Though similar events that occurred in other places received coverage in the national media, Houston, a city of approximately equal size and stature, was ignored. Understanding how mediated public deliberation works enables citizens to better weigh the information presented by the media and thus make valid decisions. This research is thereby valuable as a vivid example of the power the media can wield.

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## VITA

### CARRIE A. JACOBS

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- Education** Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas  
B.S. in Journalism: GPA 3.5
- Honors coursework: LBAR, English, Political Science, Philosophy, Science
- Work Experience** *The Battalion*, Texas A&M: *Assistant copy chief*; January 2001-present
- Copy editor, proofer, page designer; January 2000-present
  - Edit stories from all sections of paper for AP style, grammar, spelling and organization
  - Review printed pages and ensure both content and design elements are ready for publication
  - Select stories from the AP newswire, design pages and write headlines and photo captions
- Girl Scouts—Bluebonnet Council: *Program Delivery Specialist*; March 1999-present
- Interview, supervise and assist three area interns and volunteers in program delivery
  - Plan troop meetings and provide group curriculum for interns and volunteers
  - Assist in program preparation and execution
  - Register members and maintain accurate records
  - Intern: October 1999-March 1999
- Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo: *Press intern*; March 2000
- Cover and write press releases for assigned livestock shows
  - Run camera for Jumbotron presentation of livestock shows
  - Supervise camera operators and monitor video feeds for quality
- Leadership Activities** *Texas A&M University Student Y Association*  
President; 2000-2001 school year
- Plan and organize meeting location, activities, speakers, etc.
  - Correspond with national and local YMCAs
  - Work with officers and directors to oversee and assist all projects and organizational tasks
- Vice President of University & Community Service; 1998-2000 school years.
- Supervise and coordinate with all project directors to plan ongoing service projects
  - Serve as a contact person for community agencies and campus service organizations
- Director of Bonfire Benefit Derby (campus-wide food drive); 1997-1998 school year  
Youth Fun Day Staff; 1997-2001 school years
- Assist in planning and running one-day youth field day
- The Aggie Voice*, campus leadership magazine; 1998-1999 school year
- Layout pages and assist with content editing
- Liberal Arts Student Council*; January 1998-present
- MSC Literary Arts Committee*; January 1998-May 2000
- Technical Skills** Quark Xpress, Adobe Pagemaker, Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and FreeHand  
PC and Mac experience
- Honors & Recognitions** Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities 2000-2001  
University Undergraduate Research Fellow; 2000-2001  
Student Research Week Poster Competition: First place, Undergraduate Humanities category  
Tau Kappa Junior Honors Society; 1999-2000  
Golden Key National Honors Society; 2000-2001  
1997-98 Student Y Director of the Year