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Nigerian Mass Media and Cultural Status Inequalities: A Study among Minority Ethnic Groups

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Abstract. What the mass media do to the cultures of peoples has been an object to which much scholarly and policy attention has been devoted. In Africa, the media have been called upon to be active agents in nation building, cultural integration and development. However, as they attempt to perform these functions, the media elevate the cultural practices of some groups above those of others thereby creating cultural status inequalities. In this study, we attempted to explore the extent to which this was true in the Nigerian situation. Working among six minority ethnic groups and on data sourced through four different methods, we discovered that there is wide cultural status inequalities fostered by the mass media. The media devote minute attention to the minority groups. Only 23% of print and 6.3% of broadcast content analysed were devoted to the over 350 minority groups in Nigeria. Of this negligible coverage, 69% was negative coverage. About 81% of our respondents had never seen their language written in a newspaper; over 65% had not heard their language spoken on television. Almost all of their festivals and cultural activities are not covered by television or newspaper or newsmagazines whereas those of the majority groups are. Unlike the majority groups, in most cases, the minorities are invisible in the content of the media except when they do something negative. Our respondents felt marginalized over this. They affirmed a link between their invisibility and other forms of inequalities. The study recommends policy directions that can help redress the wide cultural status inequalities.

Keywords. Cultures, Inequalities, Mass media, Minority Ethnic groups

Introduction

What the mass media do to the cultures of peoples has been an issue over which there have been years of scholarly and policy debates. In African, as well indeed as in most other developing countries, the mass media have been called upon to perform the role of cultural preservation, promotion, and transmission, and to help in evolving national cultures from ethnic and primordial ones. However, national but more especially trans-national mass media have been accused of foisting foreign cultural practices on indigenous peoples thereby giving rise to what has been described as cultural imperialism (Galtung, 1984; Ansah, 1988; Meyer, 1988; Kankwenda, 2003). In fact, the celebrated prophecy by Marshall McLuhan that communication technologies would shrink the world to a global village (McLuhan, 1964) appears to have been fulfilled in the emergence of a 'village' where the cultures of several constituent groups are constantly capitulating to those of dominant groups. The celerity of this development is accentuated by modern communication technologies that render space and time almost non-existent.

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In response to this, developing nations sustained a decade-long call for a more equitable distribution of cultural and media products and appealed to international agencies for deliberate action to halt the erosion of national and cultural sovereignty. Among notable reactions was the setting up by the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1980, a commission to study "the question of how to maintain national and cultural sovereignty in the face of rapid globalisation of mass media" (Baran, 1999:468). In its report, the commission, known as the MacBride Commission, recommended practical and ideological walls to prevent the rapid incursion and displacement of cultures of the developing nations. Among specific recommendations were absolute sovereignty of nations over sources of news in their regions, and deliberate national efforts aimed at protecting national cultures against buffeting foreign influence.

However, the issues of cultural imperialism and the quest to redress perceived injustice to national cultures have not been supported by everyone. Some have questioned the whole idea of national cultures which they describe as the cannibalisation of the authentic cultures of the different and pre-colonial ethnic nationalities. They have accused nations of conferring national status on the cultural practices and symbols of dominant ethnic groups, christening such as national cultures in order to legitimise their imposition on minority ethnic groups, and indeed imposing them on such groups (Hagher, 1990; Chadha and Kavoori, 2000; Opubor, 2000; Ojebode and Akinleye, 2009). And so it appears that many developing nations are guilty of the same allegations as those levelled against developed ones.

This intra-national suppression of minority ethnic cultures, which has been part and product of nation building in most African countries, manifests in a number of ways. Among these is the selection of certain languages, especially the languages of dominant groups as national and official languages. In Nigeria, only the languages of the three mega ethnic groups—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have this status. The use of the symbols and artefacts associated with the major ethnic groups is another manifestation of this imbalance. An example in Nigeria is the fifty naira note that does not have the figure of any individual statesman but has three photographs each clearly standing for one of the three major ethnic groups. A third is the elevation of the festivals and celebrations of dominant groups into national celebrations and festivals. In Nigeria, for example, the Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State, new yam festivals of some states in the Igbo-speaking South-East and the Ojude Oba Festival in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, though have not been officially declared national celebrations, do enjoy significant federal and state government presence and sponsorship not enjoyed by any of the celebrations of the other groups, say for instance the biennial Tiv Council.

The mass media have been accused of being the very catalysts of international cultural imperialism. But even at the domestic level, there is reason to suspect that the cultural imbalance between dominant and minority groups could have been less wide had the media paid more attention to the cultures and activities of these latter groups. The mass media speak the languages of the dominant groups. For instance, until recently, the national television network news in Nigeria ended with "*From us here, it is good night; Sai gobe; Ka chi fo; O daaro*"—expressions that mean roughly the same thing rendered in English and in the languages of the three dominant groups. For over two decades, Radio Nigeria used a station identification jingle produced from an amalgam of musical instruments from the three mega ethnic groups in the country—*dundun* (hide drum) from the Yoruba, Hausa native trumpets and *ekwe* (wooden drum) from the Igbo. All these elevate some cultural practices over others.

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In Nigeria, it seems that media attention collocates with political and economic power. As Mustapha (2007:3) observes, the three dominant ethnic groups – the Hausa-Fulani in the North; the Igbo in the South East and the Yoruba in the South West – have since independence, formed the main poles in the competition for political and economic resources while "ethnic minorities are forced to form a bewildering array of alliances around each of the dominant ethnicities". This forced alliance does not, from all indications, seem to satisfy the political, economic and cultural needs of the minorities.

The elevation of the cultural practices and symbols of some groups above those of others is what has been recently described as cultural status inequalities (Langer, 2006). This is the fourth dimension of horizontal inequalities following economic, social and political horizontal inequalities (Stewart, 2002). Langer (2006), the first to use the term 'cultural status inequalities', observed that this form of inequalities manifests in four streams: observance of religious practices; designation of some languages as official languages; state recognition of symbolic events and practices of some groups, and unequal treatment relating to dress, appearance and behaviour. These, Langer and Brown (2007) quite neatly merged into three broad streams: recognition of religious practices and observances; language and language recognition, and recognition of ethno-cultural practices.

In this study, we attempt to explore how the media contribute to this fourth dimension of horizontal inequalities. We focus on the quantity and nature of coverage given by the media to minority groups and how members of these groups view the coverage. We look at the use of the languages of minority groups in print and broadcast organisations located in the states where these groups are. We observed the extent to which the ethno-cultural and other activities of these groups are reported in national dailies and magazines. In short, we wanted to see minority visibility and what the minorities think about it. We do not include the recognition of religious practices and observances as part of our points of focus because in Nigeria, religions are not completely coterminous with ethnic grouping.

Mass Media and Horizontal Inequalities

Until recently, groups have not been the focus of studies and policies aiming at promoting development and reducing poverty and inequalities as much as nations and individuals have been. In fact, groups, especially ethnic groups have been seen as antithetical to the development process. Nation building, especially in colonial and post-colonial Africa resulted in massive blurring of cultural and linguistic boundaries and the identities of separate groups. As Opubor (2000) puts it, it was reasoned that in the interest of national unity, all ethnic differences must be buried, and commonalities must be emphasised; particularities and specificities must be ignored or minimised, just as dissent and even the expression of minority opinions should be discouraged.

In the same vein, measurement of development moved from the strict use of purely economic indices to describe nations to a comprehensive consideration of the welfare of the individuals that inhabit those nations. In this trajectory, it did skip a critical step; it overlooked the group or the community. This slip is a fatal one because, as scholars have asserted, the group or community is potent in determining social stability and even the welfare of individuals. It is within the group that many individuals make sense of the daily events that they encounter (Airhihenbuwa and Obregon, 2000; Stewart, 2002). This is especially so in Africa where the supremacy of the collective over the individual is evident in nearly all aspects of life. Personal

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names, greetings and significant rites of passage attest the little significance of individuals compared to that of the collective[1].

It is in this context that studying horizontal inequalities (HIs), that is inequalities among different culturally formed groups, rather than among individuals, holds much promise in understanding group agitations and conflict, and in promoting social stability and development (Stewart, 2002). It is a step back to fill a gap in scholarship.

Three categories of HIs were identified: political participation, economic assets and income, and social situation or aspects. According to Stewart, the first category includes a group's representation at parliament, in the army, police and civil service. The second involves a group's access to available economic resources while the third has to do with access to social services and amenities. This classification, though comprehensive does not appear to be exhaustive. We contend, in line with Langer's (2006) opinion, that HIs manifest in a fourth category: the cultural category. This, we contend in this paper, covers the extent to which a group's cultural symbols and artefacts, festivals and celebrations are featured by a nation's culture industry, in its mass and other interpersonal media. We contend that there is a vital link between the presence or absence of a group's cultural symbols and artefacts in the national cultural products and what members of the group think about their position in the comity of groups making up that nation.

Though the media may have possible input in engendering political, economic and social inequalities, it is in the area of cultural status inequalities that the media deserve much scholarly attention. The media have the capacity to elevate the culture of some over that of others and this they do through the status conferral process. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1996) identify three functions of the mass media as social machinery: status conferral, enforcement of social norms and the narcotizing dysfunction. These functions have achieved a theoretical status in that they have been used to explain, predict and prescribe various aspects of mass media operation and use. The status conferral theory holds that 'if you are in the media, then you matter'.

Recognition by the press or radio or magazines or newsreel testifies that one has arrived, that one is important enough to single out from the large anonymous masses, that one's behavior and opinion are significant enough to require public notice

(Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1996:15)

In other words, the media enhance the social status of people, and bestow prestige on them (Infante, Racer and Womack, 1990; Severin and Tankard Jr., 2001). Status conferral may be positive or negative, and when media analysts say 'someone matters', they do not necessarily use the term in a strictly positive sense all the time: it may mean one is germane to the issue at stake.

Status conferral is not limited to individuals: the media confer status on groups as well. In most societies, the dominant group—those with political and economic power and who may also be in the control of the media—enjoy greater and better media patronage than others. Status conferral reinforces the stereotypes held about certain groups by the dominant society. An example is the media coverage of women in agriculture. Though statistics show that 80% of the workforce in agriculture and agribusiness was female, 80% of media focus in agriculture reporting in Nigeria was on men (Ojebode, 2006).

[1] Names like Ibidunni (Yoruba, meaning It's wonderful to have relatives), Ityongi (Tiv, meaning, My people agree) as well as greetings (The answer to 'How are you?' is not 'I am fine' in Yoruba and Edo languages. It is 'We are fine' or 'We thank God') show the collective ranks above the individual even in quite personal matters. (See Airhihenbuwa and Obregon, 2000)

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Wherever there is status conferral, there automatically has been media focus and with media focus on some comes media neglect of others. This is chief among the reasons that there cannot be absolute objectivity in media coverage and framing of societal issues.

Status conferral and exclusion is an ethical issue. Inclusiveness is a mark of a socially responsible medium. The social responsibility theory of the media, a prescriptive theory, expects the media to, among other functions, provide a representative picture of the constituent groups of the society and a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning (Emery, Ault and Agee, 1945; Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956; Baran, 2002).

Ignoring constituent groups leads to horizontal inequalities (HIs), that is, inequalities between culturally formed groups, and affects the wellbeing of individual members of the group. According to Stewart (2002), though groups are socially constructed, malleable, and often with fluid membership, their relative performance in social, economic and political dimension is an important source of individual welfare. Stewart, Brown and Mancini (2005:5) explain the connection to be 'partly because membership of the group is part of a person's own identity, and partly because relative impoverishment of the group increases the perceptions of members that they are likely to be trapped permanently in a poor position, or, if they have managed to do better than many in the group, that they are likely to fall back into poverty'.

It may not be an exaggeration to contend that cultural HIs are at least as important as other dimensions of HIs. If it is possible for a group that is not experiencing economic, political and social inequalities to experience cultural inequalities—and this is not inconceivable—such a group may have an acute sense of being marginalised. The regular complaints by Northern Nigerians about unfriendly press coverage despite the North's edge over others in politics serves to buttress the importance of cultural HIs. It is on this basis that we affirm that cultural HIs should indeed be reckoned with.

HIs have attracted diverse responses from victim groups. Stewart (2002) observes that the outcome of HIs depends on both reality and perceptions. It matters whether the concerned group perceives themselves as victims of HIs or not. One of the possible responses to HIs is blasé response which is likely when there are HIs but the affected group either does not see it or does not mind it. If there are His and the affected group does care, a possible response may be cries of marginalisation and political agitations for equality or redress. These often come before the third response to HIs which is violence and armed struggle. From a detailed analysis of nine cases taken from different nations, Stewart (2002) shows that HIs have provoked 'a spectrum of violent reaction, including severe and long-lasting violent conflict (Uganda, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Northern Ireland), less severe rebellion (Chiapas), coups (Fiji), periodic riots and criminality (the US), occasional racial riots (Malaysia) and a high level of criminality (Brazil)'. Galtung (1984) suggests that most acts of violence in the developing nations could have been caused by the neglect some groups in these nations experience from global and national media.

However, group cries of marginalisation do not usually mean marginalisation exists. An example of this is reported by Mustapha (2004). In January 2000, 40 of the 58 senators representing the Northern states of Nigeria accused the President of favouritism towards the Yoruba people in his appointments. The Senate set up a committee that investigated this and found that the North, in actual fact, had more of those appointments than the South; and that each of the Northwest and the Northeast had more presidential appointees than the president's Yoruba home zone, the Southwest. Not only this, investigations by the Federal Character Commission (FCC) into allegations of perceived ethnic marginalisation by some Nigerians revealed that some cries of marginalisation had no substance (Mustapha, 2007). Such

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accusations of marginalisation come "from a *perception* of being disadvantaged rather than the reality of it" (Mustapha, 2004:265)

Problem and Purpose of the Study

The mass media have become a central machine in the culture industry selecting, preserving, transmitting, transforming and promoting the cultural practices of the constituent groups in the society. However, many studies carried out in multiethnic societies indicate that the media often do not see everyone. These studies tend to suggest that particular constituents—more often the dominant and/or the influential—get media attention more than others, and that the little attention others get is often negative coverage (Steeves, 1993; Tseayo, 1996; Kanyoro, 2002; Ojebode and Akinleye, 2009). While the media focus and confer status on some groups, and elevate their cultural symbols and activities to a vantage level, they ignore other groups and their cultures. This creates what we have described as cultural horizontal inequalities.

Nigeria is a complex, multicultural and multiethnic nation. Grimes (2000), using genetic relationship as a guide identified over 500 languages in Nigeria. Using the mutual intelligibility criterion, Egbokhare, Oyetade, Urua and Amfani (2001) mapped these into 112 language clusters. Gordon and his team (2005) went higher than others identifying 521 languages out of which they described 510 as living. Just as there are numerous languages, there are numerous ethnic groups as well. Otite (2000) identified 389 ethnic groups out of which three are officially classified as major. These three mega groups constitute 57.8% of the population (Mustapha, 2007). It is logical to expect that the media would have difficulty in adequately covering all these groups, and thus to dismiss the initial inquiry of this study. However, the current media landscape in Nigeria compels one to expect much from the media. Every state has a radio station; most states have their television stations, and most have government newspapers. There are about 60 dailies and over 288 broadcast stations in Nigeria. One realistically expects that these local radio and television stations by reason of proximity would give adequate coverage to the activities of the minority groups especially in states made up of wholly minority groups, and thus elevate their cultural status. Whether this is so or not is a gap this study attempts to fill.

To address this possibility, the following broad guiding questions were adopted: how much focus do the media give the minority groups? How much of their festivals, cultural symbols, national days and languages is reflected in the media? What is the direction of this focus? Since outcomes of HIs depend on how the concerned groups perceive the situation, we also asked: how do the members of the minority groups feel about these? Do the direction and extent of coverage given these groups contribute to their feeling of marginalisation? Since our focus is on the mass media, we do not include the recognition of cultural elements of the minority groups by state and state actors. But we focused on media owned by the concerned states.

As argued earlier, among the many responses to HIs is cry of marginalisation. In Nigeria, minority ethnic groups have sustained this cry for about five decades (Olusanya, 1980). In spite of the government's policies of adjustment, zoning and concessions and balancing strategies (Otite, 2000; Suberu, 2003), the cry has not abated. The obvious question then is: is this cry the result of lack of media coverage of these groups and their cultural activities? Of course, media coverage and the resulting status conferral do not solve all problems, no matter how extensive and positive. They are powerless where poverty and other inequalities persist and pervade, but they could be a factor in understanding the collective feeling of marginalisation expressed by the minority groups. This probable link, to the best of our knowledge, remains unexplored in the Nigerian context.

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Specifically, the study examined the extent and direction of coverage given to the culture and other activities of the minority ethnic groups by the mass media; and attempted to find out if coverage by the media contributes to the growing feelings of marginalisation among minority ethnic groups.

Methodology

Four methods of investigation were adopted in conducting this research: survey through the use of a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and content analysis. The questionnaire was designed for members of the selected ethnic groups who were literate in English or their native language while the focus group discussions were for those who were not literate. The interviews were conducted with traditional rulers and community leaders while contents of a national newspaper, national magazine, local newspapers available in each locality, and state radio broadcasts were analysed. Communication researches often tend to focus on one of the key elements in the communication process. The outcome has often been a partial description of the process and an incomplete reflection of the dynamics of communication. Fruitful as such outcomes might be they are nonetheless partial. The current study focuses on three components of selected communication processes – the source, the audience and the content.

The Study Population, Areas and Setting

The study was conducted in three of the thirty-six states of Nigeria—Bauchi State located in the North-East geo-political zone; Cross River State located in the South-East and Kaduna State, located in the North-West. These are among the ethnically most diverse states in Nigeria. From the compilation done by Otite (2000), there is an average of about 10 ethnic groups per state in Nigeria. These three states have far above average: Bauchi has 51; Cross River has 30, and Kaduna has 32 groups. This explains the choice of these states for the study.

From each state, we chose two ethnic groups. From Bauchi State[2], we chose Gere and Wandi ethnic groups. The Geres are found in three local government areas: Bauchi, Ganjuwa and Darazo. Mostly farmers and cattlemen, the population of the Geres is 355,000 according to the 1991 census. The Gere people may thus be about 7.6% of the total population of Bauchi state. The selected community, Durum, a clan in the Gere ethnic group, is about 11,000. Languages spoken in the community are Geranci, Hausa, Fulfulde and English. Durum is made up of Moslems and Christians. The community receives signals from Bauchi Radio, National Television Authority (NTA) in Bauchi and the State Television. They also have access to English-language newspapers found in the capital, among which is the *Trumpeter*. Geranci is not spoken on the television or written in newspapers but it is the medium for a weekly radio magazine.

The Wandi ethnic group is found in Dass Local Government Area of Bauchi State whose headquarters is separated from the State Capital by 43 kilometres. The population of the Wandi community is put at 153,000. Mostly farmers, cattlemen and traders, the people speak Wadanci, Hausa and English. The community is made up of Moslems and Christians. They receive signals from Radio Bauchi, the state radio; the National Television Authority (NTA) and the state television. Wadanci is not spoken on radio or television, or written in newspapers. The Wandi people are likely to constitute about 3.3% of Bauchi state.

[2] We are grateful to Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed, Muhammad Umar Shira and Sulayman Nazeeb Ibraheem in Bauchi for research assistance.

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From Cross River[3] State, the selected ethnic groups were Bassang and Bekwarra. The Bassang people occupy fourteen villages in the Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River State. Sankwala, the headquarters of the Local Government Area, is separated from the state capital by about 380 kilometres. Predominantly farmers, the people speak Bassang and Pidgin English. The population of this mostly Christian group is approximately 100,000; about 3.5% of the population of Cross River. They receive radio signals from a repeater station of the state radio, Radio Ikom located about 115 kilometres away. Their language is not used in government and official circles in the State. Neither is it spoken on radio or television or written in any newspaper. They have minimal interaction with the state capital as a result of the long distance and poor road.

The Bekwarra people occupy seven village units founded by people who descended from a common ancestor, Odama. The Bekwarras are in the Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State with its headquarters in Abuochiche. Predominantly farmers and traders, the people speak Bekwarra and Pidgin. Mostly Christians, the population is about 150,000; this suggests that they constitute about 5.2% of Cross River people. They receive radio signals from the Cross River Broadcasting Corporation, located about 350 kilometres away in Calabar, the State Capital. Except in the Council of Traditional Chiefs of the Local Government Area, Bekwarra is hardly spoken in official circles. It is not used on television or by newspapers. Owing to poor road network and long distance, the interaction between the Bekwarras and the state capital is quite minimal.

From Kaduna State[4], we selected the Gbagyi and the Kadara ethnic groups. The Gbagyis are found in three local government areas including Chikun and Kachia. Found in three states, they are among the largest minority groups in Nigeria. We chose the Kujama town of the Gbagyis. In Kujama, languages spoken include Gbagyi and Hausa. Mostly farmers and traders, the Gbagyis are a conservative people, always retreating from large cities. There are about 700,000[5] Gbagyis about 30% of whom are in Kaduna State. The Gbagyis in Kaduna State thus make up about 3.5% of that state's population. They are predominantly Moslems but there are also Christians and traditional worshippers. Radio and television signals reach the Gbagyis from the state capital, Kaduna located about 100 kilometres away.

The Kadara are found in both Kaduna and Niger States. We selected Kasuwa Magani town, Kaduna State. Mostly farmers and traders, the Kadara speak Adara and Hausa. English and Pidgin are also spoken. They are mostly Moslems but there are many Christians and a few traditional religion adherents. In Kasuwa Magani, radio and television signals from the state capital are easily received. English and Hausa newspapers are also available. It is believed that the Kadara people are about 95,000[6] and about 90% of them are in Kaduna state. They thus form about 1.4% of the population of the state.

Sampling Techniques and the Samples

As stated earlier, six ethnic groups chosen from three states were involved in the study: Gere and Wandi from Bauchi State; Kadara and Gbagyi from Kaduna State, and Bekwarra and Bassang from Cross River-State. From each of the six groups, we chose a community and from

[3] We acknowledge, with thanks, research assistance from Mr Adebayo Ajuwon and his team in Sankwala and Abuochiche, Cross River State.
[4]We are grateful to Mr Sola Adeyanju and his team in Kujama and Kasuwa Magani, Kaduna State for research assistance.
[5] See Gordon, Raymond (ed) 2005. *Ethnologue: the languages of the world*. 15th edition; Dallas: SIL. Our focus was on the main Gbagyi ethnic group. This is different from Gbari and Gbari Gayeji.
[6] See www.joshuaproject.net/countries

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each community, we selected 100 people to respond to the questionnaire. That gave a total of 600 respondents. We ensured that the selection of respondents to the questionnaire reflected the various segments of the community, and that respondents were literate.

In each community, we conducted three Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The number of participants at each discussion varied from eight to ten. In all, there were eighteen FGDs which involved about 160 people. We interviewed 18 community leaders, three from each community. We also interviewed three staff of media corporations: one each from radio, television and newspaper. Altogether, about 780 people took part in the study as respondents.

Our selection of the three states was guided by the principles of and rationale for purposive sampling (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000:84). The three states chosen represented three of the four geo-political zones in Nigeria that were ethnically most diverse: Bauchi from the North East, Kaduna from North West and Cross River from South South. But our choice of the two ethnic groups from each state was by random balloting: we used Otite's (2000) list as a sampling frame on which the balloting was performed. Within each ethnic group, we zeroed down on two communities.

The choice of respondents to the questionnaire was by systematic random sampling (See Wimmer and Dominick, 2000:87). A respondent was chosen from every third building in each community, insofar as the respondent was willing and literate, was resident in and native of the chosen community. The technique adopted in selecting interviewees was the purposive technique. Each of the eighteen chosen respondents was a community leader: a traditional chief or leader of a community-based association or group. Where the traditional ruler nominated someone to speak for him, such was equally accepted. This happened for instance, in a Gere village in Bauchi where the village Head chose Alhaji Yunusa Adamu, a member of his Advisory Council to speak for him.

In all of these, we paid particular attention to the extant social structure in the selected communities. In Cross River, as it is in the whole of the Niger Delta region, community-based associations and professional groups are well organised and are a strong segment of the society. In recognition of this structure, we involved the Bassang Youth Leader in an interview and Bekwarra Sons and Daughters Association in an FGD. In the North, specifically in Bauchi state, having observed that men and women hardly engaged in joint activities, and that public interaction between them was minimal, we decided separate men and women focus groups should be formed. In Kaduna State, we had to go through District Heads before we could apply the questionnaire though, surprisingly, getting people to participate in the FGDs was not difficult.

For the content analysis, we selected two national dailies—*The Guardian* based in the South but circulated nationwide, *New Nigerian*, based in the North and also circulated nationwide. This combination was deemed necessary in view of traceable disparities in the positions adopted by southern and northern presses in various political issues (See Adebanwi, 2004). We also chose a weekly newsmagazine, *Tell*, for content analysis. From each daily, we chose every other edition from six randomly selected months in 2005. This gave us 92 editions each. For *Tell*, we chose every other week in 2005 which amounted to 26 editions[7].

Selected radio broadcasts from the stations received in each of the communities were analysed. From Durum and Wandi communities, it was news from the combined service of the Bauchi Radio Corporation; from Bekwarra and Bassang communities, we recorded state news on the government-owned Cross River Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC) while for the

[7] We acknowledge research assistance from our coders: Niyi Asiyanbi, Mbangohol Ikeseh, Lanre Fehintola, Najeem Aigoro, Gbenga Adeyemo and Edward Okpeke.

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Kasuwan Magani and Kujama, it was from Radio Kaduna. From each state, five radio newscasts were recorded and analysed.

The Instruments

Four instruments were used in the study: a questionnaire, a focus group discussion guide, an interview guide, and a set of content categories. The structure and content of each were determined by the guiding research purpose and broad questions, as well indeed as by the languages spoken in the selected communities. The questionnaire had 18 items, the FGD guide had 14, and the interview guide had 17 questions. All these three instruments were written in English and Hausa. The interview guide for staff had six steering questions and was only in English for the obvious reason that the respondents could, and in fact preferred to, speak English.

For content analysis, the unit of analysis for both classes of content was the story. Same set of categories was created for both radio news and newspaper stories. The following guided our coding for frequency.

All stories: this category excluded advertisements, but included editorials, opinions and rejoinders, and letters to the editors.

Ethnic stories: These are stories about all ethnic groups and ethnic associations. This category excluded stories dealing with political parties and governments, even local governments. Where there was an interaction between the government and an ethnic group, such as when a group visited government house or a peace meeting was held to placate an aggrieved group, the story was coded as an ethnic story.

Minority ethnic stories: A subset of ethnic stories, these were stories about minority ethnic groups. For this segment of the study, we excluded from this category, only the three dominant ethnic groups—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Frequency of coverage often shows quantity and not quality. Therefore, we decided to also study the direction of coverage given the minority groups. The following categories were used:

Positive: stories that show valour, patriotism, peace, engagement in development efforts among others were considered as positive stories.

Negative: stories that record destruction, violence and clashes, corruption, ritual killing among others were coded as negative.

Where there was a mix of both positive and negative elements, such as when a story reporting community violence also alongside showed the kindness expressed by its members as they catered for the afflicted, a score each was recorded for both positive and negative.

Neutral: stories that were neither positive nor negative—such as those reporting the meeting of an ethnic organisation—were considered neutral.

Members of the selected ethnic groups were sought out in a metropolitan city and were asked to assess the accessibility of the questionnaire, the interview and the FGD guides. For the content categories, two independent coders who were not aware of the research objectives were asked to use the proposed content categories to code a randomly picked portion of newspapers and recorded broadcasts. Their coding decisions were compared using Holsti's inter-coder reliability formula (Wimmer and Dominick, (2000:151)[8]. Going by this formula, the higher the

[8] As explained by Wimmer and Dominic (2000:151-152), Ole Holsti's formula for calculating inter-coder reliability is 2M÷N1+N2 where M is the number of coding decisions on which 2 coders agree, and N1 and N2 are the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coders respectively. For instance, if 2 coders code a sample of 50 units and agree on 35 of them, the calculation will be 2(35) ÷50+50. That gives a reliability index of .70. The index is interpreted much like correlation coefficients: the highest possible is 1; the lowest -1.

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reliability index, the more reliable the set of content categories being tested is. A reliability index of 0.8 was recorded from this test. This was considered quite high.

Data Collection and Analysis

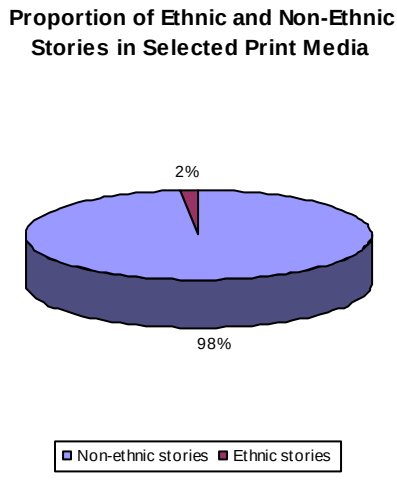
The questionnaire was self-administered, and was analysed with percentages. The FGDs and the interviews were conducted by research assistants who lived in and spoke the language of the communities. The interviews and discussions were tape-recorded and notes were copiously taken. Data from these were analysed by constantly comparing emergent themes and points across interviews, across communities and ethnic groups. Simple percentages were used in analysing data from media contents and the questionnaire.

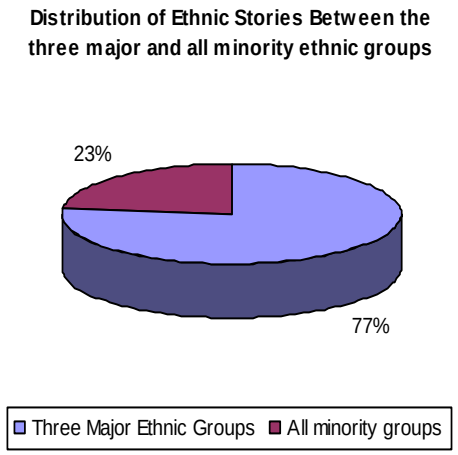
Findings

In this section, we first discuss the coverage of minority ethnic groups by the mass media, and then examine the perception of this coverage by the members of these groups. For purposes of neatness, we combine data from the four different sources. The presentation is driven by themes emerging from the different bodies of data.

Minority Ethnic Groups Have a Low Cultural Status in the Media

Our analysis of the contents of the selected newspapers and newsmagazine showed that ethnic stories were generally few. From *the Guardian*, we coded 9,354 stories out of which only 153 (1.5%) were ethnic stories. We counted 9,568 stories from *New Nigerian* out of which 184 (1.9%) were ethnic. Of *Tell*'s 1,164 stories, 19 (1.6%) were ethnic stories. Added up, only 1.8% of print media stories were ethnic stories. We decided to see what proportion of these ethnic stories was devoted to minority ethnic groups by separating stories about the three major ethnic groups from those concerning all the other ethnic groups. The charts below show both the proportion of ethnic stories compared with non-ethnic ones and the distribution of ethnic stories between the three major ethnic groups and the numerous minority groups.





Of *the Guardian*'s 153 ethnic stories, only 30 (19.6%) dealt with the activities of groups outside the three mega ethnic groups. In other words, all the other 386 ethnic groups accounted for less than 20% of the stories dealing with ethnic groups in the paper. The picture from the *New Nigerian* was not much different: only 46 (25%) of its ethnic stories concerned the

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activities of minority ethnic groups. Only six (31.6%) of the ethnic stories in *Tell* concerned minority ethnic groups. If we take Otite's (2000) census of ethnic groups as a guide, we see that 386 minority groups share 23% of all the ethnic stories while the three major ones share 77%.

It is understandable that these are national newspapers and magazine and so deal with a variety of issues and groups. But giving only 23% of ethnic-focused attention to those who constitute 42.2% of the national population (Mustapha, 2007) makes it difficult for one to avoid the obvious conclusion that the media under-represents the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Our analysis of news from each of the radio stations of the selected states showed differing levels of attention given to the minority groups. From Bauchi Radio, we counted 46 news items from the five broadcasts recorded. Of these, none dealt with the activities of any ethnic minority. Every item concerned the government, government agencies and occasionally an NGO or a farmers' group. In fact, the world news which had 8 news items had 7 of those on state government and its activities. From Cross River Broadcasting Service, the story is a bit different. We counted 47 news items out of which 6 (13%) dealt directly with the activities of the ethnic groups. We, however, noted that all the 6 items dealt with the Ikom Community which housed the radio station. There were no news items on the Bassang, Bekwarra or other groups. Only 3 of the 49 items recorded from Radio Kaduna dealt with the activities of the minority ethnic groups. Taken together, only 9 (6.3%) of the 142 broadcast news items dealt with the minority groups.

Media Coverage of Festivals, Language and Cultural Symbols of Ethnic Minority Groups

Through interviews, focus group discussions and the use of questionnaire, we attempted to find out if members of the ethnic minority groups were aware of the kind of coverage the media gave them. We asked respondents to state if they had any cultural activities such as festivals or other rites of passage that were peculiar to their ethnic group. All the six ethnic groups had such festivals. Many of these attract wide community participation and celebration. An interviewee from a predominantly Christian community said of the community's New Yam Festival which held every September, "We recognise it [the New Yam Festival] in this society more than Christmas".

However, when asked if any such festivals had been covered by the media, the answer for the most part was negative. Table 1 summarises the pattern we discerned from the interviews and FGDs.

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Table 1. Festivals celebrated by ethnic groups and media coverage of festivals

Ethnic Group	Festival	Media coverage
Gere	Woyyah (End-of-the season celebration)	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
	Adibayyah (Marriage rites)	Never been covered
	Sud Gwamunka (Harvest thanksgiving)	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
	Dodon Gere (Gere's Masquerade) (Nagala and Jara masquerades)	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
Wandi	Foliyamba (Post-harvest festival)	Never been covered
	Liyang (End of farming season masquerade)	Never been covered
Bekwarra	New Yam Festival	Radio only, annually and on invitation
	Coronation of Chief	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
Bassang	New Yam Festival	Radio only, annually and on invitation
	Burial of community leaders	Never been covered
Gbagyi	Amadewa (Community celebration)	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
	Angbamaya (Harvest celebrations)	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
	Ganga (Festival for the dead)	Never been covered
	Various dances	Never been covered
	Kabulu (Community-based funeral rites)	Never been covered
Kadara	Coronation	Radio only, occasionally and on invitation
	Various dances	Never been covered

Source: Field work (2006)

About half of the festivals had received media, specifically, radio coverage. On each occasion that radio covered the events, it was on invitation by the concerned community, and that had to be funded. In Bekwarra, the local government chairman once funded the coverage of the New Yam Festival. The media did not consider the events newsworthy enough to give them coverage.

Apart from the Gbagyi in Kaduna state, all the other five ethnic groups complained of inadequate media coverage of their activities and festivals. Most recurring expressions used by discussants and interviewees in describing the attention the media pay to their groups include "very rare" "very inadequate", "little", "not at all" and "not enough". An FGD group in Wandi

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said, "we only hear some other people's language in media [radio] but we don't hear ours. Likewise in the areas of coverage of activities… We do not hear our own things on the media".

Our respondents also stated that government did not send representative to their festivals. This was again blamed on the media. In an FGD in Bekwarra, and another in Bassang, discussants threw back the question in strikingly similar expressions: how will they come for our festivals when they do not know that we exist.

Our discussants and interviewees have all heard their languages spoken on radio but none had read their language in the papers or heard it used on the television. A councillor in Abuochiche Local Government in Cross River said, "I have never heard my language on television or read it in papers. Look at how the major languages are being covered and given upper hand…we are heard only on radio and that is once a week, and it is only heard within the state".

An instructive dimension to the issue of language use was raised by an FGD discussant. Even when radio spoke the minority ethnic language which it does occasionally, it is in a foreign dialect rendered most probably by a non-native speaker. The Group observed:

The Bekwarra forum we have on radio, most speakers …appear to be people who have been borrowed or hired from another tribe…It is not our Bekwarra they speak. Why don't they employ our children (indigenes) here in the village so that they will speak completely?"

The leader of the National Union of Teachers in Bekwarra Local Government was more indicting of the media. According to him, the media "don't even know about our existence. They do not present us or our culture anywhere".

In the study communities in Cross River, respondents commented that it was only when a negative event occurred that they got unsolicited media (radio) attention. In Bassang for instance, a group said, "when rainstorm happened last week, and many houses and property were destroyed, the matter was reported [on radio]".

Democratic and developmental news reporting requires making people part and source and not just recipients of media programmes. We asked community leaders if they had ever been interviewed or involved in any media programmes. Of the 18 community leaders interviewed, none had been interviewed by television, newspapers or magazines. All the three selected Gbagyi leaders and a Kadara leader had been interviewed by radio a few times. A Bekwarra community leader, a councillor, had also been interviewed by radio. All the other 13 community leaders selected had never been part of any radio programme.

There was a weekly radio programme in Bekwarra ("Bekwarra Forum"), and in Geranci ("Fyandi Gyare", meaning "Gere Forum"). There were also radio programmes in Adara—the language of the Kadara people and in Gbagyi. Both Wandanci and Bassang are only occasionally used on radio.

Findings from the questionnaire showed roughly the same pattern. Most of our respondents (69.4%) held that the media reported events pertaining to their ethnic groups only rarely or occasionally. Only 17% claimed the media reported events about their ethnic group very often.

Table 2. Minority group members' views on media coverage

Variable	Responses	Frequency	%
Whether member ever heard their language on radio	Yes	441	75.6
	No	142	24.4
	Total	583	100
Whether member ever heard their language spoken on television	Yes	200	34.1
	No	386	65.9

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	Total	586	100
Whether member ever read their language in a newspaper, magazine or tabloid	Yes	108	16.5
	No	476	81.5
	Total	584	100
How often the mass media reported happenings in the ethnic group of member	Very Often	154	26.1
	Often	113	19.2
	Occasionally	188	31.9
	Rarely	134	22.8
	Total	589	100
Whether media covered cultural activities and festivals of member's ethnic group	Yes	265	45.6
	No	316	54.4
	Total	581	100
How member felt about the extent of coverage	Sad/marginalised	309	54.7
	Indifferent	61	10.8
	Happy	195	34.5
	Total	565	100

Source: Field work (2006)

Radio was more accessible to respondents than television or newspapers. About 76% of our respondents had heard their languages spoken on radio but only 17% had read their language in any newspaper or tabloid. About 34% claimed to have heard their languages spoken on television—which contradicted the impression we got from the FGD. We noted that among the 200 respondents that made this claim, 131 (65.5%) were from the Gbagyi. The Gbagyi also dominated the category of those who had seen their languages in the papers making up 62% of that group.

Most of the questionnaire respondents described media coverage of the activities of their ethnic group as either rare or occasional—which again contradicted the impression we had from the FGD. Again, we noted that of the 154 (26.1%) that described the coverage as very often, the Gbagyi made up 57.5%. As earlier implied, the Gbagyi FGD discussants and interviewees did not complain about inadequate media coverage. The media did not cover their festivals but they did cover other activities and events in the community. It should be noted that of the six ethnic groups selected, the Gbagyi group is the largest.

The media staff we interviewed also stated that the media gave low coverage to the minority group especially with regard to festivals and other cultural activities. Two of them however did not believe that the little coverage was mostly negative. According to them, if the coverage was negative, it was not because the people concerned were minorities. One of the interviewees said, "We report what we see. It doesn't matter who was involved". When asked why the coverage of the minority was negligible, reasons given were that government officials and politicians--the real news makers hardly attended such functions; media houses were hardly invited, and when invited, stations often lacked the needed logistics for such assignments. Very often, there were no vans or enough fuel for the vans, or transport allowances as an alternative; and there were no cameras that could be released for out-of-station assignments.

The third interviewee felt the minorities received mostly negative coverage. "I am a minority", he said, "and when I hear (the name of) my area mentioned in news, I know something bad has happened. Maybe another expatriate has been kidnapped". But he agreed that it is the way things are: "We journalists do not manufacture news".

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Our interviewees also noted that the nature of news and perceived audience preference predisposed them to prefer the big and the bizarre: only these sell a paper or station's programmes: "If tomorrow I write that a researcher interviewed me—front page—will you buy the paper because of that? If that is the kind of news you hear on TV, will you switch on always?"

Media staff agreed that communities had to provide some fund in order for them to cover their cultural activities. An interviewee, staff of a private media organisation, justified this with the following gripping account:

I worked for … for about four years. For about two years, I wasn't paid a salary. When my colleagues and I asked for our pay, the management told us our ID cards could feed us. They said, 'anywhere you go, just show your ID card. We were married with children who go to school…you know school fees. What is that promoting? We were being told to offer our services for sale to the public. So if a community wants me to write…about them, they must pay something for my ID card.

Dire financial strains like this are not peculiar to private media organisations alone; our other interviewees mentioned poor funding and late salaries as obstacles to full performance of their social responsibilities. More importantly, programmes focusing on the activities of the minorities are not likely to attract sponsors.

With regard to languages of broadcast and news report, our interviewed staff again mentioned logistics: "If you want to speak all the languages on radio, you will have Tower of Babel. How do you read news in all the languages of Plateau state?" The second reason cited was that many stations in the ethnically plural regions do not have enough on-air staff who can speak all the languages. "If I am in my state, I can speak only my language, out of almost one hundred languages. And I cannot even speak my language fluently".

The feelings and fears of members of the minority groups regarding media coverage of their cultural activities contrasted with the thoughts of many members of the major ethnic groups. For instance, Atanda (1996:27) praised radio and television for promoting "Yoruba intellectual activities … which form an aspect of Yoruba culture and civilisation". And this can be easily confirmed. A casual internet search showed that within eight months, the Guardian published about forty articles relating to Yoruba language, native religion, folklore, folktales, jurisprudence and other aspects of Yoruba culture; and about the same number within a year for Igbo-culture related articles. But the same search yielded nothing for Bekwarra, Bassang, Gwari or Gbayi, Gere or Kadara [9].

Media Coverage of Minority Ethnic Groups Tends towards Negativity

As indicated earlier, we looked beyond the proportion of coverage to the direction of coverage. We discovered that the stories were as few as they were negative. We pooled all the print stories on ethnic minority groups together and discovered that about 69% of them portrayed the minority ethnic groups in negative lights. In summary, the negative stories qualified the ethnic minority groups with two dominant epithets: greedy and violent. Among the negative stories was *A Kingdom in Crisis* which details how "oil contracts and royalty have put a knife into the thread that held the Ofagbue Kingdom together…accumulated mistrust, ignorance and individual interests reached a detonating point and the town erupted in violence,

[9] See http://guardiannewsngr.com/TopicSearchResult?Title=yoruba; http://guardiannewsngr.com/TopicSearchResult?Title=igbo; http://guardiannewsngr.com/TopicSearchResult?Title=gwari etc

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orchestrated by some youths and the town's development union". As a result, the king's "palace was razed and he was driven to exile" (*Tell*, 31 October, 2005, p. 37).

Another example was *Itshekiri, Ijaw coalition disagrees with Chevron over contracts* (*Guardian*, Thursday, 10 November, 2005). In its lead, the story says "a coalition of Ijaw and Itshekiri citizens has threatened to disrupt Chevron Texaco's operations in some parts of Delta State alleging that the firm was creating bad blood between the two ethnic groups and pushing them to a clash" (p. 27).

From *New Nigerian* (Thursday, 11 August 2005, p. 28) came "*Armed youths kill 5 persons in Bayelsa; razed down Commissioner's house*" which narrates how "the serene atmosphere of the Amabulou community in Ekeramor local government was…thrown into panic …five people were feared dead…following the invasion of that community by some armed youths". The youth who were indigenes of the community had complained about how politicians in the community used them to get to position and then dumped them. "The boys had been chased out of the community after the elections when their demands became unbearable for the politicians…but they reinforced themselves and invaded the community making the Commissioner's house their target" (p. 28)

Negative stories were predominant: *Elf evacuates workers as youths clash in Rivers* (*Guardian*, Tuesday 2 August 2005, p. 6); *Rivers communities shut Shell facilities* (*Guardian*, Wednesday 17 August 2005, front page); *Soldiers to quell crisis in Ebonyin, C'River communities* (*Guardian* Wednesday 17 August 2005, p. 6); *Ijaw groups oppose oil blocs for Chinese, Korean Firms* (*Guardian*, Wednesday 31 August 2005, p. 7); *Ibaji protests against faulty demarcation by NPC* (*New Nigerian*, Friday 9 September, 2005, pg.24); *Lere people protest suspension of Chairman* (*New Nigerian*, Monday 26 September 2005, p. 20); *Turning on the heat—NDPVF and IJC* (*Tell*, 21 November 2005).

The positive stories included one published in *Tell*'s 'Ask Me' column featuring an interview with the Obong (Monarch) of Calabar. The story celebrated the achievements of the Obong, a retired Professor of Medicine. Among his feats were his cultural transformation and preservation activities:

We are doing everything [to preserve the heritage]. For example, the ekpe masquerade still serves as the police to the Obong whenever he goes out. But some of them [cultural practices], like the fattening room tradition, are no longer in practice. We don't encourage it because the medical field says it makes the woman too fat and may not be good for health (*Tell*, 21 November, 2005, p. 10)

Another example of positive coverage was the *Guardian'*s *Lagos holds Anioma's day of rich culture*, as "the Anioma people of Delta state rolled out drums and served the colours of their cultural heritage in Lagos" (*Guardian*, Wednesday 19 October, 2005, p. 70). Another example was *New Nigerian*'s *Ebira community marks day in Kano, Jigawa* which presented the celebration of the "10th year post-coronation anniversary of …the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland…" (*New Nigerian*, Tuesday, 6 September 2005, p. 26)

Others included *Ogoni Students want Saro-Wiwa cleansed of guilt* (*Guardian*, Friday 5 August, 2005, pg 6); *Rivers' chiefs want government to probe killings* (*Guardian* Saturday, 22 October 2005, p. 98); *For language and history, Urhobos gather in Warri* (*Guardian*, Monday 17 October, 2005, p. 68); *Peace returns to troubled community (New Nigerian*, Friday September 2005, p. 26); *Normalcy returns to Wukari* (*New Nigerian*, Tuesday, 20 December 2005, p. 3)

With regard to the ratio of positive to negative stories, the radio broadcasts showed a reverse trend. Of the 6 stories dealing with ethnic groups and their activities, only 2 were negative: *Five bikes were stolen in Ikom primary school* (CRBC, 9 June 2006), and *Clan head*

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blames parents for poor performance in education (CRBC, 15 June 2006). Others focused on positive or neutral developments. Examples include *Obudu indigenes to get involved in security surveillance* (CRBC 15 June 2005); or *Paramount ruler of Ikom to have meeting with other traditional rulers* (CRBC 13 June 2005).

We decided to examine if the ownership structure of the mass media influenced its content in the specific issues that concerned this study. The *Guardian* is owned by a member of a minority group; *New Nigerian* is partially owned by government and has been known to be pro-government and pro-North (See Adebanwi, 2004). *Tell* has a mixed-member ownership which spans both major and minor ethnic groups while the radio stations are owned by governments. Our analysis did not reveal any difference in the direction of coverage given by *Tell*, *Guardian* and *New Nigerian*. All gave predominance to negative stories about the minority ethnic groups. And while one of the government radio stations did not carry minority stories at all, the other two gave them little coverage. We thus could not correlate ownership structure with content. But we did notice that most of the minority stories were from the South, mostly based on the activities of the South-South oil-producing communities.

Our submission is that the minority groups indeed receive low and negative coverage, in spite of the claim by 34% of the respondents to the questionnaire that they had heard their language spoken on television. Data from all other sources suggest rare or no use of minority languages by media (even in state-owned media), lack of coverage of the cultural activities of the minority groups and negative portrayal of the minority groups. Negligible and negative coverage of minority and peripheral groups by the media has been repeatedly reported by researchers. Many years ago, Johnson, Sears and McConahay (1971) observed the diminishing of space allotted to blacks (who represent about 10%) in US papers and called attention to what they described as "black invisibility". And just as the Nigerian media portray the minority groups as violent and greedy, the US press painted Blacks as "militants nationwide conspiring to disrupt the peace of civilized society" (Johnson et al, 1971:720). Shaw-Taylor and Benokraitis (1995) observed that though the population of coloured people in their study setting was about 25%, only 2.1% of space was devoted to them in the media products they studied. Ojebode and Akinleye (2009) discovered that although 80% of Nigerians lived in areas classified as rural, only 7.1% of media attention is devoted to them, and 47% of this was negative coverage. The current study falls in line with these previous ones. We discovered that only 23% of print media ethnic stories and 6.3% of broadcast news dealt with issues concerning the over 386 minority groups; the three major groups took the rest. Yet as Mustapha (2007) observes, these three formed only 57.8% of the population.

Minority Ethnic Groups Resent their Cultural Status in the Media

As Table 2 shows, about 55% of respondents felt sad and marginalised by the negligible and media coverage their ethnic groups received from the media. Data from the interviews and FGDs showed a much stronger discontent with the media coverage. An FGD discussant in Bassang lamented, "It [the poor coverage] is something that is breaking the heart of everyone in my tribe. We feel very sad and unhappy". An interviewee from Bekwarra said, "we are left out; we are not recognised by the media…I feel definitely bad".

The same position was found among the Gere and Wandi. The protocol officer to the Wandi village head described the situation thus: "I hear the stories of other people and other lands, and I ask, 'where am I? Don't I matter?' I don't". The Wandi village head said, "ours is a proud race of well cultured people. We pay allegiance to our leaders yet we enjoy little coverage. It is unfortunate". A Kadara FGD group complained that Hausa was used on Radio

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Kaduna everyday whereas Adara was used for thirty minutes only on Tuesdays and wondered whether "we are regarded as human beings at all".

A strong exception is found in the responses of the Sarkin Arewa of Kasuwan Magani, a Kadara community leader who said, "Since we hear our own dialect on air as others, we are contented". Even when prodded on about whether he felt marginalised, he said, "I don't feel anything". This exception nonetheless reinforced our position: we noted that this leader had a few times been interviewed by radio. Feelings of resentment were high when media coverage was negligible.

Our media staff agreed that the minority must indeed be sad about low (and negative) coverage in the media. One of them observed, "we cannot be saying one Nigeria and then you give an announcement in only three languages and English and expect that the others will be happy". Apparently trying to exonerate the media, another said, "even the CBN (Central Bank of Nigeria) marginalised the minority. The new currency notes are written in only the three major languages. But it is sad. They are saying we the minorities do not count".

Going a step further, our respondents from media organisations expressed the possibility that minority people might develop a low sense of worth in their culture and traditions if the situation of media coverage continues. 'As time goes on', they claimed, 'the cultural practices will all die off".

Low Cultural Status in the Media is a Product of Other Inequalities.

Our respondents opined that the inadequate media coverage which their ethnic groups got was a result of economic and political inequalities. They believed it was because they were poor that they did not get media attention. In most cases, someone had to pay for journalists to visit the community. In Bekwarra, it was the chairman of the local government that paid for the 2004 New Yam Festival to be covered by radio. Among the Kadara, people who are involved in certain honorary rites such as *turbanning* (coronation) invite and sponsor journalists. Among the Gbagyi, the Ward Head of Tundun Wada (West) saw the low media coverage as caused singly because "we are poor. We have no money to invite journalists."

Political inequality was cited equally often. In every interview and FGD, we heard "we don't have people in positions of authority". "We don't have anyone from our tribe in the radio station. No one is representing us there". The Gere respondents demonstrated this most vividly. There was not a single programme in Geranci on Bauchi Radio until "our own son started work with radio. We are lucky to have our son, Hamidu Yali there; he runs our programme. Every week he speaks our language and we are very happy". Abdulhamid Yali was the producer and presenter of Fyandi Gyare (Gere Forum), a thirty-minute Tuesday variety programme.

Our casual internet search threw some weight behind this: of the ten articles published by *the Guardian* relating to the Idoma ethnic group, seven had to do with the activities and struggles of Senate President David Mark, an Idoma person[10]. If Mr Mark were an ordinary citizen, the Idoma articles listed by *the Guardian* would have been just three.

This is implied in the responses of the media staff we reported earlier: if the politicians and government officials are there, the news staff will follow them and report the events. Or if covering such promises some economic benefits to both the reporter and the news organisation, then it would likely be covered. This points attention at the definition of news adopted by media practitioners. News is about the prominent and the rich or influential. It is also about the bizarre; the only way the ordinary person or the minority can hit the headline is by engaging in the bizarre.

[10] See http://guardiannewsngr.com/TopicSearchResult?Title=idoma

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Higher Cultural Status in the Media is the Antidote to other Inequalities.

The predominant feeling among our respondents was that of marginalisation. They strongly felt their conditions were worsened by their invisibility in the media. They affirmed a strong link between being seen in the media and being heard and catered for by government. Some representative quotes are: "Since we are not covered [by the media], the government hears very little about us and our problem" (Gere FGD). "If the media had done enough our situation would have been something different" (Wandi FGD). "The media are not doing enough. That is why the government doesn't even know we are here" (Bekwarra, FGD). "If media coverage increases…the life of our people will change" (Bassang FGD). "If they care about and cover these issues, most of these problems we face today would not be there", (Kadara leader). "If journalists inform the government about us…the level of marginalisation will drastically reduce" (Gbagyi leader).

Respondents recognised the culture-preservation role of the media. There was palpable fear that the culture and language of some of the groups would go into extinction unless media coverage improved. "Our culture will die off. If the media do not support us, there's no way the culture will grow" resounded in most of the FGDs and interviews.

The Role of Community Radio

Like the poor (Duncan, 2006), the minority groups do not have a voice of their own. Until recently, there were no community radio stations in Nigeria, the last of the countries in the West African region to establish community radio stations[11]. For over ten years, the Nigeria Community Radio Coalition (NCRC), led by the Institute for Media and Society (IMS) in Lagos lobbied for the establishment of community radio in Nigeria. After more than a decade of advocacy, community radio finally became a reality in Nigeria with the approval of licenses in 2015. The demand for community radio was borne out of the need to create a more pluralistic media system and engage rural development. Besides, community radio was being established in many other parts of the world, including African countries, and yielding positive outcomes. These stations which should be located in, owned and run by the community, will be best positioned to perform the functions of cultural preservation, promotion, transmission and transformation. They will act as the voice of the community to itself and to the outside world. That will eliminate the linguistic problem which our respondents mentioned as each community will speak its own language to itself on its radio. It will also eliminate the need for much logistics such as provision of vans and fuel for visits to communities celebrating festivals or organizing coronations. The recorded programmes of these community stations can then be sent to the state and national radio for broadcasts in order to enhance national visibility of the minorities.

The fear of establishing community radio stations had been the likelihood that a community radio in the hands of ethnic chauvinists could easily be used to fan embers of inter-ethnic acrimony. A strict monitoring and regulatory framework can be constructed to guard against this. And if radio might be used to destabilize the nation, there are enough radio stations in the country to achieve that (Ojebode, 2002).

Community radio stations need a separate legislation and licensing regime. They are not profit-making and so should not be expected to pay what commercial stations pay for license. If this succeeds, the issue of participation will be put to rest and opportunity provided for addressing development challenges of minority groups.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The mass media in Nigeria promote cultural status inequalities between majority and minority ethnic groups. Causes of the poor coverage of the minority groups are both internal

and external. Causes internal to the minority groups include their financial inability, and lack of political representation. External causes outnumber internal ones. Among these is the classical and commercial definition of news adopted by media stations and personnel. Prominence-driven and elite-focused, the media pay predominant attention to the three major ethnic groups while the minority are hardly seen or heard. Occasionally when the unusual and the negative happen among the minority groups, the groups get noticed. Minority group members know this too well and are sad about it. The classical definition of news is still being taught in Nigerian journalism schools and colleges (Ojebode and Akinleye, 2009); the alternative definition of news as public service (Meyer, 1988; Rosen, 1996) has been largely ignored. Understandably, unfriendly financial situations make all but the altruistic media personnel want to focus on the minorities.

The designation of the three major languages and English as official languages has not promoted the learning or acquisition of other languages nor has the predominant citing of stations in urban areas far removed from where many minority communities are based. It is a cycle: political and economic inequalities lead to invisibility in the media which in turn reinforces political and economic inequalities. Inadequate media coverage is a cause and a product of cultural horizontal inequalities.

The media should not be wholly blamed for inadequate coverage of the minority groups. As we just mentioned, media houses in Nigeria are located in the urban areas, a factor which increases the proclivity of their attention towards urban events and occurrences. Government-owned media are also poorly funded which makes it difficult for them to travel a long distance to cover events in the periphery. More importantly, with the deregulation and partial commercialization of broadcasting in 1992, government-owned media have been asked to become profit-making. This resulted in a situation where newsworthiness is determined by the economic benefits accruable to a media station. In most cases, the minority groups are at a disadvantage. Community radio stations will be of great help here as discussed earlier.

Departments of Theatre Arts or Dramatic Arts, and Departments of Communication Studies in states where minority groups are concentrated should embark on practical projects in the languages of the minority groups. Whereas about ten Yoruba home videos are released weekly, there has not been a single home video in Tiv language. Yet Tiv is spoken by about 4 million people. Linguists in the universities and colleges should work with other experts and organizations (such as Summer Institute of Linguistics) to evolve orthographies for minority languages. The concerned schools and colleges should adopt this as a part of their institutional policy.

The Federal Character Commission in Nigeria, it has been observed, has recorded some measure of success in ensuring that recruitment and appointment into federal government organisations and positions take into account the diversity of the country (Mustapha, 2007). There is need however to ensure that appointments reflect ethnic groups rather than states so that mega ethnic groups which occupy several states will not be given disproportionate advantage over smaller ones which occupy tiny fractions of their states.

Cultural promotion organizations, such as UNESCO, should support the production of local tabloids in minority languages, and fund projects on minority language orthographies. They should sponsor the establishment of community newspapers which, true to that name, should be in the language of the owner-community.

The National Universities Commission should lead institutions responsible for the training of media women and men to review their curricula to reflect diversity reporting; exposure to minority issues and groups, and to the tenets of pubic journalism (Rosen, 1996). Class projects should be on the activities and culture of minority ethnic groups.

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