MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION mef

MEDIA OWNERSHIP & REGULATION HANDOUT

TERMS TO KNOW

FEDERAL COMMUNICATION COMMISSION (FCC) – established in 1934 as an independent government agency and is overseen by subcommittees of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The FCC is responsible for the regulation of interstate (U.S.) radio, television, satellite and cable broadcasting, and newspaper publishing. The primary responsibilities of the FCC are to set the boundaries of media ownership and prevent the emergence of monopolies. The FCC was created to protect and represent the public interest—specifically by regulating the public airwaves through distribution of broadcast licenses.

SYNERGY – the ability of a single conglomerate to cross-promote, cross-produce, and cross-advertise its content across a variety of its own channels, stores, and businesses.

FACTS

» The consolidation of media is most significant in the radio industry. Since the passing of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, over 4,000 radio stations have been bought out by larger corporations.

» Clear Channel Inc. now owns more than 1,200 radio stations across the country.

» Since 1995, the number of companies owning commercial TV stations has declined by 40 percent.

» Minority ownership of TV stations has dropped to its lowest point since the federal government began recording such data in 1990.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

1. Is there a relationship between information and democracy? Explain your position.
2. Define the terms *regulation* and *deregulation*. Should media be regulated? Why or why not? Who should be in charge of the regulation or deregulation of media? What effect has regulation—and in turn—deregulation, had on the United States' media system? Do you think this has affected news reporting and entertainment the U.S. media system produces? Why or why not?
3. How might the nature of the media industry—the way it's funded, monitored, and structured—shape the content it produces?

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