Is Public TV’s Doc Programming Different from Cable’s?

Public broadcasting’s makers and subjects are markedly more diverse than those of cable. Comparing 61 documentaries from 2013 in 4 series, Independent Lens (IL) distinguished itself from HBO, CNN and ESPN with more:

- creators from racial minorities
- minority and female characters

**DIRECTORS**

30% of IL documentaries had at least one minority director.
- 13% HBO
- 0% CNN
- 0% ESPN

HBO and CNN led in gender diversity – over half of their productions had at least one female director, compared to a third (35%) of IL documentaries.
- 52% HBO
- 50% CNN
- 0% ESPN

**PRODUCERS**

26% of IL documentaries had at least one minority producer.
- 9% HBO
- 17% CNN
- 11% ESPN

87% of IL documentaries had at least one female producer.
- 83% HBO
- 83% CNN
- 11% ESPN

**CHARACTERS**

83% of IL documentaries had at least one minority character.
- 26% HBO
- 17% CNN
- 67% ESPN

74% of IL documentaries had at least one female character.
- 65% HBO
- 50% CNN
- 0% ESPN

Learn more at cmsimpact.org/future-public-media.

Patricia Aufderheide, Caty Borum Chattoo and Tijana Milosevic, School of Communication, American University