

MEDIATED COMMUNICATION, DEMOCRACY & THE PUBLIC SPHERE:
CRITICAL MEDIA CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS

by

TODD FRALEY

(Under the Direction of Elizabeth Lester Roushazamir)

ABSTRACT

This project explicates the intersections of critical media consciousness, progressive social movements, and democracy, by analyzing the media strategies of the Athens Independent Media Center and the Industrial Areas Foundation. Individually, the definitions of communication, media, and democracy are often taken for granted. Collectively they provide the baseline for the argument that knowledgeable and engaged citizens are prerequisites for democratic social formations. Without an accessible egalitarian public sphere strong participatory democracy withers. Relying on participant observation, archival analysis, and borrowing cultural anthropology's methods of defamiliarization and cross-cultural juxtaposition, this thesis offers an elaboration of ideas concerning the fundamental components for a critical media consciousness. Furthermore, it provides support for the contention that the democratic process necessitates democratic communications structures and practices that increase citizen participation through the building of strong, equitable, and sustainable social relations among diverse peoples. Strong media, created and sustained by critical media consciousness, expands that democratic potential of communication technologies as citizens equally participate in the search for the common good.

INDEX WORDS: Strong democracy, critical media consciousness, third sector, alternative media, strong media, progressive social movements

MEDIATED COMMUNICATION, DEMOCRACY & THE PUBLIC SPHERE:
CRITICAL MEDIA CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS

by

TODD FRALEY

BS, James Madison University, 1994

MA, The University of Georgia, 2000

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004

© 2004

Todd Fraley

All Rights Reserved

MEDIATED COMMUNICATION, DEMOCRACY & THE PUBLIC SPHERE:
CRITICAL MEDIA CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS

by

TODD FRALEY

Major Professor: Elli Lester Roushanzamir

Committee: James Hamilton
Anandam Kavoori
Horace Newcomb
David Smilde

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Now that this dissertation is technically complete, it is time to acknowledge those individuals who have been indispensable to the project. First, I would like to thank Dr. Hamilton, Dr. Kavoori, Dr. Newcomb, and Dr. Smilde for their willingness to serve as committee members. I believe that a dissertation is a reflection of one's educational growth, and over the past few years you have all provided valuable support, critique and insight. For that, I am grateful. Words on an acknowledgement page do not offer adequate thanks for my final committee member. Dr. Elli Lester Roushanzamir has served as a teacher, counselor, friend, boss, and mentor since I arrived in her class nearly six years ago. One thing I have learned throughout that time is that teachers must negotiate a fine line as they build self-confidence or instill self-doubt as they push students to realize their full potential. Elli, thank you for mastering the art bending and testing the strength of that line without ever breaking it. Beyond the academy, big ups are in order for the Million Dollar Man and the Ambassador of Femininity for teaching us that it is important to ask questions. The two of you continue to influence my thinking and personal development, and it is a true blessing to call you mom and dad. The D.C. Fraley's also deserve recognition. Thanks for making me realize that individuals do have the ability to create a better world. Finally, I must thank the beautiful (mentally and physically) Alisa "Thomas" Fraley. Its been a wonderful ten years, and without you, none of this would be possible. Nothing but love, shorty. What I am trying to say to all of you has been captured by some good friends from Athens, GA - I feel a little easier now, knowing that you're all here.

TAF
Fresh for 04

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Media reformation.....	6
the focus	8
research questions	11
strong media/strong democracy	12
2 CONCEPTS: MEDIA & DEMOCRACY	15
concepts	17
critical media consciousness	29
3 METHODS.....	44
4 MEDIATED COMMUNICATION – DEMOCRATIC POWER.....	54
industrial areas foundation.....	58
athens independent media center.....	74
5 CONTRIBUTIONS, RECONSIDERATIONS, FINAL THOUGHTS.....	96
contributions	100
REFERENCES.....	116

*In order to distill a fragrant essence from roses, it is not necessary to conceal the
existence of the thorns
-Zapatistas*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is not technology that will revolutionize society, but a movement of millions that must transform society
-Drew, 1995

...forms of communication function in bringing about those understandings between individuals and peoples which are the substance of culture.
- Park, 1938

Conversation, argument, debate, and deliberation represent types of interaction, and they often lead to conflict. Nonetheless, they remain central to a flourishing democracy and this poses a problem that continues to vex democratic theorists: “How an adequate space might be created and procedures established for debate and decision-making around issues to which citizens bring divergent views and interests” (Held, 1996, p. 312). Long unanswered, this question locates communication as a fundamental component of society and highlights its role in understanding and shaping the world in which we live. Furthermore, this notion offers communication scholars the opportunity to position themselves as social critics responsible for more than incidental criticism and random comment (Williams, 1989, p20).

This project accepts the idea that “media are part of the ideological struggle between social forces with conflicting and material interests” (Bruck, 1992, p. 156). Therefore, it attempts to assist with the development and deployment of democratic communications systems by elucidating their function in reinvigorating a participatory democracy accessible and responsive to any and all citizens. To accomplish this goal, I will engage Masterman’s (2001) concept critical media consciousness and illuminate the necessity of understanding, critiquing, and analyzing communication systems, communication forms, and mediated communication strategies that continue to influence the construction and presentation of reality. This project will also expand critical media consciousness to highlight justifiable, practical, and existing alternatives crucial to reconstructing media systems that currently limit democratic participation.

Mass communication seemingly offers numerous social benefits, but injustices, power struggles, isolation and ignorance continue to plague the global environment. With

continuous modifications to communications technologies, communication strategies and practices also change; nonetheless democratic communication practices and political awareness are not guaranteed. Simply increasing the dissemination of diverse information amongst individuals will not increase political participation and ensure the ingredients of a strong democracy, but the fact remains that “communications options have the potential to transform both political organization and political power relations” (Bennett, 2003, p. 19).

Williams (1989) argues that “large scale organization and communication is a major human gain” that must be welcomed, but the reality remains that the employment of these advances has proven debilitating to the development of an egalitarian world community (p. 139). Unfortunately, large-scale organization and communication achieved with commercial media systems “blocks progressive social change—progressive in the broad sense of sharing material wealth, cultural status and political power” (Hackett and Adam, 1999, p. 25). Supporting this critique, scholars (Downing, 2001; Keane, 1991; McChesney, 1999; Schiller, 1992) continue to highlight the consequences of a market driven media industry impacting the development of informed democratic participation by a citizenry.

Among the major beneficiaries of global capitalism, media corporations gain an ever-increasing stronghold in the global business and political communities, and understandably work to support those communities.¹ By positioning themselves as guard dogs and concomitantly surrendering their standing as watchdogs, commercial mass

¹ Hackett explains that media institutions have become “key bulwarks of global capitalism” and along with financial markets, communication and information have become the most dynamic features of a globalizing market economy, and the development of global commercial media has been crucial to the development of the global marketplace (2000, p. 62).

media become obstacles to movements promoting social change and leave ‘informed’ citizens unaware of the damaging aspects of the dominant market model. The crux of the problem is a media system targeting consumers instead of citizens, and operating as a business stressing efficiency and profit while diminishing information sharing and the ability to answer back.

This powerful oligopoly has, to a large extent, successfully removed itself from critique by creating a sense of naturalness making it extremely difficult for individuals to understand the need for alternative models that erase the lines between producer and audience, and promote equal opportunities for producing consuming, and responding. Instead of using technology to ensure democracy by expanding and enhancing communication opportunities, multi-national corporations have hijacked media in their profit driven quest to expand a consumer base. The detrimental side effect is the continued diminution of the responsibility to provide a public service protecting citizens’ ability to speak, publish, discuss, and dissent.

Cautious not to privilege media over communication and overstate its power, Mills (2000) offers a necessary reminder that “discussion is the ascendant means of communication, and the mass media, if they exist, simply enlarge and animate discussion, linking one primary public with the discussions of another” (p. 304). But as Innis argues, “modern communication [has enlarged] the range of reception while narrowing the points of distribution. Large numbers are spoken to but are precluded from vigorous and vital discussion” (as cited in Carey, 1989, p. 168). Therefore, with democracy needing “contending interests and values [to] be expressed and [to] compete through ongoing processes of articulation and representation” (Diamond, 1999, p. 11), the establishment of

a democratic society must involve the development of democratic communication strategies and outlets that increase citizen participation, hold leaders and institutions accountable, and create social relations that reveal the existence and benefits of the common good.

media reformation

A call has sounded for a media reform movement² fighting for the establishment of a more democratic communications system. During the first half of 2003, a lively conversation involving the FCC, the government, and the public revolved around a decision to further deregulate the communications industry.³ The non-partisan response to this decision demonstrates the urgency for a critical media consciousness enabling citizens to critically evaluate, analyze, and create media artifacts. In addition, critical media consciousness will enable citizens to assess production techniques, operational strategies, and decision-making processes that influence mass media organizations, while emphasizing the important link between democratic communication systems, social relations, and democratic societies.

This movement to democratize the media “is one of the most important [contemporary struggles] and least recognized” (Hackett, 2000, p. 61), and has as its goal an open media environment creating an active, engaged, and politically savvy citizenry. Ultimately, citizens will gain a “media that brings us a wealth of diverse opinions and entertainment options, [provides] us with the information we need to function as

² McChesney (1998) argues that for those serious about democracy, there must be media reform. This call for reform is based on the idea that media perform essential functions in modern democracy and that media organizational structures are central to media content. To fight commercial media, the movement calls for the development of nonprofit and noncommercial media, antitrust legislation, and government regulation.

³ According to FAIR, as of July 8, 2003 nearly 2 million people contacted the FCC concerning the June 2 revision with the majority of the feedback opposing the changes.

informed citizens, [and creates a place] where ordinary people routinely have a chance to voice their concerns” (Ehrenreich as cited in McChesney & Nichols, 2002, p. 11). A major obstacle though is the continued dependence (similar to all social movements) on public communication beyond face-to-face interaction (Gamson, 1995). With public communication dominated by corporate media, the opportunity to change the current media system is systematically neutralized (Hackett, 2000), but that does not mean that such a movement cannot be successful.

The challenge is whether or not media activists and media reformists can find success on their own or if they require alliances with other progressive organizations fighting for democracy, justice, and equality. Agreeing with McChesney and Nichols (2002), this project believes media activists,

...must reach out and involve organized groups that currently engage in little activity in the way of media reform, but that are seriously hampered by the current media system. Absent far too long from media reform activism have been the cause’s natural allies, organizations that should be sympathetic to media reform and that have been active in other nations (p.127).

Democracy, dependent upon and benefiting from continued dialogue and debate, cannot evolve if the lines of communication are not accessible to all. As Kellner (2003) exclaimed, “democratic media reform and alternative media are crucial to...preserving the democratic project in the face of powerful corporate and political forces” (final ¶). Within the current system, progressive movements are at a severe disadvantage “[w]ithout the use of printed word, information broadcast via the airwaves, and other means of communication...” (Wasko, 1993, p. 163). Ultimately, organizations must

combine their knowledge and their resources to reform existing media and social institutions in pursuit of a democracy successfully balancing community and autonomy.

I argue that the existing market model of communications draws boundaries for discussion, determines who has the ability to participate, and creates the impression that there is no need for alternatives. It will continue to thrive and constrain democracy with few objections raised unless media activists and progressives develop a critical media consciousness. Democracy should ensure that “minority groups should not be hindered in their ability to express their interests in the political process,” and that alternative sources of information remain accessible to all citizens (Diamond, 1999, p. 12). Combining forces, media activists and progressive grassroots organizations, by lifting the veil behind which media operate and creating socially responsible and democratically organized alternatives, will enable informed and diverse critique.

the focus

Raymond Williams’ (1968) call for the de-professionalization, de-capitalization, and de-institutionalization of the communications industry rendered alternative media⁴ sites weighty elements in the battle to create a more egalitarian society. Just as alternative newspapers in the mid-1960’s served as “crucial information, communication, and community-building forum(s)”, progressive organizations continue to utilize and create media to present information and provide contexts quite different from that found within mainstream media (Bodroghkozy, 2001, p. 11). But today, even among all the advances in communication technology, the question remains as to whether “media

⁴ defined as media production that challenges at least implicitly actual concentrations of media power, whatever form those concentrations may take in different locations (Couldry & Curran, 2003, p. 7). Rodriguez’s citizen’s media makes explicit a link with forms of citizenship practice and empowerment influenced by theories of conscientization through education and more open communication (as cited in Couldry & Curran, 2003, p. 7).

systems [limit] the capacity of groups contesting established power arrangements to communicate both among themselves and to larger publics” (Bennett, 2003, p. 17).

Ultimately, media activists retain a key role in democratic movements because activist networks must understand how to not only challenge the power of mass media, but just as important, how to use media to “coordinate activities...and publicize often high quality information about their causes” (Bennett, 2003, p.3). To explain the intersection of critical media consciousness, social movements, and democratic communication, this project investigates and analyzes the operations of the Athens Independent Media Center (AIMC) and the Industrial Areas Foundation.

AIMC and the IAF share similar political objectives and beliefs, but a key difference lies in their media strategies and communication practices. Both groups realize the role of media in voicing political and social concerns, but as AIMC fights for reform without relying on mainstream media, the IAF, with their limited understanding of mediated communication’s democratic potential, responds to mainstream media structures in ways that constrain their media presence. Therefore, each case details how critical media consciousness can help dismantle barriers that separate the distribution, production, and consumption of media artifacts by encouraging and facilitating the development of mediated communication practices and strategies that disseminate a diversity of interests within the public sphere.

By analyzing the efforts of these organizations I will explain why and how media activists – with the goal of mandating that mediated communication enables and promotes justice and equality- are central to progressive social reform and the processes necessary for establishing a democratic society. This project also argues that such

significant goals can only be achieved by integrating a critical media consciousness into the efforts of social activists and media reformists. Finally, emancipatory potential of communication technologies appear crucial to the efforts of such activists, and informing progressive grassroots organizations about the necessity of these issues for the success of broader movements for social justice is an ultimate goal.

Structural media reform is “mandatory if we are serious about addressing the crisis of democracy in the United States” (McChesney & Nichols, 2002, p. 133). Alternative media respond to these calls for democracy by valuing a free flow of ideas over profit, access to ordinary people without the necessity for professional training, elimination of the need for excessive capital, and the ability to exist outside traditional media settings. By creating or at least attempting to create these types of media institutions, alternative media articulate challenges to power structures, allow people fighting injustice to communicate with each other, and empower marginalized voices (Downing, 1984, p.2). Ultimately, these alternative forms of mediated communication remain an important area of study as they offer the potential to create and provide access, participation, and equality within the public arena.

Outlining a democratic communication model is as complicated as defining democracy itself. Nevertheless, it is essential “to connect theories of democracy with theories of communication in order to allow new technologies to contribute to the expansion of democracy and the empowerment of more people” (Hacker, 1996, p. 213). Therefore, with a goal of strengthening this conversation, the objectives for this project are:

(1) To analyze if and how alternative media provide a site where individuals and cooperatives are working to create democratic media forms that assist with the development of strong democracy by establishing social relations based on trust, dignity, and equality.

(2) To examine if and how these institutions serve as developmental power agents⁵ enabling citizens to ensure democracy by participating in democratic processes. It is Downing's (2001) question, how can small-scale radical media have any impact worth having (p. vi) that drives my research.

(3) To explicate the cluster of ideas that coalesce around the limited concept of "media literacy" and explain the benefits of a more comprehensive approach – critical media consciousness. I suspect that so-called "media literacy" represents a core ideological tool which, when articulated in a properly specific and concrete way, will link communication, media and democracy in the ways that create strong media and benefit strong democracy.

research questions

RQ1 – What is the relationship between media reform, progressive social change, media activism and democracy?

RQ2 – How can critical media literacy be (re)theorized and defined?

RQ2a -Why is critical media consciousness a necessary component for a flourishing democracy?

RQ3 - How is AIMC incorporating media literacy and a democratic communications structure into its overall organizational objectives?

⁵ Downing (2001) views radical alternative media as developmental power agents (and not simply sites for counter information) as they expand the range of information, reflection, and exchange, work closely with democratic social movements to create democratic media, and do not feel the need to self-censor (p. 44).

RQ3a – How do these objectives help promote democracy?

research outcomes

Similar to the aims of Bruck and Raboy (1989), I am “interested in a politics of theorizing only insofar as it leads to a politics of action that reaches beyond the horizon of faddish intellectual positions and academic circles” (p. 7). Therefore, the immediate results of this project will provide a media strategy for the IAF and AIMC. Revealing the links between progressive social organizations, democratic communication structures, and strong democracy facilitates the development of an engaged, egalitarian, and complex public that understands the need to balance private interests with policies that benefit the whole.

strong media/strong democracy

Individually, communication, media, and democracy are frequently used words the meanings of which are too often taken for granted. Collectively they provided the baseline for this project. As Williams (1989) explains, “we need to...approach a theory of communication, and to have some idea of how communication relates to community, how it relates to society, what kind of communications systems we now have, what they tell us about society...” (p. 20). The remainder of this project represents the process of trying to define a democratic communication system, demonstrate the necessary components, and expose the complications raised by such an endeavor.

Initially, I believed it would be easy to explain the relationship between communication and democracy. I was wrong, but not discouraged. My attempt to fully understand democracy and mediated communications required that I reconsider personal assumptions concerning these concepts. I agreed that mediated communication systems

must be democratized, but the challenge lay in conveying a comprehensive definition of democracy that included the essential elements of a democratic communications system.

It is only recently that I have seriously considered the implications and complexities of a democratic political system, and my current understanding evolves out of a belief in and respect for human dignity⁶ in attempts to create an egalitarian world order grounded in individual autonomy and social interaction. I have learned to avoid both naiveté and idealism in favor of the recognition that sustaining democracy proves difficult even in the simplest of social and cultural forms. One cannot hide from the complexities and contradictions. As Diamond (1999) rightly explains, “democratic change is produced not by abstract historical and structural forces, but by individuals and groups choosing, innovating, and taking risks” (p. xii).

A basis requirement of a working democracy is an organized citizenry who retain an understanding of the inevitable impact of power and conflict on the tenuous balance between individual liberty and a non-discriminatory social order. This historical conflict continues on a daily basis, and it is a battle that necessitates communication and understanding. It is also a battle that forces the (re)consideration of communication practices, strategies, and systems if the democratic process is to remain democratic. Ultimately, democracy requires a communication structure that is accessible, enables sharing, and privileges listening over talking. Democratization rejects processes of persuasion, dominance, and ideological defense, and requires ongoing conversations that appreciate differences, transform conflict, and search for the common good. Mediated communication, therefore, must allow for each and every willing voice to be heard,

⁶ Borrowing from the Zapatistas, I am defining dignity as the refusal to accept humiliation and dehumanization (Holloway, 1998, p. 160)

understood, and integrated into the larger discussion. It's "not [that] every citizen expects to speak personally in the governing dialogue, but every citizen is entitled to feel authentically represented" (Greider, 1992, p. 14).

Simply taking into account all these complexities sometimes leads to frustration, anger, and abandonment as the process inevitably become uncomfortable. While I never stopped believing in these ideas, I encountered a vast schism existing between beliefs and practical applications. To close this gap, I accepted democracy as an "ongoing process, a perpetual challenge, a recurrent struggle...that emerges gradually in fragments or parts and is always capable of becoming more liberal, inclusive responsive, accountable, effective, and just" (Diamond, 1999, p. 219). In the end that is the success of democracy – the process. This "developmental view of democracy" (Diamond, 1999, p. xii) provides the foundation for the detailed analysis that follows.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTS: MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

The majority of the plain people will day in and day out make fewer mistakes in governing themselves than any smaller body of men will make in trying to govern them

-Theodore Roosevelt

Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe

-Thomas Jefferson

In lengthy discussions regarding democratic theory, political scholars often overlook or only briefly allude to the importance of media for democracy (Barber, 1984; Diamond, 1999; Held, 1996). For example, while Baker (1998) elaborates on complex democracy with its concomitant requirement for a diverse media, he offers little insight regarding the necessary steps for enabling democratic communications mechanisms. Simultaneously, media scholars have provided numerous theses on the relationship between media structures and political change and consensus, but most of this research assumes agreement on the meaning of democracy. This project, drawing on literatures, highlights the critical communication practices and media structures fundamental to deepening and strengthening democracy.

concepts

The relationship between communication, media, and democracy is vital to issues of freedom and equality. According to Keane (1991, p.26), a free press is critical to politics as it ensures the balance between rulers and those they rule. Thomas Jefferson even claimed that he would choose newspapers without government over government without newspapers (as cited in Keane, 1991, p. 2). In the 21st century, a democratic society, one built upon the exchange of ideas, participation of all, vigorous debate, and mutual respect and understanding of differences remains dependent on the press, and also requires the aid of advances in communication technology. As Raymond Williams explained, the struggle for democracy and human liberation depends on the creation of democratic institutions that try to “extend the expression and exchange of experience on which understanding depends” (Williams, 1968, p.139). Furthering the work of Williams’, Calabrese and Borchert (1996) argue that communication policy must be

central to any meaningful discussion about the future of democracy. But before embarking on that important issue, these three terms must be addressed in isolation so that a discussion explicating their intersections is comprehensive and relevant.

With democracy severely constrained without informed and egalitarian discussion, processes of communication become important areas of study. Williams (1983) definition of communication concerns itself with passing information and maintaining social contact. In reference to the communications industry (i.e., press and broadcasting), Williams' distinction between one-way processes and sharing is crucial to the argument that a multi-directional and open communications system is essential to democracy in that it incorporates concerns of production and distribution. Barber (1984) expands these points by explaining that listening is as important to the democratic process as is talking. In today's complex world, media outlets are fundamental in shaping such discussions and by extension, shaping democracy.

Couldry (2003) rightly contends that with society dominated by large-scale media institutions, many common-sense assumptions about media authority operate with a sense of the media that is highly non-specific. Used in this manner, media refer to traditional common sense forms including TV, radio, and press. For the purposes of this project, I will add the Internet to the argument that potential differences between media are less important than how people interact with the institutional sphere of the media in general (Couldry, 2003). This view reflects media's symbolic status in a mediated society as well as illuminates key issues surrounding access, inequality, and the power to define; all of which impact the discussion required for democracy to emerge.

Democracy, recognizing that different groups and different interests exist on both the individual and social levels, is in part about bargaining between segments of society with conflicting interests and the struggle of the disadvantaged and their allies against the injustice of privilege (Baker, 1998). Therefore, democracy demands an inclusive, non-oppressive conception of society protecting numerous groups (simultaneously developing divergent, potentially conflicting common goods) and offering a social order allowing for the development of differences in search of a non-coercive common good. This aim is only possible if groups have an adequate opportunity to develop their differing perspectives and have those perspectives fully voiced and given their due. In the end, complex democracy needs competing media to develop and promote alternatives (Baker, 1998).

achieving democracy?

Political theorist David Held (1996) explains that the political reality of democracy is fundamentally contested, and that its current manifestation is a process of citizen voters holding public decision makers accountable “while the decision makers themselves represent the interests of the constituents” (p. xi). Understanding that this is one of many conflicting interpretations of democracy, Held argues that it still incorporates the key concepts of “political participation, . . . representation, the scope of citizen’s capacities to choose freely among alternatives, and the nature of membership in a democratic community” (p. xi).

Combining these ingredients with democracy’s dictate that all citizens receive free and equal treatment, Held reiterates the fact that throughout history, democracy as a form of government has been difficult to create and sustain and is often sacrificed in

times of intensive social struggles. Our current president has a fine grasp of the difficulties associated with democracy and has remarked on more than one occasion, that it would be much easier to be a dictator.⁷

No matter the competing definitions, democratic societies often strive to create institutions that value and develop political equality, liberty, and moral self-development in an attempt to balance self-government with self-regulation. This has commonly led to two different types of democracy: participatory/direct and liberal/representative (Held, 1996, p.3). Participatory democracy involves the citizens directly in the decision making process while representative democracy utilizes elected officials that represent the citizens, while both maintain the importance of participation, representation, and accountability. By containing powers of the state and allowing for mediation among citizens and collectives in a fashion that tolerates and negotiates difference (Held, 1996, p. 297), these fundamental components of democracy create a form of politics and life that provides fair and just ways of negotiating values and value disputes without presupposing agreement but instead relating values and leaving the resolution of conflicts open to participants in a public process (Held, 1996, p. 298).

The historical conflict that continues to exist lies in the balancing act between individual and collective self-determination. For liberal democrats, the state should provide necessary conditions enabling citizens to pursue their own interests while

⁷ According to Buzzflash.com, Bush has stated he'd prefer to be a dictator at least three times: "You don't get everything you want. A dictatorship would be a lot easier." (Governing Magazine 7/98); "I told all four that there are going to be some times where we don't agree with each other, but that's OK. If this were a dictatorship, it would be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator," CNN.com, December 18, 2000; "A dictatorship would be a heck of a lot easier, there's no question about it," Business Week, July 30, 2001. (Buzzflash, 2002).

protecting others from impositions (Held, 1996, p. 299). As Held elaborates, the state becomes a necessary burden to individuals as they pursue their own interests. For those more inclined to socialist democracy, the idea of a minimal state is rejected as the belief that the free development of each is compatible with the free development of the all. While both camps struggle to prove their version of democracy is best, they sometimes overlook their similar concern for political, social, and economic conditions that will enable all people to develop their capacities (Held, 1996, p. 299). Despite this ongoing discussion, the question of how to balance the relationship between a sovereign state with sovereign people remains unanswered.

Without establishing a “right” answer, the principle of autonomy emerges as an integral piece to the puzzle. Autonomy enables citizens to “enjoy equal rights and, accordingly, equal obligations...as they remain free and equal in the determination of the conditions of their own lives, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others” (Held, 1996, p. 301). In essence, individuals retain the ability for self-determination through free and equal participation in processes of debate and deliberation. Therefore, communication becomes essential to establishing liberty. Similarly, Schudson argues, “if democracy is as it has often been called, government by discussion, government by rational and free public discussion among legally equal citizens, conversation must lie close to its heart” (1997, ¶ 1).

Furthermore, in democracy discussion becomes a system of collective decision-making that allows for extensive involvement of citizens in diverse political affairs that directly affect their autonomy (Held, 1996, p.310). This process requires adequate and equal participation, enlightened understanding, voting equality, control of the agenda, and

inclusiveness. These requirements are difficult to attain and create numerous spaces for disagreement pertaining to participation, citizenship, and inclusiveness. Therefore, the creation of a democratic society requires adequate spaces and procedures for debate and decision-making around issues to which citizens bring divergent views and interests (Held, 1996, p.312). In the end, democracy depends on discussion and an acceptance of the fact that democratic talk is not homogenous, it is public, and it is uncomfortable (Schudson, 1997, ¶ 6).

Held reiterates that the theory of participatory democracy leaves many crucial questions unanswered, but puts forth the argument that,

a democratic state and civil society are incompatible with powerful sets of social relations and organizations which can by virtue of the very basis of their operation systematically distort democratic outcomes (1996, p.322).

Similarly, Fraser (1992) incorporates the project of critical theory to expose the limits of democracy in late-capitalist societies while working to create new more egalitarian and just institutions. Utilizing Habermas' concept of the public sphere as the starting point for overcoming these current gaps, Fraser furnishes a space accessible and open to all "in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed" (Habermas, 1991, p.398) as citizens deal with matters of general interest without coercion. By guaranteeing that citizens may assemble, unite, express and publicize their opinions freely, the public sphere secures the production and circulation of equal and critical voices that are independent of both the state and the economy (Fraser, 1992, p.109).

While Habermas' public sphere holds the state accountable and establishes an ideal for unrestricted rational discussion on public matters leading to consensus about the

common good, Fraser (1992) claims that its tendency to overlook important issues of publicity and status is a fundamental flaw that needs to be corrected (p. 115). Similar to Held's (1996) contention that power relations can distort democratic processes and outcomes, Fraser (1992) argues that Habermas' ideal has become a vehicle for the construction of hegemonic consent by merely bracketing status differentials as opposed to creating social equality and ensuring open access. Beyond bracketing, democracy requires the elimination of social inequalities and a public sphere where all voices are heard and legitimated. Without "participatory parity," contributions from unequally empowered social groups will continue to be marginalized (Fraser, 1992, p.120).

Concurring, Schudson explains,

[w]hat makes conversation democratic is not free, equal and spontaneous expression, but equal access to the floor, equal participation in setting the ground rules for discussion, and a set of ground rules designed to encourage pertinent speaking, attentive listening, appropriate simplifications, and widely apportioned speaking rights. (1997, ¶ 39).

Establishing "social equality" as well as "democratic conversation" requires an understanding that citizens in a democracy must "alleviate the conditions of the least powerful while restricting the scope...of the most powerful...where it can be shown that such inequalities undermine [and limit]..." the development of a democratic society (Held, 1996, p. 331). Arguing that societies in late-capitalism are stratified as opposed to egalitarian, Fraser proposes a multiplicity of public spheres generating alternative counter publics that allow for the circulation of counter discourses, assist in the formulation of oppositional identities, interests, and needs, and force public debate and contestation as they offset participatory privileges of the dominant groups in stratified societies (1992, p. 123-4). This argument states that the existence of multiple public spheres realizes and

values diverse cultural styles, interests, and needs and allows for the formation of opinion and identities through a process of open and equal participation that is essential to a democratic society. This is a difficult task, but I agree with Fraser that there is “no reason in principle to rule out such a society in which social equality and cultural diversity exist with participatory democracy” (1992, p. 126-7).

strong democracy

Barber’s (1984) discussion of “strong democracy” synthesizes the concepts of multiple public spheres and participatory democracy. Accepting Fraser’s challenge to strive for a society that values differences and provides opportunities to exchange ideas in search of a common good, Barber (1984) presents a definition inching us closer to this realization. Unfairly criticized for its lack of realism, strong democracy relies on rational participation, is dependent on great citizens as opposed to great leaders, and requires that we take ourselves seriously as citizens and self-governors (not merely voters) who must participate at least some of the time (Barber, 1984, p.xvii). Outlining the differences between strong democracy and liberal democracy or as Barber refers to it, thin democracy; an understanding of the individual becomes crucial.

Barber argues that the weakness of liberal democracy lies in its premises about human nature, knowledge, and politics that are genuinely liberal, but not intrinsically democratic. Due to its basis in anarchy, liberalism’s fundamental conception of the individual, and its justification for individual rights, is flawed and undermines democratic practices (Barber, 1984, p.4). In theory, democracy should be about securing public justice and advancing interests through a process of bringing individuals together rather than keeping them separated, but as liberal democracy finds success in “resisting assaults

on the individual...[it is] unsuccessful in resisting assaults on community or justice or citizenship or participation” (Barber, 1984, p. 4). As liberal democrats struggle to deny (anarchy), repress (realism), or tolerate (minimalist) conflict, freedom becomes indistinguishable from selfishness and is corrupted by apathy, alienation, and anomie (p.6). Reducing equality to market exchangeability and citizenship to material gratifications and self-interested bargain, “thin democracy...yields neither the pleasures of participation nor the fellowship of civic association,” and denies mutual deliberation and decision-making (Barber, 1984, p. 22-24).

Conversely, strong democracy links democracy with issues of participation, citizenship, and political activity while understanding the place of conflict and the separation of private and public realms (Barber, 1984, p.117). This form of democracy considers politics a way of living that enables human beings to maintain competing and overlapping interests. The stress on conflict shifts from tolerance, denial, and/or repression to one of transformation and discovery, and individuals - discussing private interests in terms of public accommodations - emerge as citizens valuing commonality and equality rather than divisions (p.122-136). Politics becomes a site for action instead of a search for Truth or justice in the abstract (p. 122-5) and encourages critical thinking and deliberation with a focus on finding a reasonable answer as opposed to proving that one side is right.⁸

Barber (1984) does not deny that politics is conflict resolution, but strong democracy incorporates participation as an ongoing “process of...self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent, private individuals

⁸ See Barber (1984) Part II: Strong Democracy -The argument for citizenship, Chapters 6 & 7 for elaborations on these points.

into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods” (p. 132). In this society, activity is essential as it is the only way to achieve common deliberation, common decision-making, and common work. Therefore, fundamental to the establishment of a strong democracy are institutions designed to facilitate ongoing civic participation, agenda setting, deliberation, legislation, and policy implementation by citizens rather than a repressive government (p. 150). Strong democracy embraces dissensus as a space for public thinking as politics becomes the business of amateurs not experts and specialists.

At the heart of strong democracy is the idea that participation is not a random activity. Barber (1984) argues that “masses make noise, citizens deliberate...; masses collide,...citizens engage, share, and contribute” (p. 154). Through active participation, masses become citizens comprising publics. For this transformation to occur, talk must occur. Where Fraser saw a necessity of discourse among a multiplicity of public spheres providing equal access to an egalitarian setting, Barber’s strong democracy expands the notion of participatory parity, as it considers talk and listening essential to democracy. Talk - understood as any human interaction that involves language and symbols - moves citizens to a place beyond the articulation of competing interests and instead to a space that involves receiving and hearing (Barber, 1984, p. 174). Such a process works to achieve Fraser’s participatory parity as the aim in speaking becomes less about prevailing and more about understanding and respecting as listening enhances equality through the development of mutual understanding among diverse citizens.

Furthermore strong democracy requires an understanding that no voice is privileged and no position advantaged, but that every expression is legitimate as citizens

set their own agenda and collectively determine what counts as an issue (Barber, 1984, p. 183). Similar to multiple public spheres establishing an egalitarian society uninhibited by stratification and status, strong democracy stresses the importance of creating a feeling of community without surrendering autonomy. For both, participatory parity is a prerequisite for democracy, while respectful communication becomes a necessity for “the development of a citizenry capable of genuine public thinking and political judgment and thus able to envision a common future in terms of genuinely common goods” (p. 197).

democratic communication

As society expands and evolves, processes of communication add to the complexities. If we agree with Williams’ idea that “general participation in common decision-making is the deepest principle in democracy itself” (as cited in Hagen, 1992, p.20) and that mass media are an essential component for effective and necessary communication in modern societies, democratic communication systems must evolve beyond theoretical ideals, and strong democracy and participatory parity cannot remain abstractions. If, as Barber argues, talk is essential to the establishment of democracy, the impact of communications technologies on democracy must also be analyzed. Extending this argument, Garnham (2000) stressed the need for a mediated public sphere due to the complexities of modernization. Consequently, media become central to social coordination, and are essential to the development of an accessible and egalitarian public sphere.

Currently, strong democracy is jeopardized by capitalist, industrial, and bureaucratic commercial media organizations governed by the logic of profit accumulation and valuing audience maximization over other operating factors (Bruck,

1992, p.139). Therefore, baseline knowledge for media scholars must be: who owns the media; who controls them; and for what purposes (Wasko, 1992, p. 3), as well as inquiries into what is left out, overlooked, and marginalized. And a central issue concerning media and democracy, one that reminds us of participatory parity and access, becomes the concentration of power in the production and distribution of knowledge and information (Wasko, 1992).

Similar to Williams' argument that communication scholars are social critics, Garnham (2000) sees the object of media studies as the study of structure and processes of social communication as media systems develop into “systems for the production, circulation, and appropriation of meaning” (p. 4). Understanding that media may evolve as either an egalitarian public sphere or create hindrances to democracy due to ownership and control (Garnham, 2000, p. 10), structural analyses become important since they define communication systems “not as irresistible steamrollers of the state, but as important sites for struggle” (Masterman, 2001, p. 30). Media, therefore, remain central to questions regarding contemporary society, and the democratization of media becomes vital to furthering democracy as it allows for access to others and provides crucial information necessary for informed deliberation (Kellner, 1992).

For strong democracy to exist, democratic communication sites must allow individuals to influence and have access to institutions that affect their lives (Hagen, 1992). If rational debate is jeopardized as people lose the ability to be heard and are effectively denied inclusion to the political process crucial information disappears. As long as immense “gaps exist between those who have access to media and those who do not, those who have the power to define and those who are always defined, those who are

allowed to speak about the world as they know and understand it and those whose experiences are inevitably framed by others” (Masterman, 2001, p. 61), social equality and strong democracy will remain a naive ideal. Therefore, to ensure equality, democratization of the media and democratization through the media must emerge (Hagen, 1992).

As individuals begin to demystify media operations, functions, and organizational structures (Hagen, 1992, p. 22), media democratization can occur. In addition, the extent and quality of social representation and participation will increase, and individuals will become “active partner(s) and not just object(s) of communication” (Hagen, 1992, p.23).

critical media consciousness

Masterman (2001) argues that as media saturate modern societies and establish themselves as influential consciousness industries, media education must be understood as education for democracy since participatory democracy depends on the ability of citizens to communicate effectively. This critical media consciousness⁹ demands more than just an increase in diverse information, it also requires that different social groups control their own media, and retain a rationale that values information as a social good, not merely a commodity (Hagen, 1992, p. 23). The development of such a critical media consciousness aids in the prevention of the control of information as a means to concentrate power by an elite. For this to occur media participation must be linked to

⁹Masterman (2001) argues that the development of a widespread critical media consciousness in relation to media issues, media development, and media expansion must be a starting point for challenging existing democratic structures and social inequalities. I argue that this term also provides a more comprehensive approach to understanding the importance of media education as a lifelong process while also overcoming some of the limitations of the embattled and loaded term media literacy. Throughout this section I will use Masterman’s term in place of the term literacy.

social participation and progressive social movements must obtain the ability to utilize democratic communication practices that are essential to establishing strong democracy. Ultimately, media education must denaturalize current media systems through investigations of production, consumption, and ownership.

Even as the control over communications has been linked to political and economic power (McChesney, 1996), for the most part, communications research remains fascinated with content while overlooking questions of media organizations and structures, that are central to understanding a society dominated by large-scale media institutions with the power to name and construct meaning (Couldry, 2000). In turn, these issues of power, the power to define, allocate and display such a resource, and their unequal distribution, are central to social inequality in that they impact individuals' ability to constitute social reality (Couldry, 2000, p.7).

media consciousness – media education

Focusing so much attention on dominant vs. resistant readings simply lets the media industry off the hook, and reproduces media's power to name as legitimate (Couldry, 2000). This emphasis on consumption, "effectively masks the lack of choice, which too often exists at the point of production" (Masterman, 2001, p. 17), and the academy's concern with a diversity of readings as well as the influx of new channels enables the industry to remain above critique by explaining that they provide something for everyone. As Anderson and Goldson (1993) explain, this ongoing discussion of resistant readings allows all programming to appear acceptable. In response, Couldry (2000) argues for a move away from particular texts to gain a better understanding of the place and status of media in society.

While audience studies and textual analysis do provide valuable insight, they help support the contention that people are getting what they want. Unless more attention is paid to the political economy of the media industry, the argument that we get what we want will remain hard to counter. In the meantime, products that fit into a profitable business model, have broad appeal, and demand the least investment (i.e. reality TV, news magazines) will continue to dominate the media landscape.

Systematic market failures continue to offer consumers what is most cost-efficient to produce instead of what serves the public good or even what the public would be willing to pay for (Baker, 1998). Important questions concerning existing media organizations, ownership structures, business strategies, and their privileged location within the existing power structure must no longer be relegated to the sideline. As Masterman (2001) argues,

education in the technologies and the media should play an empowering and liberating role, helping prepare [individuals] for democratic citizenship and political awareness. Thus [individuals] should be given an understanding of the structures, mechanisms, and messages of the mass media... (p. 15).

By incorporating the study of media power with other issues of power (Couldry, 2000) valuable queries can assist with the creation of a democratic society that lives up to its belief in the liberation of humanity.

media consciousness - media processes

Communication and media are vital to any discussion involving democracy. In addition, domestic political content of news services is in many countries an essential basis for citizenship, providing the integrity of information flow upon which a degree of informed participation can occur (Corner, 1999). According to Schudson (1997) the

importance lies in the fact that “not everyone read the paper but even those who fail to do are forced to follow the groove for their borrowed thoughts. One pen suffices to set off a million tongues” (the subject section, ¶ 2). The problem is that “news knowledge is almost by definition narrow and often superficial in character...allowing limited time for sustained development of any one item” (Corner, 1999, p.117). Furthermore, Klein (1999) explains that news and public affairs programming exhibit biases that derive from mass media’s institutional structures.

According to Herman (1995) commercial media structures leave access to privately owned media in the hands of the wealthy and powerful; allow government and business interests to penetrate these institutions either through direct control or indirect influence; and create a relationship between the media and proponents of the status quo fixing the boundaries of public discussion and repeatedly excluding fundamental dissent from news stories. In the US, the day-to-day news making process centers on a triangulate of government officials, business leaders, and powerful institutions (Rodriquez, 1995). The fact that these aspects of society are reported on with a cautious deference leads “self-censoring journalists” to produce uncritical news supportive of a dominant ideology that assists in setting the nation’s agenda (Rodriguez, 1995, p135.). As Downing (2001) explains, this uncritical acceptance of standard professional media codes, codes that claim to provide objectivity and truth, actually erects blockages to public expression. It is these same blockages that hinder the development of strong democracy, and require development of a critical media consciousness.

media consciousness - media literacy

Masterman (2001) requires that media education be empowering and liberating, and Calabrese (2001) expands this notion by arguing that while:

Most social and political theory treat communications as an after thought,...[but] no meaningful definition of contemporary citizenship should fail to account for how the modern media are technological and institutional means for citizens to obtain information about the world in which they live and for engaging democratic deliberation (p. 69).

Media literacy is fundamental to this process, but Calabrese also understands that before debating the importance of media literacy in relation to citizenship and politics, there must be an understanding that “idea of literacy is politically significant not only in terms of issues pertaining to citizens’ ability to acquire instrumentally useful knowledge, but also through the relationship between literacy and political judgment and action” (2001, p. 69). This insight is beneficial not only for those trying to create a democratic media model, but also as individuals deal with and incorporate media (both mainstream and alternative) into their lives.

As Bruck and Raboy (1989) argue, “strategies for social change and political action have to be comprehensive with regard to communication” including an understanding of who controls the means of production (p. 12). Ultimately, a critical media consciousness becomes essential to establishing strong democracy, and must locate itself within larger movements for political and social change. This will also situate media issues as legitimate political issues as progressives begin to see the impact on their own struggles (Cowie, 2000).

Critical media consciousness seeks to expand the current concept of media literacy beyond its limited definitions. This alternative vision of media literacy, understands the importance of empowering individuals to construct and distribute alternative representations as they expand public discourse and redevelop public life (Giroux, as cited in Cowie, 2000). The goal is to move media from a system of commodified consciousness towards a system that offers the diverse, disagreeing, and contradictory environment that values all individuals and all inputs while creating a reality based on dignity, empowerment, and autonomy, a reality that is essential to democracy (Jhally, 2003).

This process is more than one of creative self-expression, but rather is essential for the realization of a democratic culture (Cowie, 2000. p. 313). In this context, literacy becomes more than a tool for reading and writing, but rather as Freire articulated, literacy establishes a way for individuals to fit into the world and more importantly to change it. Extending this belief, Lewis and Jhally explain that media literacy is “about more than the analysis of messages, it is about an awareness of why those messages are there...why they are produced, under what constraints and conditions and by whom” (1998, p.111). This comprehensive concept of media literacy is essential to “preparing individuals to function as informed citizens in a democratic society” (Hobbs, 2001, p. 165).

As media become more than basic conduits of information the public must understand aesthetic aspects of the media, how production variables operate, and how political, economic, and social forces encourage the development of some media over others (Meyrowitz, 1998). This comprehensive interrogation enables individuals to think

about the limits and possibilities of media systems while illuminating the alternatives to a system that appears natural and ubiquitous (Lewis & Jhally, 1998).

Critical media consciousness ultimately enables individuals to analyze media as “sets of institutions with particular social and economic structures that are neither inevitable or irreversible” (Lewis & Jhally, 1998, p. 109). It also opens up a space for understanding mass communication in cultural terms as opposed to simple economic terms, and as a public service instead of a business (McChesney, 1996). The aim is to produce a media savvy public of sophisticated citizens (as opposed to sophisticated consumers) with the potential to extend democracy (Lewis & Jhally, 1998). A critical media consciousness focusing on analysis and production and aligned with progressives is invaluable for those struggling to create a more humanitarian culture (Cowie, 2000). Such a consciousness provides the framework for discerning “media institutions as civic institutions” as well as the “potential for making technological innovations a means to enhance democratic citizenship” (Calabrese, 2001, p. 77).

media consciousness – media diversity

According to MacPherson, the basis of democracy is the concept of developmental power, or the opportunity for members of the public to use and develop their capacities (1973, p.42). While Barber’s strong democracy enables individual capacities and guarantees rule by the people instead of a few powerful social blocs, the current reality is that these capacities are shackled by the division of power between capital and labor that keeps developmental power from flourishing and democracy from being established (MacPherson, 1973).

Communication technologies and mediated communication practices are fundamental to altering this process. According to Kellner:

democracy requires a knowledgeable electorate that can participate in political affairs. In order for free people to govern themselves, they must be adequately informed and able to participate in public debate, elections and political activity. Freedom of the press is thus necessary to assure that the press would be free from domination by any economic or political force and could criticize the government, powerful institutions, while promoting vigorous debate on issues of common concern. (2003, ¶ 2).

In theory, a media system existing in a democratic society should provide the potential for individuals to voice their policy preferences, concerns, and ideas, while also ensuring that informed and enlightened citizens have the ability to respond and act. Due to the size (geographic and population) and complexities of modern societies, public deliberation must be mediated, and democracy will only work if media provide full, accurate, and well-interpreted information to the public (Page, 1996).

Currently, the public relies on a market driven media system that has created professional communicators called on to convey accurate information. Page (1996) warns that this reliance on mass-mediated public deliberation may cause democracy to fail if the information provided is inaccurate, misleading, incomplete, or full of outright lies. Arguing that the contemporary situation of media saturation and hypercommercialism contributes to the expansion of hegemonic corporate interests and redefines public communication, Fursich and Lester Roushanzamir (2001) call for an alternative model of communication that accounts for the current political-economic conditions. A diverse media system will help offset these concerns and prevent ideological biases from distorting public deliberation (Page, 1996, p.8). Building this media model is vital to the

creation of strong democracy since the market cannot be relied upon to ensure diversity and equal access.

Diversity and access should lead to the availability of more ideas and therefore a more informed citizenry, but according to Entman and Wildman (1992), diversity is a complicated word that can mean many different things. Market economists base many of their decisions on product diversity that ensures a range of variation in product attributes (i.e. time of day local news is aired or the personalities), and access diversity that requires media gatekeepers refrain from excluding divergent opinions. Both of these definitions assume that all media is open to all ideas and provides them with sufficient coverage. The problem lies in the fact that the market responds more favorably to those who have dollars to spend causing information to tilt towards those who can simply pay for it (Page, 1996).

Therefore, communication policy rooted in the market school of economic thought argues that economic efficiency¹⁰ promotes desirable goals such as a diverse marketplace of ideas benefiting the social and political life of the nation, and to achieve such goals competition must be nurtured and protected (Entman & Wildman, 1992). Critiquing this model, Kellner (2003) argued that instead, commercial media have become a social problem that has undermined democracy as they continue to “replac[e] news with entertainment, pursu[e] profits and tabloidization...over public enlightenment” (¶ 6).

Policy makers grounded in the social school of economics, realize that economic efficiency is not the primary concern, and it is their contention that while unfettered

¹⁰ Entman and Wildman (1992) define economic efficiency as maximizing the amount by which economic benefits of communication activities exceed the economic costs.

competition is one of several means of creating a better society, it also has many undesirable consequences. Furthermore, while market theorists argue strongly against any type of government intervention in the market, social school practitioners view government intervention as a desirable way for the public to overcome the problems inherent in a strict market system (Entman & Wildman, 1992).

Furthermore, idea diversity, as opposed to simple market driven diversity, argues that society is better off with a well-informed citizenry and good governance stemming from access to a wide array of distinct thoughts, analyses, and criticisms that are available on issues of social and political importance. In order to create a more democratic media structure and a truly democratic society, people must realize that the market lies about its perfection as it neglects the concept of ‘public goods’ and other hard to quantify externalities (McChesney, 1996). In turn, media must assume democratic functions of critically discussing issues of public concern from a variety of viewpoints; foster vigorous public debate; and allow for the development of alternative press outlets (Kellner, 2003).

Critical media consciousness leads to an understanding of the barriers that currently exist for strong democracy as well the implications of the current media structure. Simultaneously, such a consciousness provides an opportunity to affect change on such structures creating an engaged, aware, informed and connected individual.

media consciousness - media reform

Echoing the concerns of others, Downing (2001) argues that in current societies, mass media become necessary since they have the potential to ensure the communication of information required for effective deliberation, but this potential is hindered by the

current corporate structure of media institutions. To create a more democratic society, there must be a continued struggle against cultural dominance and leadership of the ruling class as well as the presentation of an alternative vision of society (Downing, 2001, p.14). Gramsci explained that key components of this continued dominance were agencies of information, including the media, which assisted with the natural appearance of the status quo, and in order to surmount this dominance, the organic intellectual also termed “communicator/activist” becomes integral to the development of a truly egalitarian society (Downing, 2001, p.15). Radical alternative media and the activists involved clearly fall into such a category as they struggle to enhance public debate in search of a goal of freedom as opposed to one of domination (Downing, 2001, p. 15).

Even though alternative media attempt to resist techniques employed by the mainstream they often adopt the same technologized means that limit popular participation (Hamilton, 2000). Therefore, progressives must not rely on technology to revolutionize society. Instead, a movement to create new cultural forms and more egalitarian political and economic structures is required (Drew, 1995, p. 83), as is an understanding of the limitations of technology and constraints of mediated communication. With high costs of entry into the market working against variety and leading to a less competitive market, media institutions rely on funding from advertising, simultaneously limiting access and working “against the optimum use of media as an agency of the public sphere” (Corner, 1999, p.19). Furthermore, even if entry costs are reduced, the problem of achieving a level of production quality competitive with established industry standards remains (Corner, 1999, p.15).

Citing Williams, Sparks (1993) argues these factors lead to centralization and concentration of control in fewer and fewer hands as the task of communications becomes one of adequate rates of return. In order to combat this process, Williams proposed a democratic form of communication separating production from distribution, and establishing numerous production centers which allow for freedom from commercial restraints, encourage the production of innovative and minority works, and avoid the monolithic practices of mainstream mass communication systems (as cited in Sparks, 1993, p.81). Atton (2002) builds on Williams' ideas and explains that it is not simply a question of radicalizing the methods of production, but alternative media requires a "rethinking of what it means to be a media producer. Alternative media...are crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production" (Atton, 2002, p.4). Questions regarding access to production, as well how such a division of labor operates to concurrently legitimate and limit participants in a given discussion become key to this project. Communication is inevitably linked to power, and "media power is an emergent form of social power in complex societies...depending on the fast circulation of information and images" (Couldry & Curran, 2003, p. 4).

media consciousness - democratic alternatives

Currently, citizens struggle to produce and circulate knowledge and engage in the process of deliberation and decision-making as they encounter the stonewall of corporate media (Angus, 1994, p. 233). Due to this crisis, the struggle for democracy must incorporate emerging communication technologies into the fight for institutions that ensure the right to communicate, acquire information, and produce one's own (Bruck &

Raboy, 1989). Media access is political power and launching independent media is one aspect of providing opportunities for cultural expression and democratic social relations (p. 10). As individuals realize their critical media consciousness and come to understand that they are capable media practitioners (as opposed to merely the audience), grassroots organizations can begin to obtain the ability to voice political concerns in an environment that respects all points of view and searches for the common good.

Decommodification of media is vital for this process as its role should be to “enable little people in big societies to send and receive a variety of opinions in a variety of ways” (Keane, 1993, p. 239). A fully democratic communication system will also ensure that “great big dogmas and smelly little orthodoxies of all kinds are held in check and in which, thanks to the existence of a genuine plurality of media of communication, various individuals and groups could openly express their solidarity with other citizens’ likes and dislikes, proposals, tastes, and ideals” (Keane, 1993, p. 244).

Downing asks the question: What possibilities do people have for constructing their own media (1984, p.10)? His argument is that alternatives result when audiences think about who they are in relation to their political context and take their lives into their own hands. Throughout history, this process has led to numerous attempts by individuals and groups to create alternatives that challenge existing authorities (Couldry, 2003; Hamilton 2000,2001). Frequently, individuals and groups create horizontal communication links as opposed to the vertical process of communication that the mainstream media favor. While vertical communication creates a top-down form of communication moving from giant corporations to ordinary people and therefore foregoing any true sense of democratic communication, horizontal communication allows

for cross community dialogue, helps to erase the lines between press and reader (or producer and audience), and provides an outlet for the discussion of important social and political realities lacking and overlooked by mainstream media (Downing, 1995, p. 241). This provides a space for media to be an “effective instrument” by disrupting the traditional “maker/audience dichotomy” allowing both the producer and audience to participate in social change (Anderson & Goldman, 1993, p. 59).

Erasing this distinction between producer and receiver, the horizontal model for communication also moves media beyond the constraints of commercialization that limit and discard contributions viewed as failing to meet the criteria of professional journalism. As Atton (2002, p.4) explains, these non standard methods of creation, production and distribution are as important as diverse content since they have the ability to provide greater access to a wider range of voices and expand the idea of democratic participation. Answering Williams’ call for the decapitalization, deprofessionalization, and deinstitutionalization of the media industry, these processes provide a challenge to the political strength of media that stems from the struggle over access, participation, ownership and representation. Following this format, media could be put to uses that “tend toward equality and emancipation” instead of re/producing relations of domination (Sparks, 1993, p.73).

Current naturalized communications systems and structures deny strong democracy, but “there is nothing natural...about profit seeking, privately owned and operated communications media” (Keane, 1993, p. 238). Overcoming this situation depends on an informed and participating citizenry. As James Madison exclaimed, “a popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a

prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both” (as cited in McChesney, 1998). This effort may prove difficult, but many citizens are already laboring to create practical alternatives to the obviously broken market driven media model. Progressive social movements incorporating a critical media consciousness in their attempts to sustain strong democracy are fundamental to this transformation because they believe that “we can make something better, if we have the courage to try” (Williams, 1989, p. 31).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

*There are alternatives to a research model which participates in... a world economic and communication system...which is at its core exploitative. [Among] these alternatives---
postmodern ethnography, juxtaposition....
- Lester-massman, 1991*

Guided by a partnership involving critical theory's engagement with progressive social change (Kellner, 1990, p. 22), and political economy's commitment to praxis and questions of justice, equality, and the public good (Meehan, Mosco, & Wasko, 1993, p. 108), the purpose of this project is to further the argument that "[scholars] are well positioned to research the deepening divisions between communication haves and have-nots" (Meehan et. al, p. 109). That said, the following chapter outlines my methodological choices and rationales that are theoretically consistent with both positions.

To further develop the concept of critical media consciousness and highlight its importance to revitalizing democracy, I chose to investigate the media strategies of current progressive organizations. I had intended to analyze organizations producing alternative media content and situate media reform as central to the establishment of strong democracy. I also wanted to become immersed in a critical discussion that encompassed more than issues of production and the circulation of diverse content. My aim was to emphasize how the emancipatory power of alternative media as well as its centrality to strong democracy evolves through non-hierarchical organizational structures embracing participatory democratic practices and commitments to creating new social formations.

Researchers record what they observe and learn through actual participation as they study groups and people as they go about their daily lives (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p.1). With the goal of spotlighting the democratic practices of media activists and their importance to practicing democracy, I employed ethnographic methods: participant observation, archival analysis, interviewing, defamiliarization, and juxtaposition. This

approach helped me focus on two cases that would ensure access and insight, and enable personal involvement, interaction, and observation.

Anthropologists George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1999) define juxtaposition as an anthropological ethnographic technique valuable for understanding domestic subjects due to its reliance on a process of defamiliarization. They explain that the defamiliarization process disrupts the common sense while “placing familiar subjects in unfamiliar... contexts” (p.137). This method can involve matching a domestic case with one from abroad as facts from one culture activate probes “into the specific facts about a subject of criticism at home” (p. 138). Their argument that a strong version of juxtaposition could include two domestic groups fit the purposes of this project. I sought out progressive organizations in the U.S. committed to democracy and citizen participation but with different media strategies and ideas regarding media reform. As Marcus and Fischer (1999) explain, “cases are not simple alternatives or ideal contrasts, but instead a means of framing questions for a project of domestic ethnography” (p. 160).

I began investigating organizations located in the Southeastern United States. Citizens for Media Literacy, a non-profit, public interest collective in Asheville, North Carolina focusing on links between media literacy and the concepts and practices of citizenship, was one of many appropriate groups.¹¹ I was also familiar with Gainesville, Florida’s Civic Media Center (CMC), a self-described alternative press library and reading room, supported by memberships, volunteers, and community groups. The CMC provides numerous resources for accessing alternative media, sponsors numerous events, and offers meeting rooms and office space for those in the Gainesville community.¹² A

¹¹ <http://www.main.nc.us/cml/> last accessed 2/26/04.

¹² <http://www.civicmediacenter.org/news/>

third option was the Atlanta Independent Media Center. Affiliated with the global indymedia network, this volunteer organization is committed to using media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social and economic justice. Their stated goal is to “empower people to ‘become the media’ by providing democratic access to available technologies and information.”¹³

Realizing that any of these groups would provide significant insight into the relationships between media and democracy, I pursued funding opportunities that could provide potential financial support for the project. Fortunately, in the spring of 2003, with the issue of access influencing my project, a professor notified me that a loose affiliation of Athens, GA citizens were preparing to meet weekly to discuss issues of corporate media and the need and potential for alternative media in Athens, GA. The following week I attended a meeting. Fifteen individuals including university students, professors, local professionals, artists and activists also attended. Upon receiving a copy of the rough Athens Mass Media Organization working paper, attendees introduced themselves and shared their reasons for attending as well as their thoughts about media needs for the Athens community. Two hours later the meeting adjourned and I left certain that this group would continue to meet and excited that some of my access problems were solved.

My next step required locating a second case that would provide further insight. I identified the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) as an alternative progressive organization to juxtapose AIMC with the potential to instigate questions enabling the critical analysis of both. Again, access played a key part in my decision making process. For the past seven years, my brother has been employed as a Lead Organizer for Action

¹³ <http://atlanta.indymedia.org/mod/info/display/mission/index.php>

in Montgomery, an IAF affiliate in Montgomery County, Maryland. We had often discussed media coverage, or lack thereof, of the IAF. Thus, I knew of the IAF's long and successful history of working for social change, and had retained a basic understanding of their efforts, tactics, and organizational structure that supplied both an important counterpart as well as ideological similarities to the emerging organization in Athens.

Furthermore, the existence of *Dry Bones Rattling*, a "political ethnography...presenting an examination of the historical development...of the Texas IAF" (Warren, 2001b, p. 10), proved valuable. Marcus and Fischer (1999) argue that strong ethnographic projects utilizing juxtaposition may "practically" involve "the published ethnography of others" as they provide "a framework or strategy of analysis that would not otherwise be achieved" (p. 162). Warren's work focuses on the IAF's contributions to building strong community organizations and their efforts at offering citizens access to power in a way that establishes and sustains democracy and democratic participation. Most important for my project is Warren's attempt to "advance [the] understanding of how to build social capital, forge multiracial cooperation, and revitalize democratic politics in America" (2001b, p. 10). His detailed analysis, based on 6 years of interviews, participant observation, and archival analysis in the late 1990's, supplied information that proved invaluable. Furthermore, his thorough discussion and rigorous critique of the IAF suggested the probes required for a strong ethnographic juxtaposition.

I will argue that combined, AIMC and IAF offer a "stronger version of cross-cultural juxtaposition...pursued within a domestic context" (Marcus & Fischer, 1999, p. 162). This technique allowed for an elaboration of my ideas concerning the fundamental components for a critical media consciousness and supported my contention that the

development of strong democracy necessitates democratic communication structures that increase citizen participation through the building of strong, equitable, and sustainable social relations among diverse peoples. With both groups chosen, the process of data collection began.

The fieldwork for the Athens portion of this project began in the March of 2003 and continued through February 2004 with participant observation my primary source of data collection. During this time, AIMC held four meetings a month. I consistently attended three meetings a month, as well as special events co/hosted by AIMC. I also participated in organizational meetings occurring outside the regular meetings (i.e. website meetings and meetings with other organizations). Initially, I attended AIMC meetings as an interested observer, but over time my contributions increased as I became directly involved in the development of a website and a subsidiary student organization. I was also responsible for administering the organizations funds.

Also, in November of 2003, as a member of AIMC, I attended the National Conference on Media Reform in Madison, Wisconsin which allowed me to witness firsthand the strategies and approaches of other independent media practitioners. Conference attendees included members of US Congress, commissioners from the FCC, media scholars, media professionals, and social activists. Occurring simultaneously was another conference, BE THE MEDIA, sponsored by Madison Indymedia, WORT 89.9 FM, and the Madison Infoshop.

Ongoing personal involvement with the group was essential to documenting the activities of AIMC and provided opportunities to reflect upon and compare my notes with information compiled from listervs as well as individual actions. This project also

benefited from the incorporation and analysis of printed documents produced and/or distributed by AIMC. I archived email correspondence and had access to listserv communication. Throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2003 and spring of 2004, I also attended the meetings of other community organizations as AIMC attempted to build valuable coalitions.

To support and strengthen my conclusions I triangulated my notes with personal and email conversations, discussion on the group listserv, AIMC fliers, and other AIMC documents. Relying on different sources and methodological choices provides for corroboration through triangulation while remaining grounded in the understanding that in combination they will not ultimately reveal the truth (Silverman, 2000). Such detailed and exhaustive analysis allows the researcher to explain perceptions and interpretations regarding those being studied while also understanding that research reports are a revelation of the multiple truths that exist in the larger social world (Emerson, et al., 1995). As Stake (1994) commented, not everything about the case can be understood due to certain choices that the researcher makes (p. 238) but this does not negate the value of the work since the goal is not to ultimately generalize the findings, but instead to “demonstrate that the analysis relates to things beyond the material at hand” (Silverman, 2000, p. 111).

My analysis of the Industrial Areas Foundation also relied on continued conversations with my brother. These lengthy discussions and email exchanges concerning the IAF, mass media, and the importance of citizen participation for the success of democracy were made possible by my brother’s affiliation with the IAF and unquestionable commitment to their goals. While these exchanges were an impetus to

this project, they were merely the starting point that helped formulate questions and concerns, sparked future discussions and directed me to the work of Warren (1996, 2001a, 2001b) and other documents regarding the IAF.

Throughout this period, data collection included locating and familiarizing myself with IAF documents, academic articles related to the organization, popular press accounts of IAF actions, and IAF-affiliate websites. I also benefited from books authored by Mike Gecan and Ed Chambers, members of the IAF national executive team, reports from IAF members, and writings pertaining to IAF founder Saul Alinsky.¹⁴ During this time I located valuable information regarding the IAF's organizational structure, internal components, goals, successes, failures, and firsthand accounts of IAF activities. I also expanded and enhanced my understanding of the IAF's history, its media relations strategies, and its incorporation of communication technologies.

Considering the practices of AIMC and the IAF provided "better understanding, perhaps better theorizing" about media and democratic communication (Stake, 1994, p. 237). As Reason argues, "valid human inquiry...requires full participation in the creation of...knowings" (1994, p. 332). In this way, the researcher becomes immersed in other's worlds by being involved and gaining firsthand experience leading to insight and understanding (Emerson, et. al, 1995). Incorporating these methods in my focus on

¹⁴ Saul Alinsky was trained at the University of Chicago as a criminologist. In the late 1930s he organized workers, local merchants, unions, and church groups in the neighborhood behind the Chicago stockyards and created the Back of the Yards Coalition. Believing that an organization of community organizations was essential to democracy and fighting against abusive power, Alinsky went on to form the Industrial Areas Foundation. <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/101/lenz.html>

particular cases will allow me to “provide insight into [the] issue” as it is studied in depth in order to understand a larger issue (Stake, 1994, p. 237).

In the next chapter, I furnish the evidence accumulated over the past year. First, I situate each organization as a key ingredient in the development of strong democracy through a description of their missions, goals, and strategies. This is followed by a detailed discussion of power that details each organization’s approach to devising a power dynamic that surmounts democracy as it exists by promoting democracy as it should be. Next, expanding on the issues of democracy and power, I introduce the third sector, a twist on Habermas’ public sphere. This section highlights attempts to ensure strong democracy through information sharing and political action by citizens and documents the successes and struggles of each organization throughout this process. Finally, I provide a diagnosis of each organization and stress the significance of a critical media consciousness to the success of their efforts, and by extension the success of the global democracy project.

CHAPTER 4

MEDIATED COMMUNICATION – DEMOCRATIC POWER

The empty space at the center of American democracy is defined ultimately by its failed political institutions. At the highest level of politics, there is no one who now reliably speaks for the people, no one who listens patiently to their concerns or teaches them the hard facts involved in governing decisions. There is no major institution committed to mobilizing the power of citizens concerning their own interests and aspirations.

– William Greider, 1992

A community will evolve only when a people control their own communications

- Frantz Fanon

Organized citizens and egalitarian communication are central to strong democracy. As a national progressive organization, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) effectively organizes and mobilizes citizens to participate in the democratic process by creating and sustaining powerful organizations with the ability to effect real change and assist in the development of a democracy that is responsive to citizens needs. Athens Independent Media Center (AIMC), a local organization working to become a member of the global indymedia network (IMC), supports and facilitates the production, distribution, and interaction of diverse and often conflicting voices fundamental for strong democracy. AIMC also strives to utilize communication technologies in ways that connect and mobilize citizens diverse in ideas, status, and geographic location. Together, these two progressive groups will help explicate the components of a critical media consciousness that understands the social and political impact of mass media and locates media reform as a fundamental component of social reform.

The IAF offers a prime example of organized citizens working together to discover the common good while remaining self-determining, autonomous, and politically powerful. This focus on citizen participation, relationship building and political power at the community level places the IAF at the “forefront of efforts to revitalize democracy in America” (Warren, 2001b, p. 3). Not surprisingly though, the IAF shares with many other progressive organizations a limited consciousness of a key facet in this struggle – mass media.

Armed with a critical media consciousness, the indymedia movement is “a digital communications network and a social network of diverse personalities knitted together by a desire to practice democracy that others only dream about” (Shumway, 2003, p. 1).

AIMC members grasp this power of media, and wanting to empower citizens to tell their stories and voice their concerns with others, they are attempting to connect Athens, GA to this larger movement. Their struggle lies in sustaining the commitments necessary for the creation and development of organizations with the ability and legitimacy to operate in the political arena.

Separately, each organization is laboring to fashion a participatory democracy with legitimate, accountable, and responsive institutions. Combined, the IAF and AIMC reflect the adage - the sum is greater than the parts, and the following chapter argues that these two unaware partners constitute key components of a powerful and successful media reform movement necessary for strengthening and deepening democracy. But reform must not be understood as simple changes to the existing mass media system. Instead, democratic media requires a reformation of current communication practices that would encourage, allow for, and construct social and cultural forms facilitating global justice and equality.

Media power, media control, and media reform are serious political issues with consequences for democracy, and communications structures and practices benefiting democracy will emerge when organizations acknowledge their centrality. Concentrating on the strategies and missions of the Industrial Areas Foundation and the Athens Independent Media Center, I will explicate the need for democratic communication practices for the success of democracy and provide empirical evidence supporting the importance of critical media consciousness to the efforts of media activists and progressive social movements.

industrial areas foundation

Saul Alinsky believed that democracy is a bottom up process responsive to the ideas, concerns, and issues of common citizens. Democracy, achieved through this process, requires social relationships facilitating trust among accountable individuals acting on behalf of the entire community in their search for the common good. For this brand of democracy to become reality, citizens must actively participate in the creation of accountable and responsive institutions.

In 1930's Chicago, Alinsky watched as individuals became increasingly isolated, communities deteriorated, and those in power gradually operated more and more out of self-interest. In response, Alinsky created the Back of the Yards Coalition in Chicago's stockyards. Sit-downs, boycotts, and other tactics became hallmarks of Saul Alinsky's organizing-for-power strategies and gave rise to his Industrial Areas Foundation (Lenz, 1998). Guided by the idea that "individuals must be responsible for other individuals" Alinsky reasoned that democracy demanded the widespread participation of active and informed "ordinary" citizens representing all walks of life ("The democratic promise", p.3). Furthermore, Alinsky "envisioned an organization of organizations, comprised of all sectors of the community – youth committees, small businesses, labor unions, and most influential of all, the Catholic Church" and argued that organized people are the only effective means for defeating organized money ("The democratic promise", p.1).

Today, the IAF combines over 2 million members from over 1200 congregations and associations (IAF, 1990) to cultivate a powerful national grassroots social movement steadfast in the belief in democracy and the ability of ordinary people to control their

destinies (Lenz, 1998). One of four major national organizing networks “representing one of the most promising expressions of civic participation...,” the IAF operates nationwide in 63 cities (Horwitt, n.d.).¹⁵ A national network of broad-based organizations, the IAF works to reconstruct democracy by assisting poor, working class, blacks, whites, and Latinos in the act of empowering their communities (“Cortes”, n.d.).¹⁶

The IAF brings together Blacks, whites, Hispanics, the homeless, middle class, radicals, moderates, and liberals to forge a determined network of citizens fighting for and believing in democracy (IAF, 1990). Through their “consensual issues strategy that avoids divisive campaigns,” the IAF has become one of the most successful community organizing networks in the country (Warren, 1996, overview section, ¶ 1). The IAF searches for commonalities, exposes mutual self-interests, and in the process, generates social capital¹⁷ derived from lasting, sustainable relationships. As Alinsky envisioned, current IAF organizers strive to “provide a connection between the individual and the larger society” (Horwitt, n.d. ¶ 7).

IAF affiliates are defined by their plurality, inclusiveness, and commitment to ensure that individuals collaborate as equal partners (Chambers, 2003, p. 15). The

¹⁵ Slessarev (2000) explains that the IAF, along with the Gamaliel Foundation, Pacific Institute for Community Organizations, and Direct Action Resource Training are the major outlets for organizing existing groups into collective action around social issues.

¹⁶ Wood and Warren (2001) explain broad based coalitions as institutions that “strive to be as inclusive of the diversity of communities that make up their local organizing area as possible. They are typically interfaith, and many include...schools, unions, and a variety of other community-based institutions... To varying extents, they bring community leaders together across lines of race, income, and gender” (p. 2) see <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers2001/faith/report.htm>

¹⁷ In an interview with Ernesto Cortes, Jr., IAF southwest region supervisor, social capital is explained as the process of enabling individuals to develop leadership, build relationships, and become active participants in government affairs and decision-making. Ernesto argues that such a process allows people to “learn through politics to work with each other, supporting one another’s projects,” and develop a trust that leads to the rebuilding of communities and strengthening of democracy www.tresser.com/ernesto.htm. Warren (2001b, p.x) explains that social capital is key to democracy and cites Putnam’s definition, “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.” The IAF builds social capital by creating a sense of trust among members that leads to cooperation and makes the common good a reality.

presence of professional organizers is another characteristic crucial to the effectiveness of IAF organizations. Chambers (2003) explains that “most of the work of broad-based organizations rests on its volunteer leaders, [but] professional organizers are a crucial catalyst...compensated well in salary and fringe benefits (p. 66). The IAF actively recruits, trains, and develops women and men of diverse backgrounds with, “a clear sense of what’s wrong, impatience in the face of that wrong, and a drive to address it” (“IAF careers,” n.d.). These professional organizers are primarily teachers who help institutional leadership teams develop effective strategies for public life (“About IAF,” n.d.). IAF Organizers and affiliates are part of a national IAF network based in Chicago. “The national IAF offers training services and professional organizers under contract to local organizations, but does not direct its staff from the national level” (Warren, 2001b, p. 7). It is the goal of each organizer to develop and sustain an organization of organizations that effectively enact progressive social change. IAF organizations consist of anywhere from twenty to sixty member institutions with the largest, United Power for Action and Justice includes 200 member institutions (Warren, 2001b, p.7). The national IAF also conducts training sessions throughout the year to locate and develop organizers and leaders and helps coordinate regional activities such as IAF-East and Southwest IAF in an attempt to build social capital beyond the local level (“Who are we,” n.d.). This effective community organizing approach initiates collective action, expands public discourse, and builds relationships “that enable people to disagree, argue, interrupt, confront, and negotiate, and, through this process of conversation and debate, to forge a consensus or compromise that makes it possible for them to act” (“Cortes”, n.d. politics, community section, ¶ 2).

A non-partisan political organization by design, the IAF generates political power through participation within and by community organizations with “staying power,” and strives to enlist a membership “representative of the diversity of views of mainstream America on a variety of social issues” (Warren, 2001b, p.4,6). Alinsky believed that democracy would only materialize if individuals valued the relationship between effective citizenship and collective action, and today IAF organizers continue to locate and develop local leaders and create community networks. They also restructure power dynamics in ways that allow people to shape decisions that impact their lives.

IAF approaches improve public discourse and sustain citizen participation in politics. Ultimately, IAF members develop leaders and build institutions that are inclusive, patient, powerful, and respectful of individual dignity. These ideals preserve their success and stress their identity as:

...non-ideological and strictly non-partisan, but proudly, publicly, and persistently political. The IAF builds a political base within society's rich and complex third sector - the sector of voluntary institutions that includes religious congregations, labor locals, homeowner groups, recovery groups, parents associations, settlement houses, immigrant societies, schools, seminaries, orders of men and women religious, and others. And then the leaders use that base to compete at times, to confront at times, and to cooperate at times with leaders in the public and private sectors. ...The IAF is indeed a radical organization in this specific sense: it has a radical belief in the potential of the vast majority of people to grow and develop as leaders, to be full members of the body politic, to speak and act with others on their own behalf. And IAF does indeed use a radical tactic: the face-to-face, one-to-one individual meeting whose purpose is to initiate a public relationship and to re-knit the frayed social fabric.¹⁸

¹⁸Retrieved from www.industrialareasfoundation.org . This site went online the week of February 21, 2004.

Practicing democracy is difficult and frustrating work, and the efforts of the IAF and their documented successes have influenced and benefited numerous communities fighting for social change. Working in both urban and suburban areas in 21 states, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany, IAF affiliates inspire political participation and power and produce necessary adjustments to civic and political institutions with their emphasis on focused agitation. Alinsky sought to actively engage marginalized citizens excluded from the political process and left powerless (Warren & Wood, 2001). Today, IAF members remain committed to “empower[ing] others to negotiate for what they want” (Warren & Wood, 2001, np). By organizing local communities through their institutions, the IAF develops a public space where ordinary citizens learn and acquire the skills of public life, build strong relationships, and find a common purpose (“Cortes”, n.d.).

organizing power

Michael Gecan, a member of IAF’s executive team and a 25-year veteran of community organizing, explains that in their efforts to strengthen democracy, IAF leaders grow painfully aware of the fact that, “we live in a world of power” fraught with abuses (Gecan, 2002, p. x). Extinguishing these abuses requires that citizens gain access to power in a way that makes institutions more responsive to their preferences (Diamond, 1999, p. 21). But prior to gaining access, power must be defined and understood so that citizens may construct a democracy based on reconfigured, redistributed, and most importantly reciprocating power. In response, Ed Chambers, partner to Alinsky in the early days of the organization and current IAF Executive Director, explains that the work

of IAF leaders and organizations is to incite the powerless to redefine power, create power, and speak for themselves (Chambers, 2003).

Dismantling power supported by domination requires a battle concerned with more than reform, legislation, or persuasion. This leaves IAF organizers and members engaged in a constant clash of power against power (i.e. institution versus institution). This battle also demands consistent and persistent agitation towards institutions that are valued and embraced (Gecan, 2002, p. xix). Faced with increased and continual participation, agitation, and organization among the masses¹⁹, these powerful yet illegitimate and unresponsive institutions find themselves embroiled in confrontations forcing restructuring. Ultimately, the IAF hopes to eradicate unilateral power (power over) instituting domination, and allow citizens to engage in self-governance producing a collaborative form of power (power with) in their quest for justice and democracy (Chambers, 2003).

The IAF believes that “true democracy requires organization, education, and development of leaders who regard themselves as sovereign citizens with the know how to stand for the whole” (Chambers, 2003, p. 14). This strategy for organizing is based on the idea that individuals can and must work together to uncover the common good and fight for it. Believing that “problems facing distressed communities do not result from a lack of effective solutions, but from a lack of power to implement these solutions” (Slessarev, 2000, ¶ 5), the IAF establishes local institutions with the ability to maintain a long-term power base achieved through broad based coalition building.

¹⁹ Diamond (1999) explains that a mass public matters to democracy as it is pivotal in helping deepen democracy beyond formal structures and institutions (p. 219)

IAF affiliates are not single community or single-issue groups, but powerful community networks with the potential, resources, and power to challenge and influence other institutions, i.e. government and corporations. Key to their success is the understanding that they “must be able to take on multiple issues because their member organizations have multiple interests” (Chambers, 2003, p. 64). This ideology, combined with talented professional organizers, is vital to sustaining IAF affiliates, and has led to national attention regarding their approaches to education, income inequalities, housing, and job training.

In 1982, IAF-East developed a plan for home ownership that has expanded to assist over 4000 families and spread to other parts of the country to create “some of the largest developers of homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income families”(“Build IAF,” n.d.)²⁰In the area of education, the IAF successfully operates public high schools in New York that boast decreases in drop out rates with increases in graduation rates, and created the Alliance School project in Texas in an effort to improve the connection between communities and schools (“IAF in action,” n.d.). This effort is now being adopted in numerous school districts in the southwest due to its effectiveness. Most recently, IAF affiliates fought for the passage of a \$295 million blight removal bond issue in Philadelphia and a \$100 million dollar bond issue in Washington to aid shrinking cities with development in an effective and practical manner.²¹

The role of the IAF in establishing a living wage in cities across the nation is one of their biggest accomplishments. Initially working with the AFL-CIO and the Baltimore city council, the IAF fought for a bill that “requires all recipients of city contracts to pay

²⁰ <http://www.buildiaf.org/products.htm>

²¹ <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/iafaction/iafaction.htm>

workers enough to support a family...[and] raised the wages of 4,000 workers by 44 percent, totaling \$8 million” (Warren, 2001b, p. 8). Today, living wage bills exist in nearly 100 communities, including New York (“IAF in Action,” n.d.). These are just a few of the examples reflecting the IAF’s “ability to engage [citizens] in active political participation and mobilize...supporters to address the needs of...communities” (Warren, 2001b, p.4).

The complexities inherent in a democratic system responsive to both the needs of the individual and society, requires power enabling individuals to act, not power utilized to dominate, abuse, or exclude. In essence, power should be exercised to “demand recognition, reciprocity, respect... as it creates and sustains meaningful relationships” (Gecan, 2002, p. 7). The IAF develops this power through numerous and continuous relational meetings²² and creates the necessary foundation for effective citizen action and participation. By working together in an open, accepting, and just environment, individuals benefit from opportunities to develop their capacities, share their concerns and create a responsive society. Time and again, the IAF achieves their goal to strengthen democracy by “challeng[ing] citizens to push the political world in the direction of the world as it ought to be” (Gecan, 2002, p. 4).

the third sector – enabling power

Mike Gecan describes the third sector, the area in which the IAF operates, as “the sector that figures out how to do what the market or state can’t do” (2002, p. 7). Often unrecognized or dismissed, this sector develops individual capacities on the local level as

²² Warren (2001b,p.31) explains that “relational organizing brings residents together to discuss the needs to the community and to find common ground for action.” This process is different from most organizations in that they take the time to build relationships instead of organizing around predetermined issues or agendas. This allow for all to be included and commonalities to be uncovered.

individuals work in partnership to manufacture and manage power (Gecan, 2002). Ed Chambers (2003) further stresses the importance of this arena for overcoming inequality by enabling public discussion and conversation and renames it the first sector. Political theorists refer to this area floating between the private sphere and the state as “civil society” and define it as the:

realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating...autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared values. It is distinct from society...in that it involves citizens acting collectively...to express their interest, passions, preferences, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, and to hold state officials accountable (Diamond, 1999, p. 221).

Similar to Habermas’ public sphere, the IAF is committed to the development of this democratic arena sustained by parity and equality, allows for action and participation among citizens and provides a sense of hope to those wishing to create a better world.

Citizens frustrated by feelings of powerlessness and isolation may easily forget the importance of their role in the democratic process. This inability or unwillingness to act stems from the fact that electoral politics is now “largely a matter of fundraising for focus groups and media buys... [and] most citizens have simply checked out of politics, devoting themselves to their private pursuits”(Lenz,1998, ¶ 1). Returning politics to the people, Gecan (2002) explains that action, participation, and organization must become the foundation of any organization seeking to provide an outlet for citizens to work together, overcome differences, and realize their potential as responsible, powerful, and real actors. Eventually, potential becomes reality as individual citizens take the time to “seek common ground among competing perspectives” and “refuse to allow ideological differences to perpetuate social divisions” (Chambers, 2003, p. 15). This realization

requires the understanding that building a strong organization takes time. Consequently, while the process remains frustratingly slow, establishing sound relationships is a step that cannot be skipped.

IAF affiliate organizations begin by “bring[ing] respective interpretations together in a better reading of our common situation and obligations [in a way] that enables [citizens] to act together with power despite...differences” (Chambers, 2003, p. 24). During this “gestation phase”, citizens devote themselves to establishing a power base as “a new culture of public life and public action and clear accountability can begin to form and spread” (Gecan, 2002, p. 12). This process is essential to establishing sustainable institutions based on acceptance and inclusion and facilitates the development of a democracy advancing the benefits of reciprocal power. On October 19, 1997, citizens from many conceivable backgrounds met in Chicago to consider the common good and address pressing issues in their communities before specifying an exact program (Lenz, 1998).

The IAF’s Chicago affiliate, United for Power and Justice (hereafter UPJ), is the response of a few Roman Catholic priests alarmed by central Chicago’s continued economic downward spiral and the Archdiocese’s inability to respond (Lenz, 1998). Founded by 10,000 citizens from religious, labor and civic institutions, UPJ is a non-partisan and self-supporting community organization, comprised of more than 300 active, dues-paying members — congregations, community organizations, employee unions, community health centers, and hospitals — committed to working for a just society by standing for the whole (“United Power,” n.d.).²³

²³Chicago’s United Power for Action and Justice is an IAF affiliate organization. Ed Chambers is the Lead Organizer

Since “loose groupings of interested individuals” lack the power necessary to challenge social institutions, UPJ spent the better part of three years conducting over 12,000 individual, face-to-face meetings (Gecan, 2002, p. 11). This approach allowed individual citizens the occasion to talk about their stories, struggles, and hopes and most importantly, served as “the glue for a new institution committed to mobilizing citizens' power” (Lenz, 1998, ¶ 4). During this phase, IAF leaders resist impulses to tackle issues and focus instead on recruiting member organizations representing the diversity of the community, establishing financial independence through dues payments, and developing a sense of ownership that would instill “participation, responsibility, accountability, and commitment” (Gecan, 2002, p. 11).

Over the past six years, UPJ has tackled healthcare for the uninsured, affordable housing, and homelessness with the establishment of the Gilead Outreach and Referral Center to address the healthcare needs of uninsured Illinois residents; the Ezra Community Homes, a multi-site housing and neighborhood development program which puts home ownership within reach for working families in Chicago and its suburbs; and secured grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help Chicago’s homeless transition to permanent housing (“United Power,” n.d.). Other IAF organizations such as San Antonio’s COPS²⁴, Baltimore’s BUILD²⁵, Charlotte’s (NC) HELP²⁶, Brooklyn’s EBC²⁷ and Montgomery (Co.) Maryland’s AIM²⁸ have also found success in their efforts to create a living wage, end homelessness, clean up disadvantaged communities, and most importantly, move the world closer to what it should be. Proving

²⁴ Communities Organized for Public Service

²⁵ Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development

²⁶ Helping Empower Local People

²⁷ East Brooklyn Congregations

²⁸ Action in Montgomery

that democracy can involve citizens, UPJ and other IAF organization provide support for Chambers (2003, p. 58) contention that “the essence of broad based organizing – plurality – produces a base of organized people power, which no single issue or group can match.”

limiting power

While the IAF has been successful in creating democratic change, communicating their messages remains problematic. As Warren (2001b) explains, “the IAF eschews media-centered campaigns and controversial moral agendas in favor of patient base-building work [leaving them a] fairly quiet, often unnoticed phenomenon on the broader public stage” (p. 9). The IAF’s focus on building a politics of the common good resists specifying an exact program and that creates an annoyance for traditional media outlets (Lenz, 1998). An IAF lead organizer in Maryland explained that when dealing with the media “[we] could not get calls back or [we] would get bored acknowledgements of the event.” Continuing, he revealed that “no one seemed to have any sense of legitimacy” and that reporters complained that “our meetings lack conflict.” Citing further frustration with the media’s response to an IAF action, he explained that:

on August 28, 2002, 800 AIM leaders packed a high school asking for commitments from 29 candidates for school board, county executive and county council. On the same evening, a small group of "protestors" stood outside a chamber of commerce candidates meeting some two hours before. They had no agenda, just people with signs, and they got a picture on the front page of the Metro section and an article. We have learned that you have to begin selling them on the meeting a few weeks before. You also have to build a relationship with the reporter. When that happens, they can judge if they want to cover it. But we also do not fit their understanding of the news and of politics. (email correspondence)

Similarly, on January 18th, 800 IAF-East²⁹ members showed up at a Baltimore church to urge federal government officials to assist in the redevelopment of many ailing communities along the East Coast. A Lexis-Nexis search turned up brief mentions in the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun. Supporting the contention that the IAF fails to gain media attention, a Lexis-Nexis two-year search on “industrial areas foundation” compiled a list of 36 articles while a 10-year search of major newspapers found a mere 70 articles. To provide some sense of comparison, a 10-year search of the “Green Party” was interrupted due to a return of more than 1000 documents. A “previous week” search on Janet Jackson (2/1/04-2/5/04), the week following the Super Bowl “wardrobe malfunction” returned 364 articles.

Believing in the importance of communication and the “ability to project your voice and promote your interest” (Gecan, 2002, p.42) IAF affiliates have found success even with a lack of substantial coverage from non-responsive media institutions. Obvious from the quote above, IAF organizers have grown accustomed to unreturned phone calls or un-interest in IAF actions lacking the right type of conflict. In response, IAF leaders continue to fight for a just society even if their efforts rarely appear in the morning paper or find airtime on nightly newscasts. As Gecan (2002) rightfully explains, the IAF and its leaders have learned to push on without excessive promotion since they obviously “do not fit easily into media’s prewritten stories”(p.16). This comment also reflects a limited notion of media that constrains the IAF’s ability to effectively communicate with diverse groups in ways that expand their radical tactic – the face to face relational meeting.

²⁹ Industrial Areas Foundation-East consists of 12 citizens groups from Boston to Washington.

diagnosis - IAF

Strong democracy dictates that organized citizens accept their differences, share competing views, and find common interests through a process of building and sustaining trusting relationships. Strong democracy also depends on the dissemination of crucial information in ways that ensure the inclusion of diverse interests, ideas, and issues among active citizens recognizing and believing in the common good. In the end, the IAF builds strong communities with the ability to exert and sustain power since they overcome conflict through dignified discussion and compromise based on trust (Warren, 2001b, p. 227/8). Similar to Barber's (1984) expanded notion of talk, IAF members privilege listening and asking over telling, and in turn, uncover important commonalities.

“The capacity to control communication [remains] a manifestation of political power,” (Bruck & Raboy, 1989, p.8) since “information societies [are] characterized by the fact that productive social activity revolves around the production, distribution, and management of symbolic matter”(Bruck & Raboy, 1989, p. 3). Similarly, Gecan (2002) argues that “without power, there's no real recognition. They don't see you” (p. 36). The IAF's commitment to building strong social relationships at the local level is an integral piece that should not be sidestepped, but at times this narrow focus overlooks the vital link between power and recognition.

Gecan (2002) argues that “public relationships with leaders and potential leaders [allow people to see themselves] as part of a larger relational whole”(p.43). This larger relational whole needs to expand beyond the local to the national if the IAF is to become a force in global politics, but Chamber's argument that there is “no electronic substitute” for the 30-minute face-to-face relational meeting (Chambers, 2003, p.49) denies the

potential of communications technologies to assist in this process. This limited notion of media inhibits the potential of the IAF to expand and enhance their efforts in ways don't diminish the importance of the fact to face relational meeting.

Developing a critical media consciousness will help IAF affiliates and members to understand that media can operate as “chief standard bearers” of a democratic communication structure by allowing people to communicate with one another in ways that create a collective identity, develop a loosely defined network of activists, and strengthen democratic culture (Downing, 2001, p. 43).

Mass media continue to alter and shape communication practices, requiring a critical media consciousness that understands the decision making processes inherent in media productions and develops the skills necessary for creating alternative productions.

As Masterman (2001) explains, the current media system creates,

great gaps between those who have access to the media and those who do not, those who have the power to define and those who are always defined, those who are allowed to speak about the world as they know and understand it and those whose experiences are inevitably framed by others (p. 61).

Due to journalistic practices and norms as well as their own organizational activities and approaches, the IAF, even with all of its success, has “yet to hit the media’s radar screen” (Warren,2001a, ¶ 6). While the IAF should be commended for their refusal to compromise their mission and tactics for a bit more media coverage, they should also realize that their efforts would benefit from the development of a critical media consciousness that facilitates mediated communication as an extension of face to face relationships and offers an opportunity for open, vital, immediate, and constant dialogue allowing for “a variety of political experiences [to be] reviewed and shared...across

nations and continents – and moreover, on an ongoing basis” (Downing, 2003, p. 252-3). Such mediated dialogue should not be viewed as a substitute for power at the local level. Instead, utilized progressively, communications technologies become vital to “creat[ing] a community capable of creating its own future” (Barber, 1984, p. 151).

The IAF’s foundation rests on the belief that civic participation is essential to creating responsive institutions and a just world because “people who can understand the concerns of others and mix those concerns with their own agenda have access to a power source denied to those who can push only their interests” (Chambers, 2003, p. 28). If we agree with Masterman’s notion concerning current media systems as well as the contention that media power is social power, media reformation becomes an essential component for the establishment of responsive institutions, and by extension strong democracy. Without this understanding, the IAF and similar progressive organizations will repeatedly and somewhat unsuccessfully rely on mainstream media for coverage and promotion even as they refuse to conform to the requests of mainstream media.

Current media systems are undeniably part of the problem, but a limited understanding of media potential is also to blame. The capacity of independent media to assist in the struggle for recognition and awareness underlies their value in the creation of new “cultural expression[s] and democratic social relations” (Bruck and Raboy, 1989, p. 10). While continued efforts and achievements of IAF affiliates provide evidence of their importance to the development of strong democracy, their limited utilization of media technologies dilutes their efforts to be a powerful political presence beyond the local level and ensures their continued frustrations.

Unless IAF organizers and members embrace the importance of a critical media consciousness, they will continue to perpetuate the naturalized division between media practitioners and media consumers that prohibits dialogue necessary for democracy. Overcoming such a division is central to altering current power structures that the IAF is working so diligently to reorganize, and supports Eco's (1993) notion that "if you want to use [media] for teaching somebody something, you have first to teach somebody how to use [media]"(p. 96).

athens independent media center

In April of 2003, Athens Independent Media Center (hereafter AIMC) was in the developmental mode as individuals and groups from the University of Georgia, Athens, and surrounding communities converged on Athens, GA for the annual Human Rights Festival. Following weeks of candlelight vigils, marches, teach-ins, and debates surrounding America's preparation for war with Iraq, Athens area citizens came together to establish an organization dedicated to helping people create a just and humanitarian world. Today, AIMC still finds itself in the early and often frustrating stages of development, and their story provides a necessary perspective regarding the relationship between media, power, and democracy.

Spinning off from Common Ground (hereafter CG), a community organization "serv[ing] as a nexus for resource sharing to enhance the effectiveness of Athens-area groups and individuals working for progressive social change"³⁰, AIMC members were interested in providing a media component for many of the groups involved with CG, and those "who wanted to establish a continual community forum on political and media issues." From April 2003 until August 2003, AIMC meetings included many new faces,

³⁰ <http://www.freewebs.com/commonground>

some never to return. During this time, meeting locations changed frequently as AIMC utilized space at a public library, the University library, other campus sites, and an area coffee shop, before finally settling on a locally owned restaurant in the Normaltown section of Athens made famous by the B-52's. The one constant for AIMC throughout this period was a dedicated group of six individuals that would become AIMC's core.

Each Thursday, with a few exceptions, a few understandable absences, and the constant introductions of new faces, a retired educator, a graduate student, an individual devoted to the concepts of communal living, a used book dealer, and two community activists worked together to create an alternative media organization for the Athens community. At these meetings topics of discussion included: goals and ideas for the new organization; the importance and value of the global indymedia network (IMC); and the benefits and frustrations of a non-hierarchical, consensus-based organizational structure. Throughout this process, AIMC evolved into a "non-commercial, consensus-operated group of individuals within Athens who seek media empowerment for Athenians, through dialogue, performance, and technical training, as well as linking Athens to the global network of Indymedia websites, print, video, audio, and visual information."³¹ Intending to "be the nexus of journalism that does not curry corporate favor...and inclusive and supportive of everything from the venerable 'zine that hosts this article to the digital documentary assigned for your journalism class," AIMC challenged "everyone who consumes media to start to tell your own stories, be it through print/video/audio/or word of mouth."³²

³¹ Athens Indymedia pamphlet

³² Athens Indymedia pamphlet

During AIMC's gestation phase, members deemed it necessary to connect the organization with the ever-expanding global Indymedia network, i.e. "the people's newsroom" (Perlstein, 2001, np). During the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle, activists decided to re-invent the partisan press and tell a different story in an attempt to counter the inadequate coverage appearing in the mainstream press (Beckerman, 2003). Created to focus on protests, IMC's have evolved into arenas for discussing local and international issues as well as resistance strategies (Downing, 2003). Their aim is "empowering individuals to become independent and civic journalists by providing a direct, unmoderated form of presenting media," (Couldry, 2003, p.45), and they describe themselves as "a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage".³³ This "four-year old phenomenon...now encompasses a constellation of about 120 local collectives from Boston to Bombay," and is referred to as a "democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth" (Beckerman, 2003, np).

Described as a "giant leap forward in the struggle for communicative democracy" (Shumway, 2003, p.1), Indymedia is slowly developing into a "day-to-day accounting of local and global concerns of social justice and anti-globalization advocates" (Beckerman, 2003). Linking with such an organization provided AIMC with both the infrastructure and technical competence necessary for generating and supporting a diverse, people driven media, and by extension democracy.³⁴

³³ www.indymedia.org

³⁴ According to Beckerman (2003) a new site is created every eleven days, emphasizing the attractiveness of this format.

organizing power

The privileged role of media in the creation and support of power dynamics is often unrecognized or simply misunderstood by many organizations challenging dominant power. From its inception, AIMC members grasped the correlation between media, information flow, and democracy and centered their efforts on overcoming existing obstacles to media access and participation by utilizing the democratic potential of all communication forms and technologies. An early document stated, “Welcome to the Athens Multi Media Organization...this newly founded organization seeks to counter the lies, distortions, and conservative prejudices built into the major media outlets...” (“Untitled,” n.d.). Simultaneously, AIMC members devoted themselves to “strengthen[ing] ties...and recogniz[ing] the importance of empowering ourselves and others to become the grassroots media.” Realizing that the current media system suffocates democracy with repeated limitations and prohibitions to access, AIMC felt a need to create spaces for local citizens to discuss, debate, and share their concerns. Similar to a migrant farm worker struggling to discuss grievances regarding working conditions and the benefits of a union, (Wasko, 1992, p.3) AIMC wanted to unleash an alternative to the current mass media system that provides opportunity to some and constant resistance to those in the majority.

AIMC members recognized the importance of media power as the power to construct reality (Couldry, 2003) and sought to become media activists “fighting the influence of corporate...media and constructing new forms of alternative media” (Drew, 1995, p. 76). In an early flier promoting the organization – Got Media? Beats Milk! – AIMC communicated their understanding of the significance of mass media and their

dedication to providing alternative to commercial fare. This flier emphasized AIMC's priorities: establishing a local IMC affiliate, screening political videos, and facilitating local independent news ventures ("Got media," n.d.). Committed to these goals, AIMC worked to create more than an organization providing alternative news content. Just as valuable to AIMC members was their role facilitating informed discussion and connections among Athens diverse population and diverse perspectives.

Since mainstream media is "increasingly dominated by Big Brother's Last Word...AIMC seeks to balance things out a little"("Got media," n.d.). AIMC challenged power dynamics detrimental to the community by organizing around media issues, and their media concerns and strategies reflect Kellner's (1990) contention that any substantial discussion of alternative media must include questions of control, accountability, loyalty (i.e. propaganda), communication models, and sustenance, if complex social, political, and economic issues are to be tackled. Suitably, AIMC circulated their views on the responsibilities of alternative media:

No one has a monopoly on the truth, but unfortunately some folks do have a monopoly on the means to truth...It has been said that in this country there is no problem with expressions of opinion from any quarter, after all, speech is guaranteed by the 1st Amendment...Is there meaning to the opinion that can't be heard?...What about opinion that can't be turned off?...The fact is that mass media is set up to be a sieve, ever more porous, for the dissemination of what a few rich and powerful folks want us to hear...It is time the problem is taken on at a local level, as well as national level. Athens Multi Media Organization is looking for the support of all concerned citizens...Needs for the organization include committed news analysis, budding photo/video journalism, library science, computer literacy

activist networking, broadcasting skills, fund-raising and more! (“Untitled,” n.d.)³⁵

AIMC places mass media systems at the heart of the struggle to create a reciprocal power structure guided by responsive institutions, by spotlighting the relationship between power and information. Information should, and in some instances does, flow more easily across social and geographical boundaries, and communications technologies have the potential to transform power relations (Bennett, 2003, p. 19). Consistently though, citizens face difficulties for reaching a larger public as communication by public relations practitioners, professional journalists, and so-called experts replaces grassroots discussion (Manca, 1989, p.171). To offset these difficulties, AIMC highlighted the need for diversity of opinions to democracy, and sought to overcome barriers to production, exhibition and distribution. Organizational and technological aspects of the indymedia network proved beneficial for AIMC, and their commitment to “allowing groups and individuals, groups and organizations, to express their views...” was compatible (Shumway, 2003, p. 4).

IMC’s require an online presence,³⁶ offer formatting and technological assistance, and consist of volunteers working with numerous media to “empower [all] to contribute to the creation of the news” (Beckerman, 2003, n.p.). Their overall goal is to “provide an avenue for underrepresented groups to tell their own stories in their own voices, to get these voices out to the world quickly, and to move us all to action for social justice” (Perlstein, 2001, n.p.).

³⁵ This document was handed out at early organizational meetings. At this time, AIMC went by the name Athens Multi Media Organization. The name was changed to Athens Independent Media Center as they looked to affiliate with the Global Indymedia network.

³⁶ Visit www.indymedia.org

Utilizing open-software, IMC's offer open-publishing in which:

the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free, and change it, and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news, they can, preferably on an open publishing site" (Arnison, 2002).³⁷

They are also developing and slowly incorporating open editing. This process creates a level playing field for the audience and the journalist by "permit[ing] any reader to post an edited version of a text back onto the site where it was published, but with editing and the name of the author displayed in another file directly accessible" (Couldry, 2003, p.48). These technologies enable citizens to create and post written documents, photographs, and video, through a process that sidesteps traditional news structures and professionalized norms that traditionally constrict such narratives.

AIMC members continued to identify reasons for joining the IMC network and working with local organizations and independent media initiatives. Towards the end of July, a volunteer from Atlanta-IMC came to talk with some members of the group about the mission, goals, and processes of the global indymedia network. The response to this meeting was favorable and provided some direction for AIMC. Discussion on the AIMC listserv contained the following remarks:

>After last night's inspirational meeting...I was wondering what everyone thought about where we should go from here. As Max³⁸ noted last night, the three principles we need to agree to before embarking on establishing an IMC are open

³⁷ www.sarai.net/journal/02PDF/10infopol/10open_publishing.pdf, Arnison (2002).

³⁸ Names have been changed

publishing, no advertising, and consensus decision-making. To better facilitate this endeavor, I propose that we begin using consensus decision-making at our meetings. If we are going to be an IMC, consensus is a must -- so we might as well begin using it now.

Another member of AIMC discussed current limitations facing AIMC and different approaches:

>I'll agree to the three principles for sure. They are in alignment with my motivations and situation...Right now, it looks like we're heading towards making content with no platform to broadcast that content, save the ones that already exist, say, WUOG and IMC ATL, (GA Theatre?). that's fine with me. I think there are platforms that are underutilized.

Continuing to discuss the benefits, one member stated

>I think it would be a good idea for us to join up with the larger imc, and I haven' heard anybody expressing a contrary opinion.

Finally, one member summarized the benefits of joining IMC and expressed the value of this route.

>Sounds like at least the people who have weighed in on the IMC issue are willing to move forward with it. From my perspective, I view an Athens IMC as a starting point from where we can hopefully branch out (as the ATL group has done by working with local radio and public access). It is a way to quickly and cheaply have a medium for getting our content out without getting bogged down with a lot of red tape or the financial stress of trying to get advertisers, etc. Down the line, if our content picks up and we have interest from the community, I am sure we can expand into a print publication or other formats.³⁹

While determining their indymedia strategy, AIMC meetings took place at the public library and later moved to a local vegan restaurant. It was during these meetings that members discussed ways of creating important local relationships. With the support of local restaurant owners, AIMC established a video exhibition area and honor system library of videos and print media. These interactions benefited all involved by providing

³⁹ Email correspondence on AIMC listserv. > denote change in person "talking."

customers (AIMC members and supporters) for businesses and simultaneously raised awareness about the existence of AIMC in the community. At scheduled and non-scheduled meetings, AIMC members encouraged and facilitated discussions surrounding media as an important component of a larger struggle for a just world. This approach reflected their view of themselves as “a collection of political activists focused on media and interested in making the greatest possible contribution on this front” (email correspondence, 8/30/2003). It also kept them from limiting participation to a particular point of view or political stance, as AIMC invited all concerned citizens⁴⁰ to join the discussion as they search for ways disseminate a more diverse and democratically necessary range of opinions.

AIMC attempted to expand the range of discussion and encourage participation by valuing inclusion and diversity. By sponsoring public screenings, establishing a video library, working with the global indymedia network, and hosting public events, AIMC members intended to provoke discussion and critical thinking. These efforts stem from the belief that power is the ability to successfully develop one’s capacities through full participation and inclusion within the public arena (i.e. civil society, third/first sector). Therefore, according to the members of AIMC, communication technologies and forms become a central concern as well as a point of entry.

Hagen (1992, p.23) contends that “democratization is...the process whereby the individual becomes an active partner and not just an object of communication, whereby the variety of messages exchanged increases, and whereby the extent and quality of social representation or participation in communication are increased.” Ultimately, AIMC emphasized the importance of democracy and the necessity of communication between

⁴⁰ Untitled document quoted on previous page

different and diverse communities for generating and sustaining power. This was clearly articulated in a pamphlet that stated their desire to “seek to strengthen ties among expert voices...that are ignored and misconstrued.”

the third sector

AIMC set the foundation for a local power base by focusing on media concerns and media issues. After months of small meetings concerning promotions, expansion, group efforts, and consensus training, AIMC members planned a movie and discussion event for the 2nd anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attacks. Placing fliers around town and communicating via word of mouth and listservs, AIMC invited people to attend a forum titled “9/11: Unanswered Questions.”

On September, 11 2003, AIMC hosted “9/11: Unanswered Questions.” Scheduled for 7:30 that evening, this event included 2 short films produced by the Guerilla News Network⁴¹ and a documentary by Michael Ruppert. Ninety-seven people from the greater Athens area, the University population, and a wide range of age, gender, race, and class filtered in and out of the University of Georgia Tate Student Center over the course of four and a half hours. Scheduled to end at 9:30 pm, the films were preceded and followed by lengthy discussions lasting until midnight. According to a report posted to the Atlanta IMC, “the majority in attendance showed keen attentiveness,” and “a burning need for credible answers was clearly uppermost on the minds of many. Skepticism regarding the official accounts of the attacks could be discerned in the volley of comments and questions” (“AIMC revisits,” 2003).

⁴¹ “Guerrilla News Network is an underground news organization with headquarters in New York City and production facilities in Berkeley, California. Our mission is to expose people to important global issues through guerrilla programming on the web and on television.” www.guerillanews.com

Throughout the evening, AIMC members circulated contact sheets and encouraged those interested in finding out more about AIMC to provide personal information. As the night drew to a close, “a number of people showed positive identification with the goals of building an independent media, and wanted to learn more” (“AIMC revisits,” 2003). A few even remarked how “beneficial” they thought the evening was and how they felt a sense of “empowerment” when realizing they were not alone in their concerns. Overall, the evening garnered nearly 100 names and created a listerv that eventually developed into a space for discussion and debate. Manca (1989) argues that individuals need to realize their role as more than passive receivers, and that through direct access they are potential journalists for an expanding and diverse public sphere. On September 11, 2003, AIMC allowed many in the greater Athens area the opportunity to recognize this potential.

Following this film screening, nearly 30 people showed up at a local establishment for the largest AIMC meeting to date. Representatives from numerous community and campus organizations, as well as individuals personally interested in learning more about media issues met for over two hours and engaged in detailed discussions surrounding the goals and mission of AIMC specifically and IMC’s in general. Agreeing on a concrete movie and meeting schedule, the next few months were spent focusing on providing direction for the organization.

AIMC members believed concrete events would instill a sense of accomplishment and help sustain the organization. Accepting the need to expand and develop relationships became integral to this process. In response, AIMC partnered with another

local grassroots organization, Dreaded Mindz⁴², to create the “SLANT” a weekly “free-speech” event at a local bar. This event offered people the chance to donate money to different organizations while also engaging in discussion as they shared their views.

Scheduled for 9-10 pm on Monday evenings, the “SLANT, was a celebration of free speech and a fundraiser.”⁴³ Individuals had the opportunity to share their views during a two hour “informal open forum to say what you really need to say to the greatest possible number of people.”⁴⁴ AIMC also hosted public screenings of political documentaries and films produced by other independent media groups on the second Thursday and last Sunday of each month at local eateries. The purpose and goal of all these events is to generate “spirited debate, on subjects we’re often told to steer clear of in polite conversation.”⁴⁵ Through exposure to documentaries regarding protests to the World Trade Organization meetings in Cancun, unanswered questions stemming from the September 2001 terrorist attacks, or government support for the School of the Americas, AIMC created an environment for discussion often missing from the daily lives of many individuals, and offered an opportunity to “come out to use the freedom that is rapidly being pulled from under us.”⁴⁶ Both events are free to the public, with donations appreciated, and due to their locations, engage citizens not affiliated with AIMC.

Collaborative efforts continued as AIMC initiated coordination with other organizations on an event highlighting the Free Trade of the America’s (FTAA) meetings in Miami, Florida as well as the School of the America’s protest in North Georgia. One

⁴² Dreaded Mindz is an organization dedicated to justice, activism, and community (www.dreadedmindz.org)

⁴³ The Rant flier (email correspondence 9/2/2003)

⁴⁴ The Rant flier (email correspondence 9/2/2003)

⁴⁵ The Rant flier (email correspondence 9/2/2003)

⁴⁶ The Rant flier (email correspondence 9/2/2003)

evening in October, a strategy session followed the film concerning the School of the Americas. Among the topics discussed were ride shares, lodging, expectations and preparations for police resistance, as well as the willingness and capabilities for documenting the event. This meeting occurred in collaboration with individuals representing Amnesty International, Dreaded Mindz, Athens Global Justice, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and other community organizations. A mix of those familiar with the history of the School of the Americas and those learning about it for the first time came to the conclusion that together they would host a night of awareness for the Athens community.

Joining hands with religious organizations, a local African-American poetry organization, a student group fighting for global justice, a soup kitchen, and other various activist groups, AIMC co-hosted “A Better World is Possible” on November 17th. That evening, people were invited to attend a night of movies, music, theater, carnival puppets, discussion, and networking. Nearly 250 individuals came by to learn about the importance of independent media and the causes and activities of many local groups, as a local music hall morphed into a combination conference hall, discussion forum, and theater. In between music sets, citizens discussed the upcoming FTAA meetings, responded to short films about the School of the Americas and globalization⁴⁷, listened as others shared their activist experiences, and meandered around the displays to learn about Food Not Bombs, Amnesty International, and Athens Global Justice. Outside the venue individuals were greeted by the Rhetoric Mobile, a University of Georgia student project “trying to promote awareness on the war on Iraq” (“Warbus,” n.d.). Such events provide

⁴⁷ Movies shown that night were “Hidden in Plain Sight” a documentary detailing the history of the School of the Americas and “Another World is Possible.”

the foundation for democracy, as “public relationships require and bring forth the ability to live with inevitable tensions of common life” (Chambers, 2003, p. 34). A member of the poetry troupe stressed the importance of these events that unite “soldiers” often segregated and unaware of each other’s existence in the battle for justice and equality.

A Better World is Possible also attracted people not aware of the existence of such groups as well as those who disagreed with their causes, the essence of democracy. While everyone in attendance did not possess the same agenda, the goal was one of sharing, promoting, and joining forces. Whether examining a bus plastered with unfamiliar and graphic images from the war in Iraq or conversing with a volunteer for a local food bank, individuals came together to engage in important deliberation. Nights like these are basic to a democratic process that demands open discussion from a wide range of opinions and a diversity of citizens, and creates an environment where people can learn from each other and realize that the existing world is a complex one often misrepresented and/or simplified by mainstream media outlets. A Better World is Possible was a night of learning and listening as opposed to one of convincing and shouting.

AIMC is also attempting to take advantage of the many other opportunities available to them locally. Currently, members are trying to strengthen their relationship with the local college radio station, researching ways to stream audio and video onto the web via an Athens IMC site, and continuing to discuss the possibility of establishing a community access television station for the greater Athens area. These efforts also include the support of other alternative media projects such as Athens Weekly News, a paper “dedicated to making a difference” (“Athens Weekly News,” 2003, p.3). Together,

these organizations can achieve their similar goals while promoting the idea that the common good can only be achieved if diverse ideas are shared.

Most importantly, AIMC still meets every Thursday in an attempt to bring individuals together to engage in listening, sharing, strategizing, and networking. Fliers for the meeting stating, “come sound off it’s your time to be heard...New members, new voices, new activists welcome” (“What’s really happening,” n.d.) reflect AIMC’s support for the notion that “democratization takes place when groups who were not previously able to transmit their messages are secured access” (Hagen, 1992, p. 21).

The current mass media system hinders the ability of individuals lacking social capital to voice concerns and discuss issues that impact their lives by consistently focusing on market share, profit, and the creation of audiences over citizens. AIMC identifies the need for a critical awareness regarding the preponderance of messages and content circulated within mass media, but they also understand that there is more to the development of a critical media consciousness. In turn, AIMC members promote the notion that strong democracy demands citizen participation in the formation of communication practices and media systems that value dialogue over monologue. Democracy demands that citizens “BE THE MEDIA.”⁴⁸

The ability to produce and disseminate information is fundamental to critical media consciousness, and AIMC meetings continue to include discussions about documenting local issues such as rallies against the Patriot Act at City Hall, the Athens Living Wage Campaign, and vigils for the People of Hope. During these conversations, there is often the realization that many people are uncomfortable or mainly unable to utilize the technology available. The opportunity to travel to Atlanta (or other IMC sites)

⁴⁸ Global Indymedia slogan

to collaborate with volunteers at Atlanta IMC educates individuals about techniques for gaining access to a newsworthy scene, formulating and asking questions, filming, and utilizing audio and video.

Following an initial “skill share”, AIMC members reported:

[We] traveled into the depths of ATL this Sunday and participated in a skillshare on writing/audio/writing for radio, and continued to foster our siblinghood with IMC-ATL.

After a bit of socializing, We got a simple introduction to journalism from one guy (I forget his name...), that was useful, personally, in that I got some tips on formulating interview questions. Next, [we received] a demo on the simpler uses of CoolEdit Pro. I'm going to be working on some interview spots within the next month, and perhaps after I get some material, we can have a skillshare of our own? If anyone is itching to learn, the IMC-ATL is itching to teach, so perhaps we should keep track of when their next skillshare is (they said they would try to do one every month, on whatever topics they felt equipped to tackle). Learn what you want to learn.

We also picked up some copies of the NYC Independent (a product of the print co-op of the IMC NYC), which I have distributed to [local establishments]. (email correspondence, 7/15/03)

To this end, IMC’s skill shares benefit any and all individuals interested in learning about the liberating potential of communication technologies. Based on a belief that media education should offer more than technical competence and serve as a critical as opposed to a reproductive activity, skill shares bring to life Masterman’s notion that, “education in the technologies and the media should play an empowering and liberating role, helping prepare pupils for democratic citizenship and political awareness” while providing an “understanding of the structures, mechanisms, and messages of the mass media... [and] encourage[ing] creative expression” (2001, p. 15).

Skill sharing sessions provided individuals with baseline knowledge and a sense of confidence. They also expanded the potential work of some members who had

previously documented events but were not proficient in editing techniques. Footage sitting dormant was now finding its way into computers with editing software and on its way to becoming short documentaries on local issues. Eventually, instead of only participating in rallies and marches, members of AIMC were equipped with both the knowledge and tools for documenting a scene.

Whether writing, reporting, recording, or photographing, IMC's provide necessary and accessible outlets for information sharing. Over the course of the year, while attempting to create their own media center, members of AIMC posted their documents on the Atlanta IMC site. As membership grew, individuals involved with AIMC became more familiar with technical aspects of media production. In the end, the potential for scheduling their own skill shares became a reality. Individuals documented (but are still struggling to edit and produce) the FTAA protests in Miami, the A Better World is Possible event, and the School of the America's protest. There was also coverage of local Athens vigils and protests and AIMC members videotaped a speech by Professor Howard Zinn and a march and vigil marking the one year anniversary of the occupation of Iraq. While AIMC members continue to struggle with their attempts to disseminate their work, numerous audiofiles have been placed on the Atlanta indymedia site, including interviews with local citizens concerning affordable housing, and the G8 summit scheduled to take place in Georgia in June 2004. Atlanta IMC has also provided an outlet to promote marches and rallies as well as document those same events.

Furthermore, On November 17th event, while attending A Better World is Possible, two individuals filmed portions of the evening while others provided stories to the Atlanta IMC. Prior to the event, numerous individuals contacted the local paper and a

press release was distributed. Similar to the experiences of the IAF, mainstream reporters did not attend but adequate coverage was provided. Whether telling the story of people fighting for a living wage, presenting the reasons for opposing the war, or interviewing families displaced from their homes, AIMC members have become the media and provide valuable, different, and all too often neglected viewpoints.

diagnosis-aimc

As Calabrese (2001) explains, the ability to participate as a listener and speaker is essential to competent citizenship and participation in public affairs on a local level often leads to more effective participation nationally as struggles gain context and individuals learn to work together. Since April of 2003, many Athenians have realized their ability to organize, take action, and affect change by seeing themselves as part of a larger (and powerful) community. But, the reality remains that AIMC is an organization based completely on individuals donating their time, and their devotion to a non-hierarchical structure makes accomplishing even the smallest of goals difficult.

At this time, AIMC has yet to establish a web presence affiliated with the Global IMC process. While they have submitted their initial application and have been in direct contact with individuals overseeing the new IMC application process, its status as a volunteer dependent organization adds to the frustration. This process is a struggle and requires an immense time commitment. But the struggle is only discouraging if it focuses on the short term. For those dedicated individuals believing in the benefits of strong democracy, the end result will hopefully be one of equality and justice.

AIMC's commitments to access, participation, and consensus are intended to incorporate the interests of all, but they often led to the aggravation and frustration of

many. While the IAF's success is based on relational meetings allowing for the development of new forms of public life (Gecan, 2002, p. 10), AIMC members find themselves frustrated by the arduous process of establishing a local Athens IMC through Indymedia.org as well as the seemingly endless meetings that appeared to accomplish nothing. Chambers (2003) explains that too often groups want to skip the long gestation phase and dive right into problem solving without realizing that lasting relationships constructed through a process of listening and relating to others is essential to the stability and power of any organization. For some involved with AIMC, the continuous discussions concerning goals and strategies for the group, a process which sometimes headed in circles, reared internal conflicts and caused attendance at meetings to decline drastically. While success became hard to enumerate and commitment waned, those involved tried to maintain the belief that an alternative media site in Athens, GA was an important piece to the creation of democracy.

Some argue that "a movement that does not make it into the media does not exist" (Rucht, as cited in Bennett, 2003, p.17), and if citizens want to maintain the power to determine their lives, information sharing cannot be repressed. This idea resonates in the IMC slogan "be the media." A critical media consciousness is a starting point for overcoming inequalities as it provides people with the ability to decode, evaluate, analyze and produce different forms of media (Masterman, 2001, p. 61). In turn, critical media consciousness alters the world that is presented and the world that exists. While attending the National Conference on Media Reform, I realized the importance of continuing the struggle to establish an IMC in Athens as I witnessed the potential, importance, and power of independent media.

mediating the public sphere

For three days in early November 2003, 1600 people descended upon Madison, Wisconsin to discuss the need for media reform as well as its critical components. The weekend included IMC workshops designed specifically for those looking to learn about the global IMC network as well as information pertaining to the new IMC process. Over the course of the conference, I attended numerous sessions and met with citizens from around the country, and I left Madison with a collection of business cards, handouts from sessions, relationships developed during “speed-dating” exercises, and helpful ideas for AIMC. All of this also enabled me to develop an impressive support network of citizens facing the same issues and concerns as those in AIMC.

Furthermore, this event provided insight into the global indymedia network, the relationship between media and democracy, and the important contributions of numerous progressive organizations fighting for media and social reform. The simultaneous “BE THE MEDIA” conference was even equipped to broadcast live on Internet Radio and community radio stations with assistance from “indymedia activists, Guerilla News Network, and WORT 89.9 FM.”⁴⁹

Even with mainstream media outlets noticeably absent, tape recorders and cameras were rolling, and in instances where technology allowed, events were streamed live on the web. Whether Senator Russ Feingold or FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein was giving a speech or John Doe was talking about low power radio, their comments were documented and disseminated. Keynote speeches by Jesse Jackson, Bill Moyers, Naomi Klein, Studs Terkel, and many others were filmed, taped, and prepared

⁴⁹ BE THE MEDIA conference flier

for broadcast by individuals representing different Indymedia affiliates.⁵⁰ During the last event an announcement disclosed a meeting point so citizens involved with recording the event could collaborate on a National Conference on Media Reform documentary. A few months later sessions and speeches were aired on Free Speech TV and made available online.

While traditional media outlets provided brief coverage, during the majority of the conference their presence was not depended upon or needed. Instead of relying on the *New York Times* for recognition, conference attendees documented and disseminated information by utilizing technology and embracing the benefits of collaboration. Critical media consciousness became less theory and more reality as citizens facilitated the dissemination of important information and understood media as an integral process in the democratic project.

Beyond information sharing, citizen participation in public affairs is essential to democracy on both the local and national level. While the conference provided a glimpse of the amazing potential of independent media, AIMC is still struggling to increase participation by providing an outlet where individuals can realize their potential to create change. But the reality remains that it is difficult for people to find the time to balance day-to-day responsibilities and commitments. Furthermore, the strict belief that everybody should be heard and that consensus must be reached before decisions can be made leads to long and sometimes frustrating meetings, and has caused many people to lose interest. As Beckerman (2003) articulates, “the [IMC] process is precarious, democracy teetering on the edge of anarchy,” and reflects the reality that “an open, representative form of media may be a worthy ideal, but [is actually] a messy thing.”

⁵⁰ visit <http://www.freepress.net/conference/recordings.php> to view and listen to the conference.

Creating a weekly newspaper or establishing a website is a mere component of AIMC's mission and goals. Grounded in a belief that as "legislation allows for the greater tightening of the media monopoly knot" and removes voices "that are not willing to play the game," AIMC members realize that citizens must fight for media reform and create democratic media outlets. AIMC efforts also represent the larger issue of bringing diverse peoples together to engage in communicative practices that will eventually assist in the development of a just, humane, and democratic world. The success of such endeavors is that as citizens continue to meet each week, they develop and expand their social capital. The indymedia movement is more concerned with developing democratic communication structures and practices than with numbers alone (Perlstein, 2001). The success is the fact that a retired high school teacher, confused and frustrated by the foreign policy of his government, now has the awareness, confidence and knowledge to travel to the School of the Americas in Columbus, GA, to participate in and document protests, share his story, create a context to understand differences, and build relationships that reveal the common good. Indymedia creates "competent activist journalists...[e]mbodying the ethos of direct action, ...telling the stories...for themselves...instead of waiting for them to be told by 'professionals'...The IMC Network is...a new paradigm for participatory activism" (Klein, n.d.). This is success because these forms of dialogue, sharing, and active participation enable citizens to understand and transform conflict – the essence of a strong democratic society.

CHAPTER 5

CONTRIBUTIONS, RECONSIDERATIONS, FINAL THOUGHTS

Democracy can survive only as strong democracy, secured not by great leaders but by competent, responsible citizens. Effective dictatorships require great leaders. Effective democracies need great citizens.

-Benjamin Barber, 1984

This endeavor materialized from a long felt tension existing between my belief in America's democracy and an emerging commitment to accept its faults. While the United States may be viewed as a model for other countries struggling to establish democratic societies, Diamond (1999) reiterates that the US is "afflicted with corruption, favoritism, and unequal access to political power, not to mention voter apathy, cynicism, and disengagement" (pg. 17). This project represents my attempt to understand democracy as a process to practice rather than an achieved end. It also documents my developing ideas concerning media and communications as necessary components in the expansion and strengthening of democracy. It is my hope that readers find value in discussing the valuable synergy of critical media consciousness and progressive social movements as it offers partial solutions for those toiling to ensure strong democracy.

As discussed at the outset, essential to this project was explicating the components of democracy. This proved a challenge since there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 550 subtypes proving that "democracy as an idea and as a political reality is fundamentally contested" (Held, 1996, p. xi). Luckily, a few constants exist among all the competing definitions. Whether labeled liberal, participatory, representative, complex, etc. all emphasized that the value in democracy lies in the fact that it,

comes closest among the alternatives to achieving. ..political equality, liberty, moral self- development, common interests, fair moral compromise, binding decisions that take everyone's interest into account, social utility, satisfaction of wants, and efficient decisions (Held, 1996, p. 3).

Stated even more succinctly, "democracy offers the best prospects for accountable, responsive, peaceful, predictable, good governance" since it "promote[s] freedom as no

feasible alternative can" (Dahl, as cited in Diamond, 1999, p. 6). Democracy also requires participation resulting in deliberation, sharing, contributions, public action, citizenship, and community among masses of citizens (Barber, 1984). In sum, democracy should:

Permit widespread liberty and the real possibility of selecting alternative governments and policies, and by permitting, disadvantaged groups to organize, mobilize politically, democracies provide the best long run prospects for reducing social injustices and Correcting mistaken policies and corrupt practices (Diamond, 1999, p. 18).

The ability to articulate the requirements and discuss the demands and benefits of democracy should not overshadow the fact that "democracy as a form of government is difficult to create and sustain" and "has evolved through intensive social struggles" (Held, 1999, p. 1). Ultimately, these definitions coalesce around an essential: democracy is a free society consisting of equal and autonomous individuals working together to create necessary yet transparent and accountable institutions responsive to the needs of all citizens. Currently, and historically, power dynamics inhibit the fruition of democracy as individuals misconstrue the common good as an attack on personal freedoms and autonomy. To mitigate these concerns, five circumstances remain essential:

1. Effective, adequate, and equal participation
2. Enlightened understanding
3. Voting equality
4. Control of the agenda
5. Inclusiveness⁵¹

Combined, these expand democracy by increasing opportunities for civic participation, allowing traditionally marginalized groups to voice concerns, and demanding institutional and representative responsiveness in the decision making process (Diamond, 1999). They

⁵¹ See Held (1996,p. 310-11) for an elaborate discussion of these democratic ingredients

also reinforce the contention that individual liberties are a social achievement dependent upon participation and deliberation (Held, 1996).

In essence, democracy requires communication at all levels and among all citizens. Talk is the heart of democracy. Talk becomes a form of communication aiming not to prevail or dominate. Talk privileges listening, sharing, and understanding and allow citizens to recognize commonalities and find common goods (Barber, 1984). Talk accepts that citizens must retain the ability to inquire as well as respond, and embraces the idea that overcoming conflict requires dialogue, not monologue. This frustratingly long process does not guarantee correct answers because its single end is "the development of a citizenry capable of genuinely public thinking and political judgment and thus able to envision a common future in terms of common goods" (Barber, 1984, p. 197).

contributions

critical media consciousness

In complex modern societies, communication technologies provide enormous opportunities for individuals from all across the globe to share ideas, and to learn about one another, while gaining an understanding of their interconnectedness and interdependence. Political science even recognizes that:

expanding the public realm requires using telecommunications networks to improve the process by which citizens form political judgments and to enhance the mechanisms whereby politicians are informed about citizens' views and priorities (Held, 1996, p. 321).

While this project is not argued from a technological determinist standpoint, it does argue that mediated communication – defined as a cultural form overcoming the limits of time

and place through an extension of face-to-face dialogue - and its organization, development, and employment, is central to the establishment of strong democracy.

Strong democracy cannot exist without communication, and at the current historical moment, that includes strong media. The commercial media model is "highly unlikely to provide the media that participatory democracy theorists identify citizens as needing [since] market forces bankrupt certain types of media, sometimes the very media that democracy needs most" (Baker, 1998, p. 41,48). Intertwined with free enterprise and capitalism, this media model operates as a commercial endeavor with profit margins constraining operation decisions (Bruck, 1992), and access to media production remaining a "carefully managed and unequally distributed resource," (Couldry, 2000, p15). Consequently, structural issues negatively impact the ability to speak, the voicing of issues, and citizens' ability to respond. As Angus (1994) argues, "contemporary capitalist societies attenuate reciprocity," monopolize access to knowledge, and control the ability of listeners to become producers by "severing [audiences] from reciprocal production of social knowledge and engagement in decision making" (p. 233).

In response, critical media consciousness calls for individuals to think critically about the democratic potential for media as they recognize that increasing the number of media outlets doesn't establish strong media or improve democracy. It enables citizens to identify media power as the power to construct reality and appreciate that "to contest media power is to contest the way social reality itself is defined or named" (Couldry, 2003, p. 39). In turn, engaged citizens challenge the idea that "society's principal stories and images should be told from [the media] ...and that this place while of public importance is such that access to its everyday operations is strictly controlled" (Couldry,

2003, p. 42). These connections highlight the importance of media power and expose ways in which mediated communication strategies and practices shape the existing world. In sum, critical media consciousness establishes strong media as diverse and unique citizens critically question mediated constructions and presentations that diminish, marginalize, and ultimately deny the reality of many.

Critical media consciousness in tandem with progressive social organizations is vital for the development of the democratic communication structures required by democracy. It assists in generating a public sphere (i.e., civil society, third sector, public arena) constructed upon participatory parity among various segments of society struggling for equality, social justice, and autonomy, and connects autonomous individuals that understand and welcome the need for social organization. In addition, these important networks allow citizens to engage in democratic communication practices that are essential for the democratic project. Otherwise, simplistic forms of democracy leaving people isolated and disempowered remain.

If society continues to operate within a "universe of beliefs, myths, and practices that allow a highly unequal media system to seem legitimate...any lasting challenge to media power [will require] a different social practice...developing new forms of communication [and] new ways in which people come to possess things in common" (Couldry, 2003, p. 41). Democratic associations involving media and social activists must communicate with each other in ways that challenge media power, build and sustain relationships, and generate social capital. The "prospects for contesting media power may appear to be smaller today than ever," but that overlooks the fact that information

continues to find ways to move across existing boundaries, and communication options continue to alter existing power dynamics (Bennett, 2003, p. 17).

powerful union

Collectively, the Athens Independent Media Center and the Industrial Areas Foundation provide a glimpse of mediated communications potential to strengthen and deepen democracy. Dedicated to revitalizing a participatory and accessible democracy, the IAF builds social capital through broad-based organizations with legitimate, accountable, and responsive leadership committed to the common good. The IAF achieves their goals with a powerful third sector firmly based in trusting relationships and an understanding of mutual interest and benefits. The recurring success of the IAF suggests their ability to develop personal commitments and sustain citizen participation while remaining financially and organizationally independent (Warren, 2001b). The foundation for their success, the relational meeting, also plays a definitive role in limiting their ability to enhance and expand their efforts to a national and global scale.

Broad-based organizing is a promising approach to creating a just and democratic society through active and continuous participation of citizens (Warren & Wood, 2001), and by building networks with the indymedia movement it can be strengthened. While the efforts of the IAF to develop beyond the local "energizes people" and challenges them as they influence policy and realize power in different situations (Warren & Wood, 2001, np), some IAF members remain concerned that such efforts will weaken local efforts. "Prioritizing local organizing [has kept the IAF from] com[ing] together to produce a national force for political transformation" (Warren, 2001b, p. 9). At the same time, there is the belief that through collaborations and networking the IAF can amplify their

operations in ways that will strengthen democracy on a national and global scale. This requires IAF organizers and affiliates to "combine organizing talent with sufficient resources to ...build into their work more opportunities for dialogue with [other progressive organizations]" in an attempt to generate social capital and political power beyond the local community (Warren & Wood, 2001, np).

The IAF has demonstrated the potential to retain political power at the national level, but their lack of internal and external communication strategies continues to hinder such efforts, and reflects their limited understanding and utilization of media and communication technologies. Efforts to be inclusive of the diversity of communities in which they operate allows them to develop, and achieve success, on the local level (Warren, 2001b) by enabling citizens to nourish relationships, determine the issues, and develop plans of attack. Consistently though, their efforts expose challenges because "expanding beyond the local requires a greater degree of centralization to initiate and coordinate campaigns because participants [are] a step removed from the possibility of daily face-to-face interaction" (Warren, 2001b, p. 75). Their limited success in Texas, Arizona, the Pacific Northwest, and parts of the East Coast in developing statewide and regional networks revealed both their interest in expansion as well as the necessity of a critical media consciousness.

IMC's "have sought to create spaces for civil society to come together, free of commercial and government influence, to explore the possibility of creating [a just society]" (Perlstein, 2001, n.p.). The belief in facilitating strong relationships within and among diverse communities echoes the IAF's commitment to developing grassroots leaders and active citizens, and the creation of community based organizations focused

on the needs of the community. For both groups it is imperative that numerous issues are voiced. Eventually, utilizing aspects of a consensus decision-making process, community needs and mutually beneficial resolutions emerge from constant deliberations among connected and trusting individuals. Furthermore, while IAF affiliates represent inclusive, diverse, multi-issue, non-partisan, and financially independent organizations, IMC's seek to address specific needs of the community by remaining "committed to allowing individuals, groups, and organizations, to express their views through a...non-profit, non-hierarchical structure, committed to participatory democracy through consensus decision making" (Shumway, 2003, n.p.). In sum, the indymedia movement's experience and know-how in "creat[ing] communication technologies that facilitate self-representation, participatory dialogue, and access for local constituencies" (Shumway, 2003, np), represents the ability to enhance the capacity of the IAF beyond the local without neglecting the local, and without surrendering key aspects of their overall mission.

The "IMC movement [is one of the] most exciting developments in national progressive media... ." but "significant challenges [remain] before IMC's can be viable alternatives to mass media" (Shumway, 2003, np). The indymedia movement, as illustrated by the frustrations of AIMC, faces numerous organizational issues that could be overcome with IAF assistance and expertise. Even with their committed, dedicated, and involved, core of six, AIMC proved that it is difficult to construct and sustain an IMC affiliate organization. Supporting this view, Shumway found that just as IMC' s "seek to create an environment where people from diverse culture and social movements can develop strong personal relationships" they "need to do a better job or shepherding new

IMC's into the network" (2003, np). These difficulties reflect a reliance on volunteers and the reality that time is not infinite.

The IAF's existing national network of nearly 2 million active citizens offers the potential to alleviate the frustrations of AIMC specifically, and the IMC movement in general. Their experience in developing organizations, locating leaders, encouraging ownership, sustaining participation, and securing financing is exactly what the indymedia movement needs as they "struggle to develop...community centers for interaction, dialogue and transformation" (Shumway, 2003, np). Time and again, the IAF has proved successful in building such centers. With affiliates in over 50 cities, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany, and continued efforts for expansion, their growing network of diverse communities and voices mirrors the indymedia movement's goal and supports their belief in reciprocal power amidst the reality of conflict.

Similar to the IAF's core values of plurality, inclusiveness, and collaboration across competing perspectives (Chambers, 2003, p. 15), IMC's, offer an important and often missing outlet for activists interested in diversity, collaboration, and inclusion. With no official political alignment, IMC's function as "voluntary communications centers" with a goal of providing a "service to a variety of anti-corporate tendencies engaged in direct action and publication" on both global and local issues (Downing, 2003, p.251). This "dual-level coverage...provided an extraordinary freeway to users to connect up political, economic, and cultural issues as needed, or simply to...intensify their state of information" (Downing, 2003, p. 251). As Beckerman (2003) explains, IMC's are, "a place where [a] diverse activist community [can] inform itself about coming protests and events."

AIMC colleagues wanted to be a part of this larger IMC community while promoting and highlighting local issues and concerns. Currently, they are continuing their efforts to establish a place to "counter the lies, distortions, and prejudices built into major media outlets," and to build a center that is both a refuge (sic) from the reign of (t)error and an outpost from which to launch a different vision of the past, present, and future."⁵² Uniting with an organization like the IAF, AIMC and the entire indymedia movement would find mutual benefits in the struggle for democracy. Both organizations realize that respectful and inclusive dialogue effectively resolves conflict through a democratic process requiring enormous time and effort among engaged, informed, and active citizens.

Collaborative efforts between the IAF and organizations like AIMC will help the IAF broaden their base and become a force in national and international politics, as they develop a critical media consciousness crucial for their efforts to reconstruct power dynamics. Simultaneously, the IAF's ability to generate social capital and influence powerful institutions by organizing citizens and sustaining personal commitments, offers needed support and assistance to the indymedia movement. The effectiveness of this collaboration rests on the similarities in the mission of each organization, their ideas about power, leadership, and decision-making, and their beliefs in a democracy based on inclusion, diversity, and dignity. It is my argument that critical media consciousness will ultimately expand and enhance these efforts.

⁵² Initial organizational flyer -untitled

relational mediated communication

Daniel Schoor's (as cited in "Benton Foundation", 1991, p.7) hyperbolic contention "if you don't exist in the media, for all practical purposes, you don't exist," identifies a central truth of contemporary society: media are a powerful institution that influence and shape culture. A critical media consciousness grasping issues of production, distribution, consumption, ownership and decision making understands this influence as well as the emancipatory possibilities that communication and communication technologies offer. Furthermore, a critical media consciousness supports the contention that creating democratic mediated communication opportunities are mandatory for strong democracy and for the success and continued existence of democratic processes.

Democracy demands an accountable, adequate, and accessible media system promoting a "freer, more egalitarian, more participatory, and hence more democratic society" (Kellner, 1990, p.187), so relational mediated communications should ensure a place where a plurality of voices and opinions can congregate and create beneficial social relationships. Simply put, media should offer different groups the ability to provide unique perspectives, locate mutual interests, and influence institutions that influence their lives (Wasko, 1992, p. 20).

Of utmost importance to this project is accepting that communication strategies and systems are absolutely fundamental to establishing strong democracy across the world. With a correlation existing between information control and political power, (Bruck & Raboy, 1989) media power forms a connection with social conflict (Couldry & Curran, 2003). Even as emerging technologies reveal the possibilities for

democratic communications, "unofficial communicators" continue to face numerous obstacles hindering reception and transmission (Drew, 1995, p. 73). Therefore, if "progressives want to play a role in US political life, they must come to terms with the realities of electronic communication and develop strategies to make use of new technologies and possibilities for intervention"(Kellner, 1990, p. 214).

This recognition -which I have termed critical media consciousness -reinforces the need for communication forms providing spaces where traditionally marginalized voices can share their unique interests, discuss differences, and arrive at mutually beneficial resolutions. Strengthening democracy depends on progressive organizations facilitating an informed, diverse, and engaged community offering opportunities for people to re-connect with others and realize their critical role in defining issues and influencing decisions that impact their lives. In the end, "citizens will begin to awaken when they are addressed as a conversational partner and are encouraged to talk rather than sit passively as a spectator before a discussion conducted by journalists and experts" (Hacker, 1996, p. 224). Both the IAF and AIMC are actively engaged in making this crucial step and together their efforts will ensure that citizens maintain the ability to act.

As it now stands, AIMC is a small group of people who come together to discuss issues of the day and try to figure out ways to improve their world. At times it may seem like nothing is accomplished, and some may even argue that organizations like AIMC are too small to offer any real improvement. But I agree with Rodriguez (1998) that alternative media become important to the democratic project as they give voice to the voiceless, foster empowerment among communities fraught with inequality and injustice, strengthen individual's sense of self, and connect isolated communities, all the while

allowing groups to realize their potential to act. If communication is understood as a foundation of existing society offering opportunities to create a just and humanitarian world, AIMC (and organizations like it) will be seen as part of the process and will eventually be part of the success. Similarly, the IAF's focus on building social capital and reconstructing power through a process of open communication offers individuals the capacity to govern themselves and determine their existence in ways that enrich the lives of all.

The goal of strong media to increase communicative participation and expand possibilities for relational meetings among citizens representing global diversity is crucial. It is my belief, confirmed by the evidence I have offered, that this process will help develop a democratic society embracing respect, dignity, and equality, as it encourages expression, listening and sharing. As progressive organizations like the IAF and AIMC, utilize media technology for "long-distance hand shaking," citizens will gain and retain the ability to share in ways that disclose the benefit the common good (Haywood, as cited in Hamilton, 2000, p. 367). Mediated communication will not replace the relational, face-to-face meeting that is the backbone of lasting relationships. It creates an opportunity to extend existing relationships and encourage the development of more relationships. In the end, mediated communication must emerge as a cultural form extending participatory communication -dialogue -while suppressing forms of communication -monologue -that restrict access and limit deliberation by privileging certain voices, views, and ideologies.

new directions

This project, similar to all research, contains the inevitable limitations that either diminish the scholarship or point to exciting research opportunities. As I noted in the methods section, access was one of these limitations. Upon gaining access, I was reminded of severe time constraints as issues continued to arise and new questions emerged. To determine the potential of each of these groups, I plan to continue my involvement with AIMC and increase my involvement with the IAF. My ultimate goal is to share my findings with both organizations and facilitate a collaborative relationship. Merging the technical expertise of the indymedia movement with the organizational success of the IAF will hopefully play a vital role in augmenting citizens' ability to actively and fully participate in the democratic process.

Juxtaposition acknowledges the benefits of utilizing existing ethnographies. For the purposes of this project, Warren's work, *Dry Bones Rattling*, generated significant probes. It also helped me realize that future research would benefit from more time spent in the field. This would afford the opportunity to build relationships with citizens involved in the indymedia movement beyond Athens, and immerse myself in the culture of an IAF affiliate. Currently, my work with AIMC and familiarity with certain aspects of the IAF proved beneficial, but increased involvement and a deeper personal commitment would provide answers to existing questions.

As this project advances, I plan to move beyond IAF leaders and work directly with community members actively involved with the organization. These perspectives would reveal the IAF's organizational processes firsthand and provide a deeper understanding of how trust is developed and conflict resolved. I would also like to see

reciprocal power in action. This will require that I find ways to participate in and observe the failures and successes of IAF affiliates. This type of involvement will broaden my understanding of the most effective ways to incorporate communications technologies and IMC skill shares into the IAF culture. A final goal is to help IAF members realize their potential to "become the media."

Time spent with a stable IMC would enhance this project by providing insight unavailable from AIMC. Currently, AIMC members' focus on developing both an organization and a web presence presents severe limitations. First and foremost is the appearance that the Internet offers the ultimate answer to developing strong media and strong democracy. This overlooks the democratic potential of radio, video, satellite technology, and print media, and seemingly hides the fact that the Internet is still limited in both its production and distribution. On the other hand, radio, video, and print continue to offer inexpensive and mobile ways to share information on a grand scale.

It is my belief that as I extend this project I will develop a more complete understanding of how these two groups could most effectively collaborate. Spending time with different IMC's, will offer firsthand knowledge of creative media efforts, how editing decisions are made, what types of media are utilized, and if and how these efforts filter into the consciousness of larger society. Bennett (2003) argues that alternative media sites and mainstream media sites are becoming increasingly porous and more time with a sustainable IMC would offer insight into this contention.

Finally, my future research will improve my ability to facilitate the relationship that I believe is necessary to developing social capital, reciprocal power, and strong democracy. The indymedia movement has embraced the technology and IAF has

organized the people. I hope to introduce these critical components, and through trial and error, determine what combination makes the most sense. I am aware that this process will contain numerous failures, but the hope is that a scattering of successes will prove that the IAF and IMC's can work together to connect citizens in ways that extend, expand, and sustain trusting relationships vital to strong democracy. This project, with all its limitations, offers the evidence that this relationship is viable, now it requires the time and the commitment to put the theory into practice.

strong media/strong democracy

Barber (1984) argues that "a people that does not set its own agenda, by means of talk and direct political exchange...relinquishes a vital power of government" (p. 181).

With an existing media system that relies on professional journalists and experts to present a sanitized and constructed version of reality, new methods of communication become critical. Ultimately, alternative media demands more than simply disseminating alternative content. Media activists and others committed to the democratic struggle must develop relationships between citizens and government officials and also improve social connections among diverse social groups (Hacker, 1996, p.229). As Mills (2000) articulated in his book, *The Power Elite*, it is essential that citizens "create intermediate associations in which [they] feel secure and...powerful" (p. 311).

Reciprocal power only emerges from inclusive and egalitarian partnerships, and overcomes feelings of isolation and detachment. No longer alone and anonymous, citizens gain a sense of belonging and recognition. Once organized, citizens identify themselves as integral parts of relational wholes that enable them to project their voice (Gecan, 2002, p. 38,42). Working together and overcoming feelings of powerlessness and

isolation, citizens must also embrace critical media consciousness and develop strong media outlets that tell their stories, create a context for understanding the stories of others, extend community ties, and generate social capital. Strong media -grounded in a critical media consciousness tied to progressive social organizations -will increase public participation, challenge the monopolization of powerful interests in deliberation, and equalize power as citizens define themselves as legitimate conversational partners involved in discussions they create and direct (Hacker, 1996, p. 224). In the end, the value of alternative media is in its link with the creation of culture and its ability to establish "new kinds of social relationships and social order" (Hamilton, 2003, p. 362).

Democratic mediated communications will help citizens achieve a participatory and egalitarian democratic society. The IAF "represents one of the nation's best hopes for reinvigorating our democratic life and reconnecting political institutions to the needs...of working people and their communities" (Warren, 2001b , p. 9). Similarly, IMC's offer a "multi-point communication network" that "has kept millions of volunteers informed about a growing global justice movement" and "helped strengthen the struggle for social justice" Shumway, 2003, np). When all is said and done, the IAF and IMC's, like AIMC, working together, and armed with a critical media consciousness allowing for an understanding of media power as social power, substantiate themselves as key components in the struggle to for democracy by strengthening and deepening democratic practice.

The current market media model privileges certain voices, supports the status quo, and sustains inherently undemocratic communication practices by generating a large number of viewers and a ridiculously small number of producers/speakers. Erasing the

line between media producer and media consumer and questioning the reified concept, media professional, remains integral to establishing social processes that revitalize democracy by permitting citizens to propose ideas, incite discussion, and participate equally in the political arena. This is a difficult task, but to restate the essence of the "developmental view of democracy", the struggle should not be feared as the struggle is the success. As Theodore Roosevelt once avowed:

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs,
even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor
spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the
gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

This project cannot offer a definitive framework for establishing strong democracy, but it does contribute valuable insights regarding media, communication, and democracy. As pointed to by the evidence, in the end, even with its complexities, confusion, and inefficiencies, strong democracy, supported and promoted by strong media, offers a practical and humanitarian approach to finding the common good.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, K. & Goldson, A. (1993). Alternating currents: Alternative television inside and outside of the academy. *Social Text*, 35, 56-71.
- Angus, Ian. (1994). Democracy and the constitution of audiences: a comparative media theory perspective. In J. Lewis & J. Crux. (eds.), *Viewing, reading, listening: Audiences as cultural reception* (pp. 233-52). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Arnison, M. (2002). Open publishing. In Sarai Reader 2002: The cities of everyday life. Retrieved February, 16, 2004, from http://www.sarai.net/journal/02PDF/10infopol/10open_publishing.pdf
- Atton, C. (2002). *Alternative media*. London: Sage.
- Baker, Edwin C. (1998). The media that citizens need. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 147(317). Retrieved July 9, 2003, from LexisNexis database (1862:0:260957)
- Balzagate, C. (2001). An agenda for the second phase of media literacy development. In Kubey, R. (eds.) *Media literacy in the information age: current perspectives: Information and Behavior, vol. 6.* (pp. 69-78). New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Barber, B. (1984). *Strong Democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Berkeley.
- Beckerman, G. (2003, September/October). Inside the indymedia collective, passion vs. pragmatism. *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retrieved September 17, 2003, from <http://www.cjr.org>
- Bennett, L. (2003), New media power: The Internet and global activism. In N. Couldry & J. Curran (eds.), *Contesting media power: Alternative media in a networked world* (pp. 17-37). Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Benton Foundation and the Center for Strategic Communications. (1991). Strategic communications for nonprofits Series. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- Bruck, P. & Raboy, M. (1989). Introduction: The challenge of democratic communication. In M. Raboy & P. Bruck (eds.), *Communication for and against democracy* (pp. 3-16) Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Bruck, P. (1992). Discursive movements and social movements: the active negotiation of constraints. In J. Wasko & V. Mosco (eds.), *Democratic communications in the information age* (pp. 138-158). New Jersey: Ablex.

- Bodroghkozy, A. (2001). *Groove tube: Sixties television and the youth rebellion*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Buzzflash. (2002, April). If Only I Were A Dictator, by George W. Bush. Last accessed April 2, 2004 from http://www.buzzflash.com/analysis/2002/10/29_Dictator.html.
- Calabrese, A. (2001). Political significance of media literacy. In O. Luthar, K. McLeod & M. Zagar (eds.), *Liberal democracy, citizenship, education* (pp. 68-86). Mosaic Press.
- Calabrese, A. & Borchert, M. (1996). Prospects for electronic democracy in the United States: Rethinking communication and social policy. *Media, Culture, Society*, 18, 249-268.
- Carey, J. (1989). *Communication as culture*. New York: Routledge
- Chambers, E.T. (2003). *Roots for radicals: Organizing for power, action and justice*. New York: Continuum.
- Chester, J. & Larson, G. O. (2002). A 12-step program for media democracy [electronic version]. *The Nation*. Retrieved July 26, 2003, from www.thenation.com
- Corner, J. (1999). *Critical ideas in television studies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Couldry, N. (2003). Beyond the hall of mirrors: Some theoretical reflections on the global contestation of media power. In N. Couldry & J. Curran (Eds.), *Contesting media power: Alternative media in a networked world* (pp. 39-54). Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Couldry, N. (2000). *The place of media power: Pilgrims and the witnesses of the media age*. London: Routledge.
- Couldry, N. & Curran, J. (2003). The paradox of media power. In N. Couldry & J. Curran (Eds.), *Contesting media power: Alternative media in a networked world* (pp.3-16). Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cowie, N. (2000). Media Literacy and the commercialization of culture (Chapter 21). In R. Anderson & L. Strate (Eds.), *Critical studies in media commercialism* (pp. 310-323). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing democracy: Toward consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Downing, J. (2003). The independent media center movement and the anarchist socialist tradition. In N. Couldry & J. Curran (Eds.), *Contesting media power: Alternative media in a networked world* (pp.243-258). Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Downing, J. (2001). *Radical media: rebellious communication and social movements*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Downing, J. (1995). Alternative media and the Boston tea party. In J. Downing et. al. (eds.), *Questioning the media: A critical introduction*. (pp. 184-203). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Downing, J. (1984). *Radical media: The political experience of alternative communication*. Boston: South End Press.
- Drew, J. (1995). Media activism and radical democracy. In J. Brook & I. Boal (eds.), *Resisting the virtual life: The cultural politics of information*, (pp. 71-83). San Francisco: City Lights.
- Eco, U. (1993). Can television teach? In M. Alvarado, E. Buscombe & R. Collins (eds.), *The Screen Education reader: Cinema, television, culture*. (pp. 95-107). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R. & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.
- Entman, R. & Wildman, S. (1992). Reconciling economic and non-economic perspectives on media policy: Transcending the “marketplace of ideas.” *Journal of Communication*, 42(1), 5-19.
- Ernesto Cortes, Jr.: Reweaving the social fabric. Retrieved February 5, 2004 from <http://www.tresser.com/ernesto.htm>
- Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy, In C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere*, (6th ed) (pp. 109-42). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Fursich, E. & Lester-Roushanzamir, E. (2001). Corporate expansion, textual expansion: Commodification model of media. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(4), 375-95.

- Gamson, W. (1995). Constructing social protest. In H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (eds.). *Social movements and culture* (pp. 85-106). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press.
- Garnham, N. (2000). *Emancipation, the media, and modernity: Arguments about the media and society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gecan, M. (2002) *Going Public*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Greider, W. (1992). *Who will tell the people: The betrayal of American democracy*. New York: Touchstone.
- Habermas, J. (1991) The public sphere. In C. Mukerji & M. Schudson (eds.), *Rethinking popular culture: Contemporary perspectives in cultural studies*, (pp. 398-404). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hacker, K. L. (1996). Missing links in the evolution of electronic democratization. *Media, Culture & Society*, 18, 213-232.
- Hackett, B. & Adam, M. (1999). Is media democratization a social movement? *Peace Review*, 11(1), 125-131.
- Hackett, B. (2000) Taking back the media: Notes on the potential for a communicative democracy movement. *Studies in Political Economy*, 63, 61-86.
- Hagen, I. (1992). Democratic communication: Media and social participation. In J. Wasko & V. Mosco (eds.), *Democratic communications in the information age*, (pp. 16-27). New Jersey: Ablex. New Jersey.
- Hamilton, James. (2001). Theory through history: Exploring scholarly conceptions of U.S. alternative media. *The communication review*, 4, 305-326.
- Hamilton, J. (2000). Alternative media: Conceptual difficulties, critical possibilities. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 24(4), 357-378.
- Held, D. (1996). *Models of democracy (2nd ed.)*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Herman, E. (1995). Media in the US political economy. In J. Downing et. al. (eds.), *Questioning the media: A critical introduction*. (pp. 77-93). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hobbs, R. (2001). Expanding the concept of literacy. In R. Kubey (ed.) *Media literacy in the information age: current perspectives: Information and Behavior*, vol. 6. (pp. 163-183). Transaction: New Brunswick.

- Holloway, J. (1998) Dignity's revolt. In J. Holloway & E. Pelaez (eds.). *Zapatista: Reinventing revolution in Mexico* (pp.159-199). London: Pluto Press.
- Horwitt, S. (n.d.) *Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation: Building strong citizens organizations for power – action – justice*. Retrieved January 26, 2004, from <http://www.progress.org/archive/alinsky.htm>
- Industrial Areas Foundation. (1990). *Standing for the whole*. Chicago: Author.
- Keane, J. (1993). Democracy and the media – without foundations. In D. Held (ed.), *Prospects for democracy: North, south, east, west* (pp.235-253). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Keane, J. (1991). *The media and democracy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Kellner, D. (2003). The media and democracy. Retrieved July 22, 2003, from <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/MEDIAem2003.htm>
- Kellner, D. (1992). Public access television and the struggle for democracy. In J. Wasko & V. Mosco (eds.), *Democratic communications in the information age*, (pp. 100-13). New Jersey: Ablex.
- Kellner, D. (1990). *Television and the crisis of democracy*. Boulder: Westview press.
- Kellner, D. (n.d.). Habermas, the public sphere, and democracy: A critical intervention. Retrieved July 22, 2003, from www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/habermas.htm.
- Kidd, D. (1999). The value of alternative media. *Peace Review*, 11(1), 113-119.
- Klein, H. (1999). Making it happen now. *Peace Review*, 11(1), 41-52.
- Kubey, R. (2001) Media education, the evolution continues. In Kubey, R. (eds.) *Media literacy in the information age: current perspectives: Information and behavior*, vol. 6 (pp. ix-xii). New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Lenz, T. (1998). Building a force for the common good: United Power for Action and Justice (September/October, #101). Retrieved February 11, 2004 from <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/101/lenz.html>.
- Lester-massman, E. (1991). The dark side of comparative research. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 15(2), 92-106.

- Lewis, J. & Jhally, S. (1998). The struggle over media literacy. *Journal of Communication*. (Winter), 109-20.
- Macpherson, C.B. (1973). *Democratic theory: Essays in retrieval*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Manca, L. (1989). Journalism, advocacy, and a communication model for democracy. In M. Raboy & P. Bruck (eds.), *Communication for and against democracy* (pp. 163-173) Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Marcus, G. & Fischer, M. (1999). *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences, (2nd ed.)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Masterman, L. (2001). A rationale for media education. In Kubey, R. (eds.) *Media literacy in the information age: current perspectives: Information and Behavior, vol. 6*. (pp. 15-68). New Brunswick: Transaction.
- McChesney, R & Foster, J.B. (2003). The “Left-Wing” media [electronic version]. *Monthly Review*, 55(2), np.
- McChesney, R. & Nichols, J. (2002). *Our media not theirs: The democratic struggle against corporate media*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- McChesney, R. (1999). *Rich media, poor democracy: Communications in dubious times*. New York: The New Press.
- McChesney, R. (1998). Making media democratic [electronic version]. *Boston Review*, (Summer), retrieved June 24, 2003 from www.bostonreview.com.
- McChesney, R. (1996). The global struggle for democratic communication [electronic version]. *Monthly Review*, 48(3), pp. 1-21.
- Meehan, E., Mosco, V. & Wasko, J. (1993). Rethinking political economy: Change and continuity. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4). 105-116.
- Meyrowitz, J. (1998). Multiple media literacies. *Journal of Communication*, 48(1). 96-108.
- Mills, C. W. (2000). *The power elite. New Edition*. Oxford University Press: New York.
- Page, Benjamin (1996). *Who deliberates? Mass media in modern democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

- Park, R. (1938). Reflections on communication and culture. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 44(2). 187-205.
- Perlstein, J. (2001). The independent media center movement: An experiment in media democracy. *MediaFile* 20(1). Retrieved February 25, 2004, from <http://www.media-alliance.org/mediafile/20-1/perlstein.html>.
- Reason, P. (1994). Three approaches to participative inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 324-336). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Rodriguez, A. (1995). Control mechanisms of national news making: Britain, Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In J. Downing et. al. (eds.), *Questioning the media: A critical introduction*. (pp. 128-146). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Rodriguez, C. (1998, June). Citizens' media and their potential in contexts of intense violence: Preliminary reflections. Retrieved November 4, 2003, from <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/R/Clemencia.Rodriquez-1/peacemedia.htm>.
- Rodriguez, C. (1996). Shedding useless notions of alternative media. *Peace Review*, 8(1), 63-68.
- Schiller, H. (1992). *Mass communications and American empire, 2nd ed.* Boulder: Westview Press.
- Schudson, M. (1992). Was there ever a public sphere? If so, when? Reflections on the American case. In C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere, 6th ed.* (pp. 143-163), Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Schudson, M. (1997). Why conversation is not the soul of democracy [electronic version]. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 14(4), 297-309.
- Shumway, Christopher. (2003). Democratizing communication through community-based participatory media networks: A study of the independent media center movement. Retrieved February 25, 2004, from <http://chris.shumway.tripod.com/papers/thesis.htm>
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. London: Sage.
- Silverstone, R. (1999). *Why study the media?* London: Sage.

- Slessarev, H. (2000, March/April). Saul Alinsky goes to church: Faith-based organizing is taking off---with benefits for both community and church. Retrieved January 26, 2004. from <http://www.sojo.net>
- Sparks, C. (1993). Raymond Williams and the theory of democratic communication. In S. Splichal & J. Wasko (eds.), *Communication and democracy*. (pp. 69-86). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Stake, R.E. (1994). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 236-47). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- The Democratic promise: Saul Alinsky and his legacy. Retrieved January 26, 2004, from <http://www.itvs.org/democraticpromise/alinsky.html>.
- United Power for Action and Justice. Retrieved February 5, 2004 from <http://www.gileadcenter.org/about/upaj.html>
- Warren, M. (2001a). Building Democracy: Faith based community organizing today (January/February, #115). Retrieved February 11, 2004, from <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/115/warren.html>
- Warren, M. (2001b). *Dry bones rattling: Community building to revitalize American democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Warren, M. (1996). *Creating a multi-racial democratic community: A case study of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation*. Retrieved February 5, 2004, from <http://www.tresser.com/iafin.htm>
- Warren, M. & Wood. R. (2001). Faith based community organizing: The state of the field. Retrieved February 5, 2004, from [http://www.comm-
org.utoledo.edu/papers2001/faith/report.html](http://www.comm-
org.utoledo.edu/papers2001/faith/report.html)
- Wasko, J. (1993). Introduction: Studies in communication democracy. In S. Splichal & J. Wasko (eds.), *Communication and democracy*. (pp. 163-67). Norwood, NJ: Ablex
- Wasko, J. (1992). Introduction. In J. Wasko & V. Mosco (eds.), *Democratic communications in the information age* (pp. 1-13). New Jersey: Ablex.
- Williams, R. (1989). *Resources of hope* (R. Gable, Ed.). Verso: London.
- Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society, (revised ed.)*. New York: Oxford.

Williams, R. (1968). *Communications* (2nd ed.). London: Penguin.

Websites accessed

<http://atlanta.indymedia.org/mod/info/display/mission/index.php>

www.buildiaf.org/products.htm

<http://www.civicmediacenter.org/news/>

www.dreadedmindz.org

<http://www.freewebs.com/commonground>

<http://www.freepress.net/conference/recordings.php>

www.guerillanews.com

www.industrialareadfoundation.org

www.indymedia.org

<http://www.main.nc.us/cml/>

*There is nothing inevitable about the triumph and persistence of democracy in the world -no
hidden hand will deliver it
- Larry Diamond, 1999*