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CAN YOU SPARE SOME (SOCIAL) CHANGE?

PARTICIPATORY MEDIA AS CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE IN POOR AND HOMELESS COMMUNITIES

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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Dedicated to Cynthia Morikone,

Whose dedication to social justice continues to inspire and provoke me to make the world a better place. Till we meet again my friend.

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Abstract

Increase in empowerment and accurate representation for lower socioeconomic status groups is a dire and growing need in America. This dissertation examines how participatory media processes can serve as catalysts for change in populations of poverty and homelessness in the U.S. Using critical theory and qualitative analyses, I analyze the relationship between participatory media and voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness at two case studies, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center, and argue that through the interaction of these key components in the participatory media process, an increase in empowerment and agency will result. I also examine where the possibility lies for civic engagement in the participatory media process. Additionally, this study argues that the participatory media process can serve as a reflexive lens for people in poverty and homelessness to critically analyze structural forms of oppression and their role in creating social change. Ultimately, I propose the concept of *digital reflexivity* and assert that digital reflexivity serves as a critical catalyst throughout processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness for the increase of empowerment and agency.

Introduction

> I believe everything in the universe happens for a reason and I am truly grateful. I am grateful for my child I am grateful for cal works because without the food stamps and the financial help and medical my child and I would be hungry homeless and sick. Although we have experience hunger homelessness and illness I know in my soul that it would be so much worse. As a welfare mom I recently had the blessing of being given work experience for pay. This work experience at San Francisco City College has boosted my self-esteem and truly helps me realize that I am working for myself and the betterment of my child. Although I only make $400 month this has truly been a help to the betterment of my mind soul and spirit. (Class exercise, July 13, 2010)

This is a blog written by a media participant/welfare mother during POOR Magazine's summer 2010 session of Escuela de la Gente/PeopleSkool. This participant transformed her in-class writing exercise for a blog writing campaign that engaged local politicians in supporting the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes (HR4213), which helped maintain the budget for the CalWORKS community jobs programs in which she participated. POOR Magazine is a revolutionary media education and production organization located in the Mission District of San Francisco, CA. Through participatory media projects like this, POOR educates and involves community members to enact their agency and use their voice to fight discrimination, inequality, and structural causes of poverty. This dissertation examines how participatory media processes, like those used at POOR Magazine, can increase empowerment and a sense of agency for people living in poverty and homelessness.

Research Aim

In this study I analyze the relationship between participatory media and voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness at two case studies, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center, and argue that through the interaction of these key components in the participatory media process, empowerment and a sense of agency

will result. I also examine where the possibility lies for civic engagement in the participatory media process. Additionally, this study argues that the participatory media process can serve as a reflexive lens for people in extreme poverty and homelessness to critically analyze structural forms of oppression and their role in creating social change. Ultimately, I propose the concept of *digital reflexivity* and assert that digital reflexivity serves as a critical catalyst throughout processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness for the increase of empowerment and agency.

Based on alternative media scholarship, this study defines participatory media as a communication approach that uses horizontal communication and a reflexive dialogic process for the encouragement of interlocutors to enact their sense of personal agency. Participatory media are a type of alternative media in which individuals are encouraged to create their own communication channels to speak against larger cultural, political, and economic structures with the intent of creating social change. Participatory media producers engage in a transformative process that empowers them to actualize their capabilities as agents of change. The transformative process consists of raising their critical consciousness via reflexive dialogues that ask media producers to analyze their positions in poverty in relation to larger structural forces. This transformation helps individuals in poverty identify opportunities to speak back to and act against structural systems in order to alleviate their conditions of poverty. This study sheds light on this transformative process by analyzing how people in poverty approach, engage in and for some, intertwine participatory media production within their lives with the goal of creating social change in their lives and communities.

Various theories in the critical paradigm and the Communication for Social Change (CFSC) literature are used as a framework to analyze and understand processes of participatory media among people in poverty. As will be explicated further in the next chapter, this study relies on a critical approach to issues of power and empowerment, dialogue and critical consciousness, voice, and agency and civic engagement. These theories and conceptualizations structure the analysis for this study to better understand how individuals in poverty engage with participatory media and create social change. In addition to critical theories, literature from the CFSC field also provides a framework with which to analyze and understand the transformative potential of participatory media. According to Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006), CFSC scholars are interested in communication processes reliant on horizontal communication and dialogue that bring people and communities together. CFSC research focuses on the communication process itself, identifying the ways in which agency, empowerment, and voice play key roles in processes of social change (Gumucio-Dagron, 2009).

This study centers around two ethnographic case studies, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center. For this study, I saw two communities in poverty realize their potential as shapers of social dynamics as they learned to create participatory media and transform their sense of agency and understanding of structural causes of poverty. The first case study, POOR Magazine, is located in San Francisco, CA and is a community media organization that provides media education and production for and by people living in homelessness and poverty. I conducted participant-observation at POOR's Escuela de la Gente/PeopleSkool during the summer

of 2010 and witnessed how community members engaged in the transformative process of participatory media as they learned to produce and disseminate their own digital media content. The second case study was conducted at Sanctuary Women's Development Center in Oklahoma City, OK where I developed and executed a participatory media production course based on the model I saw implemented at POOR Magazine. This ethnography was conducted during the fall of 2011 and summer of 2012 and involved women living in homelessness and poverty in the Oklahoma City area who utilized digital media resources Sanctuary Women's Development Center and I provided. This study also includes a comparative media analysis of the processes and products observed during these two case studies with media processes and products from four historical and contemporary community media programs across North America, to help draw comparisons and insights in the transformative processes I observed during my ethnographies.

The following research questions address how participatory media processes increase empowerment and a sense of agency for people living in poverty and homelessness.

RQ1: What does the participatory media process look like and what elements of engagement does it entail?

RQ2: How do participatory media help articulate experiences of poverty in contemporary U.S. American society?

RQ3: How can participatory media engage participants in processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness?

RQ4: How can participatory media engender a sense of agency for people in

poverty?

RQ5: When analyzing the participatory media process, where is civic engagement possible and how can it be enacted?

The "Culture of Poverty" Mythology

Over the last century various academic studies have examined the underlying causes of poverty and best practices for poverty alleviation (Harrington, 1962; Leacock, 1971; Lewis, 1959; Moynihan, 1965; Small, Harding, & Lamont, 2010; Wilson, 2010, 2012). Of this research, a divide has emerged between structural and cultural reasons behind poverty. The structural angle takes a macroscopic approach addressing U.S. economic infrastructure issues and how these issues create unequal class structures and large economic divides. The cultural perspective takes a microscopic look at specific individuals in poverty and the cultural (values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors) conditions that encourage people to stay in poverty. Oscar Lewis (1959) coined the phrase "culture of poverty" in his book *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty*. This phrase, and subsequent studies conducted during this timeframe (Harrington, 1962; Moynihan, 1965; Valentine, 1969), focused on people in poverty succumbing to cultural factors like racial discrimination, marginalization, lack of education, and feeling entrapped and hopeless about their economic situation.

In response, critiques arose accusing these scholars of blaming the victim, racism, and their negligence of structural factors (Gmelch & Zenner, 1996; Leacock, 1971; Small et al., 2010). The "culture of poverty" thesis has also been accused of creating cultural codes about poverty that still exist today. These cultural codes cultivate myths about poverty that include: people in poverty are lazy and unmotivated; parents

in poverty do not value education for their children; people in poverty are linguistically deficient; and people are in poverty because of their abuse of drugs and alcohol, among others (Gorski, 2008). Because these myths still hold in the dominant political and economic spheres, people in poverty are permeated and influenced by them.

The "culture of poverty" may have been engendered in the 1960s about the economic poverty conditions of the time, and rebuked and chastised through research and personal experiences in the decades ever since, but it is still very much alive and well in the rhetoric of politicians and the mindsets of the people in the U.S. today (Cohen, 2010). In 2012, Governor of Massachusetts and presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, elicited poverty myths during his presidential campaign claiming,

> There are 47 percent [of U.S. Americans] . . . who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it -- that that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them . . . I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives. (Madison, 2012)

Romney is not the only politician who perpetuates the circulation of these myths; many Republicans and Democrats across the country support legislation that subjects welfare recipients to drug testing, reinforcing the belief that people are in poverty because of their addiction to drugs and alcohol (Schneider, 2013; Wistrom, 2013). Through the circulation of dominant ideologies like these, mainstream media reinforce and perpetuate poverty mythologies.

The Problem of Mainstream Media

Political economist media scholars have demonstrated how mainstream commercial media attempt to support unequal class structures, reinforce dominant ideologies, and marginalize ethnic, gender, class, and sexual communities in the U.S.

(Bagdikian, 2004; Chomsky, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2004; Mosco, 1996; Said, 1997; Tucker, 1978; Warner, 2002). According to Bagdikian (2004), fifty media corporations dominated the commercial media market in 1983. Thanks in part to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 the deregulation of media ownership has reduced that number considerably worldwide. When a finite number of corporations control the majority of available media and information, the public loses freedom, as diversity of views and opinions decreases. When viewing media consolidation from this perspective, the very real threat of media monopolization imperils the public and what is best for their interests.

According to Bagdikian (2004), media corporations "do not manufacture nuts and bolts: they manufacture a social and political world" (p. 9). Culture is disseminated through mass media. Political values and beliefs are disseminated through mass media. Even social norms and behaviors are disseminated through mass media. Bagdikian asserts that the product of media corporations is not just the entertainment component of sports and cartoons but also the social construction of how we view the world, how we should interact with others, and what values and beliefs we should honor within that world. The monetary focus of corporations taints this product and restricts critical examination and democratic dialogue of important issues within our society.

Media research has shown that mainstream media set agendas, prime decisions, and frame arguments in ways that influence the mindsets of audiences and dispositions against those struggling with poverty, therefore asserting that those in power control the ideology (Gilens, 1999; Goffman, 1974; Hancock, 2004; Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993). Studies

have also shown that mainstream media are very influential in perpetuating racial stereotypes and discrimination, which only serve to exacerbate racial tensions in the U.S. (Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Ford, 1997; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Ortiz, 2007; Mastro & Kopacz, 2006; Mastro, Tamborini, & Hullett, 2005; Mastro, 2003; Oliver, Jackson, Moses, & Dangerfield, 2006). For example, in her book *The Politics of Disgust*, Hancock (2004) analyzed media descriptions and portrayals of welfare recipients and how news reports influence public opinion against the welfare *recipients*, not the welfare *system*. This influence on public opinion in turn impacts public policies and laws that consequently criminalize and delegitimize people living in homelessness and poverty.

The Transformative Potential of Participatory Media

If mainstream media coverage ignores, chastises, or denigrates people living in poverty, then which media serve the needs and express the perspectives and experiences of the 46.2 million U.S. Americans currently in poverty today (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b)? CFSC scholars argue that *participatory media* empower marginalized people to create and control media that reflect their own community's needs and experiences (Bessette & Rajasunderam, 1996; Cornish & Dunn, 2009; Downing, 2001; Huesca, 1995; Kafewo, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001). According to Cornish and Dunn (2009), "Participatory communication is a concept and practice involving citizens creating and sharing knowledge, experiences, and desires in order to pursue agendas of their own choosing" (p. 665). Participatory media help citizens enact their agency through the creation and sharing of experiential knowledge for the betterment of themselves and their community.

Key to the idea of participatory media is access, dialogue, and participation. Scholars like Luis Ramiro Beltrán and Paulo Freire have built theories of participatory communication to help scholars move away from archaic linear models of communication and to develop alternative models of communication like Beltrán's (1980) horizontal communication model. According to Jan Servaes (2008), participatory communication "stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities, and of democratisation and participation at all levels - international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional 'receivers'" (p. 21). Participatory media have the ability to empower marginalized people to create social change for their communities.

The inundation of "culture of poverty" myths through mainstream media and political rhetoric contribute to the way people in poverty internalize their condition and shape their outlook on society at large. Participatory media give people in poverty a way to interrogate this internalization and provide a channel for their voice to reach the larger social dialogue. With participatory media, the sense of agency for communities in poverty is reinforced through the creation of knowledge and sharing of poverty experiences. In other words, participatory media allow the experience to find a place next to the myth in the public sphere. According to White (2003d), the primary goal of participatory media and communication processes is to "empower people to shape their own destiny" (p. 20).

> Ideally, the participation process enables people [to] achieve an identity, chart their life course, experience freedom in their life space and reach for their human potential with dignity and respect. Participatory communication has the capacity to connect human beings as they experience social change. It is a democratic process, characterized by dialog, creative and consensual thinking, and collective action. (White, 2003d, p. 20)

Scholars like Nair and White (Nair & White, 1987; White, 2003d), Huesca (1995), and Downing (2001) have researched participatory media because of this potential for transformation and social change. Within the participatory media process is the opportunity for individuals to become critically aware of social injustices and empowered to take action as catalysts for change. In this study I argue that the participatory media processes created at POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center achieve this transformative potential for participatory media.

To understand such transformative processes, this study argues that for people in poverty, awareness of their role in changing their condition of poverty is raised through 1) **critical consciousness** and 2) **reflexivity**. Although people in poverty are aware of their experience and their conditions of marginalization, they may not be aware of the larger structural forces that keep them in poverty, their role in shaping their experience in poverty, and how to alter their conditions of poverty. As they become critically aware of each of these elements they become more engaged as agents of change in their own lives and communities. Critical consciousness consists of this awareness and can be reached through a dialogic approach dependent on reflection and action (Freire, 1970). In addition, reflexivity asks the individual to engage in a process of reflection of how they can affect and are affected by their situation of poverty (Archer, 2010). In this dissertation I want to propose the concept of *digital reflexivity*[1] as a term to explicate the role of reflexivity in the emergence of empowerment and agency from participants'

[1] Not to be confused with reflexivity in visual anthropology, a term used to refer to the ways in which the conditions of the production of the film are made visible in the film itself.

engagement in processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness during the participatory media process. **Digital reflexivity occurs when people use digital media technologies as a mirror to: 1) position themselves in their situation, 2) identify their role in changing their situation, and 3) reflect on their role in a reflexive exchange of actions (*i.e.*, how they shape and reshape their situation while simultaneously being shaped by it).** Articulation of voice, engagement in dialogue, and increase in critical consciousness occur as participants are involved in this process. This in turn, leads to an increase of empowerment, awareness of the self as an agent of change, and potentially towards acts of civic engagement. In this study I argue digital reflexivity occurs in conjunction with and helps excel the transformative potential of participatory media.

Research Motivation

My interest in community media and social change does not primarily stem from a personal history of community media engagement or activism. During my time as an undergraduate I began my career in public relations (PR) working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Formerly Used Defense Site Program. As their PR consultant I was given many opportunities to create outreach initiatives to help assuage community fears and concerns regarding environmental contamination caused by the Department of Defense. Working with a range of diverse communities, including elderly, migrant, and Native American communities, I became interested in how communities come together in times of crisis.

This interest led me to begin a Master's program in which my thesis focused on the offline repercussions of online community discussions of important albeit socially

controversial topics. In this research I was interested in determining if online community discussions could lead to offline civic engagement. Although I was not able to conclusively state a direct correlation between online community discussions and offline acts of civic engagement I did find that online communities help raise critical consciousness of important issues, which I called "civic enlightenment" (Vincent, 2009). This line of research inspired me to continue looking at the different components of civic engagement and what motivates individuals to participate in their communities.

When I began my doctoral program I wanted to continue where my thesis left off, examining civic engagement and individual motivations to participate. I learned from the research process of my thesis that I wanted to look at geographic examples of communities where people gather in person to address community issues, not just virtual examples. Having learned from my thesis that digital technologies can play a substantial role in democratic participation (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004; Rheingold, 2000; Shah & Kwak, 2001; Wellman, Boase, & Chen, 2002; Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001; Wellman, 2001; Williams, 2006) I also knew I wanted to look at a different aspect of digital technology, not just technology use but technology education and production. This led me to build an initial prospectus examining the role of alternative media providers in increasing civic engagement in passive individuals through the use of citizens' media. This initial prospectus inevitably evolved towards the current focus of the transformative potential of participatory media with a specific attention to voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness as catalysts for empowerment and agency; all key components, I argue, that lead to the potential for civic engagement.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 1 I explore the critical theories behind key concepts in the participatory media process I propose in this study. In the first section I look at theories of power and empowerment, primarily focusing on Marx' conception of ideology, Foucault's approach to power, as well as Gramsci's notion of hegemony. In the second section I then examine the theoretical contributions of Paulo Freire and Mikhail Bakhtin with regard to dialogue and critical consciousness. I also include a discussion on the role of language and dialogue and the importance of language in subverting oppressive power structures. The third section discusses conceptualizations of voice, the role of voice in building empowerment, and the role of silence in maintaining oppressive power structures. The fourth section addresses theories and conceptualizations of agency and civic engagement. This chapter lays the foundation with which to analyze the data collected for this study to understand the transformative potential of participatory media.

Chapter 2 builds the literature review for this study by discussing the classic works from the Communication for Social Change field. I use this field and its accompanying literature as a framework to understand the implications of the historical and current alternative media research for this study. In the first section I address the origins of the CFSC field, its development over time, and its diverse and international field of inquiry. The second section reviews the pertinent literature for this study, focusing on the relationship between alternative, community, participatory, indigenous, radical, and citizens' media and how they are similar yet distinctly different in their approaches to participation and social change. I also examine the literature on digital

media and discuss the debate on its democratic potential and shortcomings. The third section takes an in-depth look at specific community and participatory media initiatives in North America and how they approach issues related to poverty and homelessness. Specifically, I examine the academic literature associated with the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change program, the Community Film Workshop Council's Appalshop program, Global Action Project, and Media Mobilizing Project. By reviewing the literature associated with these specific projects I begin to foster connections between their research findings and the participatory media process I propose in this study.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodological approaches used for this study and opens with theoretical considerations that guide the approaches used, focusing on practice theory. The first section discusses the methodological approaches I used, to include ethnography, media as process, and a comparative media analysis. This section identifies the limitations to the ethnographic process I implemented and the rationale for using a comparative media analysis to supplement the data I collected. The second section focuses on the research design for this dissertation and outlines how the case studies were chosen, the ethnographic procedure, the course design for Sanctuary Women's Development Center, and the media selection process for the comparative media analysis. The third section addresses the data collection process by detailing the types of data collected and the data analysis techniques used to analyze the data for this dissertation.

Chapter 4 provides the research context for both of the case study sites. In the first section I provide a macroscopic perspective of poverty in the U.S. at the turn of the

21st century and then narrow my scope to focus on the current status of poverty in the two cities central to this study: San Francisco, CA and Oklahoma City, OK. This section also addresses anti-poverty policies in the U.S. and their effect on poverty and homelessness in these two cities. In the second section I describe the San Francisco and Oklahoma City mediascapes and address how poverty is portrayed in mainstream media in the 21st century and what alternative media initiatives have been used to pushback against these portrayals. The third and fourth sections of this chapter focus on the two specific case studies used for this study, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center, and a description of how ethnographies were executed at each site with respect to each site's unique background, location, participants, and procedures.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the ethnographic data analysis and comparative media analysis, focusing on the transformative potential of participatory media processes. In the first section I address RQ1 by describing the participatory media process I saw take place in each case study. Each sub-section thereafter addresses a component within this process: voice, dialogue, critical consciousness, empowerment and agency, and civic engagement. The first sub-section addresses RQ2 and looks at how poverty is articulated in contemporary U.S. America. The second and third sub-sections address RQ3 and focus on the engagement of participants in processes of dialogue and critical consciousness. The fourth sub-section answers RQ4 and looks at how participatory media engender a sense of agency for people living in poverty and homelessness through empowerment. The fifth sub-section addresses RQ5 by identifying where the possibilities lie for civic engagement in the participatory media

process. Throughout each of these sub-sections ethnographic data and results from the comparative media analysis are used to support each argument.

In Chapter 6 I make the argument for the concept of digital reflexivity based on the findings from the previous chapter. In the first section I discuss the literature underlying the concept of reflexivity and propose my conceptualization of digital reflexivity. I coalesce the previous analytical findings and explicate the concept of digital reflexivity as a key component of the participatory media process. Throughout this research I found that participatory media processes could serve as reflexive lenses for participants, resulting in an increase in empowerment and agency. In the second section I provide a conclusion to this dissertation and address the limitations, implications, and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 1

Participatory Media through a Critical Lens

This chapter is an exploration into theories and concepts in critical theory that enable better understandings about the ways media production processes impact empowerment, agency, and civic engagement at individual and collective levels. The first section of the chapter includes a discussion about power and empowerment, and the ways marginalized groups increase empowerment within dominant, oppressive ideologies. The second section is an examination of the works of Freire (1970, 1973) and Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981); a review of their theoretical approaches to dialogue and critical consciousness is included in order to illuminate the role of dialogue in creating critical consciousness. The third section identifies contemporary conceptualizations of voice and how they are used in creating a theoretical framework for this study. The fourth section is a description of various conceptualizations of agency and civic engagement. Through a synthesis of these theoretical perspectives, a foundation for the study of the ways participatory media[2] processes impact agency in marginalized communities is generated.

Power and Empowerment

The role of power in understanding issues of agency has been a cornerstone for critical scholars as they attempt to theorize how agency happens among those who are oppressed and silenced (Downing, 2001; Freire, 1970; Gramsci, 1971; Tucker, 1978;

[2] Media in which, members of a society actively participate in typically small-scale media production, where the process is dependent on interaction, dialogue, and mutual respect.

Wilkins, 2000). Theoretical perspectives about power and empowerment, and the role of power in social change dynamics will be described next.

Power

Marx analyzed the spread of ideology through historical materialism[3] in order to examine hierarchical structures, control, and oppression (Marx & Engels, 1846/1970). Marx argued that each society depends on material goods in its own way through the technological tools and advancements available to the members of a given society during the historical context in which it occurs. For Marx, materialism is a way to understand power relations within society by examining the ways in which people construct societal infrastructures based on the modes and means of production. According to Marx, each society develops its own mode, or process of production to satiate human needs created by conditions in the environment. Each mode of production will have its own resources needed for production (the *means* of production) as well as its own *relations* of production. *Relations* involve the formation and shaping of economic classes within a society, for example, relegating people to specific divisions of labor in which they adhere to social relations consistent with their (working) class designation. Marx described the possibilities for class struggle to occur within and among these divisions as power hierarchies develop. This potential for class struggle means that those in power prevent revolution from the working classes by promulgating and entrenching the ruling ideologies. According to Marx and Engels (1846/1978), "the

[3] Historical materialism is a methodological and theoretical approach conceptualized by Marx and argues that changes in a society's material conditions (*e.g.,* physical, technological) influence the social, economic, and political structures of that society within a given historical context.

ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: *i.e.*, the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force" (p. 172). Therefore, those who control the modes and means of production, to sustain their positions, must also control the ideologies, their dissemination, legitimization, and normalization, in order to ensure the status quo ruled by economic elites (the *producers*, in Marx' parlance), and to prevent structural change in general. According to Marx and Engels, the spread and acceptance of the ideologies of the ruling class by those without power sustains the elites and prevents working classes from altering these power structures, or even thinking of doing so. As a result of this acceptance, lower classes are isolated from one another and do not, collectively, critically examine their positions in life, the potentials for revolt, and the possibilities for systemic changes in social power structures.

Hegemony exists when an ideology is linked to tradition and becomes normalized and legitimized to a point where people do not think critically or question what is considered normal (Gramsci, 1971). As a politically constituted discourse, hegemony not only defines what is normal and acceptable but is also constructed organically and incorporated into everyday culture. Without critical examination, those in power retain their power by maintaining the status quo that favors them. Following Gramsci (1971), if critical examination exists in a portion of the population, the ruling ideology is faltering, a key event in overturning systematic oppression and hegemony. In order to overcome the hegemony of traditional intellectuals, oppressed groups must create their own organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971). "Organic" intellectuals "are distinguished … by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to

which they organically belong" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3). Oppressed groups can facilitate agency with others and change the dominant ideological structure through the emergence of organic intellectuals who establish their own agency and assist in the empowerment of others in the process. Participatory media production can be understood then as a creator and facilitator of organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense. As people engage in media production processes, they have the potential to trigger a series of outcomes related to voice, agency, and the increased legitimacy of experiential knowledge.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) elaborate Gramsci's concept of hegemony by identifying two conditions of hegemonic articulation: "the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them" (p. 136). According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the presence of antagonistic forces is necessary to establish the discursive arena in which hegemony operates while instability allows for discursive exchange to occur. In comparison to Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) suggest that hegemony does not involve a singular class in control but rather hegemonic rule is a "space for a game which is never 'zero-sum', because the rules and the players are never fully explicit" (p. 193). Laclau approaches the idea of hegemony as a process of struggle that emerges "from the political interaction between groups" (Laclau, 1996, p. 44). Within this process is the discursive interplay of "empty signifiers" in which "a particular content becomes the signifier of the absent" (Laclau, 1996, p. 43). Laclau refers to this as the *hegemonic relationship* (p. 43). To clarify this concept, Laclau provides the following example: Society is reliant on order, any order, the "content" or realization of which is irrelevant. In cases where disorder is present (*e.g.,* post-war

societies), order is absent and political forces compete with one another to fill this absence with a particular content, a new actualization of order. Through an example like this, Laclau (1996) argues "the constitutive impossibility of society can only represent itself through the production of empty signifiers," explaining that "any hegemony is always unstable and penetrated by a constitutive ambiguity" (p. 44).

Foucault (2001) addresses the role of the subject in the establishment of power relations. According to Foucault (2001), "there is no such entity as power…global, massive, or diffused…Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action" (p. 340). However, Foucault's view about the exertion of power differs from Marx in that Foucault does not view the relationship of power as being enacted directly on others but instead as the relationship of "an action upon an action" (Foucault, 2001, p. 340), a move-countermove arrangement. In this conception, Foucault identifies two indispensible elements of power relationships: "That 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up" (Foucault, 2001, p. 340). Within this view comes the possibility for revolt and social change to occur, keeping in mind that, according to Foucault, power is not a substance that is *possessed* by any person or entity, rather it is a certain type of *relationship* that occurs among individuals (or groups). According to Foucault (2001), "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (p. 342), which are inseparable components within this relationship that create the opportunity for acceptance, or more rarely, refusal or revolt.

As distinctly different definitions of power, the ideas of both Marx and Foucault can simultaneously exist within a society, its contexts and frameworks. This study is an exploration into the intersection of media and power, as it exists in contemporary capitalist contexts of poverty, and explores how participatory media processes can impact power dynamics that create and sustain oppression as well as contest domination.

Wilkins (2000) considers power as "an ability to shape social contexts" (p. 198), which is produced through citizens' engagement in action that not only shapes their own identities but the identities of others and their social environment as well. Power and agency have traditionally been viewed as centrally focused on acts of voting and protest (Dahl, 1956), however, scholars have now identified alternative ways of understanding power and agency that include analyses of dialogue, dissent, murals, graffiti, and digital media (Castells, 2009; Downing, 2001; Freire, 1970; Mody, 2000; Phillips, 1996). Using the theory of radical democracy as a foundation, Rodríguez (2001) argues that citizens enact their citizenship through "the collective transformation of symbolic codes, historically legitimized identities, and traditionally established social relations" (p. 20). In these forms of agency, power is negotiated between those who possess lots of power and those who possess little, and through these negotiations power is enacted and transforms the lives of everyday people.

Empowerment

Sen (1997) argues that empowerment helps individuals gain control of their lives through balancing, gaining, or controlling power. "Empowerment is, first and foremost, about power; changing power relations in favour of those who previously

exercised little power over their own lives" (Sen, 1997, p. 2). Sen (1997) describes two key aspects of empowerment: extrinsic control and intrinsic capabilities. Extrinsic control includes resources that create power such as money, technology, and people, while intrinsic capabilities focus on the self-confidence of individuals to succeed in acts of agency. Genuine empowerment is dependent on both components, Sen concludes. Sadan (2004) also explores the dual nature of empowerment as an individual process, addressing the comparison of psychological empowerment (internal) versus political empowerment (external). Sadan argues that the relationship of these forms of empowerment stems from the creation of psychological empowerment *within* the individual (*e.g.,* an increase in self-confidence and awareness of power within the self) resulting in the display of political empowerment in which the individual then creates action that brings about personal and/or socio-political change.

Another perspective of empowerment central to this study involves the ways empowerment originates at the community level, which Sadan (2004) defines as "the increased control of people as a collective over outcomes important to their lives" (p. 85). Community empowerment is manifested in the degree of participation by community members and their collective decision-making processes (Biegel, 1984). The difference between individual empowerment and community empowerment is the reliance communities have on individuals in creating empowerment for the betterment of the group. While individual processes of empowerment focus on individual reflexivity and self-awareness, collective processes of empowerment involve individuals coming together through collective dialogue and action.

Bery (2003) contributes to this conversation by conjoining gender theories within the participatory communication field and defining empowerment as a personal growth process in which the individual and the community transcend boundaries and constraints. Bery (2003) views this as a multidimensional process that incorporates five key aspects:

> A psychological concept of the self that includes self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-confidence; a cognitive understanding of the power structures and one's placement within the existing systems; economic independence that gives a person or community the freedom to think, explore, and take individual risks; and, [the ability to openly conduct and share] political analysis and the will to change the systems themselves. (p. 103-104)

This process of empowerment views the individual as embarking on a journey in which the person never returns to the same state of being nor moves in a linear direction. The concept of the self is at the center of this perspective and is integral to the success of the empowerment process. Bery (2003) asserts that "gaining control of one's life, making one's own decisions and being able to influence the context in which one lives are essential elements of empowerment" (p. 104). This perspective of empowerment is quintessential and especially appropriate to this present study about poverty and empowerment as the individuals living within poverty work to gain agency and, ultimately, more control of their lives.

One poignant aspect of empowerment that scholars have touched upon is the inability of others to *give* power to someone else (Gruber & Trickett, 1987; Sen, 1997). Many scholars and government agencies have argued that social change can be accomplished by establishing programs, especially educational ones, designed to transfer power from higher authorities to the lower classes. However, in contradistinction, Sen (1997) argues:

> Changes in consciousness and self-perception are one's own, and when they occur, can be the most explosively creative, energy releasing transformations, from which there is often no looking back. They can tap powerful reservoirs of hope and enthusiasm among people who have been used to viewing themselves and their worlds in purely negative terms. (p. 3)

External agents including educators and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), however, do serve as catalysts for change, in part by helping people see their own potential for exercising power and promoting social change. With this in mind, it is easier to see the many ways digital technologies and media educators help people in poverty realize their possibilities as social agents of change.

Dialogue & Critical Consciousness

Freire is a seminal scholar and theorist with regard to dialogue, critical consciousness, and empowerment. The core concepts within Freire's work (1970, 1973, 1998) emphasize the role of dialogue in creating critical consciousness within the framework of education for people in poverty where the ultimate goal is empowerment. Central to Freire's conceptualization of dialogue is a focus on the power of words, more specifically on the *true word*, which encompasses reflection and action. According to Freire (1970), "while to say the true word—which is work, which is praxis—is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone" (p. 88). Dialogue occurs based on the execution of true words to name the world, that is, to help construct and constitute a perception of reality. "Dialogue is the encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world…If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings" (Freire, 1970, p. 88). Although not the first scholar to place emphasis on the power of

dialogue, Freire argues that it is through dialogue that critical consciousness, empowerment, and social change occur.

Freire argues that when engaging in dialogue to reconstitute and name the world, oppressed people must also be engaged in critical thinking. According to Freire (1998), when people participate in dialogue that is immersed in critical thinking they more likely view reality as transformational and mutable, eliminating the boundary between thinking and doing, between ideas and policy. "The more accurately [humans] grasp true causality, the more critical their understanding of reality will be" (Freire, 1973, p. 44). As people come to critically understand their reality through everyday language and examples from their own lives, they increase their own critical consciousness (Freire & Macedo, 1995). According to Vieira Pinto (1961), "Critical consciousness represents 'things and facts as they exist empirically, in their causal and circumstantial correlations'" (as quoted in Freire [1973], p. 44). Participants in dialogue are able to critically examine their situations and come to new understandings of their reality, a reality in which they see possibilities, eventually even the likelihood, for social change and emancipation. In his text *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973), Freire argues that through shared knowledge and a dialogue of equals, educational facilitators serve as catalysts for participants to gain critical consciousness and empower themselves. In order for this to occur, dialogue must take place in an open environment where interlocutors view each other as counterparts (a dialogue of equals), each with valid knowledge and experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Freire, 1970; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973).

According to Freire (1970), it is not enough to raise critical consciousness only for the oppressed; it is essential to raise critical consciousness for all people in society in order for collective dialogue and action to occur. Through critical consciousness and the use of critical thinking in dialogue, oppressed people can increase their empowerment to break out of the oppression present in hegemonic social systems; of course, they must see the hegemony and oppression in the first place, then must realize it need not exist. Freire (1970) argues that through critical consciousness people learn "to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 35)—taking an interest in their own interests.

Freire discusses a "fear of freedom" that he argues is inevitable in the development of critical consciousness, a necessary component for social change. Marginalized people perpetuate the cycle of oppression through their fear of freedom and the "existential duality of the oppressed, who are at the same time themselves and the oppressor whose image they have internalized" (Freire, 1970, p. 61) in what might be called self-oppression, or simply, blind compliance. To break out of this cycle (to stop teaching restrictive gender roles to children, for example) and increase empowerment, oppressed individuals must raise their own critical consciousness and construct, in conjunction with as many people as possible, a language of the oppressed based on their experiential knowledge. "No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption" (Freire, 1970, p. 54). Therefore, oppressed people can begin to transform power structures by creating a language of

empowerment based on their own examples and experiences. Dialogue based on this language can be powerful as a way to redefine realities and create opportunities for oppressed people to give voice to their experience, share their experiential knowledge with one another, and pave a path toward emancipation. Through critically understanding their reality, constructing a language with which to articulate this reality, and engaging in a dialogue of equals to share this meaning, oppressed people become empowered to reconstitute and name the world, to label and critically evaluate elements in society, and to find ways to improve the quality of their lives.

Freire's approach to critical thought and participatory communication has been integral to scholars who study communication for social change and has created a flux of research focusing on the possibility for critical consciousness and social change through dialogue (Beltrán, 1980; Cornish & Dunn, 2009; Downing, 2001; Huesca, 1995; Jacobson & Kolluri, 2006; Kafewo, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001). Based on Freire's concept of "conscientization", Beltrán (1980) created a horizontal communication model[4] that focuses on dialogue, access, and participation. In this model Beltrán defines communication as "the process of democratic social interaction, based upon exchange of symbols, by which human beings voluntarily share experiences under conditions of free and egalitarian access, dialogue and participation" (Beltrán, 1980, p. 16). Beltrán asserts, illustrated with the model, that every human being has the right to communicate through the availability of open access to communication channels and that human communication stems from a multitude of purposes, in which the intent to influence is

[4] Beltrán's model questioned unidirectional communication models that were emerging from mass communication research at this time.

neither the only nor the primary one. Through the model Beltrán (1980) describes dialogue as "the crucial agent of democratic communication" (p. 15) based on the idea that in the exchange of messages, communicators share not only experiences, but also status. In order for egalitarian dialogue to occur, participants in the exchange must have adequate opportunities to speak and listen. This model is also based on the assumption that access, dialogue, and participation are interdependent, working together to meet communication needs and to execute effective communication.

Freire's theory of dialogue combined with Beltrán's model of communication have influenced the way many scholars studying the impacts of communication on social change approach their research (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Huesca, 1995; Rodríguez, 2001; Servaes, 2008; Steeves, 2000; Wilkins, 2000). Of particular relevance to this study, Nair and White (1987) use Freire as a philosophical grounding in their view of participatory communication as transactional. Through transactions of communication (as opposed to linear or vertical models) interlocutors are free to engage in dialogic participation that promotes the development of shared issues, experiences, and understanding.

In addition to Freire's approach to dialogue and Beltrán's model of horizontal communication, Bakhtin and Holquist's dialogic theory (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981) also illuminates the possibilities for empowerment in participatory media as each utterance "awakens new and independent words . . . is freely developed . . . enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts" (p. 345). Heteroglossia, another of Bakhtin's concepts, helps explicate this idea further, addressing the ability for messages to reflect social values and develop meaning that is contingent on the meaning of other

messages, that is, the meanings of messages are fluid and shift according to each different context. Messages build and rely on one another within a particular context, a context in which the communicators not only acknowledge the language of the Other (subordinate or otherwise) but also build interdependence with the Other in web-like configurations rather than linear ones. Bakhtin also describes a distinction between dialogue and monologue, placing emphasis on the importance for dialogic exchange to occur, to replace the dominance and oppression present in monologue. For Bakhtin, dialogue opens the opportunity for polyphony, in which many voices are heard within a single message. These voices are in multiple languages, experiences, or genders, for example, and allow the presence of the Other to enter into the dialogue, not only to be heard but also to have the Other's views accommodated, incorporated into the messages.

Downing (2001) uses the dialogic theories of Freire and Bakhtin to support his argument about the benefits of radical media[5] in the public sphere. Freire's theory of dialogue serves as a core philosophy for Downing's research about radical media (explained further in Chapter 2). According to Downing (2001), radical media propose "a democracy of the communication process, once more acknowledging the audience as joint-architects with the media producers" (p. 46), unlike the corporate model of the mainstream media. Downing sees the importance of dialogue in creating mutual respect among audience members and producers, which is also applicable among media educators and their participants, within and beyond traditional classrooms. For Downing

[5] Media which are typically small-scale and used against dominant hegemonic structures; for example, street zines or graffiti.

(2001), Bakhtin's emphasis on "day-to-day language and voices of the general public" and their emergence "from the public's experiences . . . in their great variety" supports the role of radical media as a "dialogic, democratic public sphere within popular culture" (p. 46-47).

Language

One of the necessary building blocks for engaging in dialogue is language and its role in constituting the world, specifically the breaking down and upholding of structures of oppression and domination. Many scholars have analyzed the construction of language domination and its role in perpetuating oppression in numerous societies (Chomsky, 2003; Gramsci, 1971; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Tucker, 1978). Language domination is viewed as the ability to reinforce hierarchical structures through advocating and privileging a particular language or dialect at the expense of languages viewed as extraneous, to include "foreign" languages, subaltern languages, and revolutionary languages. Through language domination, hegemony is reinforced to ensure dominant people, languages, and ideologies—through the control of words, labels, and definitions used to construct the very basis of reality—remain dominant. When constructing a dialogue of change, it is necessary for vulnerable communities to use language that is neither domineering nor oppressive (*i.e.*, not the dominant language or, as a re-appropriated form of the dominant language). Through the use of dialogue to increase critical consciousness, individuals can identify language domination and re-appropriate oppressive language to reconstitute the world in their own languages, emerging from their own experiential knowledges, in their own voices.

Voice

An important element in processes of increased critical consciousness and dialogue is the concept of *voice*. Voice goes beyond mere physiology involving sound and hearing (for as Nick Couldry [2010] points out even deaf people have voice), it involves process and action. In relation to agency and empowerment, voice serves as a vehicle for agency, and agency is necessary for those who have been marginalized in society to increase empowerment. The concept of voice involves an interlocutor engaged in a process of critical consciousness and reflexivity and is also, as argued here, required for the increase of empowerment. According to Couldry (2010), "voice is socially grounded, performed through exchange, reflexive, embodied, and dependent upon a material form" (p. 91). Couldry explicates each of these points further by arguing that voice does not occur in a vacuum but rather it exists within a context and involves the participation of others in dialogue. Voice, as an embodied process, encompasses an individual's unique standing in life as well as the reflexive action that occurs when that individual interacts in the world. Other cultural factors including a shared language and cultural background are necessary, as well as psychological elements such as critical thought, self-confidence, and the view that change is possible, as discussed earlier. Couldry (2010) notes that voice is also dependent on a material form, which may vary in mode and number. For example, the voice of a community in poverty contains many diverse voices reflecting a variety of stories and backgrounds, the heteroglossia of which can be seen and heard when digital technologies are available to those in poverty to express their voices via blog, Internet radio, or social media. Regardless of the mode chosen, in order for a community's voice to reach the

public sphere, it is essential that it have a vehicle or channel to get there. In this sense, access to digital media technologies is essential in helping marginalized voices reach the public sphere. Conversely, access to digital media technologies without voice does not create social change because there is no substantive content being exchanged.

Of all the aspects of voice Couldry (2010) addresses, the most relevant for this study is the aspect of reflexive agency and voice. Couldry argues that voice is a form of agency in which "voice necessarily involves us in an ongoing process of reflection, exchanging narratives back and forth between our past and present selves, and between us and others" (2010, p. 8). In this respect, voice fills a reflexive role in which people must engage with the *results* of their interactions in the world—people are responsible for the stories they tell and the effects of those stories. In this sense, agency is produced, in substantial part, through the action of voice. When an individual engages in a reflexive process to include the past, present, and future self as well as the roles of others, that individual can more clearly visualize actions needed to produce social change.

Tacchi (2008) notes that the concept of voice takes on different meanings depending on how it is applied. For example, in her research on global poverty and voice, Tacchi explains how certain bottom-up community development approaches are driven by "giving people an opportunity to have a voice and influence or drive their own social change" (Tacchi, 2008, p. 12). Tacchi emphasizes the need for people in poverty to be able to create their own definitions of poverty as they themselves experience it, as well as the need for researchers to respect the voice and perspective of all research participants, particularly those in poverty. Tacchi goes on to explicate a

research process similar to that of participatory action research (Napthali Sobers, 2010) in which the research participants consult with the researcher to determine the research objectives, approach, and goals. The research participant exercises voice and agency through participation in the research plan and processes. Couldry (2003) also argues that ethnographers must grasp the "complexity of agency and reflexivity, so we can produce more satisfactory accounts of what 'subject' and 'object' of ethnography share" (p. 41). A similar approach—critical ethnography—is used for the present study. A research design was completed in coordination with research participants who freely voiced opinions and concerns about the direction of the study, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Silence

It is not that people in poverty do not have a voice; rather it is that they have too frequently abdicated it (voluntarily or involuntarily), relinquishing the power their voices might produce. When young children learn to speak they are eager to use their voice every waking moment. Through life's harsh experiences and the suffocating effects of oppression, many people in poverty have lost the notion that freedom is possible, often too fearful of or apathetic toward the responsibilities that go along with rights generally. Similar to the long history of silencing women, the abdication of voice has contributed to the entrenchment of oppressive hegemonies, the endurance of violence, and the loss of or lack of basic rights and freedoms. When speaking of the impact of silencing women, Gilligan (1993) argues, "by restricting their voices, many women are wittingly or unwittingly perpetuating a male-voiced civilization and an order of living that is founded on disconnection from women" (p. xi). Gilligan (1993) points

out that the sharing of women's voices, experiences, and knowledge "changes the voice: how the human story is told, and also who tells it" (p. xi). The history of the oppression, domination, and silencing of women is similar to that of people in poverty, people of color, the very young and the very old, prisoners, the disabled, and other groups: their voices are muted or distorted in order for marginalization and oppression to continue. By cultivating a voice that is shaped within their own language and based on their own experiential knowledge and values, people in poverty and other marginalized groups rebuild the story of their lives, shaping a new conversation about the facts of their lives, the truth of their lives in their own words, and the harms stemming from many of the policies and laws that impact them day in and day out.

Much like the call for feminists to "silence false feminine voices" (Gilligan, 1993, p. x), people in poverty must do the same: silence false representations concocted by others, frequently others with special personal motives and who have never lived in poverty. Marginalized people must also, as argued here, find and use their own voice, they must construct their own language and action (Tiny, 2006). Ironically, silence seems to be part of the problem more than a solution. Lorde (2007) describes the fear of voice by way of silence. In this construction she sees the transformation of silence into language and action as

> an act of self-revelation, [that] always seems fraught with danger. But my daughter, when I told her of our topic and my difficulty with it, said, "Tell them about how you're never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there's always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don't speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside. (Lorde, 2007, p. 42)

Lorde (2007) addresses the fear of using one's voice and its various contributors: scrutiny, judgment, pain, and death, but argues "we have lived through all of those already, in silence, except death" (p. 43) and in turn encourages the transformation of silence into language and action.

Agency & Civic Engagement

The final section of this chapter examines the theoretical and conceptual constructions of agency and civic engagement. The theories in this section provide the framework with which to analyze the ways participatory media processes can increase empowerment and agency for people in poverty, and the potential for civic engagement.

Agency

For decades, scholars have theorized about empowerment that occurs when individuals enact agency through voice, speech, and dialogue (Arendt, 1958; Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981; Beltrán, 1980; Couldry, 2010; Freire, 1973). Arendt (1958) theorized the relationship between speech and agency in her text *The Human Condition*, in which she describes agency as action dependent on an agent and revealed through speech. Arendt and others view communication and media as tools used to develop agency—agents construct language and take action through the media creation process. In addition to Arendt, Campbell's (2005) research is also useful in this context. In her research, Campbell asserts five main components of agency:

> (1) [it] is communal and participatory, hence, both constituted and contrasted by externals that are material and symbolic; (2) is "invented" by authors who are points of articulation; (3) emerges in artistry or craft; (4) is effected through form; and (5) is perverse, that is, inherently, protean, ambiguous, open to reversal. (Campbell, 2005, p. 2)

Campbell's view of agency provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the agentic process of participatory media production.

Consistent with Campbell's first component, the communal and participatory nature of agency, is the work of Dewey and Rogers who address "conditions under which the Great Society may become the Great Community" (Dewey & Rogers, 1927/2012, p. 147). Dewey and Rogers discuss what agency is and ways individuals in society are expected to use it in order to evolve into a "Great Community." Although Dewey and Rogers do not use the term agency specifically, they argue that in order to become a Great Community, communal activity that produces beneficial outcomes for community members is necessary, and this activity incites people to do what is necessary to maintain and extend beneficial outcomes. Change begets change. Change gets easier with practice. Confidence grows. And, with the presence of media, media consumers learn of the successes of other marginalized groups, and this knowledge frequently drives home the fact that change is possible, and potentially, at least, reduces the fears associated with dissent and action discussed earlier (A. Hamilton, personal communication, June 15, 2014). Through their definition of community, Dewey and Rogers indirectly address Campbell's first element of agency: communal activity and the creation/maintenance of such by community members themselves. However, intrinsic to this perspective of the communal nature is also the symbiotic albeit diametric relationship between the individual and the community. As individuals move within communities and interact with others, they do so in self-serving ways as well as beneficial ways to their community. This action can at times be necessary for the individual as well as detrimental to the community. This study will take into account

this natural tension within agency as individuals move within their spheres of influence. Arendt (1958) also addresses the necessity for human interaction, although as with Dewey and Rogers, she does not use the term agency in describing the importance of action as part of the human condition. Arendt notes the creation of the web of relationships and enacted stories, which are important because they stem from the constitution of objective, worldly interests, "in the word's most literal significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together" (Arendt, 1958, p. 182).

Campbell (2005) argues that because rhetors/authors "are linked to cultures and collectivities, [they] must negotiate among institutional powers and are best described as 'points of articulation' rather than originators" (p. 5). Campbell (2005) further clarifies that rhetors are historically situated subjects who link past and present and discover ways to "connect the psyche, society, and world, the forms of feeling that encapsulate moments in time" (p. 5). Arendt similarly argues "somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author" (Arendt, 1958, p. 184). According to Arendt, actors perform agency, but the actors themselves are not typically the originators.

In Campbell's third component of agency, she argues that agency emerges through artistry or craft. Dewey and Rogers (1927/2012) also address the necessity for agency to be employed through an artful or crafted manner in their assertion that the dissemination of communal messages to the mass public must be done in an artful approach to attract those "not interested in learning and assimilating the results of accurate investigation" (p. 182-183). If agency and the presentation of news or a

message are not presented artfully, the targeted, (and subsequently) disillusioned audience frequently tunes out (Dewey & Rogers, 1927/2012). Dahlgren (2006) also addresses the necessity for artful messages disseminated through popular culture, arguing that "various forms of popular culture play important political roles for democracy," and "'infotainment'–a blurring of traditional genre categories–helps people to connect the private and public, the personal and political" (p. 276). Through these popular forms of message dissemination, along with relevant, clear, artful messages, mass audiences are reached effectively.

Agency involves individual perspectives and necessities and is, therefore, useful for a variety of groups for a variety of needs (Campbell, 2005). Hauser and Blair (1982) address the foundation of rhetorical form as the basis for speaking within the public realm and see public action as not essentially political but "definitively rhetorical" (p. 144). "Thus arises the need for reconceptualizing this dimension of human experience in terms of its essential rhetoricalness, or the need for a setting forth rhetorical antecedents to the public" (Hauser & Blair, 1982, p. 144). According to Hauser and Blair (1982), rhetorical form and strategy are seen as foundational forms for public discourse regardless of message content. Hauser (1987) reiterates this idea when examining what constitutes the public sphere: "public spheres, then, are discursive spheres where society deliberates about normative standards and even develops new frameworks for expressing and evaluating social reality" (Hauser, 1987, p. 439). In tying the necessity of rhetorical form to the public sphere Hauser identifies the imperative of form—and an artful one as Campbell describes—in establishing rhetorical agency.

Campbell (2005) further argues that agency is perverse and promiscuous, meaning it has no inherent, static purpose or meaning, rather it is used deliberatively for both beneficial and detrimental purposes, the perspective of which depends on the articulator and recipient. Arendt (1958) notes the use of agency for a negative purpose occurs when tyrannical governments emerge and the primary rhetorical weapon is manifest in "the impotence of its subjects, who have lost their human capacity to act and speak together" (p. 203). Through the denial of subjects' agency, rulers enact tyrannical forms of agency themselves through various forms of rhetorical oppression. Phillips (1996) also addresses agency promiscuity as shown through dissent, which, depending on perspective, can have both beneficial and detrimental results.

In addition to Campbell's (2005) five components of agency, agency also arises from exigencies—needs, especially acute ones, serve to motivate individuals to act. Arendt (1958) addresses this by identifying the actor as both a doer and a sufferer. In this sense, Arendt acknowledges that few individuals take action without a need to do so because collective action is overwhelmingly required to change social structures. "Because the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, [the actor] is never merely a 'doer' but always at the same time a sufferer" (Arendt, 1958, p. 190). In other words, sufferers need solutions, emerging from shared suffering and striving for shared solutions. By identifying needs, as a starting point, through the contemplation of action and ultimately taking action (*i.e.*, gaining agency), agency is thus entwined with the motivation to satisfy needs and evolves within the public sphere.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is an important aspect of many of the theories discussed thus far, including power, empowerment, and agency. However, as a stand-alone theory, civic engagement has yet to be fully conceptualized, although it has been addressed and defined by various scholars across disciplines (Hauptmann, 2005; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Metcalf, Blanchard, McCarthy, & Burns, 2008; Norris, 2001). Norris (2001) conceptualizes civic engagement as consisting of three components: political knowledge (knowledge of the political system), political trust (faith in the political system), and political participation (involvement in the political system "designed to influence government and the decision-making process" [p. 217]). This conceptualization is used as a starting point from which to analyze civic engagement activities for this study.

A term that has been used interchangeably with civic engagement is political participation. Because of this, at least in part, the meaning and application of civic engagement has been conflated with that of strictly *political* participation, incorrectly excluding the involvement of individuals in social and other non-political processes. A description of political participation that has been used as a baseline from which to analyze civic engagement (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002; Norris, 2001) is put forth by Verba, Nie, and Kim's (1971) political participation categorizations, and focused on voting, campaign activism, community organizing, and outreach. However, political science theorist Hauptmann argues, "Civic engagement is not restricted or related to politics only. The reference to 'civic' suggests that any kind of involvement in the affairs of government, politics, administration, or organizations could be regarded as

civic engagement" (Hauptmann, 2005, p. 4). Other scholars argue that this narrow definition excludes many ways in which citizens get involved, especially, for example, when virtual communities, online forums, social media, and blogging are available (Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002; Metcalf et al., 2008; Norris, 2001, 2002).

In addition to delineating civic engagement activities, Hauptmann (2005) argues, "Civic engagement to be effective requires first and foremost an understanding of and information about current problems" (p. 5). Through the concept of "civic enlightenment" I have addressed the need for critical consciousness and civic knowledge in prior research, and determined that an online community I worked with was

> making progress toward an increase in civic engagement by providing awareness of important issues and providing a forum for people to engage in constructive dialogue to address them. On a microscopic level, individuals are reaching a higher consciousness of awareness and are being equipped with the understanding, sensitivity and compassion to engage in meaningful discussions in local communities. From this engagement future grassroots actions can take place once a more collective, organized effort is initiated. (Vincent, 2009, p. 128-129)

In addition to civic knowledge, Hauptmann (2005) also asserts that critical consciousness by community members must also include an awareness of the power that members possess to question and address social issues important to them.

Dewey and Rogers (1927/2012) in their research on democratic participation and community involvement, argue that the need exists for more community involvement at the local level to incite civic discourse based on critical inquiry and critical reason. "Dewey called for greater integration among publics in addressing the challenges of contemporary societies, and he championed an art of communication to achieve this goal" (Asen & Brouwer, 2003, p. 159). However, Asen (2003) extends this

argument from face-to-face communication as constitutive of community to include digital media communication. The call for greater community participation advocated by Dewey and Rogers remains valid in today's society, and recently scholars have noted the expanding ways in which this can be accomplished via digital technologies (Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002; Norris, 2001; Rheingold, 2000; Vincent, 2009; Wellman et al., 2002).

According to Dewey and Rogers (1927/2012), "activity is a condition of the creation of a community," and activity through interaction is dependent on communication (p. 151). A feeling of community can be established to encourage activity and engagement when "we" and "our" exist, and "the consequences of combined action are perceived and become an object of desire and effort" by community members (Dewey & Rogers, 1927/2012, p. 151). Dewey and Rogers also argue, "Habit is the mainspring of human action, and habits are formed for the most part under the influence of the customs of a group" (Dewey & Rogers, 1927/2012, p. 159). If this is true, then involvement in community should beget more involvement in community, leading toward action and engagement in the interests that benefit a given community. In addition to action and engagement, Dewey also argues for the critical inquiry and reasoning of citizens who are "geared towards helping citizens understand and respond to the political and social issues of their day" as described by Asen and Brouwer (2003, p. 158). Through critical inquiry and reasoning citizens become more knowledgeable and capable of detecting, analyzing, and addressing the social issues important in their lives.

One critique of Dewey's conception of community participation is his dedication toward consensus for community cohesion, without equal encouragement for alternative methods like conflict (dissent). Scholars across many disciplines have argued the importance of conflict in creating social change, *especially* dissent (Dahlgren, 2006; Mattern, 1999; Phillips, 1996). Norris (2002) addresses the oversight of the power of dissent on measurements of civic engagement and political participation. "Accordingly as well as analyzing electoral turnout, party work, and civic activism, studies of political participation also need to compare…protest activity as a common mainstream form of expression today" (Norris, 2002, p. 5). In addition to the definitions and conceptualizations of what constitutes civic engagement, it is important to include forms of dissent and protest as ways for members of communities to engage and become involved in political and social processes, and to reduce the stigma associated with dissent and protest.

One complementary concept to civic engagement is that of social capital. The term social capital has been in use in various forms throughout the last century, but most recently has re-emerged through the debate of community and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). According to Putnam, "social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000, p. 19). In this respect, social capital is something that communities work to achieve through values like civic engagement, interpersonal trust, and reciprocity. It is through these efforts we see social action occur for the benefit of societies, communities, or social networks (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Campbell, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Wellman & Gulia, 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter described the theoretical foundations for this study, addressing theories of power and empowerment, dialogue and consciousness, voice, and agency and civic engagement. The first section included a discussion on the construction of power and empowerment from a critical perspective used by communication scholars who explore social change. Here, the works of Marx, Gramsci, and Foucault underlie the approach to this study, particularly the view of power. Additionally, this section examined the theoretical literature addressing hegemony and ideology in association with mass communication and ideological control. The second section examined the theoretical underpinnings of dialogue and consciousness, specifically focusing on the works and influence of Freire and Bakhtin. The third section described theories and conceptualizations about voice and silence. The fourth section examined the concepts of agency and civic engagement. The concept of agency is a strong theoretical conceptualization, with contributions from authors representing a multitude of scholarly fields. Similar to voice, civic engagement does not have a clearly defined theory, however, many conceptualizations of civic engagement exist within larger theoretical frameworks (including those related to agency and power). In the next chapter, an overview of relevant research dealing with communication and its roles and impacts on social change is provided.

CHAPTER 2

Deliberating the Transformative Nature of Alternative Media

In the previous chapter, I provided the theoretical foundation I will use to analyze the data collected for this study. This chapter provides the literature review that guides the ways in which this study approaches participatory media. One reason scholars conduct research is to engage in conversation with the scholars that preceded them. These conversations vary from field to field but essentially comprise classic works that inform the field, current research and contemporary findings, and one's own contribution. To join the larger conversation in the Communication for Social Change (CFSC) field, this chapter reviews the existing literature and conceptual framework for this study. The first section reviews the CFSC framework by discussing its history, how it developed as a field, its current standing, prominent scholars, and the extent of its diversity as an international and interdisciplinary field. The second section is a robust examination of alternative media research, one of the main components of the field known as Communication for Social Change. In this section I discuss different types of alternative media such as community, participatory, indigenous, radical, and citizens' media. Each of these types of media are similar yet foundationally different from one another in distinct ways; understanding these differences is important in order to clarify how this study approaches and understands participation within alternative media processes. I end this section with a discussion on the current debate regarding digital technology's democratic potential. The third section provides an overview of North American participatory media initiatives that deal with local poverty issues. I describe the history and overview of each organization; why they are important; how they create

the possibility for social change in their communities; and their process, strategies and approach to participatory media. Specifically, this section looks at the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change program, the Community Film Workshop Council's Appalshop program, Global Action Project, and Media Mobilizing Project.

Communication for Social Change

The field of Development Communication, which is the precursory field to CFSC, began in the late 1940s. In the 1950s, communication and media researchers within this field focused on the application of academic research and theory to help export capitalism and the ideology of "development" to Third World Countries (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). The main theory developed at this time and popularly used in the 1960s was modernization theory, which argues that all societies are going through the same evolution towards an ideal based on free-market capitalism, liberal democracy, and life-styles based on a culture of consumption. Politicians and academics that used and believed in this theory viewed capitalist, technological societies as developed (*i.e.*, "First World"), and countries that did not meet these criteria as underdeveloped or still developing (*i.e.*, "Third World"). During this time Millikan and Rostow (1957) served as economic advisors to the U.S. and played a significant role in pushing the acceptance and application of modernization theory in U.S. foreign policy initiatives. They viewed this push towards development and acceptance of capitalism as a way to persuade Third World countries to favor capitalism and reject communism.

This dominant development paradigm focused on behavior change models and the necessity of information interventions with the intent of personal behavior change

(Jamais, 2006; Lerner, 1958; Rogers, 1967; Waisbord, 2001). This paradigm was dominated by modernization theories and by communication theories inspired by modernization theories such as Rogers' (1971) diffusion of innovations theory. The goal of the diffusion of innovations theory is to understand the adoption of new behaviors/innovations/technology and posits that people go through five phases in adopting innovations: awareness, knowledge and interest, decision, trial, and adoption/rejection. This theory viewed early adopters as "good" and slow adopters as "bad", which could also be translated as First World countries as good (early adopters of technology) and Third World countries as bad (slow adopters of technology) (Gómez, 1997). The dominant paradigm's approach to development communication focused on social marketing, health promotion/education, and edu-tainment (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). These areas used commercial marketing techniques to promote pro-social behavior and changes in personal health, and applied social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) to use the mass media for the dissemination of information and encouragement of specific behaviors.

The dominant paradigm and use of modernization theories received criticism in the 1970s regarding power equality issues and lack of community participation. Third World scholars (especially economists) responded to modernization theory with dependency theory (Hays, 1964). This theory asserts that the wealth of the First World is dependent on the poverty of the Third World and vice versa. Based on dependency theory, Third World communication scholars argued that mass media should not be used to encourage behavioral changes; instead national communication policies should be created and enforced to promote public conversations around structural

transformations toward equity in global economic transactions. From this era various social change theories were developed and employed, the goals of which were to promote a better quality of life among underprivileged communities and to focus on social structures, collective action, and structural change. If diffusion of innovations was the dominant paradigm's approach to communication, dependency theory's communication approaches encouraged homegrown solutions to facilitate dialogue, encourage participation and interaction, and increase networking. These theories also viewed culture and power as central, which was a major shift from modernization theories that promoted exportation of Western "solutions" to Non-Western countries (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006).

During the 1970s participatory theories and approaches emerged that valued participation in and of itself, not just as a means to an end (Gerace & Lázaro, 2006). One of the main theorists at this time was Freire (1970) who argued that dialogue could be used to increase the empowerment of the people. Early participatory communication researchers like Beltrán (1967, 1975, 1980) applied this argument to other areas of communication like media studies and argued against the inundation of audiences with messages promoting pro-social behaviors. They also argued that instead of media producers from the West targeting Third World countries as potential audiences, ideal communication processes would involve media producers that would also be recipients of the media messages, and audiences who could also be producers of (Marques de Melo, 2006).

A social mobilization approach was also used during the 1970s to encourage researchers to work at the grassroots level to identify and analyze problems then work

with larger levels of organizations (*i.e.,* non-governmental organizations) to promote social change. Additionally, media advocacy approaches also emerged to strategically advance social/public policies (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). In this approach, media are used to stimulate debate and promote dissemination of accurate information. This approach advocates the involvement of community members and citizens in actively creating their own media for empowerment and towards social change.

One of the largest turning points for the field of development communication and CFSC was the release of the MacBride Commission Report in 1980. This report formed the basis for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and established five conclusions for the advocacy of equality, social change, and social justice:

1. Communication technologies are adopted in a variety of ways and their diversity should be respected;
2. Balance and equality in communication access and structures should be an important focus;
3. Communication is a basic individual and collective right and a fundamental human right;
4. Comprehensive national communication policies need to be developed; and
5. The report would set up the foundation for the NWICO. (The MacBride Commission, 1980)

In addition, the report also argued for the development of comprehensive national radio networks, abolishment of centralized control of information, collective self-reliance of the NWICO, balance and reciprocity of international information flows, and the development of communication infrastructures in Third World countries (The MacBride Commission, 1980).

As a follow-up to the MacBride Commission Report, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in 2003 and 2005, changed the field of

Communication for Social Change. This summit is considered the second NWICO and was convened by the United Nation's International Telecommunication Union. The most important outcome of the first summit held in Geneva was the civil society declaration: *Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs* (WSIS Civil Society Plenary, 2003). This declaration addressed issues summit participants identified as not recognized in the official declaration (Raboy, 2003, 2004). The civil society declaration focused on the importance of placing human beings at the center of global communication policies and adopting a human rights frame when thinking about development.

> We aspire to build information and communication societies where development is framed by fundamental human rights and oriented to achieving a more equitable distribution of resources, leading to the elimination of poverty in a way that is non-exploitative and environmentally sustainable. To this end we believe technologies can be engaged as fundamental means, rather than becoming ends in themselves, thus recognising that bridging the Digital Divide is only one step on the road to achieving development for all. (WSIS Civil Society Plenary, 2003, p. 3)

The second phase of the summit was held in Tunis in 2005, where the central focus was on building an inclusive information society (WSIS Civil Society Plenary, 2005). Overall, this summit placed emphasis on the importance of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the information society, the need for universal access, and the free flow of information and ideas for the betterment of global development (Raboy & Landry, 2005).

The focus and development of the CFSC field has changed over time due to critiques and deliberations addressing historical core concepts of the field, which were based on seminal events like the creation of the NWICO (Capriles, 2006; Hedebro, 1979; Huesca & Dervin, 1994; Servaes, 1999, 2008; Wilkins, 2000, 2009). The focus

has moved away from developing Third World countries through external sources towards participatory approaches organically grown from people within these countries (McAnany, 1980). In 2001, Deane (2001) critiqued the CFSC field arguing for more rigorous analyses and theory to be developed by CFSC scholars to support the claims they were making in their arguments. In response to this critique as well as other critiques (Barranquero, 2006; Kafewo, 2009; Martín-Barbero, 1988), the CFSC field has advanced considerably, becoming more robust in theory, methodology, and practice.

Although the state of the field has changed over the years, CFSC scholars still focus on several primary attributes. First and foremost, dialogue is the foundation of CFSC. Whether scholars analyze popular culture, social movements, the public sphere, or globalization, they all believe in the value of "all voices and giving people the space to tell their stories in their own ways" (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006, p. xiv). A major shift that can be seen in the current state of the field is the focus on communication processes that "allow people themselves to define who they are, what they want and need, and how they will work together to improve their lives" in order to resolve complex social issues (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006, p. xiv). People should be in control of the mode, means, and content of communication processes and the role of the researcher should strive to help achieve this (Martín-Barbero, 2006a; Wilkins, 2000). The experiential knowledge and dialogue of the research participant is more legitimate than an outside "expert", although the "expert" can be used to help participants become catalysts for change in their own communities (Martín-Barbero, 2006a; Riaño, 1994).

According to Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006), "With communication for social change the process is key: it highlights the critical two-way nature of communication during which people and communities come together in dialogue, listening and responding" (p. xx). CFSC research focuses on the content that is created through communication as well as the communication process itself, identifying the ways in which agency, empowerment, and voice inform social change (Gumucio-Dagron, 2009). In addition, scholars in this field focus on building upon and validating local knowledges and culture, incorporating the social realities of the community within the communication process (Bessette & Rajasunderam, 1996).

With these values and goals in mind, seminal scholars have emerged within the field. In addition to its focus on global development, CFSC has also become a diverse international field of research as well. Partially due to its focus on marginalized communities in Third World countries, many seminal CFSC scholars have emerged from these countries and have come to impact other fields and areas of communication research. For example, Latin American scholars like Freire (1970, 1973), Beltrán (1967, 1975, 1980, 1993), and Pasquali (1975, 2003, 2005) have developed theories on horizontal and dialogic communication processes that have helped modern CFSC scholars build from and develop new concepts of alternative communication like alternative radical media (Downing, 2001) and citizens' media (Rodríguez, 2001). Mattelart has also been a major influence on CFSC and focused his research on the intersection of communication, power, and cultural imperialism (Hay, Harsin, Cohen, & Mattelart, 2013). Mattelart's research theorizes the inequalities that exist between countries at the center like the U.S. and countries on the periphery like Chile and how

central countries exert power and influence via cultural products to peripheral countries (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1991). His theories and perspectives on culture and media have been influential for the CFSC field as well as scholars in other areas of media studies and international communication. The ways in which these theorists have impacted the current state of the CFSC field will be explicated in further detail in each of the subsections of the literature review below.

The CFSC field approaches research and practice in a variety of ways, of which Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) have identified five. The first pathway focuses on the paradigms in communication for development. In this area, CFSC research focuses on a shift in the conceptualization of communication for development; the shift implies questioning development discourse to reveal hidden interests and agendas (Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani, & Lewis, 2002; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Huesca, 1996). Escobar's (1995) research on the construction of the concept of the Third World was seminal in ushering in a new wave of post-colonial critiques within this pathway. The second pathway of CFSC research addresses popular culture, narrative, and identity. CFSC scholars within this pathway re-assess the interplay between popular culture, narratives, and the quotidian aspects of personal lives and the effect those aspects have on the construction of identity and sense making (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Mattelart, 2006a).

The third pathway focuses on social movements and community participation (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Scholars within this realm address the impact of transnationalism, technological developments, and symbolic mobility on civil society movements (Cleaver, 2001; Mefalopulos, 2006; Opubor, 2000; White, 2004). Research

within this area focuses on social movements across the globe and the role of communication in fostering social change (Downing, 2006; Huesca, 2001; Jacobson & Kolluri, 2006; Rodríguez, 2001). The fourth pathway addresses power, media and the public sphere (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). This perspective builds off the NWICO debate on public sphere access and is concerned with the nature and character of various kinds of public spheres across the globe (Barranquero, 2006; Martín-Barbero, 2001; Servaes, 1999). Most importantly, scholars in this area are interested in examining unequal power relations within the public sphere and impediments to marginalized groups (Kothari, 2001; Mattelart, 2006b; Mody, 2000; Wilkins, 2000). The fifth pathway addresses the information society and communication rights. Within this area, CFSC scholars focus on the impact of digital technologies on communication rights and access, and are primarily concerned with the issues raised at the World Summits for the Information Society (Geneva and Tunis), which focus on the democratic potential and pitfalls of digital technologies (Castells, Fernandez-Ardevol, Linchuan Qui, & Sey, 2005; Castells, 2006, 2009; Martín-Barbero, 2006b; Raboy & Landry, 2005; Raboy, 2003, 2004). Using the CFSC history and foundation as a framework, the next section will discuss the accompanying literature to this field.

Literature Review

Due to the inherent obfuscation of the nature and definition of varying types of "good" and "bad" media, many scholars (Atton, 2002; Meadows, Forde, Ewart, & Foxwell, 2009a; Rennie, 2009) have determined categories of community media and sub-categories of alternative media to clarify this delineation. These categories include, among others: alternative media (as an umbrella term), community media, participatory

media, indigenous media, radical media, and citizens' media. The benefit of such categorizations has been questioned (Downing, 2001) as many overlap, subsume and contradict each other. This section will focus on the differentiation and similarities between these types of media as a rationale for why this study particularly focuses on one type: participatory media.

Alternative Media

Much of the alternative media literature acknowledges the power differential between mainstream, commercial mass media that are owned and controlled by corporate interests and media that are created and controlled by those without corporate power and without the intent for profit (Coyer, Dowmunt, & Fountain, 2007). Downing (2001) takes this a step further and argues that this binary relationship exists through the subversive nature of alternative media to mainstream media with a specific focus on radical media as a type of alternative media.

> Radical alternative media generally serve two overriding purposes: (a) to express opposition vertically from subordinate quarters directly at the power structure and against its behavior; (b) to build support, solidarity, and networking laterally against policies or even against the very survival of the power structure. (Downing, 2001, p. xi)

Keeping these goals in mind, alternative media, or radicalized versions of it, strive to fight oppressive structures; they are subversive in nature and take an oppositional stance against mainstream media. As such, their target audiences tend to be a mix of internal, or local audience, as well dominant spheres of influence. According to Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) "alternative communication promotes the right to communicate and [the] taking possession of communication space in neocolonial, neoliberal, and repressive societies" (p. xix).

Other scholars (Atton, 2002; Rennie, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001) have argued that by positioning alternative media against mainstream media in a binary fashion, a sort of David and Goliath metaphor is evoked where alternative media are seen as lesser than mainstream media. To move away from this binary opposition, these scholars argue that we have to reposition our perspective to empower the idea of alternative media. Instead of viewing alternative media as lesser than or in opposition to mainstream media, we need to view them as legitimate forms of media in their own right that can serve to increase empowerment for marginalized people and help legitimize their voice and struggle.

In his 2002 text *Alternative Media*, Atton proposes a theory of alternative and radical media "that is not limited to political and 'resistance' media but which may also account for newer cultural forms such as zines and hybrid forms of electronic communication" (p. 7). In his theoretical construct, Atton argues that alternative media scholars need not only focus on the potential for social change via alternative media discourses, but also the means of production in which these discourses are communicated, particularly via self-published and small media. Atton argues that these alternative means of production are positioned in direct relation to dominant forms of media production. For Atton, alternative media is not inherently focused on creating change on a national level but more importantly at the local level, even if the change only impacts one or a few people. "If the personal may be political, the personal may be of social consequence" (Atton, 2002, p. 18). Along with the scholars and theorists that will be discussed in the following sections, Atton (2002) focuses on the process, not the

product of alternative media, privileging the "transformative potential of the media as reflexive instruments of communication practices in social networks" (p. 30).

Community Media

According to Rennie (2009), the term community is vague, which makes the concept of community media that much vaguer. When determining what constitutes community, Rennie argues that it is the common bond that brings people together for the welfare of the group, not the individual. Meadows, Forde, Ewart, and Foxwell (2009b) also argue "the community media sector is a cultural resource that facilitates cultural citizenship in ways that differentiate it from other media" (p. 167). With these ideas in mind, "community media therefore endorses community governance in that it aims to maintain and progress community concerns, valuing community expression as a necessary alternative to public service and commercial media" (Rennie, 2009, p. 157). Rennie further argues that community media are similar to but different from alternative media in that both are interested in flattening hierarchical structures for the benefit of the common good, but where community media prefers participation and openness, alternative media identify "themselves as 'disorganizations', collectives, or networks in a direct challenge to the perceived establishment" (2009, p. 159). Unlike alternative media, which are produced for both large-scale and local audiences, community media primarily are focused on meeting the needs of their local, community audiences.

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2002) also argue that trying to capture an all-inclusive, universal definition of community media is elusive at best. However, they attempt this feat through a multi-theoretical approach as a point of departure that stems

from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) political identity theory. Through this theoretical lens they suggest four approaches to community media:

- Approach I. Serving the community – media centered and autonomous. Locally driven, used by a community to serve its own needs.
- Approach II. An alternative to mainstream – media centered and relationist. Media here is used in opposition to mainstream using horizontal structures and offering discourses which vary from the mainstream.
- Approach III. Part of civil society – society centered and straddles autonomous and relationist. Democratization through media.
- Approach IV. Rhizome – society centered and relationist. Deepening democracy by linking diverse democratic struggles. (Carpentier et al., 2002, p. 39)

Carpentier et al. (2002) also contribute to conceptions of community media by identifying the potential for social change in communities through democratization and unification via the provision of horizontal communication structures. Carpentier et al. assert that the simultaneous application of these approaches is preferential to capture the diversity of community media.

One example of successful community media for social change include King and Mele's (1999) study of Cape Cod Community Television in Massachusetts where the scholars examined community civic participation during the media production process. According to King and Mele (1999), "the process of media production itself is politically transformational" (p. 608), which in turn stimulates public sphere activity nurtured by community media. King and Mele not only examine and argue against unequal power and hegemonic structures between mainstream commercial media and community media but also within community media research for the advocacy of fringe groups. The study shows that through the media production process, community members use their power and voice to engage in civic participation practices within the

public sphere. Milan (2009) also notes the possibility for civic participation in her research on community media and advocacy, stating, "the perception that 'change is possible if we come together' emerges from day-to-day vibrant interaction between citizens, from the promotion and strengthening of community ties, from the daily exercise of democracy at the grassroots, which also passes through the practice of media democracy" (p. 606). Studies like these and others (Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Gordon, 2009; Hull & Katz, 2006; Saeed, 2009; Waugh, Baker, & Winton, 2010) show the power and potential for community media to impact communities and create social change.

Participatory Media

Participatory media draw common ground, yet are markedly different from the previous two categories depending on whose definition of participatory is used. Nair and White (1987) view participatory communication as a reflexive dialogic process. Fuglesang and Chandler (1986) assert that participatory communication entails shared interests, accountability, and facilitation for decision-making processes. According to Jacobson and Kolluri (2006), the participatory communication process highlights "small rather than large media, horizontal rather than vertical communication, collective self-reliance rather than dependence on outside experts, and action- rather than theory-oriented inquiry" (p. 807). This last definition and viewpoint frames participatory media as a type of alternative media that shares similar traits with community media, although participatory media differ in their expansive reach beyond the social ties and bonds of a community to broadly encompass any and all people. Similar to alternative media,

participatory media can be made for internal, local audiences as well as the dominant public sphere, depending on the media creator's goals.

The definition this study relies on most closely resembles White's (2003b), who views the participatory process as dependent on interaction and dialogue where communication is the foundation of any social change process. According to White (2003b), "Empowering people around the globe to express themselves, develop their human potential, and begin to seize opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty and become a person valuable to the self and the community, has been the ultimate outcome of the participation process" (p. 33). In this definition we see the applicability of participatory media to a study that explores issues of agency, poverty, and media. Although all of the different categories of alternative media discussed in this section could be applicable to a study on agency, poverty and media from different vantage points, from a broad perspective the concept of participatory media is primarily used due to its focus on the media production *process* rather than the *product*. Rodríguez explains the difference between video-as-product and video-as-process by arguing that video-as-product "implies a communication expert who contacts a community (typically a poor community) to make a video about an aspect of their life" (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 116), where the focus is on creating a product produced by an external source. On the other hand, video-as-process "involves a professional communicator working together with community members in all phases of the production process" (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 116) and focuses on the symbiotic relationship of the external and internal agents working together to create a video reflective of that community. White (2003b) argues that participatory communication must be visualized as "process methodology"

that enables people at the margins or grassroots level to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to generate their own messages.

White (2003b) also states that critical consciousness can be raised through participatory media production processes. “The transformative dynamic of communication exchanges acts as a *catalyst* for identifying one’s own problems, recognizes possible routes to empowerment and self-reliance, and builds a sense of *in*dependence through *inter*dependence” (White, 2003b, p. 37). This exchange occurs through dialogue and creates “the capacity to connect human beings as they experience social change” (White, 2003a, p. 20). Nair and White (1987) argue that participatory communication is inherently transactional and is dependent on the interaction of interlocutors over a period of time to create shared meanings. Nair and White also argue that the context for participatory communication must meet requirements similar to what Freire asserts, where the focus is on mutuality, supportiveness, and facilitation to ensure ideas can be shared through dialogue. Cornish and Dunn (2009) echo these criteria and argue that in participatory communication research participants “are able to participate in creating and expressing their own knowledge and, in so doing, empower themselves to effect social, political, economic, and cultural change that is appropriate to them” (p. 666). They view participatory communication as a mode for interlocutors to engage in a continual process of dialogue and interaction where ideas are shaped in a mutual learning experience. They also argue that participatory communication can occur through non-textual ways as well to include film, performance, and multimedia.

Literature that reflects these foci include research conducted by Harris (2008, 2009), Matewa (2009), and Huesca (1995). In her dissertation research on women’s

work through participatory video, Harris found that indigenous women in Fiji incorporated their social capital (social networks and relationships) in their video production. As a result, their media validates the work of women and increased the women's potential as income producers in the eyes of their community. Matewa (2009) conducted ethnographic research on participatory media creation via the African Women Filmmakers Trust. In her research, she found that "participatory media production processes create public spaces for dialogue and collective self-reflection, allowing participants to shift their attention toward local resources, skills, and competencies to solve their own problems" (p. 116). In addition, Matewa also noted the importance of participatory video for communities in contexts of armed conflict to recover historical memories and as a channel for victims of armed violence to open dialogue about their experiences.

In Huesca's research on a Bolivian tin miner radio station, he strove to "avoid the pitfalls of previous research by focusing not on substantive issues—programming schedules, content analyses, social networks—but on dynamic processes—the procedures—by which participation is implemented at a specific radio station" (Huesca, 1995, p. 102). Huesca found that participatory media could be a double-edged sword in which participants can be marginalized as well as empowered and are able to express their voice as well as be silenced. Huesca (1995) argues "this two-sidedness of alternative communication should be taken as axiomatic" (p. 115) but "if communication follows a design guided by democratic principles, responsive procedures can be developed to identify and amend inequalities" (p. 116). In this research, Huesca argues for the establishment of communicative procedures media

practitioners should follow in order to encourage the potential and avoid the pitfalls of participatory media.

Indigenous Media

Questioning the dyadic opposition that exists between mainstream and alternative media becomes even more apparent when examining the type of alternative media known as indigenous media. According to Ginsburg (2002), many indigenous media were created in result of colonial mainstream media "dumping" into traditional indigenous communities. In response, indigenous communities, like those across Australia and Canada, created their own local forms of media that would reflect the values, beliefs, and interests of their communities (Buddle, 2008; Deger, 2006; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002; Hafsteinsson & Bredin, 2010; Poitras Pratt, 2010). Many indigenous media initiatives began as low power FM radio or television stations but now include online media, award-winning films, television networks, and other media outlets (Baltruschat, 2010; Ginsburg, 2002; Hafsteinsson, 2010; Patterson, 2010). Like community media, indigenous media are primarily created for internal, local audiences, serving the needs of indigenous communities first and foremost.

Although indigenous media are similar to other forms of alternative media in their opposition to oppressive, mainstream media power structures, they are different due to their unique focus on cultural values inherent to indigenous groups and communities. Indigenous media scholarship addresses unequal access to mainstream society, examines absence or misrepresentation of indigenous people from mainstream media, and explores questions of power to narrate/suppress indigenous narratives (Castells Talens, 2009; Prins, 2002). In Hafsteinsson and Bredin's edited book

Indigenous Screen Cultures in Canada (2010), scholars address the power of indigenous media by examining areas of transformative action, accurate Aboriginal representation, and indigenous media as agents of social change. David (2010) argues that it is imperative that "Aboriginal people control the media that they and their children are exposed to" (p. 39). Exclusion, stereotyping or appropriation shapes the Aboriginal media experience, where non-natives are asked to reflect on the experiences and lives of natives more often than natives, leading to a distorted view of Aboriginal experiences. One way in which indigenous media have sought to speak back to the misrepresentation of indigenous people in mainstream media is through what scholars have termed "visual sovereignty." According to Raheja (2007), visual sovereignty is a tactic used by indigenous people to confront the absurdity of the negative stereotypes surrounding their people. Dowell's (2013) work examines how visual sovereignty is used to "decolonize the screen" as well as how the process of Aboriginal media creation serves to create and negotiate "new forms of Aboriginal sociality and community" (p. xii).

Another area indigenous media research addresses is the possibility for indigenous media to facilitate Aboriginal voice in the public sphere. Hafsteinsson argues that journalism at the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is an exercise in "deep democracy" creating local and transnational practices. Indigenous media promote difference rather than assimilation where indigenous people are able to speak back to oppressive media and social structures. APTN tries to "revive Aboriginal democratic principles in ways that suggest 'roots, anchors, intimacy, proximity, and locality' (Appadurai, 2002)" (Hafsteinsson, 2010, p. 54) and their journalistic practices

focus on respect for the individual and group rights. APTN News' efforts to help distinguish national identities across Canada "is contributing to a redefinition of what constitutes a nation, and how citizens are imagined within their shifting boundaries" (Hafsteinsson, 2010, p. 66).

Additionally, another key focus to indigenous media is the idea of visual sovereignty. Through indigenous media, media creators establish and assert a visual separation and representation for their communities.

Radical Media

One type of alternative media that I touched upon briefly in the last chapter is radical media. This concept, coined by Downing (2001), refers to "media, generally small-scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives" (p. v). For Downing (2001), radical media differs from alternative media in a number of ways. He argues that the term "alternative" is oxymoronic in the fact that for every position there is an opposition and as such an alternative; so to label something as alternative depends on your perspective. This aspect of radical media also highlights one trait that binds them all together: their intention for going against a commonly held belief or value, although they may not break all the rules nor even break the same rules. Downing places great emphasis on content and context in the applicability of the term radical, for even religious media content or community newsletters can be radical. "Context and consequences must be our primary guides to what are or are not definable as radical alternative media. The edges are almost always blurred" (Downing, 2001, p. x). Radical media can be both negative and constructive, depending on the viewpoint of the observer. In this light,

small-scale media created by hate groups constitutes radical media just as much as activist community media. By this definition, some radical media may even be created in contradiction to other radical media. Similarly to participatory media, the target audience for radical media depends on the intention and motivation of the media creator and could be created for local or dominant media audiences.

Radical media "are mixed in their depth of radicalism, let alone in the effectiveness of their expression" (Downing, 2001, p. x). In other words, not all radical media are created equal and the extent to which a given medium may be considered radical differs from one to the next. A diversity of radical media exists, from small-scale newsprint to graffiti and performance dance. The fact that all radical media are small-scale, however, also points to a commonly shared problem of radical media: funding. Many radical media initiatives are generally underfunded, which can create another problem of longevity of publication or broadcast. As alluded to in the previous chapter, Downing and his concept of radical media focus on power structures and the ability for small-scale media to open dialogue with and dissent larger, dominant power systems (Downing, 2006). As such, radical media create internal organizational configurations that flatten hierarchical power structures to create more internal democratic processes.

One example of radical media is the use of small media during the 1979 Iranian revolution featured in Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi's (1994) research. Clerical and secular groups used small media to mobilize the masses and create an arena for dissent in a restrictive media and social environment where big media were used to support a repressive government. During this time, two main forms of small media had the strongest impact in supporting the revolution: cassette tapes and photocopies

(elamieh/leaflets). Cassette tapes proved highly successful due to the favoritism for oral communication in Iran as well as the high illiteracy rate. Leaflets were effective because they provided a forum for dissent through exile publications, night letters, and underground pamphlets. Leaflets were also used to help create collective identity and solidarity through identification and agitation. "A crucial element in any political movement is defining the 'enemy,' setting limits to legitimate targets of political action, and in the process reinforcing the collective 'we' parameters of insiders . . . and outsiders" (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1994, p. 125). Small media used by both religious and secular groups served as a public space of confrontation, an alternative history that acknowledged the people's voice, and a space for public participation.

Citizens' Media

A more specific form of community media that functions as a potential resource for communities to engage people and enact their citizenry is citizens' media. According to Rodríguez (2001), subaltern people can re-appropriate power through strategic use of alternative media, shifting the balance of subaltern/dominant relationships. More than the other media categories discussed thus far, this type of media primarily targets a dominant media audience to connect individuals and groups in the peripheries with power structures at the center of the dominant public sphere. "What before was at the margins now moves toward the center; what before was considered inappropriate now becomes the locus; what before was unworthy of being on the television screen, or the radio waves, now becomes the reason for the existence of the new medium" (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 153). Through this re-appropriation, citizens can then engage other community members. This engagement happens when citizens create

their own media and broadcast their own histories, voices, and cultures. The new audibility of these voices can then begin processes of increasing the power of these previously silent communities.

The term citizens' media can help us understand how media use can promote citizens' engagement in political democracy. According to Rodríguez (2001), the conceptual basis for the term citizens' media stems from the definition of a citizen as someone who enacts her citizenry through everyday life practices of dialogue and action that ultimately shape the local social fabric. Based on Mouffe's (1988) theory of radical democracy, Rodríguez asserts, "citizens have to enact their citizenship on a day-to-day basis, through their participation in everyday political practices" (2001, p. 19). In order for individuals to become active citizens it is not enough to simply engage in occasional communal dialogue; instead they need to be immersed in civic community and participate regularly. Individuals become active citizens when they engage in regular participation in local decision-making processes. By encouraging people to express their voices and articulate their perspectives and points of view, citizens' media are positioned to trigger the transformation of individuals into active citizens who can build and shape their own communities.

In her research Rodríguez (2001) describes the role and value of citizens' media for marginalized communities dissenting dominant structures. In this research she found:

> Most citizens' groups, which are involved with media production experiences, are situated in subordinate relationships with respect to hegemonic social forces. As a result of their status as subordinate communities, these groups' cultural identities are "pushed" to the margins, systematically ignored, distorted, or caricatured by hegemonic media institutions. (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 153)

Although dominant power structures work to silence or marginalize groups that are outside of the status quo through hegemonic processes, these groups can still dissent through the process of creating their own citizens' media. Rodríguez has also conducted research on citizens' media in areas of armed conflict where community members create their own media in an attempt to carve out spaces of peace where citizens can communicate and interact (Rodríguez, 2009, 2010, 2011).

According to Pettit, Salazar, and Dagron (2009), current research on citizens' media:

> affirm the power of citizens' media and communication, not as vehicles to other development ends, or as mere tools of amplification and diffusion, but as vital developmental processes in their own right – with potential to reshape the prevailing norms and power relations that create poverty and marginalisation. (p. 451)

Contemporary research on citizens' media has sought to expand and reframe the ways in which the concept of citizens' media is applied and researched (Alfaro Moreno, 2009; Kidd, Barker-Plummer, & Rodríguez, 2005; Magallanes-Blanco & Pérez-Bermúdez, 2009; Vatikiotis, 2004). Bosch (2009) uses a different theoretical approach to citizens' media, examining how the concept of the rhizome helps scholars to understand citizens' media usage. According to Bosch (2009), "like the rhizome, community radio cuts across borders and builds linkages"; because of this, some community media organizations can be viewed as "held together by a complex set of interlinked networks of relationships and interactions, with the concept of community pulsating as its central life-force" (p. 85). Anderson (2008) expands the concept of citizens' media to include its use in the creation of prison public spheres via prison radio stations. Through these radio stations "prisoners' radio contributes to wider public

deliberation about criminal justice and prison issues, and how alternative public sphere activity fosters citizenship" (Anderson, 2008, p. 9).

The Democratic Potential for Digital Media

All of the alternative media research detailed above seeks to explore, identify, and verify the conditions and extent of the democratic potential of media for social change. This potential is at the heart of a current and highly contentious debate regarding whether digital media technologies live up to, fall short of, or go against their democratic potential. In a highly controversial and highly cited article, Gladwell (2010) tackles just this issue. In his article Gladwell argues that the inherent function of social media is to create a network of weak ties[6], which he views as counterproductive to the functions of activism. "Twitter is a way of following (or being followed by) people you may never have met. Facebook is a tool for efficiently managing your acquaintances, for keeping up with the people you would not otherwise be able to stay in touch with" (Gladwell, 2010). The problem with this argument is that Gladwell does not take into account that social media networking is also a platform for connecting with strong ties, which he does view as essential for successful activism. Gladwell's argument hinges on the premise that social media networks are primarily used for connecting acquaintances without accounting for the potential for simultaneously connecting with strong ties. Granovetter (1983) highlights the strengths of weak ties to increase knowledge, awareness, and opportunities, which are also key functions of successful activist movements. However, Gladwell views the potential for social media as limited to just

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[6] Granovetter (1983) defines weak ties as superficial social network connections, like acquaintances and strong ties as intimate social network connections, like family members and close friends.

those strengths as opposed to the accumulation of those plus the possibility for creating social groups, events, and sub-networks of both weak and strong ties to coordinate social change efforts.

Due to the inherent difference in the nature of historical activism when compared to contemporary forms of activism that use digital technologies, we should not be holding contemporary activism to a paradigmatic standard of what "real" activism looks and feels like. While some proponents hail digital media as the savior of contemporary activism (Howard, 2010; Shirky, 2008), others argue against so much enthusiasm around digital technologies. Critics of digital media disregard the arguments of moderates (Cottle, 2011; Funke, Robe, & Wolfson, 2012; Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010) who state that digital media are but one tool/component/facet of contemporary activism, playing a role along with agents, resources, and events that make social change happen.

One recent example of the possibility for digital democracy and the potential for digital technology to serve as a tool for contemporary activism is the Arab Spring social movements in the Middle East. Unfortunately, a technophilic exuberance took hold of many journalists, academics, and avid Twitterers as early reports of the social movements rising across Iran and Moldova in 2009 and the Arab countries during the spring of 2011[7] were given the monikers of "Twitter Revolution" and "Facebook Revolution" (Allagui & Kuebler, 2011; Jayasekera, 2012; Ray, 2011; Zakaria, 2011). Critics (Cohen, 2009; Woods, 2011), including Gladwell's, eagerly pointed out the shortsightedness of these declarations to acknowledge the minor role that digital

[7] The "Arab Spring."

technologies actually played in the success of the revolutions (Aouragh, 2012; Ghosh, 2011; Khiabany, 2012; Robertson, 2013). However, research has shown that the technological capabilities of the revolutionaries and the inclusion of these media throughout the organization, planning, and execution did make a difference in the ability for activists to galvanize and mobilize other people to action (Cottle, 2011; Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010). For these social movements, digital technology did not drive the movements but were used as successful planning tools along with other resources like conventional media (*e.g.*, newspapers, radio), social capital, and face-to-face strategy meetings.

Another example of the role digital technologies play in digital democracy is the Independent Media Center, or Indymedia as it is popularly known. Indymedia is a global independent media network based on the sharing of open source coding and free software (Kidd, 2003). Indymedia began in conjunction with the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle, WA as a resource for activists to transfer stories and knowledge to one another within the tumultuous protest environment of the anti-WTO demonstrations. One underlying ethos to Indymedia as a global network is their commitment to alternative media and the production of voices and stories that are typically dismissed and ignored in commercial media outlets. As a global entity, some international strands of Indymedia were also born in conjunction with protests and social movements, hence the commitment to alternative perspectives. Indymedia's global collaboration has served as a resource for activists both local and global to communicate with each other and to the world to ensure their stories and actions are recorded and shared. Although research has argued that Indymedia's effectiveness is

limited by its decentralized organizational structure (Wolfson, 2013), other research has shown that Indymedia has been effective as a tool and resource to amplify social movements and promote social change across the world through democratic processes (Kidd, 2003; Sullivan, Spicer, & Böhm, 2011; Wolfson, 2012).

One setback to the democratic potential for digital technologies is the equal opportunity for hegemonic repressive forces to monitor every move of their citizens and political activists. For example, during the 2009/2010 Iranian protests, while Iranian citizens and protestors utilized small media and digital media technologies like Twitter and the blogosphere (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010), the Iranian government was working just as hard to shut down these technologies or use them to survey activist actions and communications. A more recent example includes the United States who, through the National Security Administration and Section 215 of the Patriot Act, conducted surveillance on U.S. citizens' Internet and telephone usage (Kahn & Kellner, 2004). Initiated after the 9/11 attacks, the G.W. Bush Administration crafted Section 215 in the Patriot Act with vague wording to allow Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents to confiscate data in order "to protect against international terrorism or clandestine intelligence activities" (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). However, the ability for the federal government to conduct unwarranted and potentially unnecessary search and seizures against its citizens lends the potential for digital technologies to become a type of "digital panopticon" (Kahn & Kellner, 2004).

Returning to the debate around the potential of digital technologies, Gladwell's is not the only voice critiquing digital technologies. Ginsburg (2008) addresses a different aspect of this debate by focusing on the impact and infringement of digital

technologies upon indigenous communities. Ginsburg acknowledges the potential of digital technologies for some people but argues that these advantages do not affect all people the same way. According to Latukefu,

> So seductive is the power of the ICT medium that it might only appear to remove centralized control out of the hands of government and into the hands of the people, giving them the notion of ... empowerment ... The issue that needs to be raised before any question of indigenous usage of the Internet is addressed is: whose information infrastructure or "info-structure" determines what is valued in an economy—whether in the local community or the greater global economy which they are linked to? ... Associated with this is the overarching issue of who determines knowledge within these remote communities and for the wider indigenous populations throughout Australia and beyond? (quoted in Ginsburg, 2008, p. 288)

In this quote we see the possibility for digital media technologies to go against their potential for democratization and actually infringe and further marginalize the disenfranchised groups who are seeking social change and empowerment. This concern is particularly applicable to this study and for other researchers working with populations in poverty and homelessness. In groups such as those living in poverty and homelessness it is possible to force an agenda (be it political or academic) on those uninterested in engaging with these technologies so it is of the utmost importance that researchers approach these studies from an empathic perspective to ensure the interests and motivations of the research participants are protected.

As the research and examples in this study will show, digital media technologies *do* have potential for democratization and empowerment; however, as scholars we need to constantly question whether that potential is being fulfilled in each specific context. To avoid viewing digital technologies through rose-colored lenses we need to acknowledge that for as much as these technologies yield democratic potential they have just as much possibility to infringe, restrict, and destroy democratic opportunities

as well. Downing notes this in his delineation of what constitutes radical media through the acknowledgement that some media considered to be radical are those perpetuated by hate groups and extremist organizations (Downing & Pajnik, 2008; Downing, 2001). These obviously do not actualize their potentiality for democratization. As the research in this study will show, I am careful to critically examine whether these case studies live up to, fall short of, or go against the democratic potential of digital technologies; and not just assume they excel because of a rampant trend of technophilia.

North American Alternative Media Initiatives

This section focuses on North American alternative media initiatives with goals, processes, techniques, and outcomes similar to that of the two case studies analyzed for this dissertation. In this section I provide an overview of Challenge for Change, Appalshop, Global Action Project, and Media Mobilizing Project, detailing their histories, processes, strategies, and impact for social change. These media initiatives were chosen because of their geographic proximity (United States and Canada), focus on social justice issues, and outreach with communities living in poverty or homelessness. Although there are many community media initiatives in North America that fulfill these requirements, these projects were chosen as canons of academic research that address my research focus; and such projects not described in this section, while valuable to their communities and as an object of research, fall outside the range of this section. Media and production processes from each of the initiatives discussed below are also discussed in Chapter 5 to support the ethnographic data analyzed for this study.

Challenge for Change

Although a good starting point for the history of participatory media and community engagement is debatable, one important place to begin is the Challenge for Change (CFC) program that ran from 1968-1980 and was overseen by the National Film Board of Canada (Waugh et al., 2010). This program is important as one of the first undertakings of its kind and because it inspired future ethnographic film projects in the United States. Challenge for Change was a participatory media program that produced over 140 films and whose main goal was to "give the disenfranchised and marginal communities of Canada a voice by giving them access to the media (film, and later Super-8, video and cable television)" (Marchessault, 1995, p. 134). Challenge for Change strove to create social change through its efforts to eradicate/alleviate poverty and foster communication among varying communities and community members (Low, 2010).

Challenge for Change media producers/researchers viewed film production as the beginning of a discussion with and among communities. Through creating progressive films and watching the films collectively, a communal discussion could grow and evolve towards collective action. Through media technology education and production, each project addressed questions that revolved around improving the quality of life of communities and increasing empowerment for people to create their own social change. Challenge for Change focused on increasing empowerment for communities as well as individuals within the community. The goal was "to galvanize interest in large political, social, economic issues, in the conviction that the man in the street could be interested, and involved, and participate in shaping the world" (Low,

2010, p. 18). To address issues of poverty, media producers/scholars wanted to help combat negative social stereotypes of people struggling with poverty by increasing accurate knowledge about poverty from the perspective of those struggling with it. Many of the CFC films took this perspective when helping to build voice in disenfranchised groups like women, black Canadians, and indigenous peoples.

One central concern of the CFC creators focused on the issue of measuring social change. How can you measure it? How do you know if a film is successful? Klein, who grew up watching her mother create CFC films like *Not a Love Story* (Sherr Klein, 1981), asserted: "All film can do, all books can do, is start a discussion. And you can't measure, nor should you. You put an idea out into the world and you can't control what's going to happen. You just have to believe in the value of the production of ideas" (Winton & Klein, 2010, p. xx). A similar concern revolved around whether media technologies had the power to trigger social change on their own, or if social change emerged from a culmination of a myriad of actions and processes. Some CFC leaders argued that media technologies should not be relegated to the status of "just a tool" while others acknowledged the interconnectedness of multiple elements working together to create social change, noting that media alone is not the sole cause of transformation (Waugh et al., 2010). These concerns are still discussed and addressed in contemporary participatory media projects because of issues revolving around funding, impact, and participatory research.

Fogo Island & the Fogo process. One of the earliest community media projects initiated with the goal of bringing communities together and addressing important social issues was the Fogo Island project sponsored by the CFC program. In this project, Low,

the lead producer, established a documentary process for social change working with communities. The project "used film as a catalyst to generate local debate—to give local people a voice and even editorial control—and to provide those people with access to people in power, via film" (Low, 2010, p. 17). Fogo Island's history revolves around the natural resources of the island, fishing being the most lucrative. When a commercial fishery entered the Fogo area and depleted most of the natural resources for the residents, widespread poverty struck the island. Low approached Fogo Island initially to document the effects of this phenomenon and the islanders' struggle with poverty; however, Low soon came to realize the role that film could play as a catalyst against poverty.

The project had several goals, one of which was to incorporate media into democratic processes in the Fogo Island communities. Residents produced films that served as mirrors where the community could identify and discuss difficult social issues; these collective conversations around their own films allowed residents to regain economic success and restore community outreach across the island. The use of film restored channels of communication between villages on Fogo Island, as films were circulated and discussed among different villages. The project also sought "to show Canadians that the real poverty in places like rural Newfoundland was the poverty of information; of isolation from decision-making, and of lack of organization" (Wiesner, 2010, p. 83).

During the course of the project Low developed a process that conveyed the effectiveness of community media. Where democratic processes were stilted and communication channels to policy makers broken, it was most effective to film

community members discussing their issues and problems amongst themselves and then show the film to policy makers; in essence, "using video to create community consensus" (Druick, 2010, p. 337). Low realized it was easier for community members to identify, address, and analyze community problems amongst themselves than it was for them to address and resolve these issues with local policy makers directly. To help document and disseminate this phenomenon, Low filmed many community discussions that captured the exigencies of the Fogo Island communities.

The "Fogo process" was based on the following components:

- The collaboration between filmmaker and permanent community-development officer;
- The selection of an isolated community that lacked community organizations to deal with its economic problems;
- The state having the goals of stimulating grassroots problem-solving and improving government-community communications;
- Filming techniques based on rapport between filmmaker and subjects;
- And much emphasis on the playback of materials as a stimulus to discussion and problem solving. (Wiesner, 2010, p. 87)

The Fogo process also ensured subject protection from exploitation and control over use of their images. Low had two rules he enforced during the Fogo Island project: 1) subjects had ultimate censorship over use of their sound and image, and 2) efficient governance processes over information exchange between individuals, groups and government entities. George Stoney, CFC executive producer (1968-1970), noted several preconditions for successful implementation of the Fogo process: Communities must prefer mediation over confrontation in conflict resolution; institutions of power must have a willingness to listen and respond to community concerns; and an intermediary like the National Film Board must be present and trusted by both sides of the dialogue (Wiesner, 2010).

Based on this process, several other CFC projects attempted to create social change with film in other areas of Canada. Although some projects like the Drumheller Valley project were able to successfully recreate and implement the Fogo process with positive results, many more CFC projects were not (Wiesner, 2010). One main reason for this was the conflict resolution strategies of the communities. Stoney noted that communities must be more motivated by mediation strategies than confrontation strategies in order for the Fogo process to be successful; however, many urban areas like Halifax and St-Jacques used media as tools against the local power structure instead of in collaboration with local agencies. Based on the failures in urban areas, the Fogo process began to be seen as a more successful method for social change in rural Canadian areas than urban areas. Overall, this program and the Fogo process led the way in progressive community media projects for decades.

Appalshop

The CFC program and the Fogo process became a major influence on the United States in the 1960s. Following in the footsteps of the National Film Board, the American Film Institute (AFI) utilized two grants through the Office of Economic Opportunity to establish the Community Film Workshop Council (CFWC) in 1969 (Charbonneau, 2009). With this funding, the CFWC created eight community media workshop programs across the country, from New York City to Los Angeles. Due to the relationship of the AFI with the Hollywood film industry, the CFWC was run differently than the Challenge for Change program with two major foci: to "train disadvantaged and/or minority persons in the production and use of film for the purpose of addressing the needs of their communities. Additionally, the workshop hoped to train

its participants well enough for some of them to be able to find employment in the film industry" (Office of Economic Opportunity quoted in Hanna, 1998, p. 376). This second goal, to train individuals for future employment opportunities, was accepted by most of the CFWC media workshop centers. One center that took exception to this was the Appalachian Film Workshop, later known as Appalshop (Charbonneau, 2009). Members of Appalshop felt a clear tension with this second goal for several reasons. First, being located in rural Appalachia, there were no strong media connections to the Hollywood industry for media participants to seek employment or internship opportunities. Second, because of the communal nature of the Appalachian communities, Appalshop creators and participants were not interested in training individuals to leave the area; instead, they were focused on training individuals to stay in Appalachia and use media for "communitarian expressivity" (Charbonneau, 2009; Fleischhauer, 1974). Due to these conflicts, Appalshop quickly began taking distance from the goals and mission of the CFWC. In doing so, Appalshop organizers also began distancing themselves financially from the CFWC as well so that by 1971 when funding from the CFWC finally ended, Appalshop was fully funded by private donations and grants (Horton, 1980).

Appalshop's primary focus is "to allow artistic expression in modern mass communication for social change" according to Bill Richardson, the first director of Appalshop (quoted in Abbate-Winkel, 1995, p. 58). In support of this effort, Appalshop participants, mostly people who had lived in Appalachia their whole lives, created media that gave voice to the indigenous Appalachian identity. Appalshop was also interested in creating media that spoke against the mainstream media's negative

depictions of Appalachian people and culture. The workshop worked alongside a growing movement in the area that was "devoted to re-building pride in mountain heritage, a pride that had been destroyed by mass media images coupled with a dependence on absentee corporations and government welfare" (Hanna, 1998, p. 378). Appalshop's goals were realized in the media productions created by participants. Due to the economic poverty that befell the area and the hillbilly stereotype disseminated by mainstream media, many Appalachian youth felt compelled to take action and use media technology to revive their Appalachian culture and identity as well as to resist the hillbilly image. "Appalshop employed the very styles and techniques so often used to marginalize Appalachia to educate instead, to place the blame for problems on the shoulders of absentee corporate America, and to represent mountain people as both victims and hard-working Americans struggling for justice" (Hanna, 1998, p. 390). In this sense, Appalshop helped create social change in the Appalachian area by "preserving local identity through cultural production" (Charbonneau, 2009, p. 137).

Although Appalshop was initiated and created through a government-funded organization, its process, technique, and structure were organically grown by local Appalachians for local Appalachians, which make it strikingly different from the Challenge for Change program. According to Herb Smith, one of the original participants of Appalshop, involvement in the program stimulated growth not only for the individuals creating the media but for the surrounding communities as well (Smith, Lewis, & Miller, 1984).

> [A]s we started going out and interviewing people and talking to them about life in this part of the country…[w]e began to understand this place in a way that we hadn't until that point. There was a strong sense in a lot of us that it was

> important that we stayed here and tried to create jobs for ourselves outside of the coal industry. (Smith et al., 1984, p. 413)

Smith goes on to recall that for those first participants of Appalshop, a feeling of community and personal identity developed through their work in the organization. In addition, community members took notice of the work Appalshop was doing and became involved by approaching members with ideas for media projects. Smith credits the open organizational structure for being flexible enough to accommodate the goals of Appalshop as well as the needs of the community. "To the extent that any single individual has not run Appalshop, that's really its basic strength…We've been able to nurture the organization to keep us together and yet draw from the organization to express a sense of the individual" (Smith et al., 1984, p. 414).

Global Action Project

Global Action Project (G.A.P.) is a community media initiative similar to projects founded by the Challenge for Change program but with one exception: G.A.P. is community media created by and for young people in underserved urban communities. In 1991, Diana Coryat and Susan Siegel created G.A.P. as a "videoletter" program in which young people created short videos detailing their lives and experiences and shared them with other youth across the globe in a pen-pal fashion (Coryat, 2007). G.A.P. initially started out as a project under Global Kids, Inc., whose central focus prepares young people "to become global citizens and community leaders" (Charbonneau, 2007, p. 54). In 1998, G.A.P. became a self-sustaining organization, independent from Global Kids, which altered the central goals and mission of the project. G.A.P. is centrally located in New York City where it works in collaboration with local schools to serve as a voluntary after-school program for young people to

learn media tools and skills for creating their own media. In 2007, G.A.P. oversaw nine programs, six based in their own facilities and three housed in local public school sites (Coryat, 2007).

G.A.P.'s mission is to work with young people who have been affected by social justice issues in order "to build the knowledge, tools, and relationships needed to create media for community power, cultural expression, and political change" (Global Action Project, n.d.a). G.A.P. has four core programs for youth media: Urban Voices, Community Media in Action, SupaFriends, and Youth Breaking Borders. Urban Voices, their primary program, focuses on media arts training and social justice education. Specifically, participants learn "media analysis and production, leadership and self-expression, as well as access to public forums and venues, and meaningful connections to communities working for change" (Global Action Project, n.d.b). Community Media in Action is an outreach program designed to conjoin the media projects created through G.A.P. with other local, social justice-oriented community organizations like Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice. SupaFriends is the project's LGBTQ youth video initiative in which young people create videos addressing LGBTQ social justice issues that are impactful and important to them. Youth Breaking Borders is a program where young people meet to discuss issues and share media surrounding topics of globalization, immigration, and the role of the U.S. as a global power.

G.A.P.'s pedagogical perspective is informed by Freire's (1973) work on critical literacy and critical education. According to Coryat (2007), "this involves a circular process of 'reading,' 're-reading,' 'writing' and 're-writing' one's world" (p. 4), which serves as a catalyst for reflection, analysis and social change for the participants. This

process requires participants to brainstorm and reflect on issues surrounding them and their communities; choose an issue important to them; collaborate with others in the planning, design, execution, and editing of their media product; and screen their product among diverse audiences. Throughout this process participants critically engage and reflect on the media production process as a whole, which helps the participants grow personally and their community grow collectively after viewing their final products; which is similar to the process Appalshop employs.

Coryat (2007) argues that G.A.P. serves an important function not just for the New York City participants who are involved in the program but globally as well through the sharing of participants' media and the ability to foster discussions on critical social justice issues. "G.A.P. has been at the forefront of actively engaging young people in the world around them through the production of media that expresses their perspectives and visions for positive social change. It has created pathways for their voices, questions – and answers – to be seen, heard, debated and celebrated" (Coryat, 2007, p. 3). G.A.P. has also helped reinvigorate the idea of the public sphere through the contribution of a historically marginalized group: urban youth. Through their involvement with G.A.P., young people not only learn media skills and education but also are filled with a sense of leadership, collaboration, and self-confidence. By learning to critically analyze the media they consume and create, participants learn to critically analyze the world around them and their role in it.

Media Mobilizing Project

Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) is an amalgam of approaches to community and participatory media discussed thus far. Like Challenge for Change, MMP is

affiliated with researchers from universities (primarily Rutgers University and University of Pennsylvania). Similarly to Appalshop and Global Action Project, MMP is also a community-initiated and community-driven program. MMP officially began in 2006 in response to a growing need for community media addressing issues of labor, housing, immigration rights, and education in the Philadelphia area (Berger, Funke, & Wolfson, 2011). Residents, local media activists and organizations, and researchers collaborated on an initiative that would "train immigrants and low-income communities on the use of digital visual technology to generate their own community-driven media" (LFA Group, 2011, p. 20). Although their initial focus was on helping local immigrants, a historically disenfranchised group in the area, they soon expanded their outreach to all residents affected by social injustice and poverty (Cohen, 2008).

In addition to media production and education for community members, MMP also focuses on media networking for local nonprofit and grassroots organizations in order to strengthen their access, resources, knowledge, and power. The project has received multi-million dollar grants from organizations like the Knight Foundation and Broadband Opportunities Technology Program allowing it to grow and expand its network.

> The central tactic of the Media Mobilizing Project is to utilize media (radio, video, web) as the "nervous system" that conjoins and sutures people across the fragmented political topography of the region. At the heart of MMP's work is the aim of building the power of poor and working people, with the larger goal of creating transformative structural social change. (Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 3)

MMP pursues these goals through networking, educational courses, and training provided to local community members and nonprofit organizations. They build from a foundation of beliefs that stems from the radical ideologies of the 1960s' civil rights

movement coupled with the auspicious potential of the Indymedia movement of the 2000s in order to "foster solidarity among working-class people through media production that allows them to share stories, to feel empowered to produce their own media and to collectively mobilize in an effort to build a larger movement" (Funke, Robe, & Wolfson, 2012, p. 16-17).

Specific media processes and strategies are detailed in Wolfson and Funke's research on MMP (Wolfson & Funke, 2013). Wolfson and Funke identify three essential practices central to the work of MMP: communicative spaces, narrative practices, and shared struggles, which they see as operating in dialogue. Their concept of *communicative spaces* addresses MMP's projects that require physical space to build trust and shared identity and consist of "weekly political education studies, media and communications training programs, community building dinners, and media screenings" (Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 10). Wolfson and Funke argue that these spaces create the necessary physical component for participants to view the commonalities of their struggles and agendas. *Narrative practices* help participants forge a unified class identity through the use of media and communication. These practices include face-to-face training and media screenings as well as the implementation of critical analytical skills. The third identified area of practice consists of *shared struggles* in which MMP attempts to generate an identification of commonality amongst varying participants. "These are moments when through the MMP network, different member organizations support one another in particular fights—from the right of cab drivers to unionize to the right of urban youth to a quality education" (Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 14). In sum,

these techniques and foci help MMP participants "shift from multiple struggles in the city to one struggle for the city" (quoted in Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 14).

Research studies about MMP have noted the contributions of MMP to social change and important issues regarding class formation and the digital divide (Berger et al., 2011; Funke et al., 2012; Wolfson & Funke, 2013). Funke, Robe and Wolfson (2012) identify the potential for community media initiatives like MMP to foster class alliances through the production and sharing of community media. They argue that community media projects like MMP can help serve as "catalysts for further organization building and the renewed suturing of the multiple components of what we understand as a contemporary urban working class" (Funke et al., 2012, p. 17). Researchers involved with MMP have also pointed out the limitations of the project due to the impact of the digital divide; however, Berger, Funke, and Wolfson (Berger et al., 2011) argue that through a combination of old and new media, people living in poverty now have a better chance of being able to participate in a technology-driven information economy. In an interview with *The New York Times*, one of the lead researchers involved in the project that also co-founded MMP said:

> "Poor communities are not involved in issues of digital divide," Mr. Wolfson said, because they are only passive receivers of what appears on the Internet. "If I'm somebody who is learning how to make videos, I've got a computer, and I am a low-income person and I can't get on the Internet, that is going to stir me up." (Cohen, 2008)

Wolfson and Funke argue that MMP helps to alleviate this tension because it "is used by poor and working people to shape, organize, and thus suture social relations across a fragmented working class" (Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 16).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature pertaining to the Communication for Social Change field. I began with an overview of the CFSC field, detailing its history, prominent scholars and theoretical contributions. I then discussed each of the relevant categories of media relevant to this study, to include alternative, community, participatory, indigenous, radical, and citizens' media. The literature for each of these media categorizations and concepts helps to understand and illuminate the data collected and analyzed in this study and will be referenced throughout the rest of this dissertation. In the final section of this chapter I provided brief synopses of groundbreaking community media initiatives in the United States and Canada. Each of these projects help to establish the current conversation surrounding community media actions and their impact on social change and poverty. In the next chapter I explicate the methodologies that were used for this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodological Approaches to Participatory Media

In the previous chapter I provided the literature review that serves as the framework for this study's approach to participatory media. This chapter outlines the rationale and specific methodological approaches used in this study. In congruence with the Communication for Social Change approach to research, this study embraces a critical approach to both theory and method. The first section of this chapter discusses practice theory and its role in ethnography as a way to understand human actions with intentional or unintentional political implications. The second section explicates the qualitative methodological approaches used, consisting of ethnography, media as process, and comparative media analysis. This section also describes the comparative media analysis that is used to supplement the ethnographic data collected. The third section provides an overview of the research design and describes the case studies used for this research, the ethnographic procedure, factors influencing course design and creation, and the comparative media analysis. The fourth section explains the data collection process, details the types of data collected, and explains the data analysis approach I used for this study. An array of data resulted from the methodological approaches used, to include field notes, a participant journal, a reflexive blog, interviews, media (video, audio, photos, blogs, and articles), and course literature.

Theoretical Considerations

In addition to the critical theories discussed in Chapter 1, this study is informed by practice theory in its methodological approach. Practice theory is "a general theory of the production of social subjects through practice in the world, and of the production

of the world itself through practice" (Ortner, 2006, p. 16). As a theoretical perspective and methodological approach, practice theory was developed during the late 1970s/early 1980s primarily through the works of Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1979), Foucault (1979, 1980), Sahlins (1981), and de Certeau (1984). Practice theory attempts to amalgamate a macro- and microscopic approach for understanding the dialectical relationship between the structural constraints of society and the "practices" of individual actors living within social structures (structure vs. agency) (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009; Bourgois, 2002). Through this amalgamation, practice theory affords scholars the opportunity to capture the "practical sense" of everyday life as well as how "fields" (Bourdieu, 1977) or "systems" (Giddens, 1979) define their meaning (Whittington, 2006). Scholars who use this perspective are able to analyze the actions of social actors through rigorous ethnographic research while contextualizing these practices within the larger structures that constrain (as well as enable) them. According to Ortner, "the most important forms of action or interaction for analytic purposes are those which take place in asymmetrical or dominated relations…it is these forms of action or interaction that best explain the shape of any given system at any given time" (Ortner, 1984, p. 147).

In Bourdieu's seminal work, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977), the author explains two central concepts of his approach to practice theory: *habitus* and *field*. According to Bourdieu, habitus is the predisposition individuals carry with them that is the "result of a long process of inculcation . . . which becomes a 'second sense'" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 5). Bourdieu sees habitus as durable throughout an individual's lifetime, transposable in their applicability and execution across varying fields, and as

'structured structures' as they "inevitably incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 5). Due to the fact that "agents do not act in a vacuum, but rather in concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 6) scholars need to delineate the social context or "field" in which actors perform their agency. The use of these concepts helps scholars identify, analyze, and contextualize the practice of agents within the larger social system.

As an advocate for the use of practice theory in anthropology and feminist studies, Ortner (1981, 1984, 2006) has detailed the potential as well as the shortcomings of this theory/method. In her research Ortner (2006) identifies three areas of improvement for the basic framework of practice theory: power, history, and culture. The author admits that practice theory scholars have taken these important areas into consideration; however, she believes further theoretical development is needed in these areas to analyze the relationship of practices and structure. Theories of power (specifically Foucault [1979, 1980], Scott [1987], and Williams [1977]) strengthen practice theory by incorporating the concept of partial hegemonies, in which individuals are never fully subsumed into hegemonic control and are at a minimum "partially 'knowing subjects'" (Ortner, 2006, p. 7). Including this concept helps scholars identify "ways in which domination itself [is] always riven with ambiguities, contradictions, and lacunae" (Ortner, 2006, p. 7), allowing them to account for the partiality of domination in the everyday practices of social agents.

With regard to the "historical turn," Ortner argues for the need to historicize practice theory methodologically by "destabilizing the traditionally static modes of ethnographic inquiry" (Ortner, 2006, p. 9). Ortner's approach to ethnography requires

researchers to account for the temporal changes in culture and history's impact on the researcher's methodological approach. It is also important to examine the processual nature of habitus and how it develops slowly over time, especially when examining the creation and unfolding of everyday practices. Lastly, Ortner addresses the need for "a recognizable concept of culture" in practice theory (Ortner, 2006, p. 11). She is careful to articulate the arguments anthropologists have made against the concept of culture due to pitfalls of essentialism (which hark back to the lack of historicity) as well as the contributions cultural studies has made to the concept of culture by acknowledging its fluidity as well as its highly politicized nature. The political nature of culture plays out in research when analyzing how culture enables action while simultaneously constraining asymmetrical processes. Thus we can see the potential for social actors to unknowingly engage in actions that are contrary to their own interests as they act within the habitus they have developed over time.

Ortner's contributions to practice theory help make this study more rigorous theoretically and methodologically. Practice theory brings to the fore the study's inherent political implications in which actors can make, unmake, and remake their social world through reflexive practices that counterbalance hegemonic forces. Coupled with an ethnographic approach, this aspect of practice theory yields itself to rendering latent reflexive processes used in participatory media production and their underlying political meanings. According to Whittington, agents "are potentially reflexive enough, and their social systems open and plural enough, to free their activity from mindless reproduction of initial conditions (Giddens 1984; 1991)" (Whittington, 2006, p. 615). In this sense, we see the potential for the unmaking and remaking of social worlds through

what critical scholars would call agency and critical consciousness, or in other words, practice.

Practice theory is also applicable to this study through its contextualization of micro and macro processes. When analyzing how participatory media processes impact individuals living in homelessness and poverty it is essential to account for the structural factors that have brought them to, keep them in, and contribute to the cyclical nature of poverty. It is also important to account for the historicity of poverty for individuals, which makes up their past, present, and future. Understanding the democratic potential of media production also includes understanding the structure, history, and culture with which the media production is occurring, in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the factors that can impact the success and failure of participatory media for people in homelessness and poverty. Just as one cannot generalize the applicability and potential for participatory media across varying cultures, one cannot generalize its potential across classes, where those in poverty may have more obstacles to overcome in realizing their agentic possibilities.

Lastly, and most importantly to this chapter, practice theory informs the methodology used for this study in its perspective on ethnography and reflexivity. As the next sections will delineate further, the ethnographic method is best suited for conducting this study to facilitate the exchange of experiential knowledge and understanding of media practices between researcher and participants. Practice theory's approach to ethnography advocates for researchers to take research participants and "their doings as the reference point for understanding a particular unfolding of events, and/or for understanding the processes involved in the reproduction or change of some

set of structural features" (Ortner, 1984, p. 149). In addition, reminiscent of Freire's (1970) call for a dialogue of equals between researcher and participant, practice theorists (specifically Bourdieu [1993]) argue for reflexivity within the methodological approach where researchers analyze the entire relationship between researcher and participant to encourage the researcher to avoid privileging her position and knowledge over that of the research participant. When reflexivity informs the entire research process, researchers are able to reach a deeper understanding by continuously questioning presuppositions and power relations. These methodological approaches and perspectives will be explained in further detail in the following sections.

Methodological Approaches

This section details the methodological approaches used for this study, to include ethnographic inquiry, participatory media as process, and comparative media analysis. A general overview for each approach is provided in this section, and a more detailed explication of how each method was executed for this study is provided in the sections thereafter.

Ethnography

Ethnography as a theory and method has many variations and approaches depending on the axiological perspective of the researcher. This section will provide a general overview of the conventional ethnographic method and detail the various approaches and techniques used for this study throughout the subsections below. The ethnographic method, as a qualitative approach, is a valuable toolkit in the field of communication studies in general and media studies in particular. Through ethnography, researchers are able to render an in-depth understanding of their chosen

research phenomenon (in this case, the participatory media production process) by capturing the quotidian aspects of everyday practice. By exploring participatory media production in an in-depth manner, I was able to analyze how participants engage and learn through media production; uncover deep meanings about the media production process; and identify relational ties between media production, empowerment, and agency.

This study used several conventional ethnographic strategies and techniques to understand the process of media appropriation by people who have a history of limited or no access to media production. This study used participant-observation, consisting of first-hand experience as participant and observer within the communities I worked with for this research. Although the value of personal experience has been attacked by some social scientists as being too subjective or influenced by personal bias, ethnographers and qualitative researchers believe "it is sufficient to recognize and reveal our subjectivity as best we can, thus to maximize the potential of fieldwork as personal experience rather than to deny it" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 49). For this study, participation in the media production process as both facilitator and participant through participant-observation ethnography helped me understand the role of participants as they come to learn and use digital media technologies. Interacting with participants from a facilitator role also helped me understand the role of the participatory media educator and how this position can be a catalyst for change. For the first case study, POOR Magazine, I primarily participated and observed as a participant, occasionally filling in as a facilitator for the video class. I designed the second case study, Sanctuary Women's Development Center (SWDC), with the intent that I would serve as a facilitator for

media education and production, ensuring to reflexively analyze my position of power while maintaining an environment of mutual respect (to be explained in more detail below).

Another ethnographic strategy I employed for this study was the use of interviews. As will be explicated further in the Limitations section below, I was only able to conduct semi-structured interviews with one of the communities, although data collected from casual conversations (as types of interviews [LeCompte & Schensul, 1999]) at both communities were retained for analysis. Despite this limitation, interviews in general are an excellent way to balance my observations with the experiences of the participants by encouraging "member checks" of the data from participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Interviews are beneficial in gathering in-depth information on participants' experiences and mental processes accompanying their media production. For this study, casual conversations, semi-structured interviews, structured interviews, and questionnaires were used to collect interview data.

I also employed thick description in my field notes as a way to document my participant-observation. Geertz (1973) advocates the use of thick description as a way to capture minute details of the researcher's experience that enable her to recreate the scene for her reader and provide her with as much sensorial and cultural data and context as possible to inform her theories and research. Clifford and Marcus (1986) caution that in any given ethnographic scenario there is only the ability for a partial re-telling of the experience because of the limitations of our own human perspectives and cognitive filters. With this caution in mind I realize that sharing ethnographic data in this study will only ever be a partial re-telling of what each of these communities

experienced, which is why I have used additional research techniques as well.

Although ethnography is a widely accepted and used method in many fields across academia, its history has opened itself up to critique from researchers over the years (Bredin, 1993; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Clifford, 1988; Deloria, 1988; Fabian, 2002; Marcus & Fischer, 1999; Marcus, 1998; Rosaldo, 1993; Van Maanen, 2011). Clifford (1988) critiques the "classic" ethnographic method by addressing the ahistorical nature of ethnography. When conducting research, early ethnographers like Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, or Mead wrote in the "ethnographic present", a style of writing that decontextualizes data from any sense of time and excludes past and future perspectives. Another critique against classic ethnography is the potential for "plagiarism" due to the unequal control of discourse between researchers and community informants. In early ethnography the researcher controlled all of the discourse as well as the final write-up of the field notes and publication. It was not common during this time for researchers to give credit to the community informants that helped them in their research, which Clifford (1988) argues may be a form of plagiarism or at the very least is now viewed as unethical.

Van Maanen (2011) also critiques classic ethnography by addressing essential values the researchers held and took into the field with them. Classic ethnographers viewed their research as scientifically objective and would exclude their presence from their writing, which distorted the perspective of the writing they portrayed to their readers. Another critique against classic ethnography addresses the silencing and partiality of race and gender, as well as the application and devotion to foundational beliefs of modernism and essentialism. Many classic ethnographers benefited from the

accessibility of colonial empires, which has created a historical tie between early ethnography and colonialism. This historical connection is still problematic for some ethnographers today, as is described in the ethnographic limitations section below. Van Maanen (2011) also argues that classic ethnographers did not employ critical reflection in their research and as a result may have misrepresented the cultures they thought they were accurately depicting.

Due to these critiques and limitations, as well as circumstantial imperatives for the focus of this study, a mixed-ethnographic approach was used for this study combining critical, media, and multi-sited ethnographic techniques. Each sub-section below will provide an overview of these specific approaches as well as additional ethnographic techniques and strategies implemented for this research.

Critical ethnography. To complement the critical theoretical standpoint this study uses, I took a critical ethnographic approach. In his research Thomas (1993) delineates the distinctions between conventional and critical ethnography by addressing the inherent political nature of critical ethnography and the reliance on reflexivity for the purpose of challenging structures of domination. One major difference Thomas (1993) notes between conventional and critical ethnography is the intended focus of each type of ethnography; where conventional seeks to describe and explain a phenomenon, critical sets out to create change. In her 1995 article, Scheper-Hughes addresses the need for a critical, "ethical" form of anthropology, one that is "politically committed and morally engaged" (p. 410). In this article (Scheper-Hughes, 1995), and also throughout her book *Death Without Weeping* (Scheper-Hughes, 1993), Scheper-Hughes starts to build the argument for a political, ethical, and critical approach to

anthropology and ethnography specifically by asserting that "the work of anthropology demands an explicit ethical orientation to 'the other'" in which the anthropologist should hold herself accountable to the people she is researching (p. 418). She views ethnography as a "tool for critical reflection and for human liberation" (p. 417), which she argues allows her to be able to conduct research in politically charged environments where social justice and social change for research participants is a necessity. With this in mind, I conducted critical ethnography to create a research and media production environment in which participants felt they could engage openly and critically and where I could be allowed to help foster social change benefitting the lives of these participants and the community.

Critical ethnography includes a variety of techniques to help understand individuals' perspectives, analyze structures of power and oppression, and work in a collaborative and reflexive approach with research subjects (Campbell, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Napthali Sobers, 2010; Poitras Pratt, 2010). This methodological approach coincides with the critical theory outlined in Chapter 1, specifically approaches advocated by Freire (1970, 1973). When using participant-observation I was able to create shared knowledges and a dialogue of equals in the Freirian sense (Freire, 1970). To accomplish this, I did not assume my own knowledge as superior to participants and instead worked with them to learn from their knowledge to help supplement my own. My learning occurred through a dialogue of equals that helped break down the barriers of "researcher" and "subject" to create a comfortable atmosphere and environment for us to engage in discourse and learn from one another. Additionally, I used a reflexive approach advocated by practice theorists (Foley, 2002) that involved a continuous

reflexive analysis throughout the ethnography where I reflected upon my actions, the repercussions of those actions upon participants, and ways to improve my actions based on this reflection. Whenever I noted irregularities in power differentials I attempted to correct them by changing the language I used, how I approached and greeted participants, and the materials I provided to supplement the media production courses (to be explicated further in the research design section below and throughout the data analysis in Chapter 5). According to Vandenberg and Hall, "building on reflexivity enables critical ethnographers to acknowledge biases and give participants the opportunity to critique researcher views" (2011, p. 29).

By serving as the methodological tool of research, critical ethnography allowed me to establish a deeper connection between the research participants and myself. Due to the political nature of this research I became deeply invested in the participants as well as the political outcome of their situations, which is reflected in the analysis and write-up of this study. I was also able to tap into the experiential knowledge of the participants directly by legitimizing and validating their views through in-depth interviews (in the second case study) and participant-observation (in both). This allowed me to engage with participants as "conversational partners", which in turn helped create stronger relationships with participants and yield more significant data and insights (Madison, 2011). When coupled with in-depth interviews I was able to balance my observations with direct perspectives and quotes from the participants themselves. This helped to curb my biases and allowed the participants to have a voice in the research I wrote. In the research design for this study I took a collaborative and reflexive approach to ensure the needs of the communities I worked with were placed before my own needs

as a researcher and that my research grew organically from the experiential knowledge of everyone involved in this study. Due to the fact that this research stems from a critical perspective and has an aim for social change, a critical ethnographic approach allowed the theories I use and the research goals I have to naturally blend with the needs and goals of the communities I worked with.

Multi-sited ethnography. With the goal of capturing a broader reality of how poverty and homelessness look in different geographic areas of the United States and how participatory media is received and performed, this study implemented a multi-sited ethnography approach (Marcus, 1998). The concept of a multi-sited approach to ethnography is most strongly argued by Marcus (1995, 1998) with the idea that "any cultural identity or activity is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts, or places, and that ethnography must be strategically conceived to represent this sort of multiplicity" (1998, p. 52). According to Coleman and Von Hellermann (2012), multi-sited ethnography is "concerned with the (shifting) cultivation of a conceptual topology", not about focusing on a delineated methodological program (p. 1). To be considered multi-sited, Marcus identifies several categories that can help narrow this shifting focus: people; things; metaphors; plots, stories, or allegories; life or biography; or conflict. Nadai and Maeder (2005) contribute to this list with the conception of field as social world(s), "constituted by a set of actors focused on a common concern" (p. 1). For this study, the most appropriate multi-sited category is a combination of conflict and social world as I follow the conflict of homelessness and poverty between two social worlds in one of the richest countries in the world.

This study uses a multi-sited approach to account for the multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and experiences of those living in homelessness and poverty. The first case study was conducted in the Mission District in San Francisco, CA, a diverse, marginalized, radicalized area of the city with a history of activism and oppression. My second case study was set in Stockyards City in Oklahoma City, OK, which is also an area of notable background, beginning with a rich history of cowboys and cattle workers to the present day demographic of primarily low economic, ethnically diverse peoples. Oklahoma City is a very politically and religiously conservative area in comparison to the very liberal, radical area of San Francisco. Creating ethnographies in these drastically different environments helped to create a fuller perspective of how participatory media production processes exist within their socioeconomic and cultural contexts (more discussion on contextual comparisons can be found in Chapter 4). A multi-sited approach created a richer ethnographic experience as it allowed me access to the situated knowledge and multiplicity of conflict.

Critics of the multi-sited approach have several compelling arguments against it, to include the subjectivity of location choices based on researcher preference (Candea, 2007) and the argument for the non-existence of multi-sites (Hage, 2005). With respect to the first critique against researcher subjectivity, scholars in general have criticized ethnography for being a subjective methodological approach (Candea, 2007; Wolcott, 2008). Unfortunately, no methodology exists today that is not conducted by a subjective, inherently biased human being filled with perceptual filters and unique, experiential understandings and knowledge (Wolcott, 2008). Due to the fact that it is impossible to account for every detail (or every location) of a phenomenon, researchers

will always have to pick and choose the components they view as contributing the most value and understanding to their research (Falzon, 2009; Hine, 2007). In response to this critique, Falzon (2009) (relying on Simon's [1997] concept of "satisficing") argues for multi-sited researchers to strive to satisfice, which is to satisfy and suffice, or in other words ensure their methodological choices are "good enough." With this argument he encourages ethnographers to ensure their research passes the "common sense" test (*i.e.*, Is it rational?) as well as ensure that it "fits the mass of observations of human decision processes that have been made by the…researchers…who have studied them" (Simon, 1997, p. 120) through guidance by the relevant scholarly literature, methodology, and experiential insights from the field (Falzon, 2009).

With regard to the second critique, Hage (2005) argues that "multi-sited" ethnography is merely a trend which ethnographers tend to jump on board while discarding the necessity for conducting in-depth, rigorous research. Hague views conventional ethnographies as consisting of multiple points of departure where even the most migratory ethnography could be viewed as a geographically dispersed site. With this, Hague also critiques multi-sited ethnographers as lacking the necessary reflexivity needed to determine the thoroughness of their research. Although these are substantial critiques against using this approach, I argue that a multi-sited ethnography is the most effective approach to take for this study specifically to understand the contextual constraints facing media producers in differing geographic regions. Due to the fact that the populations studied are so vastly different the argument could not be made for a geographically discontinuous site versus a multi-site because I follow the existence of conflict separated from a specific group of people. In addition, this study serves to add

to the rigor of multi-sited ethnographic research by designing the multi-sited approach to coincide with a critical ethnographic approach and ensure reflexivity on the part of the researcher is accounted for throughout data collection.

Media ethnography. The history of media ethnography stems from a history of international communication scholars conducting audience reception studies with the desire to conduct rigorous ethnographies within the limitations specific to the nature of media studies (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003a, 2003b; Murphy, 1999a). Although early media ethnography scholars developed sophisticated theoretical contributions to the field, they did so at the cost of a rigorous execution of the methodology. According to Lotz (2000), early media ethnographers utilized participant-observation strategies but failed to commit to the longevity of ethnography that many conventional ethnographers adhere to. She admits that much of the research that resulted from early media ethnographers did provide deep understanding of media use; however, her critique focuses on the fact that "identifying this work as ethnographic diminishes the distinction deserved by research engaging in truly extended field study and obscures the potential of immersing oneself deeper into media use by groups and individuals" (Lotz, 2000, p. 450).

Murphy and Kraidy (2003a) assert three underlying factors for why the application of ethnographic techniques in media studies has been so "thin." First is what they see as the "political economy" of ethnographic study. Due to the expense of time, funding, and resources required to conduct long-term (*i.e.*, rigorous) ethnographic studies, this methodology in turn tends to be more concentrated at elite universities with the funding and resources able to support it. What results is the endangerment of media

studies concentrating on the lives of working- and middle-class audiences that are subjected to the "epistemological privilege" of the elite (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003a). The second factor deals with how historical colonialism is tied to ethnographic methods. Due to the fact that media ethnographic research has been shaped more by the critique against the ethnographic method than by the historical rigor of the method, "political concerns over ethnography have in large part trumped epistemological issues—a point of tension that has somewhat hobbled ethnography's induction into the broader tradition of qualitative inquiry in communication, at least as an empirically rigorous enterprise" (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003a, p. 4).

The third factor deals with the inherent nature of conducting media studies. Media ethnography, in essence, is not vastly different from the conventional ethnographic approach described above with the exception of its primary focus on media studies, which has come to define as well as hinder the application of this methodological approach. Media ethnography focuses on mediated communication, which inherently is tied to the complexities of order, space, agency, and reflexivity (from a methodological perspective) (Couldry, 2003). These complexities force the ethnographer to re-conceptualize how traditional ethnographies must be conducted in mediated, displaced, and fragmented research sites. Marcus (1998, 1999a, 1999b) has created a compelling reimagining of this through his multi-sited approach. Within this approach Marcus argues for a reconceptualization of the role reflexivity plays in ethnographic research, accounting for the self-reflection of the participant as well as the researcher to produce a more accurate understanding of knowledge creation and exchange. According to Couldry (2003),

> Media provide common contexts, language and reference-points for use in local situations, even though media production takes place outside most localities and its narratives cut across them from the outside. The frameworks within which we reflect on ourselves and others are shared with others, because they have a common source in media flows, and yet those frameworks are never entirely 'ours'; we can grasp them alternately as 'inside' or 'outside.' (p. 48)

It is this complexity of space and location of mediated communication that makes applying conventional ethnography so difficult. Marcus' concept of complicity urges researchers to ensure a shared awareness of this complexity with participants by identifying the external forces that impact and influence the mediation of our social lives. Media ethnographers advocate the transformation of conventional ethnographic methods to accommodate this complexity by addressing the conventional areas of media consumption (*e.g.*, the home) and other areas that media circulation influences (*e.g.*, school, work, the bar, the street corner) (Couldry, 2003; Kortti & Mähönen, 2009; Lindlof & Shatzer, 1998; Murphy, 1999b, 2008).

Limitations. Although I attempted to conduct these ethnographies as rigorously as possible, throughout each case study I encountered limitations with the ethnographic method. This section details these limitations as well as what I employed to overcome these shortcomings.

Time. One primary limitation to my ethnographic approach is the length of time spent with each case study. Although there is no hard and fast rule for how long ethnography should be conducted, conventional anthropological ethnographies urge researchers to spend at least one to two years in the field (Clifford, 1988). For this ethnography, I spent one summer (ten weeks) with POOR Magazine and a total of ten months working with Sanctuary Women's Development Center (SWDC). In comparison to conventional ethnographic approaches my methodological execution

falls short of the in-depth rigor required. However, as Murphy and Kraidy (2003a) point out, media ethnographies have specific contextual limitations to them that conventional ethnographies do not endure. For example, there are limitations media ethnographers of audience reception studies face when they analyze the reception of a television series that is only available within a set timeframe. Couldry adds to this by asserting, "mediation, as communication which crosses contexts and borders in pervasive and regular ways, changes the boundaries of the political situations, the family situation, and the educational situation" (2003, p. 45). These changes in boundaries change the ways ethnographies can be conducted when studying mediated communication by analyzing the places in which communication occur, which in turn affect time spent as well strategies used for media ethnographies.

I faced similar limitations for this study. With POOR Magazine, in order to study the media production and education of a specific session of Escuela de la Gente, my exposure to participants was restricted to the hours they spent in the "classroom" learning and producing as well as the weeks they spent enrolled in the course. One way I could have overcome this limitation in the POOR study would have been to conduct ethnographies with multiple sessions of Escuela de la Gente over time. This was not done for two reasons. The first reason addresses the inherent differences between media ethnography and conventional ethnography. In a conventional ethnography, researchers work with one culture (*e.g.*, a specific tribe). For this ethnography I worked with one group of participants during one session of Escuela de la Gente who experienced specific experiences, challenges, and educational events that future groups would not experience (for example, specific political campaigns that occurred during that

summer). Similar to the diversity in varying cultures, each session of Escuela de la Gente would have its own specific culture, diversity, and character, which would create varying ethnographic results.

The second reason stems from a confrontation with the colonial history of the ethnographic method. The director of POOR had a vast critical knowledge of systems of oppression, with particular attention focused on institutions like academia. She was aware of the colonial history of the ethnographic method where researchers enacted an authoritative voice that further marginalized and disenfranchised their research "subjects." This awareness, albeit good for the equal exchange of experiential knowledge, made the ethnographic approach complicated to execute at this site, especially in terms of time and interviews. Marcus (1999a) provides an explanation for this through his reworking of "thick description" in support of multi-sited research. According to Marcus, the idea of establishing rapport with participants is neither feasible nor desirable in today's ethnographic studies. Instead, he argues for "complicity" in which the study places emphasis on developing understanding through a mutually shared questioning and curiosity by the researcher and the participant. A primary aspect of complicity is "an awareness of existential doubleness on the part of *both* anthropologist and subject; this derives from having a sense of being *here* where major transformations are underway that are tied to things happening simultaneously *elsewhere*" (Marcus, 1999a, p. 97). What results is a shared curiosity and anxiety between researcher and participant that has external determinations and becomes manifest through the research process. For this case study, I was unable to overcome the shared anxieties the director and I had towards the influences of academic institutions,

which in turn stilted the rigor of the ethnography and the access to participants for interviews.

With regard to my second case study, in conducting my first media production class at SWDC in the fall of 2011 I quickly noticed the transient nature of the women who visited SWDC and participated in the media class. Due to the fact that they visited SWDC as a way to receive resources and assistance to help them find shelter, get in touch with medical assistance, or obtain donations, among other services, the women did not consistently visit the center, which in turn affected their consistency in attending the media class. In addition, many of the women struggled with time management and scheduling. Although they were interested in attending the class, many could never remember when it was (despite fliers posted in the building) or how to find timely transportation. This transient nature not only affected consistent attendance to the class but attendance to SWDC overall. I attempted to overcome the limitation of access to SWDC participants by conducting multiple sessions of the media class. After I began the second session of the media class in the summer of 2012 I noticed all of the women I previously worked with in the fall had stopped visiting SWDC and a whole new group of women had arrived. The staff explained that a seasonal effect shapes the women's situations, for example, the ability to travel and be more nomadic during the summer versus the winter. Seasonal rhythms then affected their desire/interest/necessity to return to SWDC. Due to this, SWDC rarely saw a repeat of groups from season to season. This transient nature created a situation similar to that of the time restriction of the summer session of Escuela de la Gente at POOR Magazine in which each season I

worked with a different group of women, which affected the group culture, dynamics, and experiences.

The transient nature of the class participants was out of my control as the researcher but is a very important limitation for all scholars who conduct research with people living in homelessness. Due to the unstable nature of their everyday lives and the urgency of basic physiological needs (*e.g.*, food and shelter), attending a media class may not be realized as necessary. This fact of life impacted the environment I attempted to create for the media class, as some participants were new to SWDC while others had been visiting for several months and had already attended several classes. This put participants at a disadvantage when it came to learning participatory media and hindered the flexibility I could have in lesson planning. To accommodate this limitation I learned to make each class stand alone in nature, where each participant could learn one aspect of media production without needing to have attended prior classes.

Unlike classic ethnographic studies that sought to understand and explain specific geographic cultures (Malinowski, 1922; Mead, 1928; Radcliffe-Brown, 1922), media production is not a specific culture that occurs in a vacuum; instead it transcends space, place, and time. To address this limitation I conducted multi-sited ethnography to analyze how media production occurs in several sites. I also conducted a comparative media analysis to compare the ethnographic data I collected in these two case studies with established community media initiatives and research with the intent of supplementing and supporting my data and analysis. I will further explain how the comparative media analysis was conducted in the Comparative Media Analysis section below.

Interviews. During my first case study another limitation I encountered was lack of access to interview participants. Due to the inherent distrust the organization's director had of academia in general, I was unable to obtain access to interview participants even though I was still permitted to conduct participant-observation. This limitation excluded the possibility to use member-checks to validate my experiences and observations. When addressing this concern with the director she assured me that whatever experiences and observations I document are legitimate to my participation at the organization and would be valid. Ethnographic scholars agree with this logic (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Media as Process

In addition to ethnography, my primary methodological approach also consisted of participatory media. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, participatory media can result in media as product or media as process. According to White (2003d), "*video as process* is simply a tool to facilitate interaction and enable self-expression. It is not intended to have a life beyond the immediate context" (p. 65). In conjunction with this view, this study uses participatory media as process to facilitate learning, knowing, reflexivity, and dialogue. The production process serves an important function to facilitate the understanding of how people living in poverty and homelessness engage with and reflexively use participatory media. White (2003d) argues that participatory video (as a type of participatory media) is process-oriented that serves "as a powerful force for people to see themselves in relation to the community and become conscientized about personal and community needs" (p. 64). Participatory media raise critical consciousness through this reflexive process by asking participants to not only

engage in the media production process but also to analyze and reflect on how they engage with the process (Nair & White, 1987). This study uses media as process to understand the transformations participants go through and the way in which media can be catalysts of agency and social change.

As a method, I employed several techniques and strategies specific to participatory media as process. According to Rodríguez (2001), video as process involves the researcher as facilitator working equally with participants in all phases of the production process, which echoes a Freirean approach to critical research and education. Using this approach, I filled the roles of observer, participant, and facilitator of the participatory media process in the first case study at POOR Magazine. In the second case study, I enacted the role of facilitator and worked with participants as they learned the participatory media process. Harris (2008) views participatory video as an "open process" that ensures the process is not exclusionary to anyone based on skill level or knowledge and is "open to the ideas, voices, and needs of the community" (p. 543) so the people feel ownership over their media process. To embody the openness of the process in the case study I facilitated, I ensured the participants had a voice in the development of the media course design and the exchange of knowledge as well as full control of the content of their media and the use of the media products afterwards. Methodologically, I used the total context of the participatory media process/experience as data for this study, which included audio, visual, and multimedia data.

Comparative Media Analysis

In addition to ethnography and participatory media as process, this study also used a comparative media analysis to supplement the limitations of the ethnography. In

order to complement the data collected during media production processes, I drew comparisons between the media products and processes between the case studies I observed and participated in and four North American community media initiatives. I conducted a comparative analysis of the artifacts and processes examining common messages and themes in order to make systematic and objective inferences (Berg, 2001). This was done in accordance with Holsti's approach to content analysis, where "the inclusion or exclusion of content is done according to consistently applied criteria of selection; this requirement eliminates analysis in which only material supporting the investigator's hypotheses are examined" (Holsti, 1968, p. 598). The criteria for selection and detailed explanation for how this method was conducted is explicated in the sections below.

Research Design

This section discusses the various components of the research design that were taken into consideration for this study. The research design was initially created based on the literature, theories, and justifications explicated above; however, in order to ensure reflexivity throughout this study the research design and execution changed throughout each case study to accommodate the changing needs of the participants and the research itself.

Case Studies

Although many approaches to collecting data could have been used in the design of this research, I chose to use case studies as an appropriate method to conduct ethnography. According to Radley and Chamberlain (2012), "the case study approach is sensitive to the context in which information is gathered, so that when, where and how

one invokes the idea of illness or homelessness is entirely relevant to what might be discovered" (p. 393). Although they are approaching case study research from a psychological perspective, this argument is applicable to this study where context takes on significant importance. Case study research is also an appropriate method to further the understanding of complex phenomena in their "real-life context" (Yin, 2009). Critics of the case study method have attacked the generalizability of research findings; however, Radley and Chamberlain (2012) argue "a case is, in an important sense, an exemplar, which 'goes to show' something about the class to which it and other members belong" (p. 393-394). As will be explicated further in Chapter 4, I specifically chose two case studies for this research to address the regional, political, and cultural differences that exist for participatory media users living in poverty and homelessness on the west coast and the Midwest region of the U.S. Each of the subsections below will provide a brief overview of each case study and how they were chosen.

POOR Magazine. POOR magazine is a revolutionary community media art, education, and production initiative created by people living in poverty and homelessness for people living in poverty and homelessness, located in the Mission District in San Francisco, CA. My involvement with POOR Magazine began as part of a research proposal developed for a graduate class at the University of Oklahoma (OU), where I was interested in examining community media programs and their role in civic engagement.

To begin my search I investigated local media initiatives in Northern California. I chose this area because of my personal history with Sacramento, CA, which provided

me with a familiarity of several initiatives. I initially searched the IndyBay[8] website for research opportunities and found an interview with Tiny, the director of POOR Magazine, as she discussed media justice, poverty, and the roots of POOR Magazine. I chose to contact Tiny after reading the article because POOR Magazine fit my research criteria of a community media initiative in Northern California addressing political/civic engagement issues. I sent the organization an email on May 3, 2010 expressing my interest in learning more about their program and working with their staff. One of the staff members responded that they would love to have my help but that I needed to enroll in their Escuela de la Gente program before I could begin working with them. My enrollment in the program allowed me to learn from and work with the members and participants of POOR that summer as will be explicated further in Chapter 5.

Sanctuary Women's Development Center. Sanctuary Women's Development Center is a Catholic Charities resource center for women living in poverty and homelessness in the Oklahoma City, OK area. My work with SWDC stemmed from an internship developed for a Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) course at the University of Oklahoma. Using the WGS internship course as an opportunity to design a media education and production course modeled after POOR Magazine (on a much smaller scale), the class was created to facilitate women in Oklahoma City living in poverty and homelessness to create their own media and learn about critical consumption of mainstream media. When looking for a prospective case study I initially sought an organization that was unaffiliated with a specific religious group to avoid

[8] IndyBay is the San Francisco Bay Area syndication of Indymedia. For more information on the history of this organization see Chapter 2.

potentially further ostracizing marginalized people, but I discovered few opportunities outside of religious organizations to work with people living in poverty in the Midwest region.

Of the twenty various organizations in Oklahoma City that roughly met my research criteria, I chose SWDC because it met my original criteria for a case study/internship: an organization that addressed poverty/homelessness and women's issues, and would allow me to facilitate a media course. I initially emailed the director of the center on September 17, 2012 and after receiving no response for several weeks contacted her via phone to establish a meeting. At the meeting:

> I started by explaining my overall internship/research objectives, notifying her that I would be interested in weaving the internship lessons I facilitate into my dissertation research, which she said she would be fine with. I then went over the course summaries I had typed up for her but half way through just handed her the sheet and let her look them over. As she perused the course summaries she interrupted herself by stating that the interactive media classes would be very interesting to the women at the center and should draw some attention. (Field notes, September 30, 2011)

After the meeting I was given a tour of the grounds and buildings, which provided an opportunity to meet some of the women as well as determine what resources might be available for me to use. One limitation the director noted during our conversation was that of time. Due to the fact that so many other organizations work with SWDC I was limited to the amount of days I could be there to facilitate. Also, the director hinted at the transient nature of the women (something I would come to experience first hand throughout this research), which would limit the amount of time I could spend on any given day. She recommended I offer to facilitate the course two days a week for one hour at a time, to which I agreed.

Ethnographic Procedure

The ethnographic procedure used for this dissertation varied between case studies to respond to the idiosyncrasies of each case study. In the first ethnographic case study I primarily performed the role of participant, in which, through my participation and observation, I compiled a participatory media model that was then used to formulate the course designed for the second case study. In the second ethnographic case study I primarily performed the role of the facilitator, which brought its own unique experiences and perspectives throughout the participant-observation ethnography.

POOR Magazine. Participant-observation ethnography was conducted at POOR Magazine over the course of ten weeks (approximately 168 hours total), Tuesdays and Thursdays between June 2010 and August 2010. As part of this ethnography I enrolled in POOR's Escuela de la Gente. In its efforts to engage and build power with its demographic audience, comprised of underrepresented, misrepresented and silenced communities of color in the San Francisco Bay Area, POOR provides Escuela de la Gente/ PeopleSkool, an educational initiative designed to teach community media production. I enrolled in Escuela de la Gente to participate in this educational process first hand. In my participation and observation with POOR Magazine I attended classes, observed protests, wrote articles, recorded press conferences, assisted with the F.A.M.I.L.Y. Project, and taught video production, among other activities. To conduct the participant-observation I first attended training as a participant before the organization permitted me to participate as a facilitator.

During my enrollment the POOR Magazine office was filled with both first-time and advanced participants. I watched and participated alongside local community members as they learned to use digital media technologies, including blog writing and video production, and also how to respond to the mainstream media's misrepresentations and stereotyping of their communities. In my interactions with POOR Magazine staff and community members I attempted to create a dialogue of knowledges. I sought engaged conversation between my academic perspective and the experiential knowledge and understanding of POOR participants. Listening to POOR participants as legitimate producers of their own knowledge and perspectives allowed me to form a greater understanding of the organizational process and the participants' experiences as will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

Prior to initiating this ethnography, I submitted a research application to the OU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and after expedited review received approval to conduct participant observations at POOR Magazine with men and women between the ages of 18-64 (approximately 40 participants total). My ethnographic field notes were written in hard copy while on-site, maintained on my person at all times, and were stored in my home office with limited access until transferred to my computer. Once photo files were uploaded to my computer they were deleted from the recording device with uploads occurring daily. Recording devices were maintained on my person at all times until data were uploaded and password protected on my computer. All electronic files were stored on my personal computer and safeguarded through computer password protection.

Sanctuary Women's Development Center. Participant-observation was conducted at SWDC during two time periods over the course of ten months. The first course was taught during the first time period and occurred for eight weeks (16 hours total) from October 2011 to December 2011. The second course was taught during the second time period and occurred for six weeks (12 hours total) from June 2012 to July 2012. Using POOR Magazine as a participatory media model, a media education class was created to facilitate women in Oklahoma City living in poverty to create their own media and learn about critical consumption of mainstream media. Participants were solicited via staff members at SWDC and a media flyer I posted in the main room of the building.

This first course consisted of facilitating a one-hour media class at the center twice a week for eight weeks, providing computer assistance one hour a week for eight weeks, and collecting data through participant-observation and in-depth interviews with media class participants. The media class was designed to address basic media and journalism skills while incorporating a media literacy lesson that would help women understand the role of media in society and how to become a critical media consumer. More specifically, the class taught basic skills in analyzing media consumption, shaping media production, writing (blogging), interviewing, news production (digital media publishing), audio production (equipment, concepts, and use), and video production (equipment, concepts, and use). The course also included a component of basic computer literacy skills once I realized many of the women at SWDC struggled with the basic functions of a computer like how to use the Internet. Due to the transient nature of the participants, limited longevity of attendance, and desire to interview participants

who had attended at least three classes[9], I was only able to interview two participants from this course. Between the first and second course I maintained contact with the Center and intermittently visited to stay in touch with staff and participants.

The second course was based on the successes and failures of the first course in an attempt to restructure the course to better meet the needs of transient participants with limited access to technology. The scheduling of the second course was drastically changed from that of the first where I facilitated a one-hour media class at the center once a week for six weeks, provided computer assistance one hour a week for six weeks, and collected data through participant-observation and in-depth interviews with media class participants. Due to the fact that this course was held during the summer months, a much more transitory period for people living in homelessness, I was only able to interview one participant who met my requirement of attending at least three class sessions. I also interviewed three staff members during this session as my involvement at SWDC came to a close. Like the first course, this course also addressed media literacy, basic media production, and basic computer literacy skills. Throughout both courses I used participant-observation, shared knowledges, dialogue of equals, and thick description to document my ethnographic experiences. The interviews I conducted took place at SWDC using the questionnaires in Appendix A and B. While interviewing I took extensive notes and also audio recorded the interviews.

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[9] The requirement for interviewing participants who had attended at least three classes was chosen to try and capture participants who had engaged with the class over multiple sessions and experienced several different media production or media literacy skills and concepts.

Prior to initiating this ethnography, I submitted a research application to the OU IRB and after expedited review received approval to conduct participant-ethnography at Sanctuary Women's Development Center for one year with women between the ages of 18-64 (approximately 50 participants total). My ethnographic field notes and interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and password-protected and stored on my computer. My research assistant and a transcription company completed the transcriptions of these notes. Hard copy notes taken while on-site were maintained on my person at all times and stored in my home office with limited access until transferred to my computer. Audio, video, and photo files were stored on my personal computer and safeguarded through computer password protection. Once the files were uploaded to my computer they were deleted from the recording device with uploads occurring daily. Recording devices were maintained on my person at all times until data were uploaded and password protected on my computer. Media file names were organized by random device assignment, not by subject identification. After participant-observation was initiated, solicitation was made to all organization participants with a detailed account of the consent process. Participant consent (see Appendix C) was received through signed forms or recorded verbal consent.

Course Design

To incorporate reflexivity not only in my research design but also throughout the course facilitation at SWDC, the course design continually transformed throughout the case study in order to ensure the needs of the women and my research needs were met. As such, the course design outlined in this section is broken up by initial course design created for the fall internship and the summer revision of the course that includes

lessons learned from the first session. As will be explicated below, the course transformed on a weekly basis to accommodate the needs and limitations encountered throughout this case study.

Internship. In approaching the course design for the internship I immediately struck pedagogical and epistemological dilemmas I was forced to deconstruct in order to create a course that worked for the women and myself:

> I'm trying to create a media course to show to Sanctuary Women's Development Center tomorrow. I thought this would be a fairly straightforward task: Go over my notes from my meeting with [Dr.] Foster, review my research notes from my ethnography with POOR, and look over past syllabi I have created to help guide the structure of the course. But as I looked over my research notes from POOR I realized that what I want to accomplish and what I will be allowed to accomplish through a Catholic organization may be two opposing ideologies. I liked the idea of creating a media project with a conservative group because I thought it would create an interesting contrast with what I had accomplished through the very radical, liberal group in San Francisco. I now see that I may have chosen two complete opposites of the spectrum. Which isn't to say that I won't learn (a lot) from both groups and especially how we can foster civic engagement in our communities and how media production can empower marginalized peoples but I am feeling the dilemma of contradiction.
>
> At the heart of POOR's media education curriculum is activism. At the surface (from what I gathered from my brief conversation on Tuesday) it seems that the Women's Center [does not want me encouraging an] activist component in the classroom. Which creates a conundrum for me as a social justice "activist". However, I began to think of the books I've read lately in my media anthropology class, *Small Media, Big Revolution* and *Blogistan*. In each of these books activism has a different face than what we would normally think of. The books talk about revolution in Iran in 1979 and 2009 and the role of small media (similar to the types of media I will be teaching at the Women's Center). However, because of the repressive nature of Iran, the use of small media production and the appearance of activism had to be different than what we would normally think of them. Smaller actions, like blogging about love interests, were an act of activism in Iran because the display of affection in public is banned. So by its very nature it is rebellious. In thinking of this, I need to somehow extrapolate this idea of subtle activism and somehow incorporate it into the classroom. Not to undermine the ideologies of the church but to ensure that the ideologies of social justice and civil rights are still incorporated in the classroom. It will be interesting to see which topics I will be allowed to discuss

> with the Center's participants and which topics will be deemed too sensitive for public discussion . . . (Internship field notes, September 29, 2011)

In addition to struggling with a design that "subtly" incorporates activist pedagogy, I also wrestled with the conundrum of how to find the right balance between university epistemological approaches that also speak truth and relevance to women living in poverty and homelessness:

> Several days before the first class was to begin I sat down to create my lesson plan. I knew from the synopsis I had written for [the director] that I wanted to: "provide an overview of community media, citizens' media, and media literacy. By providing a background of mainstream media we can then look at the importance of community media and citizens' media. The use of citizen journalism is increasing in our society and it is important to train community members to create and produce their own media to add to what professional journalists produce. We will also examine media messages and our own use of media to improve our media consumption habits." With this in hand and knowing that I needed to create lessons that were one-hour a piece and somewhat stand alone in nature I thought this would be a fairly easy task. I was wrong. When I sat down I drew a blank. I tried to think of a way to approach media literacy, media control, and media reform in a way that avoided "academese" and a patronizing language and tone. I wanted to talk about Marx, Gramsci, Chomsky and all the other great minds that have developed my own interest in media justice but I figured for this project they might be a little inappropriate. (Internship field notes, October 19, 2011)

What yielded from these philosophical bouts was a course design that walked a line to find balance between my intent and the needs of the women I was working with, inevitably discarding my hesitations and personal politics to ensure the course benefitted the women first and foremost. The initial course design focused on eight areas of media education and production:

> Media Overview: This class will provide an overview of community media, citizens' media, and media literacy. By providing a background of mainstream media we can then look at the importance of community media and citizens' media. The use of citizens' journalism is increasing in our society and it is important to train community members to create and produce their own media to add to what professional journalists produce. We will also examine media messages and our own use of media to improve our media consumption habits.

Writing Basics: This class will focus on basic writing skills, how to write an article, how to write a blog, and how to publish your writing on the Internet. Unlike formal education writing classes, this class will focus on finding and shaping your own voice and letting your voice tell your life experiences and struggles. Through shaping your voice you will then be able to add your perspective to the larger social dialogue through your own blog you create throughout the duration of the course.

Public Speaking: This class will address basic public speaking skills. Speaking in front of a camera or to an audio recorder requires a different set of speaking skills than everyday conversations. We will cover basic public speaking skills (audience analysis, delivery, speech organization) to help you address large audiences, small groups, and mediated environments (*i.e.,* a video recorder). These skills can be used in the workplace as presentation skills, in an activist format to address large crowds, or to improve your daily speaking abilities in general.

Audio Production: This class will teach audio recording and production skills. You will learn a brief background of radio as a traditional medium in American society and the progression to online audio as a new medium. With the use of a digital recorder you will learn how to record sound, work the equipment, speak audio production terminology, and use audio production concepts. You will also learn how to upload audio clips to the Internet and add them to your blog.

Interviewing: This class will cover a citizen's journalist approach to interviewing. In classic journalism classes you would learn the inverted pyramid format for collective interviews and writing an article. In this class we will build from classic journalism and focus on a citizen journalist approach. Using digital recorders you will learn how to ask and record interviews as a citizen journalist.

Art as media: This class will address alternative media forms and give guidance on how to use art forms as an alternative to mass media. In addition to traditional media and new media formats we will also discuss how art forms such as poetry, theater, painting, and spoken word can be media forums for you to use as a citizen journalist. We will briefly discuss various art forms, specifically focusing on art forms you are familiar with or have interest in learning, and use those art forms to add to your online blog.

Photography: This class will teach basic skills in photography and how to create citizen photojournalism. Basic skills will include how to use the camera, how to frame shots, black and white versus color, and other camera techniques. Through the use of photography you can shape your "voice" through images, capturing your world through pictures. We will discuss the power of photojournalism images in general as well as how you can use these skills in other contexts. You will learn how to upload photos and share them on your blog as well.

> Video Production: This class will address video production basics. With the growing use of Internet sites like YouTube, video production has become easier to do and easier to publish for the world to see. Basic skills include how to use the equipment, camera angles, camera frames, speak video production terminology, and use video production concepts. You will shoot videos that depict your voice and learn how to upload them to YouTube and share them on your blog. (Excerpt from course syllabus)

Over the course of the first session the implementation of these primary goals and objectives was tweaked and transformed to accommodate the obstacles and idiosyncrasies of the case study.

Summer revision. For the second session of the media course I revamped the lesson plans from the first session based off lessons previously learned. I changed the design of the course from an eight-week course to a six-week course with the intention of facilitating two sessions over the summer (the second summer session did not come to fruition). To do this I dropped the audio and art classes, which were not popular in the first session. I also reordered the classes to allow for the video class to be presented sooner so the women could learn those skills and apply them throughout the other lessons. The new course design looked like: media overview (media literacy), blogs, photos, video, public speaking, and community journalism. I kept the blog class at the beginning of the session again in hopes that I could help the women to create one and incorporate it throughout the lessons.

In preparation for the summer session of the computer literacy course, I reviewed my notes from my previous research at SWDC and compiled a list of computer issues women had asked me to address. Among these were how to set up a free email account, how to apply for a job online, and how to search for housing online. I realized the best way to approach this course would be to make flexible learning plans

for each week that addressed the specific needs of the women as well as incorporated larger computer literacy issues that would help them in their personal and professional lives. With that in mind I did not arrive the first day with a set lesson plan but instead planned on announcing the course to the women and compiling a list of needs that would benefit the women.

Knowing that my involvement at SWDC would be temporary with the end of my doctoral program at the University of Oklahoma I also planned to provide resources to the center to extend the availability of media/computer knowledge after my leaving. At the end of the summer session I compiled the master syllabus I initially created for the course, all of the lesson plans I created throughout the two media courses, and any handouts I made for the computer literacy course and provided a portfolio (see Appendix D) of hard copy handouts and corresponding electronic versions to add to SWDC's resources in case they received any volunteers in the future interested in facilitating a media/computer literacy program. I also donated the media equipment I purchased for the project that were acquired through research grants and a computer for SWDC to continue to work with the women after the end of this case study.

Data Collection

This section discusses the data types collected for this study and the analytical procedures used. Data collection took place during both ethnographic case studies as well as after the completion of each case study through archival media data collection used for the comparative media analysis.

Data Types

Field notes. Field notes were collected during both ethnographic case studies. Both audio-recorded and hard copy notes were used while on-site and immediately following departure. Thick description and reflexivity were used during note taking to capture as much detail of each experience as possible, as well as to reflexively analyze the progress or lack thereof for each case study.

Participant journal (POOR Magazine). In addition to field notes, I utilized a participant journal during my ethnography at POOR Magazine. This mainly consisted of notes maintained during classes and activities at Escuela de la Gente but also included personal reflections on obstacles and impediments during the ethnography. This journal was written in hard copy form and maintained on my person at all times while on-site.

Reflexive Blog (Sanctuary Women's Development Center). As part of the requirements for the WGS internship, I was required to maintain a blog. This blog became an online repository for my personal reflections in addition to my field notes. In this blog I detailed epistemological, pedagogical, and logistical obstacles I faced before and during my internship. I only used the blog for the first session of the classes I facilitated at SWDC.

Interviews. As explained above, permission was not given to conduct interviews at POOR Magazine. I also encountered some difficulties in conducting interviews at SWDC; however, despite the limitations I faced I was able to conduct six interviews: three participants and three staff members.

Sample. Participants were selected to be interviewed if they met the following criteria: 1) Affiliated with SWDC and 2) attended at least three media sessions. In addition, I also interviewed staff members who were present on days I facilitated the media education and production course.

Design. The participant interview questions were designed to address five areas: general information, media education impact, media production, community building, and civic engagement, while also allowing open response at the end. The questions were designed to ask participants to reflexively analyze what they learned or achieved by engaging in the media course and what their role in their community was before and after their participation in the media course. The staff interview questions addressed four areas: general information, media impact, media education, and community building, while also allowing open response at the end. The staff interview questions were designed to gain insight into if/how daily life changed at SWDC after the introduction of the media course and after the media course ended.

Procedure. Interviews were planned in advance if possible or on the spot if necessary. All interviews were conducted at SWDC. One interview with a participant was conducted in a private office and the other interviews were conducted in the main room of the building. All staff interviews were conducted in the main room with the exception of one who opted to email her responses because of scheduling conflicts. The interviews were audio recorded with the participants' verbal (recorded) consent. In addition, I also wrote interview notes to capture any nonverbals from interviewees pertinent to the interview. I used a semi-structured interview protocol, guided by open-

ended questions, while also allowing flexibility for participants to guide the direction of the interview as well.

Sample interview questions. For the full set of interview questions see Appendix A and B.

Sample Participant Interview Questions:

- Do you feel mainstream media accurately portrays you? Why or why not?
- What were your initial impressions in creating your own media? Please describe your experience.
- Why did you choose to create your own media?
- Have you shared your media outside the center?
- What impact (if any) have you noticed in your community from your media?
- What benefits have you experienced in making your own media?

Sample Staff Interview Questions:

- Are there noticeable differences in women's behavior, discussion, or attitudes after they have taken the media class? If so, what?
- What benefit do you see the media class providing these women?
- What do you think the media class should change/address based on your interactions with participants?

Media. All media created by participants in both case studies were included for analysis in this study. These media include: videos, blogs, articles, photos, poems, and audio recordings. In addition, I also collected media on- and offline for the community media organizations used in the comparative media analysis. The sub-section below describes the media selection process for this analysis.

***Media selection process*.** For the comparative media analysis I analyzed films/videos and articles from four North American community media initiatives. These four community media initiatives include: the National Film Board of Canada Challenge for Change program, the Community Film Workshop Council Appalshop

program, Global Action Project, and Media Mobilizing Project. The criteria for inclusion of community media organizations consisted of: Community owned (not corporate owned or controlled); organizations that teach media production and education; organizations that actively create *with* community participants, not only on their behalf; organizations located in North America; and organizations that address issues of homelessness and/or poverty. The criteria for inclusion of community media products and processes from these organizations consisted of: media created through a community media organization, not individually; media that incorporate digital media technology; media created in participants' community environment, not solely in the studio; media that are not just a forum for community postings or a digital collection/archive; and media that address social issues of concern to the community.

I used two different research methods to find organizations and media that met these criteria. First, I read through the pertinent literature, as reviewed in Chapter 2. Through this literature search I discovered North American initiatives like the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change program, the Community Film Workshop Council Appalshop program, and Media Mobilizing Project. In addition I used word of mouth through citizens' media academics to learn about initiatives like Global Action Project.

Course literature. I included the course literature from both case studies as data to be analyzed for this study. Course literature generally consisted of course handouts, activity sheets, agendas, supplemental readings, fliers, PowerPoints, and packets. Staff members and media facilitators at POOR Magazine created the course literature used during Escuela de la Gente with the exception of the video-editing handout I created for

participants. I created the course literature used at SWDC that is included in this data type.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I used a qualitative analysis informed by critical theory in which I analyzed the data through open coding. The open coding consisted of a close textual reading line by line (or frame by frame) to determine portions of text that could develop potential categories. Throughout this process a constant comparison of categories was conducted in which each new code was compared against former codes to ensure consistency of coding and reliability in data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). A second close reading was conducted, consisting of axial coding, in which the initial categories were re-analyzed to find connections where codes could be formed that either merged existing categories or identified categories as irrelevant to the overall goals of this study and abandoned. Codes then transitioned from the previous descriptive form of coding to a more analytical/theoretical coding process by re-examining the data under the critical theory lens (as detailed in the theory section in Chapter 1).

Conclusion

In this chapter I provided the overview and rationale for the methodological approaches undertaken for this study. In the first section I provided the methodological theoretical perspective that guides the approaches I have chosen to use. The second section summarized the specific methodological approaches used as well as the rationale for their use. The third section outlined the research design process for each of the methods. In the final section I provided an overview of the types of data collected

for this study and the analytical process used. The next chapter provides an in-depth description of the case studies chosen for this dissertation and their research context.

CHAPTER 4

Contextualizing Poverty in Participatory Media Research

In the previous chapter I outlined the rationale and specific approaches for the methodologies used in this study. This chapter describes the contexts of the two case studies, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center, their social and political contexts, and their local media spheres. Although the United States is one of the richest countries in the world, there is an ever-widening gap between the top 20% and bottom 80% of the population[10]. Stringent policies on homelessness and poverty, like the push towards criminalization of the homeless, make the effects of this gap that much harsher for people living in poverty. The U.S. mainstream media exacerbate this problem as mouthpieces for the dominant social class, as they denigrate, illegitimate, and at times completely ignore the conditions of poverty and homelessness in the U.S. The first section of this chapter delves into the current political state of the U.S. by examining the economic policies that have brought us to our current anti-poverty perspectives. The second section provides an overview of the current U.S. mediascape, analyzing the perpetuation of poverty myths and stereotypes by the mainstream media and the pushback from media initiatives developed by poor communities. The third and fourth sections provide the research context for and describe the history and background of POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center.

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[10] According to Wolff (2012), in 2010 the top 20% possessed 88.9% of the financial wealth in the U.S. while the bottom 80% possessed only 11.1%. Economists have noted this gap is still increasing (Saez, 2012; Wolff, 2010, 2012).

Poverty in the U.S.

In order to understand the current economic, cultural, and social contexts that underlie the driving force and motivation for poor and homeless participatory media, we must first look at the economic and political policies that brought the United States to its current standing. Prior to the Great Depression, local and state governments primarily provided public assistance; however, once the national economic disaster occurred a more holistic approach was needed to address growing numbers and conditions of poverty across the U.S. Federal programs to assist people in poverty flourished through the American Social Contract, which began in the 1930s to help the U.S. economy recover from the Great Depression (Goldsmith & Blakely, 2010). This contract,

> [P]rovided not only good salaries and benefits for union members in industry and for public employees, but also transfer payments, gradual expansion of entitlements, and the elaboration of public services and protections for most workers, along with a steadily increasing share of economic output to labor rather than capital. (Goldsmith & Blakely, 2010, p. 18)

The Social Security Act of 1935 was the first national public assistance effort that established programs targeting disabled adults, dependent children, and low-income elderly (House Budget Committee Majority Staff, 2014). Many of the initial programs created with this act were transformed and rolled into new programs that still exist today like the Supplemental Security Income program (SSI) and the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program (now known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF]). The establishment and accumulation of these programs created what is now referred to as "welfare" in the U.S. Up until the economic tax cuts and shift in policies in the 1960s, these programs helped establish the safety net for

people in the U.S. where "poverty still existed, but it was less onerous and it was perceived as temporary" (Goldsmith & Blakely, 2010, p. 19). However, the tax cuts that began in the 1960s and continue today slowly began to chip away at the funding for these programs, rendering them ill-equipped to meet the public's expectations and therefore ineffective in their abilities to cushion the burden of poverty.

President Johnson's War on Poverty marks the beginning of a period of substantial welfare reform legislation in the U.S. (Harrington, 1962). This legislation created alternatives to welfare and promoted work-readiness for welfare recipients in response to the changing attitudes of the U.S. people that viewed welfare recipients in the light of the "culture of poverty" myths. Of the reforms created through this legislation two were the most important: the thirty-and-a-third rule and the Work Incentive Program (WIP) (Gilens, 1999). "The thirty-and-a-third rule allowed welfare recipients to keep the first $30 per month of earnings, plus one-third of their remaining pay" (Gilens, 1999, p. 180). In addition, the WIP provided work incentives through childcare funding and job training for welfare recipients. However, through exemptions[11] provided by legislation, many welfare recipients avoided work requirements. Johnson's War on Poverty has influenced presidential welfare reforms ever since, promoting a focus on work-readiness for recipients to encourage them to move off system dependency.

Several welfare reform initiatives were attempted in the 1970s but it was not until the Reagan administration that welfare reform coupled with bombastic economic

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[11] For example, work that was found to be "inimical to the welfare of the family" provided ample reasoning to be exempt from work requirements (Gilens, 1999, p. 180).

policies that benefitted only the wealthiest people began to polarize income inequality faster than any other time since the 1940s (Danziger & Gottschalk, 1995). Under Reagan's initial welfare reform, welfare recipients saw the reduction of: "[U]nemployment insurance, food stamps, Medicaid, vocational education, public service employment, and child nutrition" (Gilens, 1999, p. 181). These were eventually reinstated during Reagan's second term, although in a much more emaciated version without the economic structure to support them (Gilens, 1999). In addition, the "Reaganomics" economic policies had become overwhelmingly successful for those who were already wealthy through the substantial lowering of taxes for the wealthy with the intention that the profits would "trickle down" (Stiglitz, 2013). However, instead of a "trickle down" effect, the U.S. saw a polarization effect in which the wealthy became wealthier, the middle class began sliding down towards the bottom, and those at the bottom felt the conditions of poverty even more painfully (Stiglitz, 2013). Critics of the Reagan administration argue that his policies on welfare and economic distribution in the areas of housing, health, and welfare reform have set the country back decades (Kozol, 2012).

The most dramatic welfare reform to occur since Johnson's War on Poverty was initiated during the Clinton Administration with the establishment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Under this act, the Clinton Administration altered welfare in many significant ways from approaches taken by previous administrations, the most substantial of which was the replacement of AFDC with TANF. AFDC was created in the 1935 Social Security Act as "an open-ended entitlement administered and funded by the federal government"; TANF reformed this

approach “to a block grant to states with time limits and work requirements” (House Budget Committee Majority Staff, 2014, p. 14). This reform transferred more discretionary power to the states, which empowered them to determine welfare eligibility as well as budget allotments for education, work programs, and welfare recipients (Gilens, 1999). Due to this discretionary power, welfare is implemented in drastically different ways from state to state.

The creation of TANF transformed the ways in which welfare was funded federally, in turn impacting how it was funded at the state level. Under AFDC, the federal government contributed 50-80% of the cost to each state, which increased the amount states would typically spend since they were required to pay less than half the cost (Gilens, 1999). Under TANF this changed through the replacement of matching funds with block grants in which states are given a fixed sum of money regardless of whether the total number of recipients increases. The block grant approach institutes provisions on the increase of federal spending; capping the amount the federal government is allowed to give states. TANF also enforces time restrictions for welfare recipients by enforcing a five-year lifetime limitation. Under TANF, individuals who have received welfare benefits for more than five years are ineligible for further funding; however, the state controls the execution of this restriction, which can be a benefit or detriment to recipients. For example, the state can exempt recipients from the restriction, or the state can reduce the length of time a recipient is eligible to receive welfare assistance (Gilens, 1999). In addition to instituting a time-restriction for recipients, TANF also mandates a work requirement in which recipients must “engage

in approved ‘work activities’—under penalty of sanctions” in order to be eligible for assistance (House Budget Committee Majority Staff, 2014, p. 9).

In addition to the implementation of public assistance programs to help no- and low-income people, another salient aspect of U.S. poverty is the failings of the economic structure to effectively mitigate conditions of poverty. The capitalist idea that the resources and wealth of the wealthiest few will “trickle-down” to the poorest has been a major argument for conservative economic policies that support tax breaks for the wealthiest. However, as time and economic analyses have shown, this rarely happens (Stiglitz, 2013). Instead, the wealthiest tend to stockpile profits in corporate assets, estate funds and investments, instead of redistributing the wealth to benefit the entire economy. Additionally, tax cuts to the wealthy show a social and political shift from a focus on the poorest people in the U.S. to a focus on the wealthiest that is reflected in the widening gap between wealth and poverty in the U.S. Another trend has shown that since the 1970s, the rise of globalization has drawn not only money overseas in offshore accounts but also jobs and resources, leaving those in the U.S. with fewer and fewer employment opportunities. “Metropolitan fortunes across the United States have more and more depended on international flows of goods, services, finance, capital, and corporate investment, and finally even on the international movement of people” (Goldsmith & Blakely, 2010, p. 20). This change in focus from the local to the global has not only impacted those at the local level looking for employment and resources but also those at the national level who cut funds on public assistance to redistribute financial support towards global issues.

What this history shows us is that the economic and political policies for the last 50 years have subtly moved over time towards the increase in inequality where the wealthiest few become wealthier at the expense of the rest. Tax cuts for the wealthy, like the top marginal income tax rate and the capital gains tax, come at a cost for people in the U.S. by leaving an increased deficit and national debt, and subsequently a reduction in government support for the programs that help those in poverty via education, technology, and infrastructure (Stiglitz, 2013). This reduction of government support of the social safety net has been felt through a decrease in benefits to recipients and the constriction of program eligibility. As a result, the U.S. has "poverty rates that are currently among the highest in the industrialized world" (Rank, 2004, p. 62). While these economic policies have been created at the national level, the ramifications and very real impact of them are seen and felt at the local level. The next sub-sections will look at how these policies have been implemented at the state and city levels in California and Oklahoma.

Poverty in San Francisco, CA

According to the U.S. Census, California is ranked 21st in the nation for number of people living in poverty, with the state averaging 13.3% people in poverty in comparison to the national average of 13.2%[12] (according to the *2012 Statistical Abstract: State Rankings* by the U.S. Census Bureau [2012a]). However, according to the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, this measure of poverty may be inaccurate, which has led them to devise a new way to measure poverty, as shown in

[12] U.S. poverty threshold calculated for an individual under 65 years was found to be $12,119 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

their California Poverty Measure (CPM) (Bohn, Danielson, Levin, Mattingly, & Wimer, 2013; Stober, 2013; Wimer, Mattingly, Levin, Danielson, & Bohn, 2013). In their recent report *The California Poverty Measure: A New Look at the Social Safety Net* (Bohn et al., 2013), researchers from the Center argue that the original measure does not account for regional differences in cost of living or the impact of social net programs, which makes it ineffective for measuring the true level of poverty Californians experience. Through their revised poverty measure, researchers found that "About 8.1 million Californians—or 22 percent of the population—lived in poor families in 2011, over 2 million more than estimated by the official poverty measure. Across age groups, children had the highest poverty rate (25%) and adults over 65 had the lowest (19%)" (Bohn et al., 2013, p. 2). For San Francisco county, the revised measure calculated the poverty rate to be 23.4%, where the original measure determined it to be only 12.8% (Public Policy Institute of California, 2014)[13]. Researchers noted that a main cause for this discrepancy was due to the high cost of living in the San Francisco area. Moreover, the push towards gentrification and reduction in low-income housing availability have also contributed to the inflation of housing costs in the area (Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009; The National Coalition for the Homeless et al., 2008; Western Regional Advocacy Project, 2010).

In addition to correcting the measure of poverty, this study also analyzed the effectiveness of social net programs like CalWORKS and CalFresh, which provide Californians in poverty with work opportunities and food and clothing subsidies (Bohn

[13] Poverty threshold calculated for a family of four was found to be $36,349 for San Francisco with the new CPM.

et al., 2013). The report found that although Californians experience a higher level of poverty than initially thought, their experience is alleviated through the availability of these programs. "'Much as we'd like a yet better safety net, we have to appreciate that the safety net we have is doing real work, pulling millions of Californians out of poverty,' said researcher Beth Mattingly, who worked with the Stanford team" (as quoted in Stober, 2013, par. 7). However, for as much as the California safety net has helped over the years, it has not helped to alleviate the burden and frustration caused by antipoverty laws and policies that have been implemented throughout California.

Antipoverty policies. For San Francisco, the largest antipoverty legislative push has been toward what are known as "Quality of Life" laws. According to the research Vitale (2009) has conducted on Quality of Life laws in New York City, the history of this terminology stems from Johnson's War on Poverty, focusing on an intent to improve the quality of life for low-income people in the U.S. However, during the Nixon administration the ideology behind Quality of Life was reframed and repurposed to address environmental issues affecting the general quality of life for all people in the U.S. In addition, politicians like ex-New York City mayor, Rudy Giuliani, re-appropriated the term yet again to propose increased police enforcement of minor crimes like panhandling and graffiti to "protect" middle-class U.S. citizens from the presence of low-income and homeless people, precisely those the original term was designed to support. Politicians across the country have adopted this new definition of Quality of Life (Shaw, 2008), justified by the "broken windows" theory, which states that signs of urban decay like a broken window could lead to larger systemic issues like violence and crime (Kelling & Wilson, 1982).

In line with this ideology, San Francisco has enacted 12 Quality of Life laws between the late 1970s and early 1990s (Forbes, 2002). These laws criminalize acts such as: sitting/lying on sidewalks, aggressive begging, violation of public park rules, consumption of alcohol in public parks, intoxication in a public park, camping, trespassing, disobedience of city signage, consumption of alcohol in public/public drunkenness, negligent control of an animal, graffiti, and panhandling (Forbes, 2002). "By 2006, for example, 31,230 'quality of life' citations had been issued in a two-and-a-half-year period. Although 80 per cent of the citations were dismissed, the effect was to further marginalise very poor people, and make it difficult for anyone convicted to ever find permanent housing" (Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009, p. 483). Critics rebuke these laws for their high-cost and ineffectiveness as well as their perpetuation of discrimination against low-income and homeless people, arguing that they are an attempt to criminalize homelessness (Nordberg, 2002; Selna, 2006; The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009; Wright, Rubin, & Devine, 1998). According to Mitchell (1997) in his research on the annihilation of public space by law, anti-homeless laws work in a pernicious way "by redefining what is acceptable behavior in public space, by in effect annihilating the spaces in which the homeless must live, these laws seek simply to annihilate homeless people themselves" (p. 305). According to one victim of these laws,

> The best scenario in this game is that as a homeless person you somehow go undetected and unharrassed; i.e. you do not become part of the Quality of Life program. If you are spotted and cited for being homeless, you are forced through the judicial and perhaps criminal "justice" system, and will either pay the city in labor or dollars, but will ultimately go back out onto the street. The most you can hope to get out of this program is a detour through a legal labyrinth; on your way back to your 'still homeless' life. (Morrow, n.d.)

This criminalization of homelessness and poverty has been condemned by victims, advocates, and sympathizers from organizations like the National Coalition for the Homeless, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness.

In a recent publication entitled *Homes not Handcuffs: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* (2009), the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and the National Coalition for the Homeless listed San Francisco as the seventh "meanest" city in the U.S., arguing that policies and legislation like Quality of Life laws infringe on basic human rights for homeless people. Maria Foscarinis, executive director at the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, feels that because of laws like these "We are in the midst of a growing human rights crisis right here in the United States" (as quoted in Delaney, 2009, par. 2). In addition to policies perpetuating the criminalization of homeless people, everyday citizens have also taken it upon themselves to commit random acts of hatred against homeless people. For example, in San Francisco in 2011, four people severely beat a homeless man in an attempt to steal his possessions and then set his tent on fire, leaving him with nothing (The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2012). These acts of hatred and the judicial policies that follow, frame San Francisco as one of the "meanest" cities in the U.S.

Liu (2012) specifically analyzed the repercussions and effectiveness of the recent changes to San Francisco's Sit/Lie law, voted into effect in 2010. According to

Liu, "official numbers and responses by the homeless community show that the ordinance has little to no real-life impact on people who are living on the street. Nonetheless, it represents yet another discriminatory regulation against homeless people and has symbolic implications" (p. 48). Liu argues that because of the political and social power cities like San Francisco have, they set the agenda for what other cities may implement in their efforts to address homelessness, or in this case, their approach to criminalizing the homeless.

One large contributor to homelessness in the San Francisco region is the low availability of affordable housing coupled with the push towards gentrification (Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009). This push has been exacerbated even more in recent years with the move of Silicon Valley's tech boom into the city. The geographic restrictions and strict development laws have compounded this problem with the lack of new or affordable housing in the city, which drives the prices of real estate up astronomically. In 2013, more eviction notices were served in the city than housing created to account for the displacement (Kloc, 2014). This situation creates a very real housing problem that affects the number of homeless people as well as the number of people in poverty who become displaced.

In addition to the antipoverty and anti-homeless policies that have been created against people living in poverty and homelessness, there are now policy pushes for legislation targeting the advocates for these people as well. For example, in many major cities across the country (*e.g.*, Los Angeles, California and Las Vegas, Nevada) laws have come into effect that restrict food sharing (The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2010). These

laws include restrictions on public property use (*e.g.*, a food sharing group must obtain a permit to share food with homeless people in public parks), limitations on number of people served (*e.g.*, in Gainesville, Florida the city has restricted the number of daily meals that soup kitchens may provide to homeless people), zoning restrictions (*e.g.*, banning the serving of food to homeless people on private property like a church in a residential area), police harassment (*e.g.*, volunteers of food sharing groups being stopped, questioned, and/or detained by police), and food safety restrictions (*e.g.*, meals must be prepared in an inspected, licensed facility). However, San Francisco is one of the few major cities (in addition to cities like Portland, Oregon and St. Louis, Missouri) that has successfully initiated food sharing programs that are still in existence (The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2010).

Poverty in Oklahoma City, OK

During the period of the Great Depression, Oklahoma lost 440,000 citizens through migration to California (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2007). This migration was best depicted in John Steinbeck's (1939) *The Grapes of Wrath,* a fictional novel based on historical events. In this novel, Oklahoma's condition of poverty was publicized and immortalized to the rest of the country as indicative of the economic failings of the U.S. economy at that time; however, the image of the main character, Tom Joad, is still revered to this day by many Oklahomans in poverty as a symbol of perseverance through insufferable times (Maril, 2000). This iconic depiction of the "Okie" is as persistent as the conditions of poverty the state still experiences eighty years later.

One reason for this tenacious condition of poverty is geographic location. According to Kodras (1997), "…poverty is geographically produced, as changes in the market and the state emanating from national and global levels are differentially translated into the social order of particular locales, generating distinctive prospects for affluence or impoverishment" (p. 70). Unfortunately for the state of Oklahoma the geographic proliferation of poverty is embedded in the state's short history. The south and southeast regions of Oklahoma specifically have been in a state of persistent poverty, where at least 20%[14] of the population in those regions has remained in poverty over the past 40 years (Partridge & Rickman, 2006). The reason for this is as complex as the nature of poverty itself, although poverty is a dominant element in the history of Oklahoma since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

During the Great Depression the Midwest and southern areas were hit hardest economically through the loss of arable land, employment, food, and resources. For Oklahomans, the "Dust Bowl" region (the Northwestern and panhandle areas) was economically catastrophic, leaving hundreds of thousands destitute and forcing them to migrate for better opportunities (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2007). The economic footprint left by the Great Depression on the area is still pervasive today as can be seen through national census numbers: Oklahoma is ranked seventh in the nation for number of people living in poverty with a state average of 15.9% in comparison to the national average of 13.2% (according to the *2012 Statistical Abstract: State Rankings* by the U.S. Census Bureau [2012a]). Moreover, the poverty rate for women in Oklahoma is higher than men at 18.3% (women) vs. 15.4% (men) (Richey, 2012a), which is

[14] In comparison to the national average of 13.2%.

significant when analyzing the group I worked with in Oklahoma that consisted of women living in poverty. Averages like these help us to see poverty on a macroscopic scale; however, in order to understand poverty for an individual a more in-depth examination must be conducted at the local level.

When analyzing poverty at the county level for Oklahoma we see that the state average can be slightly misleading for some areas of the state. For example, when comparing city centers like Oklahoma City to historically migratory and destitute areas like southeastern Oklahoma we see a drastic difference in poverty levels. The Oklahoma City area fluctuates between areas with relatively low or no poverty to areas with some of the most concentrated poverty in the state (Graham, 2009). Southeastern areas like McCurtain County are more consistent in the pervasiveness of persistent poverty across the entire county with levels of poverty at the most extreme end of the spectrum (22.75-83.87% according to the U.S. Census Bureau as cited in Graham [2009]), which Blank (2005) attributes to leading causes that specifically affect rural areas such as isolation, climate, and limited natural resources.

Many factors help explain why cities like Oklahoma City have a range of poverty while other areas like McCurtain County endure more homogenous poverty conditions. One reason, according to Graham's (2009) thesis on the spatial dimensions of poverty in Oklahoma, is the level of education and access to education in specific areas of the state. Through regression modeling and statistical analysis, Graham (2009) identified the primary reason for poverty in Oklahoma is a lack of high school education. She points out though that the direction of causality is hard to determine, identifying whether a lack of high school education leads to poverty or if poverty leads

participants in high school to drop out is difficult to pin point. Oklahoma Policy Institute (2013b) had similar findings noting that "those without a GED or high school diploma are almost seven times likelier to be poor than college graduates" (p. 2) in Oklahoma. They also observed that "more than a quarter of Oklahomans in poverty over the age 25 did not graduate high school (27.7 percent)" (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2013b, p. 2).

Another factor influencing poverty in Oklahoma is the percentage of female-headed households (Maril, 2000; Richey, 2012a). Graham (2009) noticed in her research that this variable also correlated very strongly with unemployment rates in Oklahoma. Oklahoma Policy Institute (2013b) noted "among Oklahoma families with children, those headed by single mothers are four times more likely to be in poverty (44.9 percent) than families headed by married couples (10.0 percent)" (p. 2). For many Oklahomans poverty is intrinsically linked with gender through social policies and stigmas that revolve around women's issues like incarceration rates and domestic violence (Oklahoma Women's Coalition, n.d.).

A third factor that influences Oklahoma poverty is race and ethnicity. Although Caucasian Oklahomans constitute the majority of people in poverty (26.3% [Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2013b]), this number is misleading due to the overwhelming ratio of Caucasians to minorities in Oklahoma in general. In addition to Caucasians, African Americans are the next highest ethnicity in poverty in Oklahoma at 17.5% and Native Americans are the third highest at 14.9% (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2013b). The representation of Native Americans in these poverty numbers is directly linked to the historical genocide, oppression, and marginalization this group has faced from the

United States and Oklahoma governments. This historical oppression continues to affect the Native American nations, as shown in their occupancies of many of the regions labeled as "persistent poverty" areas in Oklahoma (Graham, 2009).

A fourth factor includes underemployment, low-wage work, and employment discrimination. In Oklahoma the unemployment rate is relatively low state-wide when looking at averages; however, when analyzing specific regions like eastern Oklahoma, unemployment rates are much higher due to lack of employment opportunities (Richey, 2012b). A systemic problem spanning the entire state is the underpayment of workers, leaving "nearly one in three jobs…in occupations where the median pay is below poverty level" (Richey, 2012b, par. 4). Even when workers are employed, low-wage jobs leave them struggling to support themselves and their families below the poverty line. In Oklahoma County specifically, two of the top five employment sectors are retail and food service, typically low-wage industries (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2013a). In addition to underemployment and low wages, many potential workers face discrimination when applying for work due to race, class, and gender as well as longevity of unemployment and incarceration (Richey, 2012a).

Antipoverty policies. Although the federal government has extended promises and opportunities to help alleviate poverty in Oklahoma (see Casteel [2014], *Choctaw Nation Picked to Lead New Anti-poverty Effort*), the transformation of welfare laws during the Clinton administration made the state responsible for creating and implementing poverty policies. Despite the fact that 15.9% of Oklahoma's citizens live below the poverty line in comparison to California's 13.3% (using U.S. Census data, not Stanford's revised CPM) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a), California requests and

receives 22.6% of the total number of federal TANF funds (approximately $3.7 billion) while Oklahoma only requests and receives 0.9% (approximately $148 million) (Falk, 2013). Granted, the total population of each state is quite different[15], but the take away from these figures is that the state of California requests approximately 25 times more TANF funding than Oklahoma, which results in vast differences in the quality and quantity of programs each state is able to offer its citizens. Due to these funding discrepancies, California is able to provide many more programs and assistance than Oklahoma, which is reflected in the few programs Oklahoma does offer. Furthermore, in the past fifteen years Oklahoma has reduced its TANF spending by 29% despite its growing population of people in poverty (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2012, 2013).

In addition, recent legislative action is looking to further cut the social net funding and resources the state of Oklahoma provides, to include six bills that have recently passed the state Senate or House and are currently pending review by various congressional committees (Oklahoma Policy Institute, 2013c). These bills place additional restrictions on how welfare funds may be spent by recipients and allow for the additional harassment and discrimination of welfare recipients by local law enforcement. Furthermore, a legislative bill, H.R. 3102: Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act of 2013, was drafted by Oklahoma Representative Frank Lucas and proposed substantial cuts to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP—which provides food vouchers for people living in poverty) that many

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[15] California's population in 2013 was estimated to be 38,332,521 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013a). Oklahoma's population in 2013 was estimated to be 3,850,568 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013b).

Oklahomans receive (GovTrack, 2013). This bill was passed in the Congressional House and is slated for review by the U.S. Senate. These cuts propose excluding unemployed childless adults, eliminating specific eligibility criteria, encouraging states to end SNAP assistance to able-bodied workers who cannot find work, providing the option for states to drug-test SNAP recipients, and eliminating eligibility for specific categories of convicted felons (Richey, 2013). Due to the fact that an Oklahoman representative drafted and proposed this bill, the cuts that are contingent on state discretion will more than likely be brought into law in Oklahoma if this bill passes the Senate.

Despite the legislative moves towards hostile poverty actions, the state of Oklahoma and Oklahoma City have both developed 10-year plans to help alleviate and end the condition of homelessness in Oklahoma. The state's plan focuses on five strategies: Promoting collaborations among stakeholders; improving access to services; increasing access to affordable, permanent housing for homeless individuals and families; improving access to mainstream resources; and improving access to federal and state benefits (Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2008). In addition to the core areas the state focuses on, Oklahoma City has developed the following policies:

> [I]ncrease the supply of Permanent Supportive Housing; develop a centralized intake center (WestTown Resource Center); improve transportation for homeless persons; develop and enforce minimum standards for all shelter and housing programs; create a database (Homeless Management Information System); implement performance based funding and evaluation of service providers; and expedite benefits enrollment for all eligible homeless persons. (The City of Oklahoma City, 2008)

Within the first four years of Oklahoma City's 10-year plan (initially created in 2004),

the city worked on ending homelessness for individuals by: preventing the release of people with serious mental illness from hospitals to the streets or shelters, applying for funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and building 64 units for chronically homeless individuals (during a time when HUD activity was on the decline), and initiating the Real Change voucher program that helped reduce the need for panhandling in Oklahoma City by 30%, to name a few accomplishments (The City of Oklahoma City, 2008). Despite the hard work the city has initiated for this population, the existence of homelessness and conditions of poverty in Oklahoma City are still on the rise.

The history of economic and social policies in the U.S. has created the conditions for our current standing of poverty across the country. In addition, the ways those policies are executed at the local level have larger implications for the differences in experiences people in poverty face. Another factor that influences these experiences is the portrayal of poverty and homelessness in the U.S. mainstream media and the impact these images have on the treatment of those in poverty as well as the social policies created at the national, state, and local levels.

The U.S. Mediascape

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries critical junctures in political and media policies established the media structure we know today. Due to the transition towards a corporate focus in American society, the media institutions followed suit and were thus impacted by government and regulatory changes over time that deregulated media control allowing for the current monopolization we endure. The most substantial media deregulation that has occurred recently was the Telecommunications Act of

1996. Commercial media reinforces capitalistic habits and norms that in turn feed the commercialization of the media. McChesney (2004) sees this as a problem because "to the extent that the contemporary media system answers to investors first and foremost, it may become a weaker democratic force" (p. 22). In other words, because of their pre-occupation with economic interests, media corporations fail to serve the information and communication needs of local communities. As a result of this, a backlash occurred from many communities across the country during the 1960s and 1970s looking to revive the community focus of their news and media providers. Through this backlash, communities began to establish their own local media initiatives. As such, initiatives like public access television began in 1968 (Linder, 1999) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was born in 1969 (Public Broadcasing Service, 2013). These initiatives sought to bring the focus of news and media organizations back to the issues and topics that are important to local communities, not just the media moguls and corporations.

Although conglomerate media corporations have enjoyed a long-standing, relatively tight grip on the mainstream media sphere, the digital revolution that began in the 1990s is quickly reshaping the conventional ways in which scholars have defined the positions of media producer and media consumer. According to Castells, "The Internet-based horizontal networks of communication are activated by communicative subjects who determine both the content and the destination of the message, and are simultaneously senders and receivers of multidirectional flows of messages" (Castells, 2009, p. 130). In the "digital age" those who were historically deemed as the "passive consumer" now have the ability to become an active producer. However, Jenkins (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013) warns that although this possibility exists for many, the

desire for most to move beyond Internet "lurking" has been found to be minimal at best ("52 percent of people online were 'inactives' and only 13 percent were 'actual creators'" (Van Dijk & Nieborg [2009] as quoted in Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 154). That being said, what this shift in technology and subsequently, *capabilities,* shows is that the control of media content, agendas, and format is becoming more and more available to those who are interested in taking it, a choice that was restrictively available before now. What this means is that access to alternative media content is becoming more readily available to those interested in turning off the mega media corporations and discovering what other voices may be out there.

The San Francisco Bay Area Mediascape

Today, the struggle between corporate-run media organizations and local, community media initiatives still exists with more and more local media organizations being bought out or shut down by media conglomerates (Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009). The dynamic San Francisco mediascape reflects these changes as "the majority of 'local' newspapers, broadcast radio, television, cable, and web services are now owned by national chains, or by transnational conglomerates" (Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009, p. 481). This change in ownership not only affects the agenda that shapes media messages but also ostracizes local communities' news and issues and relegates them to either silence or obscurity (Barker-Plummer & Kidd, 2009). In addition to the ever-shrinking availability of opportunities for marginalized groups and local communities to breach the mass media market, media conglomerates like Clear Channel are now buying out minority media (*e.g.*, African American-run or Spanish-focused radio stations) and reformatting the agenda and content, eliminating "much of

the local news, public affairs, and music designed and produced by and for these communities" (Kidd & Barker-Plummer, 2009, p. 481-482).

In addition to commercial mainstream media, San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area have a rich history of community media and public access initiatives. Locations like Berkeley, California and San Francisco have been the epicenters for some community media prototypes like The Center for Digital Storytelling (Lambert, 2006) and New America Media, a media group "dedicated to bringing the voices of the marginalized - ethnic minorities, immigrants, young people, elderly - into the national discourse" (New America Media, n.d., par. 2). The San Francisco Bay Area mediascape also thrives in creating open access to diverse media outlets that meet the ethnic, racial, language, and specialized needs of marginalized communities throughout the area. For example, San Francisco is home to African American newspaper publications like *San Francisco Bay View* and *San Francisco Sun Reporter*, Asian American newspapers and new media organizations like *Asian Week* and *Sing Tao*, Latino newspapers and new media organizations like *El Reportero* and *El Bohemio News*, as well as publications dedicated to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) community like *Inside Pride* and *Bay Area Reporter*.

In addition to these traditional media outlets for marginalized groups, the San Francisco Bay Area has helped create media networks and education initiatives focused on local communities and marginalized groups through initiatives like Media Alliance and Raising Our Voices. These programs create media channels for groups who have historically been silenced or denigrated within mainstream media and also serve as activist efforts to create social change through community and participatory media.

Through local, community, and participatory media, the San Francisco Bay Area has yielded a long and fruitful history of engaging marginalized citizens and disseminating their experiential knowledge.

The Oklahoma City Mediascape

Oklahoma City, despite being one of the largest cities in the U.S. by landmass, is not as heavily populated as other cities like San Francisco and so the concentration and diversity of the media market are much smaller. According to the Nielsen 2013-2014 TV Household Designated Market Area (DMA) Ranks, Oklahoma City is only the 41st largest television market in the country, trailing vastly behind much larger cities like San Francisco which is ranked at 6th (out of 210) (Television Bureau of Advertising, 2013). Unlike the large corporate ownership of media in San Francisco, Oklahoma City television media groups are either locally owned (within the state of Oklahoma) or owned by smaller media corporations with media conglomerate affiliations (*e.g.*, Fox Network). However, like most cities across the U.S., large national media corporations like Clear Channel and Cumulus primarily own Oklahoma City's radio stations.

Despite its smaller concentration and diversity of media, the Oklahoma City mediscape does provide for smaller, marginalized groups through various independent and locally owned media. For example, the city offers *Black Chronicle* (an African American publication), *El Nacional de Oklahoma* (a Latino publication), and *The Gayly Oklahoman* (an LGBT publication), in addition to others. As this study will further examine in the following chapters, there is a large discrepancy in the levels of activism and engagement between San Francisco and Oklahoma City as well as an imbalance in the prevalence of religious organizations and media groups. Due to this discrepancy, the

Oklahoma City mediascape does not have as large a focus or interest in activist media or community media initiatives.

Portraying Poverty in the U.S. Media

Throughout the past 150 years, poverty and homelessness have been portrayed in the U.S. mass media as a problem and blight to society (Kendall, 2011). These depictions have been disseminated to people in the U.S. through a variety of media formats, genres, and narratives that communication researchers have analyzed intensely over the past century. When looking at these strategies, the media theory of agenda setting helps to explain how media come to set the agenda the mass public consumes. Although never using the specific term agenda setting, Cohen (1963) formulated the initial ideas that would later become known and applied as agenda setting theory. According to Cohen, the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). In addition to Cohen's initial formulation of the idea of agenda setting, McCombs and Shaw's (1972) empirical research on agenda setting helped to solidify just how the media go about doing this. In their study on the 1968 presidential election coverage, McCombs and Shaw (1972) interviewed registered voters on what the voters' believed were the most important issues of the presidential candidates. They then compared this data to media coverage of the election occurring within the same time frame and found "the media appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters' judgments of what they considered the major issues of the campaign" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 180).

This theory and the preliminary empirical findings are helpful in examining the

mainstream media portrayal of poverty in the U.S. as researchers have noted similar findings with respect to what the media convey about welfare recipients and people in poverty, as well as public opinion regarding welfare recipients. In 2009 Limbert and Bullock conducted a discourse analysis of 284 newspaper articles that examined media framing on the issue of the G.W. Bush administration's welfare reauthorization proposal and the 2003 dividend tax cuts. Their study found that "dominant issue frames favored reduced support for progressive welfare policies and increased support for tax cuts" (Limbert & Bullock, 2009, p. 57). In their analysis, Limbert and Bullock found that when addressing welfare reform the media framed the issue in a negative light, proposing instead "tough love" programs for welfare recipients and framed tax cuts in a way that viewed the wealthy as hardworking citizens who didn't deserve a "double taxation" (Limbert & Bullock, 2009, p. 75). The authors concluded, "Race, class, and gender became vehicles through which socially sanctioned messages about the deservingness of diverse groups were delivered" (Limbert & Bullock, 2009, p. 76).

In her research on how news media frame class in the U.S. mainstream media, Kendall (2011) found they use several frames with which to depict homelessness and poverty, to include: thematic, negative-image, episodic, sympathetic, exceptionalism, and charitable. Each of these frames is used by the mainstream media as a way to either denigrate or ignore people in poverty, or to decontextualize the individual from the larger problems and causes of poverty. By using a thematic frame, the news media focus on statistical data about poverty and homelessness, ignoring the real-life experiences of the individual (Kendall, 2011). According to Mantsios (2009), these frames ignore "the human tragedy of poverty—the suffering, indignities, and misery

endured by millions of children and adults" (p. 101), leaving the identity of poverty essentially "faceless." Similarly to the problem of erasing the face of poverty is mutating it and conveying it as something it is not. With negative-image framing, news media portray people living in poverty and homelessness as almost deserving of their plight by focusing on the poverty myths of drug-abuse, violence, or mental illness (Kendall, 2011; Min, 1999). This frame also recalls the same narrative and mythologies surrounding mothers receiving public assistance as "welfare queens" who are deemed as hyperfertile and lazy, and merely leech off the welfare system to avoid joining the workforce (Hancock, 2004; Kelly, 2010). As these frames permeate and dominate the U.S. mediascape, the individuals living in poverty and homelessness fall prey to public policies and laws that treat them as parasites and criminals instead of human beings (Knight, 2012).

Episodic frames are used by news media as a way to decontextualize individuals in poverty from larger structural causations of poverty in the U.S. (Kendall, 2011). Through this type of frame, mainstream media narrow the news lens to focus on a specific instance in an individual's life, like fighting to survive after losing a job. What these stories fail to include is the before and after of this instance or how this instance connects with others facing similar problems and the reasons for those problems. Sympathetic, exceptional, and charitable frames are similar to episodic frames in the way they focus on an instance in an individual's life. With sympathetic frames we see news stories mainly focused on facets of society living in poverty and homelessness that easily garner sympathy like children and the elderly. With charitable frames viewers are inundated with the spirit of "good will towards men" during specific events like

Christmas or after a natural disaster. Exceptional frames are used when the media seek an uplifting story that depicts an individual overcoming the odds of poverty to rejoin her rightful class (working or middle class) (Kendall, 2011). Each of these frames erases the real story of poverty isolating individual cases from the larger social issues and the role each viewer plays in that causation.

Other research has shown media's ability to privilege negative stereotypes that influence viewers' personal perceptions, bias, and judgments. In Monahan, Shtrulis, and Brown Givens' (2005) research on female African American stereotypes (mammy, jezebel, Welfare Queen), the researchers found that the Welfare Queen stereotype yielded the strongest media effect of the three types (*e.g.*, Welfare Queen job applicants would be most suitable for seasonal or temporary work versus a long-standing career). The researchers concluded one explanation for this was because this stereotype was generally more accessible than the other stereotypes to audiences because of its prevalence throughout a variety of media (*e.g.*, evening news, *Jerry Springer Show*). Another study showed that not only does priming stereotypes through media induce those stereotypes when analyzing other situations but media priming of stereotypes has a negative effect on welfare program support (Johnson, Nelgy, Gibson, Reed, & Ashburn-Nardo, 2009). This study showed that when priming audiences with negative stereotypes regarding female African Americans, audience members are more likely to call on those stereotypes when making decisions in other situations, like choosing to support welfare reform policies. All of these studies show the impact the mass media have on audience perceptions of minorities as well as how these perceptions influence decision-making and public policies later on for important issues like welfare reform.

In addition to the role the mainstream media play in setting agendas, framing content, and priming decisions, studies have also shown that mainstream media are very influential in perpetuating racial stereotypes and discrimination. In her research, Hancock (2004) analyzed media descriptions and portrayals of welfare recipients and how media reporting biases public opinion in a way that turns public opinion against the welfare *recipients*, not the welfare *system*. In her content analysis of mainstream media publications, to include the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, she found that mainstream media framed welfare recipients as abusing the welfare system. Gilens (1999) found similar results in his content analysis of the portrayal of African Americans in the media. His study showed that African Americans were largely ignored in the media throughout most of the media's history but that in recent times this has changed where African Americans figure prominently in discussions of poverty (Gilens, 1999). According to Gilens (1999), this change led to the racialization of poverty within the media where the majority of today's stereotypes regarding the poor and African Americans inevitably stem. Current research has upheld the validity of this research by confirming that today's media continue to perpetuate racial stereotypes and discrimination. Bounds Littlefield (2008) argues that the media serve as a system of racialization, where negative imagery of African American women are perpetuated through mainstream media along with ideologies of new racism. In this research Bounds Littlefield shows how the Jezebel stereotype of African American women is still prevalent and pervasive in today's media, especially in music videos.

While considerable research has been conducted on the portrayals and linkages between minorities (primarily African Americans) and poverty (Bounds Littlefield,

2008; Clawson & Trice, 2000; Dates & Barlow, 1993; Gilens, 1996, 1999; Hancock, 2004; Johnson et al., 2009; Monahan et al., 2005; Rodriguez, 1997), little research has been conducted on the representation of Caucasians in poverty in the U.S. However, community media initiatives like Appalshop have responded to negative media portrayals of Caucasians in poverty (*e.g.*, Appalachians), an example of which can be seen in the Appalshop film "Stranger with a Camera" by Elizabeth Barret (2000). The film focuses on the sometimes-incongruent nature of documentary making with isolated communities by addressing the tragic killing of Challenge for Change's Hugh O'Connor in Appalachia. The incident occurred in Jeremiah, KY, the town in which Barret was raised. The film is an analysis of why the incident occurred and why the residents of Jeremiah sided with the shooter over the victim. At the heart of the film, Barret addresses the exploitation of Appalachian poverty and the bond between neighbors in their perceived fight against that exploitation by "strangers." In Jeremiah, residents saw their neighbors portrayed in mainstream media as symbols of poverty in the U.S. Outsiders to the community would descend upon their town with a deluge of cameras and recording equipment to document what they perceived as an economically and morally bankrupt town. Unfortunately, O'Connor was perceived to be one of these strangers with exploitative motives and was unable to explain his social change agenda before a local resident, Hobart Ison, shot and killed him. During the trial, it became clear that Ison's motivation for killing O'Connor was to protect his town, their image, and the representation of Appalachia and poverty in the mainstream media. The film addresses a very important tension between mainstream media and the populations they represent. The death of O' Connor symbolizes the struggle of representation that many

individuals and communities face, highlighting the moments in which they feel they have little to no power to take any *action*, which results in the impulsive *reaction* in their attempt to take control. This film is very relevant to this study's issue of homeless and poverty representation in the mainstream media and will be analyzed further in Chapter 5.

Poverty media pushback. In response to the negative mainstream media portrayal of people living in poverty and homelessness, poverty publications, media, and networks have emerged across the world in response. In the U.S., the most recent movement in support of homeless media began in 1989 in New York City via *Street News,* which fueled a surge of similar publications across the country and globe (Brown, 2002). The publication served as a prototype for the current model of street papers: the content begins with a board of advisors who determine the issues and focus for each street paper. Homeless people are then used to help circulate the publication and are usually afforded a percentage of the sales price (Howley, 2005). One problem with this model, despite its global success and replications among varieties of street papers, is that the people who live in and experience homelessness are rarely incorporated in the creation process. These publications help create subsistence and financial economy for homeless people but fall short of providing an authentic channel for the homeless experience and perspective.

International Network of Street Papers (INSP), the largest international network that supports homeless people and initiatives, was established in 1994 to provide collective support and resources for individual poverty publications as well as "add value to their work so that thousands of homeless vendors - 250,000 so far - can earn a

living and improve their lives" (INSP, 2014, par. 4). As part of this coalition, the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) supports 40 different poverty publications throughout the U.S. and Canada to "foster communication between existing papers, serve as a link to international papers and help nurture new papers, as well as raise funds to implement support services continent wide" (The NASNA Board, 2013, par. 5).[16] Although these networks help to provide foundational support for homeless publications, homeless people do not actually sit on the editorial boards or choose the content for the publications (Magallanes-Blanco & Pérez-Bermúdez, 2009).

Publications like *Street Sheet* and *Spare Change News* are relatively known in their respective cities (San Francisco, California and Boston, Massachusetts respectively) but they fall into relative obscurity outside of those boundaries. And although cities like Dallas, Texas and Madison, Wisconsin are also connected with these organizations via their publications *Street Zine* and *Street Pulse* (respectively), smaller or poorer cities like Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Kansas City, Missouri are not affiliated, leaving them disconnected from the larger homeless media movement and at a disadvantage for creating homeless media in their cities. What these publications and networks do succeed at though is raising awareness for homeless issues and giving a face to the homeless individuals who vend them. According to Kendall (2011), these publications "get the message out about poverty and homelessness and…provide audiences with the 'real story' of the poor rather than the packaged, sanitized sound bites and video clips presented in new reports or the occasional subplot in a television

[16] As of December 31, 2013, NASNA no longer exists as a business entity but still serves on a volunteer basis to help support North American poverty publications.

drama" (p. 118).

In addition to the publication networks described above many community and participatory media organizations have emerged throughout the U.S. that organically stem from populations living in poverty and homelessness to help spread their voice and experiential knowledge. One successful example of this is Detroit Future Media (DFM), a media workshop initiative "interested in building Detroit's media economy through the creation of grassroots media, and community cultural production" (Detroit Future Media, 2011a, par. 1). Through a series of 20-week workshops DFM focuses on four areas of foundational theory and practice: education, entrepreneurship, transformative art practices, and digital stewardship. Stemming from this foundation participants then go on to learn media production skills, to include: audio recording, digital photography, graphic design, digital storytelling, website creation, beatmaking, video production, and wearable electronics (Detroit Future Media, 2011b). The overarching goal of this program (which works in conjunction with several other Detroit Future projects) is the resurrection of a thriving, self-sustaining community in Detroit with a healthy digital ecology. In essence, they are fighting for social change in a failed capitalist city, struggling to survive.

Similar to initiatives like DFM, this study takes an ethnographic look at one established community media organization in San Francisco, California (POOR Magazine) and one facilitated media class consisting of women experiencing poverty and/or homelessness in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma via Sanctuary Women's Development Center. The next two sections will provide the research contexts for both of these organizations.

POOR Magazine

POOR Magazine is a poor people/indigenous people led grassroots, non-profit arts organization dedicated to providing revolutionary media access, education, arts and advocacy to youth, adults, and elders in poverty. The concept of revolution is at the root of what POOR aspires because the organization believes they are engaging discriminated people in new and dramatic ways. POOR is located in San Francisco, California and works to promote social change in favor of citizens whose lives are marked by their struggle with homelessness, poverty, racism, classism, disability, immigration, incarceration, and discrimination in general. The organization was created by Lisa Gray-García, aka Tiny, and her mother Dee in 1996 (Tiny, 2006). They launched a concept known as poverty scholarship and they were in fact, poverty scholars. Poverty scholarship is an epistemological perspective that assumes that people who experience homelessness and poverty also produce legitimate knowledge and that this knowledge builds power (Tiny, 2011). Based on these assumptions, POOR Magazine offers opportunities for media production and training where people living in poverty and homelessness can voice their own knowledge and interpretations of reality. True to its namesake, POOR Magazine could initially only afford to print a few issues before its budget was exhausted. However, thanks to the accessibility of new media technologies like the Internet, POOR has been able to continue its mission with online publishing.

Programs

Through funding via local art grants and donations, POOR Magazine operates as a community media center that focuses on three core areas: art, education and media. As

part of their arts concentration, POOR provides various activist art projects for community members, to include the Po' Poets Project, a poetry initiative where community members can share and publish poetry and other artworks, and welfareQUEENS, an activist media initiative for mothers and women on welfare (POOR Magazine, n.d.b). According to the POOR Magazine website,

> Through their art, storytelling and poetry, the QUEENS' project will re-contextualize the word, welfareQUEENS, and who it refers to in a society that makes it illegal to be poor and refuses to recognize, support or legitimize the work involved in raising children. With their cultural work, media activism, feature length play, and radio channel these mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, who have all struggled, survived and dealt with this ongoing oppression for years tell their stories, enact their struggles and realize their dreams of survival, thrival and resistance. (POOR Magazine, n.d.c, par. 2)

Hotel Voices is a theater project community members can be involved in to engage in a thespian perspective of important poverty issues. Los Viajes/The Journeys (POOR Magazine, 2009) is a compilation written by community members and published by POOR Magazine that describes members' personal struggles and journeys through discrimination and poverty. The Al Robles Living Library Project is a community literary project that cultivates poetry, literacy, and performing arts for community members. The Poverty Hero Project is a literary and visual arts project honoring the lives of people living through poverty and discrimination. The ReviewsForTheREvoluTion project allows community members to submit cultural reviews (*e.g.*, movies, books, music, theater productions) for publication on the POOR website.

In addition to their arts focus, POOR also concentrates on community education needs through several projects (POOR Magazine, n.d.b). In an interview published through the San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center (Indybay) (Angola 3

News, 2010), Tiny states:

> How do you ensure that the silenced voices of people in poverty are heard? By addressing the subtle and not so subtle ways in which our voices and research and scholarship is separated out and suppressed. We teach on our forms of media revolution and media justice at the Race, Poverty, & Media Justice Institute and PeopleSkool. (par. 25)

The Race, Poverty, & Media Justice Institute provides media education and scholarships for poverty scholars. Escuela de la Gente/ PeopleSkool provides media, advocacy, and activist education for people struggling with poverty or homelessness. Escuela de la Gente offers courses on media production (radio, television, and publication) and investigative journalism ("digital resistance"), as well as courses on research methods, awareness of systemic oppression, and constructive ways to resist oppression through media and education. POOR staff members also run F.A.M.I.L.Y. Project, which provides children a space to create youth art projects while their parents are attending Escuela de la Gente classes. HEAL provides education and emotional support for those dealing with substance abuse, violence and mental illness. WeSearch consists of research projects undertaken by poverty scholars that address pertinent poverty issues. Community Newsroom allows community members to participate in the community news-making process by attending a monthly news meeting, discussing important news stories, and being assigned topics to report. The PO' Scholar Fund is a philanthropic endeavor spearheaded by POOR Magazine staff to help fund youth and adult journalists in poverty.

The third core area at POOR focuses on media. Although media plays a role in each of their core areas, in this area community members are able to take a hands-on approach to media production and publication through various projects (POOR

Magazine, n.d.b). PoorNewsNetwork (PNN) is the journalistic structure of POOR for these media projects where community members implement the media skills they learn through Escuela de la Gente. PNN TV and PNN Radio allow community members to broadcast the digital videos and audio recordings they create through the POOR Magazine website as well as through any media organizations with which POOR is affiliated (*e.g.*, KPFA 94.1 FM). POOR Magazine, the original print copy, has since been replaced with its online counterpart where community members can publish and broadcast their journalism. POOR Press provides book preparation and publication opportunities for community members interested in publishing books. Indigenous People's Media Project is a media initiative for indigenous people struggling with poverty and discrimination in the San Francisco area. *Voces de Immigrantes* is a similar media initiative for immigrants in the San Francisco area to learn media education and production. Youth in Media consists of "media produced, edited, written and broadcasted by youth skolaz locally and globally and/or stories on Youth Justice" (POOR Magazine, n.d.d, par. 1). Krip Hop Nation is a "project featuring people with disabilities inside and outside the music industry, locally and globally" (POOR Magazine, n.d.a, par. 1). Thanks to POOR Magazine community members are able to voice their stories, ideas, and knowledge in a variety of media on the POOR website and via their affiliates, which include: the *San Francisco Bayview* newspaper; KPFA/Pacifica; *The Oakland Tribune*; Alternet; Paper Tiger TV; Free Speech TV; *Race, Poverty and the Environment*; *Street Sheet*; *Street Spirit*; *San Francisco Bay Guardian*; Media Alliance; and Free Press (POOR Magazine, 2008).

Their most recent and largest project is HOMEFULNESS "a sweat-equity co-housing project for landless families in poverty, which includes a school, media center and micro-business projects. This has the goal of reclaiming stolen lands and resources and moving off the grid of controlled systems of housing and budget kkkrumbs" (Tiny, as quoted in Angola 3 News, 2010, par. 22). Community members are able to take advantage of these opportunities through the personal support POOR provides in addition to education and media production. This support includes transportation to and from the POOR office, assistance in transportation for children, on-site child-care, meals, on-site direct legal advocacy, and monetary stipends for time spent learning with POOR. Through these initiatives POOR Magazine works to create change models for long-term economic sustainability and attempts to facilitate agency for people in struggle from many different cultures, races and generations.

Research Site

I began my eight-week participant-observation ethnography at POOR on June 15, 2010. The ethnography was primarily conducted at the POOR Magazine headquarters, located in the Mission District in San Francisco. The Mission District is a historically low socio-economic area that is racially diverse in the heart of the city. Here is the description of my first visit to POOR from my field notes:

> [I] Arrived at the corner of 16th and Mission St. in San Francisco at approximately 1:55 p.m. The first thing I noticed was the abundance of homeless people scattered across the intersection on benches, near fountains, outside of the BART station, or in transient. I walked two blocks east of the station to a street full of dilapidated office buildings and restaurants. Past "The Lab" and a Chilean restaurant was 2940 16th St. [POOR Magazine Headquarters]. (Field notes, June 15, 2010)

The Mission has been home to Central and South American migrants since the 1950s, which accounts for the strong Latino culture and businesses in the area. This area has attracted the likes of revolutionaries, artists and activists, which subsequently have made it a prime target for gentrification projects since the Internet boom in the 1990s (Banner, 2002). The headquarters of POOR Magazine is set against this backdrop of poverty, wealth, racial diversity, and activism, which serve as fodder and motivation for the POOR Magazine press.

The building that POOR Magazine is located in is an amalgam of these outside entities, as this description from my field notes will portray:

> The hallway was littered with protest signs that advocated peace … stored in whatever crevices or corners were available. A sign that read "San Francisco Living Wage Coalition" hung outside the room in the hallway. As I entered the office several people were already lingering inside. The first thing I noticed in the office was a long table on the left-hand side covered in food and people fixing themselves something to eat. Tiny later stated that the food is provided free of charge by a former POOR participant who works at a farm in Marin county. The food is organic, which Tiny emphasizes everyone should eat to prevent getting or worsening health diseases that may cause them to need to go to the doctor, which they can't afford. Opposite of the table was a long couch. The walls were covered in murals, artwork, and fliers. The group I had travelled with in the elevator had scattered once inside the office, some gathering food and others sitting down. As I observed all of the people in the room, [I saw] a blonde-haired woman with her hair swept to the side in a braid covered by a black newsboy hat with a Cuban flag embroidered on it (interesting because she's a revolutionary journalist). She greeted me with a large smile and firm handshake. (Field notes, June 15, 2010)

The POOR office is located on the third floor of an old business building. The office consists of a main common area, a kitchen, an office for the director, a library, two media labs, and two sub-offices occupied by other activist organizations as described in my field notes below:

> The office was set up with a front entrance area adjacent to a common area with four offices extending from the common area. At the end of the common area a

> hallway on the left-hand side led to two other offices where the media rooms were located. In the entrance area and common room, large posters and pieces of art hung from the walls. The art pieces were from previous classes and events held by PNN. A large mural with portraits of prominent historical figures and the title of "HerStorical/Historical Poverty Heroes & Resistance Fighters" hung near the entrance to the office…Some posters were strictly in Spanish some in English and some combining the two languages. A large poster that read Manifesto for Change ("Manifesto para el cambio") laid out all of the goals and initiatives of the organization. It was displayed prominently in the center of the room for everyone who entered to see. (Field notes, June 20, 2010)

In addition to the large common area that housed most of the classes at POOR, the participants utilized two media labs to learn and apply media production.

> The first media lab had approximately 10 computers in it and three people working when I walked in the room. Each computer station was a mix of monitor brands and conditions, signifying that PNN got their computer equipment from any available source. It was very much not a professional media room with matching equipment in perfect working order. One person working in the lab was having trouble getting the program to do what he wanted. "George" said that PNN doesn't have access to a lot of editing software and basically just use whatever they can access. Chairs in all of the rooms looked dilapidated with stains and cushioning with holes in them. The second media lab had approximately 8 computers in it and a couch. It looked more like an unofficial meeting or brainstorming room than a computer lab. The back hallway was cluttered with office supplies like paper cutters, filing cabinets, and loose paper. This area was also used as a logistics area for making handouts, posters, etc. (Field notes, June 20, 2010)

In addition to the POOR Headquarter offices and the Mission District, I also conducted my ethnography at off-site activities like protests and activist fieldtrips at San Francisco City Hall where participants implemented the media skills they learned in the classroom. As will be described in more detail in the next chapter POOR Magazine did not just teach in the "classrooms" of POOR but instead used the entire city of San Francisco as a backdrop and tool for media, economic, and political education.

Participants

Participants enrolled in Escuela de la Gente, facilitators, PNN staff members, community journalists, guest speakers, and guest educators were included as subjects in this case study. All subjects have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity (except the PNN director, Tiny). The demographics of people who participated at POOR varied and included both men and women. The age group of participants at Escuela de la Gente consisted of people between 18- to 65-years-old; however, people of all ages visited POOR and participated in their various programs throughout any given day[17]. A diversity of ethnicities was represented at POOR to include African American, Caucasian, Latino, Asian American, and Native American. Approximately half of the participants consisted of recent South and Central American immigrants who spoke very little English and were receiving stipends through POOR from Arriba Juntos (a non-profit employment and training organization) in return for the computer and media training they received at POOR. Due to the fact that attendance was not mandatory and that participants were juggling their education with family commitments, careers, and other schooling opportunities, most participants did not attend regularly and approximately five people never returned after the first day. There were approximately 10-15 participants who attended classes on any given day, with a small depreciation of attendance throughout the day (due to the reasons listed above). In total, approximately 30 people associated with POOR Magazine participated in the research process for this study.

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[17] People outside of the 18 - 65 age-range were not included in this study.

Sanctuary Women's Development Center

Sanctuary Women's Development Center (SWDC) is a charity organization funded and supported through the Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (Catholic Charities, n.d.). The center is located in Stockyards City, once a prominent location for cattle-raising and stockman activity, now it consists of low-income housing in Oklahoma City. The center opened its doors in 2009 at the Our Lady of Guadalupe church and focuses on helping homeless women and children by providing resources, support, and advocacy to alleviate the harsh conditions of poverty and homelessness many of the women experience (Catholic Charities, n.d.). At the center, women are provided with food, counseling resources, religious resources, assistance in finding a job or a place to live, various educational/recreational classes, and a safe space to spend the day for those who are asked to leave whichever homeless shelter they stayed in at night.

Research Site

I began my participant-observation ethnography at SWDC on October 11, 2011. The participant-observation took place at the Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Stockyards City, a subdivision of Oklahoma City, OK. Stockyards City began as a public livestock market and meatpacking district and continues this tradition today as "the world's largest stocker and feeder cattle market" (Stockyards City Main Street, n.d., par. 3). Oklahoma City promotes this history and markets the area as a nostalgic return to cowboy and western lifestyles, despite the reality that the demographics of the area reflect a changing tide from white cowboys to minority residents struggling with poverty. Sanctuary Women's Development Center is nestled within this landscape of

dynamic economic, cultural, and ethnic changes. Here is the description of my first visit to SWDC from my field notes:

> Although I was immediately impressed with the archway and rustic feel to the main street, I greeted the quiet neighborhood the Women's Center was nestled in with anticipation. I managed to get lost for several minutes while driving past the meek demeanor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, hidden amongst several trees. While driving around in the neighborhood I noticed most of the houses were small and littered with children's toys and personal belongings. Although the neighborhood did not give the impression of extreme poverty I did get a sense that the occupants might be on the lower end of the economic spectrum. Once I figured the timid looking church must be the location of Sanctuary Women's Development Center I pulled into the parking lot and surveyed the area. My initial impression was that the area had an amenable atmosphere, inviting to those who may be unfamiliar with the area…The inside of the building looked like a tiny church but one that had been refurbished and turned into a community center with various work stations and areas for the women to congregate. (Field notes, September 30, 2011)

The portion of the site I was given access to for this research consisted of the main area of the small church where women congregated and two small offices for staff members and volunteers (there was also a small outside area with a garden and another building in the back that I did not use).

Upon entering the building a front counter greeted visitors where two to three staff members usually sat. To the right of the desk was a small drop off area for donations and to the left was a small computer station nestled within in alcove with a window overlooking the street outside. Walking past the front counter, each wall was aligned with pews while large stain glassed windows shone down on the women reminding them of the spiritual history of the structure. This main area included three large tables, a small children's play area, and a table for coffee, water, and snacks. Towards the back of the room was another table with two computers that sat on a step overlooking the main area (although during the summer course one of the two

computers was broken the entire time). Behind the computer station was a restroom and access to the two offices.

I facilitated the media class in the large area of the church and held one interview in one of the back offices for privacy. The class was taught at one of three large round tables in the middle of the room; however, during class sessions where many women at the center decided to engage, as many as all three tables and both pews were used to teach the class. Computer literacy sessions were held either at the back computer station or at the small computer table at the front of the church.

Participants

On September 27, 2011 I spoke with the director of Sanctuary Women's Development Center to solicit participation from staff members and attendees for in-depth interviews and ethnographic access. After several phone conversations and a visit to the center the director assisted me in the creation of the course to meet the specific needs of the women. During this time, the director informed me that because of the transient nature of the women and their involvement at the center it would be best to create stand alone courses that would not need to develop off one another, which I took into account when designing the course structure. To solicit the class, the director made word-of-mouth announcements in the mornings and a flier was posted to the community bulletin board to advertise the course to the women and visitors in general.

The demographics of the women were not as diverse as the San Francisco group and mainly consisted of African American and Caucasian women, spanning age groups from 18 to 65, although most were older women (~greater than 40). Due to factors like their socioeconomic status, age, and little exposure to digital media technologies, many

of the women had low to no computer literacy. Most of the women were born and raised in Oklahoma although a few had come to Oklahoma from nearby states like Arkansas and Mississippi. All of the women had left Oklahoma at some point in their lives but for familial or financial reasons had returned to the state.

> Alex[18] said the church has a 50-person capacity having held up to 35-40 women maximum. She said they usually only see about 25 women at the center though. With that she described the types of women they receive: 50% from women's shelters, 10% transitional, and 40% were "couch homeless" crashing on the couches of friends, acquaintances and relatives. (Field notes, September 30, 2011)

Approximately half of the participants in the group were homeless and stayed at the Oklahoma City Rescue Mission (a local homeless shelter) while the rest had low-income residencies and were living in poverty with some form of government assistance.

Due to the transitory nature of the women who visited SWDC, most participants attended less than three classes. All participants affiliated with the organization as a staff member or media participant were included as subjects in this case study. Women who visited the center but did not participate and consent to participate in the media class were not included in field notes. In total, approximately 20 people associated with Sanctuary Women's Development Center participated in the research for this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter I provided the research context for this study. In the first section I explained the economic and social policies that have been implemented in recent U.S. history to bring us to our current situation of economic inequity. Within this section I

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[18] All subjects have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

also took a microscopic approach to provide an overview of the implementation of these policies within the specific cities of this research, San Francisco and Oklahoma City. The second section described the current U.S. mediascape, with a specific focus on the media markets in San Francisco and Oklahoma City. This section also described the recent history and current status of how mainstream media portray people living in poverty and homelessness and the media backlash that has occurred in response. The last section provides an overview of the specific case studies analyzed for this study, POOR Magazine (San Francisco, CA) and Sanctuary Women's Development Center (Oklahoma City, OK). The next chapter discusses the ethnographic and comparative media analyses, focusing on how participatory media processes at POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center facilitate transformative processes among participants.

CHAPTER 5

Transformations of Power through Participatory Media

In the previous chapter, I described the two case studies chosen for this study, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center (SWDC), and their research context. This chapter presents the ethnographic and comparative media analyses and focuses on possibilities of transformation in participatory media processes. For these analyses, I created an analytical framework based on the theories discussed in Chapter 1, the alternative media literature described in Chapter 2, the methodological approaches and theories detailed in Chapter 3, and the research context outlined in Chapter 4. Field notes from my participant-observation and participant and staff interviews were primarily examined as the basis for the ethnographic analysis. Course assignments/activities and course handouts were analyzed to help contextualize field notes and interviews. A participant journal created during the POOR data collection and reflective blog created during the SWDC data collection were also analyzed to capture the cyclical nature of reflexivity that occurred during the research process as my experiences in each case study influenced the future path of the ethnographic data collection process. Additionally, North American community media products and processes were used for the comparative media analysis. Based on my alternative media readings and understanding of critical theory, I analyzed the data through the following thematic frames: voice, dialogue, critical consciousness, empowerment, agency, and civic engagement. Overall, this chapter focuses on the transformative nature of participatory media and their potential as catalysts for agency.

The Participatory Media Process

During my ethnographic experience at POOR Magazine in San Francisco, I noticed a participatory media process emerge throughout the course of Escuela de la Gente. As participants transitioned from media novices to media producers over the course of the summer session, they learned participatory media production skills and education, which engendered processes of voice, dialogue, critical consciousness, empowerment, and agency. While enrolled in Escuela de la Gente, I observed participants engage in a participatory media process that catalyzed their transition from passivity to active citizenship, as they became reporters of POOR Magazine. I saw this process follow four distinct steps: participants articulated their voice and crafted/created their message; participants learned journalism and media skills; participants passively applied journalism/media skills in class assignments; and finally, participants actively used journalism/media skills to express their own perspective and personal struggles. Throughout the entire process, participants returned to various phases during their participation in the program.

In this section, I will provide a brief overview of the process I observed at POOR, address how that process was different during my experience with SWDC, and explain each component of the revised process in detail in each of the subsections below. In the first phase at POOR, participants learned to articulate their voice by reflecting on their personal experiences with poverty and homelessness and sharing their stories of struggle through engaged dialogue with other participants. These burgeoning voices of resistance were informed and articulated through critical discussions about POOR ideologies that raised critical awareness and consciousness of

larger social structures of oppression that played out in their stories of struggle. As participants learned to identify and shape their own voices, they simultaneously learned the skills of "revolutionary journalism" and media during the second phase. POOR's conception of "revolutionary," stems from the idea of creating dramatic change by implementing unorthodox journalism techniques, such as guerrilla press conferences and activist blogging. In these classes, participants increased their sense of empowerment as they learned basic computer skills, revolutionary journalism reporting and interviewing techniques, basic radio and video production, and theatrical skills for corporate media infiltration[19].

For example, participants created a "guerilla" press conference in downtown San Francisco to attract the attention of the public and the mainstream media, and have the story covered in the evening news. The guerilla press conference was initiated by POOR Magazine and the Living Wage Coalition and held in front of the Phillip Burton Federal Building in San Francisco to urge Senators to extend Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and continue the JOBS Now and Community Jobs programs. The press conference lasted 20 minutes and was rapidly set up and just as quickly broken down as supporters and volunteers scrambled around the scene. It began promptly at 10 a.m. with the director of POOR yelling into the microphone to garner attention from passersby. She began the conference by explaining the need to extend the public assistance programs for another year. The welfare mothers then executed the public speaking and theatrical skills they were introduced to in the Po' Poets class,

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[19] Corporate media infiltration uses mainstream media corporations to broadcast POOR events and issues important to POOR and the local communities as a way to use dominant media against dominant media.

giving testimonies of their experiences with the programs and addressing the impact on their personal lives if the programs ended. As each speech was presented, it was translated into Spanish or English so speakers could "speak on the behalf of poor mothers across the globe," according to the director of POOR (Field notes, June 29, 2010). The press conference attracted the attention of three local media television outlets, which fulfilled POOR's corporate media infiltration plan.

Once participants acquired revolutionary journalism skills and media techniques, they were provided class assignments during the third phase with which to exercise and strengthen these new skills. The empowerment process continued in the third phase as participants began to realize their capabilities for participating in important social dialogues that affected them. In this phase, participants also began to identify a personal sense of agency in which they acknowledged their responsibility for contributing a genuine poverty perspective to the public sphere. In the fourth and final phase, participants engaged in an active transformation from passive to engaged citizenship, where they enacted their sense of agency and became civically engaged. During this phase, participants applied their journalism and media skills, which had been shaped by their individual voices, experiences, and struggles, in complex responses to larger social issues.

Using the participatory media model I observed at POOR Magazine as a guideline, I revised and implemented this process during my research with the women at SWDC in Oklahoma City. To answer RQ1 of this study, What does the participatory media process look like and what elements of engagement does it entail?, I developed

the figure below to provide a graphical representation of the revised participatory media process I propose throughout this chapter:

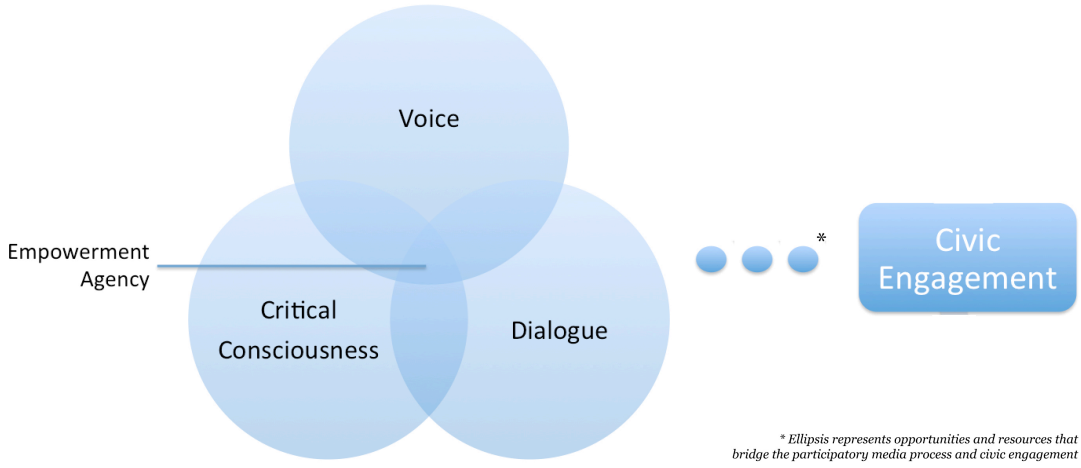


Figure 1. Proposed participatory media process. Processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness occur concurrently, the combination of which results in an increase in empowerment and sense of agency. If participants are provided opportunities and resources to enact their empowerment and sense of agency, this may result in acts of civic engagement.

In this participatory media process, I noticed participants in both case studies identifying, constructing, and articulating their voices as they engaged in critical dialogue with me and other participants. Dialogue served as a vehicle for participants to share their stories and experiential knowledge with one another as well as identify resolutions to their own and others' problems. Participants engaged in critical dialogue about the effects of mainstream media, capitalism, and a bipartisan political structure on their daily lives. These dialogues also provided a forum for participants to raise critical consciousness by explicitly critically analyzing their position in relation to others within the context of larger structural forces of oppression (*e.g.,* economic and political). These discussions helped raise critical consciousness for participants and enabled them to be

open and receptive to the possibility for empowerment and identifying an agentic sense of self.

Through a knowledge exchange, I contributed digital media knowledge and equipment, while participants provided the content of their stories and experiential knowledge to create their own participatory media. During this exchange, participants became empowered with technical skills and knowledge to create their own media, which served as a vehicle for their voice and stories. Simultaneously, some participants began to identify a sense of personal agency and acknowledgement of civic responsibility, as noted in the original POOR participatory media process. Although instances of civic engagement did not occur with the second case study, many examples were identified during the first case study that will be described in the following sections to argue that when marginalized people come together to cultivate their voices and exchange them through critical dialogue, they will begin to engage in critical consciousness raising that addresses the impact of larger structural powers that affect them. When engaging in this process of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness, marginalized people will be open to activities and opportunities for empowerment, which simultaneously provide the possibility for them to identify an agentic sense of self. As a result of marginalized people engaging in all of these processes, they will be more open and more likely to civically engage with important social issues that directly affect them.

Throughout this revised participatory media process I noticed participants choose varying points of entry into the process, *i.e.*, they may not necessarily begin by articulating their voice but may consequently articulate their voice after engaging in

dialogue with others. In this respect, the participatory media process proposed is rhizomatic[20] in nature, meaning it has no clear beginning or end and no reinforced structure that forces participants through a circumscribed channel. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 21), "The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple...it is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion" (as quoted in Gartler, 2014). The process organically grew for each person as they chose the path that best fit their needs, which may not have been the same path from person to person. The process was most effective at transforming participants from apathy to engagement if participants were involved in all components of the process. The transient nature of homelessness did impact the effect of this process: the process was stilted[21] if participants only engaged in one or two components (*e.g.*, the participant only learned media production skills). However, most classes reflected each component of the process as I learned to make the classes stand alone in nature to address the possibility of participants attending only one or two.

Throughout the entire participatory media process is the role of reflexivity where participants constantly reflect on and critically analyze where they are in their thought process, dialogue, and action; where they've been in their thought process, dialogue, and action; and where they are striving to go in their thought process, dialogue, and action. Also during these reflexive moments, participants critically

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[20] The use of rhizome here stems from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept in which rhizome is "defined solely as a circulation of states" (p. 21) This concept depicts a framework that is acentered, non-hierarchical, and multiplicitous (Gartler, 2014).
[21] Stilted with regard to the transformative potential of the entire participatory media process. However, as will be further addressed in Chapter 6, the inter-dimensions of internal processes leaves an area of research yet to be fully examined.

analyze and reflect on each of these aspects in conjunction with others, and how their actions not only impact themselves but those around them and vice versa. The role and impact of reflexivity will be discussed further in the next chapter. The following subsections will look at each of the components described above in detail, providing specific examples from both case studies and North American community media initiatives in support of this argument.

Articulating Poverty Experiences

To answer RQ2 of this study, How do participatory media help articulate experiences of poverty in contemporary U.S. society?, this section will look at how poverty is represented in participatory media versus mainstream U.S. media and what happens to this representation when the perspective of poverty shifts from mainstream media compared to the representations authored by people living in poverty. Prior to ever picking up a piece of media equipment, participants craft their own unique voice of poverty by shaping their personal stories and expressing their lived experiences of poverty in their own language and perspective.

Barriers to voice. To begin the discussion of the importance of voices of people who experience poverty in the public sphere, many participants first discussed barriers they face when trying to express their voice. Many participants spoke of the restrictions they face in accessing technological channels to express their voice as well as the mental barriers they face in trying to remember how to use the technology once they learned it. With regard to access, few participants owned their own computer and most had to rely on public libraries and community centers, which addressed a larger access issue of transportation and reliance on public services like buses. Additionally, the

participants and I discussed the implications of the rising costs of access and its impact on silencing marginalized voices. As the availability of affordable communication technologies becomes more limited over time due to the influence of large corporations on communication regulation[22], those in lower incomes face the hardship of affording and accessing computers, Internet service, and mobile phones. As a result, their voices become silenced in the public sphere. These experiences support what Castells (2009) sees as a growing problem where "abysmal inequality in broadband access and educational gaps in the ability to operate a digital culture tend to reproduce and amplify the class, ethnic, race, age, and gender structures of social domination between countries and within countries" (p. 57).

In one participant's explanation of her attempts to build a bridge between low-income people and local corporate media in Oklahoma City like Channel 4 News, she said, "I've tried various stations to get my story out there, and either they were shut down, blocked or told, 'Nope, don't do it.' That's why I say I don't even call them anymore. Forget it, you aren't worth me wasting my time." Her example addresses another type of barrier: the need for diversity, which was raised amongst the participants. Many of the participants identified a growing need for the diversity of perspectives and accurate representation of people in poverty in the mainstream media. One participant argued that mainstream media inaccurately portray homelessness "because the majority of people, media or otherwise, think that ninety-nine percent of the homeless people are either drunks or alcoholics or drug addicts, and that's not the case." Her solution for correcting these disparaging portrayals was to:

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[22] *e.g.*, The 2014 network neutrality ruling (Nagesh & Sharma, 2014).

> Have the media come in and meet the people, cos otherwise they get to know them on a one-to-one basis and get a different picture of them. Because I know in my Women's City Rescue [Mission] we have two people that have at least a bachelor's degree. One is from New York and the other one, I don't know where she's from—she got Georgia tags on her car—but they both have bachelor's degrees and one is working at Taco Bell.

Through this solution, the participant saw the potential to work with corporate media entities, share her knowledge, and express an authentic and different perspective of poverty. Kidd and Barker-Plummer (2009) also addressed the need for accurate representation in their research on the changing dynamics of corporate media ownership in the Bay Area. In this research, the authors found that people in poverty use homeless media coalitions to engage with and subvert mainstream media corporations in order to create diverse and accurate perspectives of people in poverty.

In both case studies, the facilitator asked the participants if they "saw" themselves in the media, meaning if they saw any representations of low-income people in mainstream media portrayals with which they could relate. In one example, one participant immediately said, "No" as the others shook their heads. One participant explained why she felt like the mainstream media do not accurately represent her:

> The reason why I don't feel like it pertains to me is because it's basically for the wealthy and it pretty much discusses most of their so-called problems. The wealthy don't have a problem. The only problem they have is parting with their money, that's their problem. The poor and the less fortunate and everything like that, they might touch on a few subjects but when it gets down to the real nitty-gritty, they ignore that when they're not in politics. It's like you don't even register.

Another participant said she could relate to the portrayals some of the time "because I've been there and I'm still there. I have slept in my car with four kids." She contextualized this by saying the media usually ignore homeless people and homeless issues except around the holidays. During this time of year, they cover stories like

philanthropic organizations visiting homeless shelters and depict images of families with babies sleeping in cars. When the mainstream media cover homeless issues they do so in what Kendall (2011) refers to as *charitable frames*, where the viewer is inundated with the spirit of "good will towards men" during the holidays, or *episodic frames*, in which the individuals are decontextualized from larger structural issues of poverty.

The need for accurate representation has been addressed by other community media initiatives like Appalshop[23]. In his film "Strangers and Kin: A History of the Hillbilly Image", creator Herb E. Smith (1984) presents a historical timeline of the mainstream media representation of the "hillbilly" to address how the mainstream media have demonized and ridiculed Appalachian people. For example, local color novels that were popular in the 1920s (*e.g.*, novels based on the Hatfield and McCoy feud) depicted Appalachian people as violent, unintelligent, alcoholics. His film argues that not only do mainstream media disseminate inaccurate perceptions of Appalachian people, but the wider U.S. audience then perpetuate those false representations, believing them to be true based on the journalistic credibility of the media. False representations, the need for diversity, and the need for authenticity are fundamental concerns that motivated many of the participants at POOR Magazine and SWDC to share their personal stories and craft their unique voice of poverty.

Connection with larger social issues. Facilitators at POOR Magazine motivated participants to cultivate their voice by encouraging participants to channel their feelings and emotions toward controversial issues that applied to them. For

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[23] Appalshop is a community media initiative based out of Whitesburg, KY. More information on this organization is detailed in Chapter 2.

example, in theater class, the facilitator asked participants to give examples of negative media depictions they have encountered that pertained to them. The participants responded with: "Welfare mothers are lazy," "Immigrants steal our jobs," "Illegals are just that—illegal," "All crimes are committed by brown and black people," and "People on welfare should just get a job." Afterwards, everyone was given twenty minutes to formulate a response based on emotion and feeling and then share their responses with the class. Responses were personal and focused on their own struggle as a reason for why the depictions did not relate to their perspective. For example, one response addressed that mothers on welfare could not possibly be lazy because being a mother is a full-time job. Another participant responded that immigrants do not steal work from anyone; they actually inhabit the jobs that nobody else in society wants, such as harvesting fruit or providing childcare. In this process, as each participant confronted a negative stereotype that had applied to her, she or he addressed it with a personal response that stemmed from her or his struggle.

Smith's (1984) Appalshop film "Strangers and Kin" was also created to combat negative stereotypes of Appalachian people. In the film, Appalshop participants used theatrical characterizations to convey the negative portrayals of Appalachian people they saw and read about in the mainstream media. For example, participants dressed in 19th century garments, reciting texts from books, magazines, and periodicals that slandered and denigrated Appalachian people as unintelligent and uncivilized. The participants responded to the texts by providing contextualized histories of the Appalachian heritage that addressed the pioneer life of early settlers and their amicable relationship with Native Americans in Appalachia. The film also used direct snippets

from mainstream media films to provide concrete evidence of the perpetuation of stereotypes; participants then addressed the inaccuracy of these stereotypes by providing their own experiential knowledge of Appalachian life.

Another way participatory media participants cultivated their voice was by connecting their personal struggle with larger social issues, like domestic violence, homelessness, and immigration. This process began by having participants engage in dialogue with one another, sharing their personal stories and experiential knowledge. At POOR, one participant described her struggle with domestic violence. The discussion began with a skit featuring the participant and another participant depicting her story of rape, abuse and child abandonment in her home country.

> I have lived in domestic violence and have been able to push forward but it has cost me. How much I have battled and how far I have come. Violence, struggle, strength and not b[e]ing afraid, do not stay quiet.

The participant concluded the skit with a poetry reading of what resulted from the pregnancy:

> When you are or feel pregnant,
> Fight for that life you carry in you[r] womb!!!
> This is a gift [from] God, even though you don't believe it.
> We are Single Mothers,
> Humble warriors.
> We have committed some errors,
> Very often we are threatened
> With fear,
> We do things we should not do,
> Forgive us God.
> Paining those who we most love in this life. (Escuela de la Gente handout, PNN Summer 2010 Session)

As she read her poem she paused frequently and began to cry intermittently with responses of gasps and comments from the class. The director then opened the discussion to the class for a larger discussion of domestic violence. Participants shared

personal stories of domestic violence or accounts of witnessing domestic violence between family members. In this discussion a majority of participants admitted to being affected by domestic violence or having witnessed it. The director was about to conclude the class when one participant suggested an activity to "lift" the speaker's burdens of domestic violence and her spirit by having everyone in the class lift her off the floor and hold her for a few minutes in a moment of silence. The class ended with this activity. Similar to this example, Kafewo (2009) also found a connection between personal or peripheral issues and larger social issues in his research on citizenship and accountability in Nigeria. According to Kafewo, "seemingly peripheral issues became so central to the resolution of the central issue of citizenship that the project originally set out to address. Poverty, accountability, corruption, gender, and other issues appear to be fanning the embers of ethnic deprivation" (p. 686).

At SWDC, one participant shared her struggle with domestic violence: "I'm here because I'm a victim of domestic violence" (Field notes, October 13, 2011). She described the violent history of her relationship with her recent ex-boyfriend. She told the group she has a medical condition involving seizures and the week prior her boyfriend violently slammed her against the ground, which triggered another seizure. When she tried to tell someone about the incident, her boyfriend lied and said she fell and hit her head because of her medical condition. She went into details of the relationship with her boyfriend and her family, explaining that she was used to physical violence from her father growing up. She explained to the group that she could have avoided being homeless but her father disowned her for dating her ex-boyfriend because her father disapproved of interracial relationships. As she told her story, those nearest to

her listened intently and the participant began tearing up. After the participant shared her struggle, we discussed the importance for stories like hers to be shared because it speaks to larger social issues of domestic violence, racism, and discrimination. Through the exchange of personal stories to address larger social issues, participants began what Couldry (2010) has identified as a *process of voice*. Couldry (2010) argues voice is socially grounded, in which participants "enable and sustain practices of narrative" through a shared exchange (p. 7). According to Cavarero (2000), this exchange is dependent on "an identity which, from beginning to end, is intertwined with other lives—with reciprocal exposures and innumerable gazes—and needs the other's tale" (as quoted in Couldry, 2010, p. 8). In this process of voice, participants begin to cultivate their own unique voice while simultaneously creating a shared voice with others through dialogic exchange.

Cultivating voice. In addition to identifying barriers to voice and connecting personal struggles to larger social issues, participants also cultivated their voice through a reflexive, embodied process that used empathic writing exercises, poetic prose, and the creation of a language especially tailored to express the experience of poverty based on their own knowledge. In Couldry's (2010) process of voice, he also argues that voice is a reflexive, embodied process that encompasses an individual's unique standing in life as well as the reflexive action that occurs when that individual interacts with the world around her. When participants identify their struggle in the beginning exercises at POOR and SWDC, they embark on a reflexive journey that asks them to begin a conversation with their past, present, and future self, as well as with others around them. While engaging in this reflexivity, participants focus on specific, even painful, events in

their lives that have shaped how they have come to be homeless or in poverty, or why they continue to be homeless or in poverty.

One participant in Oklahoma discussed with the group why she continues to fall into a persistence of poverty. She said, "I'm an ex-offender and I can't get a job" (Field notes, November 22, 2011). She then unfolded the story of how she committed a violent crime over ten years ago. She was a victim of domestic violence and eventually was pushed to the breaking point where she took action and retaliated against her husband. As a result, she was sentenced to nine months in jail. Unfortunately, this story is all too common for women in a state that leads the nation in female incarceration per capita (Pitman, 2011), where research has shown a strong correlation between women incarcerated and history of domestic violence (over 90% of those incarcerated have been a victim of domestic violence [Benalioulhaj, n.d.]). In addition to her violent criminal record, she also faces potential employment discrimination because she is an African American female. The participant believes one of these factors, or maybe the culmination of all three, is hindering her ability to gain employment for low-income retail positions in Oklahoma. The group discussed the importance of her story being shared with a larger audience and the implications of this story for changing hiring practices in Oklahoma. This story is an example of one participant sharing a very personal aspect of her life and reflecting on the reasons for, and enduring nature of, her current state of poverty. By sharing this story with the group, the participant was able to outwardly reflect on important social issues like discrimination and poverty, engaging in what Couldry (2010) sees as an embodied, reflexive process of voice.

At POOR Magazine, participants engaged in this reflexive process through an

empathy exercise where they wrote an example of a personal struggle in blog format. One participant described a period in her life where she was without income for three months and had to depend on welfare support, which only provided her $220 a month. She did not have enough money to pay rent, bills, and feed herself and her child; consequently, many times she did not eat so her child would not go hungry. As the participant shared her story, other participants provided comforting words while the facilitator suggested techniques to format the story for a blog. The facilitator described an expository journalism approach and encouraged the writers to begin with attention-getting lines by "dropping" the reader into their experience to create empathy. The facilitator explained to the participants that the point of the writing assignment was not for them to feel stressed or bad about their lives, but to give voice to their struggle so that others may hear it. In this exercise, participants were introduced to writing techniques that would help embody their voice in blog format and elicit empathy from potential readers with the hope that if readers could empathize with the plights of the participants they may be motivated to take action about it. One example that was used in class to model this was a blog written by the director that was eventually published on the *Bay Guardian* website.

> "Am I illegal mama?" My mixed-race, Mexican, Chinese, Puerto Rican, and Irish six-year-old son gazed up at me with the largest of puppy eyes after we watched a corporate media television report on Mayor Gavin Newsom's rejection of the legislation by David Campos that would give due process to migrant youth caught up in the criminal in-justice system.
>
> After recovering my sorrow at my son's logical interpretation of our criminalizing, dehumanizing society, I went on to explain that as far as I was concerned no human is illegal—or an alien, for that matter. (Escuela de la Gente handout, July 20, 2010)

The exercise allowed the opportunity for participants to reflect on periods within their

lives that were hard or painful and to shape those struggles as a story to share with others with the intent of creating communal dialogue that would help them and others. Harris (2008) found similar findings in her dissertation research on participatory video creation amongst women in Fiji. In this research Harris (2009) saw that "By working collectively, women invited participation and inclusion across race, religion, age, and socio-economic groups, thus ensuring equal participation of women" (p. 547).

The theater class at POOR Magazine asked participants to articulate their voice and shape their personal stories through poetic prose. In this activity, participants wrote about their personal story in poetic prose and about themselves in the five senses: color (as sight), taste, smell, touch, and sound. The participants' responses spanned the colors of the rainbow and revealed their personal secrets of self-identity, showing their ability to quickly grasp the poetic style. They used techniques like similes and metaphors (*e.g.*, "I am black like the night sky", "I am the color red") to not only convey their self-concept, but shape the voice of their story as well. Once everyone in the group read their answers, a few participants read theirs on the microphone, which showed more theatrical force through the delivery, pauses, and emphases on certain words. One interesting event that occurred in this class was the openness for participants trying to speak in a second language. Bilingual translators participated in every class to allow Spanish and English speakers to be able to communicate with each other. The intriguing part of this particular class was that the English speakers attempted Spanish and vice versa, showing the desire of the participants to be able to communicate directly with one another across ethnic/language divides instead of via translator.

This dialogic exchange within one another's native languages provides an example of what Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) term *polyphony*, in which many voices can be heard within a single utterance. Not only are participants engaging in a socially grounded practice of narrative (Couldry, 2010), but they are also creating an exchange of dialogue and voice that builds upon each other, uniting the speakers. Through these activities, participants began to articulate their voice through a material form of their choosing (*e.g.*, public speech, theatrical performance, or blog). The last example above speaks to the ability for voice to be created collectively where "sometimes we can recognize ourselves in the outcome of a production where specific individual and collective inputs cannot easily be separated from a broader flow" (Couldry, 2010, p. 9). Through this collective creation of voice, we see the ability for voice to vary by mode as well as plurality.

One of the most important aspects of the articulation of voice in communities of poverty is the opportunity "to let those who experience poverty tell those who do not what this experience is like, rather than have external 'experts' assess it from afar" (Tacchi, 2008, p. 12). One of the foundational beliefs at POOR Magazine is that those who have lived in and experienced poverty should be the ones to create a language of poverty that reflects their experiential knowledge.

> …please understand that as a colonized and oppressed peoples in poverty we do not speak the colonizers languages with academic precision. We resist linguistic domination by writing and speaking and creating. There will be typos and different uses of language. These are our voices, our art and our resistance narratives. Read them with love and spirit in your hearts. Decolonize your mind one page at a time. (POOR Press, 2011)

At POOR, people who harness this knowledge and create this language are referred to as "poverty scholars." Through poverty scholarship, POOR builds power based on the

recognition of scholarship and knowledge already held by the participants at POOR (Tiny, 2011). Through the creation of their own language and reliance on their own knowledge, participants at POOR seek to give form to their collective voice of poverty and silence false representations knowing that "voice is undermined when societies become organized on the basis that individual, collective and distributed voice need not be taken into account, because a higher value or rationality trumps them" (Couldry, 2010, p. 10).

One example of how POOR constructs their own language of poverty is through their concept of revolution. Within POOR Magazine, emphasis was placed on creating a revolution, contributing to the revolution, or shaping revolutionaries. One of their most prominent slogans is "The revolution begins with I and then becomes we." This concept is fundamental to POOR's approach to engagement, empowerment, and agency as participants learn to not only reflexively analyze their actions and standing in structural oppression, but also to connect with a larger social experience as an individual and a group member for the culmination of experiential poverty knowledges. In everything POOR creates and produces, their underlying goal is to fight against the structural oppression they feel contribute to their struggle to survive. This was seen in their "Revolutionary Mama Blog" series, their concept of revolutionary donation (donate as much as you can give, even if you feel financial pain to join in solidarity with the financial pain of those you are helping), and their revolutionary media campaign to create voices with those ignored in society. Similarly to POOR's construction of a language of poverty, Rodríguez (2002) identified a language of appropriation by young Chicanas in the barrios of San Antonio. In their re-appropriation, the girls invite viewers

into the world of a San Antonio barrio through the eyes of three children and their "experiences that exist outside of the 'official' languages" (p. 85). Through their participatory media, the children construct an alternative perspective of the barrio, one that conveys a wonderland of adventure to a young child, in contradistinction to the hardened, violent version the mainstream media portray.

Articulating voice and communicating a shared struggle is a common focus of community media initiatives. One example of this can be seen in the Media Mobilizing Project[24] (MMP) video montage, in which community activists and participants in MMP "create a theme that places different points of struggle side by side, capturing the character of struggle in a particular year" (Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 10). The montage is shown at the annual Community Building Dinner, in which MMP participants and local community movement leaders gather to converge a variety of struggles plaguing their community, like the impact of the 2009 economic crisis, the need for immigration rights, and struggles for workers unions. Through this montage, participant struggles are articulated in a format that looks at the commonality of struggles across varying groups with the purpose of bringing those groups together in a shared voice and common goal of "shift[ing] from multiple struggles in the city to one struggle for the city" (quoted in Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 14). Through this montage, MMP's goal for participants is not only to craft voice, but also to create a shared understanding and trust among people. This idea will be discussed further in the next section on dialogue.

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[24] MMP is a community media initiative based out of Philadelphia, PA. More information on this organization is detailed in Chapter 2.

Engagement through Dialogue

To answer RQ3 of this study, How can participatory media engage participants in processes of dialogue and critical consciousness?, this section will look at the role of dialogue in the participatory media process described above from a Freirean perspective. In the participatory media processes I observed, voice and dialogue occurred concurrently as participants shaped their own voice in conjunction with others to create unique individual and collective voices tied to shared experiential knowledges and perspectives.

Shared voices. As participants engaged in the activities and discussions described above to cultivate their voice, they simultaneously engaged in meaningful dialogue with other participants by sharing their voices. Participants saw the power in sharing their stories and collectively discussing important social issues that affected everyone in the group. Through collectively sharing their voices and engaging in critical dialogue, participants engaged in what Freire (1970) describes as "reconstituting and naming the world." The creation of their own language of poverty that stemmed from their experiential knowledge allowed participants to reclaim the story and experience of poverty as it is really lived and not as the mainstream media stereotypically portray it to be.

While facilitating the course in Oklahoma City, I played a video for the participants by the creator of invisiblepeople.tv[25]. The creator has passed in and out of homelessness several times during his adult life; having lived this experience in many different forms, he can relate to those who are experiencing it. He decided to work with

[25] The contribution of this content stems from conversations with Dr. Kristin Dowell.

them to create video documentaries of their experiences to provide a forum in which to tell their story. The video clip I played addressed why the creator decided to take on this project and how it helps to reclaim and reframe the poverty perspective disseminated in the mainstream media. After playing the clip, the participants and I discussed the truthfulness to the video. One participant commented that his personal story of homelessness is an inspiring story because he has not lost hope. She also pointed out that the video empowers people by helping them tell their story, to which I responded that the video maker empowers himself too by being able to help them. We then discussed how the course would help empower the participants to share their stories and to help others share their stories as well. By engaging in dialogue regarding their poverty experiences and the necessity to share their perspectives with others, participants began to reconstitute the poverty perspective they could use against derogatory portrayals disseminated by the mainstream media. Reconstitution of the poverty perspective has also been identified in Kidd and Barker-Plummer's (2009) research on anti-poverty media coalitions in the Bay Area where they found anti-poverty groups who "work to create spaces for poor and homeless people to come together and create dignified identities and to articulate their rights as citizens" (p. 488). These spaces encourage the dialogic exchange of poverty experiences, in turn validating and legitimating each person's perspective.

According to Freire (1970), as participants engage in dialogic exchange they will begin to view reality as transformational and mutable. One example of this was seen when a participant described the value of sharing her story outside of the group to a larger audience and the potential to empower others by:

> First of all, getting their voices heard, putting out stories. Having the backbone to stand up for themselves after going through this [poverty] for a while and see how it really goes. That's going to empower someone that has been shy and withdrawn to speak out because they're going to say, "Well shoot, I've been going through some of that stuff. I wish I had somebody to help me out." Well hey, there it is, come on down.

In this example, we see the participant's ability to view her reality as mutable and to impact others and help them see their reality as transformational.

Another aspect of sharing voices and engaging in dialogue that was seen in both case studies was the potential for the creation of what Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) identified as heteroglossia[26]. During Escuela de la Gente at POOR Magazine, participants attended Community Newsroom meetings, which were weekly meetings that POOR News Network (PNN) staff attended to listen to guest speakers and discuss potential news ideas and stories of interest to POOR's target audience. Community Newsroom created an opportunity for a multitude of diverse voices and perspectives to unite and engage in dialogue regarding important local issues and ideologies. When guest speakers visited, the director of POOR would assign Escuela de la Gente participants to write news articles that reported on the issues and topics discussed by guest speakers.

For example, one guest speaker addressed the overarching problem of gentrification in the San Francisco Bay Area and her personal struggle with eviction. The speaker described her modern-day "David vs. Goliath battle" against "slumlords" in the Bay Area, as one person fighting on behalf of over thirty tenants who were being

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[26] As explicated in Chapter 1, heteroglossia occurs when messages build and rely on one another within a context in which the communicators create interdependence with the "Other."

charged with $5,000-$30,000 in back pay of rent. The speaker felt the struggle was a gentrification scheme to displace African American communities and replace them with upscale condominiums. The director chimed in, “This is gentrification city, where they [property owners] get gold for housing.” As the speaker addressed the local issue and shared her perspective of the struggle, those in attendance contributed to the discussion by providing their own stories and perspectives of eviction and gentrification, as well as suggestions for how to stop this specific landlord. The exchange of dialogue opened the conversation for utterances to build upon one another in meaning and context as interlocutors contributed diverse perspectives, voices, stories, and knowledges. At the end of the session, those in attendance felt a unified, energetic charge to take action against the landlord and speak with those facing eviction. Heteroglossia occurred within and resulted from the exchange as Escuela de la Gente participants, PNN staff, and the guest speaker collaborated to raise awareness of the gentrification issue. In addition to the creation of heteroglossia, Community Newsroom provided the opportunity for participants to encompass reflection and action in their words and dialogue. Freire (1970) saw this as the ability to speak the “true word,” which he saw as a form of praxis. “Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 88). By coming together in thought and word, participants, PNN staff, and guest speakers collectively reflected on local social issues and planned points of action to create transformation and social change in their world.

One example of a North American community media initiative that brought together divergent voices and perspectives is the “Working Mothers” film series by the

Challenge for Change program[27]. The film series proved to be revolutionary not just for the Challenge for Change project, but for the feminist movement that was growing in Canada at the time. Films like "Would I Ever Like to Work*"* (Shannon, 1974) placed women's issues like employment and childcare in the forefront of the media sphere, which had been relegated to the sideline at that time. "This groundbreaking collection of films captures some of the most enduring and salient features of early second wave feminism and provides a sobering reminder of the continuing relevance of its key issues" (Fraticelli, 2010, p. 303). This film series helped the women featured in the films to share their voices and create a feeling of community through the production and distribution processes. The filmmakers established their own distribution process—uncommon at the time—and played the films for women in small communities across the country, which sparked a large discussion about women's issues and pushed women's issues towards a national agenda. For the women who watched and connected to the films, the media and the ensuing discussion helped liberate them from their isolation in fighting their own personal battles that revolved around the women's issues reflected in the media, creating a large-scale feeling of community and opportunity for sharing voices and perspectives. Similar to the gentrification example above, the women involved in this film series contributed diverse perspectives, voices, stories, and knowledges about women's issues and helped those in attendance at the screenings to feel a unified, energetic charge to take action.

Creating interdependence. At POOR Magazine, one of the ideas promoted

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[27] Challenge for Change is a Canadian media initiative funded by the National Film Board of Canada that focuses on using media for social change. More information on this organization is detailed in Chapter 2.

throughout Escuela de la Gente was the concept of interdependence. As a partial critique to the cultural value of independence that is lauded upon in the U.S., which the director argued pulls people apart instead of bringing them together, POOR emphasized the idea of interdependence as a way to connect with one another through their stories and dialogue, to share experiential knowledge that is mutually valued.

> Can we envision ourselves collectively, interdependently, dreaming and holding our ancestors teaching?
> How does this happen. It begins with us breaking through the hypocrisy of our own lives on the daily. Recognizing our own impulse to resort to po' lice calls in situations of struggle cause it's easier and faster to solve a "difficult problem" But of course it's much deeper than that (Escuela de la Gente handout, July 13, 2010)

Although not specifically emphasized in the course I facilitated in Oklahoma City, the concept of interdependence became a common theme throughout many of the classes, activities, and discussions. Interdependence grew from an initial interaction of rapport that became solidified through dialogic exchanges and intimate disclosures. To help break down social barriers of dialogue that exist between the participants and me (*e.g.*, social class, race, ethnicity), I used every encounter with potential participants to establish rapport. In small moments, like waiting for the center to open or as I cleaned up after class, I engaged with participants to open pathways of communication that would bridge our different worlds together and lead to more intimate disclosures. I found that by establishing rapport with everyone I encountered at the center, I was able to encourage people to engage in the class who may not have otherwise. I also found that by genuinely engaging with participants in an empathic dialogue, I was able to build trust and create a "dialogue of equals" (Freire, 1970).

For example, one potential participant was very reserved and did not actively

engage in the course during the first month. I sat down with her one day and asked her where she was raised. Being a fairly private person, she did not talk about herself much, but she shared that she was from Oklahoma City but had lived in D.C. for a while. Our conversation lead to the topic of jobs and she said she preferred being homeless because she did not want to work. She could never find a job she liked that much and she did not feel social pressure to have a job. I responded in concurrence that if we are going to spend most of our lives working, we should find something we truly love to do. She responded that is why she does not work—very simply and matter of fact. A conversation that began as a small icebreaker became a very serious discussion on life choices and poverty. Within a few classes, this individual started to participate in the course and engage in opportunities for empowerment and agency. The rapport approach to participant engagement speaks to Cornish and Dunn's (2009) call for researchers to focus on communicating with participants and not just "extracting or delivering information" (p. 675). Through rapport, I was able to interact with the participant and build a foundation for a deeper connection later on as she became more thoroughly engaged in the program.

In addition to creating new relationships and opening up pathways of communication through rapport, I contributed to the creation of a process of interdependence through what Freire (1970) referred to as "dialogue of equals." According to Freire (1970), "It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, not to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in the action, reflects their *situation* in the world" (p. 96). With

this in mind, I approached all of the participants with a sense that dialogue must stem from a belief in mutual respect amongst everyone through conversation and action. A dialogue of equals was not only exercised in quotidian conversations and session activities, but was also part of the ethnographic reflexive process, as I honored participants' opinions and perspectives on the class and activities and incorporated their suggestions and educational needs in real-time. In conjunction with the execution of a dialogue of equals is the concept of "shared knowledges" (Freire, 1970). With this approach, participants and I treated each other with mutual respect and acceptance of each other's personal and experiential knowledge. For example, one participant discussed her concept of an "honesty network" and its necessity for working with marginalized groups:

> The participant said, "If you're running what you call an 'honesty network'…" I asked, "What's that?" She laughed in response, "Got one on you, did I?" I replied, "You know lots of things I don't know." The participant then clarified her conception of an honesty network. "Okay, what I consider an honesty network is the people that have a lot to say that has experienced a lot of the homelessness or the hardships in life that has actually been there. Everybody got a story, but the truth part of the story is what I would base a company called Honesty and Integrity. Because if you're going to tell a story and we're in the public, it's going to be publicized, then they don't need no backlash for lawsuits or slander suits and stuff like that. As long as your story is honest and you're honest about it and you can present some evidence to back up that story."

This participant saw the importance of creating and maintaining dialogue with others based on honesty and mutual respect through what Freire (1970) calls a "true word." In her description of an honesty network, the participant echoes Freire's call for use of true words that encompass reflection and action. By establishing a base of respect for one another and a view of each other as equals and not as "teacher" and "student", the participants and I were able to exchange our personal and experiential knowledge in an

environment that would be open and receptive and therefore, amenable to the reception of interdependence.

Lastly, to help create a feeling of interdependence among facilitator and participants was the acceptance of one another and sharing of personal, intimate stories. Upon first meeting, participants were not open to sharing their personal stories of pain and struggle with someone they viewed as a stranger. However, as I was able to build trust and mutual respect, participants were willing to invite me into their lives and stories. For example, during the photo-video class at SWDC, participants were asked to take a picture that symbolized their personal struggle. For this assignment, one participant took a picture of a brick wall. The following is the exchange between the participant and me:

> "I took a picture of this stone to represent my father because I'm struggling with my father right now, and to me it's like talking to brick. It's like dealing with something so hardheaded and unmoving that this is what this symbolized for me." I looked at the picture and said, "This picture's perfect." We analyzed the lighting together and I said, "The lighting is complex. The image is illuminated by the way you've used light. When you frame something like this, when you frame the image in the center, when you frame it so that the lighting is illuminating the top surface, and when you frame it so there's a complexity of contrast between the illuminated area and the falling shadow, that creates a complex and interesting picture." She was happy to receive the feedback and said, "Thank you so much for this opportunity, just to get my mind off all these things." I responded, "Maybe it's also a good way to get things off your chest. If you are dealing with a lot, you can use media as a way to release what's going on." She's said, "I'm sick of crying," to which I responded, "This can be a way to cry; crying through media." She seemed really content with that and really pleased with her picture. (Field notes, November 29, 2011)

Through a creation of interdependence, the participant was able to use the photography skills she just learned to express her personal struggle with her father to me. In return, I was able to see the impact of participatory media on dealing with personal conflict and internal issues as well as social issues. In congruence with Cornish and Dunn's (2009)

definition of participatory communication, I used interdependent communicative processes built on a "continual process of dialogue, listening, learning, and action between people" (p. 667) to create a foundation of trust and to encourage participants to engage in the participatory media process.

The Appalshop film "Stranger with a Camera" by Elizabeth Barret (2000) addresses the tension that can exist between media producer and media participant and the need for creating interdependent relationships. When creating this film, Barret was able to take an emic approach due to her geographic ties to the residents. Although Barret was not from the same economic class as the people represented in these portrayals, and geographically she was located on the other side of town, her regional ties caused residents in the area to perceive her as an "insider" as opposed to O'Connor, who was not. This film is an example of the importance of establishing rapport and creating interdependence with communities where economic or geographic barriers exist. In Oklahoma City, I was able to establish this because I lived nearby and was perceived as having a stake in the future of the participants (*i.e.*, as an insider). However, although I grew up in Northern California, I was not perceived in San Francisco to have a stake in the future of Bay Area residents because of economic and geographic barriers. This difference created a different level of acceptance between each case study, as well as access to information and perspectives (*e.g.*, I was unable to conduct interviews at POOR Magazine).

Obstructions to dialogue. Although dialogue was important to help the participants and I exchange knowledge, cultivate voice, and share stories, there were moments of obstruction to dialogue that stemmed from language barriers and "safe"

topics. In conducting this ethnography, I attempted to be ethical in all of the approaches I took. For instance, I tried to limit physical barriers of materialism between the participants and me, such as clothing and jewelry, and dressed in a very casual manner when visiting each case study. I was also very aware and sensitive to the privilege that I carry through my race and level of education. Although I tried to speak in a language that was accessible to all participants (reducing academic jargon), moments arose when I failed to do so successfully and a language barrier was created between the participants and me. For example, I assumed that participants were familiar with quotidian technological jargon that I take for granted, like the term "Google" being used as a verb. In one of the classes, I asked a participant to Google a local resource, to which I received a blank stare. I then realized that I could not make technological assumptions of the participants and explained what Google is and what "to Google" means.

Another obstruction to dialogue I encountered with participants was the idea of "safe" topics. There are some topics that are generally considered "unsafe" as a topic of discussion between people who are not intimately connected, like rape, molestation, and domestic violence. However, I naively assumed a "safe" subject would be that of motherhood. For some mothers, this is a topic of pride, but as someone who was not a mother at the time, I came to realize what a very sensitive subject it could be for others. During the photo-video class at SWDC, I suggested a participant address how motherhood plays a role in her life. The participant quickly let me know that was not a safe topic for her. She was the mother of three children, two of whom were taken away from her at a young age, and she has not reconnected with since. She said the whole

subject of motherhood was very sensitive for her and she did not want to address that in her media. Out of respect for her and her experiences, I did not push the issue and supported her decision.

One type of dialogue obstruction POOR Magazine addressed was the concept of "language domination," to which they created a class entitled "Language Domin-action." The Language Domin-action class was held every Tuesday and addressed language history and meaning, oppressive forms of language, and bilingual English/Spanish education. The class placed emphasis on deconstructing language as a tool of oppression and reconstructing it as a tool of liberation. Echoing the Freirean (1970) argument against the "banking" concept of education[28], the Language Domin-action facilitator explained to participants, "Language, words and media are the first line of defense and the first line of attack. Education is a privilege of the wealthy; therefore, I am not here to educate, I am here to share knowledge" (Field notes, July 1, 2010). The facilitator asked participants to reflect on the attitudes they were raised with towards education; if they were ever made to feel bad about their level of education and if they ever made others feel bad for their lower level of education. In response to this, several participants shared experiences of having felt bad for their lack of education or intelligence. For example, one participant told the class that because of her family struggles and migration to the U.S., she did not attend school until she was thirteen-

[28] The "banking" concept of education refers to a process where "the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). This approach to education is widely used around the world and creates hierarchical structures in the classroom where the instructor's knowledge is held as privileged and students are seen as empty receptacles to be filled with the instructor's knowledge.

years-old. When she could finally afford the time to commit to her education, the school she attended did not know how to educate her because she was so far behind her peers and as a result enrolled her in a first grade class to learn English with six-year-olds. This experience humiliated her and made her self-conscious of her education.

In the Language Domin-action class, the facilitator also addressed ways to fight the oppression of academia and the historical perspective of "subject." She told participants: "No one can make you feel inferior without your permission. To fight against this, there are two ways to tear down the walls of oppression: Inside the fort and outside the fort. In order to do that, we have figure out how to tear the walls down" (Field notes, July 1, 2010). To address academic oppression, the facilitator explained to the class that historically researchers would go to third world countries or impoverished areas in the U.S. and enforce their perspective to the people they were attempting to help. In doing so, the researchers continued the oppression of the people by reinforcing the subjugation of the people. The "subjects" eventually said, "If you are here to save me, thank you, but keep walking. But if you recognize that your liberation is tied with mine, then let's hold hands and work together." This concept reflects Freire's (1970) argument that language cannot be spoken on behalf of another, "Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another" (p. 89). In order for marginalized people to become liberated, they must be free to speak their own words on their own behalf, not through another's perspective.

In addition to addressing the oppression of academia, the facilitator also discussed ways to fight oppression stemming from mainstream media. For example, the group held a discussion on the U.S. Social Forum and its history in trying to help marginalized people fight against corporate control. However, the social forum never incorporated the people it was trying to help so it in turn continued the cycle of marginalization and oppression. This topic started a discussion on the activists and protestors at the G8 Summit, where the mainstream media painted activists as violent anarchists wreaking havoc with no constructive goal. This in turn created a rapid debate amongst the participants about activism, the anarchist philosophy, and media representation. The facilitator brought the discussion back to media saying that mainstream media create the negative connotations given to the term anarchy, activist, poor people, and homelessness, and in our battle to fight language domination, the people have to take back and re-appropriate the negative connotations placed upon them. Downing (2006) also addresses the ways in which individuals create or appropriate media forms to open dialogue with and dissent larger, dominant power systems.

Other North American community media initiatives also address dialogue obstructions like language barriers. In Global Action Project's[29] Youth Breaking Borders program, young immigrants in New York City use media to discuss immigration issues that affect them, like migration, language, and globalization (Global Action Project, n.d.e). One example of this is the film "I Am Lobsang" (Global Action

[29] Global Action Project is a youth community media initiative based out of New York City. More information on this organization is detailed in Chapter 2.

Project, 2011), a short narrative created by Lobsang Gyaltsen that addresses his struggles with language and xenophobia. The film depicts portrayals of instances in Lobsang's life where he has faced or seen his family/community face xenophobia and discrimination. It touches upon the isolation these issues create within individuals and also how people in these situations can band together to create a feeling of community that spans language barriers. For example, Lobsang is a high school student who is bullied because of his thick accent. Lobsang makes new friends in the Latino community who support him and stand up for him when he is bullied at school. The film depicts the erasure of language barriers and cultural divides in the interracial community as the immigrant youth come together in the face of discrimination. The Youth Breaking Borders program helps a variety of immigrant youth across New York face problems like these in their daily life by providing them with media training and a creative outlet to engage in dialogue with one another about their fears and frustrations. Like the Language Domin-action class at POOR, the Youth Breaking Borders program provides youth of color discursive media outlets to confront forms of language domination and discrimination.

Shaping Voice through Critical Consciousness

Also in support of answering RQ3 of this study, this section will look at the role of critical consciousness in the participatory media process described above from a Freirean perspective. Once participants have articulated their voice in an exchange of dialogue with others, they begin to raise their own and others' critical consciousness through these exchanges. I observed participants increase their own critical

consciousness through building personal awareness of critical consciousness and then applying it.

Building awareness of critical consciousness. Through a range of media literacy activities and discussions throughout the programs, participants built their awareness of critical consciousness. Participants were introduced to a variety of media-related concepts and issues as a way to critically analyze and discuss issues of power, ideology, and media control. For the media overview sessions at SWDC, I used the resources in the Free Press "Media Reform Toolkit: Resources for Media Activists" to discuss what media are and different types of mainstream media, like television, radio, and newspapers. As a group we discussed the growing problem of media consolidation and conglomeration in the U.S. and how it affects everyone. The participants and I analyzed cluster images of corporate control focusing on corporate media ownership of their favorite channels or channels they thought were local channels. The women looked fascinated and said in shocking tones, "Oh, I didn't know CBS owned Showtime" and other similar statements. The second image depicted Bertelsmann's corporate ownership and attracted the most questions: "Who owns all of those?" "Are any companies out of the U.S.?" "Does that company own media in the U.S.?" I pointed out corporations like General Electric, who we usually associate with making light bulbs, as one of the largest media corporations, along with Disney. When we discussed the corporate reach of Disney, the women were surprised to see that Disney owned some of the stations they frequently watched, like ABC and ESPN. The women looked surprised as I pointed out that we would never see a news story on ABC critiquing the Disney Company because of their corporate ownership. Although the discussion began

with only two participants, several other women from around the room tuned into the conversation and began contributing.

In addition to discussing media control, participants also shared their personal experiences with media, which led to a discussion about the impact of the digital divide. In discussing the digital divide, I explained that the concept refers to digital technology access. We examined how this concept strongly affects people in poverty, who have a harder time accessing technological advancements like computers and the Internet (Cunningham, 2009; Tacchi, 2008). One example we discussed addressed the potential for people in poverty in the U.S. to lose their access or their quality of access when corporations increase the cost, which resonated with one participant who emphatically concurred "Yeah!" We then discussed the growing importance of media policy reform because of network neutrality issues where corporations like AT&T and Verizon are currently working to set up a tiered system of access making sure those with money get the best quality access and those without get poor quality or no access. As we engaged in these discussions, other women at the center grew interested in participating and contributing, which helped to increase their critical consciousness on the impact of mass media. According to Freire (1998), when people participate in dialogue that is immersed in critical thinking, they are able to view reality as transformational and mutable, which results in thinking that is permeated with action, leaving no boundary between the two.

As participants come to critically understand their reality through everyday language and examples from their own lives, they increase their own critical consciousness (Freire & Macedo, 1995). I observed this with participants at SWDC as we engaged in critical dialogue in which they provided personal stories and relevant

examples tied to citizen journalism. As we discussed citizen journalism during one session, a participant pointed out an article in that day's newspaper that covered the death of a young man who died in a park in conjunction with the Occupy Oklahoma City movement. Disregarding the context of the protest, the newspaper made the assumption that the boy was homeless because he was sleeping in a tent in the park without identification. The participant took offense to the assumptive statement and argued that the reporter should have provided supporting evidence to justify the assertion. As she pointed out the article, the participant stated, "I was thinking about our conversation yesterday and how the media, they just, they don't even try to get the truth, or try to get the facts, or try and get our perspective, and it really pisses me off!" (Field notes, November 4, 2011). Through the media literacy discussions we held in class, the participant began to critically analyze what she saw and read in the newspaper and tied that with the role the mainstream media play in the portrayal of homelessness and poverty. More examples of critical consciousness awareness arose as the participants and I delved into complex media literacy and social justice issues over the course of the program. Participants connected the importance of access to information with empowerment for those in poverty, the importance of creating media from a poverty perspective to counterbalance the mainstream media's perspective, and the importance of social change and their role in creating social change to better their own situation in poverty (Harris, 2008; Matewa, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001).

Most participants struggled with critically analyzing these topics at first. Many could not see the possibility for social change in their specific situation at the beginning of the course due to feelings of marginalization, lack of power, and low self-confidence.

However, the potential for building awareness of critical consciousness increased for those who actively engaged in the class and in the group discussions. I observed an increase in critical consciousness awareness for several participants at SWDC as we engaged in critical dialogue throughout the course. For example, during another class session on citizen journalism, the participants and I discussed the need for the participants to create their own stories and get their stories and ideas into the public sphere. We compared the similarities to a David and Goliath battle, where the participants felt small against the world, and also the importance of empowerment and the necessity for them to articulate and share their own stories because no one else would (or should) do that for them. During the discussion, a woman walked by and said, "Make our own media? Ha, yeah right," to which a woman in the group responded, "No, make your own media. We need to make our own media. We need to get the stories out there!" (Field notes, November 3, 2011). Through each passing course and critical discussion, participants were able to critically examine their situation and come to a new understanding of their reality, one in which they saw the potential for social change and emancipation (Freire & Macedo, 1995). This is an important finding in much of the participatory communication research, where we come to understand how social change is constructed and realized by media participants (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Huesca, 1996; Matewa, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001).

A similar critical consciousness awareness process was noted in the Media Mobilizing Project through their Labor Justice Radio program. In this program, participants engage in an hour-long radio program via a local community radio station. The radio show addresses local issues important to workers in the Philadelphia area and

forges unity among varying worker sectors across the city (*e.g.*, taxi drivers, industrial, service). According to Sarah McKay, lead coordinator for all MMP radio programs, "the training is designed to help people produce stories that either support a group's organizing or assist the listener to 'make some connection that they didn't have before'" (as quoted in Wolfson & Funke, 2013, p. 13). Training for the radio program provides participants opportunities to not just focus and reflect on their struggle or their group's struggle, but to also critically analyze how their struggle relates to other struggles in the city and how they can work with other groups to foster a shared class identity and unified front. The training asks participants to engage in activities where they interview other groups to learn their perspective and struggle and to analyze larger structural forces that are creating or contributing to their struggles. Through this program participants increase critical consciousness by critically analyzing their position in oppression in relation to other groups within the context of structural forces of domination.

Applying critical consciousness. Freire (1970) argued that through critical consciousness, participants begin to see "social, political, and economic contradictions" (p. 35) and identify their responsibility for social change. Through the discussion of media literacy concepts and critical dialogue, participants began to recognize how dominant power structures work to marginalize them and maintain their oppression. At POOR Magazine, revolutionary ideologies were discussed at leisure throughout the office and consumed a good portion of quotidian conversations that occurred outside of formal classes as well. The understanding and penetration of these ideologies in the participants' dialogue were shown towards the end of the Escuela de la Gente session.

During the Community Newsroom session on gentrification described above, the participants and staff collaborated on an alternative media concept POOR refers to as corporate media infiltration. The guest speaker stated that she had contacted a local human rights organization and a housing rights organization, and published an article in the *Bay View*. In response, the director of POOR suggested a three-tier media attack: air the problem on KPFA during their monthly broadcast, hold a press conference and encourage corporate media infiltration, and put forth an independent media bid. To implement the concept of corporate media infiltration, participants planned to hold a guerrilla press conference addressing the issues that would attract the attention of local corporate media. In doing so, participants would attempt to "steal" airtime from the corporate agenda to focus on important local issues like gentrification. Through concepts like corporate media infiltration, participants identified how ruling hegemonic ideologies are disseminated through corporate media and how organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) can infiltrate the system to jam the message. Facilitators worked with participants to identify and deconstruct the motivations behind power structures like media corporations and participants began to see opportunities to disseminate their experiential and cultural knowledge.

At SWDC, we discussed the possibility for corporate media infiltration through types of citizen journalism portals like CNN iReport. In one class I asked participants how many of them had heard of CNN and almost everybody either raised a hand or nodded their head. I said, "Right, CNN is a huge corporation. CNN is very powerful. CNN also provides us a channel to tell our story" (Field notes, November 3, 2011). I showed participants how to access CNN iReport and we discussed how sharing stories

through an international corporation could extend the reach and impact of their stories. We also discussed alternative media portals like indiemedia.org. One participant said, "I don't want to work with them, the mainstream media. I want to work with the nonprofit ones," (Field notes, November 4, 2011) which then opened a conversation about the potential for empowerment via corporate media infiltration versus alternative media cooperation. The benefit of corporate media infiltration would be the reach to a mass audience whereas the benefit of alternative media cooperation would be partnership and control of the message. The debate on the benefits and detriments of each of these types of media is also discussed in Saeed's (2009) research.

Participants at POOR also displayed critical consciousness through revolutionary courses they participated in, like the "Her-story & Resistance" class. This class created space for in-depth discussions of important social issues like domestic violence, racism, disability rights, borders, systems violence, and the non-profit industrial complex. The topic of domestic violence was spread over two class sessions with different voices expressed by participants and facilitators discussing their experiences. One facilitator began a session by defining what she termed "systems violence":

> System violence was established to keep control of the system itself. The Rehabilitation propaganda was merely a front to influence the masses to sway in the favor of discriminating law implementations, such as the "3 strikes law", where an "offender" can face up to life in prison, for 3 consecutive offences, whether the infractions be violent or otherwise. (Escuela de la Gente handout, July 15, 2010)

The speaker also addressed who she believed to be the primary perpetrators of systems violence and domestic violence: mainly men, although also the government system, and society in general. She believed the victims of domestic violence to be mainly women,

although some men too, and that domestic violence happens in all ethnic groups. In her discussion, the facilitator addressed the systematic oppression of female domestic violence victims that are framed as jealous, incapable, and unworthy in the court system. According to the facilitator, these women not only fight to have their civil liberties enforced in the court for the protection against domestic violence, but also simultaneously fight against gender discrimination in their attempt to represent themselves as credible, legitimate voices of their experience, one with which she was personally familiar. This experience depicts what Marx (Tucker, 1978) described as the spread and acceptance of dominant ideologies by those in power to maintain unequal power structures that oppress those without power. For women in this situation, their voices are not perceived as legitimate by those in power (*e.g.*, lawyers, judges) and as a result need to defend themselves as victims against their abusers. Due to the fact that so many people in the Her-story & Resistance class had been affected by this topic, it was brought up repeatedly in other classes when participants worked on assignments in shaping their voices. This discussion depicts Gramsci's (1971) notion of organic intellectuals, where participants and facilitators attempted to create social change by collaborating experiential knowledge and differing perspectives, and critically analyzing the dissemination of dominant ideologies that are used to marginalize those with limited or no power.

In Global Action Project's "SupaFriends" program, youth in the New York City LGBTQ community apply their critical consciousness in films like "SupaFriends: The Fight for Acceptance" (Global Action Project, 2013) to address issues affecting the LGBTQ community in New York City like gentrification, policing, and profiling. The

SupaFriends program helps LGBTQ youth self-empower by providing them opportunities to take pride in their identity and raise awareness of LGBTQ issues (Global Action Project, n.d.c). The film "SupaFriends: The Fight for Acceptance," addresses the need for LGBTQ acceptance in LGBTQ individuals as well society in general through a fictional story of LGBTQ superheroes. The use of the superhero is a metaphor for the capabilities and powers LGBTQ youth have in their possession that they may often overlook, like the power to accept and the power to heal. In this film, an LGBTQ youth discovers he has the power to heal and works with the superheroes to save the world with his gift. The film serves as a conduit for LGBTQ youth to apply their critical consciousness of sexual identity and the structures in society that oppress and discriminate against them.

Engendering Agency via Empowerment

To answer RQ4 of this study, How can participatory media engender a sense of agency for people in poverty?, this section will look at the role empowerment plays in creating a sense of agency and how agency is facilitated by participatory media. I observed empowerment occur concurrently with the development of agency at different points of the participatory media process. As participants increase their sense of empowerment they come to recognize their own sense of power and grow awareness for how they can cultivate and harness that power. Agency occurs as participants grow an awareness of the power they possess and come to identify the possibilities for using that power towards social change.

Facilitating empowerment. Participants began to realize their sense of empowerment as they developed technological literacy skills through participatory

media courses. To learn digital media technologies, the participants needed access to digital media equipment, as well as access to facilitators who could explain how to operate the equipment. Access to technology and technology education is one of the barriers participants discussed as obstacles to voice and empowerment. Sen (1997) argues that control over external resources like technological equipment help empower marginalized voices and provide a type of extrinsic control. "Control over the external world of resources also gives one the capacity for self-expression in a variety of ways" (Sen, 1997, p. 2). Participants gained extrinsic control through participatory media classes by securing access to the equipment and knowledge of how to use the equipment via computer literacy and media production courses. As a facilitator in both case studies, I engaged with participants from the perspective that I would contribute my knowledge of media literacy and production in exchange for their knowledge of poverty and discrimination. Through this sharing of knowledges (Freire, 1970), I attempted to create and maintain a dialogue of equals between the participants and me. In the role of facilitator, I encouraged participants to break down their fears and preconceived ideas of the complexities of digital media technologies and attempt to learn the basic skills of participatory media production. This was not successful with every participant I encountered but for those who engaged in the participatory media process, I observed an increase in empowerment. Empowerment was seen as participants engaged in the participatory media process by overcoming their feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy to learn basic technological skills (White, 2003b), as will be described in detail below.

One problem I encountered as a facilitator that was pointed out through dialogic exchange with participants was the longevity of the program and the program's

dependence on specific technological materials. At one point, a participant asked if I was giving away the media equipment that I had taken out for that day's discussion. I realized by using specific media equipment I was potentially confining their skills to a specific brand or model. The participant said, "If we don't get to keep the equipment, why should we bother learning this specific equipment, because the equipment we might use in the future will be different." The question made me realize that even though the program I implemented at SWDC would be temporary, I did not want the skills and knowledge exchanged to be temporary as well. Sen (1997) points out that the raising of critical consciousness without creating a provision for the material resources is problematic and "can lead to frustration and high dropout rates" (p. 2). "To be sustainable the empowerment process must alter both people's self-perception and their control over their lives and their material environments" (Sen, 1997, p. 2). To ensure I created a provision for material resources, all of the media equipment used for the course was donated to the center for participants to access after the course ended. Additionally, all of the course materials that explained how to use the equipment were left at the center so others could continue the program and exchange of information.

One North American community media example of how empowerment is externally facilitated is Global Action Project's Urban Voices program. This program provides training for high school students in New York City to learn digital video production, outreach, and leadership (Global Action Project, n.d.d). The program targets youth interested in media activism and production and provides them access to digital media equipment and knowledge to create public service announcements and documentaries that respond to issues that affect them in their daily lives. One example

of this is the film "Pipeline" (Global Action Project, 2007), in which participants tackle the important issues of educational justice, prisons and policing, and racial justice. At a time when educational funding and employment for youth in New York City was at the lowest point in over two decades, these participants used digital media to juxtapose the lack of concern for education with the emphasis on youth incarceration. The opportunity to create this film provided participants the chance to take control over their lives and material environment through extrinsic controls of power.

Catalyzing empowerment and agency through media production. At SWDC, although I was provided a room with computers to facilitate the participatory media class, the participants and I did not always have sole access to the computers to supplement the course lessons, which proved to be problematic. When the participants and I were first exploring basic computer literacy and functionality at the beginning of the program, we were forced to crowd around one computer terminal to go over how to set up free email and blog accounts. In addition to equipment access problems, the participants and I were also confronted with basic computer literacy issues, as only some of the participants knew how to turn on a computer or access the Internet. The participants and I discussed basic computer functionality as well as an overview of different types of computers (Mac vs. PC) and how they differ in functionality. We then went over how to access the Internet, where I learned that many of the participants did not know the basic vocabulary to discuss how to use the Internet. This language barrier affected our discussion of computer functionality so I explained different computer aspects, like what the Internet is, what a homepage is, what a search engine is, what a sidebar is, what "scrolling" means, and what drop down menus are. This language

barrier speaks to the complexities of the digital divide that Tsatsou (2011) explores in her argument that access to equipment between the "haves" and "have nots" is inadequate in fully articulating the problems marginalized groups face in the digital divide. The exclusion created by the language of technology for those with low or no access is one contributor to the digital divide that creates barriers for people in poverty (Cunningham, 2009).

For participants to engage with many of the media production classes at POOR Magazine and SWDC, they needed to have a basic level of computer literacy, which both case studies addressed. Computer literacy is becoming an increasing necessity for even basic low-level employment positions in the information age of today's society, which is why many of the participants at POOR Magazine also received a certificate from Escuela de la Gente that they could use for employment purposes. This skillset speaks to what Campbell (2005) refers to as the protean aspect of agency, for although participants can learn and harness the basic power of computer technology, this skillset can also work against their sense of agency as the technological age becomes increasingly complex and dependent on technological advancements. According to Campbell (2005), all of the media production skillsets this section will cover (*e.g.*, audio-visual, journalism, public speaking) have the potential to create a sense of agency within participants, as well as create a sense of agency in those in society actively working to oppress these participants (*i.e.*, those in power). This is why Campbell sees agency as ambiguous and protean, because it alone does not work to empower one side of the dichotomy over the other (those with power vs. those who are oppressed). This promiscuous power relationship also creates the potential for empowerment to be a

moving target for some individuals, where each instance of struggle continuously alters the balance of power, for better or worse. However, when those who have been marginalized enact power, we see the embodiment of empowerment in this dynamic exchange.

For participants at POOR Magazine and SWDC, a sense of empowerment was discovered through a variety of media production classes that addressed writing and citizen journalism skills, public speaking and theatrical skills, and audio-visual skills. At POOR Magazine, as participants began to shape their voices they were simultaneously empowered with the skills of "revolutionary journalism" and media that enabled them to broadcast their personal stories. Again, the POOR conception of revolution stems from the idea of creating social change using unorthodox journalism techniques, like guerrilla press conferences and activist blogging. Citizen journalism and media skills were taught through classes such as "Revolutionary Media for Skolaz #101", "Po'Poets/Theater", and radio/video production. In these classes, participants learned basic computer skills, how to write revolutionary blogs, how to conduct revolutionary journalism reporting and interviewing, theatrical skills for corporate media infiltration, basic radio production (audio and interview recording), and basic video production (camera operation and video recording). At SWDC, participants partook in classes on writing and blogging, public speaking, citizen journalism, art as media, audio recording, digital photography, and video production.

Writing and citizen journalism skills. Similar to Anderson's research on grassroots journalism, the "Revolutionary Media for Skolaz #101" class introduced participants to citizen journalism writing techniques and digital media formats, like

blogs, with the "aim of challenging formal concentrations of socially authorized media power" (Anderson, 2009, p. 50). As described in the section on cultivating voice above, each participant wrote out one personal struggle she or he endured and worked on applying it to different media formats over different class sections. Once participants learned the necessary journalism skills and media techniques, they were given class assignments to exercise and strengthen these new skills. In one class section, participants were asked to transform their personal struggle into a blog format. Participants were encouraged to write their struggle in a narrative/literary journalism style where they start by describing their personal experience and struggle, then move to a larger focus on how that struggle affects a mass public, and conclude with suggestions of actions the reader can take. When participants completed their writings they shared them with the group for open discussions and critiques. The facilitator encouraged participants to avoid clichés and what she referred to as "pounding on the table." By "pounding on the table" she meant to avoid complaining or whining about an issue, and to develop a personal narrative and intelligent argument through showing their struggle, not just telling it.

Over the course of the program, class assignments progressed from impromptu writing assignments to thoughtful blogs and articles. One participant's writing exercise transformed from an in-class exercise to part of a blog writing campaign addressing important local issues. During this transformation one draft read:

> I am a single mother living in the Bayview Hunters Point area and I depend on the calworks system. Through the stimulus money and the governmental assistance, I am able to go to school, and hold a 9910 job with city college of San Francisco. So the passing of the new governmental legislation for extending the money and Jobs Now program is very important to my family and I. Being that I have come from a life of struggle and over coming obstacles just like other

> minorities. I believe that everybody deserves a fair chance to access jobs in order to provide for their families. As of now people in the government don't consider those who receive public aid as being worth, or deserving of this opportunity. Many believe the false image of the welfare queen, sitting on her butt and collecting money. But the truth is, and as a mother I can testify, that we work for every dollar we receive. Extending the money for the community jobs program helps to empower and motivate those very people socially seen as deviants. Most people who are criminally deviant are doing things which will help them support and provide for their families. If you take away the program it puts more people in the place where stealing diapers, food, or selling things illegally will be their only chance at survival. (Class exercise, July 13, 2010)

In this draft, the author not only addresses the social issue that was raised during the in-class assignment, but her writing reflects her own voice and struggle throughout. Even though this draft contains what academia perceives as writing and grammar errors, this poverty scholar writes to the best of her ability without compromising her message or voice. By recreating this participant's text exactly as she wrote it, I hope to invoke a Freirean ideal of "using the everyday language and images of the participants (poor farmers or city dwellers), and reject[ing] pre-packaged language and images pulled from the scholar's authoritative shelf" (Downing, 2001, p. 45). This Freirean concept is also taught to participants at POOR who may feel inferior to cultural notions of what constitutes a good writer or intelligent person. The staff and participants at POOR work together to reinforce one another's perspective and voice and combat mainstream media depictions of their subordination.

Unlike the class facilitated at POOR, I did not address writing strategies or techniques at SWDC, but instead focused our time on how to use the technology to create a blog and post content. In this class, we used Blogger because I think it is one of the simplest blog sites available, but I explained to participants that there were many other companies they could use to create a blog, like Word Press or Tumblr. We began

the blog class by learning how to set up a free account for the site and a blog. I emphasized the importance of creating a blog address that was simple yet unique so readers could easily remember the address. One of the participants was interested in creating a blog for crafts she sells so we titled the blog exercise "Samantha's Art Crafts."[30] We used her blog as a demo for the class to go over what a post is and how to create a post. Many of the participants stated they were not familiar with Microsoft Word, so I explained each of the different text editing options Blogger provides (bold, underline, text color change, etc.) and how to insert a picture or a link into their post. Once we created the demo entry, we discussed how to publish and view the post, after which each participant then worked on creating her own blog post. Each woman was hesitant at first, unsure of what to write and how exactly to do it, so I worked with them individually while others worked in pairs and went through each of the steps again for a more hands-on approach. Once the participants published their posts, we viewed the results as a group. We only touched upon the very basics of blogging but each of the women expressed interest in learning more about how to use the technology. We also discussed the reality of the restrictions they face in accessing the technology and remembering how to use it, as none of them owned their own computer and all of them had to rely on public libraries and community centers. One problem I realized after giving handouts during classes for a few weeks was that many women had a hard time keeping track of the papers, as they did not have a place to store or file them. This also posed a problem for participants to remember how to use the new technology. To

[30] Participant's name has been changed to protect her identity.

resolve this issue, I stored extra copies of all of the handouts at the center so participants and visitors could access them and retrieve more copies.

Learning specific formats to convey their stories, like blogs, was one way in which participants developed a sense of agency, which is also an important aspect of agency that Campbell identifies in her research as form. According to Campbell (2005), "Form is the foundation of all communication, but it is also a type of agency that has a power to separate a text from its nominal author and from its originary moment of performance" (p. 7). As participants learned to cultivate and articulate their voices as well as shape them in various contexts and forms, they engaged in a type of agency in which their story and their voice extend beyond themselves. By introducing participants to written forms of citizen journalism, like blogs, they give life to their stories and share them beyond their own personal circles and networks to a broader mass public via digital media technologies. Most media creators at SWDC did not intend for their media to be seen by anyone beyond the scope of the class and therefore did not create media with a target audience in mind. However, for POOR participants, the POOR facilitators structured Escuela de la Gente to prepare participants to share their media with large target audiences, more specifically the San Francisco Bay Area communities, as well as significant target audiences, like local congressional representatives. This imagined target audience shaped the goals of each class exercise and each media product with the intended consequence of public education and social change. The potential for agency inherent in this participatory media process expanded participants' reach to a greater audience for a potentially greater impact.

Public speaking and theatrical skills. At SWDC, I facilitated a class on basic public speaking skills for the women in case they were ever interviewed by the local media or wanted to address a social issue in public. In this class, the participants and I discussed several aspects of public speaking: purposes, credibility, crafting a message, delivering a speech, and arguing persuasively. When going over the three purposes of public speaking—informing, entertaining, and persuading—I asked the participants to imagine the city council wanted to shut down the homeless shelter. If that were to happen, they might decide to appear in front of the city council and inform them of the services the shelter provides and how it helps people. I pointed out that the participants would want to persuade the city council not to close the shelter by providing the council their perspective and conveying their struggles with homelessness to encourage the council to keep the shelter open.

When discussing credibility, I pointed out that public speaking is not just about being a good public speaker, but also about questioning the people who are speaking to us, and their credibility to speak on the subject. We also discussed the importance of knowing whether or not we can trust a public speaker because we do not want to necessarily believe everything told to us. I gave an example of politicians, stating that in the next year we would be hearing many different people running for president and we would need to decide if they were telling us the truth. One participant said, "We can't trust politicians, all they do is lie," and all of the women started laughing. I responded, "Yeah, but we need to figure out if they may be telling the truth about something or if they are not and how that affects us" (Field notes, October 27, 2011). In addition to credibility and creating a message, I introduced basic elements of delivering a public

speech. During this portion of the class, we discussed eye contact, posture, and vocal quality. In this class, the participants were not given an activity to apply these skills until after they learned audio-video production, which will be discussed further below.

In the "Po' Poets" class at POOR Magazine, participants engaged in activities that introduced them to concepts of poetry and public speaking. For example, participants were asked to describe their struggle using the five senses in one class session (as described above). To facilitate public speaking education, POOR provided handouts on what they viewed as elements of a good speaker. These included being prepared by creating speaking notecards in advance and creating brief messages to maintain audience attention. On this handout POOR particularly emphasized the importance of adhering to speaking time limits:

> **3. Do Not Fall In Love With The Sound of Your Own Voice.**
> Seriously, it's a pitfall I've seen many activists fall into—in other words, *KEEP TO THE TIME FRAME ASSIGNED TO YOU*.
>
> If every speaker is given 5 minutes, THEN SPEAK ONLY FOR 5 MINUTES. Practice your speech ahead of time and EDIT IT TO FIT THE TIME FRAME. Choose a friend to stand in a visible place and signal you when you have one minute left to give you time to finish up.
>
> I seriously cannot underscore how important number 3 is. Imagine that you have been invited to speak at an immigrant or homeless rights rally where 30 speakers were invited. When one speaker exceeds their time limit, it robs the other speakers of their time. It's a matter of respect for other peoples time and their message. (Escuela de la Gente handout, PNN Summer 2010 Session).

In this handout, PNN staff tie together basic public speaking skills with foundational beliefs held at POOR like mutual respect and activism.

The "Po' Poets" class was also used as a preparatory class for public speaking events like the "Welfare Queen Call to Debate Meg Whitman" public debate, where participants practiced public speaking components like eye contact, diction, and

volume. In 2010, when this class took place, Meg Whitman was a candidate running for California governor in the 2010 elections. Whitman was a fiscally conservative Republican, whose politics and policies sought to cut funding and resources to help populations in poverty. As such, the director and participants of POOR saw her as a direct threat and source of further marginalization and oppression. As a Po' Poets class project, participants engaged in a formal request to invite Whitman to debate their poverty scholars about issues concerning people in poverty and homelessness. Knowing Whitman would never engage in a debate with them, POOR would then set up a mock reality TV debate following her decline of their offer, where poverty scholars would address each side of the California poverty argument from a pro-Whitman and anti-Whitman standpoint. According to the director of POOR, people in poverty have scarce resources and the dominant society does not listen to them so they have to find creative ways to encourage them to listen, like mock reality TV shows. Downing (2001) also addresses the creative communication channels individuals use to create social change in his research on radical media.

In practicing for the "Welfare Queen Call to Debate Meg Whitman" public debate POOR was holding the last day of class, participants enacted a mock debate in the "Po' Poets" class. The group was split with half the class in favor of Whitman's policy proposals and half the class against. Each side was allotted time to devise a strategy. I worked with the group that was against Whitman's proposals and, although everyone at POOR Magazine was against Whitman, the group found it difficult to articulate strong arguments for the debate. In the end, the group decided that a woman without children should not be making detrimental policies that affect women and

children, that immigrants should have equal rights, and that the state should not be run like a business[31]. The group I worked with used the time to develop strong individual arguments based on personal experience, but did not create any rebuttals for the debate. The side that was in favor of Whitman, however, was much more prepared with arguments and rebuttals and said they had an easier time constructing arguments because they are constantly inundated with those messages through mainstream media. The side that was against Whitman said they had a more difficult time because although they were speaking from their own experience it was harder to develop rebuttals for those participants who were unfamiliar with Whitman and her policies (primarily the migrant mothers). In the end, the side in favor of Whitman was more successful in the mock debate because they presented their arguments with more confidence and arrogance, utilizing the power of theatrical performance. This is reminiscent of Mills' (2009) research on Jana Sanskriti Theater, in which she saw theater used "as a language for reflection, exploration, and analysis in order to articulate new direction and bring about transformation" (p. 550).

The classes on public speaking and theater address what Campbell refers to as the *artistry* of agency. "What I understand as artistry includes stratagem, flair, subtlety, and the like as well as the habits of mind learned through practice. I also want to emphasize that artistry is not limited to a canon of masterworks but emerges equally in apt vernacular speech and everyday talk" (Campbell, 2005, p. 7). These classes focused on introducing participants to concepts and skills that would not only help broadcast

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[31] Whitman is the former CEO for eBay, an experience that strongly shaped her political platform.

their voice in the dominant public sphere but to do so in an artistic, creative endeavor that would garner attention and response. Participants cultivated their voice through these classes as they learned traditional and unorthodox ways to present it. For participants who applied these skills in class assignments or in acts of civic engagement (to be described further in the next section), they created what Couldry (2010) sees as a form of agency in which the action of using their voice holds them accountable for the stories they decide to share.

Audio-visual skills. While observing POOR, I was provided the opportunity to assist the main facilitator in the video production class. When the main facilitator entered the room, rather than dictating a lecture, he sat down in a chair with the participants to ask questions, and solicit responses from participants about their knowledge of video camera operation. He created a Freirian class atmosphere (Freire, 1970) where facilitator and participants are considered counterparts by having the participants speak as often as the facilitator, encouraging shared knowledge. Together, participants and facilitator went over the basic features of the camera and each participant handled the camera and experimented with the buttons to learn by doing. In this class, participants learned video recording skills like camera operation, angles, props, perspective, and lighting.

On the first day of video class, participants were asked to put their (very) new skills to work. During the class session, the director of POOR was informed of a public comment session at City Hall for community members to speak out against a land development project in Hunters Point (a low-income area in San Francisco) and told all the media participants to go to City Hall. When we arrived at City Hall, we passed

through security and headed up the stairs only to find a very long line of people waiting to speak to city officials. Upon realizing we were not getting inside the room, the video class facilitator asked the participants to interview people in line. PNN staff members and Escuela de la Gente participants practiced their video production skills by interviewing local community activists while other participants practiced their interviewing skills with other people in line. For POOR participants, the classroom was never confined to the POOR office, but instead encompassed the entire city of San Francisco, to include the corridors of City Hall. Participants simultaneously learned and applied their knowledge as they worked with other activists to address emergent public issues. In this instance, we see the possibility for agency to occur through exigency where a need arose so quickly that the organization took the education outside of the classroom in order to apply it and create change. Through this exigency, the organization felt the motivation and sense of compulsion to enact and go forth within the public sphere where staff and participants served as actors and representatives of the public.

At SWDC, I facilitated classes on audio recording and interviewing, digital photography, video recording, and citizen journalism. In the audio recording class, we incorporated public speaking skills as well as interviewing techniques. I explained the usefulness of knowing how to interview others and how to be interviewed by others in situations where participants may encounter the media or in situations where they want to create their own audio or video recording about an important issue. When going over how to interview, the participants and I discussed the importance of planning questions in advance and determining the best questions to ask to get at the heart of the issue at

hand. We also discussed how to respond in an interview and the importance of being thoughtful and clear in your message while staying true to yourself and your experience. In the class, the participants were encouraged to practice these techniques with the audio recording devices. In their research on community radio and women, Pavarala and Malik (2009) found that by providing the skillsets and knowledge like those I just described, "Community media provide women an arena, outside the state apparatus, that may be used as a potent instrument for democratic deliberations and negotiations" (p. 110).

In the digital photography class session at SWDC, we discussed the camera features as well as photography stylistics, like framing, the use of power angles, and lighting. We also discussed subject matter and the importance of staying true to what you believe in and what your subject is trying to convey in order to have justice and accuracy within what you are doing. During this session, I asked a participant to think about a topic for her photo:

> She said, "I don't know." I said, "What's your struggle right now?" She responded, "My struggle is that I just can't focus; I'm unfocused." I said, "You can convey that in your pictures, you can just have every picture be blurry. Think about ways you can incorporate that in the media that you're doing." As I sat there she signaled a sign of defeat and set the camera down. I picked up the camera and played with the settings, trying to figure out how to intentionally make the picture blurry to convey this feeling of being unfocused. I took a picture of her and she said, "Oh no, don't take a picture of me!"
>
> As I tried to figure out how to create an intentionally blurry photo, another participant turned to her and said, "Don't be scared of looking at yourself; you're a beautiful person inside and out. You have to trust that. You have to feel that. Don't tear yourself down and don't be afraid of what you see when you look in the mirror." The moment was very touching and the woman began to cry. I gave her a tissue and said, "Sometimes it's good to just let things out like that. Let me take a blurry picture of you." To which she responded, "Okay." This time I was able to do it and said, "How is this for a composition of

> yourself?" She said, "That's it; I just can't focus." (Field notes, December 1, 2011)

Moments like this allowed participants to emotionally get in touch with their struggles and convey them through media. These moments created opportunities for empowerment, as the participants begin to own the very issues that were dominating and oppressing their lives. In turn, this also created an increase in self-confidence as participants created media, then reflexively analyzed what they saw, critiquing both the content of their media as well as their position in relation to that content. This reflexive analysis allows participants to embark on what Bery (2003) sees as a journey in which the person never returns to the same state of being nor moves in any linear direction, where the concept of the self is at the center of this perspective and is integral to the success of the empowerment process.

In addition to learning the audio recording equipment and the camera feature on the digital video recorders, the participants and I also discussed how to use the video feature on the digital video recorders at SWDC. Of all the technologies introduced in the program, the digital video recorders seemed to capture the most interest and intrigue from participants, which is a common finding in participatory video research (Harris, 2008; Matewa, 2009; White, 2003b). When I first brought the recorders to the center, many of the women were standoffish and intimidated by the technology. When asked to join the photo-video class, one woman said, "I don't know…I don't think I can figure it out." I responded, "I promise you, you can figure this out. Come learn with us." I showed her how to use the video camera and she responded with a tone of surprise, "That's really easy!" I said, "Of course it is. I wouldn't introduce you guys to things you couldn't handle. You're all very smart people" (Field notes, December 1, 2011).

She beamed with pride, conveying satisfaction in her achievement.

In the class session on citizen journalism at SWDC, participants tied together skills and concepts they learned from other class sessions like public speaking and their personal struggle to practice using the digital recorders. Participants created their own short video (2-4 minutes) to discuss their confrontations with gentrification and loss of housing in Oklahoma City. In one video, a participant interviewed another about her experience in poverty in Oklahoma City. She used a dialogic style more than a formal interview style to engage her partner in a conversation where they could both express their experiences in poverty. The interviewer's partner responded to her questions with her personal experience and story of eviction and homelessness: "I was illegally evicted from the house I was living in. I was the only person paying rent, and my name is still on the lease. And I am talking to a lawyer and will take them to court. They threw $2,600 worth of my clothes away, plus other belongings" (Participant video, November 4, 2011). In response, the interviewer provided suggestions on agencies and advocacy groups her partner could see for assistance. When the roles reversed and they turned the video camera around, the participant told her partner about her experience with eviction due to a "slumlord's" housing code violations and lack of regard for building maintenance. In both videos, the participants applied the interviewing techniques they learned by preparing their questions beforehand and considering their responses in a thoughtful and truthful way. Through the audio recording and photo-video classes, participants were provided with opportunities to be "'inventors' in the rhetorical sense, articulators who link past and present, and find means to express these strata that connect the psyche, society, and world, the forms of feeling that encapsulate moments

in time" (Campbell, 2005, p. 5). By learning audio and video production, participants could enact agency by serving as points of articulation for their poverty experience. As articulators of this experience, participants were able to "invent" the way they format and disseminate their story to reach a broader audience.

At both POOR and SWDC, agency was enacted through audio-visual courses by providing opportunities for participants to create in communal and participatory environments, albeit environments that were "constituted and constrained by the material and symbolic elements of context and culture" (Campbell, 2005, p. 3). In these communal environments, symbolic action was not always presupposed as Campbell suggests due to language barriers among participants; however, participants created a shared language of poverty as a basis for symbolic action to speak of poverty in terms that remained true to their experience, as explained in the previous sections. In these participatory environments, participants combated mainstream media's dominant essentialism of people in poverty by harnessing the power of digital media technology, giving voice to their unique experiences, and sharing those experiences. Through raising their critical consciousness, participants began to recognize the impact of dominant powers and ideologies on their oppression and how those dominant powers framed the perception of their position in society (*e.g.*, "poor" and homeless). In response, participants enacted their political empowerment (Sadan, 2004) by creating participatory media projects via audio and video that spoke back to dominant authorities and questioned the products of the very systems that oppressed them (*e.g.*, gentrification).

Each of the community media initiatives chosen for the comparative media analysis in this chapter also provided audio-visual training to participants of their programs[32]. As a staple of participatory and community media programs, each program focused on empowering participants to create their own channels of expression necessary to engage with larger social dialogues. For example, Media Mobilizing Project offers participants a video training program called Our City Our Voices (OCOV). Their program partners with a local Spanish-speaking organization, Juntos, to work with Spanish immigrants in the area on worker and immigration rights issues. In this program, participants learned journalism and video production skills and then created videos addressing immigrant worker issues. Participants gained self-empowerment not only by the skills they learned through the program, but also via networking opportunities that connected their struggle with other struggles across the city.

Engagement, empowerment, and agency. In addition to empowerment conveyed via extrinsic control over technological knowledge and power, participants gained intrinsic capabilities as a form of empowerment that were shown through an increase in self-confidence and awareness of power within themselves, which Sadan (2004) refers to as psychological empowerment:

> The process of empowerment is an active process. Its form is determined by the circumstances and the events, but its essence is human activity in the direction of change from a passive state to an active one. The process brings about an integration of self-acceptance and self-confidence, social and political understanding, and a personal ability to take a significant part in decision-making and in control over resources in the environment. (p. 75-76)

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[32] Although not all Challenge for Change projects did this.

Sen (1997) argues, “greater self-confidence and a process of inner transformation of one’s consciousness, can enable one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources” (p. 2). If participants struggle to gain extrinsic control of their technological resources for empowerment, Sen sees the possibility for them to discover new possibilities to overcome these barriers if they possess intrinsic capabilities. “In whichever order change occurs, genuine empowerment typically includes both elements, and is rarely sustainable without either” (Sen, 1997, p. 2).

Participants conveyed intrinsic capabilities through engagement in the participatory media programs. By engaging with the participatory media process and through motivation to learn and participate, participants became extrinsically empowered through the knowledge and technology that was shared. Engagement was observed in several different ways to include participation via questions, comments, and dialogue; learning how to use the technology; creating media projects; and sharing their knowledge with others. As participants cultivated their voices and contributed to communal dialogues, they expressed interest in participatory media and engagement in the process, similar to the findings of Rodríguez’s (2001) and Harris’ (2008, 2009) research on participatory video engagement. Several times at SWDC, the class began with only a handful of participants and by the end of the class the entire room was captivated by and contributing to the group discussion. One participant in particular consistently sat near the group as we discussed participatory media, but never actively joined in the discussions or activities. She always sat at the table in front of ours and listened, but never came over to the table and sat with us. Several people at the center were like this—they listened to the group discussion, but never actively participated.

Some would even come over and collect a handout and then go back to their seat away from the group; this participant was like this. However, on the seventh time I visited the center to facilitate the program, she came over to the table and joined the group.

Participants also showed engagement by providing their attention and interest in learning the technology and creating media projects that reflected their voice, as has been shown in examples throughout this chapter. Additionally, participants were not only interested in engaging in the programs to empower themselves, they were also involved for the purposes of sharing what they learned with others.

> After one class session, a participant expressed that she was interested in learning more about video recording. I told her the dates and times I would be at the center and said, "If you can make it that would be great. Go ahead and think about everything we've talked about. We've discussed some very basic things, but if you can come up with some questions, things you would like to know more about, we can help you figure out how to use this equipment." She said, "That would be great. I would really like to use this in my future projects." I responded that it would be wonderful for her to pass this knowledge on to other people; that was the point of all of this. (Field notes, December 1, 2011)

Bery (2003) argues that gaining control of one's life, making one's own decisions, and being able to influence the context in which one lives are essential elements of empowerment. Through engaging in communal dialogues, learning technological skills, creating participatory media projects, and sharing their media and their knowledge with others, participants are able to influence elements in their lives and become empowered.

Sen (1997) argues that intrinsic capabilities also include self-confidence of the individual to succeed in an act of agency. As participants engaged in the participatory media process, I observed an increase in self-confidence. For example, during the digital photography class I provided feedback to one participant on her picture of a table.

> I told the participant, "What you have done here is very interesting. Your focal point was the table, obviously, so you've centered it. You actually have that in focus with the background a little bit blurry. Your use of light, where the light's coming in from the door and shining off the table, it leads the viewer's eyes into the photograph. Although the content isn't that interesting, the composition, the way you framed it, and the way you used light made the photograph much more interesting than it would have been if you had just taken a picture of the table." In response, the participant looked very proud of her work, even though she said, "I didn't mean to do that." (Field notes, December 1, 2011)

In this example, the participant began the class hesitant to try the technology because she was intimidated. Once she engaged in the course, learned how to use the equipment, and created a photograph, she opened herself up to critique and feedback by sharing it with other participants. Through dialogue and discussion, the participant received feedback that raised the confidence she had in herself to learn the technology and be successful in using it. According to Sadan (2004), "The internal process [of empowerment] is the person's sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems" (p. 76). For this participant and many others, the ability to engage with and learn intimidating and potentially complex technologies that result in a creation reflective of their identity and struggle, ignited a sense of power within themselves they had not realized before. As a result, many of the participants were galvanized with an awoken feeling of empowerment and a newfound sense of agency.

The idea of engaging community members in the production process, as a source of empowerment and authenticity of voice, was also a mainstay for many films created in the Challenge for Change program. One of the largest advocates for this was the executive producer of Challenge for Change in 1968, George Stoney. Stoney took a markedly different approach to his films at the time by training community members to shoot their story themselves, and providing them the opportunity to view the films

before they were released and censor depictions of themselves they found inaccurate or unflattering. According to Stoney, "Our fundamental tenet was that people do their own recording. In effect *they* become the filmmakers. We gave them training here on half-inch video, and they went out and did their thing, although we had some facilitators to do some basic teaching of editing" (Rosenthal, 2010, p. 174). One example of this approach was the making of the film "Cree Hunters of Mistassini" (Richardson & Ianzelo, 1974). The film provided a channel for the Cree to express their voice, concerns, and points of view in conjunction with "the subtle and unobtrusive additions of Richardson and Ianzelo [the directors], [which added] another dimension beyond the 'democratizing effect' of allowing the Cree to 'speak for themselves' on film" (Stewart, 2010, p. 187). Although an apolitical film, the film's production process was anything but, as it was replete with negotiation processes between filmmakers and tribal members. This negotiation process also empowered Cree members by engaging them in the total creative process of the film, to include control over their visual representation and protection of their heritage.

Overall, as participants increased their sense of empowerment they were connected with technological equipment and knowledge resources that helped foster extrinsic control of their surroundings. Additionally, by engaging with the participatory media process, participants' feelings of self-confidence were heightened, providing them with a sense of intrinsic capability. Through both of these sources of empowerment, participants began to have an increased awareness of the power they possess to question and address social issues that are important to them (Hauptmann, 2005), in turn creating an awareness of personal agency and ability to create social

change. The participatory media process engendered a sense of agency for many of the participants: As they engaged in computer literacy courses, participants saw the promiscuous nature of agency conveyed through digital technologies and the importance to harness its power. The writing and citizen journalism courses showed participants how agency could be enacted through form like blogs or news articles. Participants cultivated a craft of agency as they learned the poetic styling of public speaking and theater to express their struggle. Participants also engaged in the communal, participatory nature of agency as they "invented" the audio-visual channels with which to share their voices. Through all of these courses, awareness of their agency increased and participants saw the possibility to be a catalyst for change in their lives and communities.

Discovering Potential for Civic Engagement in Participatory Media

To answer RQ5 of this study, Where is civic engagement possible in the participatory media process and how can it be enacted?, this section will look at acts of civic engagement performed by participants at POOR Magazine and the disconnect between participants at SWDC and the political system. As a potential result of the participatory media process, participants enact their agency through acts of civic engagement to empower themselves and their community in creating social change. This model is but one way in which civic engagement can happen—not intended to usurp other models, but instead to show the possibility for the participatory media process to transform citizens from apathy to engagement in their communities. Not all participants who engaged in these programs were involved in acts of civic engagement, as will be further explicated in the sub-sections below. However, those who engaged

with each of the components presented in this model were highly likely to become civically engaged if presented with the opportunity and resources.

Participatory media and civic engagement. According to King and Mele (1999), "the process of media production itself is politically transformational" (p. 608). In their study of community television stations and civic engagement, they found that the process of production is key in creating a sense of civic engagement for those involved. "Personal accomplishment, meaningful communication, and social solidarity experienced by public access producers, while mitigating against a 'shared subjectivity' (Young, 1990, p. 309), constitute basic elements of sustainable civic involvement" (King & Mele, 1999, p. 621). Participants involved in the participatory media process were engaged as local citizens, addressing important social issues that affect their lives directly. Without these technological skills, dominant ideological structures would be upheld and subjugated voices would remain silent.

As participants at POOR Magazine began to use journalism and media skills shaped by their individual voices and experiences to address important social issues, they transitioned from passive to engaged citizenship. Class activities became complex responses to larger social issues. For example, similar to the guerilla press conference previously described, during my participant-observation with POOR participants were involved in a scheduled press conference as a promotional tool for the Meg Whitman debate they would be holding later that day in the POOR offices. POOR staff members created and disseminated a press release prior to the press conference to garner local and national media coverage. The press release was used as a vehicle to spread poverty voices through direct quotes and experiences. For example,

> "Meg Whitman's program only serve the rich people of California, she has spewed lies about poor people in her campaign ads, we hope to shed light on the truth with this debate," said Rosa Galindo, working poor mother of five in the JOBS NOW program and member of the Voces de Immigrantes en Resistencia program at Prensa POBRE.

The press release attracted the attention of four media reporters, to include reporters from CNN and Univision. The press conference was held in front of the POOR office building and was used to publicly challenge Meg Whitman to a debate on poverty issues in California: "Meg Whitman has repeatedly attacked immigrants and poor mothers, building her campaign on the backs of poor people, so we, the poor people, have a response," the director of POOR, Tiny, said. The street bustled with the noise of cars and foot traffic. At one point a small group of ten to fifteen people gathered around the press conference and attracted passersby to watch and pay attention. Each speaker was translated between English and Spanish and every Escuela de la Gente mother/participant spoke at the press conference. At the end of the press conference, several Escuela de la Gente participants arrived in a car dressed in character (*i.e.*, one male member was dressed up as Meg Witman) to set the stage for the mock debate and to encourage the reporters to move upstairs to the POOR office and watch the debate.

In this act of civic engagement, we do not see an example of political participation as was historically regarded and defined by such scholars as Verba, Nie, and Kim (1971), whose conception narrowly restricts political participation to voting, campaign activism, community organizing, and outreach. Instead, this is an example of engagement as a form of dissent, in which participants do not seek consensus with their oppressors but instead seek to engage the dominant public sphere from a subaltern perspective. According to Phillips, "The public sphere has been portrayed as a place

where these individual, local sites of contest might be gathered into some transcendent dialogue; however, we cannot truly engage diversity without recognizing the diverse sites and conditions in which differences come to the fore" (Phillips, 1996, p. 244). Norris (2002) makes a similar statement in her argument to legitimize protest as a form of political participation. For both of these arguments, to be civically engaged with one's community and political processes is to express discontent and dissent oppressive structures. For participants at POOR, the guerilla press conference allowed them to do just that in a public forum at the heart of one of the largest cities in the U.S. Through the participatory media process and corporate media infiltration, POOR participants engaged with their local political process to voice their concerns and perspectives.

Many of the community media initiatives discussed in this chapter have the concept of civic engagement at the core of their intent and focus. One example that has served as a paragon for connecting community media projects with civic actions is the Fogo Island series from the Challenge for Change program. In this series Colin Low, the director, created the Fogo Process, which focused on collaboration between filmmakers, community, and local government as well as "filming techniques based on rapport between filmmaker and subjects; and much emphasis on the playback of materials as a stimulus to discussion and problem solving" (Wiesner, 2010, p. 87). This process focused on connecting isolated communities with local government agencies to address the communities' issues and concerns. Through this process, Low saw that it was most effective for communities to engage in and achieve social change via film technologies rather than for community representatives try to explicate their struggles to the local government agencies (Wiesner, 2010). One key component to the success of

this initiative was the communities' commitment to mediation strategies via film over confrontational strategies with government agencies.

Politics and civic engagement. According to Norris' (2001) conceptualization of civic engagement, to be civically engaged participants should have political knowledge and political trust, and enact political participation. When discussing politics with the women at SWDC their political knowledge was limited, they had no trust in the political system, and few were interested in political participation. As one participant said, "I don't like politics. They do whatever they want, no matter what." When queried about their political involvement and beliefs on the state of politics in the U.S., SWDC participants, for the most part, were either completely disengaged or at most, occasionally voted. The political backdrop of Oklahoma had some effect on participants, where the majority of citizens in the state are conservative Republicans and activism looks and feels different than that of San Francisco. Local religious organizations play a large role in addressing homeless and poverty issues so in some respect for these women, homeless "activism" was filtered through religion. This could explain why none of the participants at SWDC were involved in any acts of civic engagement during their participation in the program.

That being said, one particular participant addressed the possibility for people in poverty and homelessness to dissent. When asked during an interview what actions she thought needed to be taken to make her community stronger, she responded:

> Awareness. They don't have to necessarily protest, but it would be nice if they would sign a petition if they believe in the cause. Just sign a petition and we all have someone there to notarize it and fax it over to the president and the congressmen and the senators—Not to the local branches, because the local branches pretend to be more busier than the top branches. It might be on their desk until somebody throws it in the trash—If you sent one to each one of them

> and everybody had a copy of what we sent in, then everybody in the community is going to know, "We did this way back then, okay what happened? They had over 90 days to reply, nobody has replied to us. Okay, what's our next step?"

For participants at SWDC, engaging in the participatory media process did increase critical consciousness as well as a sense of empowerment and agency; however, without being provided the guidance, support, or resources to become civically engaged in a channel that was flexible to their nomadic lifestyle, most did not seek out civic engagement opportunities. However, several participants had ideas for civic engagement opportunities. One participant, in particular, transitioned from complete disengagement from the program and passively listening on the side, to actively participating and engaging with others. Towards the end of the program, she was inspired to create a video about her struggle with homelessness and the poor treatment of people staying at the City Rescue Mission homeless shelter in Oklahoma City.

Cindy:	How could you see this program helping you get a story out or get your voice out?
Participant:	The [City Rescue] Mission has a lot of stories there, so that would help me do what I need to do…Living at the Mission, it would help me tell my story with others that I'm going to interview.
Cindy:	How has the class impacted your life?
Participant:	Made me think about a lot of things… Makes me think about my life. What I'm doing. What I did wrong.
Cindy:	In a good way or a bad way?
Participant:	Both. I've never been homeless, except for three years ago… I've been homeless for the last four years and I don't want to be homeless no more.
Cindy:	Do you want to make a video talking about that?
Participant:	That will probably be what it is about and about the rights and wrongs of the Mission.[33]

Although participants were not actively involved in acts of civic engagement during the program, conversations like this showed that participants were interested in becoming

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[33] Interview edited to remove irrelevant side conversations.

civically engaged as a direct result of their involvement with the participatory media program.

Conclusion

A participatory media process consisting of voice, dialogue, critical consciousness, empowerment, and agency was observed during both case studies; however the way this process manifested itself in each case study differed by incorporating the idiosyncrasies and intricacies of each community. Each community embraced each component of this participatory media process in ways that reflected their distinct voices and issues, some overlapping, others uniquely demonstrated. During this process, participants used participatory media technologies, interwoven with their experiential knowledge and shaped by their own voice, and became empowered with a sense of personal agency. For some, this sense of agency and empowerment led them to become civically engaged in their communities. Through this process, we see the power of participatory media. By articulating the voices of subjects that have been historically ignored and misrepresented, participatory media engender communication processes based on empathy, allowing viewers, readers, and listeners to understand the experiences and struggles of these participants. In recent years, movements to include African American, Asian American, and Native American perspectives in history books have succeeded in unearthing lost voices (Chomsky, 2003; Zinn, 2010); however, many overlooked groups, including the homeless, disabled, and elderly, still struggle to be heard on a daily basis. Through participatory media education and production, participants are able to articulate their own voices and allow

their stories to break through barriers of oppression. The next chapter will discuss the importance of reflexivity in this process and the concept of digital reflexivity.

CHAPTER 6

Digital Reflexivity as Catalyst for Change

In the previous chapter, I discussed the findings of the ethnographic data analysis and the comparative media analysis, focusing on possibilities of transformation in participatory media processes at POOR Magazine and SWDC. This chapter builds on the analyses discussed in the previous chapter by focusing on the importance of reflexivity in the transformative processes of participatory media through what I term *digital reflexivity*. Throughout this study, I have argued that processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness—mediated by participatory media—engender increases in empowerment and agency. In this chapter, I explicate the concept of digital reflexivity and argue it is a key component of this process as a way to increase empowerment for people living in poverty and homelessness. To conclude this final chapter, I provide a synopsis of the argument and findings for this study, coalescing my contribution to larger conversations of participatory media. I highlight the applicability of this research in the Communication for Social Change field, as well as its significance in various interdisciplinary areas. This chapter concludes with limitations, implications, and areas for future research.

Digital Reflexivity

One component of the participatory media process that emerged in the data analysis was the role of reflexivity. I observed processes of reflexivity reinforce participants' transitions throughout the participatory media process; however, more research is needed in this area to fully conceptualize what I describe in this chapter as the process of digital reflexivity. The concept of digital reflexivity helps explicate how

participatory media can serve as reflexive lenses for participants as they learn and apply media skills and education during the participatory media process. This concept also helps explain the role of mediated reflexivity as participants engage in processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness in a rhizomatic way throughout the participatory media process.

Similar to what Low found in his Fogo Island documentaries via Challenge for Change (Wiesner, 2010), that film could serve as a mirror for residents to critically analyze social and economic issues affecting them, I saw how participatory media (to include forms like blogs and websites) could serve as reflexive mirrors for people in poverty and homelessness to critically analyze structural forms of oppression and their role in creating social change. Before I explain this conception further let me first clarify the term *digital* reflexivity. Although the participatory media technologies I witnessed and used were primarily digital in format, this concept is applicable to media that are multimodal, for example, a guerilla press conference that takes place as a public performance in a time and place, but is simultaneously recorded and spread across platforms in a digital realm. This cross-platform, multimodal possibility enhances the capabilities of digital reflexivity beyond that of just the digital realm. So then, what is digital reflexivity? Digital reflexivity occurred when participants used participatory media as mirrors to: position themselves in their situation, identify their role in changing their situation, and reflect on their role in a reflexive exchange of actions (*i.e.,* how they shape and reshape their situation while simultaneously being shaped by it). As participants were involved in this process, articulation of voice, engagement in dialogue, and increase in critical consciousness occurred. This in turn, contributed to a

sense of empowerment, awareness of the self as an agent of change, and potentially acts of civic engagement. In this section I argue that digital reflexivity serves as a critical catalyst for empowerment and agency as participants engage in processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness.

In this study, I observed a process of digital reflexivity where reflexivity was enacted throughout the participatory media process in various forms and states. Within the participatory media process, the processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness occur concurrently. During these processes, participants engage in reflexive practices at three points: participants reflexively analyze their position in their struggle as they cultivate voice; participants reflexively analyze their position in conjunction with others as they engage in dialogue; and participants reflexively analyze their position in relation to others as they become critically conscious of the role larger social structures (*e.g.,* social, economic, political) play in the creation and maintenance of their marginalization. During processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness, participants use reflexivity to position themselves and contextualize their situation.

The process of digital reflexivity moves beyond previous conceptions of reflexivity to address the multimodal and cross-platform capabilities that are possible within an historically contextualized media ecology. Digital reflexivity occurs once participants learn participatory media skills (*e.g.*, citizen journalism, digital video recording, public speaking) and use them as a mirror to reflexively analyze conceptions of self, other, and society. Due to the fact that the participatory media process is non-linear and rhizomatic, participants incorporate reflexivity in various forms and states

throughout all of the components of the participatory media process. The digital reflexivity process allows participants to coalesce individual reflexive experiences with others to create and negotiate new forms of communal engagement. This is important in an era where messages are simultaneously disseminated across platforms and audiences allowing for the convergence of not only media but also audiences and cultures. Digital reflexivity creates opportunities to expand and include varying audiences in different localities over the globe and thus blur the boundaries between local media and global audiences. Its multimodal nature lets participants transcend online/offline divisions to create holistic communities of discussion and reflexivity. The expansion of possible contributions creates opportunities for engagement spanning geophysical locations for the inclusion of marginalized voices across the globe. As interactions between media producers/audiences become diversified, reflexive media experiences shift and transform to integrate new and differing perspectives.

As participants execute reflexivity at various junctures in the participatory media process, their engagement in the process simultaneously allows them to be involved in communal reflexivity that will influence and transform their individual experience. This is the main difference with what scholars have previously conceptualized as reflexivity. The possibility to transcend platform, audience, and culture changes the nature of reflexivity to allow the individual to engage in communal processes of transformation that can involve participants on the other side of the planet. The following subsections will further explicate the role digital reflexivity plays in the participatory media process as supported by the data collected for this study.

Voice and reflexivity

As described in the previous chapter, participants cultivate and articulate their voice through extensive evaluations of their situations in light of their personal concerns (Archer, 2010). Reflexivity asks the individual to engage in a process of reflection of how they can affect and are affected by their situation of poverty (Archer, 2010). The connection of voice and reflexivity was most strongly seen in discussions with participants as they addressed the need for diversity and authenticity in mainstream media coverage of poverty issues and when participants confronted negative poverty stereotypes. In media literacy discussions participants were asked whether or not they believed the mainstream media accurately portrayed people in poverty or poverty issues. In discussing this topic, participants reflexively analyzed their personal connections with mainstream media coverage and whether or not those connections reflected their own personal experiences. Most participants felt dissonance between the two, which stirred an emotional response to create authentic representation. In this example, participants conjoined individual and communal reflexive experiences to analyze structural forces of marginalization. In doing so, communal exchanges served as catalysts for critical consciousness awareness within the individual. When confronting negative stereotypes, participants at POOR were asked to identify negative stereotypes perpetuated in the mainstream media they felt applied to them. In response, participants identified welfare stereotypes, immigration stereotypes, and poverty stereotypes. To confront these, participants used a reflexive, embodied process of voice (Couldry, 2010) where they identified their own standing in life in comparison to the media stereotype (*e.g.,* "welfare mothers can't be lazy because being a mother is hard

work"). Participants did not stop at contrasting their experiences with stereotypes via discussion, but also incorporated those discrepancies in class activities like their slam-bio[34] to conjoin reflexivity and action (Freire, 1970). Reflexivity was integral for participants to identify their struggle and shape their voice as they compared and contrasted their experiential knowledge to inaccurate mainstream representations. Articulations of voice were then exchanged with others via critical dialogue and reflexivity.

Dialogue and reflexivity

As participants articulated voice they concurrently exchanged this articulation with others via dialogue. Reflexivity played a key role in processes of dialogue as participants reflexively analyzed their position in conjunction with others to reconstitute and name the world (Freire, 1970). Using what Freire terms as a true word, participants constructed a language of poverty based on reflection and action. Through class activities like mock political debates, participants were provided the opportunity to reflexively analyze the political policies of a potential state governor and the direct impact of those policies on their lives. They were also provided the opportunity to engage in political dialogue with others to address this reflection and incorporate action. According to Freire (1970), "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (p. 87). Through the creation and communication of true words, participants engaged in a process of reflection and action. Freire goes on to further argue that through the utterance of the true word, participants

[34] Slam-bios were class activities that asked participants to write a poem about their lives and family struggles. Many participants confronted negative stereotypes through this form.

are able to reconstitute and name the world. This was accomplished for participants via reflexivity by way of dialogue as well as via digital reflexivity through the incorporation of digital technologies as will be explicated further below.

Critical consciousness and reflexivity

Participants incorporated reflexive processes as they engaged in voice articulation, dialogue, and critical consciousness-raising. In this part of the process, reflexivity was used to enable participants to reconfigure personal notions of embedded social norms and predispositions of habitus[35] (Bourdieu, 1977), which was accomplished in two ways: 1) via public events where participants jarred public passersby through nonconformance of expected norms and values, and 2) by questioning their own held acceptance and predispositions of expected norms and values. For the first, participants at POOR worked on the articulation of their experiential knowledge of welfare via voice and dialogue through in-class writing activities. Participants reflexively analyzed their experience as mothers dependent on the welfare system juxtaposed to stereotypes and social values mainstream media disseminate about welfare mothers. Through this analysis, participants recognized the opportunity to confront these values and norms through the execution of a guerilla press conference. This action confronted and restructured the accepted norms of welfare recipients by creating a platform for participants to publicly speak out and share their stories and experiences of the welfare system, an uncommon perspective in the mainstream media. As participants spoke out on this platform they embodied what Mills

[35] Bourdieu (1977) defines habitus as the predispositions individuals have that stem from the inculcation of social and cultural norms and values within a specific context.

(2009) sees as theater's ability to "enable people to view things critically, build awareness on various issues, and practise alternatives to negative behaviour in safe spaces" (p. 558).

The second way participants reconfigured structures of habitus, was by questioning their own normative acceptance and predispositions. By enhancing critical thinking and using examples and language from their own lives (Freire, 1970), participants engaged in comparative reflexive analyses of social norms versus lived experiences. This was seen when participants confronted negative media stereotypes as well as in various class conversations that addressed mainstream media portrayal of homelessness and poverty. For example, in the SWDC class on citizen journalism participants critically analyzed mainstream assumptions of homelessness (*e.g.,* homeless people are alcoholics or drug-addicts) in comparison to their lived experiences with homelessness and experiential knowledge. By engaging in this reflexive analysis, participants critically analyzed the partiality of their knowledge and the "situatedness" of that knowledge's construction (Haraway, 1988). In group discussions, participants addressed homeless stereotypes by describing examples of their own personal struggles and experience with homelessness. During these discussions, participants contributed individual accounts of their experiences, combined those individual accounts with a collective group response to acknowledge the partiality of their own lived experiences, and addressed the restrictions of their own contextualized knowledge in conjunction with others' experiential knowledge. Through activities like these, participants' use of reflexivity enhanced the increase of critical consciousness and contributed to the engendering of empowerment and agency.

Empowerment, agency, and reflexivity

As participants learned and applied participatory media skills, digital reflexivity was used as a catalyst to engender processes of empowerment and agency. As explicated in Chapter 5, participants increased their sense of empowerment through harnessing the power of digital technology skills and knowledge. Learning these skillsets created opportunities for participants to connect their voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness and apply them through participatory media.

Digital technologies afforded participants the chance to express their experiential knowledge in a digital format then reflexively analyze and re-evaluate their project in light of their situation (Archer, 2010). Similar to Low's Fogo Process and the use of vertical editing, participants were able to record, view, and discuss their projects in real-time with real repercussions. Through engaging in participatory media production, participants were able to turn back their experiences upon themselves for reflexive analysis (Mead, 1934/1962). For example, when participants learned video recording skills at SWDC we sat in groups and watched the videos after they were created. In doing so we enacted what Shaw and Robertson (1997) saw as the reflexive lens of video in which, "Playing back the recorded material can promote reflection and develop a sense of self" (as quoted in White, 2003c, p. 66). During this process media creators sometimes felt self-conscious of video aspects like their voice or the quality of the video, but through their reflexive analysis and group discussion of their project participants understood different ways to approach their project in the future to more accurately convey their story.

POOR took a different approach to reflexive analysis and group discussion. At POOR, once participants created media projects like videos, facilitators (usually PNN staff members) would edit and compile the videos to incorporate segment breaks, translation captions, and rolling credits. This approach had its benefits and detriments, one benefit being a final project ready for publication on POOR's website and with POOR affiliates. However, a large detriment was that POOR did not educate participants on how to edit videos, thereby creating a point of dependency in their process where participants did not know how to edit or publish their videos. Once POOR facilitators edited the videos, they were shown during class sessions for participant reflection and discussion. These reflexive analyses created opportunities for participants to re-evaluate their project and consider courses of action to improve their project (Archer, 2010). For example, the week after participants created videos of interviews with activists at City Hall, we critiqued the videos as a group. Participants commented on improvements that could be made with regard to angles, sound bites, and frames. As participants pointed out "mistakes" in the videos, the class facilitator said, "We learn from mistakes" to show participants that everyone makes mistakes but the point is to learn from them to ensure they are not made again (Field notes, July 13, 2010). The facilitator also focused on the need for collaboration and for people on the scene in teams to "work as a tribe" to ensure good communication and teamwork. Participatory communication scholars have argued for the necessity of this dialogic reflection as a way for participants to engage with others in processes of empowerment (Harris, 2008; Matewa, 2009; White, 2003b).

Digital reflexivity occurred once participants learned digital technology skills; however, it then re-occurred in other phases of the participatory media process as participants returned to various junctures like voice cultivation or dialogue engagement. Within this process, participatory media served as reflexive lenses for participants to not only analyze and cultivate their media production skills, but also to position themselves in their situation, identify their role in changing their situation, and reflect on how they affect and are affected by their situation (Shaw & Robertson, 1997; White, 2003c). When revisiting junctures of voice articulation within the participatory media process, participants coalesced the story of their personal struggle (*i.e.*, how they position themselves in their situation) with digital media technologies in a format of their choosing. Some participants chose to write blogs conveying their personal struggle (*e.g.*, "how cutting the community jobs program affects me") while others chose to create short videos (*e.g.*, "how gentrification affects me"). While creating these media projects, participants reflected on aspects of storytelling that forced them to analyze their role in their struggle (*e.g.*, perspective, cause, effect).

For example, when drafting blogs for an in-class activity that eventually became the "Working to Feed Our Children" blog series[36], participants reflected on the social implications of the budget being cut and its personal impact on their economic standing. During this reflection, participants also identified how they could influence public financial policies that affect people in poverty via blog writing campaigns. This

[36] An in-class writing activity at POOR where welfare mothers wrote a personal blog detailing how their lives would be impacted if the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes (HR4213) (which included a community jobs program many of the women participated in) was cut from the state budget.

reflexive analysis asked participants to holistically view their position in relation to others and how they could create solidarity with other POOR participants as well as other local activist groups (*e.g.*, The Living Wage Coalition) to create social change. As part of this effort, I worked with participants to draft a letter that was sent to local legislators, directing legislative attention to the blogs to raise awareness of the "Welfare Queen" perspective. In response, POOR Magazine received an official response from Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi's office stating that Pelosi was grateful for the insight into the welfare mothers' struggles and that she would work hard to prevent the budget cuts from further impacting their lives.

Conclusion

Increased empowerment for lower socioeconomic status groups is a dire and growing need in the U.S. In a society where mainstream media dictate the story of the oppressed and underprivileged, it is important for the communication field to examine how participatory media can be used to increase empowerment and facilitate channels for individuals to tell their own stories. As shown in this study, participatory media can serve as catalysts for change in populations of poverty and homelessness in the U.S. Through participatory media education and production processes, people living in poverty and homelessness can increase empowerment as well as contribute a very necessary and missing voice from mainstream dialogue.

In this study, I have argued that processes of voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness—mediated by participatory media—engender increases in empowerment and agency. Additionally, I saw the role of reflexivity serve as a catalyst for these processes as participants engaged in participatory media production. Data I collected

from two case studies and a comparative media analysis provided support for this argument and showed that by engaging in participatory media processes participants articulated an authentic poverty perspective, engaged in critical dialogue to assess the symbiosis of voice with others, and raised critical consciousness to critically analyze structural forms of oppression and their role in creating social change. As a result, participants saw an increase in empowerment and sense of agency that helped them realize their capabilities for creating change in their community and their situation of poverty. The data for this study also showed that this process increases the likelihood for people in poverty and homelessness to be civically engaged if participants are presented with resources and opportunities that directly affect their lives.

One example that depicts how an individual can embody the participatory media process is of a participant at SWDC. As described throughout previous sections thus far, a woman at SWDC sat on the periphery of the class the first few weeks of class. She expressed no intent or desire to sit with the class or learn media technologies. However, throughout this time frame I established rapport with the woman by learning her name and a few of her interests. By conveying an interest in her and through an expression of mutual respect, the woman in turn began conveying an interest in what I was doing at the center: participatory media. Her interest was slight at first, a few questions here and there, but really culminated when I brought the digital video recorders. On one video production class day the woman expressed an interest in learning the technology by asking me, “How does that thing work?” From there I sat with her, explained the technology, and helped her create her first video. The video was an interview with her friend about her friend’s family and her thoughts on Christmas.

Participant: What do you think about Christmas?
Interviewee: Christmas is a time for worship . . . more than anything else . . . Oh! And opening up lots of presents.
Participant: If you get them.
Interviewee: Yeah, if you get them. That's always fun.
Facilitator: If you were good.
Participant: I'm always good but I didn't get presents when I was growing up.
Interviewee: Well you never know, you always have to believe in Santa Clause.
Participant: --No, not very many [presents]. Mama wasn't rich.

As this excerpt conveys, the video did not have any inherent political or civic motivation; however, it touched upon subtle issues of class and poverty and provided the participant an opportunity to engage with the media and the media process. Consequently, this engagement sparked a larger interest within the participant to create more digital videos as well as videos that addressed social issue problems at the local homeless shelter (as discussed in Chapter 5). This participant shows the power of the participatory media process to engage participants by sparking critical consciousness and encouraging articulation of voice and communal dialogue. In the end, I saw this participant go through a transformative process of self-empowerment that engendered a sense of agency.

In addition, reflexive engagement with participatory media was seen to be a catalyst for change in participants. Reflexive analysis in each component of the process catalyzed the effectiveness of the entire process as participants coalesced each piece into a holistic approach to empowerment and agency. By combining reflexivity with digital media technologies, digital reflexivity served as a way for participants to use participatory media as reflexive lenses to critically analyze their role in creating change. Digital reflexivity also provided opportunities for participants to engage in communal analyses of structural oppression through critical dialogue with others. By engaging in

reflexive analysis via digital media technologies, participants were able to transition from passive to engaged citizens; however, more research is needed into the concept of digital reflexivity to analyze its role in facilitating civic engagement.

The participatory media process proposed in this study has been seen as an effective way to engage marginalized groups in processes of empowerment and agency. This process, however, should not occur in a vacuum. Instead, it would be most successful in collaboration with other local community organizations to strengthen the goals of empowerment, agency, and civic engagement across resources and disciplines. I do not argue that this process alone will provide all of the necessary sources of empowerment an individual may need. People in poverty and homelessness face low levels of self-confidence and self-worth as a result of the internalization of derogatory and demeaning hegemonic ideologies. By partnering with other local community organizations, like homeless shelters, social workers, or advocacy groups, processes of empowerment and agency for people in poverty and homelessness can be reinforced by a variety of sources. The process I propose in this study would be most successful when coupled with other community organizations that have similar goals and interests to create a holistic approach to empowerment and civic engagement.

Limitations

In addition to the methodological limitations addressed in Chapter 3, I want to note the limitations surrounding the applicability of the participatory media process proposed here. This process was seen to be effective in raising empowerment and agency in two very different populations of poverty and homelessness. That being said, researchers must always consider the idiosyncrasies of the poverty population they are

working with to determine the best way to execute this process. Poverty and homelessness in the U.S. are not uniform throughout the country and each "community"[37] is affected by the social culture in which they reside. I observed drastic differences in the execution of this participatory media process between the two populations I worked with and through a reflexive ethnographic approach accounted for those idiosyncrasies accordingly to meet the needs and expectations of each population. The vastly different geopolitical contexts that set the backdrop for each case study influenced the ways in which participants imagined agency and civic engagement. As previously discussed, the role of religion in Oklahoma served as a buffer for activism for some participants, influencing how participants viewed the role of activism in Oklahoma as well their position within that role. This was drastically different in comparison to the geopolitical background of San Francisco, where many of the participants were encouraged to become involved with POOR primarily through their activist connections. For POOR participants, activism was intrinsically tied to participatory media. Due to idiosyncrasies such as these, reflexivity for the researcher was a necessary component of the research process. Also, reflexivity played a large role in the effectiveness of the participatory media process overall and as such should also be used by researchers engaging in this line of scholarship in order to create space for the research participant to exercise voice and agency through participation in the research process (Couldry, 2003).

Another limitation to this research is the necessity for long-term community commitment. Participatory media researchers (Bery, 2003; Matewa, 2009; Rodríguez,

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[37] Not all populations of poverty and homelessness identify a feeling of community.

2009; White, 2003b) have argued that in order for participatory media processes to succeed in the long-run, the facilitating individual or organization must make a long-term commitment to the community. Such a commitment would ensure lasting engagement with invested community members, continuation of long-term projects, and the possibility to create new projects with new members. Long-term investment is also beneficial to maintain the relationships that have been established and observe the slow process of social change that takes years to develop. The program I initiated in Oklahoma City would be more successful over a longer period of time had I committed to the program to ensure its longevity. However, the brevity of the program does not undermine the findings of this study, as explained in Chapter 3.

Implications

This study has several implications for the Communication for Social Change (CFSC) field as well as other interdisciplinary fields with an interest in participatory media, civic engagement, empowerment, or agency. This study contributes to the area of CFSC research that focuses on social movements and community participation by focusing on "the role of communication and the media in contemporary change processes" (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006, p. xxxiii). In the tradition of the CFSC field, this study has sought to give value to marginalized voices as well as a space for them to tell their story (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). This study follows the major shift in the current state of the field towards communication processes that afford people opportunities to reconstitute and name their world (Freire, 1970) based on their own definitions and experiences (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2006; Huesca, 1995; Rodríguez, 2002). Also in the CFSC tradition, I strove to help people be in control of

the mode, means, and content of their communication processes and supported the legitimation of their voice and knowledge by advocating for their acceptance as poverty experts (Martín-Barbero, 2006b; Riaño, 1994; Wilkins, 2000).

The participatory media process proposed here will help researchers in this area of study better understand the role of participatory media in processes of empowerment and agency. Models of communication help us understand and explicate various facets of communication in our everyday lives. As such, they should be critically examined and evaluated by those who use them to ensure their accuracy and applicability. I sought to update Beltrán's (1980) horizontal model of communication to address the role of advancing digital technologies, which contributed to the process proposed in this study. My intention for the participatory process I propose here is for it to be used, examined, and updated by other scholars with participatory media interests as well. This process is valuable for current scholars in the CFSC field as a way to ascertain how voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness work together through participatory media as catalysts for social change. This process also holds implications for anyone interested in analyzing the exchange of power to those obscured in marginalization, and the subsequent possibilities for agency and civic engagement.

This study provides in-depth knowledge of specific poverty populations in the U.S. and contributes to the growing knowledge of poverty and homelessness in the U.S. For example, this research serves as a rich contribution to the culturally diverse heritage of Oklahoma[38] by providing a testament to the power and potential of Oklahoman

[38] As recognized by the University of Oklahoma via the Alice Mary Robertson Award in 2014.

women living in poverty and homelessness, many of whom have never been given the opportunity to share their story until now. Through this study, I learned that the cultural significance and progress of Oklahoma could be seen in each one of its citizens, heard through their voices, and lived through their experiences. My intent for this study is not to speak on behalf of those in poverty and continue the appropriation of their voice, but to serve as a megaphone and channel for people in poverty to disseminate their stories and struggles. I also see the implications for this study to share these voices with those in the position to create the public policies that impact populations of poverty, with the hopes that in conjunction with statistical data and macro-perspectives of poverty, this in-depth analysis will inform those in power and encourage them to challenge the structures of oppression and cycles of marginalization.

Lastly, and most importantly, this study has implications to generate and facilitate processes of empowerment in populations that have been historically marginalized and oppressed. The participatory media process proposed here could be used amongst varying groups of marginalization and is not just applicable to populations in poverty and homelessness. For the communities I worked with specifically, I hope these processes continue to grow through networks of knowledge exchange to continue the empowerment of those enduring oppression. Individuals who connect with this process have the ability to create change for the betterment of themselves and their communities, and I hope those I have worked with continue to work towards this goal.

Areas for future research

To convey a true rhizomatic depiction of the participatory media process, a graphical representation might look like this:

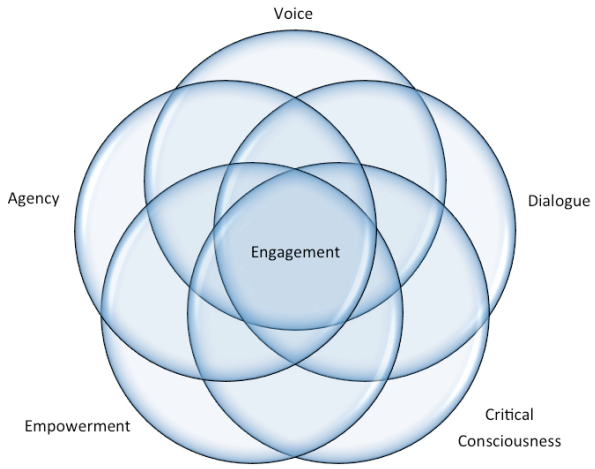


Figure 2. Participatory media rhizome. Graphical representation of rhizomatic approach to participatory media process.

In this depiction we see all of the opportunities for inter-dimensionality between the various internal processes of the participatory media process (*i.e.,* voice, dialogue, critical consciousness, empowerment, and agency). These intersections leave a wide area for future research and exploration to examine the potential and shortcomings of each of these dimensions within the participatory media process. In the participatory media process proposed throughout this study I have examined how participants engage in a transformative process from apathy to engagement, arguing the necessity for participants to be involved in all of the internal processes described throughout this study. However, Figure 3 leaves many questions yet to be answered: What does the transformative potential of the participatory media process look like when participants only engage in portions of the process; for example, only voice and empowerment? I

have argued throughout this study that all components are necessary in order for participants to transition from apathy to engagement, but the inter-dimensions within the larger participatory media process leave much to be examined to fully understand why some participants make this transition while others do not.

Additionally, this chapter proposed the concept of digital reflexivity. More research is needed on this concept to provide support to the initial observations I have noted here as well as to more clearly delineate processes of digital reflexivity and their role within the participatory media process. Is digital reflexivity more effective with certain digital formats over others? If so, how would these impact processes of empowerment and agency? Also, what role does digital reflexivity play in acts of civic engagement? I did not observe participants engage in reflexivity after performing acts of civic engagement; more research is necessary to understand if digital reflexivity could be effective as an evaluative tool for acts of civic engagement to determine if those acts fulfilled certain intended consequences as well as the impact of any unintended consequences.

In conclusion, for the communities I have worked with, I hope the knowledge we exchanged and the voices that were cultivated continue to grow strong and expressive until they break through the barriers of marginalization and rattle the windows on the structures that oppress them. Voices like these are too powerful and too essential to an effective democracy to be swept up in the bristles of the morning street sweepers. The freedoms and democracies of all U.S. citizens are tied to one another so it is the responsibility of everyone to fight oppression and systems of marginalization. For as one facilitator at POOR said, “If you are here to save me, thank you, but keep

walking. But if you recognize that your liberation is tied with mine, then let's hold hands and work together." So that leaves just one last question: *Can you spare some social change?*

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Appendix A

Participant Interview Questions

General Information

- Why do you visit the Sanctuary Women's Development Center?
- How did you first hear of the Sanctuary Women's Development Center?
- How long have you been visiting the Sanctuary Women's Development Center?

Media Education Impact

- How did you first hear of the media class at the Sanctuary Women's Development Center?
- How many media education classes have you attended?
- What were your initial impressions the first time you attended the media education class?
- What made you decide to participate in the media education class?
- How has the class helped you to tell your story?
- How has the class impacted your life?
- What benefits have you experienced from taking this class?
- What suggestions would you recommend to improve the education class?

Media Production

- Do you feel mainstream media accurately portrays you? Why or why not?
- What were your initial impressions in creating your own media? Please describe your experience.
- Why did you choose to create your own media?
- Have you shared your media outside the center?

- What benefits have you experienced in making your own media?

Community Building

- Do you participate in community events? If so, what?
- Do you feel a strong sense of community in this area?
- How do you see your media helping your community?
- Do you feel like your media could help your community further discussion of important social topics? If so, in what ways?
- Do you feel like your media could strengthen your community? If so, in what ways?

Civic Engagement

- Are you politically involved? If so, in what ways?
- Have you contributed to making your community stronger since taking this media class? If so, in what ways?
- What actions do you think need to be taken to make your community stronger?
- To what extent do you feel compelled to participate in your community since taking this media class?

Appendix B

Sanctuary Women's Development Center Staff Questionnaire

General

- How did you get involved with The Sanctuary Women's Development Center?
- How long have you been involved here?
- What are your responsibilities?
- How do you view the contribution of your involvement here? Clarification: Do you feel like you're making a difference in the women's lives? Do you feel appreciated? Etc.

Media Impact

- What are your views on how homelessness and poverty are portrayed in the mass media?
- What steps do you think should be taken to ensure more accurate coverage?

Media Education: Thinking about your interaction with the women last fall and/or this summer.

- What have clients directly said to you about the media class I taught last fall and/or this summer?
- What have you overheard clients say to each other about the media class?
- Are there noticeable differences in women's behavior, discussion, or attitudes after they have taken the media class? If so, what?
- What other repercussions have you noticed at the Center that you think might be attributed to the media class?
- What benefit do you see the media class providing these women?

- What do you think the media class should change/address based on your interactions with participants?

Community Building

- Do you feel the media class helps to create or strengthen a sense of community at the center? If so, in what ways?
- Do you feel the media class is encouraging social discussion of topics that are not normally discussed at the center? If so, what topics in what ways?
- Do you feel the media class allows participants to openly discuss potentially controversial issues? If so, in what ways?

Any other comments or observations you have regarding the media class at Sanctuary Women's Development Center:

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Community Media-Civic Engagement Study
Principal Investigator: Cindy Vincent
Department: Communication

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at Sanctuary Women's Development Center in Oklahoma City, OK. You were selected as a possible participant because you are associated with the Sanctuary Women's Development Center.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is to examine the role of community media education in increasing civic engagement through the use of alternative, citizens' media. Research questions will focus on the role community media education play in civic engagement, the impacts of community media production, and how community media education empowers community members.

Number of Participants
Approximately 5-10 people will take part in this study.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: This study will entail an in-depth interview session to be conducted at the Sanctuary Women's Development Center in Oklahoma City, OK. The interview will be held for approximately 30-120 minutes (depending on applicability of question series) and will be audio recorded. To maintain subject confidentiality, demographic questions like name and location will not be asked. Research data will be stored up to 3 years on the researcher's computer until the dissertation is complete and approved. Ethnographic meeting notes will be typed, password-protected and stored on the researcher's computer. Hard copy notes taken while on-site will be maintained on the researcher at all times and stored in the researcher's home office with limited access until transferred to computer. Hard copy notes will be stored up to 3 years in the researcher's office until the dissertation is complete and approved.

Length of Participation
Length of time of participation will be over a one-day to two-month period for initial interviews and any follow-up interviews that may be applicable. Termination of participation by researcher will only happen in cases where participant is determined to be unassociated with the organization's initiatives.

This study has the following risks:
There is a potential risk to undocumented participants visiting the center. This risk will be minimized by limited collection of identification (only asking first names and not asking for proof of identification or legal documentation) and through the use of pseudonyms to protect the identification of all participants.

Benefits of being in the study are:
The benefits to participation are: increasing knowledge of how to increase civic engagement and efficacy of alternative media.

Confidentiality
In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include Dr. Clemencia Rodriguez and the OU Institutional Review Board.

Compensation
You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Audio Recording of Study Activities
To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. ___ Yes ___ No.

Video Recording of Study Activities
In order to preserve an event/activity related to the research, activities may be recorded on a video recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to video recording. ___ Yes ___ No.

Photographing of Study Participants/Activities
In order to preserve an image related to the research, photographs may be taken of participants. You have the right to refuse to allow photographs to be taken without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to photographs. ___ Yes ___ No.

Contacts and Questions
If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at (916) 233-8184 or cindy.vincent@ou.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Clemencia Rodriguez, Associate Professor, University of Oklahoma, at (405) 325-1570 or clemencia@ou.edu.

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.
Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature Date

Appendix D

****Tentative Course Syllabus****

Media Skills, Production & Literacy Course
Provided for the Sanctuary Women's Development Center
Provided by, Cindy Vincent
Cindy.Vincent@ou.edu

Course Description and Objectives
This will be an eight-week course, designed with each class being stand-alone in nature; however, the more classes you attend, the more media production skills and literacy you will learn. In this course we will develop media production skills and citizen journalism skills. We will also look at the role of media in our everyday lives, the power of media to shape public conversations, and the potential of media as a tool for community participation. This course will specifically help to develop the ability to question media content and to think critically about how media make meaning and affect our lives.

Content Area Overview
Media Overview: This class will provide an overview of community media, citizens' media, and media literacy. By providing a background of mainstream media we can then look at the importance of community media and citizens' media. The use of citizens' journalism is increasing in our society and it is important to train community members how to create and produce their own media to add to what professional journalists produce. We will also examine media messages and our own use of media to improve our media consumption habits.

Writing Basics: This class will focus on basic writing skills, how to write an article, how to write a blog, and how to publish your writing on the Internet. Unlike formal education writing classes, this class will focus on finding and shaping your own voice and letting your voice tell your life experiences and struggles. Through shaping your voice you will then be able to add your perspective to the larger social dialogue through your own blog you create throughout the duration of the course.

Public Speaking: This class will address basic public speaking skills. Speaking in front of a camera or to an audio recorder requires a different set of speaking skills than everyday conversations. We will cover basic public speaking skills (audience analysis, delivery, speech organization) to help you address large audiences, small groups, and mediated environments (i.e. a video recorder). These skills can be used in the workplace as presentation skills, in an activist format to address large crowds, or to improve your daily speaking abilities in general.

Audio Production: This class will teach audio recording and production skills. You will learn a brief background of radio as a traditional medium in American society and the progression to online audio as a new medium. With the use of a digital recorder you will learn how to record sound, work the equipment, speak audio production

terminology, and use audio production concepts. You will also learn how to upload audio clips to the Internet and add them to your blog.

Interviewing: This class will cover a citizen's journalist approach to interviewing. In classic journalism classes you would learn the inverted pyramid format for collective interviews and writing an article. In this class we will build from classic journalism and focus on a citizen journalist approach. Using digital recorders you will learn how to ask and record interviews as a citizen journalist.

Art as media: This class will address alternative media forms and give guidance on how to use art forms as an alternative to mass media. In addition to traditional media and new media formats we will also discuss how art forms such as poetry, theater, painting, and spoken word can be media forums for you to use as a citizen journalist. We will briefly discuss various art forms, specifically focusing on art forms you are familiar with or have interest in learning, and use those art forms to add to your online blog.

Photography: This class will teach basic skills in photography and how to create citizen photojournalism. Basic skills will include how to use the camera, how to frame shots, black and white versus color, and other camera techniques. Through the use of photography you can shape your "voice" through images, capturing your world through pictures. We will discuss the power of photojournalism images in general as well as how you can these skills in other contexts. You will learn how to upload photos and share them on your blog as well.

Video Production: This class will address video production basics. With the growing use of Internet sites like YouTube, video production has become easier to do and easier to publish for the world to see. Basic skills include how to use the equipment, camera angles, camera frames, speak video production terminology, and use video production concepts. You will shoot videos that depict your voice and learn how to upload them to YouTube and share them on your blog.

Media Overview I



I. What is media? Types of Media
    a. Mass media vs.
    b. Interactive media
II. What is your experience with media?
    a. What types of media do you use?
    b. Have you ever made your own media?
    c. What is your opinion of the media you use (consume)?
    d. How can media be better?
III. Who controls the media?
    a. Gatekeeper
    b. Media consolidation
    c. Media convergence
    d. The Corporation: 1:29:36-1:40:33
    e. Digital Divide/Net Neutrality
        i. Internet video
        ii. Free Air video
    f. Where do you fit into that?
IV. Why should you care? 10 Things Big Media Don't Want You to Know
    a. 5 companies dominate the media
    b. Big media use our airwaves for free
    c. Big media want to control the Internet
    d. Digital Divide in America
    e. U.S. broadband is slow and expensive
    f. Big media kill quality journalism
    g. Consolidation is killing local radio
    h. Media owners don't represent America
    i. Public broadcasting is badly underfunded
    j. Big media spend big money in Washington
V. What can you do?
    a. Make your own media!
        i. Blogs
        ii. Online articles
        iii. Citizen journalism/Citizen photo journalism
        iv. YouTube videos
        v. Online audio bites
        vi. Websites

Media Overview II



I. Review
   a. Mass media vs. Interactive media
   b. Media Control
   c. Media & You

II. Why should you care? 10 Things Big Media Don't Want You to Know
   a. 5 companies dominate the media
   b. Big media use our airwaves for free
   c. Big media want to control the Internet
   d. Digital Divide in America
   e. U.S. broadband is slow and expensive
   f. Big media kill quality journalism
   g. Consolidation is killing local radio
   h. Media owners don't represent America
   i. Public broadcasting is badly underfunded
   j. Big media spend big money in Washington

III. Where do you fit in the media?
   a. Who are you?
   b. What is your story?
   c. Voice
      i. Struggle
   d. Is your voice reflected in the media?
      i. [example of media coverage of homelessness/poverty: http://knowit.newsok.com/homeless-oklahoma]

IV. What can you do?
   a. Make your own media!
      i. Blogs
      ii. Online articles
      iii. Citizen journalism/Citizen photo journalism
      iv. YouTube videos
      v. Online audio bites
      vi. Websites
   b. Activity
      i. Choose one medium to create a short clip/story that reflects your voice

Writing: Blogs & Articles



I. Writing
    a. Power of language
    b. Language domination
    c. How to write:
        i. Simple
        ii. Clear
        iii. Honest

II. Writing Activity
    a. On a sheet of paper write a couple of sentences/one paragraph about your story/struggle/or issue that's important to you
    b. Share writing with group

III. Blogs & Articles
    a. POOR Magazine examples
    b. Types of blogs: Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr
    c. How to create a blog
        i. Pick a site
        ii. Create account
        iii. Pick template/design
        iv. Write first post!

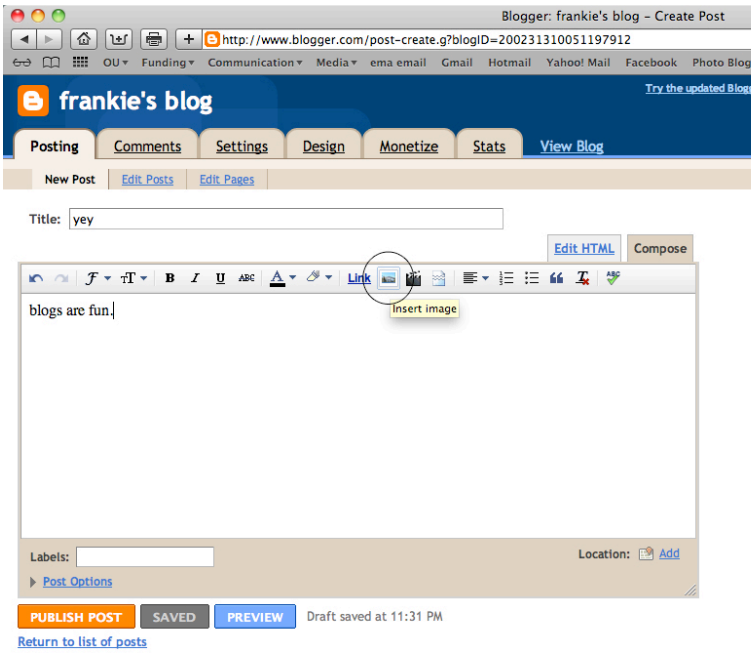
IV. What else would you like to learn?

How To Set Up an Email Account through Hotmail

- Go to www.hotmail.com
- Click the button that says Sign Up
- Fill in the form on the page
- Click “I accept” on the bottom

How To Set Up a Blog through Blogger

- Go to www.blogger.com
- Click the button that says Get Started
- Fill in the form, including the email address you set up in the previous step
- Check the “I accept” box at the bottom and click “Continue”
- Choose a title for your blog
    - Example: Frankie’s Blog
- Choose the address you would like for your blog
- Click “Continue”
- Choose a starter template, basically how you want your blog to look
- Then you can either customize the way your blog looks or start blogging by clicking on one of the links
    - Customize lets you pick different background pictures or layouts for your blog
    - When done click “Apply to blog”, then “Back to Blogger”
    - Then click the tab called “Posting” to go to where you write your blog
- Type in a title if you want for that post
    - Enter your text in the large box
    - To add a picture click on the icon for “insert image”



- Click Choose File
- Find the picture you would like to upload from where it is saved on the computer (the picture should be saved on the computer first)
- Select the picture
- Click “Choose”
- Click “Add selected”

- When you are done with your post click “Publish Post”
- To see your post click “View Post”
- Share your blog address with friends, family and your community!

Public Speaking Basics



Three purposes

- To inform
- To entertain
- To persuade

Credibility: How believable are you to speak on this subject

- Two key parts of credibility
  - Competence: Ability
  - Honesty
- To increase how others' view your competency
  - Associate yourself with other high-credibility sources
- To increase how others' view your trustworthiness
  - Indicate your similarity with the audience members

Message

- Three parts of a speech
  - Introduction: The beginning
  - Body: The middle
  - Conclusion: The end
- Evidence
  - Examples
  - Quotations: Something someone else has said
  - Statistics: Percentages, 25 % of people say . . .
  - Analogies: Comparisons, Reading a book is like turning a light on in your head.
- Language
  - Use specific language and words that help paint a picture in someone's mind
- Humor
  - Use humor when it will help lighten the mood, get the audience laughing, and enhance the speaker's credibility.

Delivery

- Good delivery includes:

    - Eye contact, posture, general physical appearance, and vocal quality: Pitch, volume, and rate of speech
- Four types of delivery:
    - Impromptu: Little to no preparation, "off the cuff"
    - Reading from paper
    - Memorized
    - Extemporaneous: Prepared with note cards or speaking points
- STAR Organization
    - S: Situation: Address the situation
    - T: Task: Address how to solve the task
    - A: Action: State what action needs to take place
    - R: Result: State what will result from the action

Persuasion

- The five steps of Monroe's Motivated Sequence:
    - Attention: Get audience to listen to what you are saying
    - Need: Get audience to share your need for what you are proposing
    - Satisfaction: What satisfaction will your audience get from what you are proposing
    - Visualization: Describe how audience's life will be better with your proposal
    - Action: What action your audience needs to take to do what you are proposing
- Example:
    - Attention: I have been homeless in Oklahoma City for the last ten years.
    - Need: One thing that has helped me is the local women's shelter. The city council is proposing to close it but if they do then I will be back on the streets. We need to keep the shelter open.
    - Satisfaction: This local shelter helps me and others stay off the streets and stay safe at night. This benefits the city and us by reducing crimes that happen to us and other community members.
    - Visualization: Imagine being able to walk down the streets at night and know that we don't have to face the harsh Oklahoma winters.
    - Action: What we need you to do is contact the city council and tell them to keep the shelter open. The more voices that support the shelter, our community, and us the better our chances of keeping the shelter open.

Citizen Journalism



I. What is citizen journalism
   a. The ability to create the news from your perspective and share it with a mass audience through new media
   b. What does it consist of?
      i. Photos
      ii. Videos
      iii. Story ideas
      iv. Articles
      v. Blogs

II. How do I become a citizen journalist?
   a. Channels for citizen journalism
      i. CNN iReport: http://ireport.cnn.com
      ii. Oklahoman: http://newsok.com/
         1. Share Your Stories with Us (bottom of home page)
      iii. KFOR: http://community.kfor.com/
         1. Your Space
      iv. Other websites
         1. http://www.indmedia.org
         2. http://www.allvoices.com/
         3. http://www.newsvine.com/
         4. http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page
         5. http://www.demotix.com/
         6. http://www.digitaljournal.com/
         7. http://www.nowpublic.com
      v. Your own media!
         1. Blogs
         2. YouTube
         3. Personal website

III. Why should I care about being a citizen journalist?
   a. 5 companies dominate the media
   b. Big media want to control the Internet
   c. Digital Divide in America
   d. Big media kill quality journalism
   e. Media owners don't represent America

IV. Citizen Journalism Resources
   a. Information: http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2006/09/your-guide-to-citizen-journalism270.html
   b. Tools: http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Tools_for_citizen_journalism
   c. Inspiration: http://video.pbs.org/video/2090024377/

Art as Media



I. How can art be used as media?
    a. Street art
        i. Banksy
        ii. Shephard Fairy: Obey
        iii. Space Invader
    b. Local art
        i. D.I.Y. vs. Gallery art
II. Why should I make art as media?
    a. Equipment is cheaper than digital media equipment
    b. It reaches a mass audience (i.e. town, state, country, world)
III. What art could I make?
    a. Painting
    b. Posters
    c. Drawing
    d. Jewelry
    e. Quilt-making
    f. Digital art
    g. Performance art
    h. Spoken word
    i. Theater
    j. Anything!
IV. What art should I make?
    a. Anything that speaks to you
        i. Medium
        ii. Message
        iii. Distribution
V. Examples?
    a. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIoG29LDw1w
    b. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOy0O69nrp0&feature=relmfu



Your Story through Audio



I. What is your story?
    a. Who are you?
    b. What is your story?
    c. Voice
        i. Struggle
    d. Is your voice reflected in the media?
        i. [example of media coverage of homelessness/poverty: http://knowit.newsok.com/homeless-oklahoma]

II. How can your story be used for citizen journalism?
    a. The ability to create the news from your perspective and share it with a mass audience through new media
    b. What does it consist of?
        i. Photos
        ii. Videos
        iii. Story ideas
        iv. Articles
        v. Blogs
    c. Channels for citizen journalism
        i. CNN iReport: http://ireport.cnn.com
        ii. Oklahoman: http://newsok.com/
        iii. http://www.indmedia.org
        iv. http://www.allvoices.com/
        v. Your own media!

III. Citizen Journalism 101
    a. How to interview
        i. Plan questions in advance
        ii. Ask questions in a direct manner to get a clear response
        iii. Ask questions that will get the best "sound bite" for your story while still being accurate and true to the interviewee
        iv. Ask questions that get at the heart of the matter
        v. Ask questions to get a different perspective from your own
    b. How to be interviewed
        i. Think about what you want to say before you say it
        ii. Try and be clear in your message
        iii. Answer the question directly
        iv. Add stories or examples to help strengthen your message
        v. Stay true to yourself and your experience
    c. How to report
        i. Answer the 5 Ws (and 1 H)
            1. Who?
            2. What?

3. Where?
4. When?
5. Why?
6. How?

ii. Try to capture the scene in rich detail through your observations

IV. How to use the Olympus audio recorder

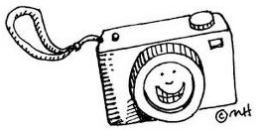
a. Move hold slider down to turn on
b. Push REC to start recording
    i. Push REC to pause recording
    ii. Push STOP to stop recording
    iii. Push PLAY to play back recording
        1. To raise/lower the volume during playback push the lpus or minus buttons
    iv. To move to different audio files on recorder, push forward or backward buttons
    v. To erase an audio file from the recorder push the ERASE button

V. Audio Recording Sylistics

a. How to hold recorder
    i. With fingers on either side of recorder in a way that is comfortable for your hand and wrist to avoid moving the recorder around a lot while you are recording
b. Where to hold recorder
    i. No more than 12 inches from speaker
    ii. If the audio recorder is sitting on a table be careful of table vibrations that will effect audio recording
c. Noise
    i. Avoid audio recording where it is windy
    ii. Avoid audio recording where there is a lot of traffic
    iii. Avoid audio recording where there are a lot of noisy people
    iv. Try to record in an area where it is quiet to reduce picking up a lot of background noise on the recorder



Stories through Pictures & Video



I. How to use the Kodak Mini-Video Camera for Photos
    a. Turn on camera (power button on right-hand side)
    b. To get to camera setting, push Right Arrow till little picture of camera shows on bottom right-hand side
    c. To take picture, line up image in video display and push gray button in center
        i. To zoom in/out, push up and down buttons
II. Photography Stylistics
    a. Framing
        i. Make sure image is centered on screen before taking picture
        ii. Be aware of "power" angles
            1. Camera angle pointing down on someone makes them look like a victim
            2. Camera angle pointing up at someone makes them look like they're domineering
        iii. Distance
            1. Be aware of what you are "cropping" in and out of photos
                a. Do you want there to be a lot of background or do you want to focus solely on the person/object/thing?
                b. What you include (or exclude) in the picture will change the meaning of the picture
    b. Lighting
        i. Be aware of lighting in area
            1. Too much light will fade out image
            2. Too little light will make image hard to see
        ii. Play with lighting to see how you can better illuminate the person/object/thing you are focusing on
III. How to use the Kodak Mini-Video Camera for Videos
    a. Turn on camera (power button on right-hand side)
    b. To get to video setting, push Right Arrow
        i. Video Settings
            1. VGA: Low quality video resolution, good for TV
            2. QVGA/30, good for Internet, 30 frames per second
            3. QVGA/60, good for Internet, 60 frames per second-better resolution
    c. To take video, line up image in video display and push gray button in center
    d. To zoom in/out, push up and down buttons
IV. Video Recording Sylistics
    a. How to hold video recorder

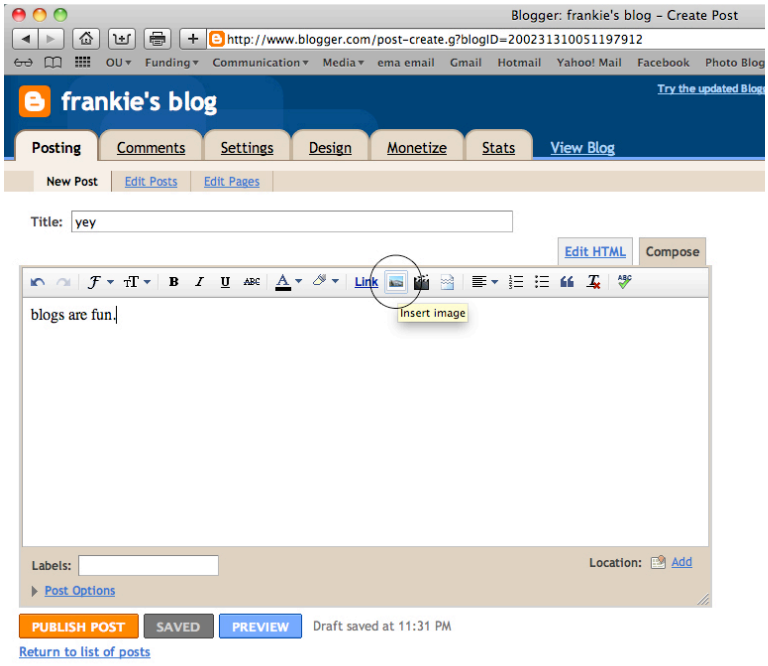
i. With fingers on either side of recorder in a way that is comfortable for your hand and wrist to avoid moving the recorder around a lot while you are recording

b. Noise
   i. Try to record in an area where it is quiet to reduce picking up a lot of background noise on the video recorder
   ii. Be aware that the video recorder will pick up noises closest to the microphone so stand close enough to what you are recording to pick up the audio clearly

c. Also be aware of the framing and lighting techniques noted above

V. Uploading your photos/videos
   a. Open the case of the video recorder at the bottom by lifting the snap
   b. Push the orange button to the right to release the USB
   c. Plug the USB end into the USB port on the computer
   d. Open the folder for the camera that appears on the desktop
   e. Move files to the computer desktop

VI. Uploading photos to your blog
   a. Go to www.blogger.com and enter your username and password to login
   b. Click the link for "New Post"
      i. Type in a title if you want for that post
      ii. To add a picture click on the icon for "insert image"



iii. Click Choose File
iv. Find the picture you would like to upload from where it is saved on the computer

v. Select the picture
vi. Click “Choose”
vii. Click “Add selected”
viii. Add a photo caption if you would like
ix. When you are done with your post click “Publish Post”

c. To see your post click “View Post”
d. Share your blog address with friends, family and your community!

VII. Uploading videos to your blog

a. Click the link for “New Post”
i. Type in a title if you want for that post
ii. To add a video click on the icon for “insert video” (next to insert image)
iii. To upload a video from the computer
1. Click “Choose a Video to Upload”
2. Find the video you would like to upload from where it is saved on the computer
3. Select the video
4. Click “Upload”
iv. To upload a video from YouTube click “My YouTube Videos” (once you have followed the directions below to upload video to YouTube)
v. Add a video caption if you would like
vi. When you are done with your post click “Publish Post”

VIII. Uploading videos to YouTube

a. Create a YouTube account
i. Go to www.youtube.com
ii. Click on Create Account
iii. Enter email address, password, location, birth date, and CAPTCHA screen shot
iv. Review the Terms of Agreement and click “I Accept”

b. To upload video
i. Click the link for “Upload” (at the top)
ii. Click “Select Files from Computer”
iii. Find the video you would like to upload from where it is saved on the computer
iv. Select the video
v. While it is uploading fill in information about the video
1. Title
2. Description
3. Tags: Keywords that will help people search for your video, i.e. poverty, homeless, incarceration
4. Choose a category your video falls under, i.e. Education
5. Check the box for Standard YouTube license, which does not allow other people to edit your video
6. Check your privacy preference (public → private)

vi. Once it is uploaded it will give you a link to your video for you to share your video with other people

IX. Citizen Journalism 101

a. How to interview
    i. Plan questions in advance
    ii. Ask questions in a direct manner to get a clear response
    iii. Ask questions that will get the best "sound bite" for your story while still being accurate and true to the interviewee
    iv. Ask questions that get at the heart of the matter
    v. Ask questions to get a different perspective from your own
b. How to be interviewed
    i. Think about what you want to say before you say it
    ii. Try and be clear in your message
    iii. Answer the question directly
    iv. Add stories or examples to help strengthen your message
    v. Stay true to yourself and your experience
c. How to report
    i. Answer the 5 Ws (and 1 H)
        1. Who?
        2. What?
        3. Where?
        4. When?
        5. Why?
        6. How?
    ii. Try to capture the scene in rich detail through your observations