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ALTERNATIVE MEDIA FOR PUBLIC PEDAGOGY:  
“CHIEF” CONCERNS AND HUMAN AGENCY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## **Abstract**

To demonstrate how the growing influence of alternative media in civil society correlates with the rise of social movements and their influence on contemporary manifestations of resistance, this research uses critical ethnographic methodologies to document the narratives of alternative media producers in the pro-Indigenous and anti-“Chief” campaigns at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign during the 2006-2007 school year. These narratives demonstrate not only the ways alternative media help transmit dissent by distributing information to diverse populations, but also the manner they facilitate contexts that influence identity formations and strengthen counter-cultural communal practices.

Particular lineages of critical social theory are used to situate knowledge construction and social relationships within specific socio-historic contexts to approach issues of subjectivity, human agency, and resistance. These include the Frankfurt School for Social Research, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and the Brazilian education philosopher Paulo Freire, who emphasize criticality based on the engagement of ideological analysis, as well as developing capacities to critique and resist oppressive social and political relationships. Thus, this study argues for expanding traditional notions of literacy to include the ability to decode and produce media as a critical element of meaningful democratic participation.

*Dedicated to Quetzalli Meztli, Laura Galicia, Mary Irene and Doña Chuy*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On March 13, 2007, the Board of Trustees (BOT) for the University of Illinois announced the retirement of its Urbana-Champaign campus mascot. The mascot, popularly known as “Chief Illiniwek”, made its first appearance in 1926 when an Anglo-American student dressed in “Native” regalia and entertained fans during a football halftime show. What followed were decades of unchallenged affinity by hundreds of thousands of fans within the local community, the student body and a powerful alumni network. The university administration embraced this mascot and capitalized on the commodification of American Indian<sup>1</sup> imagery by sanctioning its “Native” logo on various products including clothing, beer cans and even toilet paper.

Controversy surrounding the depiction of American Indians for half-time entertainment at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign surfaced in the 1970s and increased in the late 1980s when American Indian graduate students and their allies drew national attention to the mascot’s racist implications. The resistance continued over a twenty-year period, with major lulls in the movement interrupted by direct actions such as petitions, rallies, protests, and a sit-in at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Henry Administration Building in March of 2004. Ultimately, those working to end the use of American Indian imagery persevered despite enthusiastic support for “Chief Illiniwek” by members of the University of

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<sup>1</sup> At the University of Illinois, the terms “American Indian” and “Native American” are commonly accepted and used interchangeable. For example, in 2002, students were successful in fighting for a “Native American House” while in 2007 an “American Indian Studies” undergraduate minor was approved within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. See Shari Huhndorf, (2001); Sandy Grande, (2004); Elivira Pulitano, (2003); Joy Porter & Kenneth Roemer, (2005) for additional discussion on this topic.

Illinois Board of Trustees (BOT), student organizations, alumni, state politicians, community members, and local corporate media.

The transient nature of university life and the small number of American Indian students, staff and faculty on the UIUC campus made sustaining organized opposition to the “Chief” extremely difficult. While various departments on campus drafted statements in support of “Chief Illiniwek’s” retirement, for example, unwritten administrative mandates and fear of backlash by pro-mascot supporters continually silenced powerless segments of the opposition whose jobs depended on their complacency.

Nevertheless, toward the end of the mascot’s reign, a network of alternative media producers<sup>2</sup> within the movement began to emerge. Their commentary, reporting and analysis regarding the mascot appeared on Webpages, blogs, listservs and community radio, and broadened the resistance by disseminating vital information across diverse networks of pro-Indigenous and anti-mascot groups. This included many sovereign American Indian nations opposed to the use of Indigenous imagery for school mascots and other derogatory roles in popular culture, as well as organizations such as the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media and the National Congress of American Indians whose statements helped contextualize the local anti-mascot movement within a broader national framework.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “alternative media producers” is used to describe a group of people who chose to create media content for public distribution in ways that were not directly controlled, edited, or censored by corporate or government entities. Within this definition, the University of Illinois is treated as a government entity because the mascot in question is a University symbol and the University itself is a state government organization that actively attempted to control and censor the discourse on this issue. See United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, *Crue, McKinn, Reese, Farnell, Hoxie, Kaufman, Phillips v. Aiken*, 02-3627, 03-2281 & 03-2951, (2004)

In the end, it was action by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) that ultimately placed the needed pressure to force the University's BOT to end the use of the UIUC mascot. Members of the NCAA received a massive quantity of letters and documentation from Native and non-Native individuals and national organizations supporting the immediate cessation of the mascot's reign. These letters were the outcome of grassroots campaigns organized at the UIUC campus. In particular, some faculty in American Indian Studies used alternative media to solicit letters from wider networks of allies. In this sense, the use of alternative media proved essential to the struggle against "Chief Illiniwek." Not only did it enable the collaboration of informed and increasingly diverse coalitions, it inspired multiple forms of dissent by producing and strengthening the oppositional collective identities of those involved in the movement to end the use of the UIUC mascot.

An important aspect of my preparation for this work has been as a participant, organizer, and emerging activist scholar (Corntassel, 2004) within various pro-Native American and anti "Chief" campaigns on the UIUC campus. Since the fall of 2003, I have been intimately involved with attempts to build and sustain various coalitions in support of the mascot's retirement. This history includes my participation in organizing processes where an emphasis on dialogue exposed institutional structures that reified the mascot and revealed possibilities for resistance in multiple contexts. My involvement also highlights the important work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1998a, 1998b, 2004) in my understanding of pedagogy as a political endeavor. Freire's call to break from histories of silence informs my appreciation of the need for critical media literacy and its emphasis on media production for public pedagogy. It is my hope this research illuminates new ways of viewing Freirian pedagogy and provide concrete examples

of how the production and distribution processes using alternative media can be critically appropriated in ways that help mobilize, sustain, and build collective actions for social justice.

Those interviewed for this project include influential anti-“Chief” and pro-Native American organizers and activists at UIUC who produced alternative media content to inform and educate the public on the issue. These individuals became motivated to produce content to counter official narratives and positions endorsing the mascot and the well-financed media campaigns by pro-“Chief” supporters. Their actions also worked to counter information delivered by local corporate media outlets, many owned by larger media monopolies, who failed to adequately inform the local public of oppositional stances concerning the mascot and its impact on the American Indian community at UIUC and other racialized populations on campus.

### **Key Research Questions**

The key research questions to be addressed by this project include the following:

1. How did critical media literacy contextualize the use of alternative media as a means for public pedagogy?
2. In what ways did the human agency of alternative media producers overcome the limits and confinement of corporate and government controlled media?
3. How did the use of alternative media contribute to social network movements?
4. What were some primary obstacles and limits faced by alternative media producers?

### **Significance of This Study**

The body of research on the uses and consequences of American Indian sports mascots has grown considerably in the past ten years (Fryberg, 2008; Gone, 2002; Kim-Prieto, Goldstein, Okazaki & Kirschner, 2010; King & Springwood, 2001; Spindel, 2002). Scholars in American Indian Studies demonstrate how the politics of representation and the ideologies that inform

processes of “othering” exhibit material and psychological consequences in the lives of American Indian populations (Fryberg, 2008; Gone, 2002). These relationships operate within political economies that promote racist assumptions of American Indians as a means to justify their oppression, while commodifying their identities and supporting positive self-concepts within majority populations.

Carol Spindel’s (2002) book, *Dancing at Halftime*, is informed by archival research and provides historical contexts for the creation and manifestations of the “Chief” mascot. Spindel documents the activism of American Indian graduate students and their analysis regarding the impact of the mascot upon the Native community. Spindel’s book includes an interview with Jay Rosenstein, a filmmaker who was inspired by UIUC graduate student Charlene Teeters to create his first documentary, *In Whose Honor*, as a means to counter the preferred meanings of “Chief” supporters and the local corporate media. This use of alternative media made the UIUC mascot a national issue and expanded the scope of the local struggle to include other manifestations of American Indian mascots across the United States. Through the use of the Internet and listservs, local activists circulated information about Rosenstein’s film, thereby bringing national attention to UIUC’s mascot controversy. Although there are a handful of books and articles about UIUC’s mascot issue, nobody has yet written about the period when the mascot was retired or the organizing efforts that led to the end of “Chief Illiniwek”.

The pro-Indigenous and anti-mascot work at UIUC also exemplifies recent approaches in social movement theory and Internet studies that emphasize the growing influence of new technologies involved in cultural production and democratic social networks (Castells, 2007; Coyer, 2005; Downing, 2001; Garrido & Halavais, 2003; Halleck, 2002; Kid, 2003; Reed, 2005; Ronfeldt, Arquilla, G. Fuller, & M. Fuller, 1998; Schiller, 2007; Schulz, 1998; Silver, 2003).

David Silver (2003), for example, emphasizes the historical importance of documenting online activist movements by engaging ethnographic research to document issues of production:

[T]aking our cue from existing ethnographic-based scholarship in Internet studies, we must talk with, listen to, and learn from the many players of cyberactivism. Through surveys, in-depth interviews, and participant observation, we should collect our stories firsthand: from activists and artists, from offline site coordinators and online site designers, from institutions targeting the social movement, and from institutions targeted by the social movement. Indeed, online activism is not and cannot be contained within a single party line or origins myth. To better understand our subject, we must engage firsthand with its multiple and diverse players. (p. 289)

Silver's insights inform the recent interests and growth in Internet studies across university campuses and the impact they have on other academic disciplines. Kate Coyers (2005) argues that alternative and radical media producers contribute to organizing efforts by strengthening oppositional cultures and political positions. That is, communal efforts in analysis, knowledge production, and distribution assist in the movement's engagement, comprehension, and ability to mobilize social networks. Other researchers see the need for additional empirical investigations showing how public spheres are engaged and mediated to connect practices that link private actions with civic engagement (Couldry, Lingstone & Markham, 2007).

Because this particular project investigates the roles of alternative media production within the wider movement of pro-Indigenous and anti-"Chief" organizers, the term "social network" is used to define the loose affiliation of activists, organizers and concerned individuals who were in communication with each other in multiple capacities to end the use of the "Chief" Illiniwek mascot at UIUC. This conception of social network is provided by Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani (2006) and is tied directly to the concept of social movement.

Social movements are a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity. (p. 20)

As it pertains to the UIUC mascot, those struggling to end its use were clearly in conflictual relations with UIUC administrators – namely the University of Illinois Board of Trustees who held the power to change the type of mascot used at the Urbana-Champaign campus. These conflictual relations also extended to the local corporate media, local politicians, and a fan base that supported (and still supports) the continued use of the mascot. However, leadership within the pro-Indigenous and anti-“Chief” movements, who were engaged in these adverse relationships at multiple levels were not organized in any particular hierarchical manner. Instead, leadership was dispersed amongst various organizations or amongst individuals acting alone, but who identified as collaborative agents opposing the use of a Native mascot at UIUC.

Other researchers of social movements emphasize the non-hierarchical nature of networks. For example, Joel M. Podolny and Karen L Page (1998) contextualize network forms of organizing as both enduring and lacking “legitimate” leadership structures.

We define a network form of organization as any collection of actors that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange. (p. 59)

Donatella Della Porta and Mario Dianna (2006) position the term “network” within a social movement process. This process includes entities within a network maintaining a sense of autonomy while contributing their resources. The coordination of this process is ongoing as the network pursues common goals.

A social movement process is in place to the extent that both individual and organized actors, while keeping their autonomy and independence, engage in sustained exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals. The coordination of specific initiatives, the regulation of individual actors’ conduct, and the definition of strategies all depend on permanent negotiations between the individuals and the organizations involved in collective action. No single organized actor, no matter how powerful, can claim to represent a movement as a whole. (p. 21)

Castells (2000) also affirms the loose affiliation aspect of networks by referring to them as “open structures” bound together by communication processes.

Networks are open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they are able to communicate within the network, namely as long as they share the same communication codes. (p. 501)

By emphasizing the role of communicative processes within social movements, particularly the importance of building understandings of communication codes, the magnitude of alternative media within networks of resistance can be properly contextualized.

Recent alternative media research makes strong correlations between alternative media production and social movements (Atton, 2002a; Downing, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001; Waltz, 2005). These authors, however, do not simply associate alternative media production as an isolated instrument of any particular movement. Instead, they theorize that social movements and alternative media are *interdependent* and function within particular power relationships operating in specific social, cultural and political arenas. For example, Tony Dowmunt and Kate Coyer (2008) position alternative media production as revealing cultural practices “produced by the socially, culturally and politically excluded” (Dowmunt & Coyer, 2007, p. 5). As such, alternative media is a site where negotiations with institutions of power take place:

Our own view is that questions of power, its distribution and exclusions, are key, and that all alternative media work exists and flourishes in the various spaces of ‘relative independence’ from, and negotiation with, institutional power. In other words, like all cultural practices, it is embedded in the real social relations that surround it. It will already be clear that alternative media practices, more obviously than most other media, come out of the specific social, political and cultural circumstances they face. (p. 10)

These assertions hinge on the proposition that economic, social, political and cultural powers are distributed unequally at both local and global levels. Therefore, injustices associated with the resulting inequalities create conditions for resistance. “As long as these inequalities exist there

will be alternative media activists motivated to challenge them” (Downmunt & Coyer, 2007, p. 11).

Chris Atton (2002a, 2002b, 1999) builds upon these notions in his attempt to develop a theory of alternative media that accounts for both explicitly political forms of resistance that involve alternative media, as well as for artistic and literary media expressions that work in the realm of culture and entertainment. He acknowledges the compelling agendas of alternative media producers and the relationships established in the processes in opposing dominant relationships.

The aim of that part of the alternative media interested in news remains simple: to provide access to the media for these groups on those groups’ terms. This means developing media to encourage and normalize such access, where working people, sexual minorities, trade unions, protest groups – people of low status in terms of their relationship to elite groups of owners, managers and senior professionals – could make their own news, whether by appearing in it as significant actors or by creating news relevant to their situation. (Atton, 2002a, p.11)

However, Atton does not insist on positioning alternative media production solely as channels for democratizing communication content for populations traditionally marginalized by corporate or government controlled media. Instead, he attempts to provide a theory of alternative media that includes possible sites of production that engage potentially transformative processes influencing social network formations.

This requires not only the radicalizing of methods of production but a rethinking of what it means to be a media producer. Alternative media, I argue, are crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production. They have to do with organizing media along lines that enable participation and reflexivity. (Atton, 2002a, p. 4)

John Downing (2001), whose research influenced Atton’s focus on process within alternative media production, demonstrates radical alternative media’s historic contributions to social movements by privileging those embracing “counter-hegemonic” practices and agendas. Downing’s (2001) analysis includes a focus on the organizational structure of alternative media

organizations by juxtaposing groups who encourage horizontal democratic participation within processes of production, to those who adhere to hierarchical, authoritarian modes of production. His concerns focus on radical media produced by democratic means, and whose content document the interests of historically marginalized populations exposing the contradictions of hegemonic relationships.

Downing's use of the term "hegemonic" derives from the Italian theorist and labor organizer, Antonio Gramsci (1999, 1987), who used the concept *cultural hegemony* to describe the manner by which consent to rule is generated by one social class over another and whose narratives becomes part of the landscape of common sense thinking. Gramsci's understanding of how governance is managed and legitimized developed as he struggled in his role as an organizer and writer with the alternative press, *Avanti!* and *Grido del Popolo* (Forgacs, 2000). Within his framework, Gramsci positions hegemony as a mixture of persuasion and coercion achieved with minimal use of direct domination through force. Hegemony is the organization of consent through political and ideological leadership (Simon, 1991). By conceptualizing this type of social control not dependent on military strength, Gramsci sought to interrogate and expose how different forms of power reproduced compliance in ways where populations accept inequality and oppression as natural, and willingly replicate dominant relations within daily life.

Gramsci contextualizes cultural hegemonic power within the *war of position* and the *war of maneuver*. The war of maneuver entails the activation and movement of forces such as military and police units, or even street protests. On the other hand, the war of position takes place within civil society and is often associated with intellectual projects where entities manage the routines of civic engagement. David Held (1995) defines the term civil society as,

those areas of social life – the domestic world, the economic sphere, cultural activities, and political interactions – which are organized by private or voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups outside the *direct* control of the state. (p. 57)

Civil society is thus where social networks and activist groups attempt to frame their particular agendas and engage institutional power. Roger Simon (1991) believes that modern social movements, in order to garner popular consent, must activate the war of position within civil society by widening their messages and strategies to include popular ways to frame their issue in order to broaden their chances to form alliances with other social networks.

Examples are the radical and popular struggles for civil liberties, movements for national liberation, the women's movement, the peace movement, and movements expressing the demands of ethnic minorities, of young people or of students. They all have their own specific qualities and cannot be reduced to class struggles even though they are related to them. Thus hegemony has a national-popular dimension as well as a class dimension. It requires the unification of a variety of different social forces into a broad alliance expressing a national-popular collective will, such that each of these forces preserves its own autonomy and makes its own contribution in the advance towards socialism. It is this strategy of building up a broad bloc of varied social forces, unified by a common conception of the world, that Gramsci called a *war of position*. (Simon, p.25)

To expand popular support in civil society, Gramsci (1987) champions the role of public intellectuals to provide alternative readings on commonly held assumptions and publicly critique the contradictions of dominant ideological manifestations. Each new generation that comes into existence, moreover, produces its own intellectuals helping to meaningfully define their particular historical context and class identity. In this way, the intelligencia develops organically but may not necessarily be critical of the existing power structures. Thus, one of the most important characteristics of hegemony, according to Gramsci, is the ability of the dominant class to “ideologically” assimilate those intellectuals and entities that threaten the maintenance of their legitimacy.

Hegemonic assimilation allows for the reproduction of unequal class systems despite repeated challenges by those contesting their domination. This can involve such practices as

government or corporate institutions appropriating slogans, ideologies, or policy “reforms” used or advocated by adversaries. Through this accommodation of possible threats, the dominant hegemony reestablishes authority within the social order.

A passive revolution is involved whenever relatively far-reaching modifications are made to a country’s social and economic structure from above - through the agency of the state, and without relying on the active participation of the people. Social reforms which have been demanded by the opposing forces may be carried out, but in such a way as to [disorganize] these forces and damp down any popular struggles. (Simon, 1999, p. 26)

Thus, hegemonic landscapes should be viewed dynamically, characterized by compromises and processes of negotiation. Under these conditions, the displacement of cultural dominance requires alternative visions of society by opposing forces that must also withstand attempts to assimilate their movements into the very social relationships and practices they struggle to overcome. The war of position thus includes imagining and practicing unconventional relationships of production used to challenge domination. The struggle *for* hegemony by rival forces also involves active participation within civil society as well as alliances amongst diverse groups of social actors.

For John D.H. Downing (2001), radical alternative media is a strategic site for counter-hegemonic actions and relationships to develop and expand. Downing sees the use of radical media as a liberatory tool that can create alternatives in the public sphere and reduce the tendency for oppositional leadership “to entrench itself as an agency of domination rather than freedom” (p. 15). He argues:

Radical media in those scenarios have a mission not only to provide facts to a public denied them but to explore fresh ways of developing a questioning perspective on the hegemonic process and increasing the public’s sense of confidence in its power to engineer constructive change. (p. 16)

Moreover, the distribution of alternative media content can also serve counter-hegemonic struggles attempting to pierce both the dominant consciousness and practices within civil society.

For example, corporate notions of intellectual property are often countered by alternative media producers with ‘anti-copyright’ positions (Atton, 1999). In this way, the content created by alternative media producers can be freely exchanged, thus contributing to the speed by which their messages are disseminated and serving as antithetical models to corporate practices.

Furthermore, both Downing (2001) and Atton (2002a) consider these counter-hegemonic notions of involving intellectual property rights as creating opportunities for passive audience members to become active distributors and creators of alternative media content themselves. Stephen Duncombe (1996) demonstrates how this anti-copyright aspect of alternative media lends itself to understanding the proliferation and significance of “punk zines” within the public sphere. Duncombe’s research also reveals how individuals can undertake multiple production tasks needed in zine creation (such as authors of articles, illustrators, and layout artist) and then distribute their final products to their communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in ways that encourage formally passive audiences to become active producers themselves. Atton (2002a) positions this aspect of Duncombe’s research as exemplifying the potentially radical and counter-hegemonic nature of alternative media production, without privileging the content contained in the distributed product:

In other words, it is not the simple content of a text that is evidence of its radical nature; Duncombe is arguing what many alternative publishers would also argue: that it is the *position* of the work with respect to other relations of production that gives it its power and enables it to avoid recuperation by the mere duplication of its ideas. This is not to deny the significance of the content, rather it is to present it within a productive context that can be the radical equal of content in the pursuit of social change. (Atton, 2002a, p. 18)

Such a participatory model of alternative media production creates contexts where audience members can move from being passive readers of text to active writers. This capacity also situates the acquisition of literacy skills as taking place outside the realms of schooling and within the public sphere in ways that counters dominant notions of civil society and challenges

traditional manifestations of pedagogy. As such, *public pedagogy* becomes a strategic concept for those working to understand the nature of hegemony and the possibilities for resistance.

Situating public pedagogy as aligned with counter-hegemonic practices resonates well with Gramsci's (1999) positioning of hegemony as an inherently educational project: "Every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship..." (p. 350). In this way, hegemony must be viewed as learned processes taking place within cultural and historical relationships involving expressions of power. Hence, pedagogical practices are not relegated solely to the confines of schooling but rather exist within the realms of culture and civil society as well.

Henry Giroux (1999) builds upon Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony by conceptualizing public spheres not only as sites that activate social reproduction but also as potential vehicles for resistance and democratic engagement. This requires that educators include elements of popular culture in the curricula to forge connections with the daily lives of their students and to challenge the hegemonic aspects of neoliberal ideologies.

Learning takes place in a variety of public spheres outside of the schools, and while it is urgent for progressives to defend public and higher education against the ravaging influence of corporate culture, which means defending it as a public asset rather than as a private investment, we must also connect what is taught in the larger culture to the problems of youth and the challenges of radical democracy in a newly constituted global public. Progressive education in an age of rampant neo-liberalism requires an expanded notion of the public, pedagogy, solidarity, and democratic struggle. Crucial here is a conception of the political that is open yet committed, respects specificity and difference without erasing global considerations, and provides new spaces for collaborative work engaged in productive social change. The time has come for educators to develop more systemic political projects in which power, history, and social movements can play an active role in constructing the multiple and shifting political relations and cultural practices necessary for connecting the construction of diverse political constituencies to the revitalization of democratic public life. (Giroux 1999, p. 13)

Giroux's occupation with the impact of neoliberalism on education is a result of the onslaught of privatization efforts upon U.S. schools since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by

the Ronald Reagan administration in 1983. Reagan's embrace of neoliberalism as his ideological model has since created conditions where public education, previously considered an important aspect of civil society, has been transformed into a site for corporate expansion where federal educational policies have controlled the delivery of curricula with demands for high-stakes standardized tests. These test-driven efforts have been accompanied by moves to privatize public schools and impose pre-packaged curriculum materials that effectively de-skill teachers and narrow the curriculum, leaving students trapped in learning environments that are far less relevant to their daily lives.

Giroux's (2004) response exposes neoliberalism as itself a public pedagogical project that disciplines populations to accept its hegemonic status. Within education, this manifests with policies that complement the agendas of corporations within classroom over efforts to create contexts where populations learn to become actively engaged citizens capable of participating in democratic projects and seeing themselves as subjects in history.

Central to the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology is a particular view of education in which market-driven identities and values are both produced and legitimated. Under such circumstances, pedagogy both within and outside of schools increasingly become a powerful force for creating the ideological and affective regimes central to reproducing neo-liberalism. (p. 494)

Giroux's position is not to abandon public education but rather to rethink our understanding of how culture and power have become important sites for both pedagogy and politics. Thus, Giroux calls for strengthening our engagement in and understanding of public pedagogical projects that challenge dominant hegemonic expansion while reinforcing democratic participation. What is currently needed is further research on projects that expose and confront dominant relationships of hegemony within multiple realms of civil society, particularly those that contextualize features of human agency to illuminate the complexities involved in such projects.

## **Methodology**

Giroux's position influences this research in its attempt to contribute to expanding conceptualizations of public pedagogy, while exploring issues related to critical media literacy. In keeping with this purpose, I have chosen to align my theoretical frameworks with critical narrative ethnography. In so doing, knowledge construction and social relationships are contextualized within specific socio-historical contexts as a means to situate manifestations of human agency. Thus, my investigation triangulates theoretical approaches with critical ethnography and reflective participant observations. The data collected from critical narratives are used to examine nuances in alternative media production, with a focus on the influences upon the participants as they sought to engage in public pedagogy as a means of both resistance and liberation.

Critical social theorists (Carspecken, 1996; Kinchloe & McLaren, 2000; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993) connect critical ethnography directly with critical theory by including a focus on relationships involving social justice, culture, social structures, power, and human agency. As such, I am particularly drawn to critical ethnographic research and the incorporation of critical narratives, given that the methodology embraces dialogue, praxis and a commitment to social change (Madison, 2005). In this way, investigations into knowledge construction and social action include issues of human agency without the illusionary constraints of "objectivity" or "neutrality." On the contrary, both critical social theory and critical ethnography represent a defiant contingent within the academy that is not interested in preserving unjust social relationships or cultures of silence:

Critical social theory evolves from a tradition of "intellectual rebellion" that includes radical ideas challenging regimes of power that changed the world. As ethnographers, we employ theory at several levels in our analysis: to articulate and identify hidden forces and ambiguities that operate beneath appearances; to guide judgments and evaluations emanating from our discontent; to direct our attention to the critical

expressions within different interpretive communities relative to their unique symbol systems, customs, and codes; to demystify the ubiquity and magnitude of power; to provide insight and inspire acts of justice; and to name and analyze what is intuitively felt. (Madison, 2005, p.13)

The alignment of critical social theory and critical ethnography deepens the possibilities for change and authenticity regarding the nature of this study. That is, the project investigates subjectivities to discern the affects of structural organizing mechanisms and their impact on alternative media producers within the mascot debate at UIUC. This positions those who produced alternative media as outside the mainstream, with a great desire to explore and express voice and political critique.

Traditional ethnographic approaches may cast these producers as “Others,” regardless of their work toward social justice or their desire to labor for democratic participation within a robust civil society. However, critical ethnography allows the researcher to, “attend to how our subjectivity *in relation to the Other* informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of the Other. We are not simply subjects, but we are subjects in dialogue with the Other” (Madison, 2005, p. 9).

### **Theoretical lens informing critical interpretive research and critical ethnography**

Situating theoretical frameworks expounded by critical social theorists complement investigations into realms of culture as sites of both domestication and resistance. Critical interpretive methodologies in education are particularly relevant and needed as federal educational policies prescribe instrumental “banking” approaches, standardized curricula and high-stakes testing that narrowly define and control processes of inquiry in public schools across the United States.

Critical interpretive research in education illuminates the social and political relationships influencing these contemporary changes, while interrogating how power is constructed and the

manner by which dominant ideas affect our material existence. For this reason, I am interested in how the work and legacies of Birmingham and the Frankfurt School theorists complement the theoretical perspectives of Paulo Freire and other critical pedagogues. These interpretive theoretical frameworks are provocatively synthesized by the writings of Antonia Darder, Henry Giroux and Stuart Hall whose research complement the study of culture and education, while positioning human agency within pedagogies of hope.

Critical interpretive theorists align well with those who problematize a rigid economic determinist stance characteristic of classical Marxism, yet maintain a humanist theoretical position by foregrounding working class culture, experience and agency (Hall, 1980a). Here, the legacy of the theoretical articulations from members of the Birmingham School of Social Research (Richard Hogart, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams,) cannot be overemphasized. It was researchers at the Birmingham School who were often in conflict with “structuralists” like Barth, Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Poulantzas, Althusser who challenged their notion of “human agency”. Currently, the synthesis between early Birmingham scholars (or “culturalists”) and “structuralists” informs contemporary critical social theorists’ positions on how power and resistance become evident in the everyday life of subordinated classes while examining manifestations within human consciousness and experience.

Structuralists analyze how subjectivities develop to sustain capitalist social relations (Giroux, 2001; McAnulla, 2002) while viewing power as a characteristic of arrangements that “not only constitute and position human behavior, but that deny the very effectiveness of human agency” (Giroux, 2001, p. 129). This rejection of the notion of human agency locates ideology as a means to “deceive us into thinking we are subjects” (Appelbaum, 1979, as cited in Giroux, 2001, p. 130). Furthermore, structuralists emphasize that ideology itself is not simply a set of

ideas but has a material existence embedded in social practices and disciplines (Giroux, 2001; McAnulla, 2002). This analytical contribution shifts the emphasis from individual consciousness (as stressed by culturalists) to ideology as a structured feature of the unconscious.

Critical pedagogues often mediate the culturalist/structuralist debate by acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of both and locating them dialectically, rather than as competing theoretical positions. That is, the realms of culture are treated as politicized terrain where issues of citizenship can be engaged by informed and active participants within a potentially radical civil society (Giroux, 2001). This position is textured with a strong capitalist critique as well as with an emphasis on human agency. For example, Freire's (1998a) critique of capitalism actually frames his vision of human agency and the need for resistance:

Globalization theory cleverly hides, or seeks to cloud over, an intensified new edition of that fearful evil that is historical capitalism, even if the new edition is somewhat modified in relation to past versions. Its fundamental ideology seeks to mask that what is really up for discussion is the increasing of wealth of the few and the rapid increase of poverty and misery for the vast majority of humanity. The capitalist system reaches, in its globalizing neo-liberal crusade, the maximum efficacy of its intrinsically evil nature. (1998a, p. 114)

This pronouncement focuses on capitalism's need to create mass global unemployment, poverty and unequal distributions of wealth while pronouncing a "fatalistic" view of history; that the complete expansion of global capitalism is inevitable and the crowning of the market economy absolute. These defeatist views stand in stark opposition to Freire's anti-deterministic understanding of our socio-historical context and the ability of humans to struggle, at all costs, toward emancipation. Freire considered human agency to be "one of the most central themes of a radical pedagogy" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, pp. 59-60). His advocacy for "writing the world," therefore, is a direct call to action. He advocated for people to work together to alter the material conditions that inhibit our intrinsic need for the realization of freedom, humanization and creativity (Darder, 2002).

In addition, concerns about capitalist expansion relate directly to the apprehension of the founding members of the Birmingham Centre with regard to how consumer culture was affecting the British working classes. As mentioned earlier, Birmingham researchers made a decisive break from the economic determinist stance of classical Marxism by foregrounding working class culture and experience. In this way, the Centre's early focus on the contested terrain of popular culture and agency differentiated their assumptions on social change from traditional Marxists who often overlooked the sphere of culture as having a reflexive correlation with the economic base (Hall, 1980a).

Critical interpretive research thus serves as an example of how the theoretical informs practice at multiple realms of analysis. That is, the power of critique is utilized to demonstrate how theoretical frameworks are reinforced as their insights are applied and interrogated within contemporary socio-historical contexts. This approach also provides frameworks for locating the changing representations produced within the current historical, economic, and cultural juncture, while offering an analysis for interrogating the relationships between identity, culture and power (Giroux, 1994).

In using critical interpretive research and critical ethnography, I hope to contribute to a theoretical analysis that is both relevant and necessary, in attempts to understand the challenges and material relationships operating within technologically networked societies and diverse contexts of resistance.

### **Collection of data**

The collection of primary data took place within the context of private interviews with the eight participants for this study. (See appendixes A and B for demographic information.) The interviews ranged in time from 50 minutes to 2 hours. The questions asked of the

participants attempted to connect the theoretical with the methodological. As such, the interview questions focused on issues related to five specific themes:

1. Human agency
2. Overcoming confinement and controlled messages
3. Public pedagogy
4. The challenges associated with alternative media production
5. The theoretical frameworks of the alternative media producers

The format of the interviews was based on a semi-structured format, as suggested by Kathleen M. Blee and Verta Taylor (2002). Participants included UIUC students and faculty, as well as community members from Champaign/Urbana who created content for alternative media informing local and national communities on news and analysis regarding the UIUC mascot, "Chief Illiniwek", during the 2006-2007 school year. The objective was to develop an understanding of the manner by which different forms of alternative media (such as listservs, Websites, and blogs, radio and video) create counter-narratives. At the start of the project, I initiated face-to-face interviews with a sample of people well known for creating alternative media content regarding the UIUC mascot during the 2006-2007 school year. After my initial set of interviews, a "snowball effect" took place, where new participants learned of the project via recommendations made by others.

Specific criteria for participation included:

1. Subjects were active in creating alternative media with content that was directly related to informing the general public about the UIUC mascot during the 2006-2007 school year, using publicly accessible Websites, blogs, listservs, radio, and/or television.
2. Subjects were willing to be audio-recorded.

Individuals meeting this criteria were interviewed and audio-recorded at a University of Illinois facility equipped with professional audio recording equipment. The collected audio-recordings were then transcribed and saved as text documents on a password protected computer.

### **Confidentiality**

All participants interviewed for this project were guaranteed a confidential and secure conversation. The interviewees were recorded on a digital audio recorder directly onto a password protected computer and offered to self-select pseudonyms to protect their identity. When a pseudonym was not chosen by the interviewee, the researcher chose the pseudonyms for them. In some cases, the names of radio stations and radio programs mentioned during interviews were also assigned pseudonyms.

All subjects signed a consent letter prior to beginning face-to-face interviews with the project investigator. Subjects were given ample time to read and consider consent letters carefully prior to signing. The project investigator also provided additional information if requested by the subject. After transcribing and summarizing the interviews, the participants were contacted to perform “members checks.” During this time, they were offered the opportunity to discussing its content and provide input into its construction. Modifications to the data were then made accordingly.

### **Data analysis**

Given this research is aligned with critical social theory, the trustworthiness (Moss, 2004) of the data contributes to its dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and does not attempt to conform to traditional qualitative notions of “reliability”. In this way, the “trustworthiness” was confirmed by each participant along with other measures employed to protect the validity of the data, including: 1). Triangulation (using multiple sources of data) and 2.) “peer examination”

(where a peer examines and becomes familiar with the coding scheme and pertaining to the data and offers their input at various stages of the research).

Prior to the initial members checks, each transcript from the participants were imported into NVivo computer software program. This software allows for the manipulation of large amounts of data, including secondary resources such as literature reviews, articles, field notes, etc. This source material was labeled based on pseudonyms or by author.

The initial task of identifying themes consisted of creating “free nodes” within the NVivo software. Some of the conceptual categories I initially used included “agency,” “overcoming,” “public pedagogy,” “obstacles,” and “theoretical.” However, these categories quickly became limiting and the expansion of the nodes continued. This reevaluation process continued until an overall model developed. Within NVivo, “free nodes” can be re-categorized as “tree-nodes” to facilitate the hierarchical arrangement of the data. In this way, models were constructed to represent the data in multiple ways. After coding the interviews individually, I was able to export specific nodes and tree-nodes with their combined data samples. This process continued as the analysis became more refined and the complexity of the models began to demonstrate relationships.

## **Background**

My interest in critical media literacy, public pedagogy, and the uses of alternative media derive from my own experiences as an elementary school teacher, where I saw firsthand the undeniable affects of politics and popular culture on the lives of students and classroom learning. Yet, educators and administrators frequently respond to these influences dismissively and with authoritarian tendencies, often banning popular culture artifacts from campuses, including modes

of communication, music and style. Furthermore, at a time when the federal government increasingly dictates local educational policies with demands of high stakes standardized testing, a larger disconnect between standardized curriculum and the everyday lives of students becomes more blatant. Public pedagogy, thus, becomes an important site for resistance and alternative media a valuable means to communicate possibilities that overcome the trappings of fatalism.

As a Californian teacher, I also witnessed the increasingly political role that formal schooling played in state politics from 1994 through 2000. It was during these years that the political landscape rapidly changed and directly influenced the pedagogical approaches allowed or supported in the classroom. When California voters overwhelmingly passed a series of ballot initiatives, (known in California as “Propositions”) they exposed the blatant connections between politics, issues of representation, and schooling. These ballot measures included:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Proposition 184 | November 1994. “Three Strikes and You're Out” (Passed with 76% of votes).   |
| Proposition 187 | November 1994. Denied publicly funded health and education access for the undocumented. (Passed with 59% of votes). |
| Proposition 209 | November 1996. Anti-affirmative action. (Passed with 54% of votes).   |
| Proposition 227 | June 1998. Anti-bilingual education. (Passed with 61% of votes).  |

During this period, students in my classroom were low-income, immigrant and second language learners, clearly targeted by the above mentioned ballot measures. The sponsors of these ballot measures relied heavily on expensive advertising on corporate television, radio and print media as pedagogical tools to promote images and narratives that inspired fear, strengthened negative stereotypes, and disciplined an anxious citizenry to vote in their favor. The strategy included organized media campaigns airing persistent negative attacks on poor and

racialized populations through both advertisements and news reports, resulting in a heightened sense of siege within marginalized communities across the state.

As the above-mentioned ballot measures were being debated, the “progressive” pedagogical approaches advocated by the California Department of Education (CDE) were also under attack by the far right. That is, the focus on "critical inquiry" as emphasized by the state in the middle 1980's and early 1990's rapidly came into question. This was particularly important to me because the teacher education program from which I graduated promoted progressive teaching methods based on the innovative “frameworks” provided at the CDE. These frameworks, originally published in the mid 1980’s, offered curricula and philosophical guidelines designed to align classroom practices and teacher education programs in California.

By the early 1990’s, the CDE severed its historic links to traditional education and developed progressive frameworks in all core subject areas, including science, mathematics, language arts, history-social science, foreign language, visual and performing arts, health and physical education. The unifying concepts of these frameworks included the development of “critical thinking” and conceptual understanding, contextualized problem-solving, meaning-centered rather than memorization-oriented learning strategies, connecting curricula to student’s prior knowledge, collaborative and interdisciplinary learning (California Department of Education, 1995).

Furthermore, the state legislature passed S.B. 662 in 1991, authorizing the creation of the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS). The CLAS measurement moved testing away from standardized formats toward “progressive” and “authentic” forms of assessment. In this way, California's educational policy attempted to align the system by which accountability was measured for pre-service teachers, professional development, and classroom practice. As

opposed to standardized tests that require the administration of multiple-choice exams, the CLAS test encouraged students to use what was described as “critical thinking” skills by demonstrating how well they could problem solve, interpret written texts, and actively engage with learning materials. The exam was informed by progressive educational theories and graded according to rubrics established by a group of trained educators, as opposed to Scantron machines. These exams were not norm-referenced or tied to punitive accountability measures.

The CLAS test emphasis on critical thinking borrowed from the works of Benjamin Bloom (1956) who developed “Bloom’s Taxonomy.” Bloom graphically represented his classification of thinking skills in the form of a pyramid. At the bottom lies “knowledge,” followed by “comprehension,” “application,” “analysis,” “synthesis,” and “evaluation.” The top of this pyramid is considered “higher order” thinking skills, which progressive educators labeled as “critical”.

The shortcomings of this conception of “critical” quickly manifested within the history of the CLAS test itself. That is, the limits of centering one’s understanding of critical solely on higher order thinking skills quickly revealed itself as the CLAS test was attacked by neoconservative organizations and school districts catering to politically conservative populations. These included the Traditional Values Coalition, the United States Justice Foundation, Eagle Forum of California and the Rutherford Institute

Thus, through legal and media campaigns, conservative organizers focused their efforts against the CLAS test in particular, and progressive education in general. They realized their success when Governor Pete Wilson expelled the CLAS test from California schools during the 1994-1995 school year. In its place, the Governor imposed a new focus on traditional education guided by his personal selection of a new standardized test for the state; one that was the least

aligned with the previous CDC frameworks. With the adoption of this new exam came a return to “traditional” teaching standards and practices focused on getting “back to the basics”. This entailed the implementation of a high-stakes testing model for education that quickly spread across the U.S. with an emphasis on the “transmission” of information through de-contextualized, rote memorization and the imposition of prepackaged curricula programs intent on deskilling teachers.

At the federal level, both Bill Clinton (Democrat) and George W. Bush’s (Republican) continued educational policies that further embraced the neoconservative focus on education by centering “accountability” based on high-stakes testing which excludes critical thinking skills, student-centered knowledge construction, and multicultural/anti-racist education.

Because my own teaching career began in 1994, I experienced the rapid transition from a state educational policy advocating one theoretical pedagogical approach to another. Neoconservatives, uncomfortable with progressive education, applauded the “pendulum swing” and aimed their sites on bilingual education. Thus, the downfall of progressive education in California also marked the new campaign against bilingual education, ending with the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998.

Shortly after the passage of the anti-bilingual ballot initiative, Proposition 227, I found myself realizing the limits of progressive education. Although the theoretical arguments for progressive education are sound and the strategies for diversifying instruction can contribute to accessible classroom instruction for multiple student populations, practical and political obstacles continued to emerge. Obstructions included the shortage of qualified teachers who understand the theoretical foundations of progressive education, opposition from district administrators and teacher unions, and the inability to incorporate a political vision of social

justice and human agency into the theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, those who benefited from the resources allocated for progressive education also sabotaged programs through mediocre implementation and careerist protectionism.

As the twentieth century neared its end, economic downturns in California continued to place pressures on both the educational system and marginalized populations across the state. It was at this point that Proposition 21 attempted to direct the public's focus away from economics and upon the scapegoating of youth.<sup>3</sup> This ballot initiative was championed by the now former Republican California Governor Pete Wilson and funded by major corporations such as Unocal, Chevron, Pacific Gas & Electric as well as members of the Hilton hotel family. Its goal was to send a "tough on crime" message to voters, by focusing on punishment over rehabilitation for youth offenders. Ironically, at the time of the ballot initiative, juvenile felony arrests had been falling steadily since 1991 and were, in fact, at their lowest since 1966. However, media representation of youth, particularly youth of color, as criminals was at its height.

Although I participated in street protests, pamphleting, and contributed financially to the California Association of Bilingual Educators (CABE) to fight against the passage of Proposition 227, these methods of resistance were ineffective. CABE proved to be a slow moving

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<sup>3</sup> Proposition 21, officially known as the "Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act," sought to prevent juvenile crime by:

1. Trying minors, as young as 14, as adults for the crimes of murder with special circumstances or enumerated sex offenses with special circumstances and other offenses aggravating circumstances.
2. Allowing prosecutors to determine when to try minors, 16 and older, in adult courts when the youth had previously been adjudicated for a felony.
3. Sentencing anyone 16 or older convicted in adult court to adult prison.
4. Defining a gang as an informal group of three or more people wearing certain clothing, and allowing police to wiretap a suspected gang member's home.
5. Requiring convicted gang members to register with police wherever they move.
6. Lowering the dollar threshold for felony property damage from \$50,000 to \$400.
7. Removing confidentiality laws by making juvenile court records public documents.

hierarchical institution unable to inspire or educate grassroots populations on the issue. In hopes of engaging alternative forms of resistance against the Proposition 21 campaign, I realized the need to become more actively involved in wider networks of struggle that were not institutionalized or co-opted.

One organization toward which I gravitated was the California Consortium for Critical Educators (CCCE), a statewide organization of teachers dedicated to engaging issues and relationships affecting educational justice. It was through this organization that I began to theoretically contextualize the anomalies of progressive education and situate the rapid neo-conservative educational agendas within larger economic goals of neo-liberals. By engaging in reading groups on the writings of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Antonio Gramsci, bell hooks, Michael Apple, Antonia Darder, and a number of other critical social theorists, a connection was formed between the rapidly changing conditions in my classroom with that of the political landscape of California, within the rapidly changing global economy.

Of particular importance within the context of CCCE, was the development of an alteration of what I understood to be “critical” education. Though progressive theorists may view the activation of critical thinking through “student centeredness”, they are not necessarily rooted in political foresight. So despite the tendency for progressive educators to advocate for starting with a student’s prior knowledge, it does not attempt to provide an arena for analysis of how these experiences and worldviews might be connected and tied to other social, economic and political relationships. Nor do these advocates for student-centered learning openly question the role of schooling in the reproduction of social inequalities or the political forces that work together to influence educational policy. Although the assumptions about learning being made

by progressives are definitely more humane than traditionalists, its critique of schooling remains absent.

CCCE, on the other hand, emphasized the engagement of radical educators to form community as a means to develop comprehension, rejuvenate the ability to remain in the struggle through acts of solidarity, and to highlight the importance of process within organizational and educational settings. The dialogue at the CCCE general meetings and within the study groups often illuminated the social and political relationships influencing contemporary educational changes by interrogating how power is constructed and the manner in which dominant ideologies impact our material existence. Of particular importance for me was the concept of praxis in our teaching and learning. That is, the emphasis that our study of theory include issues of naming, dialogue, action and reflection (Darder, 2002).

Through CCCE, I was also able to connect with Youth Organizing Communities (YOC), a youth action group focused on educating the public on the prison industrial complex and the possible impact of Proposition 21. YOC was also part of a larger network of coalitions formed across the state, with a long history of fighting for social justice and to educate the California public on problems of schooling and the consequences of an expanded prison population.

Many of the tactics used by the anti-Proposition 21 campaign focused on building collaborative efforts to challenge and reveal the economic contributors of the initiative. In October of 1999, Bay Area youth picketed the offices of Chevron and the Hilton Hotels Corporation, demanding the withdrawal of their support for Prop 21. The Pacific Gas and Electric Company, was also targeted in San Francisco and San Jose, and agreed to end financial support to the initiative. In January 2000, young protesters showed up to Pete Wilson's gated

community home in Century City and delivered him a brick, symbolizing the link between Proposition 21 and prisons scheduled for construction.

The culmination of the anti-Proposition 21 campaign took place during the week prior to Californians voting on the measure. During the “Week of Rage,” youth from up and down the state organized large walkouts in major cities throughout California and their adjacent suburbs. Despite its success in generating large numbers of youth protestors, corporate-owned media rarely reported on these actions or the messages of the youth against Proposition 21.

To combat the mainstream media’s lack of coverage of the campaign, we explored recently accessible media technologies to promote our own messages. This new media included digital video and Web technologies as a means to create and distribute counter-narratives and reporting of anti-Proposition 21 events. Various Websites in the coalition network hosted articles, pictures, fact sheets, press releases, digital video clips and a calendar of planned events to the public.

My role within this movement included capturing participant narratives using digital video. Many of the interviews I documented included very poignant testimonials and analysis regarding the material conditions of the schools from which students were walking out. Access to these voices and perspectives are rarely allowed on corporate-sponsored newspapers or television news programming. However, recent reductions in costs and increased technological capacities have made independent media distribution networks accessible.

Historically, the anti-Proposition 21 campaign was one of the first youth movements to utilize Web based digital-video technologies to bypass mainstream media outlets and to document Californian state-wide youth organizing and inform wider networks fighting against the prison industrial complex in particular, and rightist policies in general. The use of these

literacies serve as an important example of how, despite attempts to organize schooling and civil society undemocratically, people continue to demand and exert egalitarian participation in civil life.

My own engagement in the anti-Proposition 21 campaign helped contextualize how critical media literacy could function as a site for struggle over meaning and identity formation, while exploring issues of citizenship within the context of a growing system of punishment and the privatization of civil society. It also allowed me to develop a reading of change that emphasizes how, despite the passage of Proposition 21 by a 62 percent margin in 2000, diverse networks and individuals empowered themselves by challenging elite power structures and invalidating the myth of indifference. Engaging power contributed to the development of a more complex understanding of the systemic structures that work to impede human agency, while inspiring new generations who continue to question the New Right's agenda in California and its manifestations in the global arena.

Questions raised through my involvement in the anti-Proposition 21 campaign includes issues related to documenting how diverse populations challenge the status of marginalization through democratic struggle. Specifically, it raised questions about how advances in media technology can mobilize and sustain resistance in order to transform oppressive institutional practices. My experiences also demonstrated how radical alternative media production and distribution networks facilitate new ways for communities to work in coalition and organize against oppressive institutional structures and policies.

## **The “Chief”**

When I arrived to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), I did not expect to engage the mascot issue that has plagued the campus for over eighty years. Yet my involvement in CCCE and YOC fostered a worldview sensitizing me to the multiple manifestations of institutional oppression and the traps of apathy. Also, shortly after attending a UIUC BOT meeting in the fall of 2003, I realized that mass incarceration and silencing pedagogies were fundamentally connected to the politics sustaining “Chief Illiniwek”. In other words, the politics of representation and the ideologies that inform processes of “othering” exhibit the very real material consequences to the lives of subjugated populations. These relationships operate within political economies that promote racist assumptions of historically marginalized groups, as a means to justify their oppression while commodifying their identities.

An important aspect of my preparation for this project has been as an active participant within anti-“Chief” campaigns. Over the course of my graduate program at UIUC, I involved myself with attempts to build and sustain various coalitions in support of the mascot’s retirement. This history includes my participation with veteran Native American and non-Native organizers who helped uncover some of the institutional structures, history, and culture that nourished and maintained the use of the mascot, while also serving to marginalize other racialized populations on campus. In so doing, these organizers also revealed the possibilities for resistance within multiple contexts.

My involvement also highlights the important work of Paulo Freire in my understanding of pedagogy as a political act. Freire’s call to break from histories of silence informs my appreciation of the need for critical media literacy and its emphasis on media production for public pedagogy. It is my hope that this project will illuminate new ways of viewing Freirian pedagogy and provide concrete examples of how the production and distribution processes using

new media can be critically appropriated, in ways that help mobilize, sustain, and build collective actions for social justice.

## Chapter 2

### The Theoretical Lineages of Critical Media Literacy

The evolution of media studies includes a focus on media production, reception, use, ownership, (de)regulation, distribution, analysis and critique. The impact of this research on educational scholars has led many in the field to theorize the influence of both the media and popular culture on the very meaning of “literacy” (Alverman, Moon, & Hagwood, 1999; Buckingham, 2003a; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Giroux, 1996; Grossberg, Wartella & Whitney, 1998; Hoggart, 1957; Lewis & Jhally 1998; Luke, A. & Freebody, 1997; Luke, C. 1997; Macedo, 2007; Morrell, 2002; Sholle & Denski, 1993). The contribution of such work is considerable, given that the dynamics of globalization have exponentially increased the frequency, exchange, and commonsense nature of media culture. Additional arguments for expanded visions of literacy include changes from industrial to technological modes of production, greater fragmentation of mass audiences, the rise of intertextuality and interactivity in the construction of meaning, and the ability to use mass media to (im)mobilize populations. As a consequence, there is a recognized need to enlarge our understanding of literacy acquisition beyond traditional notions of reading and producing written texts. The powerful influence of mass media and popular culture can, therefore, no longer be ignored as significant pedagogical sites, capable of influencing subjectivities, identities and the political discourse of everyday life.

Within this context, the coordination of racialized identities and the cultural production of difference are also mitigated by the media and popular culture by its creation of unfulfilled appetites and excesses of desires, as well as an incompleteness that often fosters, "insecurity, anger, violent passions, frustrations, and resentment" (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000). Media saturation and its production of discontent often functions to discipline populations in particular ways, while concealing socio-economic and political imperatives of those in power. Because of

these altered relations, specific populations are continually forced to assert and redefine their identities as social relations repeatedly diversify and fragment in ways that reproduce dominant relations.

Complementing this perspective, David Buckingham (2003a, 2003b) focuses on the use of media as an important instrument where symbolic representations are indirectly conveyed. According to Buckingham, the media is entrenched in contemporary life and offers powerful references used to interpret relationships, define identities, and promote behaviors. In this way, the media has the capacity to intervene in the lives of mass audiences, by providing selective and interest-ridden accounts of the world. Hence, Buckingham also calls for the expansion of traditional definitions of education and literacy to include competencies that engage multiple symbolic systems involving sounds and images.

Media education, then, is the process of teaching and learning about media; media literacy is the outcome—the knowledge and skills learners acquire. [M]edia literacy necessarily involves ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ media. Media education therefore aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. It enables young people to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media; but it also enables them to become producers of media in their own right. Media education is about developing young people’s critical and creative abilities. (Buckingham 2003a, p. 4)

Douglas Kellner (1995) cites media saturation as a cause for expanding conceptions of literacy: “We are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society and thus it is important to learn how to understand, interpret, and criticize its meanings and messages” (p. xii). The ubiquitous nature of the “culture industries” upon our daily lives inescapably situates the role of media pedagogy in the formation of subjectivities, by emphasizing the construction of meanings and contemporary identities. For this reason, Kellner (2000) advocates for critical media literacy, to promote both civic engagement and the ability to intervene in the current global relations transforming our world. He contends that critical educators should facilitate the development of communal contexts, where individuals learn to empower themselves to

understand and resist the negative aspects of mass media and globalization. In an effort to challenge authoritarianism and corporate power, he calls for a "globalization from below" that fosters progressive social agendas, emancipation and radical democratic participation. New communication technologies, he believes, can enable ordinary citizens to produce and disseminate oppositional content that could be used to assist in political struggles. Thus, Kellner (1997) advocates for the expansion of traditional notions of the "public sphere" to include the growing influences of technology and popular culture in their capacity to interact and engage with the masses. This entails a redefinition that implicates critical education in the process.

Carmen Luke (1997) complements Kellner's position with her call for a literacy centered on the study of how mass media influences the production of imagery and iconography in popular culture. She notes that most contemporary media literacy curricula are focused on television literacy and describes its primary objective as follows:

The central aim of TV literacy is to make students critical and selective viewers who are able to reflect critically on TV's messages, their own reasons for viewing, and to use those critical skills in the production of their own print and electronic texts. Core analytic questions are meant to interrupt students' unreflective acceptance of text and to develop new strategies for thinking about the meanings TV transmits, and how viewers construct meanings for themselves from those texts. (Luke, 1997, p. 33)

Thus, Luke (1997) promotes a media literacy based on self-reflexivity to counter unquestioning media consumption. She connects the impact of media messages with the production of desires and pleasures, while oftentimes contributing to the portrayal of sexist and racist stereotypes: "Developing a critical understanding of how texts position individual students must always extend to helping them understand how others might read texts, construct and/or resist textual meanings" (p. 33).

Len Masterman (1980, 1985) also calls for the unveiling of media texts and representations within the contexts of reinforcing dominant ideologies. Masterman uses

semiological analysis, within a political economy approach, to understand the culture industries. This theoretical position encourages learners to develop forms of analysis that expose “hidden ideologies” within media texts, thereby minimizing their influences.

This position is further supported by Pepi Leistyna and Loretta Alper (2007), who demonstrate how corporate media produce illusory images that conceal the structural dimensions of class, while perpetuating dominant myths of meritocracy. They see the development of critical media literacy as fostering the abilities to interpret belief and value systems in ways where culture is seen politically and politics are seen culturally. That is to say, literacy acquisition must foster the awareness that social action and political consciousness do not happen in neutral social historical contexts. On the contrary, their particular concern is on the growing corporate influence within the public sphere. “Corporate media’s narrow, unrealistic images conceal the extent of this assault on America’s workforce, so we can no longer afford to ignore TV’s framing of the working class or see it as just entertainment” (p. 71).

Despite the academy’s developing repertoire of theoretical approaches to media education, there is a strong disconnect between those who call for media literacy and current educational policies within U.S. public schools. In many ways, the recent focus on standardized testing, teaching to tests, and widespread use of uniform curricula leave little room for cross disciplinary approaches to media education. In addition, the history of media education in the U.S. has traditionally been under-funded and ignored by policy makers and educators alike (Goodman, 2003).

Steven Goodman (*ibid*), for example, explains how media education in the US was greatly influenced in the 1960s when cultural critics such as Marshall McLuhan, John Berger, and Vance Packard urged a focus on teaching about the media, instead of through the media. In

schools, curricula were written to develop analysis of television as a media text and media messages were investigated for their impact on mass audiences. Goodman goes on to say that a breakthrough in media literacy in the U.S. came after the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior released a report in 1972 that connected television violence and antisocial behavior. What followed were additional funding opportunities from the U.S. Department of Education for the creation of curricula to develop critical viewing skills. Funding for these projects, however, was rarely renewed and thus, educational policies in media education in public schools lost momentum.

Today, many theorists in media education are reluctant to dictate parameters when studying the field, due to concerns related to reifying, canonizing and creating hierarchical approaches to media education curricula. However, Luke (1997) suggests there are roughly four broad areas within the many variations of media literacy. These include the study of audience, production, political economy of media, and media texts. Like Luke, Buckingham (2003), also provides an overview of the field of media education based on four similar concepts comprising of audience, production, language, and representation.

According to Buckingham, his four categories are not to be seen as an absolute body of knowledge, given they could be quickly outdated in this continually changing area of study. Buckingham (2003) also insists these categorizations are non-hierarchical and should be introduced in divergent ways, depending on the instructor's pedagogical practices, curricula planning, and aims. The categories he offers work toward fostering deductive versus inductive reasoning. He advocates, in particular, for students to reach their own conclusions, as opposed to pre-determined interpretations based on teachers' preconceived notions of the type of learning that must take place.

This perspective helps to contextualize differences between those who call for “media literacy” versus a “critical media literacy”. While both views advocate the development of higher order thinking, the use of dialogue, student centeredness, and the incorporation of multiple learning styles that embrace the learner’s home culture and prior knowledge, critical media literacy emphasizes the role of schooling within a capitalist economic order and problematizes curricula that promote “instrumental reasoning”. Although advocates of critical media literacy include text analysis as a pedagogical tool, they also emphasize alternative media production in support of developing necessary skills and competencies for civic engagement, social agency, and citizenry (Alverman, Moon & Hagwood, 1999; Giroux, 1987, 1994, 1997; Kellner, 1995, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997, 2006; Leistyna & Alper, 2007; Lewis & Jhally, 1998; Luke, A. & Freebody, 1997; Luke, C. 1997; Macedo & Steinberg, 2007; Morrell, 2002; Sholle & Denski, 1993). In addition, those who advocate the development of “critical consciousness” see teachers as cultural workers involved in citizen education; embracing the incorporation of historical critique, critical reflection, and social action, while exposing the conformist, passive, and disciplining elements found in various practices and relationships (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001). At the heart of this goal is the ability to reveal the structural and ideological forces that influence everyday life and the capacity to act upon them (Giroux, 1983).

### **Early Research on Culture, Mass Media and the (Re)Production of Meaning**

Critical media literacy is grounded upon the complementary theoretical lineage of the Frankfurt School for Social Research. Often referred to as “critical theory”, the Frankfurt School’s conceptual understandings continue to guide and inform contemporary disciplines and areas of study, including those of educators embracing and expanding “critical pedagogy”.

Recognition of this theoretical foundation assists us in further understanding the differences that exist between theories of media literacy and critical media literacy.

Much of the analysis of the Frankfurt School focused on the spread and manifestation of “rational” thought, as it coincided with the rise of bureaucracies in the management of post-enlightenment societies. They were particularly interested in how the supremacy of rational thought, and its subsequent tendencies toward a “means-end” rationality, contribute to the maintenance of a highly bureaucratized division of labor. They labeled this phenomenon “instrumental reason” and saw it as a tool for directing technology and social institutions toward the objectification of humanity. David Held (1980) explains that:

For the Frankfurt School theorists, the rise of instrumental reason, the rationalization of the world, is not per se to blame for the ‘chaotic, frightening and evil aspects of technological civilization’. Rather, it is the mode in which the process of rationalization is itself organized that accounts for the ‘irrationality of this rationalization’. In advanced capitalist societies, economic anarchy is interwoven with rationalization and technology. (p. 66)

The Frankfurt School studied the impact of instrumental reason as perpetuated by mass communications and culture from the 1930s to the 1950s. These theorists were forced to interrogate the socio-historic context from which they derived, as a result of the rise of Nazi ideology in Germany and its merging with monopoly capitalism. The subsequent material manifestations of these two forces were deemed suspect by the major thinkers of the Frankfurt School (all of Jewish heritage), in an attempt to unveil the workings of capitalist accumulation and authoritarian rule (Held, 1980).

Yet the Frankfurt School’s interdisciplinary examination overcame the limitations of traditional canons with the creation of a discourse that addressed and integrated the anomalies of their times. The school’s forced exile from Germany generated not only self-critique, but also the development of an intellectual community focused on how society and its underlying

economic arrangement shape the individual and produce experiences common to particular groups (Held, 1980). Their analysis ultimately complicated orthodox Marxism, by questioning the direct base-superstructure correlation in their concept of culture as contested terrain. This has had enormous implications in the field of critical media studies; for it opened up the possibility of negotiation in the production of meaning and identities.

For instance, in order to understand how the Third Reich manufactured and expanded popular consent, Theodor Adorno examined what he called the “culture industry”. Ultimately he came to understand the mass media as a consciousness-producing industry that reproduced power relations and manipulated audiences into obedience (Durham & Kellner, 2001; Frechette, 2002). Mass media, according to Frankfurt School theorists, therefore, extends into the organization of leisure time while socializing the ego to status quo patterns of thought and thinking.

The influence of the Frankfurt School inspired the creation of cross-disciplinary communities that embarked in the analysis of power in contemporary culture. Most notable among these has been the emergence of cultural studies. Unlike the findings of the Frankfurt School, however, cultural studies researchers document issues of human agency and resistance to the culture industry’s rising influence, providing evidence how products made by the culture industry offer both the “tools and forces of domination and resources for resistance and opposition” (Durham & Kellner, 2001, p. 18).

For example, British researchers at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies examined how subcultures find ways to resist dominant forms of culture and identity, while creating their own world-views. Founded by Richard Hoggart in 1964, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Great Britain explored how culture was indeed

“ordinary” and not limited to the elitist expressions of the dominant economic class. Their analysis questioned the nature of audiences as passive receivers of ideological messages and emphasized the cultural sphere as dynamic, with conflicting and contradictory meanings embedded in specific historical relationships and political practices (Brantlinger, 1990).

Much of the early commentary on culture by Birmingham scholars was a reaction to the socially conservative writings of Mathew Arnold (1998) and F.R. Leavis (1998) who position the concept of “Culture” as elite practices and worldviews that maintain social order and represent the best of Western civilization. Arnold’s influential essay, “Culture and Anarchy” advocates that schools teach “classic” literature in order to pacify the masses, remedy class conflict, and avoid anarchy. Both Arnold and Leavis concerned themselves with the rapid and unpredictable social changes taking place in late 1800’s England, resulting from industrialization, urbanization, and the perceived resistance by immigrants and laborers to traditional forms of social assimilation and governmental authority. Arnold, in particular, worried over class conflict as workers pursued their class interests at the expense the “common good” (Brantlinger, 1990). Thus, “For Arnold culture was what promised, in the twilight of religion and the decline of aristocracy, to preserve social order against the ‘ignorant armies’ unleashed by industrialization and democratization” (Brantlinger, 1990, p. 20).

Complementing Arnold’s conservative position, Leavis’ (1998) writings deal largely with the effects of mass media and the “erosion” of high culture’s influence in Britain. He was principally concerned with the consequence of technological advances in radio, cinema, popular fiction and other modes of mass communication with the power to reach large audiences. He feared these types of communications would inevitably challenge the minority elite culture of Britain and replace them with generic U.S. consumer norms. Like Arnold, Leavis believed the

savior of British society was in the conservation of a particular body of literary influence. For this reason, he successfully mobilized secondary English teachers in Britain to embrace the teaching of the “classics” (Hall, 1990).

The central mission for Leavis and his associates was the preservation of the literary heritage, and the language, the values and the health of the nation it was seen to embody and to represent. The media were seen here as a corrupting influence, offering superficial pleasures in place of the authentic values of great art and literature. The aim of teaching about popular culture, therefore, was to encourage students to ‘discriminate and resist’ – to arm themselves against the commercial manipulation of the mass media and hence to recognize the self-evident merits of ‘high’ culture. (Buckingham, 2003a, p. 7)

Hence, since its inception, the focus of British cultural studies has been ‘everyday life’ or the structures and practices people construct to circulate meanings (Brantlinger, 1990). Birmingham scholars’ early use of ‘practical criticism’ based ‘reading’ working-class cultures as ‘texts,’ in order to understand the values and meanings embodied in patterns and arrangements (Hall, 1980a).

This idea is best described by perhaps the most influential Birmingham scholar, Stuart Hall. In his essay, “Encoding, Decoding,” Hall (1980b) argues that processes of meaning making are relatively autonomous activities, where the reception of the code is not always controlled by its producers. This approach, central to the development of critical media studies, critiques the linear understanding of message creation and delivery that once dominated the field. According to Hall at each stage of production the code or media message is imprinted by institutional power relations that attempt to reproduce preferred meanings and tend to represent the dominant cultural establishment as a means to garner consent and order.

Hall, more importantly, insists these preferred meanings are always open to dissent and alternative interpretations; there are “no guarantees” he says, that the messages of the sender will be received and interpreted exactly as the sender intended. The possibility of a “lack of fit

between the codes used by the encoder and those used by the decoder” (Turner, 2003, p. 77), in turn, reflect the structural differences within society itself. Hall (1980b) furthermore, warns:

The operation of naturalized codes reveals not the transparency and ‘naturalness’ of language but the depth, the habituation and the near-universality of the codes in use. They produce apparently ‘natural’ recognitions. This has the (ideological) effect of concealing the practices of coding which are present. But we must not be fooled by appearances. (Hall 1980b, p. 511)

For Hall (1980a, 1980b) then, the relatively autonomous nature of media messages represents their polysemic character, where meanings are multiple and socially negotiated. However, the polysemic nature of the messages is tempered by their discursive context, in that they are framed by other signifiers and ideas. Thus, Hall acknowledges a need to interrogate accepted representations for their ideological implications, effects, and material relationships.

Hall’s work is complemented by John Fiske (1997), who proposes the realm of popular culture is both conflictual and contradictory because the texts and artifacts produced by economically and ideologically dominant groups are used diversely by people located differently within society. Fiske contends that this is a necessary aspect of all cultural commodities, given that people must make their own meanings from their social relationships and identities. Otherwise, cultural commodities themselves will be discarded or will lose their potential to become popular. He bases this argument on his understanding of how meanings are constructed. Cultural texts, he argues, have no intrinsic meanings in themselves, but solely within the social, cultural and intertextual relations where they are circulated. He adds:

Much of this struggle for meanings, and popular texts can ensure their popularity only by making themselves inviting terrains for this struggle; the people are unlikely to choose any commodity that serves only the economic and ideological interests of the dominant. So popular texts are structured in the tension between forces of closure (or domination) and openness (or popularity). (Fiske, 1997, p. 4)

Thus, according to Fiske, commodities are acquired as much for their meanings and enjoyment as they are for their material function. The relevance of a particular community,

moreover, is produced depending on how cultural texts enable people to derive meaning in their everyday lives. This renders much of popular culture ephemeral, for “as the social conditions of the people change, so do the texts and tastes from which relevances can be produced” (p. 6).

Fiske acknowledges that imbalance in economic relations maintains social inequities. Furthermore, he recognizes that subordinate populations have historically had little opportunities to produce resources for popular culture, themselves. For this reason, he positions semiotic or micro level forms of resistance as necessary within macro level struggles. He calls for greater acknowledgement and connection between sociopolitical and semiotic forms of resistance, involving the relationships and issues of macro level politics and popular culture. According to Fiske (1997), politics impacts everyday life and the power of the dominant class under capitalism is to further their interests by constructing realms for subordinate subjectivities. This power relates directly with the ability to influence the construction of meanings of self and social relationships. Interrogating the meaning of power in this context, he asserts:

The basic power of the dominant in capitalism may be economic, but this economic power is both underpinned and exceeded by semiotic power, that is, the power to make meanings. So semiotic resistance that not only refuses the dominant meanings but constructs oppositional ones that serve the interests of the subordinate is as vital a base for the redistribution of power as is evasion. The ability to think differently, to construct one’s own meanings of self and of social relations, is the necessary ground without which no political action can hope to succeed. The minority who are active at the macro level of politics can claim to be the representatives of a social movement only if they can touch this base of semiotic resistance of people “thinking differently.” Without this, they can all too easily be marginalized as extremists or agitators and their political effectiveness neutralized. The interior resistance of fantasy is more than ideologically evasive, it is a necessary base for social action. (Fiske, 1997, p. 10)

Fiske (1997) insists the micro level of resistance is a more sympathetic location for struggle against domination given that the micro is the terrain where subordinated populations begin to wield power over the construction of meanings. Fiske sees this aspect of micro level

control essential to the empowerment and development of confidence, which is integral to a course of social action that can ultimately impact the political economy. He notes:

This, again, is politically crucial, for without some control over one's existence there can be no empowerment and no self-esteem. And with no sense of empowerment or self-esteem there can be none of the confidence needed for social action, even at the micro level. So Radway (1984) found a woman romance reader whose reading empowered her to the extent that she felt better able to resist the patriarchal demands made upon her by her marriage, and D'Acci (1988) found women fans of Cagney & Lacey of all ages who reported that the sense of self-empowerment produced by their fandom enabled them to promote their own interests more effectively in their everyday lives. (Fiske, 1997, p. 10)

To be clear, Fiske does not advocate for political resistance to stay at the micro level.

Instead, he sees possibilities where semiotic resistance can serve as a steady erosive force against larger structural barriers. Given that the capitalist system has proven to be adaptable to radical actions against it, Fiske concludes it may possibly be more vulnerable to the politics of popular culture. This position reflects a theoretical stance within critical media studies, which documents micro-forms of resistance used by consumers of mass media and corporate production within capitalist economies.

### **Political Economy**

On the macro level, contemporary media studies theorists, who utilize political economy as a theoretical lens, demonstrate how global privatization and deregulation of mass media ownership creates the conditions for corporate monopolies to control media content (Bagdikian, 2004; Czitrom, 1982; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Leistyna & Alper, 2007; McChesney, 2004; McCullagh, 2002). That is, as a result of media monopolies, contemporary society is marked by the rapid integration of traditional and newly developed media in everyday life that is representative of the values, beliefs and ideas of capitalist ideology. In this way, contemporary media function as pedagogical tools that greatly influence how people read the world.

The major media socialize every generation of Americans. Whether the viewers and listeners are conscious of it or not, they are being “educated” in role models, in social behavior, in their early assumptions about the world into which they will venture, and in what to assume about their unseen millions of fellow citizens. (Bagdikian, 2004, p. 261)

It is this power to act publicly as a pedagogue that requires an expanded definition of literacy to one that incorporates the ability to decode ideological messages broadcast via mass media. Stanley Aronowitz contends:

The real issue for the ‘functionally’ literate is whether they can decode the messages of media culture, counter official interpretations of social, economic, and political reality; whether they feel capable of critically evaluating events, or, indeed, of intervening in them. If we understand literacy as the ability of individuals and groups to locate themselves in history, to see themselves as social actors able to debate their collective futures, then the key obstacle to literacy is the sweeping privatization and pessimism that has come to pervade public life. (cited in Giroux, 1987, p. 12-13)

Critical media literacy theorists often correlate the deregulation of media ownership with the increase in monopoly control of consensus-building industries worldwide. An example of this consolidation is the concentration of media ownership in the U.S. since the start of Ronald Reagan’s second term in office. In 1984, for example, there were 50 corporations in the United States controlling the mass media (television, cable, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc.). By the time of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (passed under the Clinton administrations), the number of media corporations shrunk to just 10. In 2004, a mere five corporations own the media: AOL-Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Viacom, and Bertelsmann (Bagdikian, 2004). Under these conditions, political economists believe the message of capitalism in the public sphere is magnified. Moreover, Hall asserts that, “ideological power is the power to signify events in a particular way, and the power of the media is the power to represent the capitalist order in a way that makes it appear universal, natural and coterminous with reality itself” (Hall cited in McCullagh, 2002, pp. 38-39).

Within the current contexts of corporate mass-media production, the ideological messages of neoliberal capitalism permeate in advertisements, movies, television shows, cartoons, and news reports. Their messages and social commentary affirm capitalist values and beliefs in order to ‘manufacture consent’ and complacency toward the dominant order (Durham & Kellner, 2001; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Leistyna & Alper, 2007). However, Ben H. Bagdikian (2004) and Robert W. McChesney (2004) both propose that although corporate control of mass media outlets ensures the propagation of capitalist ideology, these same corporations do not engage in capitalist practices. That is, the media markets do not operate on the tenets of competition, merit, or “free markets”. On the contrary, their strategies depend on monopoly control, government interference, corporate welfare, and collusion with competitors.

McChesney (2000, 2004) deepens the analysis of corporate media and government cooperation by historically examining government policies that created and sustain the current monopoly environment. He contends the commercial structures of the media are both directly and indirectly linked to explicit government policies.

Most dominant media firms exist because of government-granted and government enforced monopoly broadcasting licenses, telecom franchises, and rights to content (a.k.a. copyright). Competitive markets in the classic sense are rare; they were established or strongly shaped by government. (McChesney, 2004, p. 19)

In his work, McChesney contextualizes the development of the media by tracing its historical development. During the first century of U.S. history, politicians realized the important role media played in developing a literate and informed citizenry. Legislatures thus supported the only mass medium available at the time - newspapers, by subsidizing their circulation through the U.S. Postal Service. The Post Office Act of 1792 subsidized postage rates so that by 1774, 70% of post office traffic was due to newspaper deliveries. By 1832, it

was 90%. These policies contributed to the creation of multiple sources of news and analysis in U.S. public life (McChesney, 2004).

The impact of government intervention to develop an informed citizenry was challenged with the advent of the telegraph in the mid 1800's. By the end of the Civil War, the privately held companies of Western Union and AT&T, established monopoly control over the telegraph medium and began to cater to profitable customers such as big newspaper businesses across the country. "The monopoly control of news reporting mechanisms like the telegraph discouraged competition and gave rise to the influence of the Associated Press in covering national politics" McChesney (2004). McChesney points out that this influence was slanted toward reporting positively on both business interests and political relations that supported its own monopoly control of the market. AT&T for example, would later use its resources to create NBC, the first national radio broadcasting network in the 1920s. The pro-business manipulation of government policies (exemplified by the passage of the 1934 Communications Act) set a precedent for the management of new technologies that were to follow: FM radio, shortwave, television, and later cable television. Little public debate over the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) policies surfaced and corporate controlled advertising supported content has since dominated the delivery of subsequent new technologies. Soon after the establishment of an advertising supported media industry, corporate ideology in the non-advertising portion of media content emerged (Bagdikian, 2004). Entertainment producers began to deliver positive images of business and finance to assure a positive environment for advertisers, thus influencing the programs they sponsor by demanding character portrayals aligned with the ideal types supportive of corporate ideology.

Because of the threat of pulling advertisement dollars from particular media programs, television and radio producers are often forced by economic pressures to scrutinize and mold media content to corporate will. What results is the production of media content favorable to corporate interests that legitimates their class standing and a political-economic system that maintains their advantage. The ability of corporations to successfully influence government regulatory policy assures the continuation of a market climate conducive to maintaining business power and the reproduction of pro-corporate ideology and media messages. The “neoliberal promise” of this ideology is adamantly challenged by Pepi Leistyna and Loretta Alper (2007):

Regardless of the neoliberal promise of prosperity for all, it is more than obvious that the structural dimensions of social class within this economic logic remain profoundly in place. In fact, economic conditions for millions of people in the United States and for billions of people worldwide are worsening as a direct result of privatizations, deregulation, and restructuring; as well as by the ways in which elite private powers have been successful in using the State to protect corporate interests and dismantle many of the rights and protections achieved locally and internationally by grassroots activists, organized labor, and social democracies. (p. 71)

As such, Leistyna and Alper (2007) purport that capital utilizes the realm of culture to shape meanings, desires and subjectivities that can work toward maintaining its practices and logic. In this sense, their analysis show the manner by which capital attempts to shape how individuals develop political agency within contexts of daily struggles and structures of power.

### **David Buckingham’s Contributions to Media Education**

An important force in media education is David Buckingham (2003a, 2003b), Professor of Education at the University of London Institute of Education working with the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media. Buckingham (2003a) sees the various methods and theoretical positions in media education as developing from changing social and cultural

contexts. Their rise and influence relate to “the ongoing struggles for control over educational policy-making” (p. 9). These struggles include attempts to embrace students’ out-of-school experiences within the curriculum, while maintaining as suspect the influences of popular culture. “Despite the growing inclusiveness of the curriculum, all these approaches seek in different ways to inoculate or protect students against what were assumed to be the negative effects of the media” (p. 10). Buckingham labels these attempts at media education as “culturally defensive” positions that try to protect youth from “their apparent lack of cultural value, and thereby to lead the children on to superior forms of art and literature” (p. 10).

For Buckingham, a focus on analyzing how media texts are constructed, while developing an understanding of the economic functions of the media industries, does not automatically lead to students’ desire to resist such influences or develop a “critical analysis” of the media. Buckingham does not see media education as a solution to social-political relationships that negatively impact populations, nor does he have faith in teachers’ ability to provide contexts for the creation of critical analysis. Instead, he positions his theoretical stance as “beyond protectionism” by grounding his analysis in an understanding of the media as fragmented and heterogeneous, with divergent and competing sets of ideologies and agendas. Buckingham (2003a) hypothesizes that contemporary media should not be seen as consistently harmful or devoid of contribution. Instead, he argues:

[T]he development of modern communications has resulted in a more heterogeneous, even fragmented, environment, in which the boundaries between high culture and popular culture have become extremely blurred. Likewise, the notion that the media are an all-powerful ‘consciousness industry’ - that they can single-handedly impose false values on passive audiences – has also come into question. Contemporary research suggests that children are a much more autonomous and critical audience than they are conventionally assumed to be; and this is increasingly recognized by the media industries themselves. (p. 12)

What Buckingham (2003a) proposes instead is a “new paradigm” for media education that focuses on *preparing* people to make informed decisions about their media consumption and production. This comes within historic contexts that include greater access to media technologies, the Internet, audience fragmentations, and the proliferation of interactive modes of digital communications. Add to this the traditional conceptions of the nation state, social institutions, citizenship, and civil society, all which are currently being challenged by globalization.

Buckingham believes these changing relationships put into question conventional belief systems and expectations of today’s youth. For this reason, his vision of media education embraces the capacity for media production, creativity and the propagation of multiple venues for student voices by encouraging analysis, evaluation and reflection not just on particular media content, but on social, economic and institutional contexts of media production. In short, he envisions a media education process that builds capacities for multiple forms of communication. Buckingham (2003a) distinguishes his approach from that of others, by emphasizing its orientation towards “preparation” and not protection, thus assuming students are not passive receivers of media manipulation.

Broadly speaking, therefore, this new approach seeks to begin with what students *already* know, and with their existing tastes and pleasures in the media, rather than assuming that these are merely invalid or ‘ideological.’ This approach does not seek to replace ‘subjective’ responses with ‘objective’ ones, or to neutralize the pleasures of the media through rational analysis. On the contrary, it aims to develop a more reflexive style of teaching and learning, in which students can reflect on their own activity both as ‘readers’ and as ‘writers’ of media texts, and understand the broader social and economic factors that are in play. Critical analysis is seen here as a process of dialogue, rather than a matter of arriving at an agreed or predetermined position. (p. 14)

Buckingham’s centering of dialogue is informed by a social understanding of how literacies develop. That is, the very act of literacy acquisition takes place in social situations involving multiple power structures, diverse purposes, and particular forms of social actions.

Literacy acquisition is seen here as a political endeavor in that it allows populations to produce meanings representative of particular associations to power. He also acknowledges, much like Hall and Fiske, how various forms of media literacies diversely impact people's lives. "We would need to recognize that the competencies that are involved in making sense of the media are socially distributed, and that different social groups have different orientations towards the media, and will use them in diverse ways" (Buckingham, 2003a, p. 39). Thus, for Buckingham, the acquisition of literacies derive from wider social struggles to negotiate meanings and identities, within unequal economic systems.

### **Response to Buckingham's Critique of Criticality**

Many of Buckingham's observations and suggestions clearly complement theoretical positions by critical educators. Nevertheless, Buckingham makes great effort to distance himself from contemporary critical theorists in the field of education. Because media education has been heavily influenced by Buckingham's work, it is important to understand Buckingham's concerns with issues of criticality.

Among these is the question of who defines what counts as 'critical consciousness'. "In demonstrating our ability to define the truly 'critical' approach", Buckingham (2003a) argues, "we are making a powerful claim for our own authority" (p. 107). He thus attributes a type of arrogance to researchers who claim to be 'critical' and attempt to behold a "monopoly on 'critical consciousness', exposing forms of oppression and mystification of which ordinary people are assumed to be unaware" (p. 108). He goes even further in his dislike of critical pedagogues:

Likewise, advocates of 'critical pedagogy' have generated a self-sustaining grand narrative of education as a form of political liberation. While claiming to speak on behalf

of the oppressed, such authors continue to reserve the right to define others' best interests in their own terms – although they have been remarkably reticent when it comes to describing how their proposals might actually be implemented in practice. (Buckingham 2003a, p.108)

In agreement with the Birmingham School, Buckingham's post-modern critique stems from questioning Marxist theoretical positions describing base-super-structure relationships in which those who own the means of production are said to have direct influence over peripheral aspects of society. Like Hall (1980b), he problematizes this model by demonstrating how issues related to meaning and representation are not guaranteed and that resistance and social agency play important roles in the negotiation of power and hegemony. Still, he is particularly unfavorable of positions that claim to "demystify" the illusions of the mass media and the conformist ideologies they propagate.

Through the powers of analysis, students are seen to move from an unconscious to a conscious state, from being enslaved by bodily pleasures and emotional responses to being 'rational' and 'skeptical' in their dealings with the media – in short, from being 'uncritical' to being genuinely 'critical'. (Buckingham, 2003a, p. 108).

Buckingham's position must thus be contextualized within a wider understanding of how the word "critical" has been used within recent educational contexts and in relationship to those who align themselves with critical literacy. Of utmost importance is the work of Paulo Freire (1993b) who does not advocate for anyone speaking *for* the oppressed classes, as Buckingham's critique states. On the contrary, Freire named his seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and not *Pedagogy for the Oppressed* specifically to avoid maintaining a "monopoly on critical consciousness", as mentioned above by Buckingham (2003a). On the contrary, Freire sees critical consciousness as a state of awareness attained by participating in processes of naming, dialogue, action and reflection within particular social –historic contexts (Darder, 2002). It is not a permanent mental state attained by an isolated individual, but rather a process that can only be

engaged while in community with others and always located within particular moments in history.

In addition, many who call for critical approaches to literacy have pushed for dramatic shifts away from positivists interpretations of the role that education should play within society and embrace the inclusion of culture and power when contextualizing schooling and issues related to literacy acquisition (Apple, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; Aronowitz, 1993; Darder, 1991; Darder & Torres, 2004; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Freire, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1998a, 1998b; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1987, 1994, 1997, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997; McLaren, 1998). However, unlike Buckingham, critical educators advocate an involved citizenry aimed at sustaining and reinventing active and informed political and civic engagement, social change, awareness, cultural diversity, and economic equity by problematizing the material and cultural consequences of schooling, in particular, and the political economy in general. As such, critical educators do not see schooling as a neutral endeavor but contextualize educational processes within wider systems of power, domination, and subjugation. The critical aspect of literacy acquisition directly relates learning and curriculum with an increasingly more complex understanding of governmentality, institutional power, and historical projects involved in “molding, making, and disciplining human subjects, populaces, and communities –and for shaping and distributing cultural and material resources” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 3-4).

For those aligned with critical literacy, therefore, being an educator is not merely about facilitating the inclusion of the learner’s home culture, prior knowledge, past experiences and respecting the pleasures they receive from popular culture (as advocated above by Buckingham). Miles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990) encouraged soliciting the knowledge of learners and moving *beyond* their existing knowledge, as a way to name and overcome obstacles that bind

individuals and groups to oppressive patterns and relationships. Freire (1998a), advocates that educators view themselves as cultural workers assisting in the creation of learning contexts where participants construct meanings, produce knowledge, and come to view themselves as proactive subjects capable of questioning and participating in the making of history. As subjects in the world, critical learners question deterministic assumptions of history and interrogate relationships of power influencing the production of culture and the reproduction of meaning in their own lives. In this way, people come to understand themselves as cultural producers.

Educators who pursue the development of critical literacy, therefore, connect the material consequences of schooling with unequal distributions of knowledge, resources and representation. For this reason, models that do not contextualize schooling within a political economy are seen as contributing to the reproduction of social inequities. The goals of critical literacy involve understanding the systemic relations that maintain hegemony while developing capacities for human agency that lead to individual and social transformation. Hence, critical literacy encourages the interrogation of dominant social and political relationships within historical contexts, in an effort to situate oneself outside the dominant culture.

Although Buckingham does emphasize the importance of production in his model of media literacy, his assessment on the role of agency is not fully developed. In this case, the work of Henry Giroux (2001) strengthens Buckingham's theoretical position by articulating the role of resistance and oppositional behavior. Like Hall and Fiske, Giroux asserts that mechanisms of social and cultural reproduction are never complete and always give rise to elements of resistance not previously imagined by dominant forces. In addition, Giroux argues social reproduction should not be seen as deriving only from the use of force or from structural relations imposed upon subjugated populations. Instead, like Freire, he acknowledges that

hegemonic forms of consent and behavior are reproduced within oppressed groups and cultures.

This leads him to differentiate between oppositional behavior and resistant action:

What must be urged is that the concept of resistance not be allowed to become a category indiscriminately hung over every expression of ‘oppositional behavior.’ On the contrary, it must become an analytical construct and mode of inquiry that contains a moment of critique and a potential sensitivity to its own interests, i.e., an interest in radical consciousness-raising and collective critical action. (Giroux, 2001, p. 110)

Further aligning himself with Freire and early cultural studies theorists, Giroux’s conception of resistance embraces the learner’s development of subjectivity and collective human agency. Critical literacy, for Giroux (2001), allows the expression of elements of resistance as focal points “for the construction of different sets of lived experiences; experiences in which students can find a voice and maintain and extend the positive dimensions of their own cultures and histories” (p. 111). His emphasis on the relationship between resistance and collective action, moreover, informs the social nature of learning embedded within the concept of critical literacy.

[C]entral to a radical theory of literacy would be the development of a view of human agency in which the production of meaning is not limited to analyzing how ideologies are inscribed in particular texts. In this case, a radical theory of literacy needs to incorporate a notion of ideology critique that includes a view of human agency in which the production of meaning takes place in the dialogue and interaction that mutually constitute the dialectical relationships between human subjectivities and the objective world. (Giroux, 1987, p. 11)

Giroux (1994) sees an important role for critical media education in contextualizing the complexity of democratic action in contemporary social conditions. He advocates for educators to develop critical literacy as a means for understanding the continually changing worldviews, desires and representations of contemporary youth influenced by mass media. Thus, Giroux (1994) emphasizes the role of teachers as public intellectuals when they assist students in rethinking relationships between culture and power, and knowledge and authority.

By situating teachers as public intellectuals, Giroux (1996) highlights the contribution of cultural studies to broaden the notion of “pedagogy” in contemporary society. As such, it is important to analyze multiple sites of learning outside of the realm of schooling. In this way, Freire’s radical conceptualization of literacy is expanded to encourage perceptions of learners as social actors capable of resisting domination and constructing democratic relationships for transformative purposes. This is particularly necessary as new and traditional media forms are increasingly accessible in the public sphere and their use by authoritarian entities grows exponentially.

The current climate of public education in the U.S. is characterized by public policy measures grounded in theoretical models advocating authoritarian, test-driven curricula. Standardized testing and their positivists’ underpinnings have further compartmentalized how teaching is approached, resources allocated and structures imposed. The manner by which these policies have come to be enacted derive directly from both neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies working together to guide educational policies within the United States (Apple, 2000a, 2000b; Darder & Torres, 2004).

It is with both great irony and predictability, therefore, that the George W. Bush administration’s No Child Left Behind educational policy did not openly call for, or support, the development of critical literacy, nor did it advocate for the ability to uncover or identify ideological positions within multiple forms of texts. This also reveals a weakness in Buckingham’s dismissal of critical theorists who call for developing capacities for interpreting the ideological in multiple contexts, including public education.

Not only have the neoliberal values of both the George W. Bush, and Barack H. Obama administrations’ standardized test-driven educational policies made critical media education non-

existent in U.S. public schools (particularly those labeled as ‘under-performing’), they have also advocated for and implemented economic policies that encourage further media consolidation to take place, so that media consumers have less choice in media content and perspectives. Again, Buckingham’s assertion of corporate media as heterogeneous, fragmented, and diversified is suspect.

The George W. Bush administration’s invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq serve as examples of how corporate media were able to perpetuate misinformation that allowed for U.S. citizenry to support the wars, curtail civil liberties, and submit to an endless war on “terrorism” (Kellner, 2005). Because of corporate mass media’s tendency to maintain an uncritical analysis of the power elite and dominant class (McCullagh, 2002), those interested in democratic participation in civil society must seek alternative sources of information and reporting, in order to maintain a critical understanding of our world.

### **Critical Media in Practice**

The current focus on standardized curricula and testing under George W. Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* and Barrack Obama’s *Race to the Top* have left little room for media education to thrive within U.S. public schools. Nevertheless, media education continues to impact community education centers, after-school programs, and grass-roots political projects around the globe. In addition, the production of alternative media often help further community dialogue, naming, action and reflection, (as outlined by Freire’s critical approach), in such a way that critical media literacy perspectives often complement the development and establishment of alternative global media networks. The following examples of the critical use of technology help

expand the understanding that practice must be informed by theory, as communities adapt to local conditions and global trends.

### **Global Learning Networks**

Jim Cummins and Dennis Sayers (1995) provide excellent examples of the use of critical media literacy in the development of global learning networks. In their seminal book, *Brave New Schools*, Cummins and Sayers locate current back-to-the-basics “reform” efforts with attempts to structure national curricula and instruction towards producing “functional literacy” to meet the needs of capital within a global economy. Cummins and Sayers position functional literacy as the ability to decode and encode letters, while cultural literacy is the capacity to understand common cultural associations in order to make meaning out of what is being read or discussed. However, the authors believe efforts focusing only on functional literacy are insufficient for promoting critical literacy that can “question the structures of power that determine the distribution of status and resources within the society” (p. 8). In their work, they situate the Internet as a possible means for bypassing official and corporate informational sources to engage dispersed communities that can create contexts for the exchange of global cultures and perspectives.

Jim Cummins, Kristin Brown, and Dennis Sayers (2007) update their analysis on global learning network in their more recent book, *Literacy, Technology and Diversity*. The global learning networks they document include I\*EARN (the International Education and Resource Network), and Orillas (short from the Spanish de Orillas a Orillas, or from Shore to Shore). Both of these projects focus on expanding abilities to analyze social and political relationships, and to foster collaborations amongst learners to seek resolutions for particular issues that arise in local settings. In most cases, the global learning networks allow participating teachers and students to use email and digital conferencing to plan and implement collaborative learning projects

amongst distant partner classes. “Such parallel projects include dual community surveys, joint math and science investigations, twinned geography projects, and comparative oral history and folklore studies” (p. 22).

To highlight this aspect of education, the authors describe a number of specific projects within I\*EARN and Orillas and others global learning network undertakings. Some of these include global learning activities such as correspondence with children in refugee camps in war-ravaged Yugoslavia in 1993 (Cummins & Sayers, 1994), schools in New York and San Francisco working together to develop strategies to overcome prejudice and “Project FRESA,” a learning endeavor created within a farming community in Oxnard, California (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007).

Like all the projects illustrated by Cummins, Brown and Sayers (ibid), “Project FRESA” is based on developing contexts for dialogue and problem posing, using computers and Internet technologies to research, publish, and share their work and findings. Inspired by Paulo Freire, the teachers involved with Project FRESA, Michele Singer and Amada Irma Perez, integrated critical literacy into their third and fifth grade classes to connect the lives of their students, families and the school curriculum.

Project FRESA began with students listing their prior knowledge about strawberries - the local cash crop grown in their community. Because most of the students had family members who worked in the fields, they gathered data about their topic from family members and the local community. In their research, many questions arose regarding such issues as the use of pesticides, wages, farming conditions, and the business logic that guided decision-making processes. As the project progressed, family and community members were invited to class, along with local farm owners. In many cases, the students’ parents became sources of expertise

so that their children began to look at them with added respect and greater understanding of their commitment and sacrifice (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007).

The teachers involved with Project FRESA continued to find new ways to connect this student-based inquiry with their school district's content standards for the various grades. Quantitative data were gathered from questionnaires administered by students and their findings were graphed on PowerPoint and posted online. The classrooms involved in the project invited community organizations to provide "additional information regarding farm-working conditions and wages, environmental concerns, and the economic impact of strawberries in the county, state, and nation" (p. 138). As their knowledge of farming and farm-condition increased, students began letter-writing campaigns to the governor and to the corporate headquarters of the local farms. Project FRESA took on new life within the global learning networks when they were able to share their work with students in other parts of California and the rest of the world. Within the global learning networks, students were able to connect their experiences with students in a coffee-growing region of Puerto Rico and in a strawberry-growing area in India.

As stated by teacher Amada Perez:

The project, the website, and correspondence online helped the students understand their parents, themselves, their communities, the people who represent them, their political system, their connections to other places in the world. They communicated with children like them and children who are different from them, people who have things in common and people who don't. We discovered that the Internet is all about connecting people and connecting thoughts. (p. 144)

Ironically, Cummins, Brown and Sayers' (2007) analysis of technology-use in public schools is moderated by a sobering assessment. Their finding include the understanding that "The digital divide has become a pedagogical divide. Until this situation is reversed, we should expect to see no significant reduction in the achievement gap between social groups nor any overall rise in literacy attainments" (p. v). Their focus on access is informed by the U.S.

government's continued emphasis on standardized testing in U.S. public schools, which has increased the differences in teaching and resource allocation between schools in wealthy neighborhoods and those operating in working class localities. They have found that learners from low-income families receive instruction and curriculum focused primarily on rote memorization of content material that is disconnected from students' cultural background and aspirations. In addition, the uniform curriculum that accompanies high-stakes standardized testing does not include developing the critical literacy skills required for democratic societies:

Democracy requires the exercise of informed choice with the goal of promoting the common good. Clearly, the ability to critically analyze social issues is a prerequisite for making informed choices. Pedagogy oriented toward the development of critical literacy can be termed a transformative orientation because its goal is to enable students both to understand how power is exercised within society and to use their democratic rights to change aspects of their society that they consider unjust or discriminatory. (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007, p. 39)

Thus, the critical use of media must be grounded in a pedagogy of transformative intent. In particular, collaborative critical inquiry lends itself to the development of communicative skills fostering critical consciousness, language skills, and an understanding that civic engagement allows for positive changes within local and global contexts.

### **Democracy Now!**

The work of journalists Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez of the Pacifica Radio network program "Democracy Now!" inspires many to challenge the dominant discourse propagated by corporate news reporting, by creating an alternative voice and source of information by the general public. In 1996, Goodman and Juan Gonzalez began broadcasting Democracy Now! from WBAI for Pacifica Radio. Originally established to cover the presidential elections of that year, the show became so popular that it stayed on the air and expanded its scope. The program continues to cover stories not reported by corporate media and emphasizes in-depth analysis, interviews, commentaries and debates on topics usually left hidden from the public's attention.

In the context of U.S. and global corporate media consolidation, Democracy Now! represents an important example for critical media literacy for a variety of reasons. First, Goodman and Gonzalez attempt to create contexts for their audience to develop a more sophisticated analysis of power relations. By including both international and national news coverage and by inviting guests to offer first-hand accounts, commentary, and analysis, audience members can recognize patterns of domination and control on a daily basis and on a global scale. Additionally, as independent media journalists with an international focus, Goodman and Gonzalez position themselves to avoid the destitution of “embedded” journalists who report from the perspective of the military industrial complex, corporate sponsors, and governmental authority. It is within the framework of their programming where anomalies are exposed and contextualized within a reading of power distinct from that dictated by the corporate and governmental elite. This alternative type of framing influences a growing audience to develop their own analysis of power and expand their ideological boundaries to include oppositional readings of the world.

Democracy Now! also represents a project that pushes the limits on how independent media is distributed within contemporary times. Although originally created as a radio program for Pacifica’s 5 stations in Berkeley, Los Angeles, Houston, New York, and Washington DC, the program can now be heard on over 845 stations around the world (Democracy Now!, n.d.). The show is broadcast on Pacifica, community, and National Public Radio stations, public access cable television stations, satellite television, shortwave radio and the Internet.

### **Across Borders**

The late Edward Said (2002) provides another example of an alternative global media network. Said supports the use of technology as a means to expand independent and non-corporate media. For Said, the emancipatory potential of technology is exemplified by the

“Across Borders” project created by Palestinian youth living in the West Bank. Using computer and Internet technology, the youth are able to communicate, inform and inspire fellow Palestinians dispersed throughout the Middle East (West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) to resist Israeli oppressive policies and actions.

By circumventing dominant media outlet’s control of content, and by including the voices of traditionally silenced individuals, groups, and political positions, the potential role that independent media plays in establishing a context for recruitment in the fight against domination becomes apparent. This alternative framing can influence a growing audience to critique and develop their own analysis of power and expand their ideological boundaries to include alternative perspectives and possibilities – a stance supported by the critical media theorists previously mentioned in this study.

### **Educational Video Center**

Another example of critical media literacy in practice is the Educational Video Center (EVC) in New York City. As described by Steven Goodman (2003), the EVC works with lower-income, marginalized, urban teenagers to create video documentaries contextualizing important issues within their communities. The EVC program is based on developing critical literacies that encourages learners to analyze, evaluate and produce multiple media forms of communications. Goodman’s research demonstrate how youth productions allow for participants to, “understand how media is made to convey particular messages and how they can use electronic and print technologies themselves to document and publicly voice their ideas and concerns regarding the most important issues in their lives” (p. 3).

The Educational Video Center is premised on the understanding that marginalized populations can move from the periphery to demand political and economic participation through literacy acquisition in the dominant medium. However, the dominant medium is changing.

Learning to read and write the printed word is still essential, but is no longer sufficient in a world where television, radio, movies, videos, magazines, and the World Wide Web have all become powerful and pervasive sites for public education and literacy.

For Goodman, learners must develop a critical literacy to read the broad array of media available to them as media consumers (Goodman, 2003). He suggest that learners who create their own video documentaries create contexts where critical media literacy can be engaged. These contexts are further developed by completing a circuit of production which includes publicly screening final projects. For example, the documentaries completed by participants of the EVC program have been screened for community members where question-and-answer sessions are included. In this way, student producers can publicly dialogue on the topics raised by their documentaries. According to Goodman (2003), this allows for students to,

synthesize what they've found and then they give back what they've found and open it up for discussion, in order to galvanize people's thought and move them toward action. There is the understanding that they can participate in the culture and history of their community. (p. 6)

For Goodman, the medium of video production lends itself well to critical inquiry within a student-centered, project-based approach, where students work together within groups and in their communities. The EVC model is based on a twenty-week term and requires students to identify pressing issues to jointly research. Some topics completed in the past include: teen media representation, immigration, Hurricane Katrina, sexual identities, gun violence, police violence, the criminal justice system, and hip hop.

## **Conclusion**

Although Buckingham attempts to mention issues of inequality and human agency within his “new paradigm”, his analysis and critique of dominant power relationships is negligible

within post 9/11 contexts. Buckingham fails to fully grasp the dangers of corporate media consolidation and their cooperation with government agendas. This has become more apparent as the U.S. government defies the United Nations, declares endless wars, normalizes torture, attacks civil liberties, and ravages public education. The contemporary ability of corporate media to “manufacturing consent” (Herman & Chomsky, 2002) within these conditions reminds us of the historic contexts from which Frankfurt School theorists were forced to analyze and critique the culture industry of their time. The influence of critical social theory on media education produces a theoretical stance that can illuminate contemporary social and political relationships, while developing a practice aimed at active civic engagement.

Critical social theory also requires a critique of ideology, involving the ability to interrogate dominant ideas as they impact our material existence. Critical consciousness is, thus, a capacity to comprehend how power is constructed and to move from the margins of society into participating in the construction of lived experience. For this reason, the influences and contributions of critical social theorists in the field of media literacy are immensely significant. Their analysis not only demands the redefinition of literacy to include the decodification of dominant ideologies in mass media, it also redefines the role of teachers as cultural workers, whose consciousness must move beyond proficiencies in methodology and curricular content. In addition to these important realms of knowledge, the critical social foundations of a critical media literacy call for on-going engagement with the socio-historic trends and contemporary relationships that affect the lives of diverse communities. Hence, the creation of learning environments must be sought where learners move from being passive objects of history to embracing their subjectivity as active creators of their world. This is an important basis from

which to overcome fatalism and develop a strong sense of human agency, capable of voice and participation within a radically democratic society.

However, as Freire and Giroux remind us, the availability of, and exposure to, alternative media sources alone does not ensure the creation of an oppositional consciousness or democratic civic engagement. Individuals and community organizations must continually strive to critically examine the everyday and recognize the complex relationships embedded in the (re)production of knowledge. This is a particularly important act when examining all creators of media, including independent media, corporate media, artists, and ultimately, ourselves.

## Chapter 3

### The Growing Influence of Alternative Media in Civil Society

The September 2007 protests led by young Buddhist monks in Myanmar exposed more than the harsh conditions administered by the military dictatorship of that country. The demonstrations against rising fuel prices, lack of food, water, electricity and malnutrition also revealed the growing importance and power of citizen journalism, alternative media, and networked communities in contemporary history.

Although Myanmar's regime closely controls its national press and restricts reporting by foreign journalists, the international corporate media turned to citizen journalists for up-to-date information on the growing unrest and the organized resistance in Myanmar. Images of Buddhist monks marching on the streets and the subsequent government crack-down were recorded and distributed primarily by people using personal technology (i.e. camera equipped cell phones, email, Websites, Skype, and satellite phones) recently accessible in that country (Newshour, September 28, 2007). Much of the content generated by local citizen journalists was then distributed on Websites maintained by members of the exiled Burmese diaspora and shared with international media outlets.

Despite the ensuing government crackdown against the protests and the government shut down of mobile phone systems, satellite television, and Internet access, activists continued to bypass military censors. Although the physical mobilization of street protests within Myanmar appeared to have been crushed, an international mobilization continues which seeks to pressure democratic change through United Nations investigations, economic sanctions, and international boycotts of Myanmar's gem trade. In many ways, the continued reporting by citizen journalists within the country serves as an impetus for the Burmese diasporic populations seeking new ways of influencing global opinions on the conditions experienced daily by Myanmar's impoverished

citizenry as well as mobilizing dispersed communities, international agencies, and state governments into taking action.

Since the Myanmar example manifested, it has been repeated to varying degrees in other parts of the world. Uyghurs in China and pro-democracy movements in Iran have also served as examples that highlight the roles of both citizen journalist and new media technologies, within contemporary societies across the globe. These incidents illustrate how those attempting to inform public opinion on the repercussions of authoritarian rule continue to develop new uses of technologies and social networks to inform, educate, and mobilize popular responses to particular causes, with the hopes of achieving social, political and economic changes.

Although the relationships between new technologies, alternative media and social movements have often been ignored within various academic disciplines, their combined influences have significantly impacted the political economy (Downing, 2001; de Jong, Shaw & Stammers, 2005). At this particular historical juncture, the public educational projects represented by citizen journalism and cyberactivism attempt to fill voids created by the crises in governance, education, journalism, and capitalist expansion.

In the U.S., this phenomenon strikes at the confidence in democratic institutions and is symbolized by the ability of the George W. Bush administration's documented media manipulation campaign, which resulted in the Iraq war; their subsequent success in mis-educating the general public on reasons for going to war; and the use of embedded reporters and government censorship to control images and narratives on the impact of the invasions and occupations. Also implicated are the concentration of monopoly ownership and control of the mass media.

Important concepts raised by those who use new technologies to produce and distribute alternative media content include civil society and the role of dialogue within pedagogy and social movements. Combined, knowledge of these concepts help develop our understanding of contemporary trajectories for change within the political economy and informs how attempts to oppose and bypass government and corporate control of media production and distribution systems contribute to the cultivation of communities of resistance that strive for democratic governance and civic participation.

### **New Technology and the Rise of Social Networks of Resistance**

The expanded infrastructure for the Internet, along with the improved capabilities of the personal computer, amplified the hyper-growth of technology's influence in the 1990's. As networks in communication systems grew in capacity, the development of the World Wide Web (WWW) as a platform for accessing the Internet allowed for a "user friendly" interface. This facilitated large-scale interactions within "cyberspace" by dispersed population and interests groups. Email readers and Web browsers were particularly helpful in making navigation on the Internet as easy as clicking a link or typing in an address.

In addition, software for creating Web sites allowed novice users to bypass the obstacles of writing HTML code; thus, opening new possibilities for publishing, sharing, and archiving local content in ways that allow access to others across the globe. Additional low-cost software (or in many cases "freeware") permitted lay people to produce and manipulate photographs, sound files, and video, in the comfort of their home, local community center, or office. Combined with lowered prices on digital cameras, Web hosting and high-speed Internet access, the possibilities for producing and distributing online content exploded.

Yet, despite the price-drops and product innovations offered by the technology industries, the government and corporate policies advocating “liberalized” economic expansion became a source for scrutiny and contention. Access to new communication systems was particularly helpful in facilitating the expression of dissent and perspectives challenging the lens of corporate media and government censors. Many groups organized against policies embracing the tenets of neoliberalism, as its implementation continued to negatively impact diverse populations. This often prompted local struggles to link with global movements, demanding alternative governing structures and greater democratic participation at multiple levels (Castells, 2007). The turn of the century also saw a convergence of oppositional politics and technological innovations that allowed various social movements, nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s) and activist organizations to further mobilize, in ways not previously seen.

An often-cited uprising demonstrating the power of “networked” communities, who were successful in exposing the contradictions of authoritarianism and neoliberalism, is that spearheaded by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation or EZLN) whose declaration of war against the Mexican government in 1994 shocked the world. Originally backed by a standing army to awaken the globe to the negative impact of Mexico’s embrace of “free-market” economic policies upon indigenous communities in Southern Mexico’s Lacandón region, EZLN tactically shifted its strategy from a military conflict to a social movement, calling for an empowered civil society (Castells, 2007; Cleaver, 1998; Ronfeldt, Arquilla, G. Fuller, & M. Fuller, 1998; Schulz, 1998). This tactic also worked to diffuse organizational elements to the resistance in ways that included global organizations and entities acting independently to raise awareness and to develop creative responses to counter the Mexican government’s plans to both silence the uprising and eliminate the participants.

Before the armed uprising, the indigenous people of the Lacandón area, (consisting of Tzeltales, Tzotziles, Tojolabales, Choles, and Mames) attempted legal means to address their concerns and to fight the repressive tactics of wealthy ranchers and the ruling political party - the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) (Schulz, 1998). Of particular concern was the continued distribution of land to the poor of Mexico, as guaranteed by Article 27, Section VII of the Mexican Constitution, but revoked by President Salinas to secure the passage of NAFTA (Cleaver, 1998; Schulz, 1998). To address their concerns, the landless workers in the Lacandón filed petitions, organized protests and marches, and used electoral processes. However, these peaceful measures were often attacked by local police or the private armies of wealthy landowners (Cleaver, 1998; Schulz, 1998). Despite these efforts, the PRI was unresponsive and held firm in dismantling Mexico's social welfare system because of pressures for "structural adjustments" from abroad, including the International Monetary Fund, The World Bank, and the U.S. Government (Schulz, 1998).

January 1, 1994 was strategically chosen by the Zapatistas to mobilize their efforts because it marked the inception of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as well as the beginning of an election year for the Mexican presidency. By choosing the start date of NAFTA to take up arms, EZLN linked their movement ideologically against the "free trade" and anti-worker rhetoric that guided the agreement's creation. At the same time, the armed conflict and the subsequent barrage of alternative media added significant pressure on the Mexican political establishment, worried about the general elections, to address the concerns of the Zapatistas through negotiations, rather than military might (Castells, 2007; Cleaver, 1998; Ronfeldt et al., 1998; Schulz 1998).

On January 3, 1994, EZLN released a message that became known as “The E-Mail Round the World” (Halleck, 2002, p. 333).

January 1, 1994. The first declaration of the Zapatistas: We are the inheritors and the true builders of our nation. The disposed, we are millions and we thereby call upon our brothers and sisters to join this struggle as the only path, so that we will not die of hunger due to the insatiable ambition of a 70-year dictatorship led by a gang of traitors that represent the most reactionary and sell-out groups.

To the People of Mexico: We the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just one... JOIN THE INSURGENT FORCES OF THE ZAPATISTA ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION. (as cited in Halleck, 2002, p. 333)

This message, along with many subsequent communiqués, were dispersed through electronic networks and later picked up by the mainstream press. EZLN and their allies helped exemplify the term “cyberactivism” with their capacity to tap into diverse collectives of organizations who distributed Zapatista correspondence, using various tools of technology. By doing so, they reached globally dispersed communities; shared Zapatista demands; monitored the Mexican government’s military and political response; and mobilized street protests in Mexico and abroad (Ronfeldt et al. 1998; Schulz, 1998). In addition, the networked community contributed immensely to analyzing information and strategies, as developments occurred in real time across broad geo-political locations (Cleaver, 1998; Halleck, 2002).

News reports on radio and television were complemented by first-hand reports in cyberspace from a record number of observers who flooded into Chiapas with hitherto unseen alacrity, as well as from more analytical commentators who could voice their opinions and enter into debates more quickly and easily in cyberspace. These few circuits were rapidly complemented by the creation of specialized lists, conferences and [W]eb pages devoted specifically to Chiapas and the struggle for democracy in Mexico. The breadth of participation in these discussions and the posting of multiple sources of information has made possible an unprecedented degree of verification in the history of the media. Questionable information can be quickly checked and counter-information posted with a speed unknown in either print, radio or television. Instead of days or weeks, the norm for posting objections or corrections is minutes or hours. (Cleaver, 1998, p. 3-4)

The ability to bypass corporate media to inform and rapidly mobilize citizenry gained EZLN the label of “The First Informational Guerilla Movement” (Castells, 2007, p. 75). The use of the Internet to distribute information and prompt cooperation amongst dispersed non-hierarchical support groups also represented a decentralized, global, grassroots network able to spread the tenets of EZLN and amplify their impact within the international sphere of public opinion (Garrido & Halavais, 2003).

Within this context, the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in EZLN’s uprising cannot be underestimated (Garrido & Halavais, 2003; Ronfeldt et al., 1998). From most accounts, the Zapatistas did not have direct access to Internet communication technologies themselves (Castells, 2007; Cleaver, 1998; Schulz, 1998). Instead, they most likely composed messages in remote areas and delivered computer disks to contacts in San Cristobal de Las Casas for distribution. Once received by those within the NGO community, the messages were sent as faxes or email messages across the globe on multiple listservs and archived on Webpages and electronic bulletin boards.

Within Mexico, the communiqués connected a complex web of grassroots organizers, students, academics, and public intellectuals. As a result, domestically based NGOs, concerned citizens, Mexican and international journalists rapidly converged on Chiapas to monitor the Mexican military’s counter-revolutionary tactics and maneuvering.

Without the influx of NGO-based social activists, starting hours after the insurrection began, the situation in Chiapas would probably have deteriorated into a conventional insurgency and counterinsurgency, in which the small, poorly equipped EZLN might not have done well, and its efforts at “armed propaganda” would not have seemed out of the ordinary. (Ronfeldt et al., 1998, p. 23)

Previous struggles by a wide array of organizations engaging various contemporary issues established the distribution networks utilized by EZLN (Schulz, 1998). These causes included: anti-NAFTA organizing, human rights, indigenous rights, women’s rights, workers’

rights, environmental justice, and the Central American anti-war movement. The Zapatista cause allowed a wide variety of organizations and communities to organize in solidarity. More importantly, Zapatistas framed their rebellion in such a way as to allow the Mexican people to understand the legitimacy of their concerns. For example, EZLN focused on the negative impact of neoliberal policies, and connected their consequences on contemporary indigenous communities in Southern Mexico and poor workers and farmers across the country. In addition, they linked their oppression to a legacy of 500 years of resistance to colonization and associated the armed struggle with Mexico's revolutionary past, taking their name from Emiliano Zapata, one of the key historical figures who fought for land reform and peasant rights. As stated by Castells (2007):

They are Mexican patriots, up in arms against new forms of foreign domination by American imperialism. And they are democrats, appealing to article 39 of the Mexican Constitution, which proclaims "the right of the people to alter or modify its form of government." Thus, they call upon Mexicans to support democracy, ending de facto rule of one-party government based on electoral fraud. (p. 81)

This process of "framing" their struggle by reappropriating popular figures from Mexican history was a tactic used by EZLN to legitimize their movement and widen the possible network of organizations and individuals willing to engage in collective action for their cause. By so doing, the Zapatistas engaged in symbolic production that attempted to position their movement as the legitimate heirs of the Mexican revolution and the protectors of the ideas and values that connect the Mexican citizenry. As described by Aleberto Mellucci (1996), this practice of naming illustrates attempts to redefine reality in ways that differentiate oppositional social movements from those against whom they struggle.

Contemporary movements strive to reappropriate the capacity to name through the elaboration of codes and languages designed to define reality, in the twofold sense of constituting it symbolically and of regaining it, thereby escaping from the predominant forms of representation. (p. 357)

Within this vein of reappropriating popular codes within the public sphere, EZLN also used popular culture to its advantage in the quest to reach out to the Mexican citizenry and global community. Its acting spokesperson, Subcommandante Marcos, became a media phenomenon and penetrated the public's consciousness with his literary flare, wit, mysterious mask, and iconic pipe. Popular musical groups such as Café Tacuba, Maldita Vecindad, Rage Against the Machine, and Manu Chao sampled Marcos' speeches in their music, while others offered benefit concerts to raise money and awareness for their cause.

Combined, these tactics positioned EZLN not as a separatist movement, but as a reformist, Mexican nationalist uprising, appealing to diverse sectors of Mexican and international populations. The Zapatistas strategized to expose the contradictions of one party rule in Mexico, as well as the global economic policies advocated administered by the PRI and their management of the passage of NAFTA (Cleaver, 1998; Schulz, 1998). What resulted was the activation of complex oppositional social networks working together, non-hierarchically, to mobilize and demand that the Mexican government change traditional strong-arm tactics and pressure them into negotiations with EZLN. While in negotiation, the Zapatistas advocated for measures meant to strengthen civil society by opening Mexico's democratic process and questioning policies that expand capitalist ideological influence. Their demands included "work, land, shelter, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace" (Zapatistas 1994 as cited in Schulz, 1998, p. 596).

In addition to bringing the government to the negotiating table, EZLN also organized a series of face-to-face meetings to facilitate dialogue amongst the multifaceted web of coalition members. These "encuentros" (encounters) were used to further develop analysis on the nature

of neoliberalism and elaborate how global networks can be further utilized in opposition to capitalism and in support of alternative modes of governance (Cleaver, 1998).

The result of these organizing efforts included: a series of continental meetings in the spring of 1996; an intercontinental meeting in Chiapas in the summer of 1996; and second intercontinental meeting in Spain in the summer of 1997. Through extensive E-mails and a small number of intermittent, face-to-face meetings, possible approaches to the organization of discussion were debated, agendas were hammered out and logistical arrangements were made. The results were stunning. Thousands came to the continental meetings – 3,3000 to the intercontinental meeting in Chiapas and 4,000 to the intercontinental reunion in Spain. Grassroots activists from over 40 countries and five continents attended both intercontinental meetings. (p. 5)

According to Schulz (1998), these encuentros expanded the scope of EZLN's goals by linking larger networks countering undemocratic, neoliberal models of globalization. The encuentros also reflected the Zapatista strategy for opposing the military power of the Mexican armed forces, promoting civil society leveraged with global communication channels (Ronfeldt et al., 1998; Schulz, 1998). Used to counter local threats from global entities who place limits to forms of resistance at the national level, EZLN identified networks of communication that held possibilities for the development of a civil society (Schulz, 1998). The Zapatistas thus advocated for increased abilities to tap into dispersed affinity networks using alternative forms to communication, where marginalized and oppressed populations could bypass the control of corporate and government media to make their voices heard, both locally and globally (Garrido & Halavais, 2003). A 1996 communiqué from Subcomandante Marcos expresses this tactic and encourages others to spread its use:

We have a choice: we can have a cynical attitude in the face of media... (or) we can ignore it and go about our lives. But there is a third option ... (and) that is to construct a different way – to show the world what is really happening – to have a critical worldview and to become interested in the truth of what happens to the people who inhabit every corner of this world. (as cited in Coyer, 2005, p. 168)

Kate Coyer (ibid) conceptualizes a lineage between the Zapatista call for constructing systems for alternative media production and distribution and the creation of worldwide

independent media networks. For Coyer, Subcomandante Marcos' call to avoid the pitfalls of fatalism and to actively challenge corporate and government domination of media inspired progressive communities across the globe to develop Independent Media Centers (IMCs). In 1999, as the U.S. monopoly of media ownership dwindled to five corporations (Bagdikian, 2004), organizers in Seattle, Washington took up the challenge of establishing a grass-roots media collective to add public light on the usually secretive deliberations of the increasingly influential World Trade Organization (WTO).

Established only months before the November 30, 2007 WTO meeting, the IMC in Seattle was able to mobilize citizen journalists to document and report on the WTO proceedings and street demonstrations, in ways never before seen. What resulted was the unprecedented massive outpouring of media activists, along with the creative use of newly accessible technology, to produce and globally distribute content at record speeds. The IMC's ability to document and distribute up-to-the minute reports via the Internet and satellite multiplied the impact of the street actions.

During the protest in Seattle, 500 Independent media makers provided up-to-the minute reports online in print, video, audio and photo – most footage uploaded and edited from the Indymedia space downtown. Information was dispatched from the street by walkie talkie, mobile phone and from people racing back to the IMC with news or fresh footage to upload. A series of five video documentaries was produced and uplinked via satellite to public access television stations each day of the protests. A daily newspaper was distributed on the streets of Seattle. Internet radio station, Studio X, broadcast online and there were a number of pirate radio stations broadcasting throughout the city. (Coyer, 2005, p. 168)

Similar to EZLN's ability to tap into global social networks, the organizers of the Seattle protests stimulated an expansive and diverse network of those concerned with the direction of neoliberal economic policies and the lack of democratic participation in global governance (Castells, 2007; Kidd, 2003; Reed, 2005). According to Castells (2007), what united these groups was not necessarily a desire to overthrow capitalism as a major ideological force in global

economic and political policy, but rather the struggle against neoliberalism as a common enemy. Thus, they called for reforms that would include greater participation and transparency in decision-making within institutions of global governance. For example, a popular sign at the protests read, “No globalization without representation” (Castells, 2007, p. 147).

An important strategy for the organizers of the Seattle protests was to attend the WTO meeting with the intent to create media spectacle and to disrupt WTO business through large mobilizations, street theatre and civil disobedience. T.V. Reed (2005) reports that there were between forty thousand to sixty thousand people who represented approximately seven hundred worldwide organizations present at the “Battle of Seattle”. Reed’s unique account of the Seattle actions emphasizes the educational aspect of the gathering. Reed (2005) describes it as a weeklong series of events that began on November 27, 1999 and were highly organized and focused on education, culture and protest.

Many of the most prominent intellectuals of the movement against corporate globalization, including Vandana Shiva, Noam Chomsky, Lori Wallach, Ralph Nader, Medea Benjamin, Jose Bové, Naomi Klein, and Walden Bello, were on hand. These people and others play an important role in translating immensely complicated academic discourses on global economics, trade issues, international law, and so on into terms more useful to the movement. (p. 248)

In addition to the educational focus, people organized into affinity groups and strategized how they would participate in the protests. Each group was self-organized and had its own mission. Some agreed to get arrested, while others preferred not to. In many instances, affinity groups voted by consensus on the streets of Seattle on how to proceed with their involvement. This was particularly important because as the police used tear gas, batons, and rubber bullets to clear groups out of intersections, another affinity group would take its place, without necessarily needing instructions from a central coordinator (Reed, 2005).

Media coverage of the protest was particularly interesting at this time. Instead of relying on mainstream accounts of mass media, the actions in Seattle, the IMC cadre of citizen journalists often contradicted news reports provided by the corporate controlled mass media. As Coyer (2005) describes:

The potency of live coverage from the Indymedia resonated especially when mainstream broadcasters reported police were not firing plastic bullets, while there was already footage up on the Indymedia site of people on the street with large welts on their bodies holding up plastic bullets. The city of Seattle later settled a lawsuit filed by protesters resulting from the level of police violence. (p. 169)

Despite the corporate media's focus on property damage organized by Black Block anarchists, the combined size and scope of the actions also caused multiple news sources to inform the public on the role of the WTO in global governance and generated various discussions on its growing influence. Dorothy Kidd (2003) notes that before the Seattle protests, "only a handful of articles in the U.S. corporate media had discussed the implications of the WTO meetings" (p. 49). In addition, during the week of actions in Seattle, indymedia.org received over 1 million hits, outnumbering that of CNN during the same period (Reed, 2005).

For Castells (2007), the important aspect of the anti-globalization movement is its example as a new form of networked resistance at the global level:

While these developments are clearly still in the process of social experimentation, what is analytically important is to underline that networking, and particularly Internet-based networking, is not just an instrument of organization and struggle, it is a new form of social interaction, mobilization, and decision-making. It is a new political culture: networking means no center, thus no central authority. It means an instant relationship between the local and the global, so that the movement can think locally, rooted in its identity and interests, and act globally, where the sources of power are. It also means that all nodes in the network can and may contribute to the goals of the network, thus strengthening it by its relentless expansion. But it also means that dysfunctional nodes that block the overall dynamics of the network can easily be switched off or bypassed, thus overcoming the traditional ailments of social movements so often engaged in self-destruction through factionalism. (p. 156)

Castells (2007) argues the goal of democratic representation and governance must extend to the global level because the repercussions of global policy are most likely to impact local environments. He believes that in the twenty-first century, the realm of global governance can best be understood and interrupted with the capacity to engage in global network societies. Within this framework, the role of alternative media forms and global communication systems are of utmost importance. The implementation of neoliberal policies, since the 1980s, established the context for the rapid monopoly consolidation of transnational media corporations (Bagdikian, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Leistyna & Alper, 2007; McChesney, 2004; McCullagh, 2002). The results have allowed for the censorship and framing of news stories and perspectives in favor of business norms, while discounting dissenting social movements and worldviews (Durham & Kellner 2001; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Leistyna & Alper, 2007; McChesney, 2004).

However, throughout history, the phenomenon of alternative media has played an important role in challenging the status quo. Downing's (2001, 2005) research on alternative and radical media contextualizes its use as historically "persistent" and contributing to the formation and survival of influential social movements. Downing faults researchers in multiple academic disciplines for grossly underestimating or ignoring radical media's significance and, thus, minimizing its impact. In particular, his research focuses on the use of radical media which he defines as, "generally small-scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives" (p. v). In addition, Downing characterizes radical media as including "a huge gamut of activities, from street theater and murals to dance and song ... not just radical uses of the technologies of radio, video, press, and Internet" (p. 8).

For Downing (2001), measuring the degree of ‘radicalism’ of media production must occur within particular contexts where interpretations takes place on a case-by-case basis. He admits that, “Fundamentalist and racist radical media are also radical media” (p. ix). However, Downing’s interests is on radical media produced by democratic means, whose content attempts to document the perspectives and opinions of those marginalized or excluded from dominant discourse and endeavors to expose the contradictions of hegemonic relationships. Downing (2001) more specifically characterizes radical media produced for liberatory purposes in the following way:

First, radical alternative media expand the range of information, reflection, and exchange from the often narrow hegemonic limits of mainstream media discourse. This is accomplished, in part, by their very number. Second, they frequently try to be more responsive than mainstream media to the voices and aspiration of the excluded. They often have a close relationship with an ongoing social movement and thus fairly spontaneously express views and opinions extruded from mainstream media, or ridiculed in them. They are quite often in the lead in addressing issues that only later get noticed by mainstream media. Third, radical alternative media do not need to censor themselves in the interests of media moguls, entrenched state power, or religious authority... (p. 44)

It is within this context, however, that contemporary radical media content and the associations formed in their production processes, continue to be shaped and informed by dominating relationships perpetuated by capitalist economies, patriarchy, and racialization (Downing, 2001). Although producers of radical media often focus their content on educating particular populations about the injustices tied to an unequal distribution of power, their own organizational structures and interactions don’t always escape reproducing the very relationships they are struggling to overcome. As such, Downing cautions against romanticizing the allure of oppositional movements, particularly as they attempt to produce media content meant to expose the contradictions of domination.

It is in response to this concern that Downing (2001) critiques organizations that may express goals of pacifism or socialist intent but who slither into fascism. Media produced by

these organizations, “fail to enhance but actually maim the public’s ability to develop its powers. Neither critical reflection nor any genuine increase in personal or collective freedom are on the radar screen of such media” (p. 89). Examples of this type of transgression include the propaganda machine of the Nazi party in Germany and the workings of Benito Mussolini in Italy – both of whose early beginnings were based on socialist visions. “Repugnant as fascism is” says Downing, “our analysis can no more omit its social movement dimension than we can assume all radical media are somehow positive forces for good” (p. 90).

Ultimately, Downing’s (2001) research points to an adherence to democratic culture as the hallmarks of liberatory radical media. On the other hand, the rightist radical media operate from very authoritarian and hierarchical organizational structures:

For the ultra-Right (aside from the anarchist ultras-right), a comprehensive future of self-governing media is simply not imaginable because – and here, there is very substantial unity on the Right – hierarchy is its deepest principle. How it believes in hierarchy, what consequences it draws, which hierarchy, all vary, but not the underlying commitment to the principle. (p. 94)

Downing’s (2001) analysis uncovers subtleties in organizational structure that helps contextualize some of the faults of popular movements. He notes that rightist or authoritarian social movements offer solutions to social ills, whose strategies themselves do not allow for popular participation. On the contrary, these conservative movements tend to, “involve the public not as joint architects of solution but only as cheerleaders for the leadership – and quite frequently as instruments to repress political minorities on the leadership’s behalf” (p. 95). As such, these organizations utilize manipulative tactics widespread in populist movements meant to exploit commonly held prejudicial beliefs as a unifying force. Their media content does not encourage dialogue nor are they interested in locating issues within complex historical contexts. Instead, they often rely on sloganism and situating the populations they are attempting to mobilize as alienated and ignored by those who control policy.

For Downing (2001) organizations producing radical media committed to expanding democracy are self-managed in ways that embrace dialogue, as well as democratic organizing principles that openly question hierarchies. This is not to say this is an easy path or that many achieve these egalitarian objectives. However, “their democratic goals, and the very fact they have had fierce struggles over them, are absolutely unimaginable on the ultra-Right” (Downing 2001, p. 95).

### **Freire and the Role of Dialogue and Transactional Relationships**

Downing’s framing of liberatory social movements and radical organizations complement the pedagogical philosophy of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1970, 1993a, 1993b, 1998a, 1998b, 1992). Freire also contextualized the need to synchronize visions of social justice in concert with members of learning communities (Darder, 2002). For Freire this is accomplished by making *dialogue* essential to literacy activities, while also building relationships that facilitate personal and communal empowerment. In this way dialogue assists community members to achieve an enhanced understanding of themselves, as well as to better comprehend the manifestations of contemporary historical influences on their own lives (Darder, 2002).

Like Downing, Freire critiques the very process by which humans struggle toward emancipation. According to Aronowitz (1993),

Explicitly, Freire warns against defining the goal of radical movements exclusively in terms of social justice and a more equitable society, since these objectives can conceivably be partially achieved without shared decision-making, especially over knowledge and political futures. (p. 21)

Thus, the processes of liberation for Freire (1992, 1998a) are ingrained in the identification of ideological and structural organizing mechanisms that condition material circumstances and

foster social reproduction. Central to Freire's conception of "critical literacy" is the ability to decode representations of power (Freire & Macedo, 1987). His vision includes reading and writing both the world and the word, in the development of critical consciousness. By advocating for critical literacy, Freire promotes competencies by interpreting the manifestations of dominant ideologies and the importance of critique in democracy (Darder, 2002).

Freire (1993a) juxtaposed this view of literacy with that of traditional education and its "banking" approach. This approach views learners as individual empty vessels who, unlike the teacher, are incapable of imparting knowledge. Banking education is thus characterized by the uncritical *transmission* and memorization of decontextualized "facts" from within rigidly defined disciplines and conveyed by authoritarian instructors. Thus, within this hierarchical model, the teacher is the legitimate sender of information and the student is the passive receiver.

Under the George W. Bush administration's *No Child Left Behind* and Barack Obama's *Race to the Top* federal educational policies, banking methods are assured by a strong emphasis on decontextualized, high-stakes standardized testing as the primary means to measure "academic success" in K-12 public education. What results is a deeply hierarchical educational system whose authoritarian control of banking methodology and implementation establish the conditions for the privatization of schools and districts that do not adhere to strict federal guidelines of "accountability" (Darder & Torres, 2004).

Freire's (1998b) critique of authoritarian relationships includes the manner by which teachers organize contexts for classroom learning as well as the domain of the nation-state and the socio-economic systems that maintain global inequities. Within all realms of authoritarianism, however, lie ideologies that serve to maintain dominant power structures: "The

authoritarian road is in itself a denial of our restless, questioning, searching nature, which, if lost, means the loss of liberty itself” (Freire, 1998b, p. 117).

In its place, Freire advocates a *transactional* view of literacy acquisition, premised on the notion of praxis: i.e., naming, dialogue, reflection and action (Darder, 2002). His adult literacy campaigns in Brazil exemplified this theoretical perspective by promoting coordinated reading groups he called “culture circles”. In 1964, at the time of the Brazilian military coup, Freire helped plan the creation of twenty thousand cultural circles for two million Brazilians (Gadotti, 1994). The goals of these groups is to make reading dialogic experiences where the discussion of the text by different readers clarifies, enlightens and creates a communal comprehension of the readings (McLaren, 2000). This active engagement enriches the development of text comprehension within community, as different understandings are exposed, shared, acted upon and celebrated.

Within these culture circles, moreover, people engage in dialogue using familiar socio-historical artifacts as prompts to solicit diverse analysis and understandings. The depiction of these “codes” occurs using various types of media such as pictures, paintings, music, poetry, movie clips, or any symbolic representation encountered in the everyday that is rarely interrogated for its ideological value. According to McLaren (2000), this literacy practice developed from the Movement for Popular Culture in Recife, Brazil at the end of the 1950’s where participants

practiced a form of decodification that broke up a codification into its constituent elements so that the learners began to perceive relationships between elements of the codification and other experiences in their day-to-day lives. Such decodification took place through dialogue, in which familiar, everyday experiences were made strange and the strange or unknown process of generating critical knowledge was made familiar. (McLaren, 2000, pp. 177-78)

Overall, Freire's theoretical positions complement and enlighten contemporary frameworks focused on communication, media education and civic engagement. For example, he frames organizational relationships and learning contexts in ways similar to that expounded by James Carey (1989) in his seminal book, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. In this work, Carey positions the *transmission* model of communication similarly to how Freire situates the *transmission* model of learning. That is, Carey describes the transmission paradigm as a linear process, where messages are viewed as being transmitted from one person or institution to another with the goal of controlling space and people:

The transmission view of communication is the commonest in our culture – perhaps in all industrial cultures – and dominates contemporary dictionary entries under the term. It is defined by terms such as “imparting,” “sending,” “transmitting,” or “giving information to others.” It is formed from a metaphor of geography or transportation. In the nineteenth century but to a lesser extent today, the movement of goods or people and the movement of information were seen as essentially identical processes and both were described by the common noun “communication.” The center of this idea of communication is the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control. It is a view of communication that derives from one of the most ancient of human dreams: the desire to increase the speed and effect of messages as they travel in space. (p. 15)

The rise of the transmission model of communication corresponds to the rise of industrial societies and the expansion of technologies in everyday life. As societies modernized, the capacity to communicate with dispersed audiences also increased (Schiller, 2007). J. Zack Schiller (2007) relates this capability with the desire to centralize power to control these same audiences, as he states, “Thus did they also become vital stakes for contending forces in society to capture for the purposes of transmitting information meant to influence attitudes or change minds” (p. 123).

Carey (1989) contrasts the transmission model by describing a more ancient understanding of the word ‘communication’. According to Carey, a *ritual* understanding of communication focuses more on the sharing of relationships, associations, common experiences,

and upon the building of community. This model has its roots in religious ceremonies focused on practices of ‘communion’ that lead toward fellowship and commonality, rather than on those aspects of religion that focus on sermons or direct instruction.

Carey’s description of both the ritual and transmission views of communication become more clear with this elaboration on the role of newspapers in society. According to Carey, the transmission model approaches newspapers by focusing on the information disseminated in the articles. Understanding the role of newspapers on audiences thus concentrates on the impact this information may have on the attitudes, perspectives and integration of its readers into society. In contrast, a ritual view of communication emphasizes how a particular worldview is depicted and substantiated, by contrasting entities or groups who produce and consume this same medium.

The model here is not that of information acquisition, though such acquisition occurs but of dramatic action in which the reader joins a world of contending forces as an observer at a play. We do not encounter questions about the effects or functions of messages as such, but the role of presentation and involvement in the structuring of the reader’s life and time. We recognize, as with religious rituals, that news changes little and yet is intrinsically satisfying; it performs few functions yet is habitually consumed. Newspapers do not operate as a source of effects or functions but as dramatically satisfying, which is not to say pleasing, presentation of what the world at root is. And it is in this role-that of a text-that a newspaper is seen; like a Balinese cockfight, a Dickens novel, and Elizabethan drama, a student rally, it is a presentation of reality that gives life an overall form, order, and tone. (Carey, 1989, p. 21)

In these ways, Carey’s articulation of the ritual model of communication embraces the important role that learning communities have on collective identity formation, validation and reproduction (Schiller, 2007). Carey (1989) also notes that the historical rise of the newspaper itself gained prominence in the eighteenth century, as a middle class hungered for a new cultural form congruent with its own class identity and interests:

This “hunger” itself has a history grounded in the changing style and fortunes of the middle class and as such does not represent a universal taste or necessarily legitimate form of knowledge but an invention in historical time, that like most other human inventions, will dissolve when the class that sponsors it and its possibility of having significance for us evaporates. (p. 21)

The rise of the newspaper, then denotes a consciousness of class interests representative of the growing need to influence the perspectives and beliefs of a mass public. “A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs” (Carey, 1989, p. 18). Thus, Carey believes the historical significance of the rise of the newspaper lies in its ability to strengthen collective identities, by normalizing particular tastes and ways of perceiving the world.

Analyzing Freirian literacy with Carey’s ritual model of communications reveals how teaching and learning are amplified within settings that promote cultural practices contributing to civic engagement. The ritual model described by Carey complements Freire’s (1992) call for dialogue within culture circles by focusing on creating contexts for the meaningful construction of knowledge, within particular communities and socio-historical locations. Both see learning as social activities meant to transform and assert various conceptualizations of reality, using multiple forms of media and symbolic systems. Both also agree that the construction of knowledge takes place because of common desires to struggle together to make sense of the world (and the word) and to share these understandings with others.

Carey’s (1989) ritual model of communication further complements Freire’s goals of strengthening communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) by conceptualizing how people can engage various modes of communication for the purpose of naming their world while supporting one’s sense of community. Freire (1998a) is forceful in viewing critical dialogue as contributing to communal processes of naming the everyday world and as a means for unveiling political and economic relationships that facilitate unequal systems of social reproduction, while also developing an understanding of one’s social-historical location. Carey (1989) also

acknowledges communication itself involves processes where reality is created, sustained, fixed, and transformed by social systems meant to impose a particular order on the world:

Reality is not given, not humanly existent, independent of language and toward which language stands as a pale refraction. Rather, reality is brought into existence, is produced, by communication – by, in short, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms. Reality, while not a mere function of symbolic forms, is produced by terministic systems – or by humans who produce such systems – that focus its existence in specific terms. (p. 25)

Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987) addresses these concerns by advocating literacy development within culture circles in ways that allow participants to deconstruct the very meanings produced within dominant systems. His aim is for the logic of these systems to become more apparent. Within these learning environments, Freire advocates for community members to identify dominant ways by which the world is framed and then to re-create new meanings and ways of looking at their world that fosters learners to see themselves as proactive subjects capable of participating in the making of history (Darder, 2002).

In this way, Freirian literacy complements Carey's (1989) call to "toss away our authoritative representations of reality and begin to build the world anew" (p. 30). Therefore, both Freire and Carey also see the need to, "examine the actual social process wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended, and used" (Carey, 1989, p. 30). For Freire, this leads learners from being objects in history to realizing their subjectivities. As subjects in the world, critical learners question deterministic assumptions of history and interrogate relationships of power, influencing the production of culture and the reproduction of meaning in their own lives.

### **Alternative Public Spheres**

This discussion of Freire's *culture circles* and Carey's ritual model of communication leads us to examine the role of the public sphere. As exemplified by the Zapatista uprising and

the “Battle in Seattle”, the resistant potential of media production can be contextualized within a wider desire to create alternative spaces that question the influence of both authoritarian governance and corporate manipulation. These conceptions of the public sphere continue to expand, as theorists grapple with the complexities of diaspora, marginalization and resistance within the immense scope of globalization and technological expansion.

Jurgen Habermas (1991) documents the important rise of a literate, engaged, and critical public in his book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. For Habermas, the public sphere took shape in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the institutionalization of private property and international trade assisted the formation of a new class of citizenry that held interests outside those of the existing ruling bodies. The rise of market economics and liberalization created needs for public debate and information not previously experienced by citizenry outside the royal courts (Calhoun, 1992). Within Habermas’ account, he documents the impact of newly formed media upon the creation of the public sphere.

According to Habermas (1991), seventeenth and eighteenth century European merchants traded not only in goods but also information from abroad, where international trade included an exchange of news along with their traffic in commodities. Those benefiting from the rise of trade increasingly concerned themselves with the workings of political institutions and the nature of government. Like Carey (1989), Habermas also situates the rise of newspapers within this historical era. Newspapers and journals are thus produced to meet the interests of a new class of citizenry that address issues of community and authority as well as to influence public opinion and party politics (Held, 1980). In this way, an informed citizenry developed subjectivities that positioned themselves separate from traditional forms of authority, as they engaged political

issues using rational discourse. “Thus, for example, critical reasoning entered the press in the early eighteenth century, supplementing the news with learned articles and quietly creating a new genre of periodical” (Calhoun, 1992, p. 9).

The rise of these new forms of public discourse emboldened political participation and the creation of civic locations for interaction. According to Habermas (1991), the creation of meeting places for public discourse also follows the import of new beverages such as tea, coffee and chocolate and the subsequent creation of coffee houses. “By the first decade of the eighteenth century London already had 3,000 of them, each with a core group of regulars” (p. 32). It was within these coffee houses that patrons discussed issues of trade, along with literary topics portrayed in the ever-growing periodicals of this time.

For Habermas (1991) the periodicals and coffee houses represent private entities loosely related to the economy and symbolize an aspect of the bourgeois public sphere that developed because of a growing autonomy from the state. This independence was initially required for the rise of capitalist market economies. He describes the importance of these periodicals, newspapers, and journals as stimulating not only the expansion of literacy but also the depth and focus of the public sphere. His definition of the public sphere is as follows:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason. (Habermas, 1991, p. 27)

Thus, the first decades of the eighteenth century mark the development of the publishing industry as well as diverse locations for engaging literary and artistic works. This includes newspapers and journals but also other mediums such as public concerts, plays, theatre and art.

By the middle eighteenth century art criticism of all types becomes commonplace and the “critical” journal becomes the medium for communicating these views across vast audiences.

In addition, independent journalism asserted itself in ways that provided commentary and opposition to government policies and agendas. According to Habermas (1991), the initial rise of capitalism influenced the creation of civil laws promoting liberties that allowed the citizenry to openly critique government policy, as public opinion increasingly focused on governance. This in turn reduced the impact of authoritarianism and despotic rule for the general population and facilitated the continued organization and expansion of capital.

The elimination of authoritarian arbitrariness through legal safeguards, that is, binding state functions to general norms, together with the liberties codified in the system of bourgeois civil law, protected the order of the ‘free market’. (Habermas, 1991, pp. 79-80)

It is within these conditions that Habermas (1991) describes the primacy of public debate and the trend towards governance based on legislative bodies that were perceived as non-coercive and bound by public opinion. The constitutional state, therefore, “established the public sphere in the political realm as an organ of the state so as to ensure institutionally the connection between law and public opinion” (p. 81). The tensions between state and civil society continued to be mediated by the early forms of newspapers and journals whose content was political in nature and attempted to promote a critical rational analysis shared and discussed in civil society. For this reason, Habermas (1991) refers to the press as “the public sphere’s preeminent institution” (p. 181).

Although not emphasized in his writings, Habermas (1991) does mention those initially excluded from participating in the public sphere. For example, he notes that women were not admitted into the coffee houses and this even led to an English campaign against them in 1674. However, as he recognizes, in France, the salons were “shaped by women” (p. 33). In addition, the role of literacy during this period cannot be underestimated. Habermas emphasizes it was the

bourgeois reading public of the eighteenth century who gained entry into and participation within civil society:

This public remained rooted in the world of letters even as it assumed political functions; education was the one criterion for admission – property ownership the other. De facto both criteria demarcated largely the same circle of persons; for formal education at that time was more a consequence than a precondition of a social status, which in turn was primarily determined by one's title to property. The educated strata were also the property owning ones. The census, which regulated admission to the public sphere in the political realm, could therefore be identical to the tax list. (p. 85)

Ironically, it was the opening up of the public sphere that Habermas sees as its downfall.

As capitalism became more organized, institutions of public opinion became more commercialized and focused on topics related to cultural consumption, as opposed to contributing to the critical consciousness of the political realm. Habermas sees the growth and effectiveness of mass media as expanding the public sphere, yet this expansion has been dependent on its own commodification. As mass media were packaged to be bought and sold in the marketplace, they fell into the control of private interests.

The shift from a political focus of journalism to that of “psychological facilitation” (Habermas 1991, p. 168) marks the demise of the newspaper, along with the public sphere. Habermas cites the creation of the penny press of the mid eighteenth century, as marking the shifting of focus toward “yellow journalism,” characterized by the inclusion of comics, news pictures, and intellectually undemanding, sensationalist stories. His disgust of the fall of the journalism is depicted in the following quote:

Editorial opinions recede behind information from press agencies and reports from correspondents; critical debate disappears behind the veil of internal decisions concerning the selection and presentation of the material. In addition, the share of political or politically relevant news changes. Public affairs, social problems, economic matters, education, and health – according to a categorization suggested by American authors, precisely the “delayed reward news” – are not only pushed into the background by “immediate reward news” (comics, corruption, accidents, disasters, sports, recreation, social events, and human interests) but, as the characteristic label already indicates, are also actually read less and more rarely. In the end the news generally assumes some sort

of guise and is made to resemble a narrative from its format down to stylistic detail (news stories); the rigorous distinction between fact and fiction is ever more frequently abandoned. News and reports and even editorial opinions are dressed up with all the accoutrements of entertainment literature, whereas on the other hand the belletrist contributions aim for the strictly “realistic” reduplication of reality “as it is” on the level of clichés and thus, in turn, erase the line between fiction and report. (pp. 169 – 170)

This blurring of lines between fiction and report becomes the hallmark of journalism under the control of a strictly for-profit business. For Habermas (1991) this marks the turning away from opinion informing institutions towards those industries elevating the consumption of culture. It also represents the interests of organized capital to reproduce itself, by transmitting the values of conspicuous consumption over those of civic engagement, deliberation, and the critical oversight of governance.

Many contemporary theorists have critiqued Habermas’ (1991) account of the public sphere and civil society. These critiques often center on the simplification of the public sphere as a singular context whose membership is dependent more on the ability to articulate a rational critical argument than on the status of one’s identity or social-economic position. Thus, Habermas’ own ideological frameworks can be seen as exclusionary of marginalized populations and his discontent towards popular culture as overshadowing its potential for resistance (Fraser, 2001).

Nancy Fraser (2001) provides a powerful critique of Habermas’ articulation of the public sphere, while at the same time, championing the concept’s liberatory potential in contemporary society. Her critique derives from multiple fronts and helps expand a critical theoretical approach to contextualizing the important role of civil society in contesting authoritarian governance and the corporatization of the public locations for formation of opinion, perspective and action.

According to Fraser (2001), Habermas' public sphere was never public in the first place. She accuses Habermas of idealizing the liberal public sphere, at the expense of marginalized people such as women and racialized populations. She also cites revisionist historians who demonstrate that although women may have been excluded from official venues of the public sphere (such as English coffee houses), they did in fact create counter-publics to engage in their own form of critical debate and rational analysis:

On the contrary, virtually contemporaneous with the bourgeois public there arose a host of competing counterpublics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working-class publics. Thus there were competing publics from the start, not just in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Habermas implies. (p. 116)

What resulted from the availability of these alternative locations was the tendency for bourgeois public spheres to advocate exclusionary norms that deliberately attempted to block further growth of alternative spaces. According to Fraser (2001), these prohibitive devices included barring not only people with certain phenotypes, gender, or property ownership rights, but also privileging particular styles of political activities and discourse patterns. Thus, Fraser argues the public sphere should be viewed both as always conflictual in nature, yet multiple in scope. That is, contexts for locations of critical discourse and opinion formation should be viewed as "public spheres" - in the plural, and not in the singular, where various competing cultural groups navigate domination imposed by wider systems of social stratification.

In stratified societies, unequally empowered social groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles. The result is the development of powerful informal pressures that marginalize the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday contexts and in official public spheres. Moreover, these pressures are amplified, rather than mitigated, by the peculiar political economy of the bourgeois public sphere. In this public sphere the media that constitute the material support for the circulation of views are privately owned and operated for profit. Consequently, subordinated social groups usually lack equal access to the material means of equal participation. Thus political economy enforces structurally what culture accomplishes informally. (Fraser, 2001, p. 120)

Fraser (2001) also positions media ownership and control as an important force influencing public discourse and opinion making. However, she also situates the use of alternative media as a potential power in the identity formation process of subaltern publics resisting domination from official narratives manufactured by culture industries. She thus cites references to the strategies of historically subordinated groups in their attempt to establish parallel counterpublics as they circulate counterdiscourses that offer oppositional interests and perspectives:

Perhaps the most striking example is the late-twentieth-century U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic, with its variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meetings places. In this public sphere, feminist women have invented new terms for describing social reality, including “sexism,” “the double shift,” “sexual harassment,” and “marital, date, and acquaintance rape.” Armed with such language, we have recast our needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of our disadvantage in official public spheres. (Fraser, 2001, p. 123)

The importance of situating the existence and survival of alternative public spheres within unequal stratified societies is profound. For Fraser (2001), it emphasizes the dual nature of subaltern sites: On the one hand, they serve as protection from hostile social norms and conditions, while on the other, they serve as foundations from which actions against domination can be planned and directed. She notes “It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counterpublics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies” (p. 124). In this sense, penetrating the dominant discursive arena broadens debate and the scope of public dialogue.

Fraser’s (2001) insights into civil society highlight the important role of identity formation within wider struggles for equality. She substantiates how social institutions such as

media publications operate from culturally specific norms that filter public expression, by accommodating certain perspectives and opinions, and discounting others. For Fraser, the strength of a society with multiple public spheres complements Habermas' original vision of the development and support of an informed citizenry, aware and engaged in deliberations related to governance and democracy.

Castells (2007) also approaches issues of identity formation in his analysis of the rise of the network society and the struggle to assert participation in the public sphere. His research documents some of the conflictual processes of resistance to corporate globalization projects seeking to homogenize global identities under the mandates of neoliberalism and market normalization. For Castells (2007), the power of identity is its role in the negotiation of meaning and its ability to transform the very forces attempting to shape our world:

For those social actors excluded from or resisting the individualizations of identity attached to life in the global networks of power and wealth, cultural communes of religious, national, or territorial foundation seem to provide the main alternative for the construction of meaning in our society. These cultural communes are characterized by three main features. They appear as reactions to prevailing social trends, which are resisted on behalf of autonomous sources of meaning. They are, at the outset, defensive identities that function as refuge and solidarity, to protect against a hostile, outside world. They are culturally constituted; that is, organized around a specific set of values whose meaning and sharing are marked by specific codes of self identification: the community of believers, the icons of nationalism, the geography of locality. (pp. 68-69)

Castells (2007) posits that under the accelerated and changing the pace of globalization enacted by and for networks of wealth, technology and power, societies across the globe are becoming disenfranchised because existing mechanisms of participation, control and political representation are disintegrating. He notes:

With the exception of a small elite of globalpolitans (half beings, half flows), people all over the world resent the loss of control over their lives, over their environment, over their jobs, over their economies, over their governments, over their countries, and, ultimately, over the fate of the Earth. Thus, following an old law of social evolution, resistance confronts domination, empowerment reacts against powerlessness, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order, increasingly

sensed as disorder by people around the planet. However, these reactions and mobilizations, as is often the case in history, come in unusual formats and proceed in unexpected ways. (p. 72)

Within these conditions, Castells (2007) believes social movements can rise via organized resistance inspired from the “specific identities and/or specific interests” (p. 73), where there are no guarantees as to the trajectory they will take. Each movement expresses itself in multiple ways, utilizing the resources of its culture and historical context.

However, in today’s network society, more often than not, movements use the tools of alternative media for interactive communications to amplify their messages and refine their struggles. Under these circumstances, the production and use of alternative media represent both transmission models of communication and aspects of ritual. In this way, the uses of these media serve to validate and promote the collective identities within the public sphere while advancing their interests (Schiller, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

Because the repercussions of global policy are most likely to impact local environments, Castells (2007) advocates engaging the goal of democratic representation and governance at both the local and global level. Within the twenty-first century, the realm of global governance can be penetrated and better understood through the coordinated actions of the global network society contesting the mechanisms of dominance and capable of informing and mobilizing civil society.

Thus, the aptitude to dialogue across wide landscapes, positions alternative media and communication networks as necessary public pedagogical outlets to participate and navigate civil society. Contributing to network communities requires expanded capacities in literacy, beyond the limits of traditional and hierarchical models currently dictated by U.S. educational policy.

The ability to read and write in multiple text forms, in real time, and to wide and diverse audiences, creates greater emancipatory possibilities in the context of democratic civic engagement.

Freire informs twenty-first century citizenship because he demands an ability to read the manifestation of ideology and power communally, and identify the forces of domination that continually maneuver to incorporate resistance into its realm. These forces include those interested in “enclosing” institutions of civil society (Kidd, 2003), such as public education, the press and the Internet, which are under tremendous pressure to support capitalist reproduction. Examples of this as it relates to alternative media are the continued attempts by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to change regulatory rules that solidify and expand monopoly control of mass media, while reducing local media programming (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2005).

In addition, government capacities to monitor and disrupt the rise of democratic and nonhierarchical social networks are becoming more sophisticated and widespread. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the U.S. PATRIOT Act authorized increased surveillance of both domestic and international organizations and restricted travel on many dissident citizens (Boykoff, 2006). The government linked RAND Arroyo Center released a report in 1998 encouraging the U.S. government to establish fake NGO’s to closely watch the development of movements, while emphasizing the “importance of monitoring and analyzing what is transpiring in cyberspace, where information operations may be conducted out of much public sight” (Ronfeldt, et al., 1998, p. 129). The U.S. government’s legacy of COINTELPRO, working hand-in-hand with corporate media, leaves the lingering shadow of Big Brother monitoring civil society through multiple means with the intention to infiltrate, monitor and disrupt the abilities of

marginalized populations attempting to challenge authoritarian rule and widen the scope of democratic participation (Boykoff, 2006).

Despite these tactics, Freire (1998a) reminds us to remain convinced of the ever-lasting presence of hope for the transformation of human life. If civil society is to have the capacity to critically expand, it must learn to resist attempts to adapt to oppressive conditions. Instead, change comes through “intervention in the world” (p. 90). For those interested in utilizing the tools of alternative media, the means by which we engage the project must critically reflect on practices that foster civic participation and democratic growth, thus democratizing the very means of production for the creation of multiple counter publics. It is through such efforts that critical media efforts can play a significant role as a public pedagogical tool for social change. With this said, the next chapter contains narratives from alternative media producers who embraced critical ideas of civic engagement to intervene in the world as a means of contributing to transformation and the positive expression of humanity.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Participant Profiles**

This chapter consists of eight profiles of alternative media producers who created content informing the public on the mascot controversy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) during the 2006-2007 school year. The 2006-2007 school year proved significant on this issue because of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees' (BOT) announcement to retire the "Chief" Illiniwek mascot on March 13, 2007.

The alternative media producers interviewed for this study are diverse in their demographics as well as in the types of media they produced, their years of experience as alternative media producers, and in their relationships within the UIUC community. The following profiles help contextualize the backgrounds of the producers and contribute to understanding how their own participation in alternative media was important to their lives and historical circumstances, as well as in relationship to the work of other alternative media producers.

Together the profiles create an arena where readers can engage the narratives of individual producers, while developing a framework for comprehending how the various creators of alternative media complement and contrast each other. The narratives also develop multiple venues for understanding the impact of the mascot controversy upon various individuals and groups within the UIUC community. Thus, these narratives contribute to a more nuanced landscape, where human agency, media production, and social movements intersect to expose particular historical conditions not normally discussed in public forums.

The interviews for this study were piloted in October 2007 and completed in July 2008. Those asked to participate in this study were chosen based on their active roles as alternative media producers whose content included issues related to the mascot controversy during the

2006-2007 school year. To further assist in disaggregating the interviewee's demographic data, the tables in Appendix A and Appendix B were created. The information used to construct these tables was generated from a survey given to the participants prior to their interviews. All information listed was self-identified by the participants. Their ages, length of time creating alternative media, and length of time creating alternative media regarding the UIUC mascot are approximated based on the 2006-2007 school year.

### **Frank**

Frank is a 43 year-old male American Indian (unenrolled)/German Mennonite faculty member who grew up mostly in the Midwest United States. He describes his class background as poor and lived in the Champaign-Urbana area 2 years before the 2007 school year, when the mascot was retired. He began producing alternative media in 1999 and has created content on the UIUC mascot issue since 2000.

As a graduate student in the Midwest, Frank began producing content for alternative media as he grew increasingly concerned by what he believed to be the frequent misrepresentation of American Indians and exploitation of Indian imagery. Although little historical knowledge regarding American Indians was being publicly exchanged in his local community, "Indian head" iconography was very visible on billboards, school buildings, police uniforms, and public libraries. As a result, Frank learned to create Webpages juxtaposing these popularly produced depictions of American Indians with observations, analysis and satirical commentary grounded in his understanding of critical scholarship concerned with social justice.

Using free Web design software, Frank quickly learned to design and upload basic Webpages with little to no face-to-face assistance. Skills such as using an html editor, ftp

uploading and downloading were acquired in the context of his desire to share observations with others on issues concerning American Indians. Much of the inspiration for Frank's early Webpage content came from the local community and surrounding area in which he was studying. One of the towns close to his university had a long history of using Indian head logos for its public and private institutions (e.g., schools and banks). While at the same time, few in that community were aware of the forced removal of entire tribes from that area.

FRANK: So the residue of that forced removal has been erased and the residue of it exists in the Indian head logo associated with the bank and in the town's name, and in the "Indian", quote unquote, Indian mascots for the elementary schools, which I think are called the Braves. The middle school's, like the Warriors, and the high school's the Chiefs, or Chieftains. Even, the public library in town has a—there's a common symbol associated with libraries. It's like this stick looking figure with a book in its hand, it's got a little feather coming off the top of its head. So, there's all this stuff right? These signs that I think of as the signs of the "Indian." But those signs empty the local and regional memory of its tribal histories and the histories of indigenous-settler (or tribal-U.S.) relations. So I use the Website really as a way to re-represent those signs, and bring the indigenous presence back into them.

Frank describes his creation of Webpages as an attempt to disrupt the assumptions people make about American Indians, while at the same time guiding them to investigate critical sources of knowledge generally, and tribal sources of information in particular. He describes his own Webpage content in the following way:

FRANK: I have narratives that I constructed myself, which took issue with the way content was represented in newspaper articles. I had multiple imagery. I lifted the imagery right off—even the police department in [local town] had—the shoulder logo had a Plains Indian, not unlike "Chief" Illiniwek.... So I use those as a way, and the narration took issue with the meaning that people typically associate with that imagery, and I would link people to—for instance, with [local town], link them to the Delaware Tribe of Oklahoma. There's actually two federally-recognized tribes in Oklahoma. I'd link them to those tribes' Websites and to other information where Indian people had greater control over what was being represented about them and how.

By constructing online counter narratives offering alternative meanings to what were popularly available and distributed, Frank also attempted to align his theoretical understandings

of issues of power and representation with his practice. As a graduate student, Frank's exposure to the writings of Antonio Gramsci inspired his desire to disrupt commonly held assumptions with how his production of online counter narratives contributed to the struggle *for* hegemony.

FRANK: And so I guess I see, through Gramsci, claiming space on the Internet as one way to think about this. It's not a struggle against hegemony, although it is, it's a struggle for hegemony. So, really it's a struggle to replace one set of common assumptions with another set of common assumptions. I have a lot more to say about that, but that, in its most crass terms, I think that that's what really framed the creation of the Website.

JOE: The war of position?

FRANK: Yea, it's a war of position. It's not a revolution. It's not replacing one set of rulers with another, but some small force claiming it's presence and legitimacy, intellectual legitimacy, and its purpose is to displace dominant forms of ideology. Not—it's not a struggle against hegemony on a large sense, it's a struggle for hegemony so it'll replace the set of common assumptions with another set of common assumptions. Or it will at least lay them side-by-side.

This analysis by Frank positions his graduate work involving the study of culture as impacting his Webpage project. It represents an active attempt for him to apply theoretical concept to his practice as well as his desire to participate in struggles for change. After completing his Ph.D., Frank relocated to Champaign-Urbana and continued creating Web content that challenged commonly held assumptions related to American Indians, as well as the systems of meaning that favor particular interpretations on these issues. As a UIUC community member, he found the school's mascot not only obnoxious but functioning as a sort of logic of elimination/replacement, which miseducated the public about the active and violent role of the United States and American people in displacing Indian tribes from the state of Illinois. Additionally, after Frank became a faculty member at UIUC, he questioned his own role as a professor affiliated with a state institution associated with historical policies that involved the forced removal of its Native populations.

FRANK: Since I'm on a faculty at a state university in this state that has pretty much a completely erased Indian people and replaced Indians with these manufactured images and ideals that really create a broad-based amnesia, historical amnesia, about what happened in the opening decades of state-making in this region, I'd like to use the Internet to re-represent all that maybe in—with a similar strategy with the mascots and to bring the presence of the tribal people who were forced out of the state between 1818 and September 1833 back into the state.

According to Frank, his newly acquired job as a professor also placed him within a system that functions to train the next generation of the professional middle class. However, Frank also viewed his professorship as allowing the slim possibility of affecting change amongst this particular class of students and upon the policy makers who oversee the maintenance of the institution.

FRANK: We're training, at least at this university, the next generation of professional managerial class. So I'd like to hope with others I can have some influence on that next generation on the professional managerial class. That's what my activism is with that class. I recognize that. If it wasn't I'd have to go some place else. I'm not just using this as a job to do other things. I'm using it really to try to affect change in that class. And at the same time, affect change in the scholarship that claims to represent Indian people.

The conflicts and challenges Frank faces because of the competing roles between his occupation within an institution of higher education and his activist's goals are further evidenced as he contextualizes the impact that a system of institutional stratification has on individuals. In the following passage, Frank describes how the hierarchical nature of higher education can alienate one's connections to family and community.

FRANK: Yeah, but I think that as I've spent more time in these sorts of institutions, I don't think of myself as a public intellectual anymore. Because I'm not as connected to community as I was when I was younger. So, I think that part of what's happened for me—I don't think it happens for everybody, but I think it happens for a lot of us when we enter—there's divisions of labor in higher education and there's different institutions which really privilege certain divisions of these divisions of labor—in institutions like this one really privilege scholarship and research that are accountable to intellectual traditions that reach back into and are accountable to disciplines that have played roles in colonizing Indians and Indian Tribes. And I don't think

research is unimportant. I really see research as a side of activism, and again, going back to what I said about how I'm sort of framing the Website—I frame my scholarship in a similar way, so I really see critical scholarship as functioning to displace reigning orthodoxies and open new, transformative space in the university. Thus, research might insert new ideas into this space in order to take it over eventually. Of course, not by myself. And it's not unfolding in a vacuum, so there's some exchange and negotiation that goes on. But the general push is to displace, basically to pull it down to its simplest terms, the settler colonial intellectual traditions with something else that I hope is more liberatory and opening and aware of itself as privileged. And what I think it aims for is not just a change of ideas in the same structure but it aims for eventually the dismantling of these oppressive structures and the creation of something in their place. I don't know what that is though.

In his analysis of oppressive structures within higher education and their colonial intellectual traditions, Frank also includes White supremacist ideology as influencing institutional relationships and hierarchies. For Frank, issues related to White supremacy must be addressed when attempting to understand the configurations of power that maintain institutional obstacles to liberatory change. He frames White supremacy not only as an issue that impacts upon identity, but as recognizing important spheres of power that enable oppressive practices such as UIUC's mascot, along with the parameters that UIUC administrators must navigate when considering school policies and resource allocations. According to Frank, the historically racist legacy of these institutions continues to have very strong personal impact on individuals and community members. Further examples of how the structural impacts the personal to maintain a vision and order in the academy are elaborated by Frank when asked what prevents more professors from engaging in the type of liberatory changes for which he advocates.

FRANK: I think one thing that prevents it is the academy wasn't made for this purpose. So the purpose that it was made for if we read it through an Althusserian lens right, it's an ideological state apparatus, so in the end it really functions in the service of the ruling elite and their ideals and their wishes and their views of the world. Of course, there's a lot of room for negotiation, which is what Raymond Williams helped us see. But none the less, as Williams helps us see that those forms of resistance and efforts to stay on the outside, dominance tends to find ways to incorporate them – at least those alternative and resistive elements that it both cannot ignore as irrelevant or that it does not

need to crush. I think that's one of the big dangers. So that's another thing that goes on, is people get incorporated. Resistance gets incorporated in commercial and corporate media right? So people end up purchasing resistance and "How resistive is that?" we can ask. So I think it's a fair question how resistant is \_\_\_ (fill in the blank), are the kinds of things that I'm talking about. What are they resisting? I think what I—what I tend to fall back on is that we're not talking—you can't—I can't imagine how you can—you can enact a revolution A, as one person, and B, in your own life time. So I think that I'm not saying single people can't make a difference because there are tipping points, where individuals do there's sort of a crest and an individual comes along and pushes it. But an individual can't do it without people going along with them. But I think these institutions, they tend to suck you in and keep you so busy attending to so many fragmented things that your mind just gets blown and you're involved in all these variety of things. A lot of times your attention and your energy may need to be devoted to something in particular but these institutions tend to pull you in multiple directions. And they divide us from each other. Just look at the way they're organized. Just if we pick on disciplines for a minute, how they're organized into these variety of departments around sort of methodological traditions and hardly ever do we cross over and meet each other. Even in so-called ethnic or racialized communities studies, there's very little interaction going on at least from my—where I'm sitting between African American Studies and Indian Studies or Indian studies and Asian American Studies or Asian American Studies and Latino Studies or Gender Woman Studies. It's not that there's none, but there's very little. Someone else sitting here might see it little bit differently but that's how I see it. Part of the reason for that is that we're all pulled in so many different directions—there isn't—no time for that kind of thing, unless we all just kind of step back and say, "We're going to resist the attraction of tenure." Right? However, then, if we resisted the attraction of tenure, we wouldn't be around here more than five—more than 7 years. That's the longest we'd be around.

Frank's analysis of the structural parameters located within the academy also relates to how he believes the local corporate media reports on the mascot issue. Thus, he characterizes the Champaign-Urbana's corporate media as fostering and maintaining particular ideological tendencies veiled by their "professional" conventions.

FRANK: All the local media represents the pro-"Chief" position. To bring it back to the configurations that are marked by White supremacy and, thus, to understand it as a White supremacist organ of power. They're ideological instruments of White supremacy. And there's—I've seen nothing in them that really disturbs the status quo from the local radio stations, which I think are even more blatantly in-your-face White supremacist than the News Gazette. Even their journalistic objectivity, it doesn't intervene in any substantial way into those

discourses of White supremacy. An individual journalist, they can influence readers with just the way they choose to organize the story, who they choose to, the voice they choose to leave you with. I think anecdotally as someone who reads this stuff, and listens too, I think, disproportionately it tends to come down on the side of the pro “Chief” position and the pro “Chief” position, I’m generally arguing is a symptom of White supremacy.

It is within this context that Frank found himself directly challenging how corporate media often situate debates regarding the representation of Native people. Thus, Frank’s work attempted to:

FRANK: [R]eally push outside the—that journalistic objectivity which sets up a pro and con on every issue. So for instance, here [in Champaign-Urbana], one can only be anti or pro-“Chief”. As much as people have tried to intervene with a position they have designated as pro-Indian, there’s really no other political identity to take on in relationship to the issues surrounding that symbolism. I think you know that among other people, [Indigenous Scholar] was continually pushing for a sort of a pro-Indian or a pro-Indigenous stance on it. That never made sense in mainstream journalism. I am in no way suggesting the effort doesn't matter – it does, but I am suggesting that always gets reduced to anti-“Chief”.

For Frank the UIUC mascot controversy exemplifies how symptoms of White supremacy correlate with notions of “journalistic objectivity” to maintain particular ways of framing issues. Thus, Frank views the local corporate media’s news coverage on the mascot issue as characterized with “binary” framing that constantly locates positions on the mascot as either “pro-Chief” or “anti-Chief”.

FRANK: As hard you try to intervene in that binary notion of journalistic objectivity, you’re always going to get reduced to the “anti” if you’re against the status quo. Or if you have some other vision for how humans should be relating to each other, than the dominant status quo position that gets re-represented through corporate media over and over and over again, and that notion of objectivity always sets you up as opposed to that. You end up looking, frankly, unless people already agree with you, ridiculous. I think that people around here tend to agree with the “anti” side, for the most part, their politics—or politics of racial liberalism, and are not really interested in major structural transformation. Yeah, they want brown people around. I don’t want to read their motives, but I don’t think they want it to the point of a tipping point where the White folks become the minority or Whites don’t dominate

the institutions of power. I've seen no evidence that convinces me of anything other than this.

When asked to comment on the role of the University of Illinois' Board of Trustees in the mascot issue, his analysis further encompasses the University's hierarchical system.

FRANK: I felt like even at the bitter end, it was a totally pro-“Chief” representation that informed the announcement of the decision to discontinue the tradition. Lawrence Epply, who may be in the unenviable position of being the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, it's still there in the bitter end when he discontinued it. He still was standing for the pro-“Chief” position in my reading of it. There was never—I never heard, I can't remember the guy's name, his name was always in the newspapers, who—probably a lawyer who works in the public relations for the University.

JOE: Hardy?

FRANK: Yeah, Thomas, Hardy—every time those two were quoted, it was so infuriating because they were representing the "we," as pro-“Chief” and they never included any nuance in their public positions. Right up to the bitter end, even when Epply announced the end, his announcement of it was not humble and did not concede any territory to the opposition -- to the other possible "we's" in the community. I found it to be a continuous outrage that they claimed to represent the University of Illinois, when what they're representing is a particular segment—a White based part— of the university. My argument basically is Indian mascots are a symptom of White supremacy and so this has been my reading of a White supremacist university and the Board of Education, despite the people of color on it, represents White supremacy. I'm not saying it represents White people. I'm saying it represents White supremacy.

Frank's capacity to endure in this environment directly related to his ability to participate in communities of resistance that existed in the local level, as well as across the country. These communities strongly questioned the dominant use of American Indian imagery in sports, as well as in popular culture. In Champaign-Urbana, many strides had already occurred prior to Frank's arrival, so that he didn't feel inhibited in speaking up against the mascot in various platforms. He was particularly impacted by the work that past organizers and activists had accomplished in making it simple for new community members to join in the struggle.

FRANK: I was impressed with it, frankly. I come into this, right, after many years of movement building and so whatever role I played was in support of—it wasn't a leadership role at all. At least that's how I see it. I was impressed by the fact that over the years since around the time Charlene Teeters was here in the late 80s to when I came into the scene in 2004 that it had really become framed as an anti-racist movement. So it got attached to all these other concerns and issues but all those concerns and issues tend to crystallize, at least with the way I was reading it around removing "Chief" Illiniwek. So, once "Chief" Illiniwek is removed, I think, the possibility for that re-fragmenting is enhanced. I think, I'm actually seeing that fragmentation, people start breaking down because they have other concerns and issues that don't line up so neatly so it's going to continue to take work to—by people who have a vision to help others see what they can cohere around right? And that's hard, hard, hard movement building work. When I came into this scene, I was impressed by—it wasn't—I wouldn't call it massive, but I was impressed by the number of departments that had . . . academic departments that had at least taken a public position in the form of some kind of statement. I mean there were dozens. That took work on the part of somebody to get some inertia moving in a different direction and have a faculty or any group of people in a program or department come together and take a stand on—on this—I don't think the cost was very high by the time there was a critical mass. With a critical mass, the cost for joining in is reduced. I think some of the earlier people, they really had their asses on the line and the cost was tremendously high for them. When I came into the picture, in 2004, it was very—the cost was almost non-existent for me to take a position against the "Chief". I mean I haven't felt any cost to it at all, really, even though I have been yelled at a few times and although I was menaced on the road one time by a group of four guys and another time in my vehicle, which sports "Stereotypes Dehumanize" and "Anti-racism, Anti-Chief" bumper stickers, was vandalized. There may be a greater cost on the emotional level, but I haven't felt it much. But "impressed" definitively is the word I would use—the work that had gone into—with people who were here before me and people who were still here when I came into the scene. The work was impressive. . . [For me] it was easy. I know stories from some of the earlier folks, and it wasn't easy for them. There was a high cost that came with it – with their speaking out. The cost I'm talking about is the threat to one's. . . I mean I call it financial well-being. I didn't feel like my job was threatened by the position I took. I think there's other kinds of costs. The emotional cost is living here with what I call it, "Chief"-Love, so prevalent. Some days, it's very hard.

As Frank engaged his Website project, he continued to share information and maintain relationships through the use of new technologies. Of particular importance for communication was the use of listservs. For Frank the listservs functioned to inform himself and others of the

intricacies of issues related to the mascot topic, but also provided perspective on the amount of commitment others had in this struggle on a broader scale.

FRANK: The Internet is more impersonal—well they're both very impersonal and the relationships are lived vicariously for the most part but the listservs remind me almost on a daily basis that there are people—it humbles me actually -- who are much more engaged on the ground (I'm more engaged in the arena of ideas) . . . much more engaged on the ground on an everyday basis. Not that this takes up their time everyday, but they live with it everyday in ways that we don't hear. And the listservs remind me of that, almost on a daily basis. I'm reminded of how, I'm humbled on a daily basis by people who are engaged with this issue and their presence is there on those listservs.

Listservs and Websites were important means by which Frank stayed informed of the daily happenings around the mascot issue, both locally and nationally. Although aware of alternative radio stations and programs, because of time constraints and the demands of the tenure process at the university, he did not frequently tune in to them. However, Frank describes their value in the following way:

FRANK: I think people who are going to be connected to the kind of alternative media that I think you're talking about are not—are already going to be critical of corporate media. They've already developed a critical consciousness if they used to read and interact with corporate media but on a range of sort of a depthless, maybe so that alternative media can really play a role in not only keeping people connected but for people sort of on the margins of that critical consciousness, to pull them further into it because I think the corporate media is working really hard to pull people back into the mainstream. So the alternative media, I'm reading this again through a Gramscian [perspective], it helps to keep people sort of in that area of critical consciousness. There's always people in the margins of that. I think that the alternative media can help keep people from slipping back into the mainstream.

With regards to his own production, Frank was impressed by the quantity of “hits” to his Website and the diverse locations from where visitors arrived. As a producer, this impacted him in different ways, bringing a sense of effectiveness, yet wondered about how the content was being received.

FRANK: I did put a counter on—I can't—I don't remember the number off the top of my head but I remember the variety of hits. All over the world. Asian servers,

European, lots of Canadian, lots of universities. I know a lot of my colleagues, because they told me, they would direct students and other to the site. So—although right now, I can only give you an impression of the numbers. I mean the hits over the years, I think that once I put that up [the counter]—it must have been around 2004 when I put it up—tens of thousands of hits. Even more if you go into multiple hits, where people go into several pages because the mascot site itself was linked with my professional stuff. People hardly ever went to the professional stuff. They were on the mascot pages. There were several—I think, I have 9 pages by the time I took the site down. Maybe more than that... [The quantity of hits] made it feel worthwhile. While at the same time, I didn't know how people were, for the most part, I didn't know how people were using the information. So I wondered. That's one of the things that it did for me, is I wondered, "How are people using this?" Occasionally, I've—because of where people are coming from, you can follow where they're coming from. I'd see that people were using it in high school classes as a resource. So teachers are setting up these pro/anti, binary positions on mascots and students—of course mine came across to people as very anti. And they would use it as a resource for this anti mascot position. They'd lift both my narrative stuff and they're lift quotes and things from other people off the site. So, I know it was being used as a resource for public schools, in public schools, across the country, several.

Frank's experiences as a Web producer influenced his personal and professional life in unexpected ways. While increasing his sense of self-worth as an intellectual, it also facilitated and enhanced his understanding of what it means to be both humble and critical. In addition, his self-location as pro-Indigenous on the mascot issue has allowed for a more complex understanding of how the status quo is able to maintain and reproduce the very structures he desires to challenge. When asked about the impact of producing alternative media on him, he responded:

FRANK: I couldn't prove this in just a few minutes but I think that it's made me—it's enhanced my ability to think critically because in engaging with and seeing more and more nuance, more and more slippage, more and more opportunity has made—I think it's made me, in some ways, for some things, a better critical thinker. I think also it has—there's an emotional toll to it because the more I have engaged the more the hopelessness has been enhanced – the more hopeless I have felt about it -- at the same time. The repetition of defenses of the status quo are breath taking. The scope of them, not just the repetition of kinds of positions that people already have that they can draw on in order to stake off their territory and push back against what is clearly seen

as a threat. It's breath taking the repetition, but the scope of it is also kind of hard to take. What I mean by scope is the—as you move away from where on the ground struggles are, and people feel or have the ability through corporate media to have a position on this thing, that repetition goes out into all those places, right. So you see the repetition locally and you also see it being played out in a whole bunch of broader locations in corporate media. That's what—that's my major resource for seeing this stuff happen.

JOE When you say critical, how do you define that for yourself?

FRANK: Critical—I guess, when I'm thinking of as critical here, I'm thinking of a more reflexive approach which to me means a willingness to reflect on my own assumptions about things. To think at a deeper level about what I thought I knew. What I think I know that now I'm not so sure about. Or that I think I'm now less sure about. And there could be a lot of reasons for this doubt, if I can call it "doubt," but I think that this is one of them. Engaging this issue through the construction of a Website and it's maintenance over several years has played a role in that—a major role in that—a major role in it. Doubt about what I think I know for certain.

JOE: That one just blew me away because what you're saying is that it's forcing you to question your own perspective but at the same time it's opening you up to another community that might help in interpreting maybe, or I mean, what is this community doing for you in this?

FRANK: It's very humbling. I mean anytime you have a platform and you are asserting your voice, I think it's important to be connected to communities that can humble that arrogance. I don't necessarily mean it's a negative, but that it's very—there's a level of arrogance to thinking that someone wants to hear or read what you have to say about something, right? And I think being connected to communities can humble that arrogance, right? Soften it and get you to think back on the positions that you're putting out there and be willing to change them and be able to grow along with that voice that you're asserting is important enough for anyone to pay attention to. I think that more than anything this issue's contributed to that for me in ways that feed back into my scholarship—which I think functions in a similar way and often times, scholarship, the community it's connected to is a genealogy of methodological traditions that are academically based and the community is scholars. Not necessarily the communities that the scholarship claims to be representing and that scholars stand with. So, there's sort of two layers, the community of scholars, which the scholarship claims to be representing, I think eclipses the broader communities which are represented in the scholarship.

JOE: Does this also change your understanding of what dialogue is? Or how dialogue takes place?

FRANK: Absolutely, and it—I think one of the things that it—it makes me seem more how ... the tremendous privileges that we have been afforded by the very fact that we're here. I think the difficulty of having dialogues with the other communities from where we came and to which we're still in some ways, maybe, connected and accountable. I think we're connected to many communities in a variety of different ways.

JOE: Well, if you started with Gramsci where are you at right now theoretically. What informs your current activity with your Website creation, or alternative media production?

FRANK: Stuart Hall, maybe, a little bit—I mean a lot of things, but if I can just pick on Stuart Hall for a minute. I think that the notion that there is no meaning—it's not that there's no meaning outside of discourse because of course there is, but there's—it's the discourse that produces it. I mean, of course Stuart Hall was also influenced by Gramsci and Althusser and this sort of anti-colonial Marxist tradition attached to and informing cultural and media, critical media studies in the twenty-first century. I think that's in part what continues to motivate me. That it's engaging dominant forms of discourse that tend to produce meaning in particular ways and really working to disrupt those. I have in the past thought of myself as an intellectual hand grenade. If you can get yourself into those spaces and then blow up the discourse, transform it, I mean I think for a moment there's not anything even wrong with the ground being—the notion of stable ground and one standing on it being torn apart. Along the way toward imagining and creating something else, something else than what we currently have.

## **Robert**

Robert is a 48 year-old White university staff member who moved to Champaign-Urbana in 1988 to enter a Ph.D program in the natural sciences. Originally from California and Virginia, he describes himself as being raised in a middle class military family. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, Robert began producing alternative media content in 2002 by creating Webpages where he featured his own video clips of interviews, protests and rallies related to the mascot issue. Before 2002 he had little experience in Webpage creation and had only used video for work related documentation.

Although Robert had access to high-end computers through his university job, he chose to purchase his own equipment to avoid any conflict of interests. He eventually spent over eight thousand dollars on equipment and software so that he could video record actions related to the anti-mascot movement and to share these footage on his own Webpages.

ROBERT: I got a Mac laptop and I don't remember what camera I had at that time. I think it was a High 8 camera... I picked up HTML books and I coded it by hand. The hard way. I only recently started using programs... I used the things I was familiar with which were text editors and scripting, and things like that, so that's how I went about it.

What prompted Robert to become a media producer was a series of pro-mascot billboards that sprung up in the Champaign-Urbana area in 2001 and 2002. The billboards held messages supporting the mascot and Robert found them particularly distasteful.

ROBERT: What motivated me finally was seeing billboards all over town which said, "Honor the Chief" and of course they were up for a long time, you know. This would have been 2001-2002. They were up for a long time and I had been planning to buy a PC laptop for myself. And I had been thinking that anyway and the longer I had to look at those billboards the more annoyed I got because I felt like that was just, you know, one view and the people with the money were able to put that stuff up there.

Initially, the purpose of his media production was to create an alternative source of information on the mascot issue. He was not particularly interested in joining existing anti-mascot groups, and was conscious of maintaining his own independence.

ROBERT: I would say I lost my way. I sort of lost what I originally intended to do. What I originally intended to do was what I kind of put in the introduction of the Website. And there was a quote from Jay Rosenstein [the producer of the documentary *In Whose Honor?*] that made it very clear saying that the Native voices and protest side of this stuff was never heard except when there was a protest or something came up. It all just disappeared. And basically what only viewpoint you were left with was those who had money to put up billboards or what have you. And they certainly have every right to do that but there was no response. And it didn't have to be tit for tat but it felt like there needed to be something out there where people had a chance to, you know, have what they said and what they felt made available for others to see. And I still feel very strongly about that now, and I've sort of come full circle that I need to put everything that I possibly can out there because there

were so many protests, and you know this. There were so many marches and protest and speeches and everything else where people said things. And a lot of it, in retrospect, was preaching to the choir, but people really poured their hearts into this and that stuff disappeared. I mean, you know quite well, and I understand the reasons for it, but the media would show up, set up their cameras, you know, shoot five minutes of b-roll, of which ten seconds would make it on the news, and then that was it. People went on and they had lots to say and that stuff was never seen again, never heard again. And I think that's a tragedy. I mean, people had a lot to say and those voices, you know, some of them are gone or you just won't hear them again.

Admittedly, Roberts decision to become a media activist was not in character with past patterns of behavior. His own family was surprised by his involvement and it changed the way he viewed himself. However, he was driven by a belief that the mascot issue was being dominated by only the pro-mascot voice and that Native American voices were ignored.

ROBERT: It was not in character for me, you know, getting involved in this was not typical for me. I think my father was kind of surprised like, "OK, this is some of the things you're involved in." It's not something I would have normally done. I think I just got progressively angrier at the one-sided messages that were getting put out there. So yeah, it was different. I don't know that I fully embraced it and I think it is my tendency to sort of be invisible and that is not always a good thing. I think it might have benefited me for the purpose of getting the message out there. It might have been more beneficial if I put myself out there more and tried to be a little less invisible. But, I did always want [to capture] what other people were having to say, particularly the Native community.

This new role of videographer and Web designer placed Robert in positions where he felt he and his camera and analysis were imposing upon others. Although the majority of his footage was recorded at public events, some participants asked not to be video taped or quoted on his Web site. Yet, at the same time, the role of media activists allowed him to hear more diverse perspectives on the issue and to broaden his own understandings.

ROBERT: It felt like an imposition in some cases. There were some people who if even though they were at a protest did not want to be taped, probably because they did not know how it'd be taken. Things are often taken out of context. I think mostly I wanted to reassure them that things would not be used in any bad way and that, if they so wished, I could pull it off of the site later which I've done for at least one person. I think mostly for me it was an eye opening

experiences to let people hear what [others] had to say and understand the different perspectives of what people brought to it. So it didn't feel like power. It didn't feel like a power, it didn't feel like a power trip. Though I think, getting back to what I said before, I think I lost my way a little bit that my original purpose in going into this thing was to let people say what they had to say and put that out there in a form that would remain there. And it wouldn't just be when it was on the news and people could find this stuff and hear what it was... I think my main purpose and what it probably should have stuck with more deeply was getting the message out from people who are not heard. Or they're heard only in bits or they're heard in ways that's distorted by the necessities of the media, or the medium in which it's being presented. So that was kind of the most important thing.

With this in mind, Robert insists his experiences as a videographer were powerful and impacted him on many levels. He attended countless rallies and protests and witnessed speeches that left lasting impressions.

ROBERT: Some of the most passionate things that were said were said at midnight behind the Union or were said while the Board meeting was going on in Chicago and things like that.

Attending Board of Trustees meetings were particularly enlightening for Robert. During the public comment section or in gatherings outside these venues, many protesters would make passionate pleas for the board to address the mascot issue. At one occasion, an American Indian man offered a prayer to the board.

ROBERT: He had a prayer that he gave in his Native language and I had the opportunity to interview him later. And I asked him, "What was your prayer there?" and he described it, he said, "You know, I was praying for people and trying to help them understand that this is very important to us and this was sacred." And I thought, "You know, if people could hear that one on one, that would be incredibly powerful," but I don't know how many people ever saw that. I think there's a real challenge that the protests are necessary to get attention or it probably dies. But I think there have to be different ways to try to reach people because I think otherwise you lose them and things become very polarized.

Although Robert doesn't cite any particular theoretical framework as prompting his involvement in alternative media production, he was interested in contributing to greater diversity in public viewpoints. For him, the local newspaper only represented a diversity of

opinion when an occasional letter to the editor managed to get posted. In addition, pro-mascot billboards continued to remain problematic in that the amount of funding needed to gain access to this platform limited the participation of many voices and perspectives.

ROBERT: I guess [my theoretical perspectives were] a couple things. One was getting a one sided message from one political view in the form of those billboards being put all over town. And so the fact that there was no forum for response to that, at least on the same level, other than the occasional letter to the News Gazette, that was really problematic to me.

Robert views the local mainstream media's portrayal of the mascot issue as problematic to developing any in-depth and multi-tiered understanding. He characterizes their reporting as problematic.

ROBERT: I guess that most people first heard something like "Well there's these bunch of activists and they're trying to kill off the mascot and, damn those people. And you know, they're over sensitive and they're politically" you know I just imagine that that's what a lot of people would hear and then they might, maybe they'd see a protest on the news and they would really not see a reason to change their mind, and that was how it was presented to them.

JOE: And working on this particular topic, going home and seeing how the local news portrayed it, did you start thinking about corporate news media differently?

ROBERT: I think it opened my eyes somewhat to how limited it would be unless somebody decided to do an in depth piece. Everything else was so superficial and so, so brief that I—it did sort of reinforce how unhelpful that medium was. At least—it just wasn't presenting anything. It was presenting the fact that there'd been a discussion rather than the discussion. So it was several levels before it was actually presenting any information and depth. The fact that there was a conflict was what was of interest, not the reasons behind it. I think that sort of opened my eyes a little bit more about how that works and what they do and why.

Robert juxtaposes his own goals for his video recording and Website creation to that of the local corporate media. For Robert, it was of utmost importance to record and upload video clips where visitors can access entire speeches and interviews with minimal editing. Unlike the local news formats, where 20-second sound bites were preferred, he believed the more people

who can get the unedited versions of what people had to say, the more understanding could be developed and shared. Thus, he characterizes his own footage in the following way:

ROBERT: It was pretty much clips of what individual people had to say and it was pretty much uncut unless there was something really distracting or they took a long pause or anything like that. So it was what they had to say and it was more time than the media would or reasonably could give to a topic. And I understand how the media works enough that they have a camera crew and a—one camera person goes out and they're told to get some footage, get a few quotes and maybe talk to somebody and then get back and it's going to get edited as they do very quickly for that evening's news. And that's just the way that format, that form of presentation works. And unless you get a long spot on something else where they're really doing an analysis of it, that's all that would ever be seen. So I really wanted to put what people had to say in which they had time to say it out there. Because I've heard people and I've seen that when the camera's on them, they're like, "Ok I've got to say the important things I need to say and I need to get it all done in like 20 seconds and I need to hit the high points and hopefully not mis-state something." So I think even the message they try to put out there is very much time dependent and when people have a few minutes to say something it's quite different.

Robert characterizes mainstream media as devoid of analysis or context, with their reporting focused on events themselves and not on the reasons why the events took place. The consequences of this type of reporting, according to Robert, often forced groups protesting against the mascot to create media spectacle just so they might gain media coverage.

ROBERT: I think the mainstream television media was just like, here's a protest and the protest was the news, not the message behind the protest particularly. It's like there's a group of people out there. Here's protesting. Here's your 5 seconds of b-roll. Somebody might interview someone from PRC briefly and that was it. So people didn't have much to hear, and that's why if you're counting on getting in the mainstream media, then the only way in which people were hearing anything was when they would disrupt something. They would go out and they would have a protest or they would be at a basketball game and if the media heard that they were going to be there, then they would set up the cameras and shoot a bit of footage. So it felt very inefficient. If you're trying to get a message across it felt like it was not getting to them. However, that had to be done or there would be perhaps nothing. As far as in the paper, I don't feel like they ever really went after the issue. I mean there was the local paper, the News Gazette, we certainly know what their editorial view was on it. But I never felt like there was any real effort to go in and present both sides in a really meaningful and deep way in all of that. This issue is still

there and what decision has been made? It's like the news now where you hear that Corporation X or the government has said this and such. And that's it. And there's no analysis. And there's a news discussion and it's not even challenged.

According to Robert, the news media wasn't the only one attempting to control the manner by which the mascot controversy was mitigated. For him, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees offered limited information that was available for public consumption. When asked about the Board of Trustees use of media, his answer was as follows:

ROBERT: Yeah, their use of media, I'd say, it was pretty limited. It was mostly in a form of resolutions that would come out in the usual way that resolutions would come out. "Therefore it's decided that such and such." I don't feel like they actually used it much. They talk pretty exclusively from what I could tell to the major papers perhaps and even that was pretty limited. And occasionally to the news, but not very much. I don't think that they were reaching out to people very much. They were pretty much just stating what was happening and what had been decided. So given that there was a certain defensiveness and an unease of what to do, I can sort of understand that. But I don't feel like the policy was really being articulated. I feel like the most we got out of them was, "Well, on paper we already made a decision, it's still officially our mascot and that's our decision unless something changes." For the most part what we found out about what goes on was very second hand. We heard that the Trustees went to another state to talk to people there, you know, we heard this and that, their discussions before the "Chief" was retired that we weren't aware of. There wasn't much communications except press releases that came out of them. So, pretty limited and that's probably the nature of the beast unless somebody decided to do things a different way. So I feel like that was pretty much the form of communication that we got from them. The 5 minutes or more than that, but the public speaking time at the Board of Trustees' meetings were also similarly limited. It felt like it was offered as a service but there was no two-way in there. It was pretty much you can come in and say what you had to have to say and that was it. I gathered that some folks from NAH, had more direct contact but don't know that it really went anywhere, so my viewpoint at least what I hear from the Board was very limited. What may get on the UI press site, what would get released, you know general statements from the media that's being released, things like that and that was pretty much it.

For Robert, the role of the Board of Trustees in this issue was difficult for many to discern. He felt those who had the power to make a decision on the issue ignored those opposed to the use of an American Indian mascot. According to Robert, this dismissive relationship often

radicalized protesters, which establish non-productive relationships between the BOT and those groups attempting to end the mascot's reign.

ROBERT: It seemed like it was always problematic that the people who had the power were largely ignoring what was being said. And so you wanted to challenge them, but you also needed at some point for them to go along with what you wanted to have happen, and you knew it was going to be an unpopular decision and so how do you do that? I don't know. Maybe they never would have cared enough about what people said there. And it would only be from external pressure in which case nothing that was said in there would ever have a benefit. I don't know. I just have always wondered how do you affect the change you want to see happen? A violent protest at some point has to happen or there's no registering that there's a problem. But in order to make something change, you have to get them to make a decision that they are going to get a lot of criticism for. And how do you do that? And just speaking plaintively and saying this is how I feel, and this is really important to me and this is really insulting, clearly was not doing it. So how do you do it? I don't know. Maybe it had to be external and I just wonder if a lot of energy is wasted trying to connect with the Board in that way. Maybe they are just a larger scale organization and the only hope was to get external pressure.

According to Robert, even when the Board of Trustees reached an agreement to retire the mascot, the reasons they publicly offered for doing so was strictly because of NCAA pressure. However, Robert notes other pressures may have impacted the manner by which the mascot was eliminated. For him, because the Board members were appointed by Illinois' governor, the governor himself was under political pressure to move slowly and quietly on the issue.

ROBERT: I don't know how, if you would have told them all the reasons that you feel this is important and they still just don't care. Or they don't care enough to affect change, because what do you do? Because my understanding is there was a poll taken within the state and it basically asked would you be less favorably inclined to vote for the governor if he was involved in having the "Chief" retired and the answer was predictably yes. That was my understanding that people have said, well no we don't want the "Chief" retired and we wouldn't think too much of him [the governor] if he had some role in that happening. Then the governor wasn't going to help either. That was my understanding.

Overall, Robert's decision to become a media activist left a lasting impact on how he understands the management of controversial issues. He believes he has developed a more

critical perspective of what is included as news, but also what might have been excluded. He also ponders the impact of media ownership consolidation and the role of entertainment based corporations on the news.

ROBERT: I just feel like I have a little better understanding of what's done and why, in that sort of media. I think I do have a more critical eye now for what's presented or more importantly probably what's not presented. I am more aware, I would say that there are many things which are put out over the media without challenge, or without even any investigation, so when someone does a fact check on a talk by Obama, or something, then that's seems really extraordinary, now, that someone actually goes out and checks what the president has to say or what some group had to say or something like that because usually it's not. It's the more—they'll take something canned and they'll run with it. And here's the press release and thus and such and that's it. That's very often the case and I think I'm much more aware of that now. Maybe it was always that way, but I'm certainly more aware of it now that that's going on. I've heard that that is—my understanding—that is more true now that news companies are owned by entertainment companies and all of the politics of economics associated with that. But perhaps it was always that way and I just wasn't as aware of it. But now I realize how little actually gets put out and how much is actually challenged in some form or just any in depth. It doesn't have to be that way.

When questioned about the personal impact his engagement in creating content for alternative media, Robert responded:

ROBERT: I think it's reinforced the idea that individuals can take steps to do things. I mean there was a time when I never believed that anti-nuclear protests would ever do anything and then there started to be governmental changes in policy and I was like wow! Things really can happen. So I think it gives me some gratification though, that there are things that individuals can do toward a greater good and some of those are very much accessible to people. I mean it's not just the fact that we can do with \$2,000 what used to cost \$200,000 ten years ago with video. It's that there are ways to contribute and they're not necessarily so difficult to do. And I think for the alternative media part of it, I feel like it's barely tapped. And I really liked this idea that what people have to say can be put out in a form that people could see 50 years from now. So what I'd like to see is that some of what people have had to say will be out there because there's a larger problem of racism in the country even if every native mascot was abandoned tomorrow, which won't happen, somehow it'll probably never go away. But there's a need for these issues to be put out there and for this information to be put there on a very personal level that I think it can only be conveyed with video. And I think that's a powerful thing. And should probably be exploited more in any way that it can be done.

## **Indigenous Scholar**

Indigenous Scholar is a 49 year-old, tribally enrolled American Indian faculty member who originally moved to Champaign-Urbana in the mid 1990s to attend graduate school. By 2007, Indigenous Scholar was a newly hired faculty member teaching within one of the Ethnic Studies programs and was very active in publicly promoting Native American perspectives on the mascot controversy. Originally from the Southwest United States, she grew up on a reservation and describes her family's class background as lower to middle class. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, she lived in the Champaign-Urbana area for 13 years and blogged on American Indian issues for approximately one and a half years.

From the beginning of her graduate studies at UIUC, Indigenous Scholar subscribed to numerous campus and national listservs focused on diverse topics embracing issues of American Indian life, politics, history and representation. These themes also embraced how American Indian issues manifested in her research in children's literature. For Indigenous Scholar, the use of the Internet became an important gateway to alternative media because the local corporate media was unable to offer American Indian perspectives on the issues most impacting her. In contrast, she considered,

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Email, listservs, blogging and Websites that are created by tribal people, all three of those are things that I think form what I saw and see as alternative forms of media.

Because the Native population is so small within Champaign-Urbana, listservs helped connect Indigenous Scholar to national Indigenous communities who then served as important support networks that allowed her to maintain her efforts as both a graduate student and as a mother raising her daughter with an American Indian identity.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I came to this work as a parent, as a mother who was in the academy. So, trying to affect change with that self and that identity are central to who I was. There are other mothers out there and as I talked about

this then we started to find each other—other mothers, actually I can't say there was actually a single father in any of this work ever that I have done. It's always the mothers. That's really interesting. Women who were—we were finding each other and supporting each other's frustration and seeking each other out. So one mother would say, "This is happening in my kid's school. I need your help. And what I want is letters from you because you're a professor or you're a student at the University of Illinois. They'll pay attention to you because you have this credential. You have this status that I don't have because I'm just a mom at this school. They think I'm just a trouble maker."

Other examples of the listservs used by Indigenous Scholar are diverse and national in scope.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Well, some of the tribal, —what I would call Native listservs actually, are the ones maintained by Native scholars primarily, but there are also non-Native people on them. There are several. One is... the Association for the Study of American Indian Literature. There's another one that is just Native Professors... And the third one is the Indigenous People's listserv for the American Educational Research Association... The fourth one is the American Indian Library Association. So I used all four of those, for a long time, since I would guess, I don't know, 8-9 years, as a way of sharing information with my colleagues—Native colleagues about Native experiences here [at UIUC].

Indigenous Scholar's gravitation toward Native American listservs was particularly strategic and relevant because other listservs to which she was subscribed did not allow for a safe environment to raise questions about or critique the UIUC mascot. She often found herself getting very strongly worded responses when she attempted to discuss the use of American Indian mascots and similar stereotypical images in children's books and school media. Indigenous Scholar describes these angry responses as "getting flamed", a term used to label an insult often meant to intimidate and silence a person who raises a particular observation or topic on a listserv.

JOE: What potential community were you hoping to become more in tuned with and why was that so important at the time?

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: It was so important because you feel pretty much alone out there in the cyber world when you're raising points that people are not—that

are new to them, challenging their established ways of thinking about - in my case Native Americans. Continually getting flamed for what I view and continue to view as important challenges that are diplomatically presented. I don't have a voice that is vitriolic or anything like that. I'm very diplomatic, but I was still getting flamed. And so I felt it really necessary to identify others nationally and internationally who were doing the same kind of work and having the same kind of experience so that we could help each other, we could come together in this space and vent about those assholes out there who are resistant to what we were trying to—affect change.

When questioned more about why she felt she received “flamed” responses, she explained:

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I think that anytime you begin these conversations where you ask people to look at things they hold dear emotionally, historically within their families, within their family frameworks, as soon as you start to ask them to think about that, they suddenly feel like they're in a fear mode where they feel like they are being called racist. And so, in response to that, they deny the validity and the legitimacy of the critique itself and their only response is to flame away. That's what they do.

Indigenous Scholar's graduate studies took place within the College of Education at UIUC where she worked with pre-service teachers and attempted to advocate for a multicultural and anti-racist curriculum in public schools. It was within a College of Education listserv where she raised the possibility of the college making a statement against the use of American Indian mascots. Her proposal was originally well received by the Dean of the college but, shortly after, her request was attacked for being too “political”.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: All the colleges have listservs. Every unit has a listserv. The College of Education has one as well. Units across campus were developing statements, asking for the Board of Trustees to retire the mascot. Library Sciences had one. English had one. Anthropology had one. Education did not have one. And it just continually seemed to me a huge hole that the educational institution at an educational institution did not have a statement. And at one point, I was active on that listserv, too. I would post information about guests who were coming out to campus, events that were happening, movies, things that I thought people who were training teachers should know about, that should be incorporated into their curriculum. I asked, at one point, for—that the College of Education develop this statement, and I put it on a listserv. It generated a lot of resistance from people. There was a thrust of conversation taking place. Interestingly, one of the first responses to it was

from the dean at that time, Susan Fowler, and she said, “Good idea. We need to do this.” But ensuing comments were, “That is not appropriate conversation to have on this listserv. That is not an educational conversation. That is political in nature. It’s not what this listserv is for.” The resistance was so strong that Susan decided to stop that conversation. She said, “Those who want to continue this discussion can continue it on a Web board” or something like that, in the College—I don’t remember what it was now. “We can pick it up over there.” Nobody picked it up over there because that required people to actually go to a Webpage and open it and then post their conversation there. It just died completely, and to this day I don’t think the College of Education has a statement about the mascot. I thought that was utterly shameful, utterly shameful because we were training [pre-service teachers] to look critically at the lesson plans that they were developing. They’d go into local classrooms intending to do something different in their fall placement as student teachers. They’d walk into classrooms that had posters of the mascot all over the place. Teachers wearing “Chief” shirts. The un-critical embrace of that mascot in the local public schools was a threat to the—our students who... in the College of Education were trying to affect change in the way that Thanksgiving is taught because they were bringing up things that were labeled as “politically correct” by teachers. They would write to me and say, “You know what, I don’t think I can do it. I’m just going to do the lesson plan that she wants me to do, ok? I’m really sorry. I’m really sorry, I know it’s wrong, but I don’t really have a choice because if I make her mad, she’s not going to give me a good evaluation and then I won’t get certified to be a teacher.” So, we created a horrible dynamic in the College of Education by not having a statement. It had a negative affect on the experiences of our students in the College of Ed.

Although Indigenous Scholar was disappointed by the lack of willingness to engage the mascot issue within the College Education at UIUC, it did not dissuade her from pursuing the subject in other areas. On the contrary, she found herself active on more and more listservs, commenting on issues of representation from an American Indian perspective. However, the amount of time it took to respond on these numerous listservs became a challenge to managing her time. This factor of time then became one of her reasons for learning how to blog.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: What I was realizing is that as I learned of more listservs, I was duplicating my work. I would posts to each one individually or in groups if their servers would allow that, but they don’t. They don’t all allow that. I was carrying on conversations in 5 or 6 different places at the same time. It was a huge time suck. And I decided that I have to have a way to do it in a single point and they come to it and the conversation happens here if it’s going to happen. I can’t really affectively use—it’s not good use of my time

to have the same conversation in 10 different places when I could consolidate into one place. So that's when I started looking at Websites and the Internet as a place when I can have a single point of entry of access for the work that I was doing. I tried Webpages, but they weren't dynamic enough and I didn't know how to do them. They were not easy tools to use. So, I decided I would just take a look at a blog and looked at Blogger. Because I read blogs. I was reading blogs prior to that. I thought, "Well, maybe I should just try it." So I did. So I created the blogs and instead of writing to all these listservs about whatever point I was trying to make about representation, I would write a single email saying, "Hey, over on my blog..." I'd say the address, "This past week, this is what I added." And I would provide an index of what was there. And that's what goes out now. So, people are coming to my blog. People still want to have the conversations over there. And sometimes what I do on those listservs where they try to have that conversation is I will compose a response there and say, "I'm going to put this on my blog, ya'll can come read it there." So, I can bring people back to the blog. And what's really cool—I see how important the blogging has become in the areas of children's literature and representation, all of which I see the mascot is a part of that, this issue of representation. This mascot is one example of that.

Indigenous Scholars rapidly became proficient at blogging and developed a following on topics concerning children's literature as they relate to issues impacting American Indians. She also integrated blogging technology into her classroom as a faculty member at UIUC and students responded positively to this as a pedagogical tool.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I do know that my students are reading things more critically as a result of taking my class. We have a class blog and they are finding things related to the mascot conversations locally and posting them on the blog. So it's reaching students who are in my class, too. And they're using that technology also, to further educate their fellow students in the class about what the local scene looks like with regard to the mascot.

Additionally, Indigenous Scholar found that blogging was connecting her to wider networks of librarians across the country. She began to receive requests to travel to different parts of the country to speak on issues concerning American Indian representation in children's literature. This connection between her graduate research and her new found passion as an avid blogger created contexts for critical readings of books considered classics in many libraries across the country.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I had an invitation to come and speak to the tribal librarians in the state of New Mexico. ... I read aloud to them from *Little House on the Prairie*, and they were shocked and very, not embarrassed, but I don't know what emotion to call it. They had that book in their libraries... [and] they had never been afforded the opportunity to read it critically, or to read it as adults and think about what it meant. They just knew it was all [on] every classic book list that you have in your library so they did it. And I think the important thing was that they realized that their training failed to help them become educators who would help the population that they were working with, which is Native kids in the Indigenouss. I think they felt betrayed a little bit by their education and that is the most important—one of the most important lessons that anyone can have. To realize that they were betrayed by their education and that my—the work I do helps them to see that betrayal and they can do something different. It was so powerful.

JOE: You said the word critical and critically a couple times. Can you just explain that?

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Questioning—it's a question. It's to ask a question. What is this? Who made it? What does it mean? How do other's perceive it? It's to ask the question I think. To me it means ask a question. What is this?

JOE: Is that opposed to, say, traditional education?

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Which is to accept things unquestioned. It's just to sit there as a good student, take notes and regurgitate what you were given.

Although Indigenous Scholar uses the term “critical” to describe a desired outcome to her practice, she is hesitant to contextualize her initial impetus to engage in issues regarding American Indian representation within a particular theoretical framework. This concern is based on a fundamental distrust of the impact of the academy on those living outside its realm and upon her relationships with her family and her own spirituality.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I feel a resistance to conversations that try to ground the work in that thing we call theory... because I feel that... the work that we do as activist scholars is crucial to the well being and future to the people we call “our people” and that the academy uses that word, “theory” and throws it at us. If we can't articulate what we're doing in the academy's framework then the work is seen and we are seen as not scholarly and as not smart. Our work is discounted for that reason. So, I'm resistant. I'm at a gut level resistant to speaking that language because it's the master's request and I feel like, screw the master.

JOE: So, that's really interesting because you're talking about being in one world and having to survive in it, the academy, but also staying connected with "the people". When you say "the people" are you talking about your—where you grew up? Or are you talking about people who are outside the academy?

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I'm talking about people outside the academy. I'm talking about my siblings back home. I'm talking about the woman from Mill's Lack Reservation, who wrote to me this morning, who I've never met before. I'm just talking about the people who are—the ones who suffer from the consequences of a society that chooses to ignore who we are and who has never—a society that's never felt it necessary to include or listen to who we are and what we wish to see for our own children.

JOE: What are some of the reasons why society is doing this? Why does it take place in the first place?

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Well, I think that there's massive denial and it's not all that understood or recognized as such in mainstream America. They can't—they cannot see how the ways that they socialize their children into believing that this is a wonderful democratic place are actually hurtful to members of the so called democracy. That the experiences of Native people and our interest in maintaining our culture is seen as, "Get a Life! Get with the Program! It's over. You lost. What's the big deal?" That kind of resistance to my maintenance, my efforts to maintain my cultural practice and spirituality with my daughter.

Within Indigenous Scholar's definition of "critical" the free exchange of information becomes of utmost importance. In this sense, bypassing traditional means to share and present information has the potential to allow individuals to question long-held beliefs and perspectives. For this reason, she views the uses of alternative media as connected to thinking critically and activism.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I think that what it's [alternative media] going to do is as more of the people have access to this networking, ...as more of us get this, there's going to be change happening because there's no way it can't. As more people have access to the information, as more people grow aware and can look critically at all of this crap that we've been dealing with and we are becoming more activist that—that woman from—that—Ojibwa woman, who wrote to me this morning, can write to me and can talk to other parents—that's like these ripples that just ripple all over the place. I just—it gives me great hope that we are going to affect change because there are more of us than there are of them.

Indigenous Scholar juxtaposes this creation of critical contexts for learning with the local News Gazette newspaper, particularly as they report on issues concerning Native Americans.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: It's kind of like not worth paying attention to. If you pay—if you responded to every single editorial or letter that the News Gazette ran that had anything to do with Native Americans, that's a full time job.

Furthermore, Indigenous Scholar characterizes their reporting as hurtful to American Indians because of their binary reporting and their insistence of spreading pro-mascot rhetoric.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Here is this, the continuing refrains that, “We're trying to honor you.” And the flat out rejection of my counter to that, that, “I don't want you to honor me. I'm not an honorable person. I'm a good person, but what do you mean honor? I'm a good mother. I'm a good person and all this bologna is hurtful to me and it's hurtful to my child.” I don't want to be honored. I want you to respect my views. My views just never get in the papers because it's not the view—that's not the sound byte that they want to hear. They want to have a fight. The media here just seems to want to pit the two sides against each other is more tabloid journalism than serious journalism. And in that tabloid way, we have a pro-“Chief” group and an anti-“Chief” group all fighting about American Indians and who we are. And what I—what they think is right for us. So it's a patronization that comes from both ends of that spectrum and the voice of Native peoples is just completely left out of that conversation. It's not sexy enough.

A specific event that Indigenous Scholar believed the local media skewed their reporting was the December 15, 2006 "congressional field hearing" to examine Republican representatives Tim Johnson's and House Speaker Dennis Hastert's “Protection of University Governance Act of 2006” (HR 5289). The hearing featured testimony from mascot supporters, such as the former mascot, Dan Maloney, Republican Illinois State Representative Chapin Rose (R), Howard Wakeland, President of the Honor the "Chief" Society, and Brent Holmes, a local Attorney and avid mascot financial supporter. Not one local American Indians or representative from UIUC's Native American House or American Indian Studies program were invited to participate in the event.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Well, I went to that hearing and the way that I recalled it being presented and spun out of that moment was just an effort to contain or

shape the story in a certain way and to confine it, it seemed—to tell it in a way that was favorable to Tim Johnson and what he was trying to do. And I think there was—there were plenty of people that weren't down with what he was trying to do. They didn't agree with what he was trying to do. And the alternative media allowed us to—blogs allowed us to say, “Hey, look what Tim Johnson said. What do you think about that?” and I do—I know for a fact because I was involved in it—I know for a fact that due to our exposure, I guess, of Tim Johnson and what he said, we reached all the way up to the Oglala people, the Oglala reservation in Pine Ridge. As a result of that work, they learned of what was happening down here and decided that they could not have the University using regalia that was acquired from one of their tribal members, in the way that it was being used. So, that led to their tribal counsel having a resolution issued, requesting that the University of Illinois return that regalia. So, the reach of the technology is just, it's limitless.

Because other alternative media producers were also creating content on the mascot issue, Indigenous Scholar was positively impacted by their contributions. She felt the additional producers created a diversity of perspectives that were not being offered by the local corporate media.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Well, I was glad that there were other places where the public could pick up some different kinds of material. I saw that as a major opportunity for the people, broadly speaking, citizens of Champaign Urbana, students of the University to get a different viewpoint than they were getting from the media.

Besides local alternative media sources presenting alternative views, Indigenous Scholar also saw the National news outlets as questioning the mascot politics taking place in Champaign-Urbana. According to her, the national media often portrayed the UIUC mascot issue in a manner that was embarrassing to the local community. In many ways, this difference between the local and national coverage exposed the high degree of acculturation taking place by the local corporate media.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Oh, that was so hilarious. It felt like the national media was saying, “Oh my god, look what Illinois is doing. They still have a [Native] mascot!” And it was the source—we became the butt of jokes I think in some—many places, and on a national scene. If there was that much attention to it. There wasn't a whole lot, but what was out there, yeah, it was like, “Wow, they're still doing that?” I think it was a--people were in disbelief that

a major school would still have a mascot like that. In contrast, the local people here were like, “They don’t understand, they don’t understand.” It was so pathetic. It was just pathetic that they thought, “Oh, they don’t understand, if they would just come here, they’d understand.” It was pathetic.

With regards to the University Board of Trustees, Indigenous Scholar believes their overall silence on the mascot issue was caused by a complex set of relationships and political pressures. This included the need to keep silent because they were appointed by Governor Rob Blagojevich and he didn’t want any possible problems to arise in downstate Illinois during his campaign for re-election. The Board of Trustees members may have also feared impacting their own corporate jobs and financial interests.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I think that actually there’s a lot about the board and how it has behaved on this—that we don’t know. I think that there’s a lot of political pressure that has been placed on them. I think that a lot of the people on the board over the years were like, “Get this thing over with.” But that there was political pressure placed on them from higher, from the appointments that they had from the governor’s office because they’re all member of corporations and running companies and boards and it seems like maybe there was fear of repercussion for their own financial interests if they did that. So, I think there were things that were going on there that we don’t know about. So a lot of them were silent. You could—if you generate a list of the Board of Trustees and looked through the records to see who said what, I think you had only a few voices actually speaking to the media and, in particular, one is Marge Sodemann, who I think she had no stake in anything. She didn’t have anything to lose. So she wanted to be out there, be the good fan and support the mascot. So I think she gave interviews about that.

Indigenous Scholar’s engagement in the mascot issue at UIUC developed her capacity to read the world through a political lens and affirmed her own identity as a political actor. When asked if she came into the UIUC environment with a sense that she was a political actor, she responded:

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: No, actually I did not. When I was teaching in New Mexico, I saw the ways that I designed my lessons with my own students, that I’m not going to go the Thanksgiving feel good stuff because it’s not accurate. That was feel good stuff, and it’s not accurate, and I’m a teacher. I’m supposed to give them—I’m supposed to teach them. I’m not supposed to indoctrinate them. So, students in my classes in New Mexico, my elementary school

classrooms in New Mexico, they got a different lesson on Thanksgiving. I didn't see that as political. I saw that as educationally responsible. So it wasn't until I came to Illinois... that I saw the phrase, because it was new, it was coming into the, into the common language use, that phrase, "politically correct." People started to use that to counter any efforts to try to be more educationally sound in what we were providing children or what we were doing. Whatever I would say with regard to the mascot here, they would say "You're just being politically correct." My counter to that was, "This is not about political correctness. This is about accuracy in what we are providing to people. This is about cultural sensitivity and responsibility as an educator." So I still don't see it as "politically correct" work. I see it as something much bigger than that.

Additionally, Indigenous Scholar's blogging provides a platform for continual feedback on her writings and observations from others across the globe. In most occasions, the responses provided are affirming and become a source of strength that allows for continued engagement.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: When I get an email from a librarian that says, "last week we removed every copy of Little House on the Prairie from our shelves and replaced them with Birch Barkhouse." Little House on the Prairie has phrases like the only good Indian is a dead Indian. That's a huge win for me and it's a huge motivator to keep doing that work because I'm affecting change where I need to, where it needs to happen, on the ground, with the kids.

## **David**

Unlike the other alternative media producers interviewed for this study, David, a 51 year-old community member, grew up in Champaign-Urbana. He describes his ethnic background as "mixed" and his family's class background as lower-middle class. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, David produced alternative media content on the mascot for approximately four years. However, David describes producing content for alternative media in general since the early 1970s.

While in high school, David first encountered alternative media production as a result of his acquaintance with UIUC students producing magazines focusing on issues he describes as 1970s "counter-culture materials". Additionally, as an up-and-coming musician and songwriter,

he also co-produced music and distributed them on cassette tapes as a means to gain band recognition and reach new fans.

DAVID: In the early 70s, I worked on a couple different sort of—I don't know what you would call it. I guess now you would call [them] 'zines'. People would print them out protesting the Vietnam War and various things like that. I did a little writing for those things. I drew some pictures, just basically helped produce. Mostly produce because it was mostly older people who were doing it. I was just kind of the kid who was hanging around trying to be involved. So I helped with a lot of that stuff from the production end of things. And simultaneously I was also involved in music projects that put out, you know, at the time it was tapes, cassettes, were the medium that we had available. And when you weren't signed to like corporate contracts as a musician that was the only way to get your stuff around. So what we used to do, actually, throughout the 70s and 80s was produce our own tapes and just distribute them amongst friends and fans. So, we'd make them like little albums. I actually still have some of these at home. We do covers and draw them up and print them on copy machines and then mass produce these things and give them to people. And trade them. So we did a little of that. But by the mid 80s I had gone completely corporate and didn't do that anymore until—I haven't done it since, essentially. Musically speaking, until actually late into—or mid to early 90s.

With the growing success of a number of his bands, David's experiences as a media producer changed dramatically. As his musical groups toured nationally and gained recognition, he signed a number of contracts with large media companies, thus altering his understanding of corporate media, as well as his view of the role of alternative media in US society. This new understanding evolved as a consequence of David's participation in the production processes, but also because he and his band were primarily the topic of music-industry interviews and reporting. Thus, the more David was able to tour the country, the more experiences he had being interviewed by both alternative radio stations, and affiliates of large corporate networks. David distinguishes some of the differences of how he and his band were being represented by these different venues in the following:

DAVID: The people that you talk to that really had something to say, or really just said what they thought would be just the kids who are like "I'm writing this article for my high school drama class." Whatever the thing was, they were totally

honest and they would just say whatever. And then the higher up you go the more controlled and sanitized it would become... As you go up, there's less and less content, less actual content and more just gloss and packaging to it... And if you start talking about what you think about anything, like we used to write songs in the 80s, we wrote a bunch of songs about the anti-apartheid stuff that was going on in South Africa at the time, and we tried to talk about that at radio stations, they would shut us down. They wouldn't let us do it. They would change the subject. They'd be like, "Oh that's really nice, we've got to go to a commercial now." And they'd be like "In this portion let's talk about blah blah blah." And then you'd be off on some completely different thing on how come you dress this way... And it was really interesting to watch. And we found that trying to make any kind of political statement at that level was virtually impossible. We could put it in our songs, but they wouldn't get on the album.

David's unique life history adds much insight into the impact corporate values have upon independent media producers whose artistic intent is driven by a deep sense of pride in one's labor. By the 1980s, as rapid media consolidation permeated the entertainment industry, David's success as a songwriter and bandleader became tempered by the increasingly intrusive role of his corporate handlers. Slowly he found himself alienated from the production processes and his own ability to express himself creatively.

DAVID: It's like the way I would describe it is like the similarity of a jack-o-lantern to a pumpkin growing out on the vine. You know the pumpkin on the vine is the same shape and it's the same basic material but the jack-o-lantern is, they hallowed it out. They carve a face that they want on it and they put a candle or whatever and then they put the top back on, and they set it out. And it looks like it was a pumpkin but it's not one anymore. It's just—that's what it felt like because the song writing you know when you write a song it's just like writing anything. You're saying something. And you're saying something that means something to you. So it could be as simple as just some dumb thing, you know an observation that people are mean and I don't like that. But once the corporate people come in there, they just start molding that and taking a word out here and putting one in there and suggesting things. Why don't you try this? And before you know it, it's similar to what you were saying but it's not the same thing at all. And I guess it's just like—I suppose it's like if you walked around with your life, having somebody that just followed you around and insisted on speaking for you all the time, or telling you what to say. It feels like that after awhile. And it's not even that they're necessarily totally contradicting what you would say yourself, but you would just prefer to say it yourself you know and in your own way and it just doesn't feel good.

These processes of commodification significantly impacted David's artistic abilities. The corporatizations of his work forced him to quit the music industry all together and revealed a business opposed to his sense of originality and artistic power.

DAVID: I quit show business all together. I just had it with the whole thing. And the whole sense of a product, of turning me into a product, it just wasn't turning what I did into a product and it just wasn't even just collaborating with me to turn it into a product. It changed the way I thought about what I did to the point to where there was nothing original. There was nothing sincere about it anymore. It was all—it was like brain washing in many ways. It was like being turned into someone who thinks about themselves as a producer of consumables as opposed to an artist who's expressing something.

David's attempts to understand the difficulties he experienced were initially based on an individualized analysis. That is, he believed he was just having bad luck with his corporate handlers, or he somehow fell through the cracks. However, as his band continued to tour across the country, he became acquainted with other artist who were experiencing similar circumstances.

DAVID: I think for a lot of the time I saw my personal experiences, my personal bad experiences with corporate media as being isolated incidents, like "Jeez, I have really bad luck. I keep getting stuck with these people who want to do this and want to do that." And I didn't see it as part of a grand narrative of the way that these things are done. But then, towards the late 80s and early 90s when I was traveling around and I was actually becoming fairly successful with that, I had the opportunity to network with a lot of other people who are also in that same position, some higher, some lower, right around that same area of success. And I started to hear their stories, and it just became apparent. Like everyone had these stories of how they were being prostituted in one way or another by these big corporations and how they were being used and robbed and you hear a few stories you think oh, that's just coincidence or this person is just trying to explain away their bad luck, the fact that they're really not as good as they thought they were. But after a while, you start going, man there's these companies out there that are just robbing everybody, taking all their money, squeezing them like lemons until they just can't produce another drop and just throwing them away. And that's the business that I'm in. And after awhile, it's like do I really want to do that? Do I want to hope that I'm just so successful that I don't run out of juice and they can just squeeze forever and I still—I get what I want. And the answer was no. So a lot of it was just picking it up as I went along, but I really resisted the idea that they were bad for a long time, I think.

After quitting the music industry, David did not involve himself in alternative media production for a number of years. He eventually settled back in Champaign-Urbana, purchased a house, and was hired at a nine-to-five job. However, local issues prompted his desire to speak out and publicly express himself and he found the only local newspaper in town would censor or reject his letters to the editor. When asked to explain why he gravitated back to producing content for alternative media, David responded:

DAVID: Because I started having really strong desires to say, to speak out about stuff that was going on around here, where I live. And after quite a few very limited attempts to send letters to the editors and get things published, I've gotten my fair share of letters to the editor published but they're just so chopped down that you really can't say, you can't really put out a whole argument.

The topic that inspired David to write letters to the editor was the university's mascot and its impact it had on the local community in general and American Indians in particular. David believed that the mascot issue was also tied to other relationships of injustices that could easily be addressed. Having grown up in the Champaign-Urbana area, he was certain that he was in a unique position to explain to the locals why the "Chief" was wrong. However, because his letters to the editors were constantly being censored or rejected, he was forced to find alternative venues for reaching people.

DAVID: I started blogging about the "Chief" right after I first became aware of it. I had one going for quite awhile, but it was just lost in the noise. And I didn't know enough people and I didn't ever publicize it. I just kind of put it out there to see what would happen if anything. I would just write regularly about all this stuff.

JOE: Why did you do that?

DAVID: Just because I have something to say and I wanted to say it to somebody. I bored all my friends and family to death with all my opinions and I still had more to say. I tried all sorts of different ways.

Additionally, David co-hosted a permanent show on the local micro-radio station. This program directly addressed American Indian issues and the mascot controversy was a common theme.

DAVID: It's a show ... and it is by and for the Native American community so we talk about it [the mascot] at least every third episode if not every single episode. I mean it comes up in some way or another a lot, either as a reference or an actual topic of discussion. So we just talk about it. I talk about it. I bring it up regularly just to get the word out you know. As long as I continue to see those T shirts and posters and things I'll continue to talk about it because someone is obviously not getting it.

David also wrote articles about the mascot for the local Independent Media Center's monthly newspaper. Regardless of the type of media he produced, David's common pedagogical approach permeated all formats.

DAVID: My plan was, and this will sound remarkably arrogant, but was to take the position of not a cultural broker, but to take the fact that I have been raised and experienced quote unquote "White European Western", whatever you want to call it, culture all my life, and take this understanding of this thing and translate somehow the reality of what was going on into a language that made sense to people that thought that way. So I don't know if you've read anything that I've written about this subject, but everything is—each step is an attempt to refine the way that I express it so that it makes sense not to people that already know, because they already do, but to the people that don't know and who wouldn't necessarily get it. And that was my plan. I was just going to keep writing and refining my ideas and draw on all sorts of sources until I could figure out a way of expressing it so that nobody could sit on the other side of that and go, "Oh I don't get what he's talking about." They'd all have to go, "oh, I don't agree with it." They could reject it, but they would understand it. And maybe it would stick in the back of their mind and maybe eventually it would do some good.

When David began producing alternative media content on the mascot, there wasn't a particular theoretical or political perspective that informed his efforts. He simply saw disconnections between the different sides on the issue and was hoping his personal experiences and perspectives would help fill a void in the education process. However, as he became more

involved in attempting to address the issues, his theoretical and political understanding began to change.

DAVID: I suppose in the sense that everything I run into or have run into for a while now leads me back into the sense that capitalism is really at the root of so many problems in the world that I don't know if there's a theoretical framework for that. I wouldn't call myself Marxist necessarily because I haven't really studied Marxism enough to say that I'm influenced by it, but I guess anti-capitalism. Whatever that is, if you can call that a theoretical framework but it's just everything leads me back to the sense that's it, if you could interrupt that in some way.

JOE: In what ways did the mascot issue lead you toward this analysis?

DAVID: Well, as I was saying about this whole sense of ownership that, it was like trying to understand why people thought the image belonged to them simply because they used it or they wanted to use it. Why did they think they own that? Why can someone, I even heard on the radio this morning someone, apparently the "Chief Council" or the "Council of Chiefs" they've selected a new "Chief" for this year. It's unofficial, not connected to the university, but he's the new guy that in case the mascot came back, they have some guy ready to go. They selected him and they interviewed, I don't know if it was this guy or somebody else, I didn't catch the name, but they interviewed somebody, and he said, this is our tradition. It's been around since the beginning, I don't know the beginning of what, but it's—he kept saying, "This is our tradition. This is ours. Ours." And I heard the word "ours" three or four times in his statement. And so that's, like, a consistent theme. "This is ours and you're trying to take that away from us." So I guess confronting what is it that makes people think that they own that and leads you to what makes people think they own anything. What is ownership and why does it exist? And it exist because everything is turned into, all things are property and all things have a monetary value, therefore they can be bought and sold and the more things you can turn into property the more ways you can make money off of them. So you have like, now even like ideas are property. And stuff that people haven't even done and all this stuff is property now and it's all patentable and you can legally lock it up and say this belongs to me. And it's just amazing how many different things now have been assigned this concept of property. And that all comes from capitalism. It's not just any kind of natural phenomenon.

David further elaborates on this issue of capitalism and the consequences of private ownership society by relating it to his understanding of the history of indigenous peoples, within

the current boundaries of the United States. In the passage below, he ties this ownership society with the legacy of conquest in North America as it relates to cultural mis-appropriation.

DAVID: Well, it's symbolic of this whole sense of ownership and privilege and it's like Western Europeans, I don't know, I hate to use, to racialize things by talking about Whiteness or people of color. I don't like those kinds of terms because it implies way too much, but the whole—the dominant ideology of America is based around this concept of ownership. And really that's the whole thing. It's just ownership. We own the space. I own this. You own that. By owning these things, we define our personal responsibility for things we own. And there are just all these off shoots of that kind of thing. And the "Chief" is just a big symbol of the way people who define themselves as Americans define and express their ownership of this land that we live on that we call the United States of America. To put it simply, I mean there's a million other things tied in with it, but that's kind of what it is. It's just really blatant because the indigenous people of this continent were sort of acquired as property along with the minerals and the natural resources as well. Like when they took all those things, they just acquired those and started using the culture in any way, those different cultures in any way that they felt that they could use it. And there's a long history of people going into Indian Country and sitting there and learning some particular thing like how to make a teepee, and then coming out writing a book and selling it. It's just like harvesting cultural ideas and imagery and art and you name it. And they treat it exactly the same way as going onto the land and chopping down trees and turning it into lumber or going and digging up coal. It's the same thing. And the "Chief" is just totally a symbol of that sense of well, "This is ours now and we can do what we want with it. And this is what we want to do."

David's analysis further ties this history in the U.S. with the university's use of its mascot iconography for the sale of goods and memorabilia. Within the Southeastern Illinois region, images of the UIUC mascot can be found on numerous public spaces, including bumper stickers, clothing, and store windows. When asked about this phenomenon, he explained this commodification of the "Chief image in local settings in the following way:

DAVID: Well, it's attached to all sorts of things so you can sell those things. You sell the idea of the "Chief" and you attach to it something that you can make money off of... [Such as on] a T-shirt or a hat, or a mug or a sticker or a poster or a flag or a bumper sticker or a sweatshirt or a backpack or a seat cushion or toilet paper. Everything, you name it. At some point it's had a picture of the "Chief" on it. And it's strictly, it only has something to do—the "Chief" if the idea that they're selling and the item is what they go along with it that they can charge money for.

For David, the proliferation of these marketing images within the local community is further supported by the manner by which the local media portrayed the mascot controversy. In the next passage, David contrasts local versus national media reporting on the issue.

DAVID: Locally and nationally [were] two entirely different things. And the trick was, and one thing that I spent trying to deal with only very limited success was reach out to some of this corporate media outside of this area. Because outside of this area it was pretty, I would say it's uniformly negative against the "Chief" but it was mostly, predominantly negative about the whole "Chief" issue. And it was only right around here [Champaign-Urbana] that it was gung ho. And here they controlled everything. It was absolutely like they painted the issue as, "A very simple handful of malcontents, who are just oh so PC. And they just want to control everything and they're complaining, but nobody else thinks it's bad and we think it's great and therefore there's nothing wrong with it. And we're going to show you all the different ways that it's honorable and respectable and it has a long rich history and here's how it's tied into your past and don't you just love this thing? Because remember when..." And they were just completely aligned, 100% all the corporate media in this area was aligned 100% as far as I can remember, on retaining the "Chief" and supported it. But if you step outside the immediate area, the story was completely different. So I think that had an impact too, and that had a bigger impact on the NCAA than anything was the fact that they're not from here and so they see the bigger picture and so like everybody else outside of this town, they're like, "Well that's a really stupid weird thing and kind of sort of racist. And that's not so cool." And so I think that had a big effect.

According to David, the role of the NCAA in ending the use of the "Chief" Illiniwek mascot was significant because the NCAA represented an outside force that blunted the very powerful entities attempting to maintain the "Chief tradition".

DAVID: I think that it was just the big corporate NCAA doing whatever they did and forcing the University. I think that if the NCAA had not stepped in, nothing would be any different right now no matter what anybody did because it's just—there's too much power concentrated in the hands of people whose entire purpose in life is to perpetuate their own power and control. So it's like—"You'll take my gun away when you pull it out of my cold dead hands." I think you'll take power away from those forces when they're—only if you destroy them utterly because they're not going to let go in any other way. I know that sounds really pessimistic but that's kind of how I feel.

JOE: Are you referring to a particular entity within the University system?

DAVID: As the powers?

JOE: Yes.

DAVID: Well, administration and the Board of Trustees. They kind of work all together to control what's going on.

JOE: So your characterization is that they reluctantly retired the mascot?

DAVID: Very reluctantly. I think that some, a fair amount of them have wanted to find a way out of this because... people have been protesting this since, what, 1980 something? So it's— not an insignificant portion of those people would like to [have] just seen the whole thing go away, but they weren't going to do anything about it because it was just too much pro-“Chief” sentiment in the hands of people that really had power, donors, alumni, those kinds of people, and lots of students. I mean let's face it, the majority of the students on this campus like that thing. So with all that going on they weren't actually going to act on it. There weren't enough of them that actually wanted to get rid of it for their own reasons or for their own belief that it was bad. There were just a few that would like the controversy to go away so they could worry about other stuff. So that's what I'm talking about.

Although David characterizes the pro-mascot forces as situated in very powerful positions within the university system, and within the local community, he also critiques other creators of alternative media content as unable or unwilling to target wider audiences in the educational process. He ties this shortcoming to their realms of “ideological purity”, something he believes is shared by both conservatives and progressives alike.

DAVID: I think alternative media unfortunately, most of the time, tends to just preach to the choir. It's sought out by and consumed by and produced by people who are kind of already on more or less the same page. Unfortunately, this has just been my experience with it. I don't see it reaching outside of those spaces very often. I think it's a good thing. I think those people need their own ways of presenting information to each other and expressing their ideas, but I don't think it gets to the people that really need to get it.

JOE: How would you describe the anti-“Chief” or the pro-Native movement in terms of various organizations wanting to reach the goal? Has that been a unified choir?

DAVID: No, it's not so much like a—I don't mean to make it sound like a bunch of generic ditto heads just walking around repeating each other. But I mean there are people that are already prone to feeling a certain way or to thinking

progressively let's say. And those people operate, I guess what I'm saying is that in recent years, over the last 5 to 10 years, it seems to me that communities are becoming very bounded and so people are sort of operating within their own sphere of ideological purity. So now, for example, if you think of the big TV networks, conservative have their own 24-hour news station. Fox News. And they don't watch anything else. So even if you put it on all the other networks, you're not going to reach a lot of those hardcore people because they won't even see it. And with the rise of the Internet, you have more and more places that you can go hang out and read and observe stuff that's designed for you that reinforces the views that you already have. So what I'm afraid of is that alternative media for the most part is just another part of that process where people are seeking out and finding the things that tell them that they're right to believe what they already believe in. And there isn't a lot of cross over going on there, you know what I mean?

Despite this critique, David sees many opportunities arising from the growth of alternative media production. On a personal note, he states,

DAVID: I feel more like I can speak, I can be, I can speak, I don't feel a lot more like I can be heard. I will be heard. But I feel that at least I can say something."

In addition to addressing his need to express voice, David appreciated the "copy free" nature of alternative media, and attributes this characteristic to the growing awareness on the mascot that took place in the Champaign-Urbana area during the final year of the mascot's association with UIUC.

DAVID: My own personal opinion is that it's worked for other people the way that it's worked for me. I think that it tells other people who already have ideals about this, it helps them refine their thinking. I know for a fact that it's done that for other people because I've had them say it to me. It's like, "Well I never really knew how to explain this before, but when I read your thing, I figured out a better way of saying it or describing it to people." So I think, it's sort of universalizes the message. It makes it possible so that you can have a good idea and you can spread it past your immediate circle of friends and you can get that idea out. What I like about alternative media, I will say, is that free nature of it. It shares ideas. It doesn't try to own them. It just spreads it out and lets everybody own it.

## Connie

Connie is a 27 year-old Caucasian graduate student who moved to Champaign-Urbana in 2003 to work in the Champaign-Urbana area. Originally from the South, she describes her family's class background as middle class. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, Connie produced alternative media content on the mascot for approximately one year. However, Connie produced content for alternative media in general for approximately nine years, beginning when she was an undergraduate student studying filmmaking.

Connie's undergraduate experiences were complemented by travels to Thailand to document sex trafficking as a independent film maker. This experience allowed her to prioritize the importance for non-Western populations to seize opportunities to voice their own particular concerns and worldviews using alternative media. It also personally impacted her by exemplifying why people's stories should be told and heard, with minimal outside interjections.

CONNIE: I had a scholarship and I was able to take more courses after my film program was done. And I took a course on women's human rights and I read about sex trafficking which I had never heard of before prior to that. And I really felt it was underreported. And again all the material that was coming out, even on issues like human rights, it still comes from a Western perspective, it still comes from an elitist, like "Here we are coming in to save different populations." And so I wanted to go to Thailand and learn more from the women who had experienced it and their families. I went there to learn and I did. I learned a lot. The nice thing about doing media too is it gives you an opportunity to shut up [chuckles] and listen to people. Because you can't be talking when the audio is on, or the camera is on because it'll ruin your content. And I think, as a White woman, I needed to learn how to do that. So just shut up and listen for once, and I think that gave me a really good experience.

After graduating from film school and visiting Thailand, Connie moved to Los Angeles to find work in the film industry. These experiences, however, were less than ideal and she became further concerned by the lack of diversity amongst film producers and the content they generate.

CONNIE: There's not a lot of diversity as far as content, as far as producers - at all. There weren't very many women in the film school that were admitted. And that reproduces the content that goes out in Hollywood. So I found that really frustrating and I became a lot more interested in diverse producers and content. So I think that's where it really started out. I was really tired of watching the same film about the same White man, made by the same White man. It didn't really feel like I could relate to it. And I thought that my training in film school really gave me an opportunity to try and change that. And, so that's what I wanted to do.

Connie sees the need for more diverse producers of media to be represented and active in delivering content to larger audiences. She states the current configurations of media producers does not allow for a variety of viewpoints needed within a diverse society.

CONNIE: There's not a lot of diversity. I think that's a huge, huge obstacle that still predominantly—when you see someone behind the camera, they're probably going to be Caucasian and middle or upper-class. And I think that's detrimental because it's very difficult then, to represent the diverse society we live in and the diverse viewpoints because, I can't say that I understand the experience of someone that I'm not.

With these goals of diversifying media production content and increasing the variety of representation of media producers, Connie moved to Champaign-Urbana and immediately connected with people at the local Independent Media Center. According to Connie, Champaign-Urbana is unique in that there are many independent oriented media producers interested in documenting and sharing diverse perspectives on multiple issues. At the same time, Connie's own repertoire of skills included producing film but she had little to no experience with digital video. The Independent Media Center provided a location and community for her to develop these new media skills that were also aligned with her visions for social justice.

CONNIE: I was very interested in independently produced films. That was what I was doing when I moved to Thailand. However, my experience was solely limited to the medium of film, not digital video, not anything online. That hadn't been my experience and that wasn't what I knew. So it actually wasn't until I moved to Champaign-Urbana that I learned much more about the possibilities, as far as technology and different options that are now available. Champaign-Urbana is unique in a lot of ways because it's very media-savvy and very, very independent media-oriented. There's an organization in town

called the Independent Media Center, in which I became very involved with as soon as I moved here, the first week I moved here. And the goal of that organization—it's an international organization and the goal of that is—well, one motto is “passionate tellings of the truth.” Meaning, people can go and tell their stories. It's much more focused on localized knowledge, rather than saying I have to have this degree or this amount of money or this radio station to have a legitimate opinion on something. So, that was kind of where I learned more about distribution models.

One of the projects on which she began to work involved a group of locals who were interested in documenting police abuse and racial profiling in the City of Champaign. The group created a “cop watch” program where they would video record the police as they interacted with both African American and White populations. They then created a video documentary highlighting major discrepancies in police behavior.

CONNIE: With the media they were producing, they were just trying to show the inequalities in the communities as far as prosecution by law enforcement in our area. The videos we ended up showing at a public library, the local independent film theater and it got huge press coverage because people hadn't really seen our law enforcement in action. Most citizens in the community just don't give it a second thought. And to have it out and in front of them where... I remember one clip showed the same night at the same time, they showed campus town where people running amuck in the streets and drunk and publicly urinating and then they're pulling over people of color on the other side of town because they don't have a light on their license plate or they don't have a bike light. And absolutely no enforcement on campus.

Eventually, two of the African American members of the “cop watch” group were arrested as retaliation for recording police officers. Connie explains:

CONNIE: Two of the members of the organization were charged with felony eavesdropping, for using alternative media to videotape cops. And this ended up becoming a very big issue in our community because they were going to jail for like, forty-four years as a result of this—this charge was really ridiculous. It was really a retaliatory charge as a result of the activism they were doing in the community. And all across the spectrum, people really rallied behind it and fought this, and so their charges were eventually dropped.

This experience for Connie solidified her commitment to creating alternative media. It also established a situation in which her own privilege could further be explored and used to complement struggles for social justice.

CONNIE: I guess the thing is, I tried to be aware of is my privilege and I didn't really feel like I had anything to jeopardize, in speaking up, where I know a lot of other people did. I'm not a person of color, I do not face the racial hatred or hostility or abuse that I think other people would have faced for speaking up. And so the very least I could do was attempt to speak up on this issue because so often it ends up being whoever is the victim of such abuse and hostility that has to speak up. And I think that's really unfair because most often they're the ones that are in a situation where they don't have that opportunity. So, I don't really feel like I needed courage.

Connie's growing awareness of her privilege was balanced with her desire to teach others media skills that could assist them to express their voice in public venues. She equates this ability to express voice with their wellbeing and sense of empowerment within society.

CONNIE: Well, I am very interesting in teaching people that otherwise probably wouldn't have the opportunity to learn it. That can be people that aren't upper middle class, not from those backgrounds. People of color that have been in the past, you know, marginalized or excluded from learning these skills, never given the opportunity, never given access to the technology. I'm very interested in that. And I'm very interested in youth being able to produce their own content that tells of their experiences because our society loves to cut them off and tell them they don't know anything. But I think that they do know their experiences and the more quickly they can tell them and command, you know, what they want from their life, the more powerful they are.

According to Connie, the ability to express oneself is such a satisfying experience that she committed herself to teaching others media production skills. This realization shifted her direction in alternative media production in that she no longer feels the calling to produce the media herself, but to teach others how to produce for themselves.

CONNIE: Well, I've been doing media for several years now and I feel like in so many circumstances, I have been able to express myself in the way that I wanted to express myself. That was a great feeling and opportunity for me. I would like others to be able to share that. So I guess that's where the shift has become now, less about me producing content and allowing others to do that.

Connie thus gravitated toward helping others produce content related to UIUC's mascot. As an undergraduate, she had attended an institution that also used a Native American mascot. Her awareness of the issue, however, further developed because of an education course she took where the professor embraced the topic to exemplify some of the course readings dealing with power, racialization and commodification. Other students in the course also expressed their understandings on the subject and Connie's awareness on the issue expanded.

CONNIE: I became much more aware and conscious of it when I took a course where this issue was discussed in class. And to see classmates of mine who were very much affected by the mascot in their lives personally, and their own identity, it really, really changed - radically changed my views on that.

Connie was influenced by the education course in other ways as well. Prior to taking courses in education, her participation in alternative media was not influenced by any particular theoretical positions. Instead, she lists her personal anger as her primary catalyst to engage in media production.

CONNIE: No, I think it was just mostly anger. I was so frustrated with, like I said, hearing the same stories that I couldn't relate to. It was just boring and tiresome and it's just very frustrating to not—oh, to feel like you're out of place, that, you might be the only one feeling that, whatever it is you're feeling. Because that's almost always never the case. But I mean, that was what's being represented, and I was so tired of watching documentaries and hearing that man's voice informing you what is going on with all these women, or what's going on with X, Y and Z. How does he know? Like, why can't we just have the woman who are on camera, who are doing the work or doing whatever else? Why can't she speak for herself? And, I honestly think frustration and outrage led me to it, not so much a theoretical framework.

JOE: Can you now look back through a particular lens that helps you understand it more?

CONNIE: Critical theory has helped me a lot. Learning under [my education teacher] has really opened my eyes to my own actions and taught me to be more critical of my behaviors and the impact that they have. It's still an area I need a lot of work in, but it's helped me a lot to remember to really reflect on things as I go. And honestly, that could be a good part of the reason why I'm not producing more of my own material right now, because I feel like I'm really in a reflective place and I want to think back about the media I have produced and whether they have reproduced systems of oppression.

Connie's participation as a producer of alternative media informing the public about the mascot issue came in October 2006 when a fraternity and sorority held a theme party entitled "Tacos and Tequila". At the party, students dressed in what they perceived to be stereotypical "Mexican" attire, which included pregnant women, custodians, gangsters, and gardeners. Many wore sombreros, fake mustaches and ponchos. Pictures of the event were posted on Facebook by the partygoers themselves. These images were then copied and sent to other listservs on campus where students of color, in particular, became outraged. Many connections to the mascot were made because of the detrimental mimicking of other's culture.

CONNIE: Well, I think that, in specific the Tacos and Tequila incident was huge as a result of it [alternative media]. And I could be incorrect in this, but I think — some of the pictures originally were on Facebook. And that's where—it started there. And so, going through listservs, it started out real small—it was a couple of people talking about it and then more and more people were learning about it. And then, from there, the radio shows on it, and more discussion in the [news] paper, so I mean it—it just began to pick up steam. The more people who knew about it the angrier they became. So just having knowledge of the situation changed a lot. And then when you look at that situation and put it in the context of our community and the hostile environment that the mascot created, I think that then gave momentum and a voice to other issues of repression.

As the Tacos and Tequila incident was unfolding on campus, more and more people were becoming aware of the incident and were willing to participate in some type of action against it. For Connie, she continued to see the direct impact on the lives of her friends, as well as the mobilization of an anti-racism movement. As the movement formed and gained momentum, she felt compelled to join and offer her own media production skills to the cause.

CONNIE: Well, I mentioned it before, but more and more people that I considered good friends of mine had been discussing how personal this issue was to them, and how it was affecting their lives and, as a friend, I couldn't just be quiet. And I couldn't not try and help and do something to change this environment because I care about my friends' emotional health. And honestly, even strangers—and I couldn't stand that this was going on in our community in 2006. Like I'm from the south [laughs]. You like to believe that blatant racism and disrespect for people is something of the past, and it's not. And I

don't know, so that really inspired my drive, that I felt like I had to do something, and I don't know, I mean there were so many people that were so passionate about it. I never felt like I was alone in this endeavor, like, "I'm the only one speaking out, I'm the only one that is," I never felt that. I mean, it was part of a movement and everyone was doing something to try and change it. Depending on what they were good at, some people would draft a press release or some people would speak out about this, or go talk to this person. And for me, how I could be useful was media. That's what I knew, and that's how I could be helpful to it, so that's what I was trying to do.

Connie's participation in this wider movement consisted of helping produce two radio programs that aired on the local community radio station. One program focused on the Tacos and Tequila event held by the fraternity and sorority. This radio program consisted of speeches given at an October 31, 2006 rally in protest of Tacos and Tequila, along with interviews of students, community members and administrators. The second radio program focused on the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC forum held on February 1, 2007. These radio programs also aired on community radio within a week of the events and were uploaded to the Internet, with links to them shared across multiple local and national listservs. In addition, Connie was a cameraperson at Racism Power and Privilege at UIUC forum, which was streamed online live and was watched by thousands of people across the country. The video stream has since been archived online and viewed asynchronously by thousands more across the country and around the world. It is available at <http://www.iresist.org/stop>

Connie's role in helping produce the radio shows focused on teaching audio editing and production skills to members of a radio collective who were ethnically diverse and fairly new to radio production. Members of the collective were present at the October 31, 2006 and February 1, 2007 events and recorded various content, including speeches, crowd chants, and interviews. This content was then compiled onto a single computer and imported into a free audio editing software package. Connie then used the content to contextualize teaching the production

processes to members of the radio collective. It is this aspect of production that excites Connie, because it is both engaging and rich in aspects of critical thinking possibilities.

CONNIE: When you're producing content like that, there are hours you put in for the actual sitting down and editing. There are hours that you put in, listening to the interviews and there are the hours that you just spend thinking about how you want to structure it. Because that can be so much of it, as you know, you may spend four hours, like actually cutting it together, but you might spend the entire week rethinking the argument and rethinking the responses. And that can change as you're editing because new information can come on when you're dealing with an issue that's happening at that time. I mean, I can edit it towards this one goal and if something happens to get that off track, in the meantime, then okay, you start over, you start from scratch. So you just have to be so familiar with the content.

Connie further describes the time commitment:

CONNIE: I do remember putting in a good 7 hours, several nights. Staying up, listening to it again, and the thing about radio and video is, I mean especially when you're hearing somebody's story, you become so familiar with their words and like, to really listen to what they're saying. It just pushes you and it drives you even more, like to hear people discussing this issue, and how it's affecting your lives over and over and over again. I mean, out of rage, I create media.

Because Connie was involved in radio and video production, her perspectives are particularly insightful in describing how media producers play an important role in framing how the content is portrayed and delivered. This influences the affective impact on audience members, but it also offers a heightened sense of awareness of these procedures for the media producers themselves. In the following quote, Connie comments about the roles she found herself negotiating as a camera person for the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC forum.

CONNIE: When you're producing the media, being critical of the situation, what's going on and engaging it and paying attention, I mean, some of the video that we shot during the forum was of—oh, who was it, [University of Illinois President Joe B.] White? Who was just being completely condescending and ignorant and defensive and—just honestly appalling behavior for a public forum. And to be able to train my camera on him and his reaction as people were telling these very personal, emotional stories, and being able to show that to the audience, and knowing that my camera and my view of what's going on is shaping how others are going to view it. It's a big

responsibility... It's very difficult to determine judgment calls when you're emotionally invested and I tried to be very conscious of figuring out if my emotions were determining how I was presenting the situation. So what I did in that situation is that I looked around at everyone else there and they were all looking at him too. So I felt that if I were someone there, I mean, it's very difficult, producing media because you want—I don't feel comfortable trying to force an opinion on someone. I like to think that given the proper amount of information then that allows a person to become a critical viewer. Given that information I feel that for the most part then people would probably agree about how I feel about things.

This aspect of media production made Connie more aware of her own role in influencing what audiences hear and see, but it also helped make her a more critical consumer of local and national news. In the following quote, she speaks to the issues of “objectivity,” binary reporting, as well as to the strengths of alternative media sources sharing events in their entirety, as opposed to strategically edited blurbs.

CONNIE: I don't believe anything is objective, as far as media. There's always a slant, there's always a bias. Some are more obvious than others, some are not intentional, but they're still inherently there. I think that if the same video that I shot was shot by corporate media, one thing, it would not be shown in its entirety. It would be shown in little sound bites, in which, they would try and show both sides. Where they would have somebody, who was probably a person of color being angry and then they would have someone on the other side, from the University, giving a responsible response to it. And I think that's really unfair to the situation because it takes the context out of things. So, I liked being able to shoot in its entirety, stream it in its entirety, have it all online so you could watch all of it, and put [Joseph B.] Whites' reactions to this in their context to realize how offensive they were at the time.

Connie continues to situate the influence of alternative media when she discussed the role of the local newspaper in reporting on the incidents during the 2006-2007 school year. In the following quote she speaks of the News Gazette, along with the school newspaper, the Daily Illini.

CONNIE: I think that's actually kind of interesting because the local newspaper has generally been very, very conservative, the News Gazette, as far as their coverage and their viewpoints expressed. And this community is very, very divided on this issue. I was pretty surprised in a lot of—to hear in a regular mainstream station, where they would discuss the forum was coming up or

the incident of Tacos and Tequila. I was very happy that it was covered as much as it was, but at the same time, of course it's just a little blurb here. It's 200 words and it doesn't really give a greater context of it. I think one of the reasons why it was brought forward was because of independent media. Because people were creating such a stir they couldn't ignore it out anymore and it had to be covered. And so then that, in itself, brings the issue forward to so many more people who would have been completely uninvolved with it. And if they wanted to learn more about it then they would search or find these other independent medias that could provide a better context.

JOE: What about the local school's paper?

CONNIE: The Daily Illini. [chuckles] Well, that paper is garbage. I don't even know how to respond to that. I feel that—I don't know, I don't really have a whole lot to say about that. It didn't cover things as much as I hoped they would. It's supposed to be a student paper and in some ways, reflects student opinion on it, and I think that with everything, the editorial staff at the time and the writers for it determine the content. And I think it's always going to be skewed in their particular bias, and I think it could have been more positive.

According to Connie, the national news was also impacted by the rising role and influence of non-corporate media. This was particularly visible when the students who organized the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC forum arranged for the event to be streamed live, thus allowing for media organizations from outside the area to watch from any location.

CONNIE: We had the Racism, Power and Privilege forum and we did a live stream, a live streaming video of the event. And press releases had been sent out to national news outlets and coverage was given to the issue. And I think a large part of it is because through these technologies, they were able to watch it and experience it from a distance and then, therefore, better able to report on it. And that was really cool, really cool. And again, when that happens that, in turn, puts more pressure locally because of the national spotlight.

With regard to the Board of Trustees, Connie views their ability to communicate with the public as ineffective. According to her, their silence on the mascot issue may have created greater outrage amongst the public.

CONNIE: I think they were largely ineffectively with using the media. I think actually that was a mistake on their part. I really felt to communicate with the public now, they [the public] expect a certain amount of communication and knowledge through the media. So they expect people—people in general, I think, expect the answers in a timely manner and in a number of different

ways. In a press release, online, interviews, you know, maybe a forum where people can ask questions ahead of time. And I think for the most part, they didn't do that or they ignored it to an extent that it created the outrage.

Connie juxtaposes the Board of Trustees' use of media to that of what she views as the possibilities that new media allows for local media producers. She characterizes new media as being much easier to access, learn, and distribute. In addition, she believes many more people are able to gain entry-level skills through local workshops and organizations.

CONNIE: Oh, yeah. I think there's a huge misconception that it's going to be such a huge obstacle to overcome these systems of domination and I don't think it is, in so many ways it's not. It's a lot easier than people think and at least in trying, at least in the effort to do that, it's so much easier. Like I said to learn the skill set, it's so much easier to access the equipment or technology needed. It's so much easier to distribute it now; it's easier to teach it. There are a lot of venues now, or you can learn these skills in community radio, you can go in and be trained on how to record interviews or go into the studio. You can take classes to learn better how to become more savvy with the Internet. There's organizations where you can join a paper and learn more about writing and you know print distribution. There are places where you can learn about how to shoot a video, there's books at the library. I think it's much more accessible now, and the cost of producing the media have also gone down significantly. Like at the University you can usually borrow a camcorder from your department or some media or technology department within the university and then it's easier to get it out. There's public access stations around the country and I think more and more people are becoming aware of what that can be to create change in their communities. I think there's a lot of fear that it's going to require so much more effort or knowledge, or intelligence than is actually needed. So, I think a lot of that is just being able to express that to people and be like, "No, you, you can do it."

Connie's own engagement in producing alternative media has had lasting impacts on her life. She has found the experiences liberating and powerful in that they allow her to speak in multiple settings, and to be heard in ways where people can relate to each other and see similarities.

CONNIE: It's very satisfying. I think that the main reason that I produce alternative media and content without censorship or influence—well, not so much influence to an extent, is because it's so freeing. I haven't really found an experience that provides so much freedom to speak and to have thoughts that are my own and are different. And at the same time, having somebody watch

that and then find a new way in which we can relate to each other. I think it provides people with more ways of getting along and finding similarities, rather than differences.

## **Ricardo**

Ricardo is a 27 year-old Boriqua graduate student who moved to Champaign-Urbana in 2004 to study in the natural sciences. Originally from a large city on the East Coast, he describes his family's class background as poor. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, Ricardo produced alternative media content on the mascot for approximately one and a half years. However, Ricardo describes having produced alternative media in general for approximately 17 years, beginning when he was a young boy growing up in the New York City area. This includes recording skits with his cousin that mimicked television programs.

RICARDO: Sometimes we would mimic verbatim what was going on from *In Living Color*, sometimes we would adlib.

JOE: So what motivated you to do that?

RICARDO: In terms of the motivation, it was just pure entertainment. I mean my cousin and I, we loved watching *In Living Color* and doing it again I guess was probably just, you know, for the enjoyment of just being able to do it again...

This theme of mimicking professionally produced content continued with Ricardo as he learned to draw pictures and images for his own comic books.

RICARDO: I would just make my own story line and draw maybe 2 or 3 page comic books, obviously there would just be one copy. I didn't have a photocopy machine, but I would draw several of the comic books, sort of like a series.

Ricardo was inspired to draw by watching his uncles and perfected his early techniques by tracing drawings from magazines.

RICARDO: My uncles were all artistic. The men are pretty artistic. And I would say they draw in some way, so I would just watch my uncle. And he drew, and that kind of encouraged me to want to draw as well. And then I just started tracing Pound Puppies. I used to have those little books that I got from one of these young kid catalogs. And I would just trace Pound Puppies all day. Like

literally trace them over and over again, probably like 30 times. It's still embedded in my head. I can remember the image because I outlined every single crevasse of it. And after awhile from tracing I just stepped away from it and reproduce it. And after awhile I could see where the lines were.

During high school, Ricardo took on a larger project by producing his own alternative magazine. In many ways this publication represented a form of rebellion against his high school teachers and administrators.

RICARDO: I didn't really like my school to begin with. I was really disenchanted with everything about the school in terms of some of the teachers I really had issues with. The administration I had issues with. I was constantly going to the Dean's office, being sent to the Dean's office for random things, sometimes warranted, sometimes not... I would just ask people, "I want you guys to write the most outrageous magazine possible for senior year." I gave pseudonyms and I had people do crossword puzzles. I made the illustrations, I wrote one or two articles in there. But I ended up getting into, I ended up making that publication and getting into a lot of trouble.

Following high school, Ricardo pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree on the East Coast and continued to produce alternative media for entertainment. It was in a university setting where he helped produce and record a comedy show.

RICARDO: We would videotape them and I would recruit comedians from different places. Sometimes I would get local acts to open up the sets, so like break-dancers or like these dancers from BU, or random people to juggle, or a comedian to open up for the acts.

JOE: Who was this distributed to?

RICARDO: That was just distributed to people that were involved in the process, who were part of my cohort of people where I lived. I shared that media with them. Just showing the replays and the recasts of it, just so they could see, just like reminiscing I guess about what we had just seen, but sometimes some of the member weren't able to attend the event because of academic obligations, sometimes it was just a way for them to be able to still participate.

After Ricardo completed his undergraduate studies he attended UIUC as a graduate student. Upon arriving on campus he was offered a time slot to create his own radio show for a soon-to-be low-powered community radio station.

RICARDO: And that was just random. I was going through Quad Day and... I was there talking to these guys and they're like, "You know if you want to get onto a radio station, we're just literally building it, you can get on the radio and you can have your own show." I'm staring, looking at these people like something doesn't seem right. They're just offering me time like this. They don't know who I am or what I'm about. But I took them up on their offer to get time. And at that point they had not built [the radio station]. They hadn't built the studio and they hadn't built the antenna on top. So everything was sort of a draw of an idea that still hadn't come into fruition.

The offer to have his own radio show turned out to be a real opportunity for Ricardo. He was allocated a weekly time slot, developed his own audience base, and rapidly developed his skills as a radio host. In addition, Ricardo found that live radio also provided a medium that functioned as a cathartic release from the pressures of student life. He became very drawn to this excitement and found ways to incorporate some of the daily frustrations he experienced into his show.

RICARDO: I told myself I would just play music, try to play some Spanish music, try to play some hip hop and I would just get people to call in and talk and have conversations or do live performances. Just talk trash because the radio is a cathartic experience for me. Like I just—I build up a lot of frustrations from various things. From life, from school etcetera. And when I get on the microphone... on the radio... I think I need to release, to be able to feel better and feel good or share what's pressing at the moment that I think is worth sharing. That's what I do, that's my vision I guess.

Ricardo's impetus to involve himself in community radio did not come from any particular theoretical grounding or direction. Instead, Ricardo's endeavors advanced because of a perceived "logical progression" in his development as an alternative media producer and his desire to engage larger audiences.

RICARDO: I wouldn't say that there was—there wasn't anything that got me interested in making it myself. I just—I mean having the experiences that I've had with my cousin. Also, doing the radio stuff, I mean the cassettes, and then it just, I don't know, it just seemed like the logical progression.

The experimental nature of community radio also allowed for Ricardo to learn radio skills in the context of his production. As he gained experience on the air, he became more

aware of new ways to format the show so the transitions were smoother and seamless. He also realized he enjoyed the rush of live radio, versus a pre-produced show.

RICARDO: Well the very first interview I did was with 4 ladies in the... scholars program, MD PhDs and I was just basically interviewing them, asking them what it was like. Why they pursue their careers and it was a very stale sort of—it was representative of the fact that I wasn't comfortable completely. I wouldn't say I was bad but it was just, I didn't know what I was doing. Like I knew when you do interviews you need to ask people questions and then they answer them and you wait. But now I'm more—like that was of course prerecorded because I wasn't there for the first broadcast so there was a level of disconnect. I've noticed that when I do prerecorded things which I try to avoid completely now, versus live, there's—I'm in the moment way more. I enjoy myself. People who are there they see it. I'm having a good time, things are just moving along. When I did the prerecorded ones in the beginning. It was just very different. So that was something that changed, and the production styles, more smooth transitions. I'm more conscious of the content that I'm distributing as well, like making sure that there is a certain amount of message being contributed at certain junctures. Or certain information that I get out because I'm only offered 2 hours. And sometimes you just need to dedicate a certain amount to that. And in the beginning I wasn't even thinking about that. I'm going to get on the radio, I'm going to talk trash and that's it.

Within a year of his initial radio show, Ricardo also acquired a weekly one-hour time slot on the local public access cable television station. This television production mostly consisted of him using a consumer grade digital video camera on a tripod to record his radio show as it happened live. He would then import the video footage on his home computer, add an introduction, an outro, and titles using free video editing software. In addition, he created animations using Macromedia Flash and uploaded the programs to his YouTube and MySpace accounts. He also linked some of this content to his student Webpage offered free to him by the university.

RICARDO: I've also been producing TV, and that's been the next major check point. And in the process of making TV, I mean, actually I've always made media with Macromedia Flash and sort of animations. I've always done like Websites and just random animations for a personal Website. Like my name flying in and out of, you know, for a comedy collage. I had a Website before and it was just very dynamic in the sense that there were texts doing 360's

and pictures fading in and out that sort of thing. So I just continued in that same sort of vein, making YouTube clips and making sound bytes and videos that people can hopefully be entertained by. I really do it for archival purposes because I like to go back and sit and just reminisce maybe, or just enjoy what I did. But it's getting more and more where I'm realizing that people are just watching it on YouTube. On the radio and TV. People are watching it and I'm like "OK, that's cool". You're having a good time with me rather than just laughing at me or something.

When asked who has influenced his on-the-air style and personality, his response is congruent with the entertainment goals of his previous experiences in alternative media production. These models include television personalities, as well as imagining his own family as being the audience for his productions.

RICARDO: I've listened to a lot of different personalities and TV people, obviously, so I think that I've been influenced by that sort of stuff. I think if anything, the person that I would think of most would be Johnny Carson. Johnny Carson was just like, cool, just doing random stuff. But the way he would just interact and do random skits and random stuff and just interject and just be live... I would watch all kinds of comedy, me and my cousin would watch different comedies everything from Loral and Hardy to the Three Stooges, those sorts of stuff. So I think that that influenced me as well because it's like quick sound bytes and just random silliness that just gets interjected every now and then. I'm like, whatever, that's the slapstick sort of humor.

It is within this entertainment value that Ricardo structured his television and radios shows. Consequently, it becomes interesting to uncover how he came to report on the mascot controversy at UIUC. When he first arrived on campus, he didn't think the UIUC mascot was a very important or worthwhile issue to engage.

RICARDO: I didn't care. I thought that people were pretty much whiners, pretty sensitive, being overly sensitive, whining about it. I just didn't really care.

JOE: So what do you think changed your mind in term of its relevance?

RICARDO: Well, outside of becoming more educated, I think I had experiences. Enough here in the context of the Urbana-Champaign - living experience. I've had different situations happen to me where there's been a really serious racist overtone, not even undertone, overtone to the situation. And I was just like, I wasn't even looking for it. It just kind of came to my doorstep. I'm just walking by and people wanted to be racist to me.

JOE: How did they know to pick you to be racist to?

RICARDO: I guess I look enough Latino to them that they can distinguish me from the average Caucasian person with the dominant phenotypes here.

As the months passed, Ricardo began to see firsthand how the UIUC mascot was impacting the learning environment on campus. An important instance came on his college's listserv during February of 2006, when the University of Illinois' basketball team competed in the NCAA tournament known as the Final Four. It was during this time that campus pride was rising and many students were having parties and events to celebrate the team's victories. Someone on his college's listserv stated they were going to dress like the mascot and conduct a stereotypical cheer, mimicking what they believed to be an American Indian dance. At one point, Ricardo interjected on the listserv and related how he believed their mockery can be compared to how doctors are sometimes insensitive to their patient's cultural background. Ricardo believed this type of insensitive mockery could have potential negative impacts on patient care. His comments on the listserv resulted in a series of hateful emails directed at Ricardo, for which he felt obligated to respond and clarify his position.

RICARDO: I started sending emails to the person, and I'm like "This is a problem because it's right, you have these thoughts and notions that you walk into the room, even the patient's rooms, and these insensitivities and it's like you have these misconceptions about these people. People aren't going to be cool with this and you carry this with you and you come into the clinic setting and it's like how can you not think you're going to provide someone with less or worse care. They're not going to be as open to you. You're not going to have that relationship with somebody and they're just going to be closed off. And this is why African Americans, Latinos, and Native people don't have positive, don't correlate a positive experience with going to the physician. They don't seek out medical care because they have this historical disparity and at the same time, there's this misperception that "I don't trust the doctor". I don't think that they're going to advocate for my best. And it's being legitimized by that sort action." And the person, as soon as I sent that email, that person's wife, I didn't know at that time, that person's wife sent out, "I love it how you sent out that email and you completely left out Asians. That shows you're culturally insensitivity there. Asian people are" blah blah blah, "we're minorities too". And I was just like, "I never said anything about them

not being minorities. I just said that African Americans, Latinos, and Native people have horrible experiences when it comes to physicians. It's been documented, the disparities are there." And it's just—it was a really downward spiraling conversation via email. It was just sucking me away from my work. I probably sent 20 emails. No maybe 10 to 15 emails in the span of 24 hours on this one subject. And I was forwarding them to administrators and I was, "Look, this is what they're sending to me, on an individual basis." And of course they did nothing about it. On an individual basis, the situation got more aggressive in terms of the conversation. It ended up going to having a dialogue in [my college]. But of course they didn't want it to be about the mascot. They said, "We'll recruit someone from the Native American House but we don't want it to be about the mascot. We want it to be about having a conversation advocating for Native people and their disparities. And you know, show them what the statistics are so that people will be educated. We don't want this to be about the mascot right." All of the other minorities were like "of course not". I was just like "What's going on here, what's the deal." But that was just the emblem of the school at the time, or still. And the meeting takes place and it was ok in terms of how it played out. But the situation was getting more toxic in terms of my interactions with them.

For Ricardo this incident revealed the heated nature of the mascot issue at UIUC. It also demonstrated how administrators within his college were unwilling to frame issues associated with racism or cultural insensitivities to include the role of the mascot at UIUC. To bypass their realm of control, Ricardo turned to his radio show to prompt dialogue on the subject by inviting pro and anti mascot guests to debate the issue live.

RICARDO: There was one show where I dedicated it to just talking about what the mascot was. I invited people to be pro or anti-mascot and of course nobody wanted to be pro-mascot. For some reason we couldn't find somebody to be pro-mascot. For some reason we couldn't find somebody to stand up to the microphone. But one person did call in kind of neutral and said there's no point in changing it. Students will always be advocating for it. But one student, who's a high school student here, ended up... saying how [she was] racially attacked for that. People would just throw pictures of the mascot into her locker. She's a Native person, and the school would like---

JOE: In high school?

RICARDO: In high school. And they just used that to just sort of throw it at her like there's nothing wrong with it sort of thing. You're going to have to accept it sort of thing and so she shared that experience with me on the radio and that was the next time [the mascot issue] was put on there [his radio show].

As Ricardo continued to learn of instances of racism upon other people of color, he decided to investigate the founding of the University using the University's own archives. A fellow graduate student had informed him that the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a racist White supremacy group, had been established at UIUC in the in early 1900's. Ricardo decided to research this link and to create a multimedia slide show that documented his findings.

RICARDO: It [the slide show] consists of sort of the history of the university. Archives of it in terms of the racism that took place here from the early 1900s, including RSO's [Registered Student Organizations] that were recognized by the University and how the ignorance was just embedded into the culture. And it was institutionalized. And so at some juncture, the blatant images disappear but the culture remains in other ways. The slide show sort of helps bring that to the forefront and tie into how the mascot was conceived at that same time and moved along in the same notion. It basically developed and progressed along with all these other misconceptions and ideologies.

JOE: So what did you learn through the archives in terms of the mascot and its relationship to a racist history?

RICARDO: I started up just not even looking for the mascot, truth be told. Another graduate student told me that there were pictures of the KKK in our [UIUC's] archives. They were a frat here in the early 1900s, founded in 1906, 1908. I was like ok, having all of this stuff happening around me. I was like ok. I don't think I was a complete idiot, let me just try to rationalize this. I went to the libraries. I went through the yearbooks, like 1906, 1907, 1908, and early 1900s I didn't see anything in there. I was like what the hell is wrong with this person, making this stuff up. I got up into 1916, and it was like bam 1916 to the 1930s there's just pictures of the KKK, like student fraternity organization, you know. Inter-fraternity, junior social organization. And it was just a way—like once I saw that and I saw all these guys in these different fraternities, the oldest, the most well established fraternities. Then you see how some of them became Board of Trustees members. Some of them became involved with academics. They became professors here. Some of them become involved in administrative positions. While they're here on campus the students are literally running everything. They're vice-presidents or junior chair for the social prom. If you want to be physical in any sort of sport, wrestling, basketball, football, they're the captains of it... Clearly you can say that they're racist right. They're KKK members. And you see that they're running everything on campus from the Daily Illini, to the College Republicans to the sports activities, social activities. And then you have in 1926, I believe, it was when the mascot was first produced and you say, ok, this kid here he came up with this. He didn't do this in a vacuum... Then you go and see the yearbook pictures of this guy, Lester Lutewhiler. He's there

with his boys scout troop. And they're just all there, bare-chested, dressed up like Native people. They're little, they're—all these White people dressed up like Native people. Probably not a single Native person amongst them and they're all doing what they think Native people do, representing their culture however they think their perspective of it. I was like this is really weird. Something happened where I just started to see all the chips just fall into line... There were all these sort of inherent contradictions that kept coming up.

Although Ricardo's archival research continued for over a year, he wasn't able to complete his multimedia slide show so readily. It was a great deal of research and it was conducted outside of his regular classroom studies. However, he was also an active member of a group of students who were planning a public forum entitled, Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC. The goal of this forum was to force the administration to acknowledge the existence of a history of racism on the UIUC campus and to allow a public venue for students and community members to express their voice in front of key administrators. This platform motivated Ricardo to make the time needed to complete his slide show and to present it at the public forum.

RICARDO: We had a forum coming up related to our forum on Racism, Power, and Privilege at UIUC. And you know, I guess the hot topic at the time was the mascot and I had already been working on something like that. And I was going to make it anyway. So I was like ok. Just let me force myself to make it for this. So I made the slide show, it took me awhile to make it because obviously I wanted to have the right, the images had to be nice and smooth, it had to be a story line. And I'm the type of person, I sort of like when I make an outfit I throw whatever pants and whatever jeans and I sew them together to see how it fits but I had to make it so that I wasn't forcing pieces. I didn't just want to say ok, the University is racist because they have the KKK and here's the mascot and that's racist too, and that's why I out them together.

Both the slide show and the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC forum were well received. Ricardo's slide show was also uploaded to his and other Websites, and was downloaded by thousands of visitors. The African American cultural house also used it to educate students and to facilitate dialogues. Additionally, the research conducted by Ricardo solidified his belief that racism was indeed embedded within the Champaign-Urbana community

itself and tied directly to the UIUC mascot. For Ricardo, these assertions manifested in a more overt and pointed tone on issues related to racism, both on his radio and television shows as well as other public speaking opportunities. This change in tone is described by Ricardo when asked if he generated more content on the mascot issue after his research concluded.

RICARDO: There were definitely conversations about it where I would have monologues of just like calling people racists, calling people out for being affiliated with it, associated with it. I would go to the student senate meetings, call them racist there. I really only did one or two shows, maybe since that juncture, three shows tops dedicated specifically to the mascot. It would come up though in conversations sometimes, when we would talk about the University of Illinois experience and some of the perceived ignorance here. People would bring in that [the mascot] into the conversation so it would come up there.

Another aspect that arose from Ricardo's media activism was he found himself sought by local corporate news media to speak on the mascot issue. This experience added greater insight into the manner by which the local corporate news framed the issue.

RICARDO: Gosh, this woman interviewed me from one of these news channels from the local area. But when they did, the sound bytes that they used for the conversations, the pro and the anti, I felt like that when they did it, I mean the whole situation - they made me seem like the crazy anti-"Chief" sort of person. When they showed the sound bytes, it was such that, yes there was equal time. But in terms of the equal time to the both sides was put out, it wasn't like both arguments were strong or lucid.

Overall, Ricardo characterizes the local corporate media as presenting the mascot favorably in its news reporting of the controversy. He attributes this with the long history of the mascot in the local culture and by their binary reporting of the issue.

RICARDO: Well, I would definitely say it's favorable. I mean, it's clearly racist, but it's favorable. For them it's something that they've grown up with. So it's sort of like you're loving the Alma Mater statue so you got to love the mascot because it's part of our culture. It's intertwined in our culture. So I would say, they necessarily put it in a positive light. And at the very worst, they'll put both positions, or they'll put the anti position in a very - they taint it. Not necessarily in a horrible light, but they definitely taint it.

When asked specifically to comment on the News Gazette, Ricardo states:

RICARDO: I mean they're very conservative in terms of the media that's here and they're, pretty racist. There's a—and I base that on the illustrations and cartoons that they have. The conversations that they'll have and the editorials about things and the local cases.

Furthermore, Ricardo characterizes the Daily Illini as using the mascot's image opportunistically to capitalize on the emotional impact it has on campus. They do so by overly using its image on the front page, regardless of the importance of the story associated with the mascot issue.

RICARDO: I think that the school newspaper tries to be indifferent, but there's still the over arching support for it. And it goes, not necessarily by saying we support the mascot but what they'll do is have a lot of articles related to nonsensical issues affiliated with it. Like when the kids are bringing up cases related to it. Bam, there goes another big picture of the "Chief". When there's some sort of case related to suing the University even though it has no chance of winning, it's spending money, tax payer time, it's racist, but oh it's another important front page article. Bam. There's another picture of the mascot. Then there's the mascot shows up at the game. Bam, here's a big full-page picture of it. And just like, we're trying to bury him and pour some bleach on his grave and here you are trying to resurrect what little flowers and seeds there are and just granted again. They're not trying to take a pro or anti position, but they're doing insidiously in such way that it's positively promoting it.

With regards to the University's Board of Trustees, Ricardo portrays their decision to end the use of the mascot image and performance as a necessity because of NCAA's threatened sanctions. This stance mentions nothing about the moral imperatives raised by the controversy, but instead focuses on the outside pressures that were placed on them.

RICARDO: I think they wanted as much as possible to not make it perceived from the local community that they were doing it because they were not in favor of the mascot. So as a result they would do things like keep the mascot footage from the last dance on their Website. You know, the University of Illinois Website. You can still go see the "last dance" as if it's something to be cherished or remembered... It was very abrupt when they did the change. Like there was an emergency meeting held to cancel it, to remove it. And they officially removed it one meeting afterward. And it was done in a very fast non-lingering fashion so that people wouldn't get caught up in the emotion of being for or against it. And they could try to diffuse it in that way. I think they tried to make it seem like they were purely doing it for NCAA reasons,

money reasons. So that's sort of why people say the teaching moment was sort of lost. There was no lesson to be gained from it other than if you pressure an institution with money you can make some changes. You can make them change something that they don't agree with. That is what you could extract from the way that they did things and how they [put] their message out there. But in terms of the media, yeah they didn't necessarily say that they were against the mascot, but they—what they really tried to do was make it seem like we're either neutral or in favor of it. They didn't want you to walk away from the experience of whatever way you interacted with the media, to come away with, "Oh the university is denouncing our 81 years of tradition". They want to say, "Oh the university is being positioned by a larger body that has big financial play in them." Like every local person and alumni is tied to their sports. So they didn't want to play around with that.

As Ricardo reflects on his experiences as an alternative media producer, he sees dramatic influences upon his life. He believes the process of learning the tools of production and distribution provide a source for expressing voice, not dependent on previously controlled means for communicating. Thus, the acquisition of these skills have directly added to a sense of power and self worth within a context that attempts to silence him or usurp his labor towards institutional change.

RICARDO: I think how it's influenced me most dramatically I guess is it's given me a voice. I thought I had a voice before but I really didn't. I learned that with [my college]. I was very easily muted. Once the email conversation was gone or once those meetings were gone, there was no way for the conversation to continue when it should of. Like they could easily walk away from me, or not meet with me and that just frustrated me to no end. So I think being in the media, being on the radio, TV, etc, it allows me to let them know that the conversation is not just under their terms. If we want to have a talk about racism, or discrimination, etc, we get to both define how that's going to be, not just them. Because there's all kinds of rules of professional conduct, etc, that they have to adhere to. Being on the media just lets me know I have more power than I had originally perceived.

Although Ricardo is unsure of his own impact upon administrative policies, he sees the benefit of alternative media production upon himself. Much of this personal enhancement comes in the form of self-reflection and awareness. He also expresses a certain satisfaction in being

able alter the manner by which he delivers his content to reach larger audiences with information he believes can benefit them.

RICARDO: I don't know if they [the administrators] changed, but I've become more acutely aware of my own position because when I go back and hear the recordings and I hear myself, when I first talk I'm not filtering my content. I'm like whatever, if you ask me a question I'm going to tell you the answer, just make sure you're ready for the answer. When I start to hear more, and I start to see, and I think about what good I can do, that has changed how I deliver my content.

Ricardo's reflections on his practice are significant because of the length of time he's seen himself as a producer of alternative media. His conscious acts of engagement in multiple forms of media production occurred over an historical time period when the means to digital production have dramatically altered the alternative media landscape. His perspective situates these changes historically and personally in a way that exemplifies their impact and potentiality.

JOE: In terms of growing up when all this media is dramatically changing and more easily accessible, how would you characterize some of the newer ways of distributing the content that you're making now?

RICARDO: I think it's easier to reach a larger audience. I think they have this notion out there of being "viral". You know, there are videos out there that become viral very quickly. So I think that reflects that the masses are able to control the media more in a way that didn't exist before. So for me, I've been very fortunate that I can be able to ride that wave. YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, etcetera have helped me to reach a larger audience and be more effective in doing that. It's not just like—like before we used to have a comedy show. It wouldn't be in email, I would just be handing out flyers, go to different campuses, physically taking myself, you know, miles across town to different colleges. But now, I just sort of like, with this innovation of, not only email, but you know being able to mass communicate through these different forums is like, you don't even—you can literally stay in your basement for a day and reach thousands of people and it's like -that's pretty crazy.

Ricardo characterizes the very nature of these new technologies for production and distribution as allowing for easy access for broad spectrums of populations. This ease of use, however, is also tempered in the end by the final product's quality. With this in mind, Ricardo contextualizes the role of access to professional equipment in the production process.

RICARDO: It's easy. I think anything is easy when I make it. It's like if you just want to produce something very simple in terms of the, let's say from the video clips, you can make a pretty—you can make a video clip pretty easily I think. To make one exactly the way you want, that's a whole other issue. It's easy to be a novice at it. I think it's hard to reach the level of intermediate or an advanced sort of practitioner of this sort of art. But it's definitely easy to get on. There's a lower access, or lower barrier to access now a days than it was back in the 90s when I was starting to do stuff.

JOE: Well, how would you characterize the intermediate and advanced producers of these media?

RICARDO: Once you get to the point where you actually have real audio equipment that's able to be directional microphones, compressors, eliminators, mixers, all these other devices. It's like, you know, you go past that level of being a beginner to an intermediate. When you get to the advanced level, that's the big boys. You're playing with the big toys only. There's probably going to be—you only have a camera and some sort of tracks for it to be able to move the camera on the tracks, not just tripods, moving and motorized cameras that you can scroll back and forth. Even when they're in the air in those sort of like machines and they can take different angles, which is definitely cool, those sorts of things. Just access to those things are a little harder to get to but they are there.

JOE: So those are some of the constraints to advancing?

RICARDO: I mean, right now, the concept that I've delivered from going to beginner to intermediate, it hasn't drastically changed. I don't personally feel, but I think when I get to the level of advanced it will be because the production quality will be so high. Right now, people don't notice it like in the beginning. There's little things like transitions. Transitions between like songs, take like five seconds you know, anywhere from five to 10 seconds or between any sort of segments. And as you get better at them or you move to those advanced levels, they're seamless in a way where they're not noticed. And it's because you don't notice them, that's considered an expert. But when you do notice them, that's a beginner or sometimes an intermediate. So that helps me distinguish that.

Ricardo's participation in production allows him to understand and situate his own skills and expertise so that the production level at which he is currently able to create resides upon a continuum of advancement. These perspectives make him conscious of his current capacities as well as possibilities for his growth and future engagement. It also highlights the importance of being in community with other media producers from whom he can learn new skills, techniques,

and gain access to production tools that he can use in his own endeavors. For Ricardo, an important hub for interaction is the local Independent Media Center. When asked where is he able to interact with other media producers, he states:

RICARDO: Primarily, the IMC has been a major one, but other than that, through the university. The IMC is like a hub for people that's producing media of all types you know, publications to radio, to TV, so through them I've been able to interact with a lot of people just doing cool stuff. And conversations with them sort of lead into getting more information and more advice on those types of things. And I meet other students like yourself who are doing media, making media, and I end up collaborating.

### **Tzetzengari**

Tzetzengari is a 37 year-old Chicano graduate student who originally moved to Champaign-Urbana in the summer of 2005 to attend graduate school in the social sciences. Growing up in multiple states in the Southwest United States and Oregon, he describes his family's class background as working class, seasonal laborers. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, he hosted a community radio show for approximately three years focused on issues impacting the Chicano diaspora.

Tzetzengari, however, began producing content for alternative media in 1998. The first radio production he developed involved inner-city youth in San Francisco who created radio programs on Chicano history and culture for a community radio station. This project used Spanish, English, and Nahuatl languages to teach Aztec history and religion while also connecting the content with the display of local murals. According to Tzetzengari, this allowed for expressions of identity while providing a venue to create examples of diverse cultural representations to educate the public.

For Tzetzengari, the vision for these initial radio projects was to help produce accessible intellectual content that was rich in culture, history and politics, yet not adherent to academic or

corporate standards for expression or documentation. Tzetzengari maintains the non-commercial aspects of community radio allows for unique engagements of cultural exploration and expressions not offered by either corporately controlled media or within the academy. In this way, Tzetzengari situates community radio as an important site for what he describes as “marking space and place” within social and political landscapes.

TZETZENGARI: “What it meant was anchoring identity in the community to establish particular physical spaces as well as being proud of that enough to get it out over air waves, to mark space for ourselves.”

After his initial introduction to alternative media, Tzetzengari continued to produce radio programs embracing these themes for independent radio stations in Oregon and Texas. During the summer of 2005, Tzetzengari helped form a radio collective at a newly established micro-radio station in Urbana, Illinois. The collective’s goals were not only to play Chicano music but also sought to report on public affairs and issues impacting the Chicano diaspora in the Midwest. In this way, the radio collective saw itself involved in a political project struggling to better understand and share the complexities of Chicano history and identity while also networking Chicanos within the UIUC community. Within this context, Tzetzengari’s definition “Chicano” embrace issues of change, politics, and resistance.

TZETZENGARI: I think it’s constantly in definition and in redefinition. For me, I have really tried to keep the content of what I put on specific to Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants to a lesser degree and more so towards what I associate with US born folks of Mexican descent who have a particular politics which is a radical sort of. Not anti-White or anti-U.S. but a pride in both indigenous and Mexican roots as well as a particular critical politics of White hegemony, of class and gender hegemonies that are part of White mainstream America.

The radio collective’s commitment to networking Chicano diaspora in the Midwest, along with informing the general population about Chicano identity and politics, speaks to the critical educational nature of their project. In this way, their use of community radio allows the

collective's membership to situate learning outside of the established boundaries of schooling, while at the same time asserting their identity within the public sphere. In describing the collective's radio productions, he states:

TZETZENGARI: So it's something that's entertaining almost even to some degree, theatrical, that's going to engage people to kind of keep their ear on the radio. And at the same time, let the radio sort of fill up the space that they're in - to connect them to the other people in that space as well as to what's being said, which doesn't happen in particularly mainstream classrooms.

Pedagogically, Tzetzengari uses a number of methods to educate the listening audience on issues impacting the Chicano diaspora. Multiple languages are engaged on the air, as well as a diverse set of content that is accompanied with historical information. In addition, the radio collective's definition of what counts as Chicano radio programming is constantly being challenged, redefined and reaffirmed.

TZETZENGARI: I think some of the biggest negotiations is having to define with other Latinos that are in the community, what's the program about. The reason that I and some of the other co-producers limit it to Chicanismo right, instead of wider sort of like Latinidad, or even wider World Music types of things, and I enjoy listening to a lot of music from all over the world and even definitely a lot of music from all over Latin America and I have a lot of it, but I don't play a lot of it during those two hours because I really have a particular political project that is part of the program. So having people say "hey this is a good topic for the program" or "how come you never play so and so" or "so and so and I don't hear any Javier Solis or Romanticos from..." and I'll be like "I like those tunes too". So every once in a while we'll be like well, Chicanos do listen to this music so we're like, we can put it on and still not really be breaking our own sort of like parameters for the program. So you know, from time to time we'll try to do it but I personally have tried to keep the focus on identifying what Chicano is and what it means giving small historical sort of accounts to support that so I might even repeat that same sort of like little historical counts week after week to see if they sink in, Spanish one time and English another time and Spanglish in a lot of different ways.

Tzetzengari asserts the political nature of his collective's radio program emphasizes the connection between the affirmation of positive expressions of Chicano identity and navigating dominant culture. For Tzetzengari, the complexity in which Chicanos find themselves

maneuvering within the Midwest allows for expressions of solidarity with other groups. For this reason, the mascot controversy at UIUC is of particular importance in exemplifying the subservient roles for marginalized populations by what he describes as “White hegemony”. So although his radio collective’s radio program is not specific to American Indian issues or concerns, they attempt to educate the public on how the mascot controversy connects with relationships concerning Chicano identity.

TZETZENGARI: One of the things that pisses me off about moving here is when I used to see all these radio stations’ bumper adds for a radio station called “The Chief”. I just thought “man that is so insulting, so engrained to what's going on here”. I've listened to it a couple times and heard it and it's just like that is such a powerful tool of marking this space as “Chief Illiniwek’s.”

Other acts of solidarity offered by Tzetzengari and his radio collective include collaborating and sharing with other radio programs that offered American Indian themed content, inviting anti-“Chief” and pro-Native organizers on their live radio program, and providing radio training to a wider group of progressive activists. Additionally, to counter what they saw as the domination of public space, the radio collective chose radio content that can be used to dispute the idealized narrative propagated by pro-mascot supporters.

TZETZENGARI: One thing that they [the radio collective] play is a song by Mother Night, which is an old 70s Chicano rock band and they have a song called *Fools Are You*. The first line starts out, “snatch a feather from an Indian's head, hang it up above your head, to prove that you're a man, to prove that you're cool, to prove that you can kill, fool are you”. So then they keep developing this as they go on. It's this critique of folks appropriating indigenous identities and identity in general and sort of making these characterizations out of them or just to prove that they're a man, that they are cool, that they can kill. So we usually play that every week and dedicate it to all the “Chief” supporters.

With regards to the mascot controversy at UIUC, Tzetzengari characterizes reporting by traditional media as further marginalizing people of color within the local community and propagating a history of silence.

TZETZENGARI: The general attitude, I think, of the media was that “we” were taking - and I take “we” in the sense of anti-“Chief” activists as well as even, I felt it personally as “people of color” specifically, Native American or Latino folks, Chicanos - were taking something away from the rest... that they really enjoyed.

Tzetzengari contrasts traditional media perspectives and approaches with that of alternative media by emphasizing the inclusion of historical contexts as well as in-depth analysis. In this way, alternative media in the Champaign-Urbana area serve to link histories of struggles within a transient University community. The decontextualization of the anti-“Chief” struggle is something that Tzetzengari maintains is characterized in mainstream media accounts of the mascot.

TZETZENGARI: I listen to the community radio that's here in town and heard a lot of the anti-“Chief” activist perspective on some things that explain things that I wasn't even aware of such as the history of the anti-“Chief” movement or the history of the “Chief” coming to the University of Illinois and being here. But most important I think for me, was only having lived here 3 years, was to know that there was anti-“Chief” activism historically. That I think was something that was not expressed in mainstream media but only in alternative media. Also, I think that anti-“Chief” activists were given a chance to more fully explain sort of the damage that the “Chief” had done to them personally as well as to the community and to relate it to the damage that it was doing to the University in general through alternative media sources rather than just be sort of written off as “anti-“Chief” community” or “activists” as they were in the general media. Plus, I think in the alternative media you have a lot more voices from folks and not from university administrators that were constantly being quoted who it was very difficult over the last year to tell exactly where they stood. You knew that you couldn't trust them because they were talking out of both sides of their mouth and trying to say something affective and to me they weren't saying anything at all.

Although situating alternative media as potentially beneficial in impact, Tzetzengari is not short of critiquing these important sites of production. His long and diverse experiences in various regional locations allows for this critique to be filled with particular examples and nuance. For example, Tzetzengari first learned how to engage in audio production through workshops at community radio stations in the cities of Oakland and San Francisco. The

workshops were provided by both veteran members of the stations as well as by youth with whom he developed radio content. Despite Tzetzengari's assertions that his experiences in alternative media production can be characterized as democratic and liberatory, Tzetzengari also encountered many barriers in the multiple forms of participatory democracy offered at various sites of alternative production. Overall, Tzetzengari asserts European American discourse patterns have tended to dominate struggles to create collective spaces in these alternative sites of media production.

TZETZENGARI: I think almost every space that I've worked in, KBU might be a little bit different, but I think every space that I've worked in Oregon, California, Texas, and in Illinois within alternative media have predominately been White spaces who tend to be looking for more input, more diversity but at the same time I think, definitely see it as something they want to have control of, they don't want to let it out of their hands. ...I feel uncomfortable, I mean most of the places I've worked are supposedly, collectively run. But you tend to have White folks dominating the collective. So, even in meetings, consensus style meetings are based on, to me, what seems like White consensus models rather than some other ways of socializing and getting work done at the same time, being little bit more relaxed and being a little bit more able to incorporate people's experiences beyond just learning new equipment or making decisions about the station into collective work.

For Tzetzengari, this guarding of control by European Americans has created some difficult situation for him and his radio collective. He provides some examples of how the content of his radio programming, combined with his collective's phenotypes have caused tensions with others.

TZETZENGARI: [You] get a lot of community members who come in and are surprised that this space had changed. Surprised to hear some political [talk] or Spanish coming over the lobby speakers, because there are some speakers out there. So you get a lot of weird stares. And what's particularly interesting about Wednesday nights, for the last 2 years, there's been a couple of different people instructing dance classes in the major studio off of ... the performance area. So you have to walk by the radio station by the big window and during our program and people, this is something that's typical I think for me, that I've noticed for this area, they hear like Spanish language or Spanish music and they don't want to look at whoever it is so they completely ignore it and try to walk by really fast. But what's funny is they're on their way to like

Salsa dance classes or Belly dance but they're like completely afraid like that somehow over the air waves they're going to be, I don't know, molested by this music. They don't want to look in there and see who's playing it. So they get really like scared, very unfriendly and that sort. Even including the instructors over there. So it's weird, they'll come to you and be like 'Can I help you?' when you're someone from, for example if we have guests on the program or even some of the co-producers of the program who are African American or other Latinos will get up and go into one of the other room and get equipment or go to the bathroom and someone's there asking them "Can I help you?" like "What are you doing here?" So we constantly have to explain "No, no, I'm fine. Can I help you?"

In other instances, the tensions manifest in more direct conflicts and hostilities for Tzetzengari, as he attempted to pursue various aspects of media production.

TZETZENGARI: I had someone here from Chicago who was the program manager for housing rights, for fair housing and came to record a couple of messages like, public service messages in Spanish with me. And we were doing sort of like a dramatization of like what would happen as seen between a landlord and a tenant and we were doing them in Spanish. This guy bursts into the studio and he's like "what are you doing in here?" I was like "excuse me?" And then I shut the door and kind of moved him out so we could finish the recording and then I excused myself from my guest that I had there who had come down from Chicago to do these. I went out and I was like "Why did you burst into the studio? We were making a recording". He said "Well, there's been equipment missing from that room. I mean right now I can tell you there's a monitor that should be on that desk that's gone." I'm like, "Yeah, well I put it in my fucking pocket." So I got really upset with him. He went back to the collective and said that he was attacked... So I think predominantly every space I've been working has been White and there's been struggles to really make that space collective.

Tzetzengari also cites how hierarchies are policed within these alternative sites of production. He asserts that other common mechanism for maintaining control are based on the amount of time one has volunteered at a particular site as well one's familiarity with production equipment.

TZETZENGARI: I think what you see a lot of times in alternative media people who have been there a year longer, a week longer than someone else wants to sort of exert a hierarchy over this as "my space" or "I've been here longer than you". "I know how to use the equipment" or "You don't really know the history of this place and how it came about." I definitely think that more you can say I've been trained how to use this equipment or that you know how to

set it up or put it away and how to use it successfully, people tend to like, “Oh that guy knows what he's doing.” They kind of leave you alone but again that comes to people who know that you know how to use the equipment because in the scenario I gave you before I think I knew how to use the equipment fine, I had the code to the door which is locked with a particular code which is given to only people who have been trained to have. But yet this guy still felt like he should come in and say something. So, I think that the underlying hierarchy seems to me, to be about time, how long someone's been there. Were they part of the original sort of founding group of people, and then age. I mean, I knew a lot of what I've seen is people who are older tend to think kids or youth or even youth of color are going to fuck up the equipment.

To counter the dominant relations he experiences, Tzetzengari addresses the challenges by providing some of the technology trainings that are required for new members to host their own radio shows. In this way, he is able to contribute to the creation of new spaces for marginalized populations to overcome the obstacles of certification. When asked why he focuses on people of color, he replies:

TZETZENGARI: I think because it's more difficult for them to attend, I think that the experience is different when they go to a larger training. People don't know really know about the subject matter they want to get on the air and sort of were just like “oh ok, cool.” I think I'm able to have a longer discussion, make someone feel a little bit more at ease in a space that's not predominately White in order to learn how to use the stuff. It can be intimidating when it's a lot of White folks. They're not familiar with your subject matter that you want to get on the radio or maybe even the language that you want to do it in and so they might be very technical with you or focusing on other people in the group.

Despite Tzetzengari's efforts to train prospective members on equipment, it is difficult for him to continually offer these workshops. He sites this as a major barrier to overcoming the obstacles in providing greater access for Spanish speaking people at the station.

TZETZENGARI: For example, there are people right now who have expressed an interest in working in radio that need to be trained in Spanish and I could do that training but I'm not going to be there every time they come to the studio. I really can't do more than one program that I'm committed to right now. There's limited amounts of people who are in those collective spaces who are-who speak Spanish or speak other languages who can welcome these people in and I mean, it's obvious, the people who have shown interests are

also not expecting me to be there every time. So they're more reluctant to get involved. I don't think that within community radio that I work at here in town, I don't think there's any objection to Spanish language programming. I think that people still need to learn that playing Democracy Now! from Spain is not exactly I mean when I say Spanish language programming for the community. So sometimes people feel that, well it's in Spanish, but it's definitely a different perspective than Chicano perspective on issues or even you know, it's a different language.

Tzetzengari speaks to the issue of marking space and his concept of democratic

community:

TZETZENGARI: It is really a combination of both a dialectic relationship such as: using (radio) space in order to mark place (existence) in the community and that place (existence) in the community benefits from our access to resources (radio) that allow us to mark it (space). It sounds a little territorial and all but it sort of works that way. Also... many times decisions and processes are described as democratic because they are decided upon in a group, through a particular type of consensus that has to do with majority, rather than careful consideration of collective inclusion; to me this is a White consensus model probably inherited by the faulty understandings we have of electoral democracy. The criteria for democracy at most community media is based on how long you have been at the station, a sort of first come first serve policy. For example, when you have a space that is nearly completely anglophone and White and a group of non-White non-anglophone newcomers request a particular time-slot that might be otherwise occupied by the third "alt rock" or religious program of the day the collective is not going to shift the programming for the newcomers; it would not be democratic by the criteria. Conversely, in my opinion it's more democratic to shift the shows around to give less common new programming more exposure. However, in my experience this sort of thinking is not in the majority at most community stations. Thus, democracy comes to be a function of consensus based on majority rather than widespread inclusion. To summarize, in the collective spaces of media production, democracy is often not thought of in terms of the development of an inclusive collective/community, but rather in terms of respecting the rights of others, i.e. time participating and first-come first serve/choice.

### **Union Maid**

Union Maid is a White 34 year-old community member who moved to Champaign-Urbana in 1998. Originally from a suburban area of the Midwest, she describes herself as

growing up in a middle class family. Prior to the 2007 retirement of the mascot at UIUC, Union Maid began producing alternative media content in 2003 as a community radio program hostess.

Union Maid's describes the origins of her interest in alternative media as developing in 1981. It was during this period that she was involved in slumber parties with her best friend and they would record themselves with a portable tape recorder. Eventually this activity also included creating mix tapes of music she recorded from the local commercial radio stations.

UNION MAID: So when I was really little I had a Texas Instrument tape recorder. My best friend Connie, we would have sleepovers, I'd sleep over at her place, she'd sleep at my place, first grade, maybe a little later than that. We would create programs on the fly of just interview programs, late night talk shows, whatever. We thought we were being really funny. We would incorporate things we weren't supposed to talk about, scandalous stuff, create voices and we would create these characters. We'd record and listen to it. I was doing that basically in my bedroom for sleepovers and stuff. I also would be recording and making mix tapes off of what I heard on the radio.

As the years progressed, Union Maid continued making mix tapes and sharing them with friends. In high school, Union Maid's sister sent her a mix tape of a community radio show from Champaign-Urbana focused on women artist. For the first time, this exposed Union Maid to non-commercial radio and prompted her interests in new genres of music and media.

UNION MAID: It wasn't until I was in high school, I was still making mix tapes for friends and stuff, that my sister started going to the U of I and she sent me a mix tape of Women Shaking the Earth, which is one of the programs on WPRG. So she was being exposed to a lot of artists that I wasn't hearing in the suburbs at all because it was all commercial radio, unless you listened to NPR... So when my sister started sending me these artists it was very different than what I was hearing on the radio, [like the] Police, U2, very mainstream, big arena rock kind of bands, highly produced, big record contracts. So it was a way to kind of see, oh there's this whole other thing going on. She never was involved in WPRG, the community radio station, but when I moved here in '98, fall of '98, one of the first things that I got involved in was finding WPRG. I remember the Women Shaking the Earth programs and I went in the station, I was already involved in LGBT activism, so I was starting to meet older people who were not in the university, who were organizing around LGBT rights.

Within a year after arriving in Champaign-Urbana, Union Maid found herself involved with various communities producing alternative media. She even found herself producing cover art for a local alternative magazine.

UNION MAID: I was doing some cover art for The Tangerine, which was the alternative paper in town. It was a free weekly paper that would list different concert shows. It would have some interviews on mostly the arts. Nothing terribly political but certainly alternative to the News Gazette, and the company paper the DI [Daily Illini]. So, I was doing the visual art for that and in those kinds of cover concepts. Whenever I had the freedom to try to bring in something that wasn't White and mainstream, like this town tends to be, I did it. I subtly put it in there.

In addition to The Tangerine, Union Maid also became involved with the community radio station as well as the Women Shaking the Earth radio cooperative. It was in this cooperative that she started to become familiar with the technological knowledge of producing radio programs, as well as some of the basic requirements of becoming an air shifter. As the years progressed, Union Maid was able to obtain her own radio show.

UNION MAID: As I was listening to this stuff, and it started making me think, "Well what if I started to try to create programming that really highlighted women artists." I was conscious about people of color, conscious about making sure that I was playing music that wasn't White women with guitars during Women Shaking the Earth and it wasn't black male jazz musicians who were distinguished and very, the top 40 in jazz in some way even though they are great in their own way, they're recognized enough that we need to be conscious and active to create a broader picture of what's going on in the music industry and music in general and art in general. So I've made it my role to purposely emphasize those other artists.

In addition to her program focusing on women artists, Union Maid also began hosting a second show that included interviews of local activists and visiting musicians in her programming.

UNION MAID: I've been doing Wild Grasses, which is a live interview show where I try to feature local activists and talk about local issues that are happening in this community. I've expanded that to issues around class, race, gender, identity, and environmentalism... The other show that I do is Radical Mix, where I try to feature commentary from Mumia Abu Jamal, Jim Hightower, and Radio

News. I do a sub feature called Left Out where I play a 29 minute piece of audio produced on Radio for All that's accessible on the Net. I don't have to edit and put that together myself... Then in between that I'm playing artists that I feel defy genre categories that challenge people's thinking about what a jazz artist is or what rock music is or whatever.

It is within this programming format that Union Maid would occasionally air content related to the mascot issue.

UNION MAID: So I see the mascot issue fitting into both of those [shows] very easily because it's how something is interpreted or how it's boxed and sold, imagery, it's not just about a sporting event... I see the "Chief" issue, the mascot issue as a very local climate issue that people need to have an opinion about. It's not just something that's here and we just ignore it... [P]eople need to understand these climates affect day-to-day functions and health, mental health, and spirituality for people.

For Union Maid, the nature of community radio allows a potential audience to tune in and hear very diverse opinions and narratives. Her own strategy as a radio host is to "subtly educate" the listening public, so that others can hear how issues such as the mascot controversy impact people's lives.

UNION MAID: Radio allows for us to hear other people's experiences even if we can only hear 5 minutes of it and they're angry they tuned in. Some things get through. Where if it's something that you have to buy, [like] a book and read 300 pages to hear about those people. I can't read that. But if I'm driving in my car to get gas and someone says [on the radio], "My son said 'mom, I have to cut my hair because I don't want to be an Indian.'" And you hear a woman who's crying because she recognizes that her son wants to assimilate. He's doing it to survive. He's doing it because he doesn't want to get beat up at school, he doesn't want to have that difference that separates him from the other kids. When you hear that, when you hear someone's experience it's different than reading about it. It's different than seeing a movie, people acting it out. And how do we reach the people that don't want to know about that. How do we drop little information that they can—that they might pick up, little breadcrumbs that they might follow and find some truth. You work in the public sector. You work with people who don't have money to study with. Or you find people who are studying something different. And you say now that we're all here, maybe you can see how this affects other people. You try to subtly educate.

Union Maid contrasts this approach with the reporting on the mascot issue by corporate media. She characterizes their reporting as attempting to preserve a positive memory of the mascot tradition.

UNION MAID: There's all these other resurgence of adamant, "This is mine. You're trying to take away what my memory is." There was a clear bitterness in all of this mainstream media about their reporting on the retirement of the "Chief". But they're reporting in a way to make you feel bad about it. "Look at what you're getting rid of. Look at this. Remember this? Oh wasn't that great."

Additionally, she believes there was a clear attempt to profit from the sale of mascot memorabilia, by the same corporations who were also reporting on the subject.

UNION MAID: Yeah, so when they retired the "Chief", that first month there was more imagery of the "Chief" than I could remember ever seeing, memorabilia plates for sale at the News Gazette, photos for sale, people were clipping out the images from the Newspaper because the newspaper had to make the front page the dance. They had to create a character that people could feel sorry for... It just became a way of cashing in and consumerism. That's what I saw in the main stream. It's like picture that you could have from the newspaper actually framed for yourself or you could buy stuff about it or and people started selling their [personal] items they had around their house. You could see there was all this liquidation of stuff because they wanted to cash in on it. It's interesting because it wasn't so much like a sentimental thing. It became a moneymaker thing. It wasn't about really losing part of their spirituality or their attachment to something it became, oh I can make money off of this, I got these plates. How can we make a buck off of it? To me, all it did was emphasis even more that this isn't—the people who were going to give that up aren't really giving up anything if they really look at it and if they really see the progress that we, at some point we all have to decide, we all have to realize there's no Santa Claus.

Union Maid situates the commodification of the mascot symbol as creating strong emotional attachments to many in the local community. This commodification process is associated with the University of Illinois' conscious attempt to use the Native American symbol in their "brand" identification campaigns throughout the years. According to Union Maid, the affective impact of these ongoing campaigns are then passed on from generation to generation.

UNION MAID: So there becomes this history I think, for people to have that attachment to something that's going to stay consistent throughout their lives. And they start to lose how that image was created. They don't remember that. They just latch onto that childhood image of their father taking them to a game and they had their first Illini shirt and they did the tomahawk chop. They remember those and you can't rip those memories from them. You can't take that from them and they start to associate their personal attachment to that, instead of saying I had a good time at that sporting event, and watched these two teams play and this is—this play happened and that play happened. They don't even remember all of that because all they remember is that—this society is so latched onto imagery and brand recognition and that mascot is a brand. So, because people don't see the history and the pain that students have to deal with to see that, they can't relate to that. They see it as, "Oh it's just an image. Get over it." They don't see that those memories that other people get from that image are different but there's still an association. We all have that association. We have an association with that mascot but they're different associations so it becomes, "You can't take away my happy association with that because you had a bad one, tough shit." It becomes this inability to recognize that image is recognizable to another group of people who also have a history of what their father went through or when they first saw their parents cry or when their brother decided to cut his hair because he didn't want to be associated, he wanted to disassociate with what that image meant for other people.

Union Maid's recognition of the deep entrenchment of the mascot symbol into the local culture helps contextualize the difficulty in sustaining public educational projects against the use of Native American mascots. Logistically, she describes the need to work in networked groups to counter corporate sponsored campaigns that supported the retention of the mascot. For example, during the 2006-2007 school year, Union Maid benefited from the work of other alternative media producers also addressing the mascot controversy. She describes this time as a period in which many were working collaboratively to create a different culture to educate the general public. In this way, she believed the collaborative effort worked to minimize the amount of time needed in producing content.

UNION MAID: There was a lot more sharing of collective collaborative work. The piece that was on IResist also went to WLPR, it went to WPRG, the Public Eye, the fact that people had blogs, that people were sharing on the S.T.O.P. [Students Transforming Oppression and Privilege Coalition] email list, all these different ways of communicating even if it was the same message being done

and all these different ways, the posters for the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC, even if people didn't go to that event, we were creating a different culture. We were creating a different climate that people could blind themselves to if they wanted to but if they were looking for it they could fall into it. And have all sorts of ways of people talking about it in a space to explore and challenge. And what it also did was have our views and interpretations reach a different audience than WPRG's audience. People who look at the IResist Website and can download stuff are not necessarily listening to radio. So reaching in as many different ways to the population as possible and making it accessible. And even if it is the piece that two people recorded and it gets rebroadcast and analyzed and written about, it allows for more time to be spent on other things. We don't all have to recreate our own interpretation of those things so we get that credit for it. It can be helping to move things along so that we don't have to spend so much time in the editing room putting our interpretation of that together just to get it on the air and get it out there and people will absorb what they can and hopefully they'll look for other resources. So it becomes this sharing of information and what I found is that's collective organizing. That's being a collective and not saying "I'm making a name for myself and a career for myself in this particular field" and helping people who might not be as comfortable with the technical aspect try it out because they're so impassioned about the idea that you're talking about. So it becomes a way of networking and sharing information and abilities and skills.

Union Maid's observation of the collaborative nature of the 2006-2007 alternative media producers is particularly insightful into the obstacles that those involved in media creation often face: mainly revolving around time constraints. She later emphasized this again by stating that many who are not involved in media production never realize the amount of time required in the editing process.

UNION MAID: [It] has been really helpful to have [people] editing MP3s and putting them on the IResist Website because then I don't have to edit it, I don't have to go record it. All these steps that are involved with promoting something that people who don't work with audio or video don't understand all the unglamorous hours and hours of losing your mind, rewinding and playing back and moving things and trying to make it into something that's going to make sense to people. So when I don't have to do that then I can focus on promoting the hard work of someone else and using it a second time and not feeling like it's only good for one shot and then it's over, it's old.

Other obstacles that Union Maid faced in the production process were not limited to time. On the contrary, Union Maid encountered other barriers associated with misogyny, ageism,

status hierarchies, and discourse patterns that made teaching and learning difficult or impossible. Much of this occurred because of a long established culture at the community radio station where Union Maid was airing her programs and attempting to gain new radio engineering skills.

UNION MAID: It doesn't have to be what I went through when I started at WPRG where these guys would be like, they couldn't tell me that I had [the volume] too low. They would just reach over me and [yell] "Look at your levels!" And they would scold me. If someone was just randomly hanging out in the studio because he felt he was twice my age and he's an engineer at WPRG and he's been here longer that he can tell me how to do it instead of saying, "OK, I'm just going to tell you, hi, I'm coming in, my name's Jack. And I'm an air shifter here. I noticed that your sound is a little, I think you should check that CD. Or maybe you need to bring the sound down," instead of physically doing that. And this is where White males that I've worked with in engineering, they have a communication problem. It becomes a culture of how they don't share knowledge. It becomes, "it's mine, I'm going to show you that it's wrong by doing it but I'm not going to tell you how to fix it." Or "It's too complicated for you to understand. I'll just engineer for you. Why don't you do the interview and I'll do the soundboard?"

Union Maid was very surprised to have these interactions at a community radio station. Her initial expectation was the radio station would be a progressive organization and adhere to the values associated with democratic participation. However, to her surprise, she often encountered a culture that was often unflexible and unwilling to engage in dialogue as a problem solving strategy.

UNION MAID: I thought community radio, wow it's different than public radio, it's different than commercial radio. It's going to be all these cool people who have these progressive views. It wasn't. It was about—WPRG is a place that, they say that anyone can get a radio show. And that's true, anyone can but the climate is such that the people who are in place do not make it a space that's inviting or flexible to new ideals or flexible to new interpretations of how things should be done or new types of dialogues, new ways to structure a meeting or to not to structure a meeting, new ways to get things done at the station more efficiently, how do we, and people start to have this sense of ownership. They've been there a long time. They've been doing their thing, their way for years. They don't want some new person coming in and telling them how to do it. If they're not open to having that dialogue then it becomes a real hostile environment and when people can't work professionally doing what they love doing they do it as volunteer then they feel even more

ownership because they're not getting paid to do it. It's their time and their effort and they want to be recognized for it.

The difficulties encountered by Union Maid continued throughout the years. As time went on, she experienced conflicts also associated with the lack of access to high-end equipment that some community radio members brought with them for recording. The following narrative is extensively quoted to help contextualize the extent of the issues raised by Union Maid.

UNION MAID: Max who is like twice my age has a Motorola job and buys \$300 microphones, all this equipment. He decides he's going to run the board and I can be on the mic doing the interview. I'm like, "No. I signed up to do what you're doing. We're going to have to rotate then. I'm willing to rotate." [Max then states] "No, I'm no good on the microphone. I'm sure you're much better. You can do it. I'm just going to do the sound, I just want to do the tech stuff that's why I'm here." He had the money, he had the gear, so he becomes an interesting and appealing asset to people at WPRG, well we'll work with this because we want that access to his resources so here's a White guy twice my age with a really good paying job and I'm like shit poor and I can't even—I got to, I saved up two years for a mini disc recorder and he's got all this on me because he's got his, he's got his DAT machine he brings in to record. So now we have an archive. So he's got all this glitz, all this flare and that persuaded a lot of people instead of looking at the bare bones issue which was someone who could share that knowledge, could be told, you need to make this a collective effort. Why don't we all learn about how to use Max's equipment? It became well that's Max's gear. That's how he is. We'll just—we really want to have that gear here and all that resources and he's got all this great stuff. So you're just going to have to learn to deal with it. It became, if it get to be a real problem let me know says the station manager. But you know, engineers are kind of like this. They have a hard time explaining things because they're engineers. I'm like, no, but I've asked him a question about how to do a particular thing and he thinks I'm his gopher. I'm not his gopher. If he wants me to run a mic cable, and I asked why he wants this mic cable, I expect an answer or I expect to be told afterwards this is why I asked you to do that so we can talk about and I learn something. It's not—and what I was also experiencing, not only was I getting that kind of downward look from him, from Max, I wasn't getting the support from the station manager who should have been helping to bring in new people, to make this environment and this culture inviting and make this culture a learning space. I didn't get that support. I didn't get it from the bands because the bands, "Oh are you a groupie? Are you here to listen to us?" I'm like no. I'm here to help set up. "Oh you're going to do the interview." They didn't want to give me their gear. They didn't want me near their gear. "We're just going to talk to Max about how that sound check works." And it was, so I was dealing with the stress of having the other engineer, and I'll say the other

engineer because we were both engineer. I have actually been at WPRG more years than he had at that point but I wasn't doing live sound in that way. So I was dealing with that. He brings in a guy assistant to help him. He doesn't even introduce him to me and this guy just runs circles around me, he doesn't want to talk to me. I'm not even worth his time. And then I'm dealing with the band itself with their sexism about a woman engineer and then I'm dealing with the station manager not creating a culture and now helping to change the climate for new people coming in. So, I had to really want to do that show. And so then I would say, I thought to myself, ok he can run the first hour and I'll do the second hour in the booth. Then he decided to come in the booth when he didn't like how my prerecorded stuff sounded. So he would move things on the board. I'd be like, Max get the fuck out of here. I'm the engineer here. I would get aggressive with him. He's like whoa, whoa! Someone's got an attitude problem. He didn't get it, that this is my board now. You want to play this kind of game where you own something, well this is the board I have. It might be small and it only has two CD players but it's my fucking board and this is my hour so fuck off.

Although Union Maid experienced these challenges, it didn't prevent her from participating in the organizational structure of WPRG. Initially she believed the problems she encountered were associated with a lack of resources so she took a paid position at the station raising funds. Successful in raising significant funds, she later attempted to influence policy by running for a Board of Directors' seat with the hopes to change the organizational structure and ethos at the station. One of the policies she initially championed was for the Board to adapt an anti-sexist statement.

UNION MAID: And all we wanted was a statement that would be posted to women who felt that if they had to leave the organization—there was some recourse. There was something that they could refer to, to say, "Hey, that's sexist and here's why we have this policy. You can't act that way to me." We didn't have a policy before that. So it became an issue.

As a result of Union Maid's push for change, she believes other radio station members acted to intimidate and silence her. At one point, she had her car window smashed. Other times, she would be verbally attacked at Board meetings. All this tension took a toll on her personal life.

UNION MAID: I'm tired of it. And I can't deal with this shit anymore. I can't fight these people. And in the two and a half years that I spent on the board it almost killed me. I've never seen myself behave in the way that I started to behave. I had to check myself. If [my friend] hadn't told me that I don't behave that way in other groups and organizations, I wouldn't have seen it. I felt it but I didn't see it until someone I trusted pointed it out to me. Then it's like whoa. You should not be thinking violent thoughts about people when you're sitting there. And even now I feel my heart rate go up when I read through some of those emails. I started chain smoking. I would go out for drinks after the meeting, which was my only way to wind down. I would chain smoke before the meeting. I would leave work early so I could take 3 hours to prepare for a [Board] meeting because I knew I was going to get bashed at the meeting and I had to have as much of a buffer as I could. I would invite friends to witness what was happening at the meetings so I didn't feel I was there by myself being bashed. I still got bashed... I had a girlfriend who couldn't stay through the whole meeting. She walked out. She was like "I can't believe that they treat you like that. I can't even sit there and watch it." She couldn't do it. I thought fine, I can't be in a relationship with you, because if you can't endure that kind of suffering like I can, it's not going to work. I need someone that—so it really fucked up a lot of aspects of my life. It became, it was this drive that I can change this. I can change this establishment. I'm going to make it accessible for people.

Upon further reflection Union Maid believes the problems she experienced arose because she was trying to change the culture and structure of the radio station. During her time as a fundraiser and as a productive volunteer she believes she was seen as a model member. However, this quickly changed once she began to advocate for more inclusive station policies.

UNION MAID: When I started to threaten the culture, when I started to challenge the culture and try to change it, that's when I had the most resistance and the most reaction. When I was doing all the tasks that they wanted, when I was taking up pledge drive coordinator and working 10-hour days and doing underwriting and running around and making money for the station, no one had a problem with that. It wasn't until I joined the Board of Directors and tried to make change. So I think all those identities fed into their fear and their anger towards me but they wouldn't have had to deal with me until I got in their face about it. I tried to go through their channels that were established to change those things and it didn't work. They created obstacles. So it wasn't even like I could have strategized differently. I did everything. I did everything I could have to established trust in those 8 years before I joined the board of directors. I had done all the things a loyal air shifter should do. I did all this volunteer commitment. I subbed people's shows. I raised money for the station. I brought in hundreds and hundreds of dollars. I donated my own, my that \$40 a year and still all that, it was great, "Union Maid was

number one volunteer.” Everyone loved me until I started to try to change things. And most women didn’t get to that point.

Although Union Maid originally contextualized the problems she experienced at WPRG as specific to that location, she began developing a systemic perspective of the issues she was forced to address when she attended national community radio conferences. Despite describing the demographic participation at these conferences as “White dominated” she states that there are attempts to diversify participation so that many stories and situations can be shared in some of the small group discussion that took place at the conferences.

UNION MAID: There’s a grass roots radio conference that happens every year and it’s made up of—it’s a loose coalition. Anyone can go. It’s promoted on a Website, each radio station that’s involved tries to host it once a year but you don’t have to be involved with that radio station to participate. Sometimes you can get sponsorship from other people who put money together to allow new people to go and they’re always trying to get younger people and women, people of color to go because it’s still White dominated. It’s a grass roots radio conference. I went to a couple different ones and started to find that a lot of the problems that I had at WPRG were also happening at other station. Groups that had dealt with bannings, someone who was banned from the station, people who felt that they weren’t being heard because they’re a minority in their station. That their show was being attacked. But a lot of the people that were there were somehow progressive in some ways but faced the problems that all left organizations have internally... It allowed for people to meet other people at different stations that might be going through similar situations. So there’s networking going on. There’s also a sharing of resources.

Additionally, Union Maid continues to meet past members who left WPRG because of the same problems she currently faces. These encounters help contextualize the depth of the struggle in which she is involved, as well as serves to provide interactions that break the isolation she might be experiences.

UNION MAID: I’ll talk to someone, [and they say], “Oh yeah I used to do a show at WPRG, years and years ago. I just got tired of the bullshit there.” It’s interesting to know that this has been going on for so long. So it still becomes a hub of interaction that can still happen. And so it’s not isolated in a vacuum like an editing room.

## Themes

A number of important themes arose in the interviews with the participants for this study. These themes include views on the corporate media, the perceived role of the Board of Trustees, obstacles to alternative media production, the theoretical influences on the alternative media producers, networking, and the personal impact that alternative media production had on the producers. These themes will be engaged more fully in the next chapter, where an in-depth analysis will take place.

However, it is important to note that all of the participants for this study expressed multiple concerns relating to the management of the mascot controversy at UIUC. These apprehensions ranged from the different ways by which the political system within Illinois placed multiple pressures on the Board of Trustees to delay a final decision on the issue, to the manner by which the local corporate media constructed particular narratives for public consumption. Together, the narratives offer insight into the forces that required the activation of their human agency as expressed in their alternative media production.

For example, multiple interviewees forcefully referred to the local corporate media as upholding conservative ideological positions that tainted the manner by which mascot coverage was reported and framed. Participants identified voids of journalistic integrity and used their skills to create their own alternative media to provide alternative views and analysis regarding the mascot issue.

However, not all corporate media generated the same perspectives on the mascot issue. Many participants contrasted the local corporate media with national corporate media reporting on the issue. Others, saw the national news outlets as questioning the mascot politics taking place in Champaign-Urbana and often portrayed the UIUC mascot issue in a manner that was embarrassing to the local community. In many ways, this difference between the local and

national coverage exposed the high degree of acculturation taking place by the local corporate media.

The obstacles encountered by the alternative media producers included issues of time, access to equipment, and expenses. However, those working within larger organizations associated with media production, such as the local community radio stations, or the Independent Media Center also experienced difficulties associated with the maintenance of hierarchical power structures, misogyny, and racism.

Another theme that arose involved the participant's theoretical influences before and after they became involved in alternative media concerning the UIUC mascot. Responses by interviewees to questions involving theoretical influences upon their desire to engage in media production proved diverse and revealing. Regardless of the theoretical perspectives the participants originally expressed, these often changed dramatically as a direct result of their involvement with alternative media production. This trend also informs the potential strengths of this site of production for the development of critical media literacy and is more fully explored in the next chapter.

Listservs played important roles by which the alternative media producers interviewed for this study established networks, stayed informed and further developed their analysis with regards to the local and national mascot issues. The listservs assisted in the maintenance of the movement and facilitated the construction of alternative public spheres from which the participants could gain additional information and analysis on the issue, and contribute to identity formations, and help reframe the mascot controversy as a social justice issue.

And finally, all of the participants for this study indicated very strong personal growth upon their lives as a direct result of their engagement in alternative media production. For

example, many of the interviewees stated they were better able to express “voice” and that their understanding of corporate media expanded greatly. Thus, the acquisition of skills for navigating media production led to self-empowerment and feelings of self-worth. This is particularly powerful given the power of dominant hegemony to silence dissent and appropriate challenges to institutional change.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion of Data

This research uses critical narratives obtained from producers of alternative media as a means to document the processes involved in alternative media production, and to highlight its changing roles within the public sphere. These narratives offer insight into how alternative media producers contribute to social movements struggling to overcome contradictions within dominant society. Specifically, the alternative media producers interviewed for this study labored towards ending the use of a Native American themed mascot at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. As producers of counter-cultural content, the participants did not all work in collaboration with each other. However, their narratives show how their combined practices assisted in transmitting information and analysis to counter the dominant representations of the mascot. In doing so, the participants for this study also demonstrated ways their efforts contributed to identity formations within the pro-Indigenous and anti-mascot movements.

Because the data presented in the previous chapter is so rich and immense, I have chosen to approach the data analysis based on the original research questions for this project. These questions include the following:

1. How did critical media literacy contextualize the use of alternative media as a means for public pedagogy?
2. In what ways did the human agency of alternative media producers overcome the limits and confinement of corporate and government controlled media?
3. How did the use of alternative media contribute to social network movements?
4. What were some primary obstacles and limits faced by alternative media producers?

I approach these questions by integrating critical social theory and critical pedagogy. Thus, the analysis will include issues related to a critique of ideology, the capacities to comprehend how power is structured, and the need for a continual engagement with pedagogical environments

exemplifying how learners can question their positioning as passive objects of history as they struggle to become actively engaged in the construction of knowledge.

### **How did Critical Media Literacy Contextualize Alternative Media as a Means for Public Pedagogy?**

The data presented in the previous chapter provide compelling narratives exemplifying the critical uses of alternative media and the contexts from which they developed, and were engaged. However, it is important to note that in approaching this question, it is not insinuated that all of the media producers interviewed for this study acquired a state of critical consciousness that allowed them to maintain a constant condition of “criticality”. On the contrary, critical media literacy requires engagement within historical junctures that are in constant flux. The negotiation of meanings within these conditions requires an understanding that processes influencing the construction of knowledge necessitate contextualization within relationships of power and culture. As suggested by Paulo Freire (1970, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1998a, 1998b), notions of criticality must embrace issues of praxis employing processes of naming, dialogue, action, and reflection. Furthermore, these processes must not be seen as static or permanent mental states attained by individuals working alone, but practices that are socially engaged and contextualized within personal, political and historical moments.

My findings associated with the use of critical media literacy and alternative media as a means for public pedagogy, directly relate to producer capacities to reveal and challenge preferred meanings by which the mascot issue was presented to the general public. That is, the participants consistently referred to issues related to dominant modes for framing how the mascot should be understood within the public sphere. Furthermore, many of the participants of this study relate the term “critical” with this capacity to question these dominant forms of

representation. This concept connects to the development, alteration, and refinement of their theoretical positions, as they engaged in alternative media production. In addition, engaging in critical media production also promoted affective elements within the producers themselves that situate their learning as meaningful and contributing to the development of their voice and to their ability to engage in civil society.

### **Preferred meanings**

Throughout its use as a form of half-time entertainment, those favoring the mascot attributed “honorable” values that purported to represent the “spirit” and “traditions” of the University of Illinois (Spindel, 2002). In challenging these dominant views, the alternative media producers interviewed for this project also demonstrate critical media skills that situate the use of media analysis and alternative media production as important and powerful forms of literacy.

Since its creation in 1926, “Chief” Illiniwek was used to entertain half-time fans in Champaign-Urbana. It wasn’t until the 1980s that organized and sustained opposition to the mascot openly questioned these preferred meanings in public ways. From their onset, the protest against the UIUC mascot represented attempts to publicly reveal and engage the contradictions of using American Indian imagery for sporting events. Additionally, the increasing role of alternative media leading to the mascot’s retirement also placed additional emphasis on agents of change to utilize meaning-making processes advocated by critical media literacy theorists.

For example, the history of resistance to the mascot symbol at UIUC complements Hall’s (1980b) analysis of how meanings are encoded and decoded. That is, the reception of “codes,” or media messages, are relatively autonomous activities and are not always controlled by its producers. Hall theorizes that at each stage of production, these codes, imprinted by institutional power relations, attempt to reproduce their preferred meanings. Applying this concept to the UIUC mascot, the preferred meanings generated by pro-mascot entities were

interpreted by pro-Indigenous and anti-mascot activists as representing the ideologies of the dominant cultural establishment and as a means to garner consent for the legitimacy of their mascot.

Within the UIUC community, resistance to these preferred meanings regarding the mascot often took place on individual levels and within private contexts. However, the alternative media producers interviewed for this study used alternative media not only to challenge the mascot's institutionally preferred meanings, but also to construct publicly accessible oppositional meanings that attempted to widen the scope of the mascot debate. This attempt to widen the debate often included the mascot's impact upon historically silenced voices at UIUC, particularly those of American Indians and people of color. As described by John Fiske (1997), constructing these oppositional meanings for public consumption are needed before political action by a wider social movement can take place. For Fiske, semiotic resistance is required to mobilize a base to commit to social action because it represents the capacity to question the status quo and to exemplify new ways to construct meanings that can accommodate contradictory relationships experienced in everyday lives. Without this functional ability of providing alternative interpretations within a semiotic framework that can garner popular support, those advocating for change, according to Fiske, "...can all too easily be marginalized as extremists or agitators and their political effectiveness neutralized. The interior resistance of fantasy is more than ideologically evasive, it is a necessary base for social action" (p. 10).

Indeed, those challenging the preferred representations within Champaign-Urbana were continually marginalized within the traditional and established means for public pedagogy. As described by Ricardo, the local corporate media often positioned those questioning the preferred meanings of the mascot as "crazy".

RICARDO: Gosh, this woman interviewed me from one of these news channels from the local area. But when they did, the sound bytes that they used for the conversations, the pro and the anti, I felt like that when they did it, I mean the whole situation - they made me seem like the crazy anti-“Chief” sort of person.

Ricardo’s observations and experience on this issue were echoed by Frank, who believes the manner by which the mascot issue gets framed locally is often dictated by notions of “journalistic objectivity” that require particular ways of portraying the issue. According to Frank, the local corporate media utilize a binary framing that often places those opposed to the use of the American Indian mascot on the far side of the spectrum. This framing then alienates those offering oppositional readings from the general public, because they appear “ridiculous”.

FRANK: [I]f you have some other vision for how humans should be relating to each other, than the dominant status quo position that gets re-represented through corporate media over and over and over again, and that notion of objectivity always sets you up as opposed to that. You end up looking, frankly, unless people already agree with you, ridiculous.

Other important sites for this type of binary framing and protection of preferred meanings occurred on listservs. These listservs were sites of confrontation for both Indigenous Scholar and Ricardo who experienced angry email responses (flaming) when they demonstrated oppositional positions regarding the UIUC mascot within their college’s general listservs. For Ricardo, his listserv exchanges regarding the mascot resulted in hostile electronic correspondence that demanded greater amounts of his time and energy. This negatively affected the conditions under which he studied, as well as his relationships with the administrators and other students in his college.

RICARDO: On an individual basis, the situation got more aggressive in terms of the [listserv] conversation.

For Indigenous Scholar, presenting an American Indian perspective on the mascot and on other stereotypical images sparked strongly worded retorts.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I don't have a voice that is vitriolic or anything like that. I'm very diplomatic, but I was still getting flamed.

The manner by which gate-keeping of preferred meanings led to the alternative media producers to seek other venues to express their alternative understanding of the mascot within other contexts are further discussed in the section on agency and networking. For now, however, it is important to highlight the theoretical lenses held by the producers, and relate them to critical aspects of media literacy.

### **Engaging theoretical lenses**

All of the interviewees for this study situated their reasons for becoming involved in the UIUC mascot struggle upon a perceptual construct that questioned the preferred meanings on the issue. For Steven Tozer, Paul Senese, and Guy Violas (2009), these perceptual constructs are the basis for theorizing, which they define as the “interpretation and explanation of phenomena” (Tozer, Senese, & Violas, p. 7). In this way, the decisions of the alternative media producers to actively question dominant narratives, and to act upon them, relates well to the Freirian concept of praxis, which calls for using processes of naming, dialogue, action and reflection in the construction of knowledge. Moreover, Freire's emphasis on praxis as a means to develop understanding and critical literacy stresses the balance of theory and action within dialogic relationships. This concept's particular significance to this study relates to how the participants cite dramatic changes in their theoretical framework after becoming involved in alternative media production.

The theme of relating the actions of alternative media producers with their personal development of theoretical frameworks also situates their abilities to perceive dysfunctions within existing systems of public pedagogy. This relates well to the Freirian concept of “reading the world” involving processes that situate learners as active subjects able to participate and

interrupt oppressive relationships. Initial readings of the world made by many of the participants include the idea that what was truly needed for the mascot issue to be understood within the public sphere was simply “additional information” and perspectives. That is, they believed that with more access to a diversity of information and knowledge on the subject, the general public would understand the contradictions associated with the use of an American Indian themed sports mascot. Through this initial assessment, the interviewees often set out to document the impact of the mascot on marginalized populations on campus, particularly those of American Indian students.

Robert, for example was prompted to action out of frustration because he saw there was a need for diversity of opinion concerning the mascot. For him, the well-financed pro-mascot supporters asserted influence in the public sphere as a result of their political power and their ability to pay for publicly displayed mascot imagery, such as on billboards, t-shirts and memorabilia. In this way, Robert viewed the financial capacities of the pro-mascot campaigns as supporting the dominant discourse and, consequently, silencing opposition within the local community.

Robert also cites his decision to become an alternative media activist as impacting his comprehension of the management of controversial issues. He believes he has developed a more critical perspective of what is included as news, but also what might have been excluded. Additionally, he ponders the impact of media ownership consolidation and the role of entertainment based corporations on the news.

ROBERT: I just feel like I have a little better understanding of what’s done and why, in that sort of media. I think I do have a more critical eye now for what’s presented or more importantly probably what’s not presented. I am more aware, I would say that there are many things which are put out over the media without challenge, or without even any investigation.

Indigenous Scholar also tied this goal of inquiry, identifying contradictions and challenging certainty with her own understanding of “critical”.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Questioning—it’s a question. It’s to ask a question. What is this? Who made it? What does it mean? How do others perceive it?

This linking of questioning with criticality also relates to how the media producers began to reflect upon their own practices, after attempting to intervene in the dominant discourse concerning the UIUC mascot. For example, prior to taking courses in education, Connie’s participation in alternative media was not influenced by any particular theoretical position. Instead, she lists her personal anger and desire to break feelings of isolation as her primary catalysts to engage in media production.

CONNIE: I think it was just mostly anger. I was so frustrated with, like I said, hearing the same stories that I couldn’t relate to. It was just boring and tiresome and it’s just very frustrating to not—oh, to feel like you’re out of place, that, you might be the only one feeling that, whatever it is you’re feeling...

JOE: Can you now look back through a particular lens that helps you understand it more?

CONNIE: Critical theory has helped me a lot. Learning under [my education teacher] has really opened my eyes to my own actions and taught me to be more critical of my behaviors and the impact that they have. It’s still an area I need a lot of work in, but it’s helped me a lot to remember to really reflect on things as I go.

Tzetzengari theoretically situates the role of alternative media production as representative of an attempt to mark public space in a manner that positively expresses counter narratives on multiple issues. His understanding positions a dialectal relationship between using community radio as a means to establish oppositional space and place.

TZETZENGARI: It is really a combination of both a dialectic relationship such as using (radio) space in order to mark place (existence) in the community and that place (existence) in the community benefits from our access to resources (radio) that allow us to mark it (space).

For Tzetzengari, the establishment of this “space” becomes a strategic location from which alternative readings of the world can be publicly expressed and the expansion of possibilities for meaning making established within the awareness of the local community. Frank echoes Tzetzengari’s observations on the need to mark space and to struggle against what he describes as hegemonic forces. Frank’s engagement in alternative media production on the mascot issue was inspired by his desire to disrupt commonly held assumptions, and replacing them with counter narratives that represent the struggle *for* hegemony.

FRANK: I see, through Gramsci, claiming space on the Internet as one way to think about this. It’s not a struggle against hegemony, although it is, it’s a struggle for hegemony. So, really it’s a struggle to replace one set of common assumptions with another set of common assumptions.

Frank’s assertions are based on his theoretical understandings of Italian theorist, Antonio Gramsci (1999). It was Gramsci, himself an alternative media producer for the Italian labor movement, who stressed the importance of officially controlled narratives in maintaining social reproduction within the Italian population. Gramsci advocated for public intellectuals to not only provide alternative readings on a particular issue, but to publicly reveal and critique the contradictions of dominant ideological assumptions. In this way, he encouraged understanding the manner by which populations consent to being ruled, through their unquestioning support of popularly accepted ideas, practices and assumptions. Gramsci believed this type of consent legitimized dominant rule and replicates existing power relationships.

Although Gramsci’s work informed Frank’s initial engagement in alternative media production, his theoretical framework altered as he became more involved in his alternative media work. Frank thus mentions the work of Stuart Hall as helping contextualize his own position as a faculty member within the academy to disrupt the dominant discourse that he believed was harmful and rarely questioned. In this way, Frank sees the academy itself as

consisting of spaces that mitigate contradictions in ways that avoid transformation and produce illusions of stability.

FRANK: I have in the past thought of myself as an intellectual hand grenade. If you can get yourself into those spaces and then blow up the discourse, transform it, I mean I think for a moment there's not anything even wrong with the ground being—the notion of stable ground and one standing on it being torn apart. Along the way toward imagining and creating something else, something else than what we currently have.

Thus, Frank sees his role in occupying space as disrupting the status quo in ways that forces the questioning of dominant narratives. This disruption of stability is required, according to Frank, in order for processes of reflection and liberatory action to take place. In many ways, Frank is relating the concept of criticality directly to cognitive processes that force learners to adjust their existing schematic frameworks, in order for the assimilation of new perspectives to be accommodated. He attributes this understanding directly to his involvement in Webpage production and the context it provides to expose the complexities involved in knowledge construction that is specifically targeted for public reception.

FRANK: I guess, when I'm thinking of as critical here, I'm thinking of a more reflexive approach which to me means a willingness to reflect on my own assumptions about things. To think at a deeper level about what I thought I knew. What I think I know that now I'm not so sure about. Or that I think I'm now less sure about. And there could be a lot of reasons for this doubt, if I can call it "doubt," but I think that this is one of them. Engaging this issue through the construction of a Website and its maintenance over several years has played a role in that—a major role in that—a major role in it. Doubt about what I think I know for certain.

The examples of Robert, Connie, Tzetzengari, and Frank, are representative of interviewees whose relationships within the academy influenced the manner by which they utilized and engaged concepts that helped locate and frame their actions as alternative media producers. Given that the Urbana-Champaign is a university town, and these four producers are actively involved in types of scholarship that utilize social critique, it is not surprising their

theoretical frameworks were challenged as they produced alternative media regarding the mascot issue. However, David, a community member with no history of being enrolled in higher education, provides a narrative that also demonstrates how alternative media production facilitated changes to conceptual frameworks for those outside the academy.

When David began producing alternative media regarding the mascot issue, there wasn't a particular theoretical or political perspective that informed his efforts. Like Robert and Indigenous Scholar, he saw disconnections between the different sides on the issue and was hoping his personal experiences and perspectives would help fill a void in the education process. However, as he became more involved in attempting to address the issues, his theoretical and political understanding began to change in ways that embrace a capitalist critique. His analysis derives from frequent responses from pro-mascot fans who state the mascot is "our" tradition.

DAVID: And so that's, like, a consistent theme. "This is ours and you're trying to take that away from us." So I guess confronting what is it that makes people think that they own that and leads you to what makes people think they own anything. What is ownership and why does it exist? And it exist because everything is turned into, all things are property and all things have a monetary value, therefore they can be bought and sold and the more things you can turn into property the more ways you can make money off of them.

David further elaborates on this issue of capitalism and the consequences of private ownership upon society by relating it to his understanding of the history of indigenous peoples within the current boundaries of the United States. In the next passage he ties this idea of an ownership society with the legacy of conquest in North America as it relates to cultural misappropriation.

DAVID: It's just really blatant because the indigenous people of this continent were sort of acquired as property along with the minerals and the natural resources as well. Like when they took all those things, they just acquired those and started using the culture in any way, those different cultures in any way that they felt that they could use it... And the "Chief" is just totally a symbol of that sense of well, "This is ours now and we can do what we want with it. And this is what we want to do."

David's analysis further ties the history of commodifying Native imagery with the University's use of its mascot iconography for the sale of goods and memorabilia. For example, throughout Illinois, images of the UIUC mascot continues to be displayed on numerous public spaces. He states these commodities could historically be found on a number of materials, including;

DAVID: A t-shirt or a hat, or a mug or a sticker or a poster or a flag or a bumper sticker or a sweatshirt or a backpack or a seat cushion or toilet paper. Everything, you name it. At some point it's had a picture of the "Chief" on it.

Union Maid also situates this type of commodification as creating strong affective attachments to the mascot within the local community. This commodification process is associated with the University of Illinois' conscious use of a highly problematic Native American symbol in their "brand" identification campaigns. According to Union Maid, the emotional impacts of these promotions are reproduced from one generation to the next generation.

UNION MAID: So there becomes this history I think, for people to have that attachment to something that's going to stay consistent throughout their lives. And they start to lose how that image was created. They don't remember that. They just latch onto that childhood image of their father taking them to a game and they had their first Illini shirt and they did the tomahawk chop. They remember those and you can't rip those memories from them.

Both Union Maid and David's ability to relate the marketing campaigns of the University and the local corporate media with the reception of these codes at the emotional level is powerful. It is through this lens that one can contextualize the difficulties challenging these embedded constructions of the mascot. Yet it also demonstrates the unique ways that alternative media production situates the acquisition and use of critical literacy within environments rich in meaningful activity. For the participants of this research project, this created opportunities contributing to habits of the mind that fostered media critique and ideological awareness.

Another issue that must be addressed that is related to the use of the term “critical” and the development of theoretical frameworks involves the contradictions that might arise from their use. For instance, although Indigenous Scholar uses the term “critical” to describe a desired outcome to her practice, she is hesitant to contextualize her initial impetus to engage in alternative media production within a particular theoretical framework. For her, the very conceptualization of theory proved to be a provocative topic. Her previous life as a public school teacher on a reservation informed her understanding of criticality, yet her experiences within the academy as an American Indian woman, and as a mother, nurtured a suspicion of that which is labeled as “theory.” This concern is based on a fundamental distrust of the impact of the academy on those living outside its realm and upon her relationships with her family and her own spirituality.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I feel a resistance to conversations that try to ground the work in that thing we call theory... because I feel that... the work that we do as activist scholars is crucial to the well being and future to the people we call “our people” and that the academy uses that word, “theory” and throws it at us. If we can’t articulate what we’re doing in the academy’s framework then the work is seen, and we are seen as not scholarly and as not smart. Our work is discounted for that reason. So, I’m resistant. I’m at a gut level resistant to speaking that language because it’s the master’s request and I feel like, screw the master.

Indigenous Scholar’s responses are indicative of the tenuous situations historically colonized populations often experience within the academy. Combined with the presence of a campus mascot she understands to be hostile toward her identity as a member of a sovereign American Indian nation, the colonial legacies of schooling continue to inform her need to express voice and form community with others. Yet, it is also within Indigenous Scholar’s definition of “critical” that the free exchange of information becomes of utmost importance. In this sense, she is indicating that bypassing dominant means to share and re-present information and events has the potential to allow individuals to question long-held beliefs, perspectives and

structures that uphold systems of reproduction. For this reason, she sees the use of alternative media as a source of hope because she views it as connected to thinking critically and growing networks that are better informed and active.

The public struggles over preferred meanings assigned to the “Chief Illinwek” mascot at UIUC provide opportunities to situate important theoretical concepts informing critical media literacy. They also provided opportunities for the alternative media producers to develop their perceptual frameworks in ways that highlights aspects of “criticality” engendered through their work, challenging the preferred meanings of the UIUC mascot. Freire sees these pedagogical acts of reading the world as a dialectical process involving acts necessary in the struggle against fatalism and domestication. At the same time, these same struggles also offer opportunities to envision and practice pedagogies of hope that contribute to an active civil society and an invigorated democracy.

### **In What Ways did the Human Agency of Alternative Media Producers Overcome the Limits and Confinement of Corporate and Government Controlled Media?**

Notions of human agency employed in this study are informed by critical pedagogues’ conceptions and applications. This entails acknowledging “structuralist” assertions proclaiming that subjectivities are manufactured to sustain capitalist social relations, in ways that dominant ideologies work to reproduce social and economic relations. This acknowledgement, which limits the impact of human agency, is mitigated by critical pedagogues who dialectically situate the realm of culture within a politicized terrain where issues of citizenship are activated by participation within a potentially radical civil society (Giroux, 2001). This “culturalist” position is emphasized with a strong critique of corporate capitalism as well as signaling the need for human action to challenge and transform oppressive material conditions.

The work of Paulo Freire complements the culturalist understanding of human agency because he rejects a strictly “structuralist” view on social reproduction. That is, Freire rejects “fatalistic” views of history and challenges notions which assume that the maintenance and reproduction of dominant relationships are complete. Instead, Freire positions these assumptions as deterministic and neglectful of the possibilities to struggle toward emancipation. This view of human agency promotes both self empowerment as well as individuals laboring with others to engage material conditions by interrogating historical contexts and acting upon them to bring about transformative change (Giroux, 1994).

Thus, critical literacy centers the concept of agency in educational settings by promoting contexts that move learners from being passive objects of history to championing their subjectivities as active participants in the world. This aspect of critical literacy directly relates the acquisition of knowledge with developing proficiencies in identifying and transforming relationships that sustain passivity and shape “cultural and material resources” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 3-4). In this way, human agency promotes capacities to comprehend how power is constructed and moves from the margins of society into the construction of lived experience.

Given this assertion of human agency, the alternative media producers interviewed for this study knowingly challenged a long history of emotional and political commitment to the “Chief”. Their motivation to activate their agency included the desire to challenge official narratives generated by the University of Illinois’ Board of Trustees (BOT) and local corporate media. Many saw the need to directly produce content that expanded diversity of opinion on the issue. In attempting to do so, they came to identify several key institutional relationships that prevented the UIUC mascot issue from being fully addressed and resolved. Their sense of human

agency, therefore, further developed as the struggle progressed and the contradictions of the mascot became more exposed and comprehended.

This understanding of human agency coincides with the findings of the Birmingham School for Social Research regarding the relationship of audiences to mass media. That is, the Birmingham scholars questioned the nature of audiences as passive receivers of ideological messages and emphasized the cultural sphere as dynamic, with conflicting and contradictory meanings embedded in specific historical relationships and political practices (Brantlinger, 1990). Thus, the struggle over audience consciousness represents a terrain of struggle where alternative sites of public pedagogy were seen as essential to exposing the contradictions of the UIUC mascot and forcing policy changes to end its use. As such, the interviewees for this study expressed concerns relating to the management of the mascot controversy at UIUC. These apprehensions ranged from the different ways by which the political system within Illinois placed multiple pressures on the University of Illinois Board of Trustees (BOT) to delay a final decision on the issue, to the manner by which the local corporate media constructed particular narratives for public consumption. Combined, the exploration of these themes offers additional insight into the forces that prompted and sustained the need to activate human agency by using alternative media production.

Many of the participants forcefully referred to the local corporate media as upholding ideological positions that informed the manner by which the mascot coverage was reported and framed. These ideological perspectives were often described as “conservative” and “racist” and ran counter to the worldviews of those interviewed for this study. Additionally, strong gate keeping roles such as selective editing related to letters to the editors in the local newspaper were often listed as common reasons to produce alternative sources on the mascot issue.

For David, the manner by which the mascot issue was locally framed and reported compelled him to publicly dispute the dominant narratives on the issue. However, he found the local newspapers, the News Gazette and the student run Daily Illini, as continually censoring or rejecting his letters to the editor. When asked to explain why he gravitated to producing content for alternative media, David responds:

DAVID: Because I started having really strong desires to say, to speak out about stuff that was going on around here, where I live. And after quite a few very limited attempts to send letters to the editors and get things published, I've gotten my fair share of letters to the editor published, but they're just so chopped down that you really can't say, you can't really put out a whole argument.

David attributes the censorship of his letters to the protective pro-mascot positions of the local newspapers. However, he describes all of the local corporate media as being in favor of retaining the mascot and thus portraying those who counter their messages in negative light.

DAVID: And they were just completely aligned, 100% all the corporate media in this area was aligned 100% as far as I can remember, on retaining the "Chief" and supported it.

Connie also supports the opinion that the local corporate media adheres to pro-mascot perspectives. In particular, she identifies the News Gazette as heavily influenced by ideologically conservative perspective.

CONNIE: I think that's actually kind of interesting because the local newspaper has generally been very, very conservative (the News Gazette) as far as their coverage and their viewpoints expressed.

Similarly, Union Maid views the local corporate reporting as attempting to preserve a positive memory of the mascot tradition.

UNION MAID: There's all these other resurgence of adamant, "This is mine. You're trying to take away what my memory is." There was a clear bitterness in all of this mainstream media about their reporting on the retirement of the "Chief". But they're reporting in a way to make you feel bad about it. "Look at what you're getting rid of. Look at this. Remember this? Oh wasn't that great."

Tzetzengari also characterized the reporting by traditional media as further marginalizing other “people of color” within the local community and propagating a history of silence.

TZETZENGARI: The general attitude, I think, of the media was that ‘we’ were taking - and I take ‘we’ in the sense of anti-“Chief” activists as well as even, I felt it personally as ‘people of color’ specifically, Native American or Latino folks, Chicanos - were taking something away from the rest... that they really enjoyed.

Tzetzengari’s comments position the local media as oppositional to the interests of people of color. This observation is complemented by Frank’s analysis that characterizes the Champaign-Urbana corporate media as fostering and maintaining radicalized ideological tendencies at heart. In the quote below, Frank attributes the local media as operating within a system of White supremacy meant to maintain a particular status quo that does not question or intervene in existing power relations within the local community. Within his framing, he equates White supremacy with pro-mascot supporters.

FRANK: All the local media represents the pro-“Chief” position. To bring it back to the configurations that are marked by White supremacy and, thus, to understand it as a White supremacist organ of power. They’re ideological instruments of White supremacy.

Ricardo complements this view by maintaining that the News Gazette is ideologically conservative with racist overtones.

RICARDO: I mean they’re very conservative in terms of the media that’s here and they’re pretty racist.

Indigenous Scholar also characterizes this type of reporting as hurtful to American Indians because of their binary framing and their insistence of spreading pro-mascot rhetoric. However, she states that this binary framing wasn’t only coming from the pro-mascot population, but also from those in the anti-mascot movement as well.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: My views just never get in the papers because it’s not the view—that’s not the sound byte that they want to hear. They want to have a fight. The media here just seems to want to pit the two sides against each

other is more tabloid journalism than serious journalism. And in that tabloid way, we have a pro-“Chief” group and an anti-“Chief” group all fighting about American Indians and who we are. And what I—what they think is right for us. So it’s a patronization that comes from both ends of that spectrum and the voice of Native peoples is just completely left out of that conversation. It’s not sexy enough.

Robert also views the local mainstream media’s portrayal of the mascot issue as a formidable barrier to developing more comprehensive understandings of the controversy. Like others interviewed for this study, Robert characterizes their reporting as highly problematic. Overall, Robert portrays mainstream media as devoid of analysis or context, with their reporting focused on events themselves and not on the reasons why the events took place. The consequences of this type of reporting, according to Robert, often forced groups protesting against the mascot to create media spectacle just so they might gain media coverage.

ROBERT: I think the mainstream television media was just like, here’s a protest and the protest was the news, not the message behind the protest particularly... I mean there was the local paper, the News Gazette, we certainly know what their editorial view was on it. But I never felt like there was any real effort to go in and present both sides in a really meaningful and deep way in all of that.

Not all corporate media, however, generated the same perspectives on the mascot issue. In the next passage, Indigenous Scholar contrasts local corporate media with national corporate media reporting on the issue. She perceived national news outlets as questioning the mascot-politics taking place in Champaign-Urbana. According to her, the national media often portrayed the UIUC mascot issue in a manner that was embarrassing to the local community. In many ways, this difference between the local and national coverage exposed the high degree of acculturation taking place by the local corporate media.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Oh, that was so hilarious. It felt like the national media was saying, “Oh my god, look what Illinois is doing. They still have a [Native] mascot!” And it was the source—we became the butt of jokes I think in some—many places, and on a national scene.

According to Connie, organizers attempting to expose the story strategically used knowledge that the national news did not look as favorably on the mascot as the local corporate media. This was made visible when the students who organized the *Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC* forum arranged for the event to be streamed live, thus allowing for media organizations from outside the area to watch from any location.

CONNIE: We had the Racism, Power and Privilege forum and we did a live stream, a live streaming video of the event. And press releases had been sent out to national news outlets and coverage was given to the issue. And I think a large part of it is because through these technologies, they were able to watch it and experience it from a distance and then, therefore, better able to report on it. And that was really cool, really cool. And again, when that happens that, in turn, puts more pressure locally because of the national spotlight.

This view often corresponded to the lack of communication and engagement, not only within the local media, but also on the part of the University of Illinois' Board of Trustees. In the end, it was the decision of the Board of Trustees to end the use of the American Indian themed mascot. This decision, however, was seen as being made reluctantly, without conviction that it was the correct thing to do.

DAVID: [T]hey [the BOT] weren't going to do anything about it because it was just too much pro-"Chief" sentiment in the hands of people that really had power, donors, alumni, those kinds of people, and lots of students. I mean let's face it, the majority of the students on this campus like that thing. So with all that going on they weren't actually going to act on it.

With regards to the University's Board of Trustees, Ricardo also portrays their decision to end the use of the mascot image and performance as a necessity because of NCAA's threatened sanctions. This stance mentions nothing about the moral imperatives raised by the controversy, but instead focused on the outside pressures that were placed on them.

RICARDO: I think they tried to make it seem like they were purely doing it for NCAA reasons, money reasons. So that's sort of why people say the teaching moment was sort of lost. There was no lesson to be gained from it other than if you pressure an institution with money you can make some changes.

When asked to comment on the role of the University of Illinois' Board of Trustees in the mascot issue, Frank's analysis further supports David and Ricardo's assertions. However, Frank ties the Board of Trustees' stance as aligned with the forces of White supremacy.

FRANK: Right up to the bitter end, even when Epply [the BOT Chair] announced the end, his announcement of it was not humble and did not concede any territory to the opposition -- to the other possible "we's" in the community. I found it to be a continuous outrage that they claimed to represent the University of Illinois, when what they're representing is a particular segment—a White-based part— of the university.

Connie's views on the Board of Trustees focused on their ineffective communication with the public. According to her, their silence on the mascot issue may have created greater outrage amongst the public.

CONNIE: I think they were largely ineffective with using the media. I think actually that was a mistake on their part. I really felt to communicate with the public now, they [the public] expect a certain amount of communication and knowledge through the media.

Like Connie, Robert also saw the Board of Trustees' use of media as inefficient and lacking of vision. For him, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees offered limited information that was available for public consumption. When asked about the Board of Trustees use of media, his answer was as follows:

ROBERT: I'd say, it was pretty limited. It was mostly in a form of resolutions that would come out in the usual way that resolutions would come out. "Therefore it's decided that such and such."

For Robert, the role of the Board of Trustees in the mascot controversy was difficult for many to discern. He felt those who had the power to make a decision on the issue ignored those opposed to the use of an American Indian mascot. According to Robert, this dismissive relationship often radicalized protesters, which establish non-productive relationships between the Board of Trustees and those individuals and groups attempting to end the mascot's reign.

ROBERT: I just have always wondered how do you affect the change you want to see happen? A violent protest at some point has to happen or there's no registering that there's a problem. But in order to make something change, you have to get them to make a decision that they are going to get a lot of criticism for. And how do you do that? And just speaking plaintively and saying this is how I feel, and this is really important to me and this is really insulting, clearly was not doing it.

According to Robert, even when the Board of Trustees reached an agreement to retire the mascot, the reasons they publicly offered for doing so was strictly because of NCAA pressure. However, Robert notes other pressures that may have affected the manner by which the mascot was eliminated. For him, because Illinois' governor appointed the Board members, the governor himself was under political pressure to move slowly and quietly on the issue.

ROBERT: Because my understanding is there was a poll taken within the state and it basically asked would you be less favorably inclined to vote for the governor if he was involved in having the "Chief" retired and the answer was predictably yes. That was my understanding that people have said, well no we don't want the "Chief" retired and we wouldn't think too much of him [the governor] if he had some role in that happening.

Indigenous Scholar complements Robert's analysis of some of the complexities faced by the Board of Trustees. She believes their overall silence on the mascot issue was caused by a difficult set of relationships and political pressures. This included the need to silence themselves because the incumbent Governor Rod Blagojevich appointed them and he didn't want any possible problems to arise in downstate Illinois during his 2006 campaign for re-election. The Board of Trustees members may have also feared impact to their own corporate jobs and financial interests.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I think that actually there's a lot about the board and how it has behaved on this—that we don't know. I think that there's a lot of political pressure that has been placed on them. I think that a lot of the people on the board over the years were like, "Get this thing over with." But that there was political pressure placed on them from higher, from the appointments that they had from the governor's office because they're all member of corporations and running companies and boards and it seems like maybe there was fear of repercussion for their own financial interests if they did that.

Ricardo attempted to understand and problematize the official mascot narrative through archival research. This research linked the formation of the mascot with the establishment of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) at UIUC. He would later use this research to create content for his alternative media productions, in his attempt to inform the public on the historic context from which the mascot derived. This research led him to create a multimedia slideshow that contained historic pictures, quotes, and archival information regarding campus climate and the role that inter-fraternity organizations had on the creation of the KKK at UIUC. He also traced the membership of one inter-fraternity organization and showed how many of its members would later gain positions as administrators, faculty members, and as members of the Board of Trustees.

RICARDO: And you see that they're running everything on campus from the Daily Illini, to the College Republicans to the sports activities, social activities. And then you have in 1926, I believe, it was when the mascot was first produced and you say, ok, this kid here he came up with this. He didn't do this in a vacuum... Then you go and see the yearbook pictures of this guy, Lester Lutewhiler. He's there with his boys scout troop. And they're just all there, bare-chested, dressed up like Native people... Something happened where I just started to see all the chips just fall into line... There were all these sort of inherent contradictions that kept coming up.

Ricardo's archival research led him to construct new understandings of the historical context from which the mascot derived and was nourished. This archival aspect of his investigation complements critical literacy, by situating historicity and the political economy within contexts for knowledge construction.

This archival feature of research was also shown to influence Robert as a primary motivation for him to engage in alternative media production. For Robert, the powerful insights and possibilities allowed by archives played an important role in his goals in documenting anti-mascot actions that occurred on campus, and at Board of Trustees meetings. In the following

quote, he identifies the local media's tendency to show up with their cameras at anti-mascot rallies, but to only show very short clips on the local news.

ROBERT: I understand the reasons for it, but the media would show up, set up their cameras, you know, shoot five minutes of b-roll, of which ten seconds would make it on the news, and then that was it. People went on and they had lots to say and that stuff was never seen again, never heard again. And I think that's a tragedy. I mean, people had a lot to say and those voices, you know, some of them are gone or you just won't hear them again.

What prompted Robert to become a media producer was a series of pro-mascot billboards that sprung up in the Champaign-Urbana area in 2001 and 2002. The billboards held messages supporting the mascot and Robert found them particularly distasteful. Initially, the purpose of Robert's media production was to create an alternative source of information on the mascot issue. He was not particularly interested in joining existing anti-mascot groups, and was conscious of maintaining his own independence. In particular, he was influenced by the words of the local independent video producer Jay Rosenstein, who documentary, *In Whose Honor?* focused on the UIUC mascot controversy.

ROBERT: [T]here was a quote from Jay Rosenstein that made it very clear saying that the Native voices and protest side of this stuff was never heard except when there was a protest or something came up. It all just disappeared. And basically what only viewpoint you were left with was those who had money to put up billboards or what have you.

As a result of these observations, Robert set out to document speeches and actions of anti-mascot activities so that those narratives could be archived for local community members, as well as for his growing national audience. By video recording and archiving these speeches, Robert attempted to use them as pedagogical tools that could educate the general public on the mascot issue in ways that countered the local corporate media's approach and perspectives. That is, his extended video clips were made available online, often uncensored and unedited, so that the corporate media's "sound-bite" and dualistic framing could be bypassed. Robert's hope for this

approach was for a type of framing that fostered a deeper understanding of the issue to develop, one that included the perspectives of the American Indian community involved with this struggle, and the consequences the issue had on the lives of everyday people.

ROBERT: I really liked this idea that what people have to say can be put out in a form that people could see 50 years from now. So what I'd like to see is that some of what people have had to say will be out there because there's a larger problem of racism in the country even if every native mascot was abandoned tomorrow, which won't happen, somehow it'll probably never go away. But there's a need for these issues to be put out there and for this information to be put there on a very personal level that I think it can only be conveyed with video. And I think that's a powerful thing.

Similarly to Robert's goal to support indigenous perspectives on the mascot issue, Indigenous Scholar used her blog posts to inform wider networks of Indian Country of what was happening in Champaign-Urbana. Her desire was to counter the media's attempt to portray the mascot issue as either pro-"Chief" or anti-"Chief" by focusing on and encouraging pro-Indigenous perspectives to arise. Indigenous Scholar believed this was necessary because she understood the manner by which the local corporate media represented the issue was hurtful and false.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: My views just never get in the papers because it's not the view—that's not the sound byte that they want to hear. They want to have a fight. The media here just seems to want to pit the two sides against each other is more tabloid journalism than serious journalism. And in that tabloid way, we have a pro-"Chief" group and an anti-"Chief" group all fighting about American Indians and who we are. And what I—what they think is right for us. So it's a patronization that comes from both ends of that spectrum and the voice of Native peoples is just completely left out of that conversation. It's not sexy enough.

As such, Indigenous Scholar used her blogging activism as a way to force Native perspectives on this mascot issue to arise. This included reporting on events such as the Congressional Field Hearing co-sponsored by representative Tim Johnson, a Republican from Urbana.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Well, I went to that hearing and the way that I recalled it being presented and spun out of that moment was just an effort to contain or shape the story in a certain way and to confine it, it seemed—to tell it in a way that was favorable to Tim Johnson and what he was trying to do. And I think there was—there were plenty of people that weren't down with what he was trying to do. They didn't agree with what he was trying to do. And the alternative media allowed us to—blogs allowed us to say, “Hey, look what Tim Johnson said. What do you think about that?”

The reporting on the field hearing provided by Indigenous Scholar reached the Oglala reservation of Pine Ridge. It was Fools Crow, a tribally enrolled Oglala who originally sold the regalia during the great depression. Shortly after the congressional field hearing, the Oglala Sioux demanded the regalia be returned because of what they considered to be its misuse.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: As a result of that work, they learned of what was happening down here and decided that they could not have the University using regalia that was acquired from one of their tribal members, in the way that it was being used. So, that led to their tribal counsel having a resolution issued, requesting that the University of Illinois return that regalia. So, the reach of the technology is just, it's limitless.

This type of educational project, informing others of mascot issues across the country, also took place on a weekly basis because of local alternative media activists. Both Union Maid and Tzetzengari viewed their production efforts as educating the public on the issue in both subtle and direct ways. During Union Maid's weekly community radio program, she would occasionally air content related to the mascot issue.

UNION MAID: I see the “Chief” issue, the mascot issue as a very local climate issue that people need to have an opinion about. It's not just something that's here and we just ignore it... [P]eople need to understand these climates affect day-to-day functions and health, mental health, and spirituality for people.

For Union Maid, the nature of community radio allows a potential audience to tune in and hear very diverse opinions and narratives. Her own strategy as a radio host is to “subtly educate” the listening public so that others can hear how issues such as the mascot controversy impact people's lives. Her belief is that listening to the personal narratives of people being directly

affected by the mascot controversy can work to transform opinions on the issue. For her, community radio offers a medium for this type of educational process to work over prolonged periods of time. Unlike the education that takes place strictly through the use of books, the format of radio is able to penetrate the structured barriers preventing consciousness on the issue to arise.

UNION MAID: If I'm driving in my car to get gas and someone says [on the radio], "My son said 'mom, I have to cut my hair because I don't want to be an Indian.'" And you hear a woman who's crying because she recognizes that her son wants to assimilate. He's doing it to survive. He's doing it because he doesn't want to get beat up at school, he doesn't want to have that difference that separates him from the other kids. When you hear that, when you hear someone's experience it's different than reading about it. It's different than seeing a movie, people acting it out. And how do we reach the people that don't want to know about that. How do we drop little information that they can—that they might pick up, little breadcrumbs that they might follow and find some truth. You work in the public sector. You work with people who don't have money to study with. Or you find people who are studying something different. And you say now that we're all here, maybe you can see how this affects other people. You try to subtly educate.

Tzetzengari and his radio collective also practiced this act of solidarity exemplified by Union Maid. This collective often supported the work of others struggling to educate the public on the issue. They also included playing songs with provocative lyrics that helped contextualize the meanings that diverse groups of people had on the issue.

TZETZENGARI: One thing that they [the radio collective] play is a song by Mother Night, which is an old 70s Chicano rock band and your head, to prove that you're a man, to prove that you're cool, to prove that you can kill, fool are you'. So then they keep developing this as they go on. It's this critique of folks they have a song called 'Fools Are You'. The first line starts out, 'snatch a feather from an Indian's head, hang it up above appropriating indigenous identities and identity in general and sort of making these characterizations out of them or just to prove that they're a man, that they are cool, that they can kill. So we usually play that every week and dedicate it to all the "Chief" supporters.

This example offered by Tzetzengari demonstrate how the work of his radio collective are able to challenge what he describes as normalized "markers of space" broadcasted by

corporately controlled media. For Tzetzengari, these markers of space are often characterized by dominant cultural norms that silence diverse perspectives and voices.

The narratives presented in this research offer insight into the lives of alternative media producers and the landscapes that helped shape the contexts they engaged. Their stories speak to the manner by which individuals and networks interact with social movements and with the University's administrative policies meant to control the pace of change on the issue. In all cases, production of alternative media content was meant to challenge administrative attempts to manage the UIUC mascot debate, while also overcoming the local corporate media's influences on how information on the issue was distributed and framed. Also confronted were the media and political campaigns of pro-mascot supporters, characterized by the alternative media producers as failing to comprehend the mascot's impact on the American Indian community at UIUC as well as other racialized populations on campus.

### **How Did the Use of Alternative Media Contribute to Social Network Movements?**

At this juncture, it becomes timely to address issues related to how the alternative media producers contributed to social network movements. This study uses the term "social network" to situate the loose affiliations of activists, organizers and concerned individuals who were in communication with each other in multiple capacities to end the use of the mascot at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This definition locates social networks involved in the pro-Native and anti-mascot campaigns within a wider social movement. In this case, the movement consisted of individuals and organizations working on the issue at multiple levels and in various capacities. These individuals and groups cannot be classified as operating within a single hierarchically run organization. Instead, the social network aspect of those involved in this

movement carried on relationships without an overall organizational structure or personnel with established leadership authority. This understanding works well with Joel M. Podolny and

Karen L. Page (1998) articulation of network forms of organization:

We define a network form of organization as any collection of actors that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange. (p. 59)

According to Donatella Della Porta and Mario Dianna (2006) what binds those involved in heterogeneous networks is the formation of a collective identity developed by the assimilation of commonly understood and shared codes. Including this aspect of collective identity positions processes that facilitate the negotiation of meaning as primary. These processes of negotiation help maintain the involvement of semi-autonomous entities willing to contribute their resources in the pursuit of common goals.

A social movement process is in place to the extent that both individual and organized actors, while keeping their autonomy and independence, engage in sustained exchange of resources in pursuit of common goals. The coordination of specific initiatives, the regulation of individual actors' conduct, and the definition of strategies all depend on permanent negotiations between the individuals and the organizations involved in collective action. (p. 20)

Thus the coordination of these resources requires permanent negotiation processes within communicative structures that foster growth and movement towards goal attainment. These communicative processes within social movements are particularly significant, given that it is precisely through the development of common communication codes that comprehension takes place.

With this said, when addressing this question of how alternative media contributes to social networks, the centrality of listservs must be recognized as a medium that allows for the free exchange of information and shared analysis to take place. All of the alternative media producers in this study acknowledged listservs as both a type of alternative media and as serving

a central role in developing and sharing ideas which question the use of American Indian mascots. Listservs also served as the common link between the alternative media producers interviewed for this study. That is, although they may not have known each other personally, they were kept partly informed of the issue by their enrollment in the [coalition@iresist.org](mailto:coalition@iresist.org) listserv.

Other national and locally based listservs played important functions for seeking camaraderie and linking with communities of resistance. These listservs broadened networks by providing breaking news, analysis, and expanding people's connections between the local and national mascot concerns. Additionally, the listservs solidified practices of identity formation within the anti-“Chief” and pro-American Indian movements. For example, because the Native population is so small within Champaign-Urbana, listservs helped connect Indigenous Scholar to national Indigenous communities who then served as important support networks, sustaining her efforts as both a graduate student and as a mother raising her daughter with an American Indian identity.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: I felt it really necessary to identify others nationally and internationally who were doing the same kind of work and having the same kind of experience so that we could help each other, we could come together in this space and vent about those assholes out there who are resistant to what we were trying to—affect change.

Other examples of the listservs used by Indigenous Scholar are diverse and national in scope. Indigenous Scholar's gravitation toward tribal listservs was particularly strategic and relevant because some of the local listservs did not allow for a safe environment to raise questions and critique UIUC's mascot. She often found herself attacked when she attempted to discuss American Indian issues within non-Native listservs. For this reason, she sought other sources where she could learn from others, as well as share her observations and experiences

concerning these topics. Additionally, Indigenous Scholar found that blogging connected her to wider networks across the country.

CONNIE: I think a lot of what really helped me was just reading people's stories, either sent through listserves or discussed their experiences via electronic mediums. That was really powerful for me where technology's really helped us to be able to pass information along so quickly, you know, within a couple seconds—a hundred people know about—know more in depth about something and being able to, you know, on a listserve being able to communicate back on an open forum and I think it's an under-realized media that's really helpful.

Indigenous Scholar's experiences with listservs are indicative of why individuals involved in oppositional movements seek and choose to form "parallel counterpublics" (Fraser 2001) as a strategy to establish and sustain spaces for semiotic resistance (Fiske, 1997). These actions complement the analysis of Nancy Fraser who documents the historical use of alternative media as a strategy to form counterpublics within a broad array of populations. Fraser also locates the use of alternative media as a force in the identity formation of subordinated populations resisting policies that maintain oppressive relationships and silence dissent.

For Fraser, subordinated groups have historically utilized alternative media to establish parallel counterpublics, as a means to circulate unconventional perspectives representative of oppositional interests. Because Fraser situates her analysis of counterpublics within unequal stratified societies, she emphasizes the dual nature of alternative sites for the construction of meaning. That is, they represent spaces that can insulate from antagonistic environments, while also providing arenas for actions against domination to be organized. These alternative sites serve as incubators for dissent where the dominant discourse is engaged, the contradictions of its logic publicly revealed, and strategies for overcoming their obstacles are developed and acted upon.

The formation of counterpublics also allows for similarities of coding/decoding to take place and develop; an aspect necessary for identity construction, the maintenance of non-hierarchical organizing, and the growth of networks of resistance. These spaces offer contexts for similarities in interpretation and interaction with codes, which serve as foundational aspects allowing the formation and expansion of social movements.

Frank echoes Fraser's assertions by situating listservs and Websites as important sources for alternative modes of framing the mascot issue. His analysis speaks of the significance of locating the mascot struggle within a larger anti-racist effort that embraces people of color as well as their White allies. In this way, the preferred meanings circulated within the dominant discourse could be questioned and challenged within an analysis that positions various social justice movements together, within a particular historical moment and local context.

FRANK: Of course, those are vehicles [listservs, Websites] for even keeping people on the margins connected to it, informed of what's going on... This is probably simplistic but my having been here three years, my reading of—around the “Chief”—the framing is an anti-racist struggle. That's an important struggle. In that sense, it's an anti-oppression struggle. So it's related to other struggles. The anti-racist struggle brings people of color and White allies together.

Frank analysis may also contextualize how the movement to end the use of the UIUC mascot was able to gradually expand over the years. That is, by framing the mascot controversy as an anti-racist and social justice issue, the scope of possible nodes that can join the existing network increases dramatically. Additionally, Frank also cites listservs as a vital tool for maintaining this network, both locally and nationally. For Frank the listservs functioned to inform himself and others of the intricacies of issues related to the mascot topic, but also provided perspective on the amount of commitment others had in this struggle on a broader scale.

Other participants of this study cite new media technologies for also impacting the growth of the network, altering the framing of the mascot issue, and assisting with the sharing of resources used to update the social movement on future actions, concerns and issues. For example, Connie relates how in October 2006, there was a racist theme party held by the “Greek” organizations, Delta Delta Delta and Zeta Beta Tau, entitled *Tacos and Tequila*. At the event, the sorority and fraternity members dressed like “Mexicans”. Some dressed as pregnant women, others like custodians, ground-keepers, gangsters, and sombrero wearing mustached figures. Pictures of this event were posted on Facebook and were distributed on various listservs on campus.

Because the UIUC administration failed to address this event, students of color, Native American community members, and their allies organized themselves and created an organization called Students Transforming Oppression and Privilege (or S.T.O.P.) Coalition. The S.T.O.P. Coalitions’ focus was not simply protecting Mexican or Mexican American students from being stereotyped by ignorant Greek students. On the contrary, as suggested by Frank, they framed the issue within a wider struggle of anti-racism and social justice. What resulted from this organizing was the February 1, 2007 campus event entitled the Racism, Power and Privilege Forum at UIUC.

Immediately prior to the Tacos and Tequila incident, there had been a lull in activity within the anti-mascot and pro-Native social justice movement at UIUC. However, people were in communication with each other via multiple listservs, particularly the [coaliton@iresist.org](mailto:coaliton@iresist.org). Once word spread of the Tacos and Tequila party, including actual photos of students participating in what were perceived to be racist practices, the network quickly mobilized.

According to both David and Union Maid, what assisted the speed and effectiveness of the mobilization was the “copy free” nature of alternative media. That is, the ability of alternative media producers to freely share their work and ideas contributed to the public education work required at the time.

DAVID: What I like about alternative media, I will say, is that free nature of it. It shares ideas. It doesn't try to own them. It just spreads it out and lets everybody own it.

For David, the quantity of alternative media production that took place in response to the Tacos and Tequila incident was so rapid and widespread that it gave the appearance of an hierarchically organized campaign. Again, the ability to freely share materials within the alternative media context multiplied the perceived sense of collaboration that was taking place behind the scenes.

DAVID: We were working together, but they seemed to the outside to be working together in a much more concentrated, not concentrated, but coordinated way than they actually were. It took that whole Tacos and Tequila thing.

Union Maid further develops this theme by describing how she utilized this availability of network resources personally, but also how it represented the creation of a new collaborative culture focused on public pedagogy.

UNION MAID: [W]e were creating a different culture. We were creating a different climate that people could blind themselves to if they wanted to, but if they were looking for it they could fall into it and have all sorts of ways of people talking about it in a space to explore and challenge...

Similar to David's interpretation about the “copy free” nature of this material, Union Maid cites this aspect of alternative media production as strengthening networked communities because of its efficient use of resources. That is, because content was being created on one Website or blog, it could be freely shared and distributed on multiple listservs or used by other producers on their radio shows. For example, video that was posted on one Website was also

uploaded with separate audio files that could be downloaded and used on the different community radio stations.

UNION MAID: There was a lot more sharing of collective collaborative work. The piece that was on IResist also went to WLPR, it went to WPRG, the Public Eye, the fact that people had blogs, that people were sharing on the S.T.O.P. email list, all these different ways of communicating even if it was the same message being done and all these different ways, the posters for the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC, even if people didn't go to that event, we were creating a different culture.

Union Maid's observations highlight the importance of collaborative networks in producing and distributing timely material tied to relevant news stories. In the examples provided the content was created and able to be distributed without bureaucratic delays that could have lessened the relevancy of the materials, made possible by a shared sense of collective labor, which promoted values aimed toward communal sharing.

UNION MAID: So it becomes this sharing of information and what I found is that's collective organizing. That's being a collective and not saying "I'm making a name for myself and a career for myself in this particular field" and helping people who might not be as comfortable with the technical aspect try it out because they're so impassioned about the idea that you're talking about. So it becomes a way of networking and sharing information and abilities and skills.

The legacies of these relationships have left a lasting impression on social justice movements. For example, Frank's capacity to endure a pro-"Chief" environment is also directly related to his ability to participate in communities of resistance at the local level, as well as across the country. In Champaign-Urbana, many strides had already been made prior to Frank's arrival, so that he didn't feel inhibited in speaking up against the mascot in various platforms. He was particularly impressed by the work that past organizers and activists had accomplished, facilitating the involvement of new community members.

FRANK: I know stories from some of the earlier folks, and it wasn't easy for them. There was a high cost that came with it – with their speaking out. The cost I'm talking about is the threat to one's... I mean I call it financial well-being. I

didn't feel like my job was threatened by the position I took. I think there's other kinds of costs. The emotional cost is living here with what I call it, "Chief"-Love, so prevalent. Some days, it's very hard.

Frank's description of the positive impact of previous work "It was easy," associated with campaigns problematizing the mascot surfaced in other ways as well. Tzetzengari describes how the legacy of sustained anti-"Chief" and pro-Native networks had a powerful role in how he became educated on the topic. In particular, he sites the importance of educational materials created by alternative media producers in providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue. He juxtaposes these efforts to that provided by the corporate media.

TZETZENGARI: But most important I think for me, was only having lived here 3 years, was to know that there was anti-"Chief" activism historically. That I think was something that was not expressed in mainstream media but only in alternative media. Also, I think that anti-"Chief" activists were given a chance to more fully explain sort of the damage that the "Chief" had done to them personally as well as a community and to relate it to the damage that it was doing to the University in general through alternative media sources rather than just be sort of written off as anti-"Chief" community or activists as they were in the general media.

Thus, the legacy of alternative media production acted to strengthen and expand the network of supporters through educational activities made publicly available. Additionally, this type of production by alternative media also had an impact on other alternative media producers involved in the struggle. For example, Indigenous Scholar states she was positively impacted by their contributions because she felt the other producers created a diversity of perspectives not offered by the local corporate media.

INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR: Well, I was glad that there were other places where the public could pick up some different kinds of material. I saw that as a major opportunity for the people, broadly speaking, citizens of Champaign Urbana, students of the University to get a different viewpoint than they were getting from the media.

Indigenous Scholar's comments speak to the positive role that communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) have on each other and upon the general public. Overall, her comments,

along with the narratives from the others interviewed for this study speak strongly to how alternative media contributes to social networks. Through their voices, it became clear that alternative media production on the mascot issue represented a consciousness of interests symbolic of the growing need to influence the possible perspectives and beliefs that problematized the use of Native imagery for sporting events. The production efforts offered by the alternative media producers functioned not only as acts to inform the general public by distributing alternative perspectives, but also by serving to reinforce the “representation of shared beliefs” (Carey, 1989, p. 18). In this way, alternative media production actually strengthened networks of resistance by developing and reinforcing collective identities, publicly working to redefine mainstream notions of the mascot issue.

Alternative media producers can thus be seen as cultural workers exemplifying civic engagement by providing the creation of contexts for the meaningful construction of knowledge. This view of learning as a social activity was also advocated by Freire (1992) who asserted the need for multiple conceptualizations of reality using diverse forms of media and symbolic systems. For Freire, the development and support of cultural circles serve as the context for these activities to take place, whereas, for the alternative media producers interviewed for this study, their possible audiences and the networks of pro-Indigenous and anti-mascot organizers and activist represented the culture circles. The work of these media producers served to assert an alternative vision of the world (and the word) and to share these understandings with others.

This observation complements Carey’s (1989) ritual model of communication and further deepens the connection to Friere’s understanding on how learners can engage multiple modes of communication for the purpose of naming their world, while strengthening community. Applying Carey’s model demonstrates how alternative media producers contributed to the

maintenance of dispersed networks by publicly exemplifying shared beliefs that counter the dominant narrative. Melluci (1996) also compliments this view by locating the integration of ideology within networked communities and the ritual practices they create. For Melluci, communities are strengthened through the formation of rituals serving to mediate tensions inherently found in organizing across diverse populations.

A last aspect of the integrative function of ideology can be found in ritual practices. Every movement creates rituals which serve to consolidate its components. The adoption of linguistic or gestural codes, of costumes or ways of dressing creates traits common to those who are part of the movement. Actual ceremonies, governed by codified procedures, represent the synthesis of a shared organizational culture. These rituals, through the quasi-sacred crystallization of the norms of the group, tend to guarantee the continuity and the efficacy of ideology, in spite of the tensions at work within it. (p. 353)

For Freire (1998a) championing critical dialogue is a particularly powerful activity. He advocated for practices that include communal processes of naming the world in ways that engaged political and economic relationships that facilitate unequal systems of social reproduction, while also developing an understanding of one's social-historical location. The participants of this study provocatively demonstrate these capacities and highlight the importance of using alternative media for public pedagogy.

### **What Were Some Primary Obstacles and Limits Faced by Alternative Media Producers?**

The eight alternative media producers interviewed for this study represent Webpage developers, bloggers, radio content creators, and videographers. As mentioned earlier, these producers cite listservs as important sources of "alternative media" used to inform themselves and others about the mascot issue at UIUC. Excluding their use of listservs, however, the contexts for alternative media production fall into two categories. One group consists of Webpage developers and bloggers producing content under conditions that were not dependent

on larger organizations administering access to production equipment and software. The other group of producers worked within organizations supportive of alternative media production such as the local community radio stations or within the administration of the local Independent Media Center (IMC).

Although members of this group would agree they gained expertise in production skills from books or Internet resources, their production output was more often affected by their own limitations and time constraints, or by the life demands outside of the scope of alternative media production such as their occupational requirements and family life.

For example, Robert is a media producer who worked alone using both digital video and Webpages to inform the public on the mascot issue. He learned to create Webpages by reading books, visiting other Internet sites and by trial and error. He also developed some basic video skills from a class he took at the local community college. The obstacles that he most faced had to do with time constraints and equipment expenses.

ROBERT: I think the main toll was time away from my wife. ... It was just like, "Yea, ok, your going to spend a lot of time on that" and things of that sort. So, that was the main thing. I mean, certainly there was a fair amount of expense that went into buying all the stuff. You know if you include the laptop and the camera, then you're up at eight grand and up, when you start buying more stuff. But I think it was mostly time.

Connie also cites the amount of time needed to produce alternative media as an obstacle. In the quote below she describes the large amount of hours needed to pre-produce a one-hour community radio program.

CONNIE: When you're producing content like that [pre-produced radio show], there are hours you put in for the actual sitting down and editing. There are hours that you put in, listening to the interviews and there are the hours that you just spend thinking about how you want to structure it.

The group of producers working within organizational structures also experienced obstacles of limited time and demands required from their livelihoods and families. However,

they were also more likely to cite organizational barriers, conflicts with personnel, dominating discourse patterns, as well as access to high quality production tools and training, as impeding their own goals and visions for alternative media production. These barriers were both provocative and revealing. For example, Tzetzengari's narrative is particularly helpful in illustrating how these obstructions are often encountered within organizations created to support progressive spaces for production. Tzetzengari associates these problems to characteristics of the dominant culture, their particular discourse patterns, and an overall distrust of people of color. For Tzetzengari this also translates into organizational meetings being run that reflect dominant ways of structuring interactions. What results are uncomfortable environments for those who are not proficient in these modes of working together.

TZETZENGARI: I think almost every space that I've worked in, KBU might be a little bit different, but I think every space that I've worked in Oregon, California, Texas, and in Illinois within alternative media have predominately been White spaces who tend to be looking for more input, more diversity but at the same time I think, definitely see it as something they want to have control of, they don't want to let it out of their hands. ...I feel uncomfortable, I mean most of the places I've worked are supposedly, collectively run. But you tend to have White folks dominating the collective.

Tzetzengari also cites how hierarchies are policed within these alternative sites of production. He asserts that other common mechanism for maintaining control are based on the amount of time one has volunteered at a particular site, as well one's familiarity with production equipment.

TZETZENGARI: I think what you see a lot of times in alternative media people who have been there a year longer, a week longer than someone else wants to sort of exert a hierarchy over this as "my space" or "I've been here longer than you". "I know how to use the equipment" or "You don't really know the history of this place and how it came about..." I think that the underlying hierarchy seems to me, to be about time, how long someone's been there. Were they part of the original sort of founding group of people, and then age. I mean, I knew a lot of what I've seen is people who are older tend to think kids or youth or even youth of color are going to fuck up the equipment.

To counter the dominant relations he experiences, Tzetzengari addresses the challenges by providing some of the technology trainings that are required for new members to host their own radio shows. In this way, he is able to contribute to the creation of new spaces for marginalized populations to overcome the obstacles of certification. When asked why he focuses on people of color, he replies:

TZETZENGARI: I think I'm able to have a longer discussion, make someone feel a little bit more at ease in a space that's not predominately White in order to learn how to use the stuff. It can be intimidating when it's a lot of White folks. They're not familiar with your subject matter that you want to get on the radio or maybe even the language that you want to do it in and so they might be very technical with you or focusing on other people in the group.

Despite Tzetzengari's efforts to train prospective members on equipment, it is difficult for him to continually offer these workshops. He sites this as a major barrier to overcoming the obstacles in providing greater access for Spanish speaking people at the station.

TZETZENGARI: For example, there are people right now who have expressed an interest in working in radio that need to be trained in Spanish and I could do that training but I'm not going to be there every time they come to the studio. I really can't do more than one program that I'm committed to right now. There's limited amounts of people who are in those collective spaces who are - who speak Spanish or speak other languages who can welcome these people in and I mean, it's obvious, the people who have shown interests are also not expecting me to be there every time. So they're more reluctant to get involved.

Similar to Tzetzengari, Union Maid discussed obstacles in production not limited to technological or skill-based aspects of media creation. On the contrary, Union Maid encountered other barriers associated with misogyny, ageism, status hierarchies, and discourse patterns that made teaching and learning difficult or impossible. Much of this occurred because of a long established culture at the community radio station where Union Maid was airing her programs and attempting to gain new radio engineering skills.

UNION MAID: It doesn't have to be what I went through when I started at WPRG where these guys would be like, they couldn't tell me that I had [the volume] too

low. They would just reach over me and [yell] “Look at your levels!” And they would scold me... And this is where White males that I’ve worked with in engineering, they have a communication problem. It becomes a culture of how they don’t share knowledge. It becomes, “it’s mine, I’m going to show you that it’s wrong by doing it but I’m not going to tell you how to fix it.” Or “It’s too complicated for you to understand. I’ll just engineer for you. Why don’t you do the interview and I’ll do the soundboard?”

Union Maid was very surprised to have these interactions at a community radio station. Her initial expectation was the radio station would be a progressive organization and adhere to the values associated with democratic participation. However, to her surprise, she often encountered a culture that was often inflexible and unwilling to engage in dialogue as a problem solving strategy. The difficulties encountered by Union Maid continued throughout the years. As time went on, she experienced conflicts also associated with the lack of access to high-end equipment that some community radio members brought with them for recording.

Although Union Maid experienced these challenges, it didn’t prevent her from participating in the organizational structure of WPRG. Initially she believed the problems she encountered were associated with a lack of resources so she took a paid position at the station raising funds as a Pledge Drive Coordinator. Successful in raising significant funds, she later attempted to influence policy by running for a Board of Directors’ seat with the hopes of changing the organizational structure and ethos at the station. One of the policies she initially championed was for the Board to adapt an anti-sexist statement.

UNION MAID: And all we wanted was a statement that would be posted to women who felt that if they had to leave the organization—there was some recourse. There was something that they could refer to, to say, “Hey, that’s sexist and here’s why we have this policy. You can’t act that way to me.” We didn’t have a policy before that. So it became an issue.

As a result of Union Maid’s push for change, she believes other radio station members acted to intimidate and silence her. At one point, she had her car window smashed. Other times,

she would be verbally attacked at Board meetings. All this tension took a toll on her personal life.

UNION MAID: I'm tired of it. And I can't deal with this shit anymore. I can't fight these people. And in the two and a half years that I spent on the Board it almost killed me. I've never seen myself behave in the way that I started to behave. I had to check myself.

Upon further reflection Union Maid believes the problems she experienced arose because she was trying to change the culture and structure of the radio station. During her time as a fundraiser and as a productive volunteer she believes she was seen as a model member. However, this quickly changed once she began to advocate for more inclusive station policies.

UNION MAID: When I started to threaten the culture, when I started to challenge the culture and try to change it, that's when I had the most resistance and the most reaction... Everyone loved me until I started to try to change things. And most women didn't get to that point.

Union Maid's experiences serve as powerful testimonials to the struggles that take place within organized sites for alternative media production. Her story exposes the great efforts often demanded in order for her to express and strive towards preferred visions for organizational relationships, as well as respectful contexts for the social construction of knowledge.

Other producers did not mention these organizational constraints as impacting their media production. For example, Ricardo's observations regarding obstacles faced in alternative media production addresses the particular tools and skills needed to sustain his production. Ricardo begins his observations by first characterizing the very nature of the new technologies for production and distribution as facilitating easy access for (and to) broad spectrums of populations. This ease of use, however, is also tempered in the end by the final product's quality. With this in mind, Ricardo contextualizes the vital role of access to professional equipment in the production process.

RICARDO: It's like if you just want to produce something very simple in terms of the, let's say from the video clips, you can make a pretty—you can make a video clip pretty easily I think. To make one exactly the way you want, that's a whole other issue. It's easy to be a novice at it. I think it's hard to reach the level of intermediate or an advanced sort of practitioner of this sort of art. But it's definitely easy to get on. There's a lower access, or lower barrier to access now a days than it was back in the 90s when I was starting to do stuff.

JOE: Well, how would you characterize the intermediate and advanced producers of these media?

RICARDO: Once you get to the point where you actually have real audio equipment that's able to be directional microphones, compressors, eliminators, mixers, all these other devices. It's like, you know, you go past that level of being a beginner to an intermediate. When you get to the advanced level, that's the big boys. You're playing with the big toys only. There's probably going to be—you only have a camera and some sort of tracks for it to be able to move the camera on the tracks, not just tripods, moving and motorized cameras that you can scroll back and forth. Even when they're in the air in those sort of like machines and they can take different angles, which is definitely cool, those sorts of things. Just access to those things are a little harder to get to but they are there.

Ricardo's participation in production allows him to understand and situate his own skills and expertise so that the production level at which he is currently able to create resides upon a continuum of advancement. These perspectives make him conscious of his current capacities as well as possibilities for his growth and future engagement. It also highlights the importance of being in community with other media producers from whom he can learn new skills, techniques and gain access to production tools that he can use in his own endeavors. Similar to other alternative media producers in this study, he cites the local Independent Media Center as an important hub for networking and education. When asked where is he able to interact with other media producers, he states:

RICARDO: Primarily, the IMC has been a major one, but other than that, through the University. The IMC is like a hub for people that's producing media of all types you know, publications to radio, to TV, so through them I've been able to interact with a lot of people just doing cool stuff. And conversations with them sort of lead into getting more information and more advice on those

types of things. And I meet other students like yourself who are doing media, making media, and I end up collaborating.

It is important to note that unlike Tzetzengari, Ricardo does not mention particular IMC personnel, culture or discourse patterns as obstacles to his involvement in media production. This helps contextualize the workings of the IMC as functioning for some, while obstructive for others.

David's perspective on some of the obstacles to alternative media production did not focus on time, labor requirements or organizational obstacles. Instead, he exposes another dimension one may face when engaging in alternative media production. His observations help shift this conversation to issues of audience reception and struggles over consciousness. For example, although David characterizes the pro-mascot forces as situated in very powerful positions at the University and within the local community, he also critiques other creators of alternative media content as unable or unwilling to target wider audiences, within the public educational processes. He ties this shortcoming to their ideas of "ideological purity," a shortcoming he believes is shared by both conservatives and progressives alike.

DAVID: I think alternative media unfortunately, most of the time, tends to just preach to the choir. It's sought out by and consumed by and produced by people who are kind of already on more or less the same page. Unfortunately, this has just been my experience with it. I don't see it reaching outside of those spaces very often... So what I'm afraid of is that alternative media for the most part is just another part of that process where people are seeking out and finding the things that tell them that they're right to believe what they already believe in. And there isn't a lot of cross over going on there...

Frank's views complement David's perspective, by contextualizing the value of alternative media production within struggles over audience consciousness. As such, he situates alternative media within a dialogical relationship with corporate media who also struggle for influence over people's worldviews and connection to wider systems of knowledge construction.

FRANK: I think people who are going to be connected to the kind of alternative media that I think you're talking about are not—are already going to be critical of corporate media. They've already developed a critical consciousness if they used to read and interact with corporate media but on a range of sort of a depthless, maybe so that alternative media can really play a role in not only keeping people connected but for people sort of on the margins of that critical consciousness, to pull them further into it because I think the corporate media is working really hard to pull people back into the mainstream.

The major obstacles described in this section speak to the concerns of John Downing (2001, 2005) and Paulo Freire (1970, 1993a, 1993b, 1998a, 1998b, 1992) call attention to the processes by which social justice organizations engage issues, individually and collectively. Downing locates radical media within social movements that attempt to use democratic processes to sustain their coordinated actions and mechanisms of production. He was cautious about contemporary radical media producers who reproduce dominant relationships associated with capitalist economies, patriarchy, and racialization. He emphasizes the common occurrence of social justice organizations producing media content by using dominant forms of relationships in their production processes. In this way, these organizations reproduce the very relationships they attempt to expose and transform. Downing thus warns us of romanticizing the promises of radical media production in order to ensure that oppressive relationships are not reproduced.

By emphasizing process, Downing centers the need for popular participation in media creation. He encourages the challenging of unsubstantiated sloganism within organizations that claim to champion social justice causes. He suggests incorporating dialogue within organizational structures as well as democratic organizing principles that openly question hierarchies.

Freire (1970, 1993a, 1993b, 1998a, 1998b, 1992) also contextualized the need to synchronize visions of social justice within organizational structures fighting for social justice (Darder, 2002). Freire (1992) suggests using dialogue to foster organizational relationships

promoting empowerment. The goal of this call to embrace dialogue as an organizational process is to better understand the historical influences upon the lives and relationships of those fighting for social justice (Darder, 2002). Thus, shared decision making should be preferred over the attainment of specific goals, even if they relate to social justice (Aronowitz 1993).

### **Personal Impact of Acquiring Critical Media Literacy**

Although not an original research question, this section addresses the personal impact of acquiring critical media literacy, given the profound nature of statements on this topic made by the eight participants in this study.

The production aspects of alternative media supported the ability of the participants to better express themselves within public venues. Many of the producers described this developed skill as the expression of voice. For example, as Ricardo reflects on his experiences as an alternative media producer, he also sees dramatic influences upon his life, which resulted directly from his acquisition and refinement of these production skills. He believes the process of learning the tools of production and distribution provided a source for expressing voice that is not dependent on using media controlled by dominant forces. Thus, the acquisition of skills for navigating media production directly added to a sense of empowerment and self-worth, within a context that attempts to silence him or usurp his labor towards institutional change.

RICARDO: I think how it's influenced me most dramatically I guess is it's given me a voice. I thought I had a voice before but I really didn't. I learned that with [my college]. I was very easily muted... So I think being in the media, being on the radio, TV, etc, it allows me to let them know that the conversation is not just under their terms. If we want to have a talk about racism, or discrimination, etc, we get to both define how that's going to be, not just them. Because there's all kinds of rules of professional conduct, etc, that they have to adhere to. Being on the media just lets me know I have more power than I had originally perceived.

Although Ricardo is unsure of his own impact upon administrative policies, he sees the benefit of alternative media production upon himself. Much of this personal enhancement comes in the form of self-reflection and awareness of how power is structured and can be challenged. He also expresses a certain satisfaction in being able to alter the manner by which he delivers his content to reach larger audiences with what he sees as information and knowledge that contributes to supporting a stronger civil society.

Other alternative media producers complement Ricardo's assessment with respect to strengthening their sense of voice and participation in the public sphere. Another example is David, who attributes his activity with alternative media production as contributing to his ability to be heard within a public arena.

DAVID: I can be, I can speak, I don't feel a lot more like I can be heard. I will be heard. But I feel that at least I can say something.

Indigenous Scholar's engagement in the mascot issue at UIUC developed her capacity to read the world through a political lens and affirmed her own identity as a political actor; while Connie's engagement with producing alternative media has led to liberating and powerful experiences. For Connie, the exercising of media skills allows her to speak in multiple settings and to be heard in multiple ways. She also sees alternative media as a site where diverse people can relate to each other and appreciate their similarities.

CONNIE: It's very satisfying. I think that the main reason that I produce alternative media and content without censorship or influence—well, not so much influence to an extent, is because it's so freeing. I haven't really found an experience that provides so much freedom to speak and to have thoughts that are my own and are different. And at the same time, having somebody watch that and then find a new way in which we can relate to each other. I think it provides people with more ways of getting along and finding similarities, rather than differences.

Frank's engagement in Webpage creation, for example, provided an important venue to exercise his development of voice, which in turn, made him more aware and engaged in dialogue

with various communities, both online and face-to-face. This in turn provided a context for becoming more reflexive in his own worldviews, in that he began to question his own beliefs, knowledge, and ways of thinking – all which he had previously taken for granted. Activating these practices then informed his future actions as a media producer. He attributes these activities as promoting critical thinking that has impacted his personal life in dramatic ways.

FRANK: I think that it's made me—it's enhanced my ability to think critically because in engaging with and seeing more and more nuance, more and more slippage, more and more opportunity has made—I think it's made me... a better critical thinker. I think also it has—there's an emotional toll to it because the more I have engaged the more the hopelessness has been enhanced – the more hopeless I have felt about it -- at the same time.

While increasing Frank's sense of self-worth as an intellectual, participating in alternative media literacy also facilitated and enhanced his understanding of what it means to be both humble and critical. In addition, his self-location as pro-Indigenous on the mascot issue has allowed for a more complex understanding of how the status quo is able to maintain and reproduce the very structures he desires to challenge. As mentioned above, this comprehension also entails an unanticipated emotional toll that he attributes to a sense of hopelessness.

Robert also cites his decision to become a media activist as influencing how he understands the management of controversial issues in the mainstream media. He believes he has developed a more critical perspective of what is included as news, but also what might have been excluded. Additionally, he ponders the impact of media ownership consolidation and the role of entertainment based corporations on the news.

ROBERT: I just feel like I have a little better understanding of what's done and why, in that sort of media. I think I do have a more critical eye now for what's presented or more importantly probably what's not presented. I am more aware, I would say that there are many things which are put out over the media without challenge, or without even any investigation... Maybe it was always that way, but I'm certainly more aware of it now that that's going on.

In bell hooks (2010) most recent book, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*, she speaks directly to the benefits of promoting contexts for the acquisition of critical thinking skills and the utilization of engaging pedagogies. Although her discussion focuses on classroom learning, it can easily be situated to apply to public pedagogical experiences.

According to hooks, engaged pedagogy is a starting point for critical thinking to develop amongst learners. She advocates the promotion of critical thinking to assist learners to become “fully self-actualized” (p. 8). This occurs when teaching and learning are situated as interactive processes involving active participation by teachers and learners. After providing a series of definition of critical thinking, hooks (2000) states:

All of these definitions encompass the understanding that critical thinking requires discernment. It is a way of approaching ideas that aims to understand core, underlying truths, not simply that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible. One of the reasons deconstruction became such a rage in academic circles is that it urged people to think long, hard, and critically; to unpack; to move beneath the surface; to work for knowledge. (p. 9-10)

Like Freire, hooks also includes uncovering ideological relationships in her understanding of critical, along with the ability to act upon one’s learning. However, hooks also includes an aspect in her pedagogical framework that explicitly relates participation in the construction of knowledge with establishing working relationships within learning contexts that establish integrity.

The root meaning of the word “integrity” is wholeness. Hence, engaged pedagogy makes the classroom a place where wholeness is welcomed and students can be honest, even radically open. They can name their fears, voice their resistance to thinking, speak out, and they can also fully celebrate the moments where everything clicks and collective learning is taking place. Whenever genuine learning is happening the conditions for self-actualization are in place, even when that is not a goal of our teaching process. Because engaged pedagogy highlights the importance of independent thinking and each student finding his or her unique voice, this recognition is usually empowering for students. This is especially important for students who otherwise may not have felt that they were “worthy,” that they had anything of value to contribute. (p. 21)

Given this conception of integrity, hooks is able to connect with the type of learning experienced by the alternative media producers in this study. Their insistence that they developed voice and found new ways to engage in the public sphere is testament to the engaged learning they experienced. According to hooks, when learners value their ability to express voice and to dialogue they contribute meaningfully.

Engaged pedagogy is vital to any rethinking of education because it holds the promise of full participation on the part of students. Engaged pedagogy establishes a mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties, creating an atmosphere of trust and commitment that is always present when genuine learning happens. Expanding both heart and mind, engaged pedagogy makes us better learners because it asks us to embrace and explore the practice of knowing together, to see intelligence as a resource that can strengthen our common good. (p. 22)

This analysis by hooks resonates with the type of learning that took place amongst those interviewed for this study. Their engagement in the struggle to end the use of the mascot at UIUC took place outside the confines of schooling, on a voluntary basis, and was repaid by the positive attributes they developed which encouraged relationships of integrity. In many ways, it was precisely the struggle for integrity and an opposition to those conditions that obstructed voice and participation that inspired these media producers to contribute to the public pedagogical process to eliminate the use of the fabricated “Chief Illiniwek” mascot.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

This research contextualized alternative media production within the framework of critical media literacy to demonstrate how alternative sites of communication supported public pedagogical efforts and contributed to social networks resisting dominant forms of hegemony. The study includes narratives of alternative media producers involved in the movement to end the use of a Native American mascot at the University of Illinois. In attempting to inform the public of the contradictions of the mascot, these alternative media producers became actively involved in civil society and demonstrated how relationships within dominant discourse can be challenged through their own involvement with alternative media production. This positions the participants as moving further from being passive receivers of “official” and corporate news reporting on the mascot issue, to active producers utilizing new and traditional forms of media to express their subjectivities.

An analysis based on critical social theory informs how media literacies were used for public pedagogy while also contributing to the maintenance of communities of resistance. Critical social theory requires a critique of ideology involving the ability to interrogate dominant ideas as they impact our material existence. This includes capacities to comprehend how power is structured and to move from the margins of society into participating in the construction of lived experience. This aspect of critical media literacy calls for on-going engagement with contemporary relationships and the creation of pedagogical environments where learners move from being passive objects of history to active creators of their world.

The findings from this study confirm Douglas Kellner’s (1997) assertion that the easy access and use of new technologies expands traditional notions of the “public sphere” to include the growing influences of technology to interact and engage with wider audiences. Thus, the

increased use of alternative media in the mascot struggle is also indicative of the manner by which alternative media and new communication technologies permeate the contemporary media landscape and have the potential to enable ordinary citizens to produce and disseminate content that can be used to strengthen oppositional political struggles.

This research also resonates with previous accounts (Castells, 2007; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1996, Ronfeldt, et al., 1998) demonstrating how the non-traditional organizational structures of computer mediated networks utilize the power of decentralized communication channels to rapidly transmit news, information and analysis across the Internet to inform dispersed communities of their struggles. For example, the use of non-hierarchical networks by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation or EZLN), allowed for more efficient resource allocations in their struggles against neoliberal policies and their goal to persevere the war of maneuver against Mexican Army forces (Castells, 2007; Cleaver, 1998; Ronfeldt, et al., 1998; Schulz, 1998). They were then able to utilize alternative media in their war of position to engage in intellectual work that framed their struggle as appealing to wider populations within the Mexican citizenry, as well as to global supporters.

The participants interviewed for this study demonstrate how the opportunity for independent media production also allowed for the expressions of sovereign voices that contributed to the wider network of pro-Indigenous and anti-mascot advocates. Although the participants for this study came from very different backgrounds, and expressed conflicting ways of theorizing the efforts they undertook, their combined efforts complemented each other in unique ways. This occurrence was expressed by some of these participants more than others. A few indicated they were unsure of their contributions to the pro-Indigenous and anti-“Chief” movements, while others saw otherwise.

UNION MAID: There was a lot more sharing of collective collaborative work. The piece that was on IResist also went to WLPR, it went to WPRG, the Public Eye, the fact that people had blogs, that people were sharing on the S.T.O.P. email list, all these different ways of communicating even if it was the same message being done and all these different ways, the posters for the Racism, Power and Privilege at UIUC, even if people didn't go to that event, we were creating a different culture.

David also spoke to these efforts within the network. In the below quote, he mentions that it seemed more coordinated than it "actually" was.

DAVID: We were working together, but they seemed to the outside to be working together in a much more concentrated, not concentrated, but coordinated way than they actually were.

David's response demonstrates the traditional notions and expectations of organizational work that many continue to hold. However, the nature of new social movements, utilizing computer-mediated forms of communication and distribution, allows for nodes within mobilized networks to contribute independently from one another. In this way, the network manifests and expresses itself in increasingly heterogeneous ways. This heterogeneity can potentially contribute to the network in unforeseen ways, and allow for diversity in the rapid transmission of pertinent information and analysis. Thus, it may have seemed that individuals were laboring in isolation from each other, but the diversity of alternative media producers and the content they produced contributed to a coalescing within the movement. Additionally, while the heterogeneous expressions from within the movement contribute to the knowledge base of the network, these same transactions can work to strengthen identity formations and facilitate the network's expansion by appealing to other identity groups or members who marginally participate.

It must be stressed, however, that the uses of independent media itself can never assure a consistent type of outcome within a particular struggle. Access to production equipment or space does not secure liberatory aims. Nor does the existence of independent media producers or

networks of resistance warrant a vibrant democracy. In other words, there are no guarantees (Hall, 1980b) that the work in production or the content itself will be transformative or free of elements that reproduce dominant forms of hegemony. Furthermore, history continues to demonstrate that once a movement begins to have an impact within a wider power structure, there are tendencies for forces to respond in order to reconfigure and appropriate those efforts (Gramsci, 1999). Dominant hegemony works to undo and absorb the kind of transformative potential social movements represent. This integration often serves to dismantle those aspects which are more threatening to the stronger oppositional forces.

This caution also highlights the importance of avoiding consolidation in what is considered “independent media”. That is, not all of the independent media represented by this study derives from, or was associated with the local Independent Media Centers (IMC) or with the local community radio stations. As described by some of the narratives from this research, organizationally these entities reproduced constraints limiting possibilities of heterogeneity within these spaces of production.

However, the nature of the new media allows for individuals and groups to work outside these domains to maintain a degree of autonomy, while also contributing to wider networks of resistance. This aspect of alternative media production demonstrated in this study showed its potential to create contexts for self-empowerment through active involvement in public pedagogy by constructing spaces for greater participation. In the case of the participants of this study, these processes promoted experiences of civic engagement, democratic participation, and the development of voice. Furthermore, as the alternative media producers critically engaged multiple systems for sharing meanings, opportunities were created for more complex understandings of those systems. In this sense, engaging issues related to power and

representation contributed to the development of a multifaceted understanding of the systemic structures that work to impede human agency. Within this analysis, issues of power can be seen more fluidly, and the conditions to transform existing paradigms is more possible.

Alternative media production thus serves as a powerful tool emphasizing the educational processes of public pedagogy. The possibilities provided by alternative media complement Freire's concept of "culture circles," where the individual's processes of conscientization are nourished within socio-political arenas where learning is seen as inherently social and political. Freire advocates unveiling ideological tensions within these culture circles as a necessary part of knowledge construction. This tension should also be viewed as a necessary aspect of creative processes that engage subjectivities, within particular historical contexts (Darder, 2002).

### **Future Research**

The nature of alternative media production lends itself to examining multiple intersections and processes involved, particularly when examined from a public pedagogy perspective. Another aspect of alternative media production I have yet to examine involves the important archives created by alternative media producers reflecting their struggles and artistic engagement. However, because of the non-institutionalized nature of alternative media production, many of these archives are often left unorganized and inaccessible to future citizens and researchers wishing to examine these unconventional accounts of history.

These artifacts of alternative media production can serve to document how individuals and communities engaged their particular socio-historical contexts and reveal various aspects of power relationships and personal integrity. That is, examining these archives from particular

alternative media producers can serve to provide evidence of a producer's trajectory as identified within particular ideological tensions, the political economy and history.

Thus, my future work related to this current research involves creating permanent multimedia archives documenting the use of alternative media in the anti-mascot struggle at UIUC. The archival aspect of this work promises to make notable contributions to the fields of American Indian Studies and Indigenous Studies and Cultural Studies by creating a rich and unique multimedia archival collection that can be used by future scholars in undergraduate and graduate courses across multiple disciplines. The archives can feature a more diverse representation of traditional and digital archival materials at the Student Life and Culture Archival Program for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and it will be a useful resource for those who work to counter pro-mascot resurgences that have surfaced since the 2007 retirement.

My current assessments of these archives reveal insufficient sources and few contributions by historically marginalized student populations at UIUC. The most troubling gap is the absence of Native voices in the current archives at UIUC. Here and elsewhere, archival records of higher education institutions across the U.S. are overwhelmingly dominated by presidential administrations, college deans, and faculty members. When the lives of students are represented, it is largely the records of fraternities and sororities. Hence, the lives of students from marginalized populations are scant, particularly within traditionally White institutions.

My own contributions to these multimedia archives include video footage of the Council of Chiefs gathering, the Oglala Sioux press conference, congressional field hearings, an extensive interview with former Trustee Lawrence Eppley announcing the mascot's retirement, the 2006 student protest against race-based fraternity and sorority parties, the 2006 Racism,

Power and Privilege at UIUC forum, actions against the mascot at various Board of Trustees meetings (2004-2007), and student protests against the “Next Dance” performances by pro-mascot supporters that took place in the years after the mascot was retired.

The deposit of primary resources on the struggle against “Chief Illiniwek” in university archives is particularly strategic given that the meaning of such struggle is continually challenged, resurrected, and used as a wedge issue in campus, local, and state politics. Additionally, the current documentation of successful campaigns to end the use of American Indian imagery in sports mascots is extremely limited both at the local and national level. Hence, given that the University of Illinois is “ground zero” in the mascot debate within the United States, the preservation of these counter-narratives potentially serves as critical sources that can both inspire and deepen the resistance within other sites of struggle.

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## Appendix A

### Demographic Information of Participants

Table A1

*Demographic Information of Participants*

Participant Gender Age	Ethnicity (self identified)	Family's Class Background	Affiliation to UIUC	Where Raised	Length of Time Creating Alternative Media	Length of Time Creating Alternative Media on the UIUC Mascot
Frank Male 42	American Indian (unenrolled)/German Mennonite	Poor	Faculty	Midwest U.S.	7 Years	6 Years
Connie Female 26	Caucasian	Middle Class	Graduate Student / Staff	Southern U.S.	9 Years	1 Year
David Male 51	Mixed	Lower Middle Class	Community Member	East Central Illinois	34 Years	4 Years
Indigenous Scholar Female 48	American Indian (tribally enrolled)	Lower and Middle Class	Graduate Student / Faculty	Southwest Reservation	1.5 Years	1.5 Years
Ricardo Male 26	Boriqua	Poor	Graduate Student	East Coast	16 Years	1.5 Years
Robert Male 47	White	Middle Class	Graduate Student / Staff	West and East Coast	4 Years	4 Years
Union Maid Female 33	White	Middle Class	Community Member	Northern Illinois	7 Years	2 Years
Tzetzengari Male 36	Chicano	Working Class	Graduate Student	West Coast / Southwest	8 Years	2 Years

## Appendix B

### Types of Alternative Media Used by Participants

Table B2

*Types of Alternative Media used by Participants*

Participant	FM Community Radio (low and full power)	Webpages	Listservs	Blogs	Independent Media Center (IMC) Monthly Publication	Community Television	Digital Video
Frank		X	X				
Connie	X		X				X
David	X	X	X	X	X		X
Indigenous Scholar			X	X			
Ricardo	X	X	X			X	X
Robert		X	X				X
Union Maid	X		X				
Tzetzengari	X		X				