Catalysts for Action:
A Civic Media Model of Participatory Engagement

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ABSTRACT
This paper proposes and explains a civic media model and its application within two case studies to better understand how participation in the civic media production process can lead to acts of civic engagement and social change. To understand the application of the civic media model, this study uses a mixed-methods approach that includes critical ethnography and a comparative media analysis of the processes and products observed at two case studies with media processes and products from four historic and contemporary community media programs across North America. Various theories in the critical paradigm and the Communication for Social Change (CFSC) literature are used as a framework to analyze and understand processes of media production and social change. The proposed model is iterative, rhizomatic, and designed to help scholars explain and understand the connections that exist between participatory media production and civic engagement. This study explains this transformative process by analyzing how individuals approach, engage in, and for some, intertwine media production within their lives with the goal of creating social change in their lives and communities.

Keywords: Civic media, participatory media, civic engagement, agency, voice

INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes and explains a civic media model and its application within two case studies to better understand how participation in the civic media production process can lead to acts of civic engagement and social change. The MIT Center for Civic Media defines civic media as “any form of communication that strengthens the social bonds within a community or creates a strong sense of civic engagement among its residents” (MIT Center for Civic Media, n.d.). The model proposed in this paper relies on this definition while also looking at the interdependent relationship between participatory media and civic engagement. Based on participatory communication scholarship, this study defines participatory media as a communication approach that uses horizontal communication and a reflexive dialogic process for the encouragement of interlocutors to enact their sense of personal agency (Nair & White, 1987; S. A. White, 2003b).

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To understand the application of the civic media model, this study uses a mixed-methods approach that includes critical ethnography and a comparative media analysis of the processes and products observed at two case studies with media processes and products from four historic and contemporary community media programs across North America. This study builds on existing research that looks at the role of civic and participatory media for increasing civic engagement in marginalized groups and communities and is situated in the fields of participatory media and civic media (Barranquero, 2006; Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016; Matewa, 2009; MIT Center for Civic Media, n.d.; Rodríguez, 2001; Vincent, 2013, 2014; Vincent & Straub, 2016). Various theories in the critical paradigm (Beltrán, 1980; Freire, 1970; Marx & Engels, 1846/1970) and the Communication for Social Change (CFSC) literature (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Huesca, 1995; R. A. White, 2004) are used as a framework to analyze and understand processes of media production and social change. CFSC research focuses on the communication process itself, identifying the ways in which agency, empowerment, and voice play key roles in processes of social change (Gumucio-Dagron, 2009). Within this framework, participatory media are seen as a type of alternative media in which individuals are encouraged to create their own communication channels to speak against larger cultural, political, and economic structures with the intent of creating social change.

The proposed model is iterative, rhizomatic and designed to help scholars explain and understand the connections that exist between participatory media production and civic engagement. It begins with a participatory media production process consisting of voice, dialogue and critical consciousness that leads to individual transformation in terms of self-awareness of empowerment and agency. The model also includes a catalyst for action, using a modified version of Watson Strong's (2014) and Zuckerman's (2016) calculus of civic engagement (based on Riker and Ordeshook's [1968] calculus of voting), and the act(s) of civic engagement. This study explains this transformative process by analyzing how individuals approach, engage in, and for some, intertwine media production within their lives with the goal of creating social change in their lives and communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of civic media is embedded in a history of scholarship that examines democratic and civic participation and the ways in which "citizens", or community members more broadly, engage within these processes. In their research on democratic participation and community involvement, John Dewey and Melvin Rogers (1927/2012) argued for more community involvement at the local level to incite civic discourse based on critical inquiry and critical reason. Dewey also argues for the critical inquiry and reasoning of citizens who are "geared towards helping citizens understand and respond to the political and social issues of their day" as described by Asen and Brouwer (2003, p. 158). Through critical inquiry and reasoning, citizens become more knowledgeable and capable of detecting, analyzing, and addressing the social issues important in their lives. The call for greater community participation advocated by Dewey and Rogers still remains a great need in today's society, and recently scholars have noted the expanding ways in which this can be accomplished via digital technologies and civic media (Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002; Norris, 2001; Rheingold, 2000; Vincent, 2009; Wellman, Boase, & Chen, 2002).

Pipa Norris (2001) contributes to the conversation through her conceptualization of civic engagement as consisting of three components: political knowledge (knowledge of the political system), political trust (faith in the political system), and political participation (involvement in the political system "designed to influence government and the decision-making process" [p. 217]). In addition to these definitions and conceptualizations, it is important to include forms of dissent and protest as ways members of communities engage and become involved in political and social processes.

A term that has been used interchangeably with civic engagement is political participation. Because of this, at least in part, the meaning and application of civic engagement has been conflated with that of strictly *political* participation, incorrectly excluding the involvement of individuals in social and other non-political processes. A description of political participation that has been used as a baseline from which to analyze civic engagement focuses primarily on political participation categorizations like voting, campaign activism, community organizing, and outreach (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1971). However, political science theorist Jerzy Hauptmann argues, "Civic engagement is not restricted or related to politics only. The reference to 'civic' suggests that any kind of involvement in the affairs of government, politics, administration, or organizations could be regarded as civic engagement" (2005, p. 4). Other scholars argue that this narrow definition excludes many ways in which citizens get involved, especially, for example, when virtual communities, online forums, social media, and blogging are available (Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002; Metcalf, Blanchard, McCarthy, & Burns, 2008; Norris, 2001, 2002).

Scholars within the civic media field build upon the works of democratic theorists like John Dewey (Dewey & Rogers, 1927/2012), Hannah Arendt (1958), and Jürgen Habermas (1962/1991), by pushing these conceptions further to address the myriad of ways the digital era has changed the democratic landscape. At its core, this field is particularly interested in understanding the symbiotic relationship of democracy and digital media as each continue to rapidly change in response to the social, political and economic volatility of the 21st century (Benkler, 2006; Costanza-Chock, 2011; Levine, 2016; Zuckerman, 2016). The first anthology for the field of civic media was published in 2016 by MIT Press (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016) and is "anchored by a vision to better understand how digital media are fundamentally advancing or threatening the capacity of citizens across politics, activism, education, art, health, expression, games, and society writ large" (Civic Media Project, n.d.).

In addition to the literature on civic media, this study is largely reliant on the CFSC literature on participatory media and social change. Based on alternative media scholarship, this study defines participatory media as a communication approach that uses horizontal communication and a reflexive dialogic process for the encouragement of interlocutors to enact their sense of personal agency. Participatory media are a type of alternative media in which individuals are encouraged to create their own communication channels to speak against larger cultural, political, and economic structures with the intent of creating social change. Participatory media producers take action in a transformative process that engages their power to actualize their capabilities as agents of change. The transformative process consists of raising their critical consciousness via reflexive

dialogues that ask media producers to analyze their social positions in relation to larger structural forces. This transformation helps individuals identify opportunities to speak back to and act against structural systems in order to alleviate conditions of oppression. This study sheds light on this transformative process by analyzing how individuals approach, engage in and for some, intertwine media production within their lives with the goal of creating social change in their lives and communities.

From a broad perspective the concept of participatory media is primarily used due to its focus on the media production *process* rather than the *product*. Rodríguez explains the difference between video-as-product and video-as-process by arguing that video-as-product "implies a communication expert who contacts a community (typically a poor community) to make a video about an aspect of their life" (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 116), where the focus is on creating a product produced by an external source. On the other hand, video-as-process "involves a professional communicator working together with community members in all phases of the production process" (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 116) and focuses on the symbiotic relationship of the external and internal agents working together to create a video reflective of that community. White (2003b) argues that participatory communication must be visualized as "process methodology" that enables people at the margins or grassroots level to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to generate their own messages.

METHODOLOGY

This study used ethnography, participatory media as process, and a comparative media analysis to address the following research questions:

- RQ[1]: What does the civic media process look like and what elements of engagement does it entail?

- RQ[2]: How can civic media engender a sense of self-empowerment, agency, and civic engagement?

For this study, media ethnography was implemented through participant-observation at two case studies, POOR Magazine and Sanctuary Women's Development Center. In the summer of 2010, I enrolled in PeopleSkool/Escuela de la Gente at POOR Magazine, an educational initiative designed to teach community media production, to observe the educational process as the group met twice a week for nine weeks. At this site I primarily performed the role of participant where, through my participation and observation, I compiled a preliminary participatory media model that was then used to formulate the work designed for the second case study, Sanctuary Women's Development Center. Through this ethnography, I watched and participated alongside local community members as they learned to use digital media technologies to respond to mainstream media misrepresentations and stereotyping of their communities. In my interactions with staff and participants, I attempted to create a dialogue of knowledges (Freire, 1970) by seeking engaged conversation between my academic perspective and the experiential knowledge and understanding of participants. Listening to participants as authentic producers of their own knowledge and perspectives helped me to develop a greater understanding of the organizational process and participants' experiences. The

ethnographic dataset included field notes (using thick description and reflexivity), all media created by participants at both sites, a participant journal during my time at POOR Magazine, online publications made by POOR participants over the next two years, which included videos, blogs, articles, photos, poems and audio recordings. I also analyzed course literature generated at POOR Magazine, which included: course handouts, activity sheets, agendas, supplemental readings, fliers, PowerPoint presentations and packets.

In addition to ethnography, my primary methodological approach also consisted of participatory media as process. Participatory media can result in media as product or media as process. According to White (2003d), "*video as process* is simply a tool to facilitate interaction and enable self-expression. It is not intended to have a life beyond the immediate context" (p. 65). In conjunction with this view, this study uses participatory media as process to facilitate learning, knowing, reflexivity, and dialogue. The production process serves an important function to facilitate the understanding of how people living in poverty and homelessness engage with and reflexively use participatory media. As a method, I employed several techniques and strategies specific to participatory media as process. According to Rodríguez (2001), video as process involves the researcher as facilitator working equally with participants in all phases of the production process, which echoes a Freirean approach to critical research and education. Using this approach, I filled the roles of observer, participant, and facilitator of the participatory media process in the first case study and at the second case study, I enacted the role of facilitator and worked with participants as they learned the participatory media process. Methodologically, I used the total context of the participatory media process/experience as data for this study, which included audio, visual, and multimedia data.

Lastly, this study also used a comparative media analysis to supplement the limitations of the ethnography (time spent on site and lack of interviews due to access). In order to complement the data collected during the media production processes, I drew comparisons between the media products and processes between the case studies I observed and participated in and four North American community media initiatives: Challenge for Change, Appalshop, Global Action Project, and Media Mobilizing Project. I conducted a comparative analysis of the artifacts and processes examining common messages and themes in order to make systematic and objective inferences (Berg, 2001). This was done in accordance with Holsti's approach to content analysis, where "the inclusion or exclusion of content is done according to consistently applied criteria of selection; this requirement eliminates analysis in which only material supporting the investigator's hypotheses are examined" (Holsti, 1968, p. 598). The media products and processes, interviews, participant-observation, direct observation, and documentation of each of the case studies were comparatively analyzed with the media products and processes of Challenge for Change, Appalshop, Global Action Project, and Media Mobilizing Project.

POOR Magazine

POOR magazine is a revolutionary community media art, education, and production initiative created by people living in poverty and homelessness for people living in poverty and homelessness, located in the Mission District in San Francisco, CA. Participant-

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

Sanctuary Women's Development Center

Sanctuary Women's Development Center is a Catholic Charities resource center for women living in poverty and homelessness in the Oklahoma City, OK area. Participant-observation was conducted at SWDC during two time periods over the course of ten months. The first course was taught during the first time period and occurred for eight weeks (16 hours total) from October 2011 to December 2011. The second course was taught during the second time period and occurred for six weeks (12 hours total) from June 2012 to July 2012. Using POOR Magazine as a participatory media model, a media education class was created for women in Oklahoma City living in poverty to create their own media and learn about the critical consumption of mainstream media.

A Proposed Model of Civic Media

During my ethnographic experience at POOR Magazine in San Francisco, I noticed a participatory media process emerge throughout the course of Escuela de la Gente. As participants transitioned from media novices to media producers over the course of the summer session, they learned participatory media production skills and education, which engendered processes of voice, dialogue, critical consciousness, agency, and civic engagement. I saw this process follow four distinct steps: participants articulated their voice and crafted/created their message; participants learned journalism and media skills; participants passively applied journalism/media skills in class assignments; and finally, participants actively used journalism/media skills to express their own perspective and personal struggles. The entire process occurred in a cyclical manner as participants returned to various phases throughout their participation in the program. Using the participatory media model I observed at POOR Magazine as a guideline, I revised and implemented this process during my research with the women at SWDC in Oklahoma City. The model was later expanded and revised as it move from a cyclical to a rhizomatic representation to more accurately capture the iterative and organic ways in which participants returned to previous phases as needed or desired. The original model was also later expanded to incorporate the motivational factors for why participants move from engaged media participants to civically engaged community members, using a modified version of Ethan Zuckerman's (2016) reworking of Watson Strong's (2014) reworking of Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) application of game theory and mathematics to elections to explain voting behavior. To answer RQ^1 of this study, What does the civic media process look like and what elements of engagement does it entail?, Figure 1 provides a

graphical representation of the culmination of these changes as the civic media model I propose in this paper.

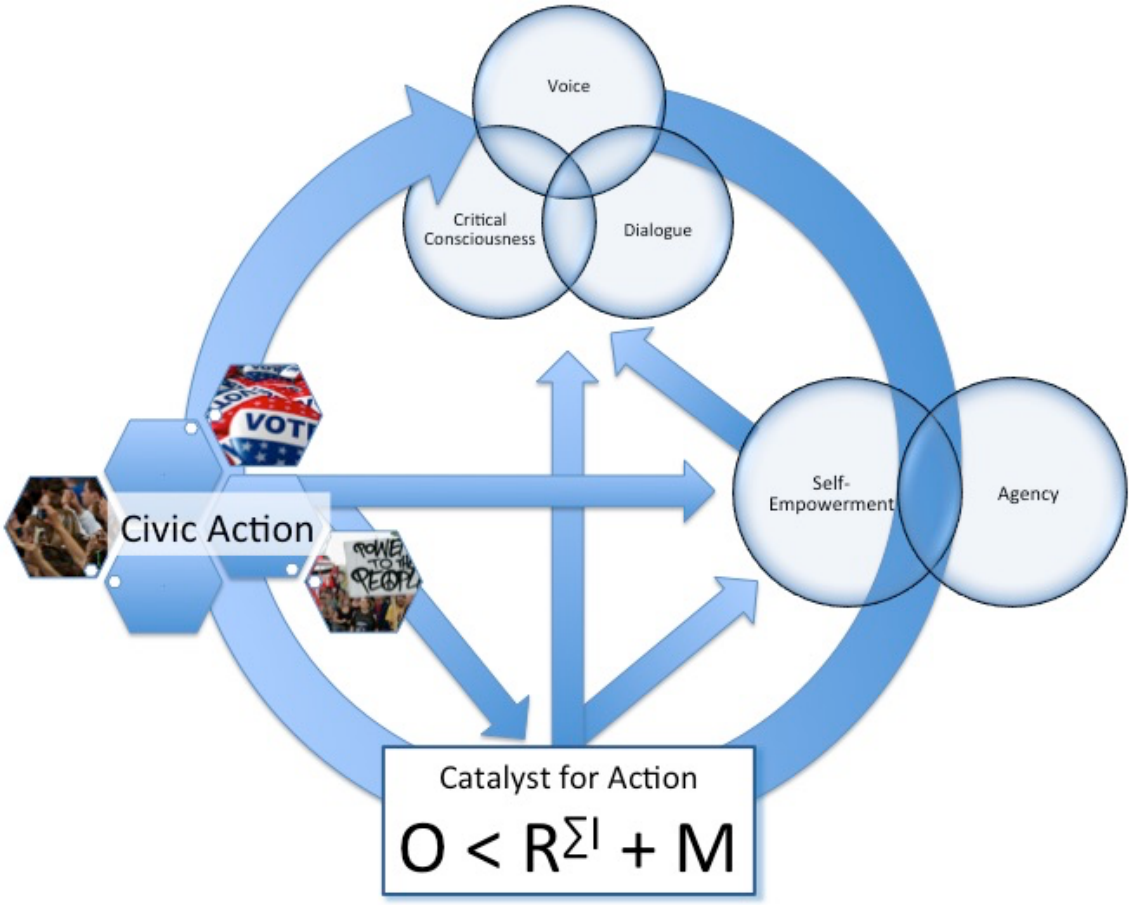

Figure 1. Civic Media Model. This model depicts the transformative process civic media creators undertake as they engage in civic media creation.

Voice Articulation

The model begins by delineating three interlocking phases that occur concurrently as individuals create media that consist of: 1) voice articulation, 2) communal dialogue, and 3) critical consciousness. As individuals participate in the creation of their own media they engage in each of these phases in a non-linear and rhizomatic manner, idiosyncratic to their own progression. During voice articulation, participants identify, construct, and articulate their voices as they engage in critical dialogue with the facilitator and other participants. This is based on a Freirean (1970) model of dialogue of equals, where the focus is on mutuality, supportiveness, and facilitation to ensure ideas can be shared through dialogue. During voice articulation, I noticed participants in both case studies identifying, constructing, and articulating their voices as they engaged in critical dialogue with me and other participants. Prior to ever picking up a piece of media equipment, participants crafted their own unique voice of poverty by shaping their personal stories and cultivating their poverty experiences in their own language and perspective. Three themes that emerged with regard to this topic were: barriers to voice, connections with larger social issues, and cultivation of voice.

Many participants first discussed barriers they faced when trying to express their voice by identifying restrictions in technological access to express their voice and the mental barriers they confronted in trying to remember how to use the technology once they learned it. With regard to access, few participants owned their own computer and most had to rely on public libraries and community centers, which addressed a larger access issue of transportation and reliance on public services like buses. Additionally, the participants and I discussed the implications of the rising costs of access and its impact on silencing marginalized voices. As a result, their voices become silenced in the public sphere. These experiences support what Castells (2009) sees as a growing problem where “abysmal inequality in broadband access and educational gaps in the ability to operate a digital culture tend to reproduce and amplify the class, ethnic, race, age, and gender structures of social domination between countries and within countries” (p. 57).

One way facilitators at POOR Magazine motivated participants to cultivate their voice was by encouraging them to channel their feelings and emotions toward controversial issues that applied to them. For example, in theater class, the facilitator asked participants to give examples of negative media depictions they have encountered that pertained to them. The participants responded with: “Welfare mothers are lazy,” “Immigrants steal our jobs,” “Illegals are just that—illegal,” “All crimes are committed by brown and black people,” and “People on welfare should just get a job.” In this process, as each participant confronted a negative stereotype that applied to them they addressed it with a personal response that stemmed from their struggle. Through the exchange of personal stories to address larger social issues, participants began what Couldry (2010) has identified as a *process of voice*. Couldry (2010) argues voice is socially grounded, in which participants “enable and sustain practices of narrative” through a shared exchange (p. 7). According to Cavarero (2000), this exchange is dependent on “an identity which, from beginning to end, is intertwined with other lives—with reciprocal exposures and innumerable gazes—and needs the other’s tale” (as quoted in Couldry, 2010, p. 8). In this process of voice, participants begin to cultivate their own unique voice while simultaneously creating a shared voice with others through dialogic exchange.

Participants also cultivated their voice through a reflexive, embodied process that used empathetic writing exercises, poetic prose, and the creation of a poverty language based on their experiential knowledge. In Couldry’s (2010) process of voice, he also argues that voice is a reflexive, embodied process that encompasses an individual’s unique standing in life as well as the reflexive action that occurs when that individual interacts with the world around them. When participants identify their struggle in the beginning exercises at POOR and SWDC, they embark on a reflexive journey that asks them to begin a conversation with their past, present, and future self, as well as with others around them. While engaging in this reflexivity, participants focus on specific, even painful, events in their lives that have shaped how they have come to be homeless or in poverty, or why they continue to be homeless or in poverty.

One of the most important aspects of the articulation of voice in communities of poverty is the opportunity “to let those who experience poverty tell those who do not what this experience is like, rather than have external 'experts' assess it from afar” (Tacchi,

2008, p. 12). One of the foundational beliefs at POOR Magazine is that those who have lived in and experienced poverty should be the ones to create a language of poverty that reflects their experiential knowledge. Through the creation of their own language and reliance on their own knowledge, participants at POOR seek to give form to their collective voice of poverty and silence false representations knowing that "voice is undermined when societies become organized on the basis that individual, collective and distributed voice need not be taken into account, because a higher value or rationality trumps them" (Couldry, 2010, p. 10).

Communal Dialogue

Dialogue served as a vehicle for participants to share their stories and experiential knowledge with one another as well as identify resolutions to their own and others' problems. These dialogues also provided a forum for participants to explicitly critically analyze their position in life, as well as the position of others, with regard to larger structural forces of oppression (e.g., economic and political). These discussions helped raise critical consciousness for participants and enabled them to be open and receptive to the possibility for empowerment and identifying an agentic sense of self. Participants engaged in critical dialogue about the effects of mainstream media, capitalism, and a bipartisan political structure on their daily lives. In this model, voice and dialogue occur concurrently and are examined from a Freirean perspective, where participants shape their own voice in conjunction with others to create unique individual and collective voices tied to shared experiential knowledges and perspectives. Three themes that emerged with regard to this topic were: shared voices, creating interdependence, and obstructions to dialogue.

As participants engaged in the activities and discussions described above to cultivate their voice, they simultaneously engaged in meaningful dialogue with other participants by sharing their voices. Participants saw the power in sharing their stories and collectively discussing important social issues that affected everyone in the group. Through collectively sharing their voices and engaging in critical dialogue, participants engaged in what Freire (1970) describes as "reconstituting and naming the world." The creation of their own language of poverty that stemmed from their experiential knowledge allowed participants to reclaim the story and experience of poverty as it is really lived and not as the mainstream media stereotypically portray it to be. According to Freire (1970), as participants engage in dialogic exchange they will begin to view reality as transformational and mutable. One example of this was seen when a SWDC participant described the value of sharing her story outside of the group to a larger audience and the potential to empower others by:

> First of all, getting their voices heard, putting out stories. Having the backbone to stand up for themselves after going through this [poverty] for a while and see how it really goes. That's going to empower someone that has been shy and withdrawn to speak out because they're going to say, "Well shoot, I've been going through some of that stuff. I wish I had somebody to help me out." Well hey, there it is, come on down. (Personal interview, December 5, 2011)

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

At POOR Magazine, one of the ideas promoted throughout Escuela de la Gente was the concept of interdependence. As a partial critique to the cultural value of independence that is lauded upon in the U.S., which the director argued pulls people apart instead of bringing them together, POOR emphasized the idea of interdependence as a way to connect with one another through their stories and dialogue to share experiential knowledge that is mutually valued. At SWDC interdependence grew from an initial interaction of rapport that became solidified through dialogic exchanges and intimate disclosures. This approach was reliant on Freire's (1970) concepts of shared knowledges and a dialogue of equals, where dialogue is exchanged mutually between individuals, understanding that "their view of the world, manifested variously in the action, reflects their *situation* in the world" (p. 96). Through the creation of these types of dialogical exchanges was the potential for what Bakhtin and Holquist (1981) termed heteroglossia[1]. During Escuela de la Gente at POOR Magazine, participants attended Community Newsroom meetings, which were weekly meetings that POOR News Network (PNN) staff attended to listen to guest speakers and discuss potential news ideas and stories of interest to POOR's target audience. Community Newsroom created an opportunity for a multitude of diverse voices and perspectives to unite and engage in dialogue regarding important local issues and ideologies. When guest speakers visited, the director of POOR would assign Escuela de la Gente participants to write news articles that reported on the issues and topics discussed by guest speakers.

Although dialogue was important to help the participants exchange knowledge, cultivate voice, and share stories, there were moments of obstruction to dialogue that stemmed from "safe" topics and language usage. While there are some topics that are generally considered "unsafe" like rape, molestation, and domestic violence, I assumed a "safe" subject would be that of motherhood. For some mothers, this is a topic of pride, but as someone who was not a mother at the time, I came to realize what a sensitive subject it could be for others. During the photo-video class at SWDC, I suggested a participant address how motherhood plays a role in her life. The participant quickly let me know that was not a safe topic for her: She was the mother of three children, two of whom were taken away from her at a young age and she has not reconnected with since. She said the whole subject of motherhood was very sensitive for her and did not want to address that in her media. One type of dialogue obstruction POOR Magazine addressed was the concept of "language domination," to which they created a class entitled "Language Domin-action" that addressed language history and meaning, oppressive forms of language, and bilingual English/Spanish education. The class placed emphasis on deconstructing language as a tool of oppression and reconstructing it as a tool of liberation. Echoing the Freirean (1970) argument against the "banking" concept of education[2], the Language Domin-action facilitator explained to participants, "Language,

[1] Heteroglossia occurs when messages build and rely on one another within a context in which the communicators create interdependence with the "Other."

[2] The "banking" concept of education refers to a process where "the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). This approach to education is widely used around the world and creates hierarchical structures in the classroom where the instructor's

words and media are the first line of defense and the first line of attack. Education is a privilege of the wealthy; therefore, I am not here to educate, I am here to share knowledge" (Field notes, July 1, 2010). The facilitator asked participants to reflect on the attitudes they were raised with towards education; if they were ever made to feel bad about their level of education and if they ever made others feel bad for their lower level of education. In response to this, several participants shared experiences of having felt bad for their lack of education or intelligence.

Critical Consciousness

Once participants have articulated their voice in an exchange of dialogue with others, they begin to raise their own and others' critical consciousness through these exchanges. I observed participants increase their own critical consciousness through building personal awareness of critical consciousness and then applying it.

Through a range of media literacy activities and discussions throughout the programs, participants built their awareness of critical consciousness. Participants were introduced to a variety of media-related concepts and issues as a way to critically analyze and discuss issues of power, ideology, and media control. As a group we discussed the growing problem of media consolidation and conglomeration in the U.S. and how it affects everyone. In addition to discussing media control, participants also shared their personal experiences with media, which led to a discussion about the impact of the digital divide. As participants came to critically understand their reality through everyday language and examples from their own lives, they increased their own critical consciousness (Freire & Macedo, 1995). I observed this with participants at SWDC as we engaged in critical dialogue in which they provided personal stories and relevant examples tied to citizen journalism. Through the media literacy discussions we held in class, participants began to critically analyze what they saw and read in the newspaper and tied that with the role the mainstream media play in the portrayal of homelessness and poverty. Participants were also able to connect the importance of access to information with power for those in poverty, the importance of creating media from a poverty perspective to counterbalance the mainstream media's perspective, and the importance of social change and their role in creating social change to better their own situation in poverty. Through each passing course and critical discussion, participants were able to critically examine their situation and come to a new understanding of their reality, one in which they saw the potential for social change and emancipation (Freire & Macedo, 1995).

Freire (1970) argued that through critical consciousness, participants begin to see "social, political, and economic contradictions" (p. 35) and identify their responsibility for social change. Through the discussion of media literacy concepts and critical dialogue, participants began to recognize how dominant power structures work to marginalize them and maintain their oppression. For example, Participants at POOR displayed critical consciousness through revolutionary courses they participated in, like the "Her-story & Resistance" class. This class created space for in-depth discussions of important social

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knowledge is held as privileged and students are seen as empty receptacles to be filled with the instructor's knowledge.

issues like domestic violence, racism, disability rights, borders, systems violence, and the non-profit industrial complex. The topic of domestic violence was spread over two class sessions with different voices expressed by participants and facilitators discussing their experiences. According to the facilitator, domestic violence survivors not only fight to have their civil liberties enforced in the court for the protection against domestic violence, but also simultaneously fight against gender discrimination in their attempt to represent themselves as credible and legitimate voices of their experience, one with which she was personally familiar. This experience depicts what Marx (Tucker, 1978) described as the spread and acceptance of dominant ideologies by those in power to maintain unequal power structures that oppress those without power. For women in this situation, their voices are not perceived as legitimate by those in power (e.g., lawyers, judges) and as a result need to defend themselves as victims against their abusers. Due to the fact that so many people in the Her-story & Resistance class had been affected by this topic, it was brought up repeatedly in other classes when participants worked on assignments in shaping their voices. This discussion depicts Gramsci's (1971) notion of organic intellectuals, where participants and facilitators attempted to create social change by critically analyzing the dissemination of dominant ideologies that are used to marginalize those who might feel they have limited or no power and then creating their own media to combine experiential knowledge with a diversity of perspectives.

Self-empowerment & Agency

To answer RQ^2, How can civic media engender a sense of self-empowerment, agency, and civic engagement?, the rest of the paper will address the relationship between self-empowerment, agency, and civic action. Within the proposed civic media model, self-empowerment and agency are depicted as concentric circles as self-empowerment occurs concurrently with the development of agency at different points of the civic media process. During this part of the model participants come to recognize their own sense of power and grow awareness for how they can cultivate and harness that power, in turn identifying the possibilities for using that power towards social change.

Participants began to realize their sense of empowerment as they developed technological literacy skills through participatory media courses. To learn digital media technologies, the participants needed access to digital media equipment, as well as access to facilitators who could explain how to operate the equipment. Access to technology and technology education is one of the barriers participants discussed as obstacles to voice and self-empowerment. Sen (1997) argues that control over external resources like technological equipment help empower marginalized voices and provide a type of extrinsic control. "Control over the external world of resources also gives one the capacity for self-expression in a variety of ways" (Sen, 1997, p. 2). Participants gained extrinsic control through participatory media classes by securing access to the equipment and knowledge of how to use the equipment via computer literacy and media production courses. For participants at POOR Magazine and SWDC, a sense of self-empowerment was discovered through a variety of media production classes that addressed writing and citizen journalism skills, public speaking and theatrical skills, and audio-visual skills. Self-empowerment was seen as participants engaged in the participatory media process by overcoming their feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy to learn basic technological skills.

In addition to self-empowerment conveyed via extrinsic control over technological knowledge and power, participants gained intrinsic capabilities as a form of self-empowerment that were shown through an increase in self-confidence and awareness of power within themselves, which Sadan (2004) refers to as psychological empowerment. Sen (1997) argues, "greater self-confidence and a process of inner transformation of one's consciousness, can enable one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources" (p. 2). Engagement was observed in several different ways to include participation via questions, comments, and dialogue; learning how to use the technology; creating media projects; and sharing their knowledge with others. According to Sadan (2004), "The internal process [of empowerment] is the person's sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems" (p. 76). For many participants the ability to engage with and learn intimidating and potentially complex technologies that result in a creation reflective of their identity and struggle ignited a sense of power within themselves they had not realized before. As a result, many of the participants were galvanized with an awoken feeling of power and a newfound sense of agency.

Overall, during the empowerment phase at POOR and SWDC, participants were connected with technological equipment and knowledge resources that helped foster extrinsic control of their surroundings. Additionally, by engaging with the participatory media process, participants' feelings of self-confidence were heightened, providing them with a sense of intrinsic capability. Through both of these sources of empowerment, participants began to have an increased awareness of the power they possess to question and address social issues that are important to them (Hauptmann, 2005), in turn creating an awareness of personal agency and ability to create social change. As they engaged in computer literacy courses, participants saw the promiscuous nature of agency conveyed through digital technologies and the importance to harness its power. The writing and citizen journalism courses showed participants how agency could be enacted through form like blogs or news articles. Participants cultivated a craft of agency as they learned the poetic styling of public speaking and theater to express their struggle. Participants also engaged in the communal, participatory nature of agency as they "invented" the audio-visual channels with which to share their voices. Through all of these courses, awareness of their agency increased and participants saw the possibility to be a catalyst for change in their lives and communities.

Catalysts for Action

While the first two points in the civic media model focus on participatory media production and are derived from ethnographic and case study analysis, the third and fourth points stem from political science and civic engagement theory. The first two points explain *how* individuals become personally and socially prepared to engage in civic participation, the next point attempts to theorize *why* this occurs. As previously stated, this formula is based on Ethan Zuckerman's (2016) reworking of Watson Strong's (2014) reworking of Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) application of game theory and mathematics to elections to explain voting behavior. While stemming from a calculus for voting formula, the revised and proposed calculus for civic engagement is not created with the intent of predicting human behavior in terms of civic engagement. Instead, this formula is attempting to address and capture the barriers and incentives that could influence a person's decision

to be civically engaged. This is important when trying to better understand the motivating and dissuading factors that engage or disengage individuals in civic participation. Within the civic media model, this aspect encompasses the participatory media production process and connects it to the act of civic engagement.

Within this revised formula, the obstacles to entry (minus cost-reduction factors) must be less than the relevance of the issue magnified by the sum of peer influences plus additional motivating factors. So what does this mean? I will first define each of the variables within this formula and then discuss the implications of the formula in the next section. Firstly, the obstacles/barriers to civic participation include factors like attention scarcity, misinformation, lack of faith in a broken system, and cost, where cost includes time, money, resources, and effort. The cost-reduction factors include items like information that reduce the number of obstacles. For example, if an individual is interested in participating in a protest, but does not have the transportation to get to the protest, a cost-reduction factor could be the availability of a friend that is able to drive that person there.

The relevance of the issue includes its salience towards the individual and its relationship to the perception of direct or indirect benefit to the individual. Salience is defined as an individual's awareness of an issue and the extent to which they feel it is relevant to them (either directly or indirectly). For some individuals the perception of benefit may influence whether or not they see or understand the relevance of the issue to them or their lives. Relevance is then magnified by the sum of peer influences, which is an aggregated factor of social influence and peer pressure. According to Zuckerman (2016), "Voice is how people signal their affiliations, their priorities, and the issues they care sufficiently about that they share them with friends in the hope of influencing their actions" (p. 69). This social influence may be through honest or deceptive communication and in turn may result in irrational or rational engagement, which is why this is not a predictive formula: humans are complex creatures, difficult to predict. Instead, Zuckerman argues that incorporating this aspect of peer influence "helps us understand the particular power of civic media" (Zuckerman, 2016, p. 68) as has been seen in the use of social media for collective organization (Vincent & Straub, 2016) or the use of voice in the amplification of other voices (Costanza-Chock, 2011).

Motivational factors include feelings of obligation, necessity, psychological (self-empowerment, agency, etc.), incentive/benefit (direct or indirect), and probability of effect. Benefit is conceptualized as a sliding scale where, the more you move from direct to indirect the lower your probability of engagement. It also includes feelings of goodwill and the enjoyment of being part of a larger community. The probability of having an effect includes the feeling that you are capable of creating an impact (self-efficacy) and that your involvement or the energy you put into the situation will create some modicum of change or impact. It also includes the perception of the scalability of impact (e.g., via collective action, bandwagon effect, etc.) and a history of actions: how has previous engagement turned out for you or others like you and what is the perceived probability that history will repeat itself vs. the history of structural/institutional oppression (e.g., viewpoint that the game is rigged).

Civic Action

Lastly, participants enacted their agency through acts of civic engagement to create social change in their lives and their communities. This model is but one way in which civic engagement can happen—not intended to usurp other models, but instead to show the possibility for civic media to aid passive citizens in becoming more civically engaged in their communities. Not all participants who engaged in these programs were involved in acts of civic engagement; however, those who engaged with each of the phases presented in this model were highly likely to become civically engaged if presented with the opportunity and resources discussed in the last section.

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

As participants at POOR Magazine began to use journalism and media skills shaped by their individual voices and experiences to address important social issues, they transitioned from passive to engaged citizenship. For example, participants created a "guerilla" press conference in downtown San Francisco to attract the attention of the public and the mainstream media and have the story covered in the evening news. The guerilla press conference was initiated by POOR Magazine and the Living Wage Coalition and held in front of the Phillip Burton Federal Building in San Francisco to urge Senators to extend Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and continue the JOBS Now and Community Jobs programs. The press conference lasted 20 minutes and was rapidly set up and just as quickly broken down as supporters and volunteers scrambled around the scene. It began promptly at 10 a.m. with the director of POOR yelling into the microphone to garner attention from passersby. She began the conference by explaining the need to extend the public assistance programs for another year and then the welfare mothers executed the public speaking and theatrical skills they were introduced to in the Po' Poets class by giving testimonies of their experiences with the programs and addressing the impact on their personal lives if the programs ended. As each speech was presented, it was translated into Spanish or English so speakers could "speak on the behalf of poor mothers across the globe," according to the director of POOR (Field notes, June 29, 2010). The press conference attracted the attention of three local media television outlets.

In this act of civic engagement, we do not see an example of political participation as historically defined by such scholars as Verba, Nie, and Kim (1971), whose conception narrowly restricts political participation to voting, campaign activism, community organizing, and outreach. Instead, this is an example of engagement as a form of dissent,

in which participants do not seek consensus with their oppressors, but instead seek to engage the dominant public sphere from a subaltern perspective. According to Phillips,

> The public sphere has been portrayed as a place where these individual, local sites of contest might be gathered into some transcendent dialogue; however, we cannot truly engage diversity without recognizing the diverse sites and conditions in which differences come to the fore. (1996, p. 244)

In other words, to be civically engaged in one's community and political processes is to express discontent and dissent oppressive structures. For participants at POOR, the guerilla press conference allowed them to do just that in a public forum at the heart of one of the largest cities in the U.S.

CONCLUSION

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

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