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Ephemeral media, persistent action: public pedagogies of collective resistance

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EPHEMERAL MEDIA, PERSISTENT ACTION:
PUBLIC PEDAGOGIES OF COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by
Jessica Ketcham Weber
B.S., Louisiana State University, 2003
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Dedication

In memory of my sister Elise, who taught me
the power of laughter and the simplicity of compassion
in the face of injustices, big and small.

For my best friend and husband Andy,
who continues to inspire me to act and create for progressive social change,
who challenges me to envision a gentler world,
and who reminds me every day that partnership can be radically beautiful.

For my daughter Aloe Elise, for whom I will continue to imagine a more humane world.

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ephemeral presence indicates how much work we have left to do to make academia a more equitable place. I also genuinely thank Dan Novak for his help and general support on the job market—a beer and a laugh can go a long, long way.

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Abstract

In *Ephemeral Media, Persistent Action: Public Pedagogies of Collective Resistance*, I argue that representations of contemporary activism against corporate globalization, as analyzed in three different sites of commercially-driven media texts—newspapers, film, and websites—teach people to move away from public forms of collective activism and towards privatized and institutionally-sponsored forms as part of the larger project of neoliberalism. Specifically, this dissertation focuses on the representations of, and responses to the representations of, two events—the protests against the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle, Washington in 1999 and the protests during the Republican National Convention in 2004 in New York City—as moments that simultaneously capture the burgeoning movement in the United States against corporate globalization and the development of digital tools for citizen and social media. I analyze digital media interventions in these representations and give examples of how composition teachers might use these same digital tools and what I call *an ethos of tactical ephemerality* to encourage students to compose not just in response to, but in dialogue with, multiple and precarious publics and counterpublics.

Chapter One

Mapping Public Pedagogy through Neoliberalism, Tactics, and Media Interventions

In the spring of 2006 I taught a sophomore-level elective class at Louisiana State University entitled *Eco-Texts: Environmental Literature and Writing in the United States*. I designed and proposed the class to my department in large part because of a renewed environmental student movement on campus, launched by the creation of a new student group called the Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO). ECO was led by two dynamic women—“Lola,” an International Studies major and “Tessa,” an Economics major—who in their first two years as officers revived LSU’s “Alternative Earth Day,” which started in the 1990s as an alternate to the Exxon, Georgia-Pacific, and Coca-Cola-funded Earth Day Festival in downtown Baton Rouge; worked with Facility Services to help establish a recycling program on campus; assisted the Student Government Transportation Task Force to set up a Gold Bike Program to promote bicycle-sharing; and organized the first Annual LSU Sustainability Conference with several academic departments. They wrote letters to the editor of the school and city newspapers about environmental practices and policies, their signatures generally accompanied by their affiliation with the Sierra Student Coalition, the national wing of the Sierra Club. In spite of all of these actions, both students vehemently rejected being characterized as activists. Defined as intentional action in support of or opposition to a political or social issue to bring about change (*Merriam-Webster; Random House*), activism refers to a wide range of action, including such activities as community organizing for new programs or policies, planning protest events, and writing letters to local media outlets. Nevertheless, when we read Edward Abbey’s *Monkey Wrench Gang*, Tessa talked about her mom’s activist

boyfriend's "vandalist tactics" in defense of the earth in the 1970s and early 1980s and rejected direct action tactics (tactics that fall outside of traditional or institutional channels for social change, including strikes, sit-ins, protest marches, and property modification) as ineffective. Likewise, when we discussed Earth First! and Greenpeace demonstrations as image events, or, "staged acts of protest designed for media dissemination" (Delicath and DeLuca 315), Lola dismissed public protests and civil disobedience as viable means of social change, saying that they did more harm than good. Both students advocated legitimately working within the system—official institutions like the government, non-profit organizations, and corporations—to affect change. As a whole, Lola and Tessa and the rest of the class, a group of students who overwhelmingly saw environmental change through awareness and action as necessary, equated public displays of activism with chaotic street protests performed by radical anarchists, and therefore never participated in them. I wondered about how this understanding of public activism came to be the dominant image in the collective imaginary of the students in my class.

At the same time, the first decade of the 21st century has been dominated by a public discourse of youth apathy, insinuated by campus and national editorials alike, and often illustrated by the shortage of student-led anti-war protests on college campuses. Even university presidents have commented on the lack of public student protests on campuses across the nation. Graham Spanier, President of Pennsylvania State University, wrote a 2008 editorial reflecting on his experience as an activist in college:

As one who vividly recalls anti-war marches, the Kent State shootings, protests against apartheid, and the demand for civil rights, I marvel on the one hand at the silence of today's young people on major issues and on the

other hand at the inadequate understanding of the fundamentals of the issues that some students choose for protest. (“Is Campus Activism”)

He notes that a characteristic of activism that he sees on campuses is that “there are myriad causes that capture the attention of just a handful of students” (like advocating for concealed weapons on campus) and laments that on Facebook, “the Lazy College Students of America’ group attracted more than twice the members of the ‘United Students Against Sweatshops.’” At LSU, some students created a Facebook group, “I am an Anti-activism Activist,” which lists ten reasons to be opposed to activism—most of which rely on an understanding of activists as “lame attention seekers” and activism as public protest with “unimaginative, glib” posters. In other words, *activism* becomes synonymous with *public protest*. It is not the desire or intention for social change that gets ridiculed, but the public nature of the tactics. In his 2007 editorial, “Generation Q,” Thomas Friedman suggested contemporary college students are a generation of quiet Americans, “quietly pursuing their idealism, at home and abroad.” Instead of being quiet, he suggests that America needs a bump of public idealism and activism and that emailing petitions and friending causes on Facebook will not cut it:

Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy didn’t change the world by asking people to join their Facebook crusades or to download their platforms. Activism can only be uploaded, the old-fashioned way — by young voters speaking truth to power, face to face, in big numbers, on campuses or the Washington Mall. Virtual politics is just that — virtual.

Friedman’s article, Spanier’s editorial, and even the 2003 headline in *Newsweek* asking “Is Activism Dead?” all point to various activities that students are engaging in instead of collective public protest, but none speculate as to why they, as my students did, reject this tactic.

President Spanier ultimately concludes that he might not be seeing the chants and protests of the past, but students are still making a difference through increased participation in volunteerism and community service. Building on Spanier's conclusion, it seems that independent student activism in the public sphere has been replaced by institutionally sponsored "civic engagement" on campus. Campus centers for civic engagement and service-learning generally rely on one of two common definitions of civic engagement: "actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern," (Delli Carpini) or "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference [. . .] through both political and non-political processes" (Ehrlich). While the projects and intentions associated with civic engagement and activism may overlap, distinguished by their positional relationship to dominant ideologies, they are certainly not the same thing. The number of offices and centers for civic engagement, charged with developing service-learning classes and community service projects, has been growing on university and college campuses throughout the country. According to Campus Compact, the national organization for campus-based civic engagement, the number of member schools has almost doubled from 689 in 2000 to 1190 in 2008 ("Statistics"). In many ways these centers have constructed institutionally acceptable forms of participation that have become the norm, effectively modeling social action that is not a threat to moneyed interests.

Service-learning projects are safely connected to curriculum and have a ready-made end date. Some centers offer incentives for student involvement in the community such as certificates and designations on transcripts. Generally, the service opportunities

afforded by civic engagement centers have been prearranged between a university faculty/staff member and a member of an approved community partner, taking the challenging, persistent, and tedious work of community organizing out of the equation for students. I certainly do not intend to categorically discredit service-learning classes, only to complicate them in relation to the larger context of activism. Indeed, my Eco-Texts course was a service-learning class and almost all my students were excited by this component, some even concurrently enrolled in other service-learning classes. Given my students' desire to act for change, but their resistance to unsponsored public activism, I would argue that civic engagement offices on college campuses are places designed to guide activist tendencies in more acceptable, manageable, and non-oppositional directions. The definitions of activism implicate "change" as part of the goal of action, which suggests a position against the status quo. Civic engagement, on the other hand, seeks to address concerns that may be shared by those in power or not.

My Eco-Texts students' rejection of collective public activism in favor of engaging in service-learning classes, electoral campaigns, and online petition drives is influenced by more than the appeal of civic engagement centers on campus. Two visible articulations of culturally sometimes-resistant, collective public action by mostly college-aged people in the United States are critical mass and flash mobs. Critical Mass is a monthly bike ride in support of cyclists' rights to the road, while flash mobs originated as a group of people who gather suddenly to perform an act before dispersing. Both actions can be political or entertaining; they give participants options to be part of the action for purely social reasons, which might be the key difference in why some of my students had participated in these events but not explicitly political collective action. There is much controversy

amongst cyclists about critical mass, largely because it functions in some cities as more of a travelling party than an action to positively affect car-cyclist relations or to make streets safer for cyclists. Most contemporary critical mass-ers reject the notion of the ride as a protest, instead calling it a monthly celebration of bikes, and even the leader-less, nonhierarchical origins of the ride have evolved in some cities into pre-planned routes sponsored by different bars and bike shops each month, further depoliticizing and commercializing the ride. Likewise, flash mobs, generally mobilized through digital media technology such as mobile phones or the internet, have been used as a means to political ends, but are not inherently activist actions. While the first few flash mobs in the US were associated with anti-consumerist ideologies—gathering in commercial spaces and acting like zombies, for instance—flash mobs are now used by corporations to gather people at the opening of new stores or for the release of new products, staged and rehearsed by professional DJ companies and arts organizations to gain publicity, and are even presently banned in certain U.S. cities because of violence. So while there are at least two current articulations of public collective action, they have become more entertaining than political. But entertaining is what young people need right now, according to freelance feminist journalist Courtney Martin, in a rebuttal to Friedman’s Generation Q. She wrote an opinion piece called “Generation Overwhelmed” for *The American Prospect* where she argued that her generation was not quiet, but that the number of issues with which to engage overwhelmed them. She noted that she and her friends *did* talk about politics and had jobs in education and nonprofit sectors that tried to address inequities, but that sometimes spontaneous dance parties where they could escape the tremendous amount of work to be done was necessary. She also argued that she and her generation felt like

participating in political street protests was too imitative of images of activism from the 1960s.

This prompted more questions for me: What are contemporary images of activism and where would my students encounter these images? How and by whom were these images produced and how were these media texts circulated? Is activism always presented as public protests in news media, and what aspects of the protests or activist work are shown? How is activism represented in other media texts like film and websites? Are these representations reliant on the public's collective memory or mythology of activism in the 1960s? Are any alternative representations being produced and if so, by whom? Does the mainstream circulation of these media texts produce a persuasive and pervasive enough pattern of representation to teach people what they know about activism? In other words, how do different media texts function as public pedagogies of activism and might this education be particularly reinforced for students who already learn from educational and governmental institutions about which public spaces are appropriate for civic participation? What, if any, media texts are produced to counter these representations and what literacies are required to produce them? These questions led me to consider images of activism in three sites of dominant media representation—newspapers, film, and websites—alongside some of the counter-representations that they elicit. Each set of texts functions as social discourse, producing images and words that shape our ideological understanding of activism and materially affect tactics of civic, social, and political participation.

As this introduction suggests, I am interested in how dominant institutions such as higher education and corporate media teach students and citizens about activist

involvement around myriad social issues. I am also interested in the ways that people are using media to create texts to counter, complicate, or supplement these messages. This dissertation attends to the textual and visual representations of particular moments of resistance to neoliberal politics to explore the public-pedagogic work of media texts. I focus on the representations of, and responses to the representations of, two events—the protests against the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle, Washington in 1999 and the protests during the Republican National Convention in 2004 in New York City—as moments that simultaneously capture the burgeoning movement against corporate globalization and the development of digital tools for citizen and social media. Specifically, I argue that representations of activism, as analyzed in three different sites of corporate and commercially-driven media texts—newspapers, film, and websites—teach people to move away from public forms of collective activism and towards privatized and institutionally-sponsored forms as part of the larger project of neoliberalism. I analyze digital interventions in these representations and give examples of how writing teachers might use these same digital tools and what I call *an ethos of tactical ephemerality* to encourage students to write not just in response to, but in dialogue with, multiple and precarious publics and counterpublics.

Situating the Project

This interdisciplinary project necessarily intersects with, borrows from, and contributes to a number of different fields, including cultural studies, media studies, and curriculum theory, but it is primarily situated within the field of rhetoric and composition. Itself an interdisciplinary terrain, rhetoric and composition has long been attentive to three interrelated areas: pedagogical activism in the classroom, often influenced by the

body of work on critical pedagogy¹ by Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, and Henry Giroux (Freire; Gee; Giroux; McLaren; Messer-Davidow; Shor); writing practices, rhetorics, and democratic constructions of specific digital communities (Hawisher; Gruber; Jenkins and Thorburn; McCaughey and Ayers; Selfe; Villarejo); and the capacity for composing practices to engender social change (Bizzell; Cushman; Hewett and McRuer; Singer). My project continues these traditions while attempting to answer questions about how people create knowledge and teach themselves. As this dissertation started and ends with students, my goal is to look at what students might know about contemporary activism from dominant media representations and the textual spaces within which citizens are intervening in these media representations, and how that might inform composition teachers who ask students to be involved with their communities through public writing. No book-length project has examined representations of anti-neoliberal public protests through multiple media, nor has any book-length project combined specific classroom practices to facilitate student responses to neoliberalism with analysis of corporate media representations and interventions. As such, I see this dissertation filling the gaps and bridging the work of three recent books in composition, rhetorical, and pedagogical studies: Paula Mathieu's *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition* (2005), Rachel Riedner and Kevin Mahoney's *Democracies to Come: Rhetorical Action, Neoliberalism, and Communities of Resistance* (2008), and Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel's *DIY Media: Creating, Sharing, and Learning with New Technologies* (2010).

Both Mathieu and Lankshear and Knobel's books are squarely situated in the classroom, while Riedner and Mahoney's book conceptualizes pedagogy in various

¹ In chapter five I provide an overview of critical pedagogy.

cultural spaces, including the university and the protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C., in April of 2000. Mathieu examines the return to “the public” in composition studies by identifying four approaches to public writing: through service-learning and community literacy projects, through writing about local issues, through conducting ethnographic literacy projects, and through courses that focus on the public sphere. In her discussion of these four approaches, Mathieu draws on Michel de Certeau’s distinction between tactics (which individuals use to create spaces within institutions) and strategies (which belong to institutions and individuals with institutional power), both terms that I will elaborate more on later in this chapter. Mathieu argues that each of these approaches call for specific *strategies* for community collaboration, and that instead public writing and community collaboration should be approached *tactically*, without predetermined university-derived outcomes. Extending Mathieu’s framework into the media sphere, I look at how tactics guide media interventions, while interrogating commercial attempts to co-opt grassroots tactics. Additionally, I extend her call for a tactical approach to public writing by discussing the use of ephemeral media compositions to respond to kairotic moments—moments which require responses to exigent situations and that are unidentifiable at the beginning of a semester.

Riedner and Mahoney’s book is the first in rhetoric and composition that looks at the anti-corporate globalization movement; building on critical theory and cultural studies, it connects the ethos of the movement to the status of the university in a market-driven, privatized, neoliberal state. They conceptualize and develop pedagogy as rhetorical action, “a political practice of making, reproducing, and remaking of social

relations, identities, and intervening in relations of dominance and exploitation” (7) as a way to open up new spaces to interrogate the effects of neoliberalism as seen in the material conditions of academic institutions. While they attend to the university as an institution, they do not specifically talk about the effects of neoliberalism on the students or the classroom. My project extends theirs by both analyzing closely what we learn from the media representations of the movement and considering how we might concretely intervene in this “new world order” through our classroom practices. On the other hand, in *DIY Media*, Lankshear and Knobel provide a rich array of classroom practices and assignments based on digital literacies of DIY (do-it-yourself) meaning-making, but they do not fully explain how a DIY ethic might be important to challenging or interrogating the contemporary state of corporate media, nor do they connect the roots of DIY culture—critiques of consumerism—with the current culture of consumption. What they do connect DIY culture to is media theorist Henry Jenkins’ concept of convergence culture,² which focuses on entertainment and commercial spheres to the exclusion of politicized subcultures. In this way, Lankshear and Knobel, and particularly Jenkins in his afterword where he tries to argue for the term *do-it-ourselves* instead of *yourself*, transform DIY culture from a rich subcultural tactic to a strategy co-opted by educational institutions, emptying it of its political roots.³

The contemporary context for this project centers around two conditions in the United States: the triumph of corporate conglomerates over public media systems and the expansion of economic neoliberalism into all aspect of social lives. According to Free

² I describe this concept and Jenkins’ theory in detail in chapter four.

³ See the forthcoming work by Karin H. deGravelles for an in-depth study of the failures and promising futures of zine pedagogy.

Press, a media reform nonprofit, and the *Columbia Journalism Review*, just six corporations—General Electric, The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS Corporation—own virtually all of the media landscape, including production and distribution companies. In addition to film, publishing, television, radio, and online holdings, many of these corporations also manufacture military equipment, produce medical equipment, fabricate technology for oil and gas drilling, and finance commercial aviation (General Electric), own sports teams and advertising companies (News Corporation), own parks, resorts, and consumer product companies (Walt Disney), and own multiple marketing companies (TimeWarner). This consolidation conflates the profit motives of entertainment with the purported educational goals of news, and ultimately this has a profound impact on the diversity of ideological perspectives represented. Understood within the larger context of neoliberalism, corporate media and meaning-making provide a space for intervention most relevant for teachers of rhetoric and composition.

Neoliberalism, which David Harvey defines as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by *liberating* [emphasis added] individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2), further situates this project. Any state apparatus—repressive or ideological⁴—that

⁴ Louis Althusser defines ideology as, “a representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions” (1498). He conceptualizes ideological practice as being made up of both Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). He conceives of ISAs as largely part of the private domain (media, churches, schools, family), and RSAs of the public (government, police, prisons). Despite the increasingly blurred division between public and private due to privatization of public

stands in the way of this right to entrepreneurial freedom becomes framed as a hazard to democracy. Riedner and Mahoney explain that neoliberal policy is one of “upward redistribution in which public services are privatized, markets are opened up, and weakened government regulations are allowing corporations the ‘freedom’ to pursue capital by extending market relations ever deeper into our social relations” (10). The discourse of neoliberalism promises liberation, freedom, and choice, but it is liberation *from the state*,⁵ *freedom of the market*, and the choice *to consume*. As Henry Giroux puts it, the state “becomes a threat to freedom, particularly the freedom of the market, as its role as guardian of the public interests is actively disassembled, though its powers are still invoked by dominant interests to ensure their own privileges, such as free trade agreements, government subsidies for business, and strike ‘negotiations’” (56). Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* provides a cogent account of the institutionally-protected capturing of public good by private gain through what she calls “disaster capitalism.” Government incentives were widely available to corporations after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, for instance, while whole public housing initiatives were barred from reconstruction; similarly, a year and a half after the hurricane, the school system was all but totally privatized through charter schools run by companies (Klein; Molina; Sanchez). The justification for these kinds of privatized takeovers of previously public sectors always comes back to the discourse of market freedom.

goods and services, the most significant difference that Althusser posits is in the mode of enforcement of ideology; RSAs function primarily by violence and repression and then by ideology, while ISAs function first by ideology and then repression. Neoliberalism, however, guides both RSAs and ISAs, achieving hegemonic status.

⁵ We saw this play out through the 2009 anti-healthcare reform discourse, where one main argument against President Obama’s proposed public option was that it would threaten the profits of private corporations.

Pierre Bourdieu argues that neoliberal discourse is “so strong and so hard to fight because it has behind it all the powers of a world of power relations which it helps to make as it is, in particular by orienting the economic choices of those who dominate economic relations and so adding its own—specifically symbolic—force to those power relations” (96). Harvey agrees that within neoliberalism, “the role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (2). Explaining the extension of neoliberalism as an economic policy to the social aspects of our lives, he goes on to say that:

deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision have been all too common. [. . .] Furthermore, the advocates of the neoliberal way now occupy positions of considerable influence in education (the universities and many ‘think tanks’), in the media, in corporate boardrooms and financial institutions, in key state institutions (treasury departments, the central banks), and also in those international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) that regulate global finance and trade. (3)

These institutions that serve public interest, particularly media and education, are transformed from investments in the public to private profits, all in the name of the “logic” of the market, or rationalized self-interest. Not surprisingly, Giroux points out that this logic of rationalized self-interest, “goes hand-in-hand with growing incidents of racial injustice, class injustice, economic downsizing, and the growth of a criminal justice system” (57).

Like Giroux, Harvey declares that neoliberalism has “become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (3). It is this hegemonic status that I argue the representations of activism in

mainstream media seek to maintain. Not only does neoliberalism provide the cultural, social, historical, and political context for this project, it is also the thing that unites the anti-corporate globalization and anti-Bush policy protests whose representations this project analyzes. Through this dissertation I will trace hegemonic representation, attempts at counter-hegemonic representation, and tactics for intervention in both, which I describe later in this chapter as *an ethos of tactical ephemerality*.

A Cultural Studies Approach to Media Texts as Public Pedagogy

Asserting that all media functions pedagogically, Stuart Hall argues that media doesn't just reflect culture, but helps construct it. Newspapers, films, television, and websites (media texts) don't just deposit interpretations into a passive viewing audience. Instead, meanings are created in the interaction between texts and the audiences who interpret them. As an ideology-producing and ideology-sustaining medium, media texts ascribe meaning to the past and the present. A cultural studies approach to media texts, and representation in general, is necessary to understand how newspapers, films, and websites can teach their audiences.

Stuart Hall, part of what was known as the Birmingham School, named after Richard Hoggart's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, insists that the project of cultural studies is more than textual. In "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," Hall asserts that "culture will always work through its textualities—and at the same time that textuality is never enough," and asks that cultural studies embrace the tension that Edward Said describes as "the study of the text in its affiliations with 'institutions, offices, agencies, classes, academies, corporations, groups, ideologically defined parties and professions, nations, races, and genders'" (Hall

1907). What defines cultural studies as a project, according to Hall, are the social, political, and cultural forces that surround the production and content of a text, but also the hegemonic work that the text performs. Part of a wider argument about representation, which Graeme Turner defines as “the social process of making images, sounds, signs stand for something,” (40) the influence of cultural studies on media studies has broadened the object of inquiry from the media text alone to the larger interconnected systems of meaning and intertextual mediums bound up and referenced in that particular text. Referring to film specifically, he argues that the box office numbers and marketing campaigns, politics of the producers and popularity of the actors, audience and historical contexts, are all in conversation with the film itself to produce a cultural event in conversation with our everyday lives. Giroux, too, is interested in “how films function as social practices that influence their [audiences’] everyday lives and position them within existing social, cultural, and institutional machineries of power” (*Breaking*, 7). Functioning as “a cultural product and as a social practice, valuable both for itself and for what it could tell us of the systems and processes of culture” (Turner 41), film and other media produce and reproduce cultural significance, galvanizing otherwise diverse audiences around dominant ideologies through signifying practices.

Invoking the work of semioticians such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, Turner notes, “there is a ‘language’ for visual representation, too, sets of codes and conventions used by the audience to make sense of what they see. Images reach us as already ‘encoded’ messages, already represented as meaningful in particular ways” (Turner 47). One component of the task of analyzing media as a social practice is to uncover how images are represented and what that representation signifies. Unlike

Saussure and Barthes, whose semiotic approach to representation tended to be bound in language via signifier and signified, Michel Foucault argued for a discursive approach to representation, one that considered both power and institutions. Foucault writes that, “one’s point of reference should not be to the great model of language (langue) and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history which bears us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power not relations of meaning” (*Power/Knowledge* 114-5); in other words, he argued for the consideration of material forces on the construction of knowledge. Foucault presents discourse as, “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (*Archaeology* 49). So a discourse produces something, as it is about language *and* practice. About the definition of discourse, he later states, “I believe I have in fact added to its meaning: treating it sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (*Archaeology* 80). For Foucault, nothing exists outside of discourse, but subjects are produced within discourse; it is constitutive.

Hall describes the impact of Foucault’s articulation of discourse on a theory of representation:

It is discourse, not the subject who speaks it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period and culture. Indeed, this is one of Foucault’s most radical propositions: the ‘subject’ is *produced* within discourse. This subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it must be *subjected* to discourse. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge. The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author. (*Representation* 55)

This admittedly radical notion suggests that heterogeneous individuals “will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, subjected themselves to its rules, and hence become the subjects of its power/knowledge” (Ibid.). Here, Foucault invokes Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony as manufactured consent, which is closely related to Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatus. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, refers to the ruling class’s power over everyday citizens through consent to the dominant ideology. This consent is achieved through the acceptance of dominant media messages, among other avenues. Crucial to the study of representation in film, media, and especially popular culture, Gramsci’s theory of hegemony allows for resistance from oppressed groups. Hall reworks Gramsci’s hegemony, taking up this possibility for interventions and resistance and constantly asserting that cultural studies is a space for—and requires—action.

Perhaps most important to media studies is Hall’s assertion that representation is constitutive—that is, the very act of representing something contributes to the meaning of the thing. He writes:

representation is conceived as entering into the very constitution of things; and thus culture is conceptualized as a primary or ‘constitutive’ process, as important as the economic or material ‘base’ in shaping social subjects and historical events – not merely a reflection of the world after the event.
(*Representation* 5-6)

Instead of simply reflecting or re-presenting reality, his view of representation is that meaning is created by representation; the representation of a thing is part of the event. While ideological institutions attempt to fix meaning through representation—to close the possibilities for interpretation of an image—it is, of course, always contextual. For example, I have asked my students to close their eyes while I tell them that someone is

breaking into their house. When I ask what that person looks like, almost every single student (and often everyone) in a given class—regardless of their race or ethnicity—will say that it is a black man. This is certainly because the local news media creates that meaning by disproportionately covering crime committed by black men in our community; the act of representing the event is what creates the meaning and message to fear black men, perpetuating institutionalized racism.⁶ This is not to suggest that there is only one way to read media representation; on the contrary, multiplicitous negotiated or resistant readings are possible. Hall’s work on encoding and decoding is invaluable here; invoking and revising Saussure, he argues that the correspondence between encoded and decoded moments is constructed and that there is no necessary correspondence. To use the previous classroom example then, there is no natural correspondence between “black men” and “violence,” but there is a preferred reading which codes this relationship as natural.

The fact that students learn this hegemonic representation itself points to the way that media functions as a form of public pedagogy. Describing media, specifically film, in this way, Giroux writes:

The growing popularity of film as a compelling mode of communication and form of public pedagogy—a visual technology that functions as a powerful teaching machine that intentionally tries to influence the production of meaning, subject positions, identities, and experience—suggests how important it has become as a site of cultural politics. (*Breaking 6*)

Corporate media serves as a pedagogical site essential for maintaining neoliberalism, and teaching students to identify, discuss, and respond to the inequities inherent within this

⁶ See former President of NBC News and PBS Lawrence Grossman’s “From Bad to Worse: Black Images on “White News.”” *Columbia Journalism Review*. 2001.

construct requires connecting media ownership with meaning making practices, both online and on paper, in schools and outside of them. The flourishing study of public pedagogy provides a helpful framework for understanding media messages and representation as hegemonic as well as for theorizing counter-hegemonic projects in, through, and outside of the composition classroom.

Public Pedagogy: Sites of Reproduction and Resistance

We are always learning and unlearning, and constantly being taught through our interaction with and understanding of ideological and repressive state apparatuses. In the introduction to their edited collection—the first comprehensive collection to theorize public pedagogy—Jennifer Sandlin, Brian Schultz, and Jake Burdick write:

These are public pedagogies—spaces, sites, and languages of education and learning that exist outside of the walls of the institution of schools. As this collection illustrates, however, they are just as crucial—if not more so—to our understanding of the developments of identities and social formations as the teaching that goes on within the classroom. (1)

Riedner and Mahoney also talk about spaces outside the classroom as public pedagogy, specifically protest spaces: “for each of us, the events of A-16 (the IMF protests of April 2000) began long conversations, reading, talking, and thinking about pedagogy as a public, democratic practice that exceeds the bounds of the classroom and the university space” (4). Frequently referred to as a practice, space, or site, public pedagogy requires interaction with a text—a website, a museum, or a protest, for instance. This project looks specifically at media texts, including newspapers, films, and websites, as public pedagogy, and thus relies on circulation of these texts in particular publics.

In 1962, Jürgen Habermas published *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, which described the rise and fall of the bourgeois public sphere, a place where

citizens could form publics to discuss social and political issues. Whereas Habermas conceptualized the public sphere as singular, Nancy Fraser counters this with what she terms, “subaltern counterpublics,” or “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (123). The conditions of publics and counterpublics is taken up later by both Catherine Palczewski in Asen and Brouwer’s *Counterpublics and the State* (2001) and Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002). Warner maintains that publics must be created and maintained through participation, while Palczewski warns that the online space of contemporary social movements often prevents it from functioning as a counterpublic because, “material inequalities make Internet access difficult, if not impossible, for those who most need to make their needs heard” (180-1). These considerations further inform the making of publics and counterpublics within public pedagogy, particularly within this project, which conceives of media texts designed for participation through broad circulation, as public-pedagogic work.

Public pedagogy scholarship has evolved through distinct articulations of itself: first, within the work of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and the Birmingham Centre, who focused on popular culture and mass media as pedagogical spaces—a line of research that continues today (Graham; Sandlin; Tisdell). Henry Giroux, one of the most prolific theorists of public pedagogy, began naming public pedagogy as a site of hegemony in popular culture with his 2000 article, “Public Pedagogy as Cultural Politics: Stuart Hall and the ‘Crisis’ of Culture,” though he wrote about the educative work of media and culture before that. While most scholarship on public pedagogy examines it as a site of

hegemony (Giroux), some scholars have been paying attention to critical public pedagogy, or the use of popular culture for social justice (Sandlin; Tisdell). In 2008, Giroux published *Against the Terror of Neoliberalism: Politics Beyond the Age of Greed*, in which he writes:

These new sites of public pedagogy that have become the organizing force of neoliberal ideology are not restricted to schools, blackboards, and test taking. Nor do they incorporate the limited forms of address found in schools. Such sites operate within a wide variety of social institutions and formats including sports and entertainment media, cable television networks, churches, and channels of elite and popular culture such as advertising. Profound transformations have taken place in the public sphere, producing new sites of pedagogy marked by a distinctive confluence of new digital and media technologies, growing concentrations of corporate power, and unparalleled meaning-producing capacities. [. . .] What is surprising about the cultural politics of neoliberalism is that cultural studies theorists have either ignored or largely underestimated the symbolic and pedagogical dimensions of the struggle that neoliberal corporate power has put into place... (487).

This dissertation responds to that call, utilizing public pedagogy as a theoretical framework for analyzing dominant media representations and conceptualizing media interventions as critical public pedagogy in each chapter. Additionally, I seek to further explore a pressing question of public pedagogy scholarship: whether or not publics are “just fictions we recite in the service of private interests” (Sandlin, Schultz, and Burdick 2) or if they can function as counterhegemonic spaces within neoliberalism.

An Ethos of Tactical Ephemerality

This project relies on Michel de Certeau’s differentiation between tactics and strategies to understand the implementation of media interventions. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, his influential book in which he looks at how people operate in their daily lives based on their relationship to institutions, he writes that a strategy, which is only available to subjects of will and power, “assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and this serves as the basis for generating relations with an exterior

distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, ‘clienteles,’ ‘targets’ or ‘objects’ of research)” (xx). In other words, strategies are the art of the dominant institutions; they belong to those who define and control discourses. Tactics, on the other hand, are the art of the “weak,” or the everyday person. A tactic “insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances” (Ibid.). Without the privilege of institutional ownership or established space, people who use tactics capitalize on time: “a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing’” (Ibid.). In this way, tactics are dependent on the rhetorical concept of *kairos*, the opportune time for communicative action. Tactics and *kairotic* action then are central to this project in two ways: they inform the understanding of media interventions that I analyze in the following chapters, and they are the basis for a composition pedagogy that employs what I call an ethos of tactical ephemerality in the last chapter.

In a recent email call for chapters, community media studies scholar Kevin Howley wrote that though media interventions are commonplace in contemporary culture, “the concept of ‘media interventions’ remains somewhat elusive and theoretically underdeveloped.” Building on his definition of media interventions as “activities and projects that secure, exercise, challenge or acquire media power for tactical and strategic action,” this dissertation also conceptualizes media interventions as *kairotic*, tactical actions that respond to and resist public pedagogies, creating counter or critical public pedagogies. I analyze several moments of critical public pedagogy as media interventions

into the dominant representations of anti-neoliberalism activists in the U.S., and theorize spaces in the composition classroom from which to intervene as well. Michel de Certeau elaborates on the relationship between interventions and tactics:

Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time--to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. (38)

Digital media provides a tool and a platform for immediacy of response and, more importantly, broad, transnational, public circulation of these interventions. What is gained in immediacy, however, is lost in longevity; many digital media texts would be best understood as ephemeral texts that capture moments of resistance but will quickly be replaced with another text and other moments of resistance. This is significant not just for the composition classroom, where we teach students about responding to a particular context with a particular genre and for particular audiences, but also for our understanding of how to design arguments for public consumption within the kairotic moment of activist action. Thus, I argue for an understanding of the production and consumption of media interventions, both in and outside of the classroom, through an ethos of tactical ephemerality.

The Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement and Two Sites of Resistance in the U.S.

The anti-corporate globalization movement, also known as the anti-globalization movement (primarily by the media), the global justice movement, and the movement of

movements,⁷ is a social movement against the globalization of corporate capitalism.⁸ As the name “movement of movements” might suggest, the anti-corporate globalization movement intersects with myriad other movements, sub- and countercultures, social issues, and events, including environmentalism, alternative and independent media, Zapatistas, Anarchists, DIY culture, Buy Nothing Day, and Critical Mass. The sentiments are reflected in popular culture through feature films such as *Fight Club* (based on a novel), documentaries such as *Food Inc.*, *The Corporation* (also a book), and *The Yes Men* (based on the activities of the cultural resistance pranksters by the same name), and books such as Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* and magazines such as *Adbusters*.

Movement activist Amory Starr writes in the introduction of her book, *Global Revolt*, “this history, while hardly a comprehensive one, maps the emergence and convergence of movement hallmarks: diversity, solidarity, creativity, autonomy, direct action, and the creation of spaces of participatory democracy” (38). Though the media coverage of the movement, and thus public discourse about the movement in the United

⁷ Though I recognize the diversity of perspectives, movements, groups, and issues that make up the anti-corporate globalization movements, I will refer to the movement in the singular, referring to the “movement” of movements against corporate globalization. When I discuss the activists and protesters involved, I will sometimes refer to them as anti-corporate globalization activists as opposed to simply anti-globalization activists because many activists are not actually against globalization, but against the globalization of corporate capitalism and neoliberal policies.

⁸ For critiques of globalization from the perspective of privatization of public sectors, see: Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars*, 2002 and Saron Beder, *Power Play: The Fight to Control the World’s Electricity*, 2003. For critiques of labor conditions, see: Ellen Rosen, *Making Sweatshops: The Globalization of the US Apparel Industry*, 2002 and Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, 2000. For further reading related to health, food, science, and pharmaceutical companies, see Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, 2000 and Jim Yong Kim, *Dying for Growth: Global Inequality and the Health of the Poor*, 2000. For an overview of the movement from an activist’s perspective, Amory Starr’s *Global Revolt* has excellent coverage of its history, controversy, and tactics.

States, first started after the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999, that was hardly the beginning of the movement. Scientist, academic, and activist, Vandana Shiva famously said at those protests: “The first globalization was colonialism and it lasted 50 years. The second globalization was so-called development and it lasted 50 years. The third globalization was free trade and it only lasted 5 years and since Seattle, we now speak of a fourth globalization, people’s globalization, which Richard Falk had already theorized as ‘globalization from below’” (Starr 20). Globalization from below refers to the transnational communities of activism who do not oppose globalization, but rather corporate globalization; farmers in the global south and environmental activists in the U.S. collectively working against Monsanto’s genetically-modified seed monopoly, for instance, are creating an alternative vision of globalization. It is this “people’s globalization” that I’ll be looking at in this project. These next two sections briefly describe the history of the two events whose representations I follow, and situate them within this alternative vision of people over profit.

A BRIEF HISTORY: SEATTLE, 1999

The first World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in the United States was held in Seattle, Washington, in late 1999. Securing a U.S. location was initially seen as a success of the Clinton administration and transnational corporations based in the U.S., but that celebration soon ended after the conference talks collapsed early. The reason for the collapse was in part because of direct action tactics and large street protests, many of which physically blocked delegates from attending talks, but also because of the less-reported conflict brewing due to developing nations’ concerns with particular WTO laws

(Wighton). Anti-corporate globalization activists participated in the protests for various reasons, but ultimately the thread that linked them together was their opposition to WTO policies and trade negotiations which privilege profit over human and environmental rights. Nonprofit organizations, labor unions, religious organizations, student groups, direct action groups, and individuals who identify as anarchist, anti-authoritarian, and/or autonomous, all participated in actions to shut down the WTO meetings and raise consciousness about the WTO by capturing the mainstream media's attention through performative action, image events, and educating the public about the consequences of free, rather than fair, trade. Marches, rallies, and teach-ins were planned months ahead of the conference, some even organized in accordance with police and city officials, and many nonprofit organizations were scheduled to give formal presentations to the WTO delegates during the conference; in short, numerous activist groups and individuals spent a lot of time and effort to have their voices heard.

November 30, also referred to as N30, was the first day of the WTO conference. Seven members of the AFL-CIO staff worked for over two months to prepare a rally and march for the opening day (McIntosh), and numerous organized labor unions from different states worked together to get their members to Seattle for the march. Meanwhile, students, primarily from Oregon and Washington colleges and universities, had been organizing street demonstrations via email and online message boards for months as well. All of these events converged on the morning of N30 as an estimated 15,000 students (and student-aged individuals) gathered to stage performative protests and used lockdown tactics borrowed from forest-defense protests, such as linked arms in large metal tubes filled with wet concrete, to secure major intersections and block traffic

to the WTO conference. At the same time, there was a union rally of an estimated 20,000 people going on in Memorial Stadium and smaller labor and environmental marches to downtown of almost 15,000 more people. Because of the sheer number of people, delegates were unable to get to the conference and consequently, it was shut down for the day. That night, Seattle police enforced a curfew and established a “no-protest zone” around the conference site—over twenty-four blocks in all. Over the next three days, anyone who appeared to be a protester, including news reporters, non-activist residents, and even a congressman, was arrested immediately and placed in one of the many FEMA detention centers or the King County Jail.

On the last day of the WTO conference, delegates from the African caucus walked out of the meeting, causing the talks to collapse without any resolutions. Overall, over 600 people were arrested, 157 of whom were awarded a collective \$250,000 in 2004 because they were arrested outside of the designated “no-protest zone” (Young and Brunner). Other outcomes attributed to the protests included the resignation of Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper, the failure of Mayor Schell’s re-election campaign, increased public awareness of the WTO, and the creation of the Independent Media Centers (indymedia.org).

A BRIEF HISTORY: NEW YORK CITY, 2004

Five years after the beginning of the anti-corporate globalization movement in the U.S., three years after the attacks of September 11, and one and a half years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Republican National Convention was held for the first time in New York City. The Republican Party was nominating George W. Bush for re-election and the

location and timing helped remind the public, in case they managed to forget, that his platform was squarely centered around keeping America safe from additional terrorist attacks. Like the 1999 protests in Seattle, the protests against the RNC were not about a single issue, but rather issues that converged around the idea of global justice. Activists protested the war in Iraq and war profiteering alongside critiques of President Bush's foreign and domestic policies more generally.

Protest activity started four days before the convention, including a banner drop in front of The Plaza Hotel (*Plaza Banner*) accusing President Bush of lying about the reasons for invading Iraq, a nude protest by members of the AIDS advocacy group, ACT UP (*Republican National Convention Protests in NYC*), and a protest Critical Mass bike ride of over 5,000 people ("Democracy Headlines"), all culminating in a march and rally of over 500,000 people ("Critical Mass:") the day before the convention started. United for Peace and Justice, a "coalition of more than 1400 local and national groups throughout the United States," ("About United for Peace and Justice") organized the peaceful march, working with city officials to plan the route, but Mayor Bloomberg denied them a permit to officially gather in Central Park.

As the convention started on Monday, Still We Rise, a New York-based group, gathered 4,000 people for a rally, and later, another group called the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign amassed thousands of people for a march that was disrupted by a policeman who drove his motorcycle into the crowd (Dwoskin). Direct action tactics escalated during the days of the convention, including members of Code Pink: Women Against War and ACT UP interrupting the convention from within. Over the course of the week, over 1000 people were detained, many of whom were held for

multiple days in a temporary holding facility termed “Guantanamo on the Hudson” by some news media outlets because of the cramped and filthy conditions (Bone). Like the WTO protests in Seattle, bystanders were arrested without cause and police tactics were challenged in courts. Ultimately, George W. Bush was re-elected, and the aforementioned activist groups continued to stage marches and rallies throughout his tenure.

A Brief Overview of Chapters

Noam Chomsky and David Graeber both suggest that the more appropriate term for the movement is anti-neoliberalism, and adopting this position in this dissertation, I chose to focus on two sites of resistance to neoliberal policies, including protests against the expansion of corporate globalization at the WTO protests in Seattle and against President George W. Bush’s economic, military, and security policies at the protests in New York City during the 2004 Republican National Convention.⁹ I follow these sites of resistance as they are represented in print news media, films, and websites, to understand how these media texts function as public pedagogy, shaping how potential activists and protesters understand the messages, tactics, and people of the movement.

In chapter two, “Making the News: Mainstream Print News Media as Public Pedagogy,” I analyze the coverage of the protests through front-page stories in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* during the week of each of the protests. I argue that the representations of protesters aim to undermine the movement in the name of maintaining neoliberalism. I then briefly consider the news website

⁹ For more on Bush Doctrine policies as neoliberal policies, see William Tabb, “Neoliberalism: A Stock Taking After Three Decades,” Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands, 11 September 2004.

Indymedia (Independent Media Center) as a site of critical public pedagogy, created as an intervention in mainstream media with an ethos of tactical ephemerality.

In chapter three, “Commercial Films, Activist Intentions? Public Pedagogy as Reproduction and Resistance,” I consider two feature films, *Battle in Seattle* and *This Revolution*. Both were created as a way to supplement the gaps in mainstream news media’s reporting of the protests, but both rely on hegemonic representations of activists, reinforcing the existing stereotypes of protesters. Both films use documentary footage to gain legitimacy, but produce dramatic feature films with Hollywood actors and plots that rely on predictable Hollywood tropes. I ultimately read the films as both reinforcing and intervening in what mainstream news media teach about activism and protests.

Chapter four, “Learning from Convergence Culture: Digital Sites of Public Pedagogy,” traces the evolution of two websites, the promotional site for *Battle in Seattle* and a counter website, *The Real Battle in Seattle*, as they respond to and intervene with each other as public pedagogy and critical public pedagogy. I also investigate the evolution of an online news site, *Guerilla News Network*, founded by *This Revolution* director Stephen Marshall, as it introduces commercialism to a previously grassroots space.

After analyzing newspapers, films, and websites as sites of public pedagogy, I shift focus to classroom pedagogy, specifically thinking about how the media interventions in the previous chapters might contribute to the development of assignments in the composition classroom. In chapter five, “Media Interventions: Kairotic Moments and Ephemeral Texts in the Composition Classroom,” I reflect on the use of alternative, independent media as classroom texts and on assignments that ask students to intervene

in different publics using digital media. I consider the limitations of introducing countercultural media practices such as culture-jamming into the classroom, including the challenges of talking about political topics with students who have differing perspectives. I close with a description of and reflections on an assignment that engages students in public writing with an ethos of tactical ephemerality.

Chapter Two

Making the News: Mainstream Print News Media as Public Pedagogy

“Don’t Hate the Media, Be the Media!”
Seattle Indymedia slogan

I first heard about the protests against the World Trade Organization while watching the nightly news on television. I vaguely remember seeing chaotic images of the protests, but distinctly recall poring over the local newspaper, as I did each morning before school, and coming across a painfully short article with colorful opinion but very little information just before the Letters to the Editor section. The headline read, “Wrong Method to Challenge WTO” and all 114 words supported the idea that the only thing that took place in the three days of protest was “vandalism and violence,” which the newspaper staff “condemned.” There was no Blogger, Facebook, or Twitter yet, no online social networking or alternative news sites for me to consult for more information, and so I slung my anti-war button and patch-covered bag over my shoulder and went to school, where none of my teachers brought up the issue either. Though I suspected there was much more than violence and vandalism going on at the protests, it was not until four years later at my first large national public protest against the invasion of Iraq that I truly understood protests as rich sites of learning, in addition to physical sites of resistance. This experience has lingered long enough to help shape the purpose of this chapter—to examine mainstream print news media coverage of the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle and the 2004 Republican National Convention (RNC) protests in New York City as sites of public pedagogy which prompted critical media interventions to create a pedagogical space for counter-narratives including, in the case of Seattle, an online alternative media news site called Indymedia.

As public pedagogy, mainstream news articles about large anti-corporate globalization and anti-Bush—ultimately, anti-neoliberal—protests produce and sustain *protesters-as-violent* and *protesters-as-ignorant* primary discourse frames, which encourages readers to dismiss the protesters’ actions, issues, and messages while privileging state and corporate interests. While there may still exist a romantic notion of the “free press” acting as agents of objectivity and neutral reporting, for some time critical media scholars have argued that corporations and government influence what and how news is reported (Bagdikian; Bennett; Fishman; Herman and Chomsky; McChesney). In *The New Media Monopoly*, Ben Bagdikian details the five media mega-conglomerates in the United States (Time Warner, Disney, News Corporation, Viacom, and Bertelsmann¹⁰) and argues that the financial and political interests of the conglomerates are what dictates what will and will not be included in news content. Financial concerns and focus on profit also dictate how many journalists are employed and how they acquire their information. The current practice of 24-hour “news,” born from cable news networks and the pressure of online news and social networking sites, coupled with the decrease in numbers of paid full time reporters, presents a situation in which journalists are more inclined to use ready-made governmental and corporate press releases as sources of information. Even before this 24-hour news cycle—twenty years ago—Herman and Chomsky wrote that there was an increasing reliance on official sources. They argued that the media’s heavy reliance on official sources overwhelmingly provides the state’s perspective without presenting opposing voices. Even when voices in opposition to the state or corporations

¹⁰ Bertelsmann, a German company, is the largest publisher of English-language books.

are present in the news, according to Bagdikian, they are given very brief treatment with respect to space and depth.

Describing how news discourse frames stories through a reliance on dominant ideologies, Brian Houston writes:

News discourse establishes ordinary, familiar ways of looking at the world—worldviews which are presented as objective and thus considered to be true. Assumptions are ingrained in the ideology of the news, and challenges to these assumptions are seen as an attack on the understanding of reality. Because fundamental beliefs about reality cannot be realistically challenged, opposition to the dominant ideology is dismissed as absurd or threatening. (5)

In this chapter, I analyze the protests against the WTO in Seattle and against the Republican National Convention in New York City, both of which had record-breaking numbers of protesters since the Vietnam War (Elliot and Vidal; Houston). Because of this, they were more likely to capture news media coverage and are thus more likely to have taught a large number of readers about protests. In order to ascertain the lessons news stories might have taught while covering these protests, I combine rhetorical analysis with content analysis methodologies to do a close reading of the front page articles published during the weeks of the protests in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. My first questions revolve around issues of the representation and framing of the protesters: Who are the activists? Are they represented as diverse and multi-vocal or as a homogeneous group? What are they doing? How are their appearances and actions described? My second set of questions has to do with voice: how are protesters given agency in the articles? Are direct quotes used? Where are their voices placed within the articles? What messages are they trying to convey through the protest? My third group of questions addresses the events as sites of pedagogy more specifically:

Are the explicitly educational aspects of the protests, such as teach-ins, represented? Is there any educational framing of the events? Are those who question corporations and government framed as intellectually curious or as trouble? I close the chapter by exploring how the first Indymedia website, established as a result of the Seattle protests, functions as a site of critical public pedagogy that directly responds to the public pedagogy of mainstream news media.

Related Studies of Mainstream News Media Coverage of Street Protests

A number of studies have analyzed mainstream news media's coverage of street protests that challenge corporations and government in the United States. Todd Gitlin's influential 1980 book, *The Whole World is Watching*, analyzed media coverage of the group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the late sixties and found that it undermined the group by focusing on countercultural style and appearance and deviant actions, as well as by undercounting the number of people at protests rather than focusing on the messages of the SDS. In 1984, Shoemaker found "the more deviant a group was ranked by an editor the less favorably that group was covered by the media" (qtd in Houston 6). Shoemaker and Reese also showed that media coverage of protesters' appearances is more likely than coverage of protesters' messages. Numerous studies find that media coverage of protests focuses on radical or violent behavior, no matter how small the minority partaking in such behavior, and systematically ignores arguments and messages presented by oppositional groups (Jha; Hertog and McLeod; Small). Smith et al concluded, "the presence of counter demonstrations, arrests, and/or violence produced more reporting on the demonstration itself and less attention to the issues at stake" (1415). Baasanjar Undrakhbuyan asserted that, "In the reporting of political deviancies,

the media overstate the seriousness of the event, and exaggerate the violence and damage that occurred during the politically deviant events” (8). This does not go unnoticed by individuals and organizations planning protests; in fact, it is a rich subject of discussion. In *Global Revolt*, Amory Starr explains that “violence” is seen as a socially constructed concept that varies from culture to culture, depending on what the dominant culture considers illegitimate: “On a strategic level, some activists believe that any image that can be construed as ‘violent’ discredits, delegitimizes or distracts from the movement’s messages. In response, other’s argue that the media tend not to cover *demonstrations unless they violate what is considered to be legitimate*” (135). While some activists argue that police violence is normalized and therefore remains invisible, others “recognize that experiencing, witnessing, or watching media coverage of arbitrary police violence crystallizes issues of power, order, and discipline, with reliably radicalizing effects” (Starr 133). Still other activist groups reject the dichotomy of tactical violence/nonviolence completely, including activist Starhawk, who wrote, “I can no longer use the same word to describe what I’ve seen even the most unruly elements of our movement do in actions and what the cops did in Genoa” (qtd in Starr 134). Despite internal debates and discussions, what all movement activists do tend to agree on is the practice of using no violence towards people.

When protesters’ actual messages are being covered, their voices are directly used even less frequently. Houston contends that “voices of protest are often provided late in a text, after a macrostructure that focus on the violence has been constructed” (14).

Ultimately, all of these studies point to the marginalization of voices in opposition to the state or corporations. Concerned about the relationship between the press, democracy,

and public knowledge, Sonora Jha points out, “Since news has been considered a significant political resource over the last few decades and is even more so in today’s mass mediated America, this paints a dim picture” (“Why” 728).

Media coverage of the Seattle and New York City protests is no different. Undrakhbuyan asserted that “content analysis of the news programs of television networks and the images major newspapers used during the Seattle protest found that it [. . .] was dominated by the violent reaction of police and the deviancy of the protest movement” (4). Interestingly, Wall found that both mainstream and activist-produced media primarily presented only two activist identities—union organizers and anarchists—which are both easily identifiable archetypal characters that the public already has opinions about. DeLuca and Peebles looked at the media images of the WTO protests and found that the acts of property violence during the protests helped gain media attention but that, again, it was negative attention that framed activists as primarily young troublemakers. Rather than view this as something bad though, DeLuca and Peebles say, “Yes, violence is disturbing. But for people excluded by governmental structures and corporate power, symbolic protest violence is an effective way to make it onto the public screen and speak truth to that power” (144). However, later in this chapter I pay particular attention to how many activists actually get a chance to speak truth to power vis-à-vis the (in)frequency of direct quotes.

Methodology

For this chapter, I have compiled newspaper articles for textual analysis of the mainstream print news media representation of the 1999 WTO and 2004 RNC protests. My analysis is based on the examination of manufactured frames, what Gitlin calls,

“principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (6) in the news stories. My sample includes twenty-two articles from the three U.S. newspapers with the largest circulation since 1999, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (“eCirc”): *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. All three papers are owned by different parent companies—a rarity within U.S. media—but it is worth noting other holdings of the companies.¹¹ A small company, The New York Times Company owns *The New York Times*, as well as eighteen other newspapers in six states, the *International Herald Tribune*, and a radio station in New York City. Gannett Co., Inc., which enjoys the largest newspaper circulation in the U.S., owns *USA Today* and *USA Weekend* alongside over ninety-five “local” newspapers in thirty-four states and over nineteen newspapers in the United Kingdom. Of particular interest is that they also own the Army Times Publishing Company, which publishes seven military-branch specific papers. Recently acquired in 2007 by News Corporation, *The Wall Street Journal* might have the most ideologically controversial parent company. News Corporation’s chairman and CEO, Rupert Murdoch, was a visible friend to the George W. Bush administration, as detailed in a survey of over one hundred seventy-five of his newspapers worldwide that all supported the invasion of Iraq (Greenslade). The 2004 documentary *Outfoxed* specifically critiqued Murdoch and his Fox News Channel for the explicitly conservative bias of the channel and his control of journalistic content. In 2007, Murdoch acquired Dow Jones, which owned *The Wall Street Journal* and also provides broadcasting content for CNBC. In addition to *The Wall Street*

¹¹ All holdings are according to the 2008 version of Columbia Journalism Review’s *Who Owns What* online database found online <http://www.cjr.org/resources>

Journal and *Dow Jones*, Murdoch owns *The New York Post*, the Fox Broadcasting Company with over forty-five television stations, twelve film studios, over one hundred seventy-five newspapers internationally, and over forty-five book imprints including HarperCollins. Murdoch's other entertainment holdings include *myspace.com*, *rottentomatoes.com*, and *American Idol*. With or without Murdoch as the owner, it is important to note that the same company that owned one of the largest stock market indices also owned the largest financial and business newspaper in the U.S.

I only selected articles that were published on the days of the WTO and RNC protests—November 30, 1999-December 3, 1999 and August 30, 2004-September 2, 2004, respectively. These dates should theoretically be the most fruitful with respect to quality and quantity of coverage of the events. I chose news articles as opposed to the numerous editorials published during the same time frame because I am primarily interested in what is reported under the pretense of factual, ideologically neutral, informative, and educational—that is to say, objective—journalism. Except for *The Wall Street Journal*, which had no cover stories of the protests, I only selected stories that appeared on the front cover of the newspapers, since that page yields the greatest visibility and readership. For *The Wall Street Journal*, I chose to look at the coverage on page two of the newspaper. I did not attend to accompanying photographs because, while the text of the story remains stable whether the audience views the article online or in print, the photographs are often not included online. There are indeed limitations to this small sample, as there was mainstream print news media coverage of the protests well before and after the events, but as a representative range, the source samples provide

clear parameters for the purpose of this chapter, which is to examine the ways that mainstream media might be teaching the public about activism.

Masks and Bandanas: One-Dimensional Representations of Protester Identities

One primary frame in the media coverage of anti-corporate and anti-war protests focuses on the young age and alternative appearances of protesters, often in an all too simplistic manner. According to Robin Broad:

The same images are projected over and over again in the press: rowdy students, black-masked anarchists—desperately in need of a shower—smashing a window or burning a car. Too many journalists write as if this movement were a composite of a caricature: an idealistic privileged student with magenta hair and a nose ring who will one day grow up and understand the way things really are. (1)

In *The New York Times* article, “National Guard is Called to Quell Trade-Talk Protests; Seattle is Under Curfew After Disruptions,” the first description of the appearance of the protesters is “a small group of men, dressed in black clothing and masks” in the seventh paragraph. Though other activist groups are discussed in the article, none of their appearances are described so the focus on what we can assume are members of the anarchist group Black Bloc¹² immediately alerts the reader to the presence of dangerous-looking men. Again at the end of the article the author writes that most of the demonstrators are opposed to the violent behavior of a small number of protesters, “most of whom were young men wearing masks and declining to give their names when asked by reporters.” Both descriptions are coupled with the reminder that these black-clad protesters are the minority, but the inclusion of the same basic description in two

¹² Though not a group in the traditional sense, Black Bloc is an anarchist tactic utilized at large protests. Small groups form an affinity group and work with other affinity groups to enact particular actions. The groups evolve and dissolve often and organically.

paragraphs within one article suggests that their presence is anything but minor.

In *The Wall Street Journal's* "Waves of Protests Disrupt WTO Meeting: Police repel Demonstrators as Seattle Mayor Sets an Overnight Curfew," again, the only description of the protesters' appearances is "two dozen young men wearing bandanas over their faces." Another article in *The Wall Street Journal*, "Some Hazy, Some Erudite and All Angry: Diversity of WTO Protests Makes Them Hard to Dismiss," makes reference to more of the same accessory: "Debbie Carlson, a bandana-wearing member of a lesbian activist group." Though the article is on the diversity of activist interests and issues represented at the protests, they only choose to describe Carlson's appearance, which serves to parallel the dangerous ideologies of lesbian activists with those of property-destroying, angry men in black. Though bandanas are associated with violence, the reasons for wearing them are many, including visible solidarity, security against tear gas, and in the case of the Black Bloc, anonymity: "We don't want stars or spokespeople. [. . .] Dependence on charismatic leaders has not only led to infighting and hierarchy within the left, but has given the FBI and police easy targets who, if killed or arrested, leave their movements without direction" ("Letter").

USA Today did not reference the appearances of activists in Seattle or in New York for the RNC protests, and *The Wall Street Journal* didn't describe the appearances of RNC protesters either. *The New York Times*, however, ran a special column on the front page of the paper each day during the convention, called *The Republicans: The Convention in New York*, which featured quite a bit of coverage on the protests. The politics against Bush and his administration were broader than simple "anti-war" sentiments. In one of the columns, "Upstaging Before the Show," two activists are described as "dressed in suits

made of duct tape to spoof Mr. Bush's handling of national security," while another activist is described as wearing a pinstripe suit outside the New York Stock Exchange ("At Least 900 Arrested"), critiquing bankers on Wall Street. One article, "Police Tactics Mute Protesters and Messages," appeared to describe police action that was the exact opposite of the headline: "the police allowed 10 protesters in a larger group to wear masks -- technically a violation of the law -- as part of a symbolic statement against the abuse of United States military prisoners at Abu Ghraib in Iraq." The law referenced here was one that was reinstated by the city of New York just before the scheduled protests against the 2001 World Economic Forum (RNCNotWelcome Collective), highlighting the state's need to manage democratic cultural resistance. Unlike the descriptions of activists in all black wearing bandanas, these descriptions of the more carnivalesque activists are not positioned as general threats to the state as much as they are against specific policies.

Another primary frame in the articles is protester violence. Though each of the articles states, usually in one sentence, that the majority of activists were non-violent, the vast majority of the sentences dedicated to protesters' actions portray hostile activities. In one *Wall Street Journal* article about the Seattle protests, activists were said to be largely non-violent in the fourth paragraph, but then three of the four paragraphs describing action featured explicitly aggressive behavior such as young men who "broke car windows," and attacked the Foreign Trade Minister, Martha Lucia Ramirez, by banging on her car. They also included descriptions of property violence, as painted by the following scene: "There were broken display windows in dozens of retail stores, including Nordstrom, Bon Marche, and the Gap. Many trashcans were overturned, and some dumpsters were set afire. Graffiti was spray-painted on buildings, with messages such as

‘No Sweatshops’” (“Waves of Protests”). *The New York Times* had similar stories of disruptions, again recounting the familiar scene of “smashed windows and spray-painted graffiti at downtown stores like Nordstrom, Niketown, Starbucks, and the Gap” and a man screaming “Anarchy rules!” before “carrying a trash can down the street and then using it to smash a window of a Starbucks coffee shop” (“National Guard is Called”). The reader would encounter six other paragraphs in this article that reference disorderly actions like these before she gets to a short quote from the police chief near the end of the article saying that most actions were non-violent. A description is painted of the peaceful—albeit surrounded by police and National Guard—marchers against the RNC:

Shorts and T-shirts, many branding Mr. Bush a liar, a criminal or a warmonger, were the uniforms of the day. Anti-Bush accessories went beyond banners, placards and buttons. There were fly swatters bearing Mr. Bush's face. Pallbearers carried a thousand mock coffins of cardboard draped in black or in American flags, representing the war dead in Iraq. And moving along the line of the march was a papier-mâché tank with President Bush's head, wearing a cowboy hat, poking out the hatch. (“Vast Anti-Bush Rally”)

Again, though, this thick description is at the very end of the 2000+ word article and the reader must get through paragraphs labeling the activists as “raucous,” “belligerent,” “disorderly,” “trouble,” and “wild-eyed liberal wastrels” who “harassed convention guests,” “knocked down police barriers,” “hurled bottles at police lines,” and “shout[ed] insults and obscenities at Mr. Bush” (Ibid.). The few who smash the windows of corporate stores become synecdoches for all protesters.

It is important to note that the “violent” protester behavior described above was never directed at people. While the accounts of the protests were continually described as being “marred by an outbreak of violence” (“Talks and Turmoil”), both media and activist accounts confirm that it was the police and/or National Guard that committed violence

against people. Most of the media accounts either report police violence without naming police as the actors or couple police violence with the idea that they were struggling to handle protesters, thus excusing their violent acts. For instance, *The New York Times* reports that “tear gas floated through the streets...and the police struggled to break up demonstrations” (“Talks and Turmoil”); the police are not explicitly identified as the agents behind spraying tear gas into protesters’ eyes, but if the reader does make that connection, she is to understand that the police were just trying to restore order.

Sometimes police weren’t even mentioned: “As white clouds of tear gas passed down the streets, protesters coughed, cried, and asked for water” (“National Guard”). One article in *The Wall Street Journal* did explain that “the use of tear gas and billy clubs by the police took many by surprise because the protesters were largely nonviolent” (“Waves of Protest”), but it was still written in passive voice, creating a meaning quite different than if the author had said “police beat protesters with billy clubs.” Even when the action is non-violent, harsh action verbs are used to frame the activity as violent and oppositional, as seen in this sentence in *The New York Times*: “the protesters surrounded the convention hall, pinned trade dignitaries in their hotels and stopped traffic at several intersections” (“National Guard is Called”), which conjures up images of protesters literally pinning people to the wall or locking people inside their suites, when of course they simply jammed traffic, making it difficult for delegates to drive or be driven to the ceremony.

If the media reports of protester appearances and actions seem to paint them as a fairly homogeneous group, the lack of details about the thousands of activist groups present at both the Seattle and New York City protests doesn’t help counter that notion. In

the twenty-one articles that I analyzed, only seven mentioned the names of any of the thousands of activist groups represented at both events, and only four articles mentioned more than one group. The article that mentioned the most activist groups by name—five—was specifically about the diversity of groups present. Published in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Some Hazy, Some Erudite and All Angry—Diversity of WTO Protests Makes Them Hard to Dismiss,” does all that it can to make readers dismiss the groups. While the reporter writes that “the sheer diversity of the groups that have come here to vent their ire at free trade and corporate globalization makes them difficult to dismiss,” she presents specialized and seemingly irrelevant groups at the WTO protests, such as Dyke Action, the Kuna Youth Movement, the Fourth World Association of Finland, the Memphis Audubon Society, and the Canadian Library Association. Another reporter disregards the diversity of causes, calling them “an eclectic array of grievances” (“National Guard”). About this strategy, Houston writes, “The reader is also allowed to dismiss the protests because of the specificity and oddity of the many protest causes and their parent organizations” (19). And it is not just the public readership that might dismiss the groups. Media organizations such as NPR lamented of the RNC protests: “the lack of a unified message among a series of large and small groups with varying tactics has complicated [our] efforts to gain coverage,” with one senior editor agreeing that “there are so many different messages and so many different ways they are portraying themselves” (“Police Tactics”). Ultimately, the shallow portrayal of protesters’ appearances—especially clothes, actions, and group memberships—serves to keep their identities one-dimensional and easily lumped together and contained as if they are a singular subculture.

Voices in the Margins: Activist Agency on the (Bottom of the) Page

For all the tens of thousands of activists in Seattle and New York City for these protests, it would seem from the lack of direct quotes in the articles that reporters had a hard time finding a single one with whom to talk. Drawing from Chomsky and Herman's notion of official voices, Houston notes that the accounts of the Seattle protests "depended heavily on police voices to explain and address the conflict between protesters and police" (23). In addition to police, WTO delegates in Seattle, and RNC delegates and vaguely identified "GOP officials" in New York, lodged critiques against the protesters in the articles I sampled. While twelve of the twenty-one articles included at least one quote from a protester, the quotes were almost always in the last quarter of the article and almost all are immediately preceded by or followed with a paragraph contradicting the legitimacy of protester's quote. Additionally, when direct quotes were not used and the reporter paraphrased the purported message of the people, it was often immediately followed with a contradictive "official voice."

Only one of the three *New York Times* articles about the WTO protests used a quote from an activist, "Gloria Haselwander, a 21-year-old clerk in a Seattle music store" ("National Guard"). She maintains, "We are here peacefully; we just want our message to be heard [. . .] We kept saying 'No Violence, No Violence,' [. . .] but there was just this mass of gas. My throat hurts, my lungs still hurt." Her quote is tightly nestled in between a paragraph describing how police officers fired rubber bullets at protesters that they "believed were charging police lines," and another paragraph in which a lawyer says that activists intended to be nonviolent but also intended to continue the demonstrations until

the WTO changed their trade policies. This placement almost certainly implies that it might have been Gloria's own fault that she was the victim of tear gas.

Two articles in *The Wall Street Journal* feature single quotes from activists, both in the last few paragraphs, who comment on police tactics—once again shifting the story away from the issues that brought the protesters there in the first place, in favor of covering combative police-protester relations. One of the activists who hung an anti-WTO banner from an eighty-story crane said, “On Monday, this black cop told me that if it wasn't for stuff like this, there wouldn't have been a civil-rights movement [. . .] Yesterday, the same cop was tear-gassing me” (WTO-Clash). In “Waves of Protest,” a protester who travelled to Seattle from Portland with classmates and a professor, admits, “I just want to say I'm really scared. We're not activist weirdos, just college kids.” As the sole direct quote in each article, these voices are standing for the voices of all the protesters. In the latter quote, as in so many of the quotes, the speaker is a young person and therefore not as credible as the older, official voices. He actually helps perpetuate this lack of credibility by claiming a wide-eyed “college kid” identity rather than that of a savvy citizen confidently condemning the policies of the WTO.

However, when, in the third *Wall Street Journal* article, a labor union president, Brian McWilliams, does confidently condemn the WTO, the quote is countered by an “official voice” in the very next paragraph. McWilliams says, “By taking time out from work to voice our concerns, the ILWU is telling the transnational corporations that they cannot run the global economy without the workers of the world. We are not antitrade. We are against free trade and for fair trade” (“Dockworkers”). The following paragraphs both work to delegitimize McWilliams' concerns, stating the impact of work stoppage on

“billions of dollars of international goods” and quoting an official as saying that “It seems very ironic that a group of people who have benefited more than anyone else would take an action that potentially could hurt themselves.” This strategy—a more official, higher-ranking, or powerful voice commenting on how a protester or activist group doesn’t fully understand what they’re asking for—is one that is seen throughout all of the articles sampled.

In *The New York Times* coverage of the RNC protests, singular activist quotes are often inserted without context and stand alone as their own paragraphs. In “At Least 900 Arrested in City As Protesters Clash With Police,” the only protester voice in the article is a confused one: “We don’t know why we are being arrested, we were just crossing the street...We were told that if we don’t do anything illegal we would be allowed to march on the sidewalk and we did just that. Then they arrested us for no apparent reason.” As a reader, it is tempting to greet this quote with skepticism; after all, who gets arrested for doing nothing? Because there is no additional information, no confirmation that the protesters were in fact being arrested without cause, the quote doesn’t carry much weight. A police spokesperson in the same article poked fun at many of the activists’ lack of knowledge about the city, which extends the protester-as-confused frame: “A lot of them are from out of town, and I think it was reflected in the choice of intersections.” The implication that protest organizers didn’t network with local groups in their planning and organizational stage communicates little to the reader other than a demeaning attitude.

Sometimes the belittlement of protesters is not passively, through quote positioning, but outright, through journalistic description. Helene Cooper, staff reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, begins by dubbing the WTO protests “the Woodstock of

antiglobalization” in the first sentence, a move that frames the event as a leisurely foray into sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll instead of a hands-on shut down of the WTO talks. She introduces the reader to a member of a lesbian-activist group who “can’t get beyond a few sound bites to explain why she is out in the streets with thousands of other free-trade foes who are opposed to the World Trade Organization,” and chastises her further for not being more specific than asserting that “The WTO doesn’t care about women’s rights.” But even when an activist is specific and articulate, such as Panamanian protester Ibe Wilson, marching as part of the Kuna Youth Movement, Cooper still questions the legitimacy of protesters, calling Wilson’s knowledge of WTO rules mere “arcane details.” While Houston maintains that the media doesn’t report on the complex and diverse issues surrounding the protests, thus facilitating a situation in which an “inability of the reader to understand the complexity of the individual issues allows the reader to dismiss the protesters and conclude that the WTO protests are more spectacle than substance,” (19) the treatment of the quote above suggests that even if there is coverage of the in-depth protest messages, it is likely that they will be framed in a way that encourages readers to write them off.

USA Today employed the same point-counterpoint strategy, with the dominant ideologies in the latter position, and therefore always having the opportunity to close with the last word. Lamenting that big businesses and lobbyists buy the trade rules and deals, activist Josh Knot maintains, “corporate trade lawyers are the lawmakers, judges, and jury,” while a U.S. Trade Representative assures the reader that “corporations are absolutely not at the table” (“This Weird Jamboree”). A potato farmer, frustrated with being crushed by globalization, which he says is “crushing the mom and pop store,” is sick of the “relentless pressure to be more productive” (Ibid.). Instead of exploring this issue a

bit more, the reporter refers to the activists and protesters in her next paragraph as fringe elements: “The WTO has become the target of marginalized movements, disenfranchised individuals, and obscure causes” (Ibid.). Trying to live up to the promises of these characterizations, she profiles Herb Green, a “displaced marijuana farmer” who felt “strongly enough to leave the mountain home where he lives without electricity” and says “the turtles speak to me,” as well as Carmen Nogales, who came to “help the U’wa, an indigenous people in southern Columbia” who are being driven off their land because of oil exploration (Ibid.). The reporter ends this activists-as-fringe frame and invites the reader to view the protesters as little more than ignorant pests when she writes: “It was the naiveté of many demonstrators that irritated some delegates and bystanders. ‘I’d like to see half of them spell World Trade Organizations,’ resident Jack Mackey says” (Ibid.). Taken together, the ideological selection of the few quotes actually from protesters, the journalistic positioning of numerous quotes aligned with dominant ideologies to counter activist quotes, and opinionated reporter commentary, overwhelmingly frame protestors’ voices as those of the uneducated margins.

One of the most obvious questions that does not seem to be asked of the thousands of activists is why they are doing what they are doing and what specific issues they are concerned about. In fact, most of the direct quotes selected for inclusion in the articles address protester’s experiences with police rather than focusing on more substantive issues. Houston points out that the official voices “repeatedly condemn the violence of the protesters, while praising nonviolent protest, yet the issues of concern among the non-violent protesters receive little attention” (16). In the articles sampled, the protesters’ messages are largely reported through indirect quotation, paraphrasing, and speculation

about intentions, none of which describe the issues or concerns in depth. Drawn from these information sources, the reported concerns of the RNC protesters include calling for the president's defeat ("Bush's Guard"; "Praise and Protests") because they were "against the war" and because Bush was "hostile towards unions" ("Police Tactics"). One article did paint protesters' concerns in a more colorful manner, citing that they were denouncing Bush's re-election because he "plunged America into war and runaway debt, undermined civil and constitutional rights, lied to the people, despoiled the environment and used the presidency to benefit corporations and millionaires" ("Vast Anti-Bush Rally"). While more than the typical account that "marchers espoused a host of causes" ("Republicans Rally for Election Push"), even this laundry list of the issues is vague and uninformative.

Additionally, it also allows the reporter to shirk journalistic responsibilities like actually reporting on or investigating the issues. The same article reports on the diversity of the RNC march:

The faces appeared to be a cross-section of the American experience. There were individuals, families and groups from many states and across the region and the city. There were young people and older citizens, families with small children, students and representative of the middle and working classes and many organizations, including advocates of gay and women's rights, antiwar groups, immigrants, veterans, artists, professionals, religious organizations and proponents of education, health and other causes.

So why weren't the concerns of these diverse people detailed, explained, or reported?

New York Times reporter Andrew Jacobs admitted, after being critiqued for the lack of news coverage of the issues that actually brought so many people to the streets, that "for reporters on a deadline, the panoply and complexity of issues [is] too much for a simple sound bite" ("The Protesters"). A newspaper's short format and the immediate deadlines, Jacobs confesses, require a reliance on managed, crafted statements of "official voices."

Protest Activities as Educational Practice

There were many explicitly educational aspects during the protests against the WTO and RNC, but unfortunately none of them garnered media coverage in my selected sample. Workshops, teach-ins, lectures, pamphlets, and flyers were all significant parts of the protest activities, both in terms of visibility and time spent writing, preparing, and organizing, and yet there is not a single mention of them in the articles. In fact, there is no educational framing of the events at all, and instead, a strong portrayal of the events as problematic and troublesome. Whereas the protesters were painted as either aggressive militants or ignorant but playful rabble rousers, many are part of nonprofit groups with explicit educational projects, such as leading community workshops and designing mobile teach-ins. Many more are involved in their local infoshop or radical bookstore, physical spaces dedicated to education through free book, zine, DVD, and audio recorded lecture lending libraries, and book and film discussion groups. The educational efforts of many activists demonstrate characteristics counter to their representations as ignorant troublemakers who don't even know how to articulate their positions on the issues they are protesting.

Recent books such as Kathryn Thoms Flannery's 2005 *Feminist Literacies, 1968-1975* and T.V. Reed's 2005 *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* discuss activist cultural production as sets of rich and interconnected literacy practices and sites of unofficial pedagogies. Not only do the articles not orient the print ephemera produced for protests within the context of educational materials, they don't even mention the materials, save for the occasional reference to banner-carrying or poster-holding protesters in those vague terms.

Interestingly, many of the photographs that accompany the articles show literacy ephemera such as posters, flyers, and banners, so it would be an obvious extension for the journalist to discuss the messages printed upon them. Further research should look at a larger cross-section of protest coverage in the United States to examine whether the activities are ever framed within print periodicals as educational opportunities or sites of rich literacy practices.

Creating Alternatives: Indymedia as Critical Public Pedagogy

The crisis of corporate media through media consolidation and globalization, coupled with the lack of activist representation and protester voices in mainstream news media, prompted the creation of the first Independent Media Center (referred to as IMCs or Indymedia) during the Seattle protests against the WTO. IMCs are grassroots news websites that include voices and issues not featured in mainstream media, linked throughout the globe in over 150 cities on six continents. IMCs both report on and help create the movement against corporate globalization through a diversity of media technologies found on the websites, including video and audio.

Launched in November of 1999, the IMC was “created by media democracy activists who gathered in a downtown Seattle storefront during the weeks leading up to the WTO protests...to provide non-corporate accounts of street-level events” (Pickard 20).

One of the New York City Indymedia founders, John Tarleton, wrote:

What concerned the IMC organizers was that the upcoming World Trade Organization protests in Seattle would be poorly covered (if at all) by the mainstream, corporate media. Their goal was not to create one more alternative lefty publication but to lay the infrastructure for a multimedia people’s newsroom that would enable activists to come together and disseminate their own stories without having to go through the corporate filter. (53)

Hundreds of activist-journalists produced media for Indymedia in that first week, using open-source and open-access web technology to report on the police brutality that plagued protests and feature the multiple and diverse voices of citizens who had stories to tell. The need for this space was immediately apparent and the reception in that first week was tremendous:

Indeed, rather than being mesmerized by mainstream media's blurbs about, and glossy images of, embattled police tear-gassing anarchist protesters, citizens could look instead to the local and first-hand perspectives available on Indymedia's website, which received 1.5 million hits during the Seattle protests alone. Indymedia thus began as a grassroots response to globalization and mainstream media's ongoing failure to address the social and economic problems associated with it. (Stengrim 282)

The Indymedia movement grew quickly, at first alongside the global sites of anti-corporate globalization protests, but then expanding beyond that with twenty-four IMCs established across the world in the first year, including in places like Quebec City, Prague, and New York City. It is now clear that Indymedia—functioning, I'd argue, as critical public pedagogy—is valuable to activists across the world as a way “not just to cover protests but as a day-to-day accounting of the local and global concerns of social justice and antiglobalization advocates” (Beckerman 29).

The politics are left-of-center to be sure, but are as varied and diverse as the issues covered. Pickard notes that among the membership of the Seattle IMC are, “all manner of liberal democrats, progressives, anarchists, Green Party members, civil libertarians, and socialists” (21). The unifying ideological principles are a commitment to and belief in the value of representing diverse people and voices in the media as well as an understanding that accessibility to media production is essential for media democracy. In fact,

Indymedia's unofficial slogan, "Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media," exemplifies the importance of citizen access to media meaning-making.

Both media and social movement scholars have paid attention to Indymedia, focusing on the technological and political capacity of the sites. Downing has looked at Indymedia within the context of the history of the radical media tradition going back to the Spanish Civil War, while Halleck and Atton look at Indymedia as a social movement. Pickard and Pike argue that Indymedia achieves the actualization of radical democracy and Stengrim asserts that IMCs are powerful responses and challenges to corporate media consolidation. Considerations of Indymedia have also been included in collections about alternative media and new social movements (Opel and Pompper; Van de Donk, Loader, Nixon, Rucht, and Dahlgren) and online activism (Meikle). Additionally, Morris and Pickard have charted the tensions within the movement, particularly the struggle for IMCs to remain connected but independent. There have been no in-depth studies of the discursive or the pedagogical nature of Indymedia, but further research would be beneficial to educators, activists, and scholars.

According to Jennifer Sandlin and Jennifer Milam, critical public pedagogy "fosters participatory cultural production, engages with the learner and the 'teacher' corporeally, and aims to foster the creation of a community politic. We further argue [. . .] it can operate as a form of 'transitional space'" (330). Indymedia opens the possibility of functioning as critical public pedagogy through the enactment of these four principles. The first news story posted to Indymedia, on November 24, 1999 (just days before the WTO protests), hinted at what was to come from the movement, and exemplified these four principles:

The resistance is global... a trans-pacific collaboration has brought this web site into existence. The web dramatically alters the balance between multinational and activist media. With just a bit of coding and some cheap equipment, we can setup a live automated website that rivals the corporates [sic]. Prepare to be swamped by the tide of activist media makers on the ground in Seattle and around the world, telling the real story behind the World Trade Agreement.

Written by a user called “maffew and manse,” the post called for participatory cultural production by giving activist media makers access to a website where they could produce the real stories behind and inside of the protests. The posters indicate the corporeal nature of the work of physically reporting from the ground-level in the streets in cities around the world. They also acknowledge that the project was made possible by trans-Pacific collaboration, referencing the Australian computer programmer who got involved with Indymedia a few weeks before the protests and created the open-source code for the website (Beckerman 29), but the statement also implicitly invoked the immediate need for a global community of activists telling stories to make it work. The poster hints that it will become transitional space, a space where, as Sandlin and Milam argue, “the viewer-learner begins to [re]consider her role in society, both as an individual and in relation to others,” (258) as the project alters the balance of who gets to make the news.

The participatory nature of Indymedia lies in the interface. Each IMC website has a newswire on the right-hand side of the computer screen, editorial collective-selected features in the center column of the screen, and links to other IMCs on the left-hand side of the screen. Users can click “publish” on the home page to instantly paste or upload media content such as pictures, video, text, or audio. On the back end of things, the IMCs each have an extensive documentation section detailing everything from FAQs and principles of consensus decision-making, to minutes from general meetings and the IMC

city-specific editorial policy. All of these documents are created through wikis: open, web-based documents that allow people to collaboratively write and edit content, and track changes.

Figure 1: The old Seattle Independent Media Center

Figure 2: The new Seattle Independent Media Center

Indymedia invites people to engage corporeally with the website. Of his experience covering the protests against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C., John Tarleton writes:

I was soaking wet and sitting near the back of a bright yellow school bus when another round of spirited singing broke out. [. . .] I couldn't reach the ballpoint pen and soggy notepad that were tucked in my inside jacket pocket. So I tried to memorize the scene around me—how it felt, what people were saying and doing, the uncertainty about what lay ahead. (53)

Capturing street-level video, audio, or photos often requires being subjected to police tools like tear gas and batons, as many videos capture, or sitting on a bus-turned-holding cell on its way to the county jail, as Tarleton described. Even being present for a town hall or local school board meeting requires a physical presence open to sensory experiences that transforms the way that a person might view an issue and report on it. Though hands-on street-level journalism might be the exception for most contemporary professional journalists for newspapers like *The New York Times* (for many reasons, but especially because of the time restraints that NYT journalist Jacobs mentioned above), it is what Indymedia is built upon.

Each IMC is autonomous, connected only through linked URLs and shared ideologies:

Despite an overall uniformity in website architecture and political ethos across Indymedia sites, there are significant differences among individual IMCs including but not limited to cultural particulars regarding editorial policy, membership criteria, and the size and location of the IMC. (Pickard 20)

As a site of learning, Indymedia teaches its community poetics and politics through its technological structure and decision-making processes. In other words, the open source nature of Indymedia is predicated on its consensus decision-making practices; without

one, the other would collapse (Pickhard 36). Remaining decentralized is a strategic move as well as a philosophical one, as it becomes impossible (so far) to hold any one person legally responsible for a particular action or piece of media; the structure maintains and continually recreates an ethic of community.

One of the founding members of Indymedia, media activist Sheri Herndon, observed, "Ultimately, it's not enough for us to talk about what we are against. We have to articulate what we are for. It's not enough to slow the rate of destruction. We have to increase the rate of creation" (Beckerman 30). As a transitional space, a space that facilitates creative new ways of seeing and learning, Indymedia invites its media makers and media consumers to question the relationship between globalization and corporations, news-makers and citizens. The motto "Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media!" looms large at the top of most IMC websites, implicating the viewer in the task of making media, of interrupting the established flow of information from corporate media to consumer.

Indymedia is a powerful example of democratic media, allowing citizens to critically intervene in the public pedagogy of mainstream news media representations of social activism, and to reclaim the civic process of news-making. Though they may not have formal training in journalism, Pickard notes that the volunteers are far from inexperienced in the democratic process: "IMC activists actively try to redefine relationships instead of replicating the power inequities, structural biases, and systemic failures that they organize against" (35); because of this commitment, Indymedia will probably never be seen as being as credible as nightly television news media or perhaps even cable news networks. Indymedia is not without conflict and disagreement, and is far

from running on autopilot, but perhaps that is the greatest lesson to glean from Indymedia—constant re-creation and questioning is required to prevent sites of critical public pedagogy from becoming co-opted by capitalism.

As a site of critical public pedagogy, Indymedia counters *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*'s, and *USA Today*'s reductionist public pedagogy of activism. The collective contribution of hundreds of meaning-makers provides a diversity of perspectives that counters the carefully managed dominant voice of neoliberalism, which champions the private over the public. A kairotic space, Indymedia relies on citizens who are educated, motivated, and opinionated—citizens who are paying attention—to capture, compose, and upload the news that is mostly being ignored, or at least sparsely covered, by mainstream news media. As a model of collective meaning-making, Indymedia's individual composing practices but consensus decision-making process can both intervene in the current standard of the mega-media conglomerate and inspire new ways of teaching about collaborative writing.

Chapter Three

Commercial Films, Activist Intentions? Public Pedagogy as Reproduction and Resistance

A few years ago, I participated in a discussion at a monthly vegetarian community potluck about environmental activism in film. *The Constant Gardener* (2005) had just been released in theaters, and while everyone who had seen it enjoyed the movie, two of us were disappointed that like in *Erin Brockovich* (2000), the main woman, activist Tessa (Rachel Weisz), would not have been able to expose the illegal and unjust practices of a corporation without relying on her feminine sexuality. We debated whether or not this was simply a Hollywood sex trope, or if it could be read through an ecofeminist lens that equated sexualized women with the environment as terrains to be conquered. The conversation drifted to other representations of activism in Hollywood film and as we discussed different social issues on screen, the seeds of this dissertation were planted.¹³ A few of the women present, myself included, admitted that the portrayal of Tessa and Erin in these two movies wasn't all bad—they'd even inspired us with their hopeful (read: corporate practices were exposed) endings. Films that center on other activist issues don't have such happy endings, however. For instance, animal rights activists are often seen as violent anti-human activists, such as in *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) and *28 Days Later* (2002) where viruses kill off much of the human population. Sixties protests set the backdrop for numerous movies, generally punctuating rebellious youth and mythologized violence such as in recent films *The Dreamers* (2003) and *Across the Universe* (2007). While there are many studies on the representations of politicians and political issues in

¹³ See Charles Mitchell's *Filmography of Social Issues* (2004) for a guide to some of the representations of social issues on the big screen.

film (Gianos; Giglio; Hass; Rollins and O'Connor) there has not been research specifically attending to representations of activists in film.

In this chapter, I read two recent protest films depicting the RNC and WTO protests, *This Revolution* (2005) and *Battle in Seattle* (2007), respectively, from a cultural-rhetorical perspective to gain an understanding about how they function as a form of public pedagogy about activism. I consider the films rhetorically, focusing on how they function as catalysts for new texts and how they respond to old ones. I attempt to foreground the conversations about political action, agency, and meaning-making being held across media and the relationship of meaning to institutional contexts. I pay close attention to material relationships, connecting the political economy of these films with how they function as systems of representation concerned with activist identity formation and consumption. My interpretations of these films are not intended to be complete, final, or closed, but they are threads of interpretation, meant to answer three questions: what do these protest films teach about anti-corporate globalization in the United States; what do they teach about media as an activist tactic and as a meaning-making institution; and how might these films affect a viewer's future participation in progressive activist culture? I argue that these films teach both insider and outsider audiences what it means to be an activist, but also about the oppositional relationship between corporate media, the state, and citizen action. Through direct quotes, cinematographic choices, and framing devices, I analyze the films' messages about activist backgrounds and motivations, how to get involved in protests and social action, activist identities, the state and the citizen, violence and non-violence, and the role of corporate media. I contend that even though both directors claim that their films were made to tell

the “truth” about the events—to correct the news media accounts of the protests—their films end up reinforcing the same dominant ideologies. I ultimately consider the films as forms of media intervention into mainstream new media representations of the protest events.

Film as Public Pedagogy

Educational researchers B. Stephen Carpenter II and Ludovic Sourdout use Kevin Tavin’s threefold conceptualization of visual culture to assert visual culture as public pedagogy:

Ontological—various ideas related to the roles, implications, and effects of visual culture on our lives; pedagogical—curriculum and content taught, interpreted, and learned; and, substantive—objects, events, television shows, advertisements, and other similar cultural productions. Such examples are intended for public access, consumption, and contemplation, and therefore can be considered as forms of public pedagogy. (Handbook 446)

For Carpenter and Sourdout, public pedagogy is, in part, defined by intent to connect to a public audience. Giroux also argues this point, illustrating that by combining entertainment and politics, film connects “the personal and the social by bridging contradictory and overlapping relations between private discourse and public life” (*Breaking* 6-7). Part of the way that it achieves this bridge is by creating cultural events that influence popular consciousness and shape public memory:

The potency and power of the movie industry can be seen in its powerful influence upon the popular imagination and public consciousness. Unlike ordinary consumer items, film produces images, ideas, and ideologies that shape both individual and national identities. (*Breaking* 6)

Giroux goes on to say that films can bridge the gap between private and public discourses and “play an important role in putting particular ideologies and values into public conversation, and offer a pedagogical space for addressing how a society views itself and

the public world of power, events, politics, and institutions” (*Breaking* 10). He is interested particularly in how films can be used in the classroom to prepare students to engage in those discourses in the public that seem to be closed down by institutions. In my own classes I have employed “visual cultural pedagogy” (Carpenter and Sourdot) to achieve this very goal. My students have often been more inclined to talk about race, gender, and class if we first discuss it through a creative text—be that a film or a short story—and *then* apply these concepts and power structures that we have seen in the text to our everyday lives. By contrast, in the classes for which I have attempted to start off by analyzing race, gender, and class in current events, students sometimes seem to quickly adopt a “pro” or “con” stance and often comment that the class is “too political.” I might suggest that the distance of the screen (or the page) establishes a pattern so easily identifiable that students have already mastered the ability to recognize stereotypes, for instance, by the time we discuss current events.

Discussing the educative nature of films, Giroux describes how power is mobilized “through their use of images, sounds, gestures, talk, and spectacles in order to create the possibilities for people to be educated about how to act, speak, think, feel, desire, and behave” (*Breaking* 3). Others point to the multimodal rhetorical strategies employed: “Films contain dialogue and plot, they display image, and they can use sound, particularly music, to augment image and word. Put another way, film can teach. [. . .] How do these films inform? What did the filmmakers do to make this happen?” (Eisner 177). I would add to these questions the question of genre, which I address later in this chapter: how films are produced to capture rhetorical authority that might not be attributed to another genre. Ultimately, Giroux argues that, “Films become relevant as public pedagogies to the

degree to which they are situated within a broader politics of representation, one that suggests that the struggle over meanings is, in part, defined as the struggle over culture, power, and politics" (*Breaking 12*). But films do not only reinforce hegemony; they also create opportunities for resistance.

Mainstream films can both reinforce dominant ideologies and be sites of counterhegemonic resistance. As Gramsci noted, popular culture can be used as a tool of oppression by, as well as a site of resistance against, globalized hegemonic forces. Giroux also comments that, "while films play an important role in placing particular ideologies and values into public conversation, they also provide a pedagogical space that opens up the 'possibility of interpretation as intervention'" (*Breaking 7*). In this chapter I look at two films that simultaneously reinforce stereotypical images of progressive activists and critique mainstream media's representation of people working for political action.

Hollywood and independent films alike achieve pathos by presenting movies about social action within a framework of individualism. The Personal is Political has been turned on its head to convince audiences that The Political is *Always* Personal: "Privatism is still the conceptual umbrella that reduces social problems to personal ones, and struggle is still viewed as solitary rather than a collective endeavor" (Giroux, *Breaking 20*). The fact that this ideology transcends both blockbuster and indie films demonstrates how dominant ideologies can be so pervasive as to even infiltrate those films that attempt to be consciously oppositional.

A Note on Film Selection

I chose not to focus on the numerous documentaries about the 1999 Seattle protest, such as *Breaking the Spell* (1999), *This is What Democracy Looks Like* (2000), or

30 Frames a Second: The WTO in Seattle 2000 (2000), or about the RNC protests, such as *August in the Empire State* (2006) or *Unconvention* (2009), because the documentary genre lays claim to a different kind of pedagogical intent and audience. Namely, documentary films explicitly seek to teach the audience about a topic by documenting reality. To be sure, documentary films are not unequivocally fact, nor are narrative films pure imaginative fiction, but because I am interested in how more mainstream entertainment media teaches activism, I exclude documentary films about the events. Both *This Revolution* and *The Battle in Seattle* have been compared to Haskell Wexler's 1969 film *Medium Cool*, the former due to its use of cinema vérité-style cinematography and the latter because of its content. *Battle in Seattle* director Stuart Townsend explained, "One of the reasons for me making a feature was the fact that there were documentaries made, but nobody saw them except for maybe some activists. My idea is to mainstream it, to make a film that is still not exactly mainstream, but to make a film that hopefully has a chance with a mainstream audience, to shine attention onto the subject" (Cineaste). Townsend's *Battle in Seattle* had a twelve-week release in forty theaters across the nation, but the foreign gross was three times the domestic gross.¹⁴ The estimated budget was \$8 million, compared with an estimated \$2 million for Marshall's *This Revolution*. Marshall's film had a limited theatrical release, with a larger presence at film festivals internationally.¹⁵ *Battle in Seattle* and *This Revolution* are both distributed on DVD through Universal Studios and were re-released in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Both films have been categorized as docudramas—reality-based works in fictional formats—

¹⁴ This information is approximated by *Box Office Mojo*, an online box office database owned by Amazon.com and maintained by IMDb.com.

¹⁵ Exact numbers are unavailable for this film.

but docudramas typically have little to no documentary footage (Staiger). Though the generic boundaries are blurred and dramatic licenses are taken, both directors put forth these movies to supplement the gap in knowledge and educate audience members about the politics of activist work. While neither film is a documentary, they both use real footage from the protests, obtained from Indymedia and other media activists, which is a rhetorical move by the directors to gain credibility and legitimacy as corrective representations to the mainstream news media accounts of the protests against the WTO and RNC.

Narrative films that feature collective action prominently are few and far between, but when they are produced—particularly in Hollywood—collective action generally looks dangerous. In this chapter, I focus on two recent narrative protest films, *This Revolution* (2005) and *Battle in Seattle* (2007), which were both directed and written by self-identified progressive activists—one a Hollywood actor—to see how these mainstream dramatic narratives teach about collective action. A former community organizer astutely commented in his 2010 State of the Union address that democracy is “noisy and messy and complicated” and that democratic action “stirs passions and controversy” (Obama). Unfortunately the mess and the noise of democracy is often mistaken for always-anarchic chaos. I argue that this is the dominant representation of public, collective protest—even when the directorial intent is meant to be corrective of mainstream media’s representation.

***This Revolution*: Background and Overview**

Written, cast, shot, and edited in 100 days, just in time for the 2005 Sundance Film Festival deadline, *This Revolution* premiered there before it made the international film

festival circuit. It was in limited release in theaters across the United States before its DVD release in 2007. While this was Canadian writer and director Stephen Marshall's first narrative film, he is no stranger to media production. In 1995, he founded Channel Zero, a global newsmagazine that provided alternative news coverage, but was distributed through Virgin Megastores and Tower Records on VHS. He consulted with MTV and generally tried to work at the intersection of hip popular culture and radical politics, despite the obvious conflicting interests of both. In 2000, he moved to the internet, co-founding Guerilla News Network as a cross-platform news website. Before it closed in December of 2009, Marshall produced political music videos for Beastie Boys and Eminem and award-winning documentaries under GNN. He brought this history of alternative media production, as well as several books of political criticism, to *This Revolution*, establishing a kind of authority on both alternatives to corporate media and the anti-corporate globalization movement.

The film centers on Jake Cassevetes (Nathan Crooker), a well-known and well-paid cameraman for BCN news network, who has just returned from being embedded with the US military during the invasion of Iraq in time for the 2004 Republican National Convention. Jake is marked as a reader, a traveler, and philosopher as the camera pans over his bookshelf, containing Henry Rollins, Jack Kerouac, and Ray Bradbury. His "The Year of Living Dangerously" poster, motorcycle, and leather jacket suggest that he has some untapped resistance inside that will reveal itself later in the film. Since returning from Iraq, he finds himself newly struggling between wanting to make a difference as a media producer and the paycheck that he collects by shooting what he's told and not questioning it when his footage is not aired. His new assignment is to cover the protests

against the RNC, and in doing so he meets a boy, Richie (Brett DelBuono), and his mother, Tina (Rosario Dawson), who has recently lost her husband in Iraq. Jake befriends Tina, the working-class anarchist who appears to be the antithesis of his sometimes girlfriend, Chloe (Amy Redford), a career-driven and callous reporter at BCN, and begins to question the media's coverage of the war.

Tasked with finding more radical footage, Jake follows some Black Bloc anarchists and shadows them for the day, finding out about their tactics and ideologies. After being told to stop filming them by one of the Bloc and refusing, he gets beaten, only to be rescued by another member, who pulls down her bandana and reveals herself to be Tina. Though Jake has captured all of this on film, he has no intention of airing the footage as it would clearly jeopardize Tina and her son; however, Chloe gets her hands on the footage and turns it over to Homeland Security as part of a deal between them and BCN. Upset about the implications for Tina, Jake collaborates with Daniel, an editor at BCN, to create a video montage of his protest footage and the captured confessional monologues about the profit motives of corporate media by the head of BCN. Together, they hijack the station's live broadcast after President Bush's nomination acceptance and air their video in its entirety on BCN for viewers at home and in Times Square to see.

The opening credits of *This Revolution*, written in stencil font, quickly give way to a hectic three-minute introduction, which frames the aggressive tone and pace of the film. The first person that the audience sees is a Black Bloc anarchist, whose face is partially covered by a bandana. In response to the cameraman's request for an interview, he responds, "Get that shit out of my face. I know who you are. I know what you're doing," before smashing the video camera towards the ground. The pop punk musical beats in the

background quickly swell as actual footage from the 2004 Republican National Convention protests in Manhattan blend with scripted scenes. The montage immediately sets up an oppositional State vs. Citizens dynamic, as the rigid black-clad police in riot gear contrast with the people holding signs, chanting, and marching. Seen as a unified front, the State is marked by SWAT teams lined up with their weapons at the ready, black helicopters flying overhead, cops pushing protesters' faces into the ground, and, comically, a policeman whose actions are punctuated by the Dunkin' Donuts sign directly above him. The portrayal of Oppressive State plays out against a carnival of color and performance: burning flags, a large puppet of Bush with glowing red lights for eyes, people on their knees with bags over their heads, hands tied, and shirts that say "I am not a terrorist," and signs and shirts reading phrases such as, "Your phones are tapped," "Corporate Whores," and appropriately, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." In this opening sequence, the event is marked as both mediated and carnivalesque by the dozens of video cameras and voyeurs, including a group of older white women in what appear to be tennis outfits, gasping and shaking their heads in disapproval, and we are reminded of the mediation again as the three minutes come to a close on the editing screen of a newsroom at BCN.

In an occurrence that speaks more to the policing of contemporary protests than Marshall's direction of "authentic" actor-protesters, actress Rosario Dawson was arrested while shooting a scene for the film during the convention. The Associated Press reported, "Dawson and Marshall were spotted in a road with about 30 people gathered around them. She and another person were wearing handkerchiefs as masks with only their eyes showing" (Arroyo). After refusing to leave the roadway, they were arrested, despite Marshall's attempts to show police his city permit to film. This story has become central

to any discussion of the film, as I discuss when I look at the reviews, helping to punctuate some of its messages.

Battle in Seattle: Background and Overview

Though it was actor Stuart Townsend's directorial debut, he garnered critical attention from mainstream and independent media with his 2007 film *Battle in Seattle*, which he also wrote. In an interview with *Cineaste*, Townsend shared that he was initially interested in portraying the 1999 protests against the WTO in Seattle after seeing images in Paul Hawken's essay on the event (Hedden). Inspired by "the creativity and color...and the fact that it got crushed by the police state" and claiming "there have been moments in films with riots, but not a whole film," Townsend set out to acquire funding for the film. Not surprisingly, he encountered hesitancy from the Hollywood producers he approached: "It took me years to actually have it financed...a first-time director doing a political ensemble—when they do risk evaluations, which they do, that's a risk." After six years of writing, researching, financing, and casting, Townsend shot the film in a mere 29 days and debuted the final product at the Toronto Film Festival in 2007.

Battle in Seattle utilizes an ensemble cast to look at the historic protests against the first WTO ministerial conference in the United States, held in Seattle, Washington, in November 30, 1999, or N30, as it is sometimes referred to. The protests were historic for a number of reasons: Indymedia, a now-global network of citizen-journalists offering non-corporate media coverage, was launched during the events; the anti-corporate globalization movement was introduced to US mainstream media through these protests; and the internet facilitated an estimated 50,000 activists to converge on Seattle, marking the first major protest in the US mobilized through digital media. The movie chronicles

the actions of four protestors leading up to and just after N30: Jay (Martin Henderson), a direct-action activist; animal rights activist, one-time anarchist, and tough girl Lou (Michelle Rodriguez); environmentalist and eternal optimist, Django (André Benjamin); and quiet but passionate law student Samantha (Jennifer Carpenter). Their stories are told alongside the stories of those who are impacted by the protests: Seattle policeman Dale (Woody Harrelson) and his pregnant wife, Ella (Charlize Theron); well-intentioned but powerless Seattle Mayor Tobin (Ray Liotta); the spectacle-chasing, local network news reporter Jean (Connie Nielsen); an African delegate to the WTO, Abasi (Isaach De Bankolé); and Dr. Maric (Rade Serbedzija), a Doctors Without Borders representative trying to get the attention of the WTO delegates amidst the chaos of the protests.

The film opens with a documentary-style crash course on the GATT-turned-WTO, featuring iconic graphs depicting the rise in corporate profit and simultaneous decline in human rights, food security, environmental protection, public health, and real wages, in conjunction with footage of trees being logged, little children looking hungry in Africa, and sweatshop labor. White text displays on a black screen stark messages like “It has very little to do with **trade**, and it’s certainly not **free**” and “WTO imposes will over governments,” while voiceovers explain that the WTO controls more than 90% of world trade (a figure which is now hovering around 97% according to “The WTO in Brief”) and can impose punishments on non-rule abiding countries. This consciously educational segment closes with a nod to the role of the internet in mobilizing people to the protests by replicating an online chat room in real time:

P1: It’s amazing what the rich global corporations think they can get away with.

P2: Will you be joining us in Seattle?

P1: Yes. I am afraid of tighter corporate control over more areas of our lives.

The computer screen fades away and the camera introduces us to the Seattle skyline, where Lou and Jay teeter on top of a crane, locked in with harnesses, and rappel off to drop an enormous banner identical to the one that was dropped by the Rainforest Action Network:



Figure 3: Banner Drop

Jay acknowledges, “you gotta be a little crazy to take this gig,” they joke about getting arrested, and the music peaks as the banner unfurls, all framing activism as dangerous, optimistic, and passionate. The sexy excitement established in these first four minutes is carried forward by the music, action, and jerky camera shots throughout the remaining and fast-paced hour and a half.

The audience is quickly familiarized with *Battle in Seattle*'s ensemble cast. We watch as the police chief briefs the mayor on the past actions of the four main activists. We understand that Jean is a typical news hound; we empathize with Ella and Dale's excitement over their first glimpse at their baby on the ultrasound machine; we are encouraged by Dr. Maric and Mr. Abasi's commitment to bettering the WTO's policies; we

recognize that the mayor wants to be a friend to the protestors. A mere fourteen minutes into the film and we see protest footage from Indymedia coupled with scripted film; twenty minutes in and the opening WTO meetings are cancelled because delegates cannot reach the convention center and the cops are gassing the protestors. Anarchists are throwing bricks through The Gap's windows at twenty-six minutes. The most intense stretch though, is the almost ten-minute sequence that comes next; after views of the police in riot gear shooting rubber bullets and clubbing protesters, we watch in horror as Ella, who can't get home from work because the buses and cabs aren't running, makes her way through the protests only to be beaten by a policeman in her pregnant abdomen, ultimately resulting in a miscarriage. Townsend immediately cuts to real footage of police brutality, shot by dozens of Indymedia activists, and the reality of the situation sinks in for the viewer. Ella can't even look at her policeman husband and N30 comes to a close. The four activists watch the mainstream news coverage of the events, which focuses on the few anarchists who committed corporate violence, and they are crushed by the spectacle the day has become. Meanwhile, the WTO talks are actually held the next day, but Dr. Maric's testimony on behalf of Doctors without Borders appealing for a concern for people rather than profits is quickly rebutted by a representative for the pharmaceutical industry. Having witnessed the brutality against Ella, Jean decides not to do live coverage of President Clinton's address, as she has been ordered by her boss to do, but rather to cover some of the nonviolent protest tactics. This lands her and hundreds of other protestors in jail as more brutality occurs and mass arrests are made. Sam, the law student, confronts the mayor, saying that there are no legitimate charges against the people in jail and even if there were there aren't enough resources to try every single one

of them. Coupled with the increasing coverage of police brutality, the mayor has no choice but to let them go. Mr. Abasi, speaking on behalf of the African caucus at the WTO, leads a walkout, shutting down the conferences by preventing quorum, and Jay, Lou, and Django leave jail optimistic and ready to fight the good fight again at the next anti-corporate globalization protest against the IMF. Ending the film in the same vein as he began it, Townsend provides facts about the subsequent WTO protests, such as the two-mile exclusion zones that are now the norm at international meetings, further restricting citizens' rights to assemble, and the failed promises of the WTO to meet the needs of developing countries. Film and still photos from protests around the world accompany these last thoughts, typed across the screen in stark white font:

By 2007, little progress has been made concerning the WTO promises at Doha, including access to essential medicines. Poor countries' trade concerns have still not been addressed. Millions of U.S. jobs are offshored, wages decline, and tainted food imports soar. But that has not stopped people from trying to make another world possible. The Battle continues...

Public Pedagogies of Protest

Taken together, *This Revolution* and *Battle in Seattle* teach audiences about the conflicts and challenges, possibilities and tactics of being involved in public protests. In this section, I consider what messages the films offer about six themes: activist backgrounds and motivations; how to get involved in protests and social action; activist identities; the state and the citizen; violence and non-violence; and the role of corporate media. I then consider how these themes might influence the take-away messages of the films.

ACTIVIST BACKGROUNDS AND MOTIVATIONS

TINA: Before I had Richie I didn't really think about trying to change the world or control it or affect it all, I was just trying to navigate my way through, get the things that I wanted, but since I've had him I'm sort of inspired to make it better, more fair, humane, for him, you know?

JAKE: If there's one thing I've learned it's that the world is one nasty complicated mess and we are way too insignificant to change anything. You're really just better off focusing on Richie and preparing him for the future.

TINA: Yeah, I used to think like that, before Cruz died, but it's different now.

In this scene in *This Revolution*, Tina relates that major personal events like the birth of her son and the death of her husband in Iraq are motivations for her activist involvement. Resonant of the feminist slogan, "the personal is political," the idea that people need to be personally affected to be moved to action is repeated again and again. For some, like Tina, a personal loss is what propels them into activism, but for others, like *Battle in Seattle's* Jay, who lost his brother in a demonstration on behalf of Sequoia trees, loss simply energizes him further and gives him the motivation to continue. These personal connections serve to intervene in dominant discourses of protestors as crazy, bored youth or adults with nothing else to do, as seen in this exchange between Chloe the reporter and Jake:

CHLOE: Those protesters are out there because they don't have jobs, they have nothing better to do. They're on welfare for fuck's sake.

JAKE: Do you hear yourself? Do ya? Cause you sound like fucking Rush Limbaugh.

Indeed, Chloe's misconception is commonly heard in public discourse; consider the "I am an anti-activism activist" Facebook group I mentioned in chapter one, which has a member who is applauded for writing, "I utterly despise activism, a bunch of counter-cultural freaks. If you have the time to protest 98% of anything then you need to get a

haricut [sic], a job, and a life.” While personalizing the motivations behind Jay’s and Tina’s actions serves to flesh out these stereotypes, it potentially communicates that there needs to be some kind of personal connection to injustice in order to act against it. We also learn that Lou burned down her father’s animal research laboratory to protest his treatment of animals there, and even Mayor Tobin understands the protestors’ aims only because he used to be a Vietnam protestor. While certainly it is true that many people are moved to social action because they personally witness inequality, representing activism as conditional upon personal experience with a social issue is limiting and closes down meaning for the audience member without such an experience.

In addition to having a personal connection to injustices, we also learn that protesters are passionate and driven. As seen in this dialogue, Sam is discouraged by the mass media’s portrayal of all Seattle protestors as violent, and wants to give up:

SAM: Yeah I do [want to make a difference]. But how do you stop those
who’ll stop at nothing?

JAY: You don’t stop.

At the end of Battle in Seattle, Jay asks how long they’ve been trying to save the planet and Django responds “not long enough,” but he excitedly proclaims that the work will continue on when they meet again for next year’s IMF meetings. This framing of protest as work that never ends might be discouraging to some audience members, but understood in relation to foreign policies that establish wars that never end, longevity is becoming the norm for crusades of all ideological persuasions.

The last thing we learn about activists is that they are not afraid of dangerous situations. During the banner drop, Jay proclaims that you have to be a little crazy to carry out that particular tactic, and in a planning meeting before the protests start he asks for a

show of hands of all those willing to go to jail (most indicate that they are willing). Reflecting a common practice in large protests, Jay writes the phone number for the group's lawyer on Lou's arm in a black Sharpie, "for when you're in jail." The casual assertion that one might go to jail, coupled with the assumption that bodily or legal danger is inevitable, is not likely to encourage mainstream audience members to join a protest anytime soon:

JAY: I want to make sure everything runs smoothly and nobody gets hurt.
LOU: Of course we're gonna get hurt. What do you think this is?

Ultimately, these films indicate that activists involved in public protests are people who have personal, even familial, issues at stake, and who have nothing to lose by plunging headfirst into action. This representation may invigorate some viewers, but it also might teach audiences to leave activist work to those who are directly impacted by the issues, perpetuating hyperindividualistic notions of social justice.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If audience members are still inclined to get involved after understanding some of the activist characteristics, the films give a glimpse into how and whether participation is possible. Jake the cameraman tries to find out how to get involved in radical action against the RNC by going to Bluestockings, a well-known activist center and bookstore:

JAKE: Hey you wouldn't happen to know about any meetings being held for the protest on the RNC, would ya?
CLERK: Yeah, sure, have you tried United for Peace and Justice or Not In Our Name?
JAKE: Yeah, I looked into all that stuff, I was just looking for something a little more radical.
CLERK: Radical? (laughs)
JAKE: Yeah, you know anything about the Black Bloc?
CLERK: Yeah, the Black Bloc is street tactic. It's not an organization per se.
JAKE: Yeah, but they have meetings to plan their activities don't they?

CLERK: People are meeting...there's plenty of meetings. You might check out the website.

JAKE: Cool, thanks.

For insider-audience members, this scene provokes snickers and giggles. The clerk is clearly making fun of Jake, as the Black Bloc certainly has no website and is definitely not the type of thing that one asks a stranger about in public.

Somehow, Jake does find himself in the right place for a Black Bloc organizing meeting, but he gets denied access by two large men dressed in black and wearing bandanas (thus marking them as Black Bloc). This closed, secretive meeting is contrasted with a nonprofit activist organization's meeting that Jake attends, where everyone is sitting in a circle and talking about the state of political parties but not acting in the streets. This distinction communicates the need for direct-action organizations by portraying mere political discussion as lacking.

In *Battle in Seattle*, we never see how people get involved in activist work, but three of the four main characters all know each other from previous protests. The fourth, Lou, gets to know everyone quickly—so quickly, in fact, that we see that she and Jay have slept together the day after meeting each other. Both films suggest a level of inclusivity and secrecy that is meant to be in response to the State, but may inadvertently turn off viewers who see protest involvement as a subculture that they don't belong to and might not even have access to if they wanted to be involved.

IDENTITY, DIVERSITY, AND ACTIVISM

Though the two films celebrate progressive activism, they still rely on stereotypical depictions of women, providing familiarity and recognition to a perhaps otherwise unsettled audience. In both films, being career-driven is associated with being

callous, as both Jean and Chloe are television reporters primarily concerned with applying their makeup and working their way up to the top. If we know anything from Hollywood's treatment of career women, it is that they are uptight women who "need" to be dominated by institutions like marriage, motherhood, and corporations to realize their "true" selves; from Sigourney Weaver in *Working Girl* (1988), Tilda Swinton in *Michael Clayton* (2007), Meryl Streep in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006), Katherine Heigl in *Knocked Up* (2007) and *The Ugly Truth* (2009), Sandra Bullock in *The Proposal* (2009), it is a message that persists through the decades (Powers). Strong women, Jean and Tina's stances are subverted through the traditional pillars of femininity: motherhood and romantic partnership. Jean is moved to question her coverage of the events and rethink the protesters as thoughtful people with articulate messages only after watching pregnant Ella get beaten by policemen. Meanwhile, Jake uses Tina to try to get to the more "radical" story, by spending time with her son and appealing to her role as a mother, but the film portrays this as simply necessary action to get an authentic story, in stark contrast to Chloe, who is seen as conniving in her attempts to get ahead. This double standard is so ideologically entrenched that even films that purport to critique hegemony rely on them for character and plot development.

There are frequent examples of women being "saved" by their male love interests, as well. In the opening scenes of *Battle in Seattle*, for instance, Jay first meets Lou when he saves her from "turtle-ing" (she is hanging upside down from the crane and can't get back up), and her legs in the air, they participate in flirtatious banter which leads to a romantic relationship that night. When he writes a lawyer's number on her arm, the usually tough Lou quips, "I thought you were going to be my knight in shining armor?" Meanwhile, in

This Revolution, Jake tries to provide for Tina by buying her and her son some canned food from a convenience store. Originally depicted as just as tough as Lou, Tina also quickly falls victim to flimsy cardboard girl reactions when Jake tries to kiss her and she says, "I can't," but falters when he persists. One can only hope that she stands her ground a bit more strongly in the midst of a protest.

Both films offer a critique of racism and racist imperialism through their main African-American characters, both of whom are better known as rap artists and political activists than actors (OutKast's André 3000 is *Battle in Seattle's* Django and Immortal Technique is featured as himself in *This Revolution*). In the latter film, the police are framed as classist and racist when they stop Immortal Technique in his car under the guise of heightened threats of terrorism. He tells them that the war against the poor is the oldest war there is in America, and challenges them, which Jake captures on tape and presents to the network. Racism is more institutionalized in *Battle in Seattle*, with the delegates of the African Caucus walking out of the WTO meetings after they were stripped of their interpreters just as the caucus meeting started, in favor of an impromptu meeting. Mr. Abasi questions the equity in this decision and a WTO spokesperson replies that the interpreters belong to them and they lend their skills as they see fit. In both instances, issues of racial inequity are patently obvious, bordering on hyperbole, and encourage disparagement in a way not seen with respect to gender. Anarchist groups and mainstream direct action groups have long been critiqued for reinforcing normative gender dynamics and male hierarchies (Elverich and Reindlmeier) while focusing on racial and class injustices. These films both reflect this same sidelining of gender equity as a social issue while reinforcing stereotypes of women.

VIOLENCE VERSUS NON-VIOLENCE AND THE SHADES IN-BETWEEN

The films place the schism between violent and non-violent direct action at the forefront, offering both critiques and explanations for each tactic. Offering correctives to typical mass media coverage of protests as violent and, therefore, of all activists as violent, *This Revolution* and *Battle in Seattle* spend a great deal of time and effort incorporating explicit dialogue and visual evidence to the contrary. In the beginning of the former film, a press conference is held in which a spokesperson for the A31 Action Coalition calls for “a day of nonviolent civic disobedience.” A spokesperson for another activist organization states, “In the past at large protests all violence has been initiated and perpetuated by the police force who try to disperse us from the streets.” Similarly, *Battle in Seattle’s* leader-figure Jay says at an organizational meeting early on in the movie, “we’ve got thirteen major intersections downtown and each of the affinity groups are going to shut these areas down. Now how we gonna do it?” In unison, everyone yells, “non-violently!” and, nodding to a non-hierarchical structure, he agrees and says, “that’s right—and by consensus.” This is coupled with dozens of people and groups chanting “peace-ful, pro-test; peace-ful pro-test,” and yet both films give significant screen time to violence. Ironically, though the film explicitly critiques mainstream news media’s coverage of protests as violent spectacle, the latter half of *This Revolution* is largely spent with Jake following a group of Black Bloc anarchists. After he doesn’t turn off his camera and leave upon request, we watch as one anarchist kicks and beats Jake, rendering him almost unable to walk. Tina, still disguised in a black bandana and thus unfamiliar to Jake, helps him limp away from the group:

TINA: You all right? You know you crossed a line, yeah? I mean you gotta understand anonymity is all we've got, otherwise we can't be effective.

JAKE: The only effect you have is making a spectacle for the networks. You're a news producer's wet dream. Mass broken windows? Are you kidding me? You guys are a ratings bonanza!

TINA: What do you expect? Are we supposed to just fucking walk in organized lines smiling at the police and fucking carrying puppets?

Then, in the scene immediately following this, Jake returns home to his girlfriend-colleague, Chloe, where she asks if the police hit him:

JAKE: I just got a little too close to some of the militants.

CHLOE: They wonder why we don't give them any positive coverage. Activist my ass—bunch of fucking drug addicts and thugs—they deserve what they get.

JAKE: You don't know what you're talking about.

While Jake sticks up for the group who beat him, it is a curious move for writer/director Stephen Marshall to try to simultaneously critique mass media for making all protests and protestors seem to be about violence, and then to portray and thereby perpetuate that same focus on violence. Black Bloc tactics of violence are, as I have mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, reserved for property destruction and defensive acts in response to police violence. This is another example of how activist violence is so entrenched as hegemonic representation that even narratives intended to critique the ideologies that produce those representations end up relying on them.

Battle in Seattle is more careful about how it depicts anarchist violence. Fresh from celebrating the role of the non-violent protests in successfully shutting down the WTO talks for the day, Jay and Lou see Randall, a Black Bloc anarchist, smashing in store windows:

JAY: Hey man, we asked you not to do this shit today.

RANDALL: I didn't promise you anything. I didn't get in your way and you stay outta mine. Our message is just as valid as yours.

JAY: Take the fucking mask off and join the rest of us. Are you a fucking moron, man? You're ruining everything we worked for. Now we stopped them today!

RANDALL: And what about tomorrow? And frankly I don't give a fuck what it is you accomplished, I'm not just gonna lay down and say peace and love and, can I stick a flower in the barrel of your machine gun, hippie. (Smashes another window.)

JAY: This is a nonviolent protest!

RANDALL: And that's not violence. Do you see anybody getting hurt? We attack corporate America.

LOU: That's not the point. The media's feasting on this.

RANDALL: Exactly. We're the one's making this day famous

LOU: Are you blind? You're feeding them, you're giving them exactly what they want. You call that anarchy?

RANDALL: You're just pissed cause you're not getting enough attention, sweetheart.

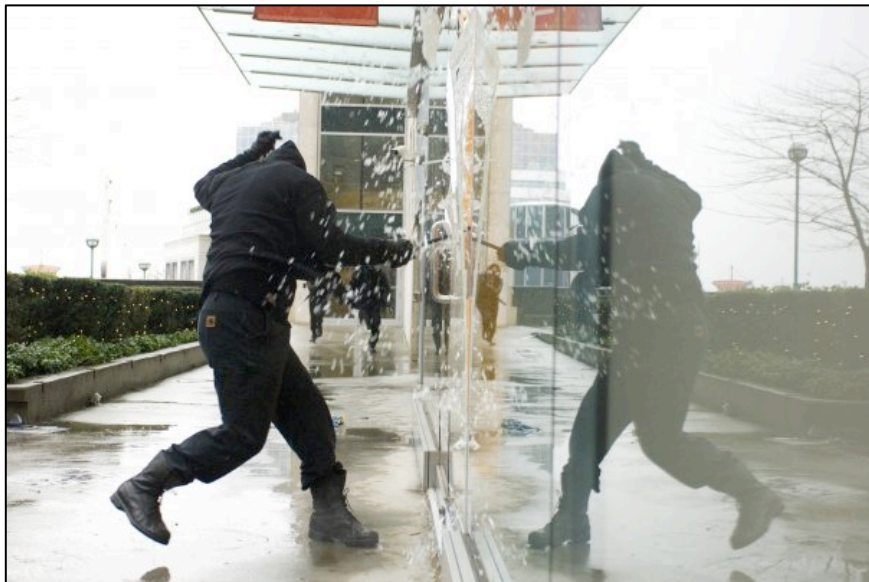


Figure 4: A Black Bloc member smashes a store window

Earlier in the movie, we learn that Lou once considered herself an anarchist but doesn't anymore. If Randall is the poster boy for anarchist attitude, with his equal parts masculine aggression and snarky condescension, then this scene hints at some of the reasons that she stopped being involved in those circles.

This Revolution also attempts to explain the use of property violence as a tactic. In one scene a Black Bloc member describes to Jake how he could get shot by the police forty-one times¹⁶ but is expected to do nothing in response:

BLACK BLOC MEMBER 1: The State is the only one that can sanction violence? When I do violence it's wrong but when the State does it it's great, right?

JAKE: So when you throw bricks through windows...

BLACK BLOC MEMBER 2: But that's corporate property. Corporate property by its nature is violent, so when you're breaking a Starbucks window it's not hurting anybody but that corporation.

While the films try to communicate the distinction between bodily violence and property violence, the spectacle of violence still looms large, and is not likely to encourage peaceful audience members to engage in protest activities. While audience members who are part of the movement will appreciate the brief dialogue distinguishing activist property violence from police brutality, ultimately, the protests are overwhelming marked as violent and dangerous places to be—places where you could have your hair pulled back by one policeman while another one sprays tear gas into your eyes or even places where you might lose your unborn child at the hands of the police.

THE POLICE STATE AND THE CITIZEN

Other than these few Black Bloc scenes, the violence in the films comes from the police. The filmmakers visually contrast the more playful aspects of street protests with the militaristic nature of the police. In one scene in *Battle in Seattle*, the police are lined up at an intersection in riot gear, facing one of the affinity groups, led by Sam and others

¹⁶ This references Amadou Diallo, an immigrant who was shot 41 times and killed by the NYPD in 1999.

dressed as butterflies with enormous, colorful wings. The powerful imagery of black riot gear against gentle butterflies foreshadows the police violence to come. When you gather



Figure 5: Activists and Police

people who question the power of the state and corporations with people whose job it is to enforce and protect that power, it should come as no surprise when chaos erupts.

Battle in Seattle seeks to correct the mass media coverage of the activist-versus-police violence, which portrayed activists as the ones who initiated violence. *The New York*

Times, for instance, reported that Molotov cocktails were thrown at police (Christian) and as David Graeber wrote just before the 2004 RNC protests:

It is a little-known fact that no one at an anti-globalization protest in the United States has ever thrown a Molotov cocktail. Nor is there reason to believe global justice activists have planted bombs, pelted cops with bags of excrement or ripped up sidewalks to pummel them with chunks of concrete, thrown acid in policemen's faces or shot at them with wrist-rockets or water pistols full of urine or bleach. Certainly, none has [sic] ever been arrested for doing so. Yet somehow, every time there is a major mobilization, police and government officials begin warning the public that this is exactly what they should expect. Every one of these claims was broached in discussions of the protests against the Summit of the Americas in Miami in November and used to justify extreme police tactics, and we can expect to hear them again approaching the Republican convention in New York. (2004)

The myth of activist violence certainly originated before the 1999 WTO protests in

Seattle, but because of the size, and thus media coverage, of those protests, the myths

from Seattle continued to propagate. Despite the retraction from *The New York Times* and similar denials from Seattle authorities, *The Boston Herald* reported that former Seattle policemen were briefing local forces on “Seattle Tactics” before anti-globalization protests in their cities.

In the beginning of *Battle in Seattle*, the Seattle mayor insists to the police chief that no arrests should be made, and that he has worked with different activist organizations to ensure a non-violent presence. Throughout the movie, however, we learn that non-violent direct action is perceived as just as much of a threat when it interferes with daily life or garners media attention—both of which are, of course, the point. In this scene, Mayor Tobin’s aide has just told him that the WTO delegates cannot get to the conference because the protestors have blocked the intersections:

POLICE CHIEF: We couldn’t arrest them all even if we wanted to.

MAYOR TOBIN: Well, I thought they were non-violent.

POLICE CHIEF: They’re not being violent.

MAYOR TOBIN: What are we gonna do?

POLICE CHIEF: I have called every patrol in the state, I’ve even called the fire department to hose down the protestors, but they refused.

MAYOR TOBIN: What are the options then?

POLICE CHIEF: There’s only one option left.

MAYOR TOBIN: Gordon, I am not going to start gassing people, do you hear me? I gave the protestors my word; the press would have a field day...

POLICE CHIEF: Jim, I think we’re past having that choice.

MAYOR’S AID: Sir, the White House is on line two.

MAYOR TOBIN: All right. Just do whatever you have to do and just do it fast.

We watch as the chain of command continues to ripple through the conversations of elected officials:

GOVERNOR: I’ve got the CIA all over me and they’re saying that action must be taken.

MAYOR TOBIN: The protestors are non-violent! If you bring in the National Guard everyone will freak out.

Though the mayor continues to assert the nonviolence of the protestors, the governor reminds him that non-violence is not the same as law-abiding. This conversation intends to raise questions for the audience about civil liberties and the right to dissent. That Townsend, the film's director, hammers the point so hard makes the police violence all the more intense.

As the protest escalates with activists drumming and singing, Lou runs in front of the police and writes "hug me" in chalk while everyone starts chanting "peaceful protest." The police, given the go-ahead by the chief, give the last warning. No one disperses. The police start gassing the protestors. Meanwhile the police start clubbing and beating people and shooting rubber bullets while people yell "the whole world is watching." Common police dispersement tactics, including holding people by the hair and spraying gas into their eyes, is mixed with real footage from Seattle just as it is getting difficult to watch—a strategy that reveals fact to be much more grotesque than fiction. The most horrific scene in the movie is when Ella, trying to get home from her job but unable to use the public transportation that has been shut down, gets caught up in the protest downtown. She tries to navigate through the crowds but everywhere she turns, people are running from the police. Unable to see because of all the gas, she brings her blouse to her face and, possibly mistaken for an anarchist, a cop clubs her in the stomach. She crumbles to the ground, blood gushing, and the audience immediately knows that the trauma has caused a miscarriage.



Figure 6: Police violence

The film tries to explain some of the police violence by showing the cops becoming edgy after being on duty for hours without anything to eat or a place to go to the bathroom. Ella's husband Dale, who isn't granted permission to take leave despite the hours-old loss of their child, sees a little boy in the protest crowd. He is clearly having a difficult time dealing with being at work and he tries to fight back his emotions, but shoots a teen with a rubber bullet. Jay yells "would you shoot your own kid?" and Dale loses it, chasing Jay through town before beating him bloody. Two other cops come by and arrest Jay, sending him with hundreds of others to jail. The next morning, Dale comes by to apologize and explains that he and Ella had just lost their baby and Jay forgives him before offering insightful analysis:

JAY: I don't blame you, I mean, I do but shit, you're not the problem. I mean you're just doing your job, I guess. There are people I'm really trying to fight—the ones that destroy so much—and they hurt so many lives, not just one, literally millions, and no one ever points a gun at

them. They just seem so, unaccountable, untouchable. Just seems kind of fucked that you and me are the ones that have to fight each other.

This line is one of the most important lines in the movie as it explicitly critiques the idea that individual experiences with injustice are ever really individual, but it gets buried underneath the fact that a family lost a baby because of the protests. Police violence or activist violence, the violence upon Ella’s body lingers through the rest of the film through brief scenes of her despair in bed, separated from her husband.

While it includes similar representations of police violence, *This Revolution*, depicting a post-9/11 protest world, invokes Homeland Security in its plotline and leads the audience to understand how the corporate media, local cops, and federal government work together to police citizens. In multiple scenes, we watch a courier deliver Jake’s camera footage of protestors to a woman in a makeshift Homeland Security office. She diligently types in the information, creating a profile (pictured below) and dramatically labeling each activist as “ENEMY COMBATANT.”



Figure 7: The Homeland Security database

Coupled with the earlier scene where Immortal Technique gets his car searched in the name of terror threats, and repeated interruptions by BCN news anchors alerting the audience of heightened security alerts and the newest terror color code, the state’s actions are couched within the concern of safety against terrorists. This would suggest to

the audience that such concerns are legitimate, except that there are also frequent BCN broadcasts reporting that the NYPD wants Mayor Bloomberg to appeal a judge's decision to rule against blanket searches of protestors, serving as reminders to the audience of the legal rights of protestors. The films emphasize the struggle between arguments for the need for national security and the rights of citizens.

THE ROLE OF CORPORATE MEDIA IN MEANING-MAKING

Perhaps the strongest messages in both films are about how corporate media makes meaning through the inclusion and absence of particular news stories. The reporters in *This Revolution* and *Battle in Seattle*, Chloe and Jean, respectively, both signify spectacle-laden mainstream news by running after the most visually flashy stories they can find. Chloe, a driven but naïve BCN reporter who is being groomed by Kramer, the CEO of the station, flaunts her cynicism: "I don't know about you but I'm certainly not going to sacrifice profit to honor some idealistic view of what journalism should be." She regularly takes orders from Kramer about what news footage Jake should capture:

CHLOE: Kramer likes what you're getting but we need you to get something a little more, um, dangerous.

JAKE: Translation?

CHLOE: Militant, dramatic, whatever. Just get into the enemies' camp. Find out what protestors are planning. Find out who the leaders are of the anti-Bush movement [. . .] I need you to go out there as if you were embedded in any other war zone. [. . .] But you really gotta blend in, you know? Get me face to face with all the most radical groups— anarchists, communists, peaceniks, feminists, fucking botanists if they have a gun, I don't give a shit. Just get me the edgiest stuff you can.

Battle in Seattle also presents the reporter as if she cares about nothing other than ratings. Jean is driving around with her cameraman and the radio reporter explains that issues such as human rights and environmental protection are not on the official agenda

of the WTO meetings. Jean immediately changes the radio station and the cameraman inquires about her action, to which she retorts, "I'm just looking for a good story" while finishing her makeup application. Jean's blind eye to the WTO's exclusion of social issues as a newsworthy story paints her as both naïve and uncaring. As we see when she cuts off an interview with Django, who is explaining why the WTO protests are occurring in the first place, in favor of police starting to gas protestors, Jean defines "a good story" not as real information about an issue, but as ratings-induced spectacle. Jay, Django, Sam, and Lou all watch as the media dubs the whole event "Battle" in Seattle, which Django says sounds more like the name for a monster truck show than a real event affecting real lives.

Just as important as what is aired, is what does not get to air on television. Jake argues with Chloe's assertion that they (BCN) have given the American public everything they could about the war in Iraq, saying, "Where are the pictures of dead and bloody children?" She sarcastically retorts, "What, don't you get Al Jazeera?" which positions her as part of the ideological right who largely discredit this news source. Media bias, or at least the suppression of certain news stories, seems to be common knowledge among all characters. Tina declares that the working class will always be on the front line of the battle field, fighting for the rich man's oil, but that that doesn't make it to the television screen because, "if the fucking media tried to sell that story as much as they fucking try to sell the war in Iraq, there'd be fucking fighting in the streets." Proclaiming a similar message, *Battle in Seattle's* Jay gets frustrated when Jean, who has just watched him confront a window-smashing anarchist, asks him why he thinks violence is the answer. As an audience, we know that Jay opposes violence and that Jean knows that too, but is trying to depict him for the news as a violent protestor. He snaps back, "Oh you want to know

my message? Why don't you stop spreading corporate controlled disinformation around the globe, and start covering the real issues like why this fucking world is being raped by guys that make \$500 million a year while the rest of the world starves. Why don't you put that on the 9 o'clock news?" When the cameraman asks Jean if he should keep the tape, she says "What do you think?" and we know that this will be cut. It is not just the protestors who are frustrated with the lack of meaningful coverage. Dr. Maric and his Doctors Without Borders partners are deeply disappointed that the television crews all pull out of their coverage of his presentation to the WTO in order to cover the protests. Ironically, his message of people over profits is the same message that the protestors are trying to convey, and neither makes it to the television screen. On the contrary, what airs are interviews with people like the Starbucks CEO, who calls the fact that he has to close his stores just before the holidays because of the protests an "injustice."

It isn't until Jean watches Ella get clubbed by police and helps take her to the hospital that she seems to realize that there might be more going on than she has captured up to that moment. She talks with her producer, Eric, about doing more in-depth coverage but he objects and wants her to stay on schedule:

JEAN: The story is a lot bigger than a few people dressed in black breaking windows, Eric. The news is right here, I'm telling you. Listen to me, Eric.

ERIC: No you listen Jean, in one hour, Clinton is giving a press conference. You are going live.

CAMERAMAN: What do you want to do?

JEAN: Let's just stick around a little bit.

Instead of covering the Clinton conference for the live broadcast, however, they go live as Jean, who has tape over her mouth, stands alongside the protestors in solidarity against the silencing of citizen voices. Ironically, Jean's big decision to give protestors a voice

instead of covering the President's news conference still doesn't give them a voice. In both films, activists are concerned with the lack of what they consider to be accurate news coverage by mainstream media and by the altogether absence of things that they think should be covered. Through overly simplistic (but not completely untrue) dynamics, corporate media is depicted as profit-driven, ideologically conservative, and influenced by the state.



Figure 8: Jean in solidarity with protesters

Conflicting Messages: Negotiating Reproduction and Resistance

The take-away messages of these films are conflicting, in part because they are attempting to intervene in mainstream media as alternative stories of resistance, but institutionally reliant on Hollywood, they end up reproducing some of the very neoliberal policies and ideologies that they intend to critique. The intentional message, as stated by the directors, is to encourage people to take action. *Battle in Seattle* director Stuart Townsend maintains: "It's about participation. That's a real democracy. Hopefully, the film shows the commitment that those protesters had and the level of patriotism. The

power of the individual and the power of solidarity: all those issues are eternal.

Ultimately, I just want the film to inspire people” (Cineaste). However, I would argue that there is an equally convincing alternative reading of the film, which discourages action and involvement. At the end of the movie, the protests have impacted a number of lives and causes negatively. Ella and Dale have lost their unborn baby because of the sheer use of large public protest as a tactic. Also because of the protests, Dr. Maric with Doctors Without Borders, who is desperately trying to work for policy changes in the WTO that would provide essential medicines to developing nations, finds his media coverage eclipsed and his presentation continually cancelled because delegates cannot reach the convention hall. These two storylines provide a strong argument against large street protests and, together, paint the Battle in Seattle as unnecessarily damaging to innocent people’s lives and the hard work of official organizations.

This Revolution also tempts the viewer to read the film through a lens in opposition with Marshall’s stated intent to intervene in narratives of mainstream news coverage. The percentage of screen time dedicated to following the Black Bloc anarchists (and likewise, the percentage of the dialogue with explicit language) could easily make it seem like the real story is about these few violent and inarticulate activists. Jake’s disinterest in and the Black Bloc’s disdain for nonprofit activist organizations might leave an audience member who would otherwise be inspired to get involved in community action through those channels, hesitant to be involved at all.

Both films end with some type of culture jamming through the hijacking of television media, but instead of showing independent activists doing the jamming, in each film it is an employee of the news media stations—someone connected to the corporate

media institution. In fact, though both directors are doing it themselves in the production of these movies, neither film ever depicts activists making DIY media to intervene in mainstream media. Thus, it is in the directors' attempts to counter dominant media narratives about the protests against the WTO and RNC that they end up reinforcing the very idea that institutions are the important meaning-makers instead of everyday people. The films employ varying levels of activist media tactics, including street-level video footage in *This Revolution* and clips from activist-produced documentaries in *Battle in Seattle*, but are ultimately strategically produced as narrative feature films, tied to commercial entertainment institutions. These gaps and absences in representation, however, become opportunities to start the conversations in the composition classroom about media- and meaning-making practices, which I will do in chapter five.

Chapter Four

Learning from Convergence Culture: Digital Sites of Public Pedagogy

The Web's low barriers to entry expand access to innovative or even revolutionary ideas at least among the growing segment of the population that has access to a computer. Those silenced by corporate media have been among the first to transform their computer into a printing press. This opportunity has benefited third parties, revolutionaries, reactionaries, and racists alike.

Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, p. 210

It's time that we in the social movements tell our own stories, reclaim our own histories, and publicly fight damaging myths past and present. This website is doing just that!

From the *Real Battle in Seattle* Homepage

And all is quiet...

From the abandoned *Guerrilla News Network* Homepage

Five years ago, in 2005, I closed my two-year-old MySpace account upon hearing the news that it had been purchased for over 500 million dollars by News Corporation's Rupert Murdoch. It seemed social media heresy for a social networking platform to be acquired by a single media conglomerate with so many other media holdings and advertising relationships. Others saw the conflict of interest also: since Murdoch's buyout, the site went from a peak of 75 million users to its current 57 million—contrast this with the independently owned Facebook, which now has more than 400 million users (Johnson). To be sure, the decline in users was not solely due to ideological opposition to Murdoch, but year after year his quest for more ownership of the new media landscape was implicated in the decline (Barnett; Chmielewski and Sarno; Reiss). As Bobbie Johnson recently wrote for *The Guardian*, Murdoch “craves leadership in the digital world” and has a “fundamental misunderstanding of the differences between the technology and media industries” (Johnson). Another major problem for Murdoch's MySpace was the accusation of censorship of both content, in the form of the deletion of critiques of the interface on a

discussion board, and media type, in the form of the blocking of YouTube uploads for a period of time (Wapshott). Locally, some friends in an indie rock band called Bones had their MySpace page stripped from them after Fox (owned by Murdoch) launched a television series by the same name and wanted their URL name for the show's publicity (*MySpace Snatches*). MySpace failed to evolve from the hierarchical, "old media" way of thinking which sees media owners/producers and media audiences/consumers as distinct entities, the former in a more privileged position than the latter. Whereas Murdoch and his team should have followed the suggestion of Shayne Bowman and others, and reconceptualized "the audience" of social networking and participatory media as "the participants," it appears from each of the examples above that they were doing everything they could to prevent participation. Ultimately, MySpace is failing because it doesn't quite know how to let go of the practices of corporate culture and fully operate within what media theorist Henry Jenkins calls "convergence culture."

At the close of the previous chapter, I discussed how *Battle in Seattle* and *This Revolution* both contested mainstream media representations of activism and reinforced dominant ideologies and stereotypes of activists. Moving from newspaper to film to the internet, the mediation of the protests against the WTO and RNC continues. Opinions of the films, of their impact on collective public memory about the events that they represented, and of the directors' motives, made their way to other online spaces as well—spaces that include social networking sites, web-based magazines, news websites, and websites created specifically to counter the history presented on the screen. In this chapter, I first explain Jenkins' "convergence culture" and consider what convergence means for public pedagogy. Then using both concepts, I briefly consider *This Revolution*

director Stephen Marshall's *Guerrilla News Network* website and spin-off sites and extensively analyze the evolution of two websites related to *Battle in Seattle*. As was the case with the films, there has been no scholarly attention paid to the websites I examine. Throughout the chapter, I argue that the concept of convergence culture and the claim that social media facilitates democracy are complicated by activist culture online. Further, convergence culture is enriched as a concept when it is considered alongside the public-pedagogic work of each website. Tracing the cultural discourses produced by each website creates a narrative about the public-pedagogic operation of participatory, social media and the practices of critical media intervention.

Alex Reid explains, "The term 'social media' points to a broad range of technologies and practices that rests upon the traditional Internet, but extends into other spaces such as mobile networks and virtual worlds (e.g., *Second Life*)" (194). Social media encompasses blogs and microblogs, like Twitter, social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn, collaborative writing applications like Wikipedia and Google Documents, photo, video, and audio sharing applications like Flickr, YouTube, and Last.fm, virtual worlds like Second Life and The Sims, social news and bookmarking plug-ins like del.icio.us and Digg, and community forums like Yahoo! Answers. Debates about social media predictably follow the centuries-old threats that accompany the emergence of any new media: as literacy "threatened" orality (Ong), so too does electracy (Ulmer) "threaten" literacy. Books like Sven Birkets' 2006 *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Rate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, Andrew Keen's 2008 *The Cult of the Amateur: How Blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and the Rest of Today's User-Generated Media are Destroying Our Economy, Our Culture, and Our Values*, Gary Small's 2008 *iBrain: Surviving the*

Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind, and Mark Bauerlein's 2008 *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes our Future*, argue that youth are less literate than previous generations (Birkets; Bauerlein), that the multiple voices of amateurs drown out the more valuable voices of experts (Keen), and that digital technology and social networking's emphasis on the personal alters our brain chemistry (Keen) and psychological health (Bauerlein; Small). On the other end of the spectrum is a wealth of books celebrating social media, including Howard Rheingold's 2003 *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, Yochai Benkler's 2007 *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, Clay Shirky's 2008 *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, David Weinberger's 2008 *Everything is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder*, and Henry Jenkins' 2008 *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Collectively, these books argue that social media allows for new ways to achieve democracy. Here, social media is promised to improve means and access to cultural production and meaning-making (Benkler; Jenkins), facilitate more efficient and creative actions for social justice (Rheingold; Benkler; Shirky), and even to change the way that we classify information and make sense of the world (Weinberger).

Amidst all these claims, I would contend one thing about social media that has not been addressed by any of the authors above: it shapes the public-pedagogic operation of websites. On his academic blog, *Digital Digs*, Alex Reid suggests that in order to investigate public pedagogy of a media environment, one should "account for the intersection of media networks with that space, the media devices available to people in those spaces, and the potential of social media interaction to shape pedagogical

encounters with that space.” I address each of these three aspects of the websites in this chapter, and I also analyze the overall pedagogical narrative about media and meaning-making constructed through the creation and relationship of websites in response to other media, paying close attention to inter-web references to other websites. Social media has changed website design and impacted the choice of applications to embed within them. It is now rare to visit a business or school website without coming across features that ask you to “add us as a friend on Facebook,” “follow us on Twitter,” or “leave a comment,” or to find a personal website without photo or video streams. As such, my analysis of these websites also addresses what the selective inclusion of social media on these websites might teach its participants about what counts as civic engagement and social change in an online environment.

Convergence Culture: Intersecting Concepts

From scholarship by medievalists about contemporary films like *A Knight's Tale* (Trigg) and Religious Studies research about television shows like ABC's *Lost* (Clark), to digital literacy studies research on Facebook (Williams) and gaming scholarship about Fox's *Alias* (Ornebring), Henry Jenkins' concept of convergence culture has clearly informed discussions in a wide span of disciplines and grounded much new interdisciplinary research. In his 2006 book, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, Jenkins writes:

By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who's speaking and what they think they are talking about. (2-3)

Convergence culture, he posits, is at the intersection of corporate media and grassroots or people-powered media. It is more than an advancement in the capabilities of digital technologies (think: making a phone call and surfing the web while listening to music, all on your iPhone). Rather, “convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content” (Jenkins 3). He argues that within convergence culture, the line between media producers and media consumers is blurred, but that both are participants who interact with each other. Though he doesn’t use the term social media—likely, because mainstream social media applications were just starting to spring up as he was writing his book—social media is what creates the techno-cultural condition that makes convergence culture possible.

Jenkins articulates convergence culture based on the relationship between three concepts: media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence. “In the world of media convergence,” Jenkins writes, “every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms” (3). The very structure of this dissertation illustrates his first point that stories are told through multiple media platforms. That I can look at singular events as news media, film, and online communities represent them suggests that there are stories worth telling there, but also that many people have different interests in telling the stories and even different voices and tools with which to tell them. Who tells these “important stories” is complicated, however. There are two contradictory trends in who tells the stories worth telling: on one hand, new technologies have “expanded the range of available delivery channels, and enabled consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate and recirculate media

content in powerful new ways. At the same time, there has been an alarming concentration of the ownership of mainstream commercial media” (17-8). It would be incorrect to think that corporate and grassroots media are completely separate. In fact, they co-opt each other’s tactics and strategies with ease in a culture of media convergence. Jenkins notes that convergence:

is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence. [. . .] Sometimes corporate and grassroots convergence reinforce each other, creating closer, more rewarding relations between media producers and consumers. Sometimes, these two forces are at war and those struggles will redefine the face of American popular culture. (18)

For all the celebration of the democratic possibilities of new media technologies, they don’t challenge the pervasive pattern of growing media conglomerates. In fact, they simply expand possible acquisitions—and for cheaper prices since a new social networking venture costs much less than acquisitions like established sports teams or book imprints. But as Jenkins notes, “convergence doesn’t just involve commercially produced material and services traveling along well-regulated and predictable circuits. [. . .] Entertainment content isn’t the only thing that flows across multiple media platforms” (17). Demonstrated in these chapters, stories of protest, events that are at once part of both political and popular culture, also travel across multiple media platforms to make meaning and influence public discourse about social change.

Jenkins argues that convergence is reshaping popular culture, but I would argue that it is also reshaping public discourse in other arenas, including formal and informal learning spaces. Formal learning spaces—classrooms in particular—are a site investigated by composition and digital literacy scholar, Jonathan Alexander. He explains that media convergence is “the use of multiple media to create complex and rich sites of

meaning” (2). Unlike Jenkins, he implicates users in his very definition, highlighting the fact that media convergence is not just a state of the current technological environment but is also about the relationship between user-participants and media. He goes on to say:

the richest convergence point in media convergence may be between person and machine, the human and the technological, as the mixing and converging of media offers yet more sophisticated, potentially more nuanced forms of communication, representation, community building, and reflection on our own subjectivity, on what it means to be a communicating person in a techno culture. (5)

Examples of these relationships in educational settings are myriad, ranging from the impact of media convergence on university-teacher relations in the form of teachers bound to particular technology by university contracts with particular course management systems (Blackboard, Moodle, etc.), to student-teacher relations, wherein the range of digital literacies and popular cultural knowledge may be so diverse as to impact the assigned work and classroom discussions. Ultimately, the effects of media convergence play out in multiple ways, impacting corporate and grassroots media, civic and educational spaces alike.

The notion of participation is crucial to convergence culture. Jenkins identifies our participatory culture as the second concept around which convergence culture is based. Digital communications scholar Howard Rheingold defines participatory media as, “social media whose value and power derives from the active participation of many people” (100). He maintains that participatory media has three characteristics; it is at once technical-structural, social-psychological, and economic-political. To look at the circulation of media is to pay attention to all three of these aspects. Sometimes this circulation is the product of strategic corporate planning, and sometimes it is the product of grassroots tactical plans, but either way, “this circulation of media content—across

different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders—depends heavily on consumers’ active participation” (Jenkins 3). He acknowledges that all potential participants are not on equal footing. Not only do corporations have more power than individual citizens or groups of citizens, but some citizens have more opportunity to participate in convergence culture, based on their education and economic status. Unequal access notwithstanding, many techno-enthusiasts choose to focus on the participatory possibilities of the Internet. Joe Trippi, who worked on Howard Dean’s presidential campaign in 2004 and is the author of *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*, writes:

If information is power, then this new technology—which is the first to evenly distribute information—is really distributing power. The power is shifting from institutions that have always been run top down, hoarding information at the top, telling us how to run our lives, to a new paradigm of power that is democratically distributed and shared by all of us. (4)

With this sweepingly optimistic statement, Trippi contributes to the cacophony of voices equating participatory media with corporation-crushing democracy. As I will discuss later in this chapter, however, just because everyday people can and do participate in meaning-making with social media, does not mean that it is to the detriment of corporate interests.

In his more recent book, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, Jenkins writes that participatory culture:

is emerging as the culture absorbs and responds to the explosion of new media technologies that make it possible for average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways (8).

He claims that it is “reworking the rules by which school, cultural expression, civic life, and work operate” (ibid.). Part of the reason these spaces operate differently is because they are responding to what James Gee calls “affinity spaces,” or, informal learning spaces,

on- and offline, in which people voluntarily participate based on common interests, regardless of gender, race, class, age, or education. The lingering question is whether affinity groups using participatory media will express new ideas, reinforce the ideologies of corporate media, or simply be playing into another digital strategy for profit motives.

For the third concept, collective intelligence, Jenkins draws from Pierre Lévy's book by the same name, in which he writes: "No one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity" (20). Collective intelligence is different from shared knowledge, which is when a group all knows the same thing. Instead, collective intelligence refers to the ability of anyone in a group to access new information from a member of that group. Wikipedia, which launched in 2001, or Yahoo! Answers, created in 2005, are both examples of this, in that they rely on the collective intelligence of many to construct knowledge for the public. Most significantly, and as is the case with both of the aforementioned examples, this knowledge is freely available to anyone with an internet connection. In this way, it threatens not just the idea of knowledge having a singular owner, but also the idea that we should pay for knowledge. Jenkins argues that current changes in systems of communication have led to "diversification of communication channels" which, coupled with collective intelligence, is politically important because, "though some voices command greater prominence than others, no one voice speaks with unquestioned authority. The new media operate with different principles than the broadcast media that dominated American politics for so long: access, participation, reciprocity, and peer-to-peer rather than one-to-many communication" (208). Though Jenkins acknowledges the new political opportunities, his focus, and most of the scholarly work on convergence culture, remains focused on the popular culture

landscape. In fact, he contends that in the lead up to the 2004 presidential election, “Again and again, citizens were better served by popular culture than they were by news or political discourse; popular culture took on new responsibilities for educating the public about the stakes of this election and inspiring them to participate more fully in the process” (22). This chapter extends his work in the sphere of popular culture, specifically focusing on the intersection of cinema, commercialism, and civic activism.

Examining Civic and Social Action in Convergence Culture

According to MIT political scientist Ithiel de Sola Pool, who Jenkins refers to as the “prophet of media convergence,” communication technology has the potential for eliciting civic participation and a plurality of voices:

Freedom is fostered when the means of communication are dispersed, decentralized, and easily available, as are printing presses or microcomputers. Central control is more likely when the means of communication are concentrated, monopolized, and scarce, as are great networks. (qtd in Jenkins 11)

This is not specific to digital technology, of course, as scholars have pointed to the democratic and radical potential of the printing press, radio, and television. With each new technology, however, comes a new set of social, cultural, legal, economic, and political contexts. As Raymond Williams contends, the impact of new media is not revolutionary, but evolutionary. Nonetheless, the promise of civic participation frequently accompanies writing about new media technologies, from a focus on the civic engagement of youth (Anderson; Bennett; Buckingham; Loader; Tappscott), to studies of internet activism (Alexander; Firkus; McCaughey and Ayers; Meikle; Pickerill).

In the introduction to *Democracy and New Media*, Jenkins and David Thorburn use two phrases associated with the late 1960s and early 1970s to explain the difference

between old media and new media. They claim that activist and poet Gil Scott-Heron was right on target when he wrote in 1971, “The revolution will not be televised,” as corporate media “was unlikely to transmit dissenting ideas or images” (12). The revolution, Jenkins and Thorburn contend, is certainly being digitized, however, with revolutionaries and radicals able to claim an online space to broadcast their opinion. The second phrase, “The Whole World is Watching,” is a protest chant that complicates the first, as Jenkins and Thorburn note: “Whatever the difficulties, if the student protesters got their images and ideas broadcast via ABC, CBS, and NBC, they would reach a significant segment of the population. Is there any place on the Web where the whole world is watching?” (Ibid.). In other words, while there is a broadening of discourses and channels in a new media environment, people have to know where to find them. Alternative ideas are going to be more readily available online, but how easily will they be found by the larger public, unless the venues are publicized by mainstream media channels? Jenkins concludes that broadcasting provides the common culture while the internet offers specific spaces to respond to that culture. As I illustrated in chapters two and three, activist media spends much of its time responding to mainstream media on its own terms, which can reinforce the primacy of dominant ideologies because the frame of reference for talking about an event is already created, and thus shared.

Many of the contradictory trends within convergence culture—the simultaneous growing corporate media concentration and the exponential growth of participatory media platforms available to everyday citizens; the corporate co-opting of grassroots media tactics to mobilize people to buy things and the use of public relation strategies by activists to attain mainstream media attention—can be more fully examined by looking at

how specific sites online function as public pedagogy. The remainder of this chapter will focus on a series of related websites that illustrate the logic of convergence culture and its impact on protest groups, activists, and nonprofits, alongside commercial culture. I first explain how the concepts of convergence culture and public pedagogy help us understand the Guerrilla News Network news website, its eventual collapse, and the spin-off projects associated with the brand. Next, I look closely at the evolution of the interface, design, and content of the *Battle in Seattle* official movie website and an activist-created counter-site. I borrow and adapt Reid's proposed lens for looking at the public-pedagogic nature of a specific media site to ask: What mainstream and alternative media channels are in conversation with the site? Are there any commercial, governmental, or nonprofit connections to the sites? What digital features are available to the visitors of the website? What media devices were used to create the website? How does social media shape "the pedagogical encounter" with the website?

Guerrilla Networks and Message Board Warfare

Four years before he wrote and filmed *This Revolution*, Stephen Marshall co-founded the *Guerrilla News Network* (GNN), an alternative news website and production company. His background in media production included creating a globally-distributed VHS newsmagazine called Channel Zero, directing controversial videos for rappers like Eminem, dead prez, and 50 Cent, and directing dozens of short documentaries, one of which won at the Sundance Film Festival. Ideologically radical but hip enough for MTV, the GNN was founded to "expose people to important global issues through cross-platform guerrilla programming" ("What is GNN"), and for the first four years that content was produced by Marshall and three other Guerrillas with extensive production

experience: Ian Inaba, a former CEO of a media development group, an investment banker, and a software executive, among other affiliations; Anthony Lappé, a television producer, freelance writer for publications such as *The New York Times*, *Salon*, and *Details*, and documentary producer for MTV; and Josh Shore, a film and television producer and marketing strategist. A for-profit company, GNN produced feature length and short documentaries; music videos; a book that seeks to expose governmental practices and



Figure 9: www.gnn.tv, 2002

media bias, *True Lies*; and Marshall's feature film, *This Revolution*; before it closed down in 2009.

In 2004, GNN launched its beta site, GNN 2.0, which incorporated web 2.0 technologies such as participatory media applications including blogs, user-generated

content, and user-voting techniques to determine featured content. Anyone could sign up as a user, and each user's account came with a personalized home page and blog and the ability to contribute to the forum and vote on articles that should appear on the homepage. At this time, the GNN team expanded to include an Assistant Editor, Columbia Graduate School of Journalism graduate, Matthew Cole; a Canadian Bureau Chief, video producer and editor, Paul Shore; and London Bureau Chief, music director and documentarian, Justin Wickham. Collectively, these men all had connections to entertainment, governmental, corporate, and community sectors (actors and artists, mainstream and independent media producers, and community activists) and these connections in turn shaped the design and features of GNN. Though GNN incorporated web 2.0 features to give users a voice on the site, there were guidelines for content. "Articles" referred to original content, which was required to follow the GNN house style, similar to the Associated Press style, while "Headlines" referred to reposted articles found elsewhere on the internet. The "yard" was a place where users could contribute their articles, annotated headlines, and photographs or other visual media, which were then voted on by members. Those with the most votes were featured on the homepage, or "front door." Message board rules did not censor anyone based on political opinion, but their moderation policy restricted any mention of illegal activity and harassment. At the time of the launch of GNN 2.0, traffic had been steadily increasing "from its critical mass audience from approximately an initial 300 unique visitors/day to an average of 25,000 and a high of over 300,000" ("How did GNN Get Started?"). Over the next few years, GNN developed a presence on social networking sites like MySpace, had a YouTube channel,



Figure 10: www.gnn.tv, 2004

and eventually in 2006, began to feature outside advertising on the sidebars of the website. This marked a significant change in the landscape of the site, and shifted the public-pedagogic work of the site by moving from a paradigm in which users understood the for-profit GNN media projects as a way to fund the larger project of keeping the site up and running, to users complaining on the boards about GNN “selling out” to make money. GNN founders created a MySpace page, which was mainly used to promote and publicize the media and clothing sold in the GNN store, or to redirect people to the site. Slowly, GNN members began to feel like Marshall and his partners were abandoning them,



Figure 11: Advertising in the sidebars of GNN, 2008

as they incorporated more commercial aspects onto the website and continued to produce larger media projects, such as *This Revolution*, the first feature film of GNN. The message boards began to become havens for conspiracy theorists and spammers alike, the latter posting purely personal attacks against other users in the most vulgar terms.¹⁷ As one long-time GNN user, Liam, noted:

¹⁷ For examples of the hateful and uncritical accusations and personal attacks, see this thread about the closing of GNN: <http://gnnarchive.blogspot.com/2009/11/ok.html>

I'd say it died because it had no boundaries, no ability to move a very hateful commenter off your blog. I wrote a great deal for the site, and had more than several long conversations with site creators and programmers, about putting in a simple filter. [. . .] And so, I suggested, again and again: Institute a simple 'block' feature, so that when you and some peers want to do some real research, you're able to do so, without three people coming in and posting long insult streams. But. No go. ("GNN Closes")

In Marshall's closing posts on GNN's message board, he wrote that he had been naïve to believe that an anarchist philosophy of a leaderless (moderator-less) online space could exist, and that "the level of hatred and venom accumulating on the blogs drove people - and advertisers - away quickly, and then in droves" (Ibid.). Marshall announced that he would give people a couple of months to transfer their blogs over to another blog site online, but that the site would not remain online for much longer. He explained, "the issue from the beginning has been that the articles are no longer up to date and the blogs are inconsistent. the site has basically become a haven for it's [sic] users, which is great. but not a consistent news source that we initially built. it's time to retire it" ("ok.....").

Complicating the trend in convergence culture for corporations to use activist tactics to mobilize people to consume things, in this case, an online activist community rejected the increasing commercialization of the site so effectively that they dismantled the original, almost decade-long project. In other words, as the public-pedagogic work of the site moved from a focus on the circulation and production of alternative news to advertising and promotion of large media projects with profits and awards, many users became territorial and hostile.

GNN and Indymedia, discussed in chapter two, started at about the same time and aspects of convergence culture can point to the reason why the latter is still in existence while the former has collapsed. Both focused on radical, alternative media production but

their intersections with other media networks, their conception of media makers, and their reason for, implementation of, and uses of social media were drastically different. Indymedia rejected advertising on their sites, while GNN embraced it, albeit selectively. Indymedia's vision is for everyone to be the media by supplementing it with their own texts and meaning-making tactics, while GNN co-founders began to see the website as secondary to their larger, well-funded book and film projects, placed squarely in the middle of popular culture and politics. Indymedia's philosophy is centered on unity statements and hundreds of city-specific, community media centers on six continents where members can meet face-to-face, so their use of social media is a means towards the end of physical community or collective projects with the goal to teach. GNN co-founders, on the other hand, used social media for the promotion of their own projects, abandoning collectivism for commercialism. Users have migrated to other social networking sites, creating communities for "GNN Refugees," such as the Guerrilla Underground Network (GUN) on NING, a site that allows groups to create their own social networking site based around similar interests and the Guerrilla News blog which uses the Wordpress blog platform to replicate a news wire. Neither website is affiliated with commercial or for-profit projects and for this reason, the users understand the use of social media in this space as a way to shape critical pedagogical encounters without the ideological persuasions that accompany profit motives. Tracing these evolutions as a narrative illustrates Jenkins' point of finding, within convergence culture, "the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (3) and extends it to primarily non-entertainment spheres.

Tracking the Battle Over Seattle

Over a year and a half before Stuart Townsend's film, *Battle in Seattle*, was released in the US, there was already a website for the promotion of the film:

www.battleinseattlemovie.com. At the same time, another website was in progress, one that issued a call for people to tell their own stories about the resistance against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999, rather than letting the story be told by Hollywood and mainstream news media. The website, www.realbattleinseattle.org, was built around the idea that the story of the Seattle protests had to be told by the activists, journalists, and citizens who experienced it; thus, the site functions as an archive of people's stories. The organizer behind the Real Battle in Seattle was David Solnit, a direct action activist who moved to Seattle months before the protests to help organize tactics of resistance. He writes, "I'm also an arts organizer, and I worked with many other artists, groups, and activists to make the giant puppets, art, and street theater that were very present in Seattle. This was all part of an effort to find new language and new forms of resistance." Perhaps in response to the critiques that Solnit and other activists in Seattle launched against Townsend, the official website for the film evolved dramatically within the year, going from an edgy, stereotypically anarchist design to a more peaceful and earnest, global justice design. The most significant changes, however, were the incorporation of participatory media on the promotional website, and links to nonprofit organizations working for some of the causes that were being championed during the protests—both of which were rhetorical tactics of the realbattleinseattle.org website. Despite the co-opting of tactics, and likely because of it, the film's promotional site failed to galvanize activists, and ultimately all social media was abandoned.

The original promotional website was created in 2006, during the shooting of the film. Its first function was as a call for protester extras and the only interactive aspect to the site was a form to fill in your contact information. In the absence of a synopsis, character information, or trailer, the visitors to this website could only extrapolate information about the film based on the design of the webpage. There was no indication of any affiliation with a production studio, director, or cast. The interface was combative and oppositional, with a ragged, war-like, all-caps font and a black and red color scheme. The colors were a clear reference to anarchists, specifically anarcho-syndicalism, with black being the traditional color of anarchism and red, the color of socialism. A protester wearing a gas mask is the dominant image in the frame, taking up the largest amount of space, and centered in the middle of the screen. It's clear from the protest signs that the people in the street are protesting the WTO, but the reasons are not clear at this point. The embedded audio for the webpage, which automatically loads with the page, reveals angry voices shouting, police sirens, helicopters overhead, a woman yelling, people chanting, "the whole world is watching!" and more police sirens. Manufactured in a Hollywood sound engineer's studio, the decision to feature auditory chaos on the webpage contributes to the overarching message that the protesters were confrontational, and likely framed for potential extras the kind of protester that they would be asked to recreate for the film. The language of the call for extras utilizes war discourse to emphasize and pun "Battle" in the title. From asking potential extras to "enlist," to referring to accessories as "gear," the call exclusively focuses on conflict. Interestingly, it doesn't ever reference what the prospective extra is supposed to be

protesting. Instead the call just asks, “Dying for a chance to put up a protest?”, which reinforces the idea that many of the protesters were just there to be troublesome, as



Figure 12: www.battleinseattlemovie.com, 2006

opposed to being there to articulate clearly formed positions for specific causes or against particular policies. Collectively, the images, text, and audio of this webpage overwhelmingly position the events as a violent riot, but without much explanation of the reason for the battle.

At the top of the main page, there are two very small hyperlinks that read, “log on” and “links.” The “links” hyperlink brings the user to a separate page, filled with links, mostly to other organizations in one of four categories: globalization, environment, alternative press, or aid agencies. The links provide a wealth of information concentrated in a small column against a plain background. Juxtaposed against bright, full color photographs at the top of the page, the tiny font looks like an overwhelming amount of information and is not likely to capture the full attention of anyone but the most dedicated visitors to the site wanting to know more about the issues at stake. The photographs, which we are assured from the credits below them were taken at the actual protests, depict anarchists, riot police, puppets, and protest signs. The message of this webpage is quite different than the homepage and seeks in earnest to provide a little bit more context. While well meaning, the misspellings and outdated information in the brief annotations below each link look a bit more like a hurriedly put-together first draft than an official resource page that the site user should take seriously.

Meanwhile, David Solnit found out about the film in production when director Stuart Townsend called him to ask for consultation on the film, specifically with the art department as they began to design puppets for the protest scenes. Solnit offered to read the script and offer feedback, and even rewrote parts of the script with other activists, but Townsend made very few changes. Solnit writes that he realized, “my attempt to engage with Townsend’s movie helped me see how important it is for members of social movements to tell our own stories—not just about Seattle, but about all our struggles and victories—and to tell them loudly, publicly, and compellingly” (“The Battle for Reality”). As a result, he and a group of anti-WTO activists launched a new website called the Real

Battle in Seattle, which aims to correct some of the film’s many misrepresentations. Mainstream media and Hollywood weren’t the only ones misrepresenting the story though; Solnit admitted that some activists romanticize the events in Seattle as “semi-spontaneous rebellion that arose as if by luck.” (Ibid.). Both groups contribute to what Solnit dubs, “widespread amnesia about the history of movements and rebellion,” which makes organizing for progressive change in the US so hard. These representations, according to Solnit, ignore “the key strategizing, mass mobilizing, networking, education, and alliance-building that made Seattle possible” (Ibid.).

The original website that the group launched was a plain text call for people to reclaim their history. The call emphasizes three things: 1. The power of narrative 2. The importance of intervening in sites of public pedagogy, and 3. The multiplicitous nature of the voices in the movements involved against corporate globalization. The group

The Battle for the Story of Seattle: A Call to Social Movements to Reclaim Our History

"Until the lions have their own historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter."
—African Proverb

In the fall of 2008, a major motion picture called "Battle in Seattle" will come out in cities across the country. The movie is a docu-drama—a fictional story based on real events—that features extensive archival footage. It may shape what most people in the US and around the world think happened for decades to come—unless we speak up. We call for social movements to take action: to reclaim our history, our stories, and our future.

The story of popular resistance to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in 1999 is a story of how people power can change the world. It is a dangerous example for the global elite, and a powerful one for movements.

For eight years, the US corporate media, global elites, and their police have been twisting and marginalizing the truth, in order to invent their own story of Seattle 1999 and the stories of social movements' resistance and victories. These lies and revisions of history have been used in an attempt to criminalize and repress our protests, movements, and mobilizations.

The movie will be released on the eighth anniversary of the 1999 Seattle anti-WTO uprising and shutdown. It was written by a well-meaning actor-director, but is unlikely to reflect the motives, experience, or thinking of the movements behind the shutdown of the WTO. The potential is high and the possibilities are infinite to interrupt this narrative and claim the history that we helped create.

"The struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."
—Milan Kundera

It's time that we in the social movements tell our own stories, reclaim our own histories, and publicly fight damaging myths of our movements past and present. We must intervene in the public understanding of what happened, what is happening, and what it all means. Stories are how we understand the world and thus shape the future—they are part of our fight against corporate power, empire, war, and social and environmental injustice and for the alternatives that will make a better world.

The real story of Seattle 1999 is of tens of thousands of people rising up, taking direct action, and changing history; standing up to corporations and governments and winning; joining with movements around the world in our common struggle against the WTO.

"When it's truly alive, memory doesn't contemplate history, it invites us to make it."
—Eduardo Galeano, Upside Down: a primer for the looking-glass world

Let's link the 1999 resistance to the WTO in Seattle and globally with building support for today's 2007 resistance that is continuing the fight for global justice on many fronts; against war and occupation for environmental and climate justice; for workers, immigrants, women, and farmers rights, etc. We call for commemorations, public events, performances, media, interventions, interruptions, educational events, performances, screenings, gatherings, and celebrations.

[View the signers of the call to reclaim our history here](#)

Figure 13: www.realbattleinseattle.org, 2007

maintains that “stories are how we understand the world and thus shape the future—they are part of our fight against corporate power, empire, war, and social and environmental

injustice and for the alternatives that will make a better world.” By creating a website filled with people’s stories about the Seattle protests, their histories and experiences could fill in the gaps created by the two-dimensional representations on the film and television screens. The group also recognized the public-pedagogic nature of the film, and that it would teach audiences about the events: “it may shape what most people in the US and around the world think happened for decades to come—unless we speak up. We call for social movements to take action: to reclaim our history, our stories, and our future.” The group recognizes that Townsend is “a well-meaning actor-director,” but maintains that his script is “unlikely to reflect the motives, experience, or thinking of the movements behind the shutdown of the WTO.” The group envisions this website as a site of critical public pedagogy and sees that “the potential is high and the possibilities are infinite to interrupt this narrative and claim the history that we helped create.” Charging those involved in the movements with the job of teaching the larger public, they write, “we must intervene in the public understanding of what happened, what is happening, and what it all means.” One of the biggest things that the group aims to teach others is that there is no singular, stereotypical activist, but multiple causes and voices, including those who “fight for global justice on many fronts; against war and occupation for environmental and climate justice; for workers, immigrants, women, and farmers rights, etc.” To complement those voices and their stories, the group ultimately calls for future “commemorations, public events, performances, media, interventions, interruptions, educational events, performances, screenings, gatherings, and celebrations” in addition to stories to be displayed on the website, thus educating people face-to-face and online.

Though there were no stories to share when the website was first launched, the group still attempts to emphasize the power of everyday people's voices. At the bottom of the page, there is a link to "view the signers of the call to reclaim our history here," which brings the user to a list of people from over 50 different organizations who signed the call when it was posted at the US Social Forum in 2007. At the top of the page are four links, including: "About Seattle," which lists a few questions to get people thinking about how they can contribute their stories; "About the film," which posits the question, "What kind of challenges (or opportunities) does a popular Hollywood version of a popular history of struggle present?"; "A people's history of resistance," which prompts people to finish the prompt that simply says "this is how we did it:"; and "Organizing resources," which includes flyers promoting the website and project. Without images to distract or entertain, the webpage is a clear and concise call for the real stories of on-the-ground activists.

In 2007, the *Battle in Seattle* promotional movie website was updated to reflect that there was a new MySpace page for the film. This first version of the MySpace page attempted to construct an identity for the movie that would pass as an insider of the movement, but lacking the same ideological viewpoints and experiences, it came across as simply trying too hard. The "details" and "interests" boxes indicated that the actual creator of this page was the director himself, as the "hometown" was listed as Townsend's Dublin, Ireland, and many of the titles listed under "Books" were ones that he mentioned in an interview as reading in preparation for writing the script for the film, such as *No Logo*, *Culture Jam*, and *The Battle in Seattle*. The MySpace page continued the same war discourse established on the promotional site, a strategy that is likely employed to

attempt to fit in with and attract the very stereotypically tough, anarchist representations of activists that Townsend tries to expand on in his film. Instead, he unintentionally constructs the activist identity as always combative and aggressive. The standard MySpace layout at that time featured two categories of text to fill out in the main wide column of the page: “About me” and “Who I’d like to meet.” Under the latter category was “People who survived that day,” which facilitates a survivor-victim sense of identity that is not reflected in any of the actual protester accounts of the stories of Seattle. This same descriptor also wrongly insinuates that the protests only occurred on one day, but more than that, it fails to link the actions of the multiple days of protest activities to the greater movement against corporate globalization. Under “About me,” is an explanation that the film is in post-production, and a brief description of the film which clearly positions the conflict of the plot as about the activists against the state. Asserting insider status again, this time through claims of authenticity, the description reveals that the movie is “based on true events” and touts “actual footage of the event.” With no mention of a production company or sponsors anywhere on the page, the film passes as an independent film. The affiliations with grassroots organizations and activist groups—displayed in the “friends” box—also contribute to the film’s ability to pass as activist-created film. Ultimately, it appears that Townsend very much wants his *Battle in Seattle* to be seen as a legitimate storyteller in the collective representations of the events against the WTO.

Later that year, Townsend’s struggle for the film to get picked up by a production company came to an end, and the official promotional site was redesigned. The changes made to the visual aspects of the homepage significantly changed the message to reflect a



Figure 14: www.battleinseattlemovie.com, 2007

more managed, contained, and clean look. The original promotional site had font, placement, and photographs that communicated chaos and edginess; with production companies on board to distribute the film, it became officialized, and thus, tamed down. The font evolved from a jagged, graffiti-esque, sans serif font, to a more militarized serif font. Coupled with the change in the main image—from a protester in a gas mask and a snapshot of throngs of protesters with signs, to a simple image of the earth with a barcode on it—this redesign suggests a shift in the perspective from which the story is told, moving away from Do-It-Yourself stories of activists to stories of ownership, economic and militaristic. The new image features a series of numbers, 11291999, under the

barcode, which refer to the first day of the WTO conference and thus, the first day of the protests. The new site design communicates more of a cohesive visual argument than the previous one, arguing that the battle in Seattle was over the increasing ownership, privatization, and commodification of the world. While the older page might be mistaken for an independently produced film or piece of activist media, no such mistake could be made from the new homepage, which prominently displays the names of the Hollywood celebrities featured in the film, including Woody Harrelson, Joshua Jackson, Ray Liotta, Michelle Rodriguez, Channing Tatum, Andre Benjamin (better known as OutKast's Andre 3000) and Townsend's longtime partner, Academy-Award winner Charlize Theron.

The website is much more fleshed out than the previous incarnation and includes pages such as "Synopsis," "Cast," "Crew," "Video," "Photos," and "More Info." The synopsis page features riot police shooting rubber bullets as the background image, while the background image for the cast page is a group of anarchists, two of whom have a newspaper box raised high in the air as they charge a store window. Both images suggest, as the mainstream media reports did, that the battle in Seattle was about anarchist destruction and police violence. Townsend repeatedly asserted that his film would tell the

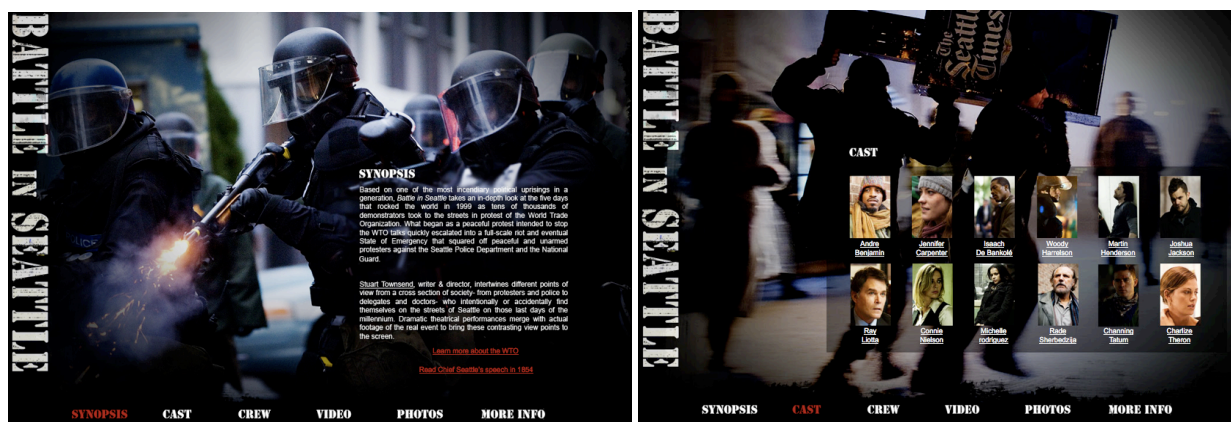


Figure 15: Synopsis and Cast pages

true story of the events, the one that the mainstream media did not cover, but these images suggest otherwise, which was one of many points that Solnit addressed in the book he co-edited with his wife, *The Battle of the Story of the Battle of Seattle* (2008). Neither the synopsis nor the visual images share information about the protesters' issues, thus they are yet again seen as a homogeneous group who protested without clearly articulated reasons. Linked from the synopsis page are two other pages, one that invites users to "learn more about the WTO" and links to the same resource page from the old website, with tiny font and dozens of links, and one that links to the full text of Chief Seattle's speech in 1854. The choice to include the text for this speech is an interesting one since the authenticity of the speech has been the subject of much debate, with the most widely circulated version being written for a Hollywood script ("Chief Seattle"). While the speech is recognized by some as a call for the protection of native people and environmental values, its inclusion on the website is without explication or context, leaving the user unsure of the connection. This is yet another example of the film trying to pass as a community-oriented, community-connected project, only to materialize as patently disingenuous. Despite the redesign and Hollywood backing, the promotional site still functions as a read-only, with no invitation to act or participate.

By the next year, 2008, both the grassroots activist-created website and the film's promotional site evolved yet again. The "Real Battle in Seattle" site re-launched to the form in which it exists today, with participatory features and a rich, cross-search capable database of people's stories about the protests. The database allows people to browse stories in four ways. One is by people identifying as: "Anarchist/anti-authoritarian";



Figure 16: www.realbattleinseattle.org, 2009

“Community/social justice/human rights”; “Direct action/affinity group”;

“Labor/union/worker”; “Media/journalist/Indymedia”; or “Resident/neighbor,” which emphasizes the diversity of citizens present, plurality of voices to be heard, and ideological perspectives on the events and issues. This complicates the notion that activists were a mono-vocal group easily lumped together as “the protesters.” A second way to search for stories is by specific topic, including “Seattle WTO Resistance,” “Other simultaneous actions around the US,” and “International Simultaneous Actions,” which truly links the actions in Seattle to the world by emphasizing the transnational efforts of the movement against corporate globalization and the WTO. This is a crucial notion as it

counters the idea that Seattle, 1999, was a stand alone spectacle—a happenstance occurrence staged by a group of anarchists from Eugene, Oregon. Instead, transnational perspectives strengthen the argument that the WTO impacts the livelihoods of people worldwide and is thus a concern of activists across the planet. The third search option allows users to browse stories by date, including each date of the WTO talks as well as “Before November 30, 1999” and “After December 4, 1999.” This counters the idea that there was one main day to focus on, as the mainstream media tended to do, whether that is the day that the protests started or the day that there were the most arrests. Instead, this option connects these events to other protests to come and ones of the past, communicating the continuity of resistance to the myriad impacts of corporate globalization. The last way to search the database is by contribution type, including video, photo, and audio, but also by four different written genres: account, analysis, reflection, or report. While some of these essays were written specifically for the website, many were written for other sources like organizational newsletters or excerpted from longer pieces in publications.

The participatory nature of the site is apparent on every page, as on the top left hand side of each page is a large link asking people to “Contribute to the People’s History.” When clicked, it brings the participant to a page where they can set up an account to upload a story or piece of media and tag it with the available categories that allow it to be searched, for instance, as a video reflection about international simultaneous actions by a laborer. The site still receives submissions, mostly in the form of anniversary reflections and analyses of new actions. The social media applications utilized on the site include a user-populated events calendar, which contributes to an ethos of continued action. David

Silver writes in the conclusion of *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*, “the best kind of online activism engages users as active agents of change rather than passive consumers of information” (285) and this site aims to do just that. On the “contribute” page, they detail multiple ways and types of texts to upload, but the last way to contribute simply says “Get it out in your community, networks, and the world.” They suggest both online and face-to-face ways to circulate the stories of the history of the Battle in Seattle. Like the film’s original promotional website, there is a page which encourages visitors to learn more about the WTO. However, unlike that site, this one features essays as well as website URLs, information about films, videos, books, downloadable flyers, and even a link to a free, interactive game called “The Game of WTO,” which asks you to pretend that you are the leader of a small country who has recently joined the WTO and guides you through a series of scenarios where you have to choose how to negotiate some of the devastating economic impacts on your economy due to WTO policies. Both a site of learning and for inspiring action, the website complicates the tendency for theorists to focus on the commercial aspects of convergence culture, showing that a non-commercial, educational site can engage in transmedia storytelling as well. Collectively, the stories in this database give depth to the events in Seattle and counter the public pedagogy of the promotional website.

Attempting to temper the critiques dispersed by David Solnit while capitalizing on the claims of democratic participatory media, the film’s website was quickly overhauled the same month as the Real Battle in Seattle website’s re-launch. Henry Jenkins explains the logic of convergence politics as “the effort to use grassroots media to mobilize and mainstream media to publicize” (220), and the redesigned promotional website

epitomizes this description. The biggest addition is the inclusion of social media and opportunities for participation via story contribution, just like the Real Battle's website. There are three columns dedicated to social media and participatory action. One column is solely for promotion of the film, with icons for social media applications such as Digg (a social news website and application), Delicious (a social bookmarking site), and Stumbleupon (a social recommendation search engine). Another column asks users to "Join the Movement," which means nothing more than signing up to get email notifications about the film. There is also a link to "Become an Insider" which also merely brings the user to a page to sign up for film updates. The idea that being a movement insider is on par with being a consumer and promoter of a Hollywood film is telling, but allows both parties to feel like they are involved in a movement. If Townsend is to be taken at his word, however, that he wants to inspire people to "Get involved; take action; participate" (Hedden), then this exemplifies the failed convergence of activist tactics and corporate strategies.

The last column eliciting participation asks users to "Tell your Story: Were you there? Upload your own video, photos or writing about your experiences at the protests. We want to hear what you've got to say!" Four opportunities to "tell your story" are touted, including a collaborative space called "The Activist Wiki" through the wiki platform, Wetpaint; a group site set up through Flickr, the photo-sharing web service, where you can "contribute your photos to the Seattle Vs. WTO Photo Project"; a Youtube channel, where you can "Watch activists, protesters and everyday people tell their stories of actions that changed the world"; and a Facebook page where you can "connect with other rebels." Not surprisingly, the call to share stories on the Hollywood-backed

“activist” sites went unanswered. The Activist Wiki garnered one story and the original thread, “Let’s Organize the Activist World,” remains uncommented on; the Flickr site is home to five images, four of which are stills from the movie; the Youtube channel has no uploaded videos, and the Facebook page, while moderately more successful than the other platform, has a mere 29 friends. The co-opting of the democratic discourse of the grassroots website ultimately fails because of the uncritical manner in which it is attempted. The most obvious move might be for the film to link to the grassroots website, but instead it tries to emulate it. This lack of collaboration, or even acknowledgement of the people’s history project, coupled with the lack of in-depth education about the issues, as demonstrated by the “Learn about the WTO” link bringing users to the WTO Wikipedia page, clearly mark this site as the antithesis of the grassroots site.

Just two months after the promotional website was updated, it was redesigned and re-launched one last time in July 2008 before it went offline for good in December 2009. At this time, the MySpace page for the movie was synched with this official website in terms of both colors and content. The most significant change, likely in direct response to the failure of the Wiki, Flickr, YouTube, and Facebook projects, was Townsend’s partnership with five nonprofit groups—Greenpeace, Ocean Revolution, Organic Consumers, Global Exchange, and Rainforest Action Network—to develop a project called 5Actions. With the help of Public Citizen, an advocacy group originally founded by Ralph Nader, Townsend attempted to, yet again, prove that his commitment to social justice went beyond wanting his movie to be seen. Yet again, though, his rhetorical claims to authenticity seem to get in the way of the project of collective action. On the downloadable flyer found on the Battle in Seattle Movie website and on the website



Figure 17: www.5actions.com, 2008

for 5 Actions, the text reads:

The Battle in Seattle really happened.
 We know. We were there.
 Despite the incredible odds we shaped history.
 Now it's your turn.
 There are five (5) actions you can take.
 This is not changing your light bulbs/driving a hybrid kind of stuff.
 Like the activists in the movie, they will require you to stretch yourself.
 (No tear gas required)
 These actions will powerfully affect the world around you.
 Choose one. Or all five.
 And if you are one of the first 100 to share your action story we will
 send you a limited-edition lapel pin¹⁸ to honor your work.
 Because we need more stories from people who do more than just watch.

Townsend uses the five nonprofit organizations that had advocates present at the protests to claim authority and call for participatory action. The actions range from reverse trick-or-treating where kids give adults fair trade chocolate to placing stickers on the ATM machines at Bank of America branches to protest their status as one of the largest coal sector financiers. The information about and resources needed for each action links back to the nonprofit that sponsors it and while their websites indicate that people

¹⁸ Generally just called a "button" or a "pin."

participated in the actions even before the creation of 5actions.com, there is no indication on the 5actions website that anyone participated. Again, the only discussion threads and media uploaded to the site were those by the nonprofit group who set up the page. Taken together, Townsend's attempts at creating a community of activists exemplify how the mere inclusion of social media does not necessitate participatory action and teach that a community of activists cannot be created from the top down.

Following the *Battle in Seattle* and *Real Battle in Seattle* websites as they respond and evolve in dialogue with each other ultimately illustrates how analyzing these connected media spaces as sites of public pedagogy can enrich Jenkins' concept of convergence culture to include consideration of its pedagogical potential. At a glance, both websites intersect with other media networks, they both rely on rich web 2.0 technologies to teach the public about the events in Seattle, and they both use social media to offer users opportunities for participatory action. However, tracing the evolution of the film's promotional website provides an example of how the attempted co-opting of grassroots tactics by corporate-backed media can fail. My reading of the intent behind the changes to the website design and content is dependent on several factors, primarily Townsend's own claims (see Hedden) that he wanted to make a film that accurately portrayed the events in Seattle and inspired political action in its audience and his ultimate partnership with existing nonprofits to create spaces for activist involvement on the film's website. In this case, no amount of images and fonts, activist mobilization tactics, or even nonprofit alliances could help Townsend create media texts that could replicate activist community, or even invigorate a new one. Likewise, the demise of the Guerrilla News Network was attributed to the introduction of commercialization and what that signified to the online

community. These examples suggest that convergence culture should also be considered for its public-pedagogical potential, particularly in relation to the presence or absence of commercialism. Jenkins maintains that through the lens of convergence culture, we can see every story told and every brand sold through multiple media, but he does not consider the implications to convergence culture when that paradigm fails to contribute to profit or even to participate in commercial projects.

Jenkins and scholars of convergence culture primarily attend to “average consumers” who “archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways” (3) but as we have seen through the evolution of design and content in the *Battle in Seattle* and *Real Battle in Seattle* websites, Hollywood producers are also able to appropriate and recirculate content. However, while the *Real Battle in Seattle* website was created as a media intervention into the film, countering its public pedagogy, the promotional website—because it was sponsored by an institution—failed to be able to act tactically, in a way that would allow media interventions into the *Real Battle in Seattle*. Instead, the *Battle in Seattle*'s website relies on corporate strategies like offering consumer incentives like “lapel pins” for proof of completed activist tasks and branding “insider status” with staying up-to-date about the commercial representation of that movement; in other words, it injects a neoliberal ethos into its “opportunities” for activism.

Chapter Five

Media Interventions: Kairotic Moments and Ephemeral Texts in the Composition Classroom¹⁹

How do we see pedagogical activism not as an end in itself but as an integral process of revitalizing democracy? How to create moments to process new arguments, respond to particular conjunctures, and create new languages that articulate the contingencies and affinities of the particular moment?

Rachel Riedner and Kevin Mahoney, *Democracies to Come*, p. xiii

Critical pedagogies are messy work. They are time consuming, challenging, and require flexibility precisely because they are often constantly re-shaped in response to evolving political contexts. They allow for kairotic moments, those moments in which there is an immediate space for students to enter into a public conversation or action. Critical pedagogy practitioners understand that virtually every aspect of schooling is political and bound up in capitalism: assessment practices, textbook choices, access to instructional resources, and even the physical space of schooling. Worth quoting at length, Peter McLaren recently wrote:

Critical pedagogy's once-subversive refusal to reproduce dominant ideologies and practices inherent in capitalist school and instead to embrace the possibility of resisting and transforming them has been tempered—domesticated in fact—by the soi-dissant [sic] politics of postmodernism. Postmodernists have become the fitting progeny of transnational capital. Rather than becoming preoccupied with the discursive ruptures, discontinuities, and arbitrary subjectivism of the postmodernists, I prefer to emphasize the continuity of capitalist relations of exploitation, maintaining that the struggle for social justice, and for socialism, can be grounded in non-arbitrary conditions. I believe academics must take a principled and non-negotiable stance against exploitation and oppression of all living creatures, one that strives for social justice and dignity for all human beings. (565)

¹⁹ An earlier version of this chapter was published in SMITH/SMITH/BOBBITT. *Teaching in the Pop Culture Zone*, 1E. © 2009 Heinle/Arts & Sciences, a part of Cengage Learning, Inc. Reproduced by permission. www.cengage.com/permissions

In other words, critical pedagogues work to counter neoliberal politics, which thrive on exploitation and oppression through the inequitable, vertical distribution of power and the privatization of public services. Like “globalization from below,” critical pedagogy is pedagogy from below, uniting feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and radical educators in their work for global human, ecological, and economic rights. Critical pedagogy is multi-vocal; critical educators value diverse student voices and various critiques of hegemony and give students the space to act, or as is the case in the composition classroom, to compose, for social change.

However, some question whether pedagogical activism is even possible within the contemporary labor and class structures of higher education. Jeffrey Williams goes as far as to say, “regardless of the pedagogy we practice, whether passively transmitting canonical knowledge or proactively spurring radical critique, students are circulated through literary studies [or any studies] in order to be distinguished for the labor pool” (306); he maintains that whether teachers prepare our students for careers in the public or private sector, we are still preparing them for corporate-state interests. This leaves some educators “politically paralyzed,” stemming from the belief that things will change for the better at some point with or without their intervention. Of course this is the product of neoliberal ideology, as McLaren points out: “We have permitted the political guardians of the corporate state to convince us that dialogue is weakness and an obstacle to peace, and that univocal assertion is a strength. We must reverse this trend” (567). Indeed, this chapter is written with the belief that a critical part of progressive education is to interrogate dominant discourses with our students, to provide spaces for

alternatives to these discourses in our classrooms, and to frame what we do there in a way that makes it applicable outside the classroom.

Building on that belief, Leila Villaverde writes:

We can spend countless hours perfecting language or expanding it, but if we do not spend countless other hours in the struggle of and for education or pedagogy in all its forms and sites (both traditional and nontraditional learning spaces), and, specifically, the development of multiple ways of integrating feminist critical pedagogy into daily living, it will continue to support and be complicit in a larger system of inequity impenetrable by you or me. (3)

Paying attention to nontraditional learning spaces, and to the public pedagogies outside the classroom, can inform educators about the kinds of knowledge students come to the classroom with. By further examining the forms of public pedagogy at work in contemporary culture, educators can use these as a starting place for pedagogy in our classrooms. In Chapters Two, Three, and Four, I have demonstrated how news media, film, and websites function as forms of public pedagogy, shaping discourse about activist work for social justice. These chapters also explored how media is used to intervene in and supplement these discourses, while taking into account how the tactical ephemerality of media texts has reshaped the terrain of activist work. As I observed public pedagogical practices—of newspapers, posters, television shows, blogs, radio, literature, or other media forms—it became immediately clear that preparing students for the analysis and interpretation of meanings and messages is not enough for a composition classroom. Preparing students to produce and circulate texts, to take part in meaning-making, must also be part of my pedagogy. The question, then, that I take up in this chapter is why and how to engage students in the creation and circulation of texts that contribute to and critique dominant conversations in the public sphere. I propose that by designing

assignments that ask students to both create media texts for public consumption and to circulate these texts through digital media—to engage in the production of ephemeral texts—teachers can challenge dominant ideas about who gets to create meaning and produce knowledge.

In a recent article Carole Edelsky wrote, “changes in people’s concerns about democracy in education occur in relation to what else is happening at the time” (8). Corporate globalization is what else is happening. Corporate interests and media conglomerations influence formal education (by contributing to policy decisions and funding avenues) and informal education (through aspects of public pedagogy like popular culture and news media). As Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky note in *Manufacturing Consent*: “Four [of the six giants that dominate the media universe]—Disney, AOL Time Warner, Viacom, and News Corporation—produce movies, books, magazines, newspapers, TV programs, music, videos, toys, and theme parks, among other things...” (xiii); since Herman and Chomsky’s book was updated in 2002, mergers have positioned General Electric and CBS Corporation alongside those four. To further complicate ownership in the media, there are many online tools, often heralded as democratic (because they are free for “anyone” to create their own media content): blogging and other user-generated content services (such as Blogger, owned by Google), social networking platforms (such as MySpace, owned by News Corporation), and online video sharing sites (such as YouTube, also owned by Google). Newer social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are still independently owned for now, but the question of ownership is certainly relevant as both feature “ownership of all posted property” clauses in their terms of service. That media conglomerates own many of the

social media applications does not make them immediately unusable or inescapably ideologically tainted, but it does complicate commonly heard celebratory claims of the democratizing force of new media. Media ownership is particularly relevant for issues in the rhetoric and composition classroom as writing teachers guide students to analyze different sources of information with respect to a text's author, audience, and context. In this chapter, I will map concepts and traditions key to teaching visual and media culture in the rhetoric and composition classroom, briefly discuss how I use consumption as a heuristic in the classroom, and then end with a definition of ephemeral media texts, and a theory and practice of implementing these texts in the classroom.

Negotiating Multiple Terms

In the great awash of online, digital, media-friendly, and technology-rich classrooms, questions about the place of media literacy and visual communication instruction arise. Who should teach it and where do teachers integrate it into our already jam-packed curriculum? Does the *it* refer to visual rhetoric, media literacy, digital rhetoric, or multi-modal literacies? Who wouldn't be disoriented as they find themselves writing in a digital age, saturated by visual culture, living in a new media world where they keep in touch through social media, and working in a technological environment in a global era? There are so many places to insert aspects of media culture and its technologies into the curriculum, but not much guidance as to the ethics of such inclusion.

It is precisely because of the infiltration of corporate media conglomerates into education that writing teachers might incorporate alternative media into the classroom. One starting place to make space for this conversation and practice is to include critical media literacy instruction in the composition classroom curriculum. McLaren and

Hammer advocate for the creation of a “media literate citizenry that can disrupt, contest, and transform media apparatuses so that they no longer possess the power to infantilize the population and continue to create passive and paranoid social subjects” (196).

Sometimes used synonymously with multimodal literacy, other times with visual literacy, in the context of this chapter, I differentiate the terms in the following way: visual literacy is the ability to interpret and make meaning from visual symbols, including photographs, charts, video, signs, etc.; multimodal literacy is the ability to interpret and create messages in multiple meaning-making modes including oral, print, tactile, and electronic means of communication; media literacy is the ability to assess the messages presented by media outlets, including advertising, television and news programs, movies, and websites, etc., paying close attention to the relationship between the producer and the message. While it is clear how these literacies are related, they are certainly not interchangeable. Digital media can figure prominently in each of these literacies, but it doesn't necessarily have to. Visual and multimodal literacies are traditionally understood to give equal weight to the ability to interpret and create in those modes. Media literacy, on the other hand, is not generally conceived of as asking the literate to produce media, only to assess it. Given all the media platforms that people are using to make meaning, though, it only makes sense to incorporate production into our definition of media literacy. Additionally, media literacy is inherently political in a way that visual and multimodal literacies are not. Later in this chapter, I will discuss how a particular kind of assignment can meet competency goals with respect to these three kinds of literacies, paying particular attention to how these literacies can help students both interpret *and* produce texts.

It is difficult to teach media literacy as something separate from visual rhetoric since teaching students how to analysis and read image events, news media and corporate bias, and spectacle as texts in and of themselves is best understood by first teaching visual rhetoric. It is increasingly essential to teach the ability to receive and decode intertextual messages and to create and send multi-modal ones, and the composition classroom is uniquely situated as a place to deconstruct and recreate media messages. A pedagogy which counters the rampant consumerism and passive consumption brought about by media culture seems appropriate for a rhetoric and composition curriculum charged with teaching about language, power, and persuasion. From viral videos, tweets, and Internet memes to emails, Facebook status updates, and the nightly news, 21st century media texts emphasize immediacy. These texts are often perceived as ephemeral by their composers and are created with temporality in mind. Attention to kairos, then, becomes an increasingly important component of rhetorical analysis of contemporary media. Wary of the interests behind the production of meaning and manipulation of images and words, there has never been a more crucial time to revitalize the push for active, critical, innovative pedagogies—starting with discussions about consumption and production practices.

Interrogating Consumption

We have been living in the midst of a historical moment, where hyper-consumerist forces and mediated realities—what Guy Debord has called spectacle—have commodified and appropriated social life. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord defines spectacle as “not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (12). Bob Peterson describes the effect of these image-based mediated

experiences on his elementary school students: “In my two decades of teaching, technological ‘advances’ in video, hand-held gameboys, cable TV, and video and computer games have enveloped my students’ lives with such an intensity that I have no alternative but to incorporate critiquing the media within my curriculum” (296-7). In this same historical moment, there is a privileging of the visual over the tactile, and of appearing over being. Debord details this phenomenon in more detail:

An earlier stage in the economy’s domination of social life entailed an obvious downgrading of being into having that left its stamp on all human endeavor. The present stage, in which social life is completely taken over by the accumulated products of the economy, entails a generalized shift from having to appearing: all effective ‘having’ must now derive both its immediate prestige and its ultimate *raison d’être* from appearances. (16)

Advertising functions and consumerism thrives precisely because of the ease of appearing over being. Simply put: it is easier to buy a “Go Green” tee-shirt from Gap than it is to actually implement lifestyle changes which reduce your environmental footprint, or to even interrogate the manufacturing practices of a particular company. So the question critical educators might ask themselves is whether we can teach so that something other than spectacle is produced. It is this historical time that provides the conditions for a classroom which challenges the being/having/appearing continuum, even if temporarily. Through an interrogation of consumption and an incorporation of alternatives to corporate meaning-shapers, the classroom can be a place of resistance and of action.

“When was the last time you consumed food grown locally?” When I have posed this question to the students in my Louisiana State University English classes, including media and environmentally-themed freshman composition classes as well as the Eco-Texts: Environmental Literature and Writing class, it has been met with answers ranging

from “I don’t know” to “after I go to the farmer’s market each week” to the less frequent “every time I harvest the garden.” With the rise in awareness of “green” living has come a heightened awareness of, among other things, local and global food issues. Many of my students are familiar with the 100-mile challenge (in which you challenge yourself to eat only food produced within a 100-mile radius) or at least the basic arguments surrounding local food movements. But when I ask, “When was the last time you consumed a piece of media produced locally?” it has generally been met with silence. After some discussion, students come up with lists that include: some of the articles in the local newspaper and city social magazines, a handful of programs on local radio, segments of the local nightly news, and a few of the television programs on the local PBS station. In general, they are surprised by the lack of truly local media and begin spotting syndicated material passing as local material everywhere they look. By linking local environmental and local media issues, and through discussions of media consumption and food consumption, teachers have an opportunity to forefront issues about corporatization and globalization, and the subsequent effects these have on language. For an English class, or any class focused on communication and composition, it becomes particularly important for students to question how discourse is framed, produced, and disseminated, as well as by and for whom. By connecting food ownership and media ownership, students often come away with a clearer picture of the role of institutions and corporations in our everyday lives.

In Felix Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies*, he argues that globalization (or, Integrated World Capitalism—IWC) is eroding not only environmental ecologies, but also mental and social ecologies. For students, it is useful to link the media and the environment, especially in terms of consumption, because it allows for a much more powerful

understanding of the pervasiveness of corporate ownership. For instance, asking students to keep consumption journals, where they write down all the food brands that they consume for two weeks or all of the media that they consume for two weeks, and then to visually and collaboratively map this data allows them to see the crux of corporate convergence (and as a plus, everyone is always fascinated/appalled to learn which media conglomerates own which agricultural conglomerates). After situating consumption with this kind of exercise, I usually spring into deeper discussions about mainstream media. Writing about how the mass media perpetuates dominant ideologies and particular social agendas, Guattari asserts that IWC “tends increasingly to decentre its sites of power, moving away from structures producing goods and services towards structures producing signs, syntax and –in particular, through the control which it exercises over the media, advertising, opinion polls, etc. –subjectivity” (47). Guattari locates part of the solution, or at least a point of rupture, when he speculates that an “essential programmatic point for social ecology will be to encourage capitalist societies to make the transition from the mass-media era to a *post-media* age, in which the media will be reappropriated by a multitude of subject-groups capable of directing its resingularization” (61). But to get to this post-media age, where Guattari believes that people can reclaim their subjectivity from the homogenization of mass media, I will first consider the differences between advocacy groups for media literacy instruction and those for independent media.

Media Literacy Meets Independent Media

Both media literacy efforts and the independent media movement (including, but not limited to Indymedia mentioned in chapter two, and alternative news websites)

address and react against the corporatization of media and the mono-cultured information and representation it disseminates. Both are influential to the pedagogical practices that I describe in this chapter. Both actively counter the ethnic stereotyping and restrictive gender roles commonly reflected by corporate media, though media literacy's focus is on exposing these portrayals as narrow while independent media concentrates its attention on providing alternative views and voices, left and right. Media literacy generally has a defined aim to "have every citizen able to 'access, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms'" (Wehmeyer 95), but advocates do not necessarily call for alternative or independent media. Instead, advocates include parents and schools concerned about the effects of excessive television viewing habits and religious organizations troubled by representations of sex and violence. While media literacy groups encourage a number of different methods, theories, and approaches held by a wide range of ideologically informed groups, "these discussions have come to promote both the idea and the practice of some form of media literacy as the necessary response to, if not the inoculation against, the lived experience of media-saturated lives" (Wehmeyer 94).

Independent or alternative media groups hold as their primary goal to change the mainstreams media's stinging string of hegemonic images and messages, and to create an alternative. Adopting the creation of alternative texts for public distribution as one of our goals in classes that purport to address issues of writing and culture will prepare students to think beyond the media's representation of reality. Alternative media, according to Michael Albert's "Alternative Media: What Makes Alternative Media Alternative?" is defined in this way:

An alternative media institution (to the extent possible given its circumstances) doesn't try to maximize profits, doesn't primarily sell audience to advertisers for revenues (and so seeks broad and non-elite audience), is structured to subvert society's defining hierarchical social relationships, and is structurally profoundly different from and as independent of other major social institutions, particularly corporations, as it can be. An alternative media institution sees itself as part of a project to establish new ways of organizing media and social activity and it is committed to furthering these as a whole, and not just its own preservation. (1)

Alternative media is generally distinguished from independent media, or citizen media, because it too can be corporately produced. On the contrary, independent media is grassroots media, created and produced independently of commercial interests. This could take many forms: from the hundreds of city-specific indymedia.org sites, to zines and pamphlets, to citizens' blogs and podcasts (see Dan Gillmor's *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism By the People, For the People* for an optimistic view of the potential of internet-based media-producing tools). The production and circulation of most of these public educative texts are facilitated by digital tools that our students can use for assignments in our classes.

Media literacy extends well beyond the decoding of messages though, to a necessarily intertextual understanding of how meaning is produced, constructed, and manipulated. It is not just "the [news] media" which media literacy refers to—it's also the multiple modes or mediums through which communication is rendered. Websites, billboards, television, films, and t-shirts are all texts to be read in terms of medium. I often use the example of a bumper sticker—which might take on different meanings on a car versus a stop sign. Each semester I show *Outfoxed*, a documentary detailing Fox News' corporately manufactured news, as well as footage from CNN, and a clip from PBS' *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer* for a comparative discussion of where citizens get their

information and the differences in visual composition of this information. This is a pivotal moment for some students—a moment where that connection between privilege and power, ownership and content, language and audience all makes sense. Another strand of people concerned with media literacy—media activists who are part of nonprofit organizations like Free Press—specifically believe that all citizens should be able to have an alternative to getting their news from a media conglomerate—a corporation. This is not a surprising revelation for those who have watched the prevalent use of tweets, news feeds, podcasts, and blogs and their exponential growth. As thousands of people participate in alternate or independent forms of news broadcasting and meaning-making, composition teachers should include in their classrooms and assignments the digital tools that citizens are using.

The accessibility and ease of use of technology—from online publishing tools to personal, home printers—has undoubtedly increased groups' and individuals' ability and desire to create and distribute. It is the necessity to create, to inform, and to critique, which unites the diverse makers of indie media. Writing about the potential of collectively produced media, Herman and Chomsky write: “the organization and self-education of groups in the community and workplace, and their networking and activism, continue to be the fundamental elements in steps toward the democratization of our social life and any meaningful social change” (5). Independent media has been growing exponentially since the mid-nineties, and youth cultures have been the primary creators. In the early anarcho-punk and political feminist collectives, zines caught on because of the opportunity for empowerment, the ability for engagement in community dialogue, and the chance to correct the information received in mainstream media. These goals

certainly haven't changed, but in an increasingly media-polluted society, the modes have expanded to e-zines and blogs, and the social and political identities of the groups have broadened beyond subcultures. Before teachers can bring alternative media-making practices into the classroom, they should include alternative and independent media as class texts, so as not to decouple countercultural practices with their contexts.

Independent/Alternative Media Resources for the Classroom

Using a variety of alternative media in the classroom models non-canonical sources of information and knowledge while providing students with the resources that they will need for the following assignments and often have not been exposed to. Further, it ensures that the critiques of mainstream media and dominant discourses in class readings and discussion are balanced by hopeful alternatives. While it is best to have a running list of resources that is collectively maintained by the class, I have a short list that I start students off with at the beginning of the semester. Because there are no infoshops, zine libraries, radical bookshops, Indymedia centers, or other progressive community centers in the southern college town in which I teach, and there is only one independent bookstore, there isn't much access to zine culture. For that reason, the alternative media resources I provide are mainly online resources, including my top five picks for any classroom:

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW, [HTTP://WWW.CJR.ORG](http://www.cjr.org)

This indispensable resource founded at Columbia University is known as "America's premier media monitor" and includes an online guide to what (and who) major media companies own, which I find indispensable.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER, [HTTP://WWW.INDYMEDIA.ORG/EN/INDEX.SHTML](http://www.indymedia.org/en/index.shtml)

Based in individual cities, each indymedia site is collectively run by members of that city. Dedicated to grassroots, non-corporate coverage, hundreds of people and independent media organizations contribute.

ALTERNET, [HTTP://WWW.ALTERNET.ORG](http://www.alternet.org)

A kind of clearinghouse for independent news, this online news magazine started as a project of the Independent Media Institute, which also has a youth-based branch that I've used successfully with middle and high school students.

ZMAG, [HTTP://WWW.ZMAG.ORG/](http://www.zmag.org/)

Comprised of a website, an online and print magazine, a video site, and an alternative media institute, Z communications is another good resource to start from for alternative news coverage.

"THE MERCHANTS OF COOL," [HTTP://WWW.PBS.ORG/WGBH/PAGES/FRONTLINE/SHOWS/COOL/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/)

This website, produced by PBS' Frontline, includes a 53 minute video, discussion questions, interviews with teens and youth, and an interactive chart detailing the main media giants.

Each of these online resources houses a myriad of textual and visual genres—from blogs and videos to downloadable zines and stickers, traditional journalistic writing and informal opinion pieces. Thus, as a class, we can use these sites as a springboard to discuss what kinds of texts are most persuasive in a digital context. Since the English classes that I teach (rhetorical, media, cultural, and gender studies) focus quite specifically on the forces shaping written language and communication, these resources tie right into the curriculum, but I can imagine integration into any classroom which requires research projects, papers, or presentations. Especially because the resources are online, it is important to discuss alternate ways to get independent media out to publics who aren't comfortable using or don't have access to the Internet or other digital technology.

Looking at Ephemeral Texts

There has been very little theorizing of ephemeral texts, in large part because these texts are often created quickly and cheaply, and are intended to have a limited life. These texts include private, print ephemera like postcards and scrapbooks, public print ephemera like zines and posters, private electronic ephemera like emails and public electronic ephemera like Twitter or Facebook statuses or posts and blogs. The kinds of ephemeral texts that interest me most for their pedagogical possibilities are the public ephemeral texts, both digital and print, which are crucial rhetorical artifacts that have functioned to address people and issues in immediate ways. Ephemeral texts have long been a medium for marginalized and subordinated groups to articulate radical ideas and to form counterpublics through literacy practices, from the radical pamphleteering of Thomas Paine in the 18th century to the riotgrrl zines in the 1990s.

Most of the time, college teachers are in their students' lives less than four months. The classroom is an ephemeral space to begin with, and yet teachers often have enormous goals, including teaching students to write and think more critically but also to become more civically engaged. Critical educators often use service-learning models or action research frameworks, or sometimes we rely on the content that we introduce to open students' eyes to new possibilities. But what is truly possible in this time period? How can civic-minded teachers resituate pedagogy as not something that happens only in the classroom, but intervenes and unsettles enough to drift into areas outside of the classroom? I propose that within an age of budget cuts to higher education, furloughs, adjuncts, large class sizes, and outlandishly expensive textbooks, activist-teachers can design our pedagogy to intervene in the business-as-usual of institutional authority. An

activist pedagogy, a pedagogy of kairotic moments and ephemeral public texts, a pedagogy of patience and messiness, and of immediacy and flexibility, might need to be further theorized in the intersectional spaces of composition, cultural, and rhetorical studies.

Asking students to analyze, create, and circulate ephemeral public texts is a logical place to start as it ties to conversations about context and globalization as well as digital media, texts, and genre. Analysis of ephemeral texts can tell us much about the kairotic moments in which they were created, helping, in fact, to flesh out histories not told by textbooks and mainstream media. Creating and circulating ephemeral texts for public consumption is one of the most effective ways of enacting pedagogies beyond classrooms. While they may seem to be less “permanent” than their print counterparts, digital ephemeral texts are often engaged with by many more people, albeit in a shorter amount of time, because of the ease with which the ephemera can be emailed around, posted, linked to, etc. Indeed there is something liberatory in creating a public text, because you have little control of it once it leaves your hands—kind of like teaching.

Two Assignments

I've found that the most successful assignments and exercises are the ones that ask students to critique something and produce an alternative based on the critique. One such assignment, which I'll detail more below, is the “subvert the advertisement” project, based on *Adbusters Magazine's* popular culture jamming uncommercials. Rooted in the idea that we make meaning with texts rather than simply deriving meaning from them, creating our own zines (or pamphlets, for those who want to make the historical connection to Thomas Paine) takes this a step further toward making meaning *with* texts by *making*

COMPOSE AND CREATE: VISUAL TEXT

Using Photoshop, alter an ad to make the existing message more accurate. Think of this as a persuasive visual assignment with the goal of identity correction.

Accompanying media: Guerilla Girls poster, *Production of Meaning* DVD, and B. Kruger's art

Accompanying activity: Basic Photoshop Workshop

Focus: Media Production/Creation

COLLECT AND CRITIQUE: 3-4PP

Collect various examples of feminist and/or countercultural media (zines, videos, websites, comic books, songs, posters, etc.) centered around one critical issue in the lives of women.

Describe the collection and critique it. Does one medium communicate an issue more effectively? How? Most importantly, describe the exigency surrounding the creation of the text.

Accompanying media: CodePink website; Le Tigre, Adhamh Roland, and Ani DiFranco lyrics

Accompanying activity: In-Class presentation/reading of zines

Focus: Independent/Alternative Feminist Media

texts. Creating our own textbooks, our own zines, can help the class as a whole function as a non-hierarchical counterpublic, where all members are expected to bring contributions, be it their own views or more formally researched positions. Creating our own media provides an alternative or supplement to expert-Authors by enabling people with little previous knowledge of a subject to become knowledgeable. Further, the larger project of

creating media for distribution to local publics-at-large functions as a useful transitional space in that it allows students to teach themselves how to enter into a public sphere to effect and discuss social change.

When it comes time for circulation and distribution of the zines and visual texts they have created, students are extremely excited, but also nervous. I asked earlier in this paper, whether, how, or if educators can teach so that something other than spectacle is produced. By integrating independent media production assignments such as the production of ephemeral public texts, we ask our students to move from *appearing* to be involved through analysis and critique alone, to *being* involved through the creation of content for distribution to real publics. When students have the time, tools, and task to extract what is omitted from mainstream media—whether in their hometown, campus, or other local community—and then to reinsert a more accurate reality based on their experiences, they are succeeding in disrupting the spectacle, which encourages student solidarity and produces resistance to hegemonic representations.

Interrogating Authoritative Knowledge: The Activist, The Artist, and The Author

One striking thing about pedagogy that focuses on imagistic and linguistic literacies is that it has the potential to aid in the demystification of “the artist,” “the activist,” and “the author.” Through multi-modal composition, “artists’ cultural perspectives enable them to critique cultural inscription” (Garoian 2), which in turn provides a sense of agency. Compositionists such as Hardin have suggested that “pedagogy in the writing class might be made even more productive by emphasizing the student’s productive role as ‘author’” (12). People see authors, artists, and activists as intangible beings—reified subjects doing things that they could never do. By shattering

this idea and encouraging student authorship, critical teachers can resist the way that academic culture constructs authority (of the lecture, of the text, of the original). One example of encouraging student authorship is to treat student writings as they are—texts to be read and analyzed like any other text assigned from a book or course packet. Rather than only reading students' papers in a peer review session, I invite students to write editorials to share with the class in the form of blogs throughout a semester and encourage students to collaborate in their writing for the class and the public on wikis and through GoogleDocs. Only in an open classroom, an open space where students can establish themselves as authors of texts, can progressive pedagogy be effective.

Composing for change in the composition classroom can both allow students to achieve agency and to cultivate a communication style which does not merely attempt to translate what is in the world, but can allow for creation or emergence of ideas. By merging the personal and the political, writers can find those connections or intimate interests that drove them to think/write/speak/act in the first place before red pens and sentence-diagramming homework drove them away. As a composition teacher, I am always careful to make it clear that we won't be writing in either formal or informal language, either personally or critically, but always both (with an eye for audience).

I am also careful not to sound flippant when I talk to my students about composing for change. It is scary, certainly, to begin writing in a way that questions dominant representations rather than simply attempting to represent. It is also unsettling because students realize that dominant ideologies can be identified in all parts of their lives. Many students say that they can't look at anything the same anymore; other students confess that they didn't know that they could be interested in politics. Minh-ha (1989) says that

no position taken is always a position. When teachers don't acknowledge the politics that are already in the classroom, they are taking a conservative position. If composition teachers only allow students to compose through the written word, we are taking an unrealistic position. Critical pedagogy is not, however, about teaching students to think like the teacher. As McLaren notes, "when we teach critically, we often fear that we might be manipulating our students in ways that escape our observations. But the alternative is not to teach, not to act, to remain pedagogically motionless. Teaching critically is always a leap across a dialectical divide that is necessary for any act of knowing to occur" (567). Critical pedagogy is not ever complete; it means experimenting and recreating and experimenting again.

Public, Ephemeral, Media Texts: An Assignment

In these last pages, I will share one assignment that I use for a sophomore-level composition class, the second in the two-semester university writing requirement that met twice a week for an hour and a half. Because it was a required course, students came from a wide range of disciplines, but they did choose to sign up for a media-themed composition course. There were three assignments in addition to the one I describe here: the first is a written letter to the editor in which the student explains an issue related to consumerism; the second is a paper evaluating and comparing how multiple media outlets presented a single story with respect to gender; and the fourth is a rhetorical analysis of how an issue, phrase, or word is phrased within a particular online discourse community. After spending much of the semester interrogating issues of class, gender,

race, and ethnicity, as well as America's "suicidal consumer binge,"²⁰ students were ready to take a stab at creating their own argumentative image for their third main assignment, designed as a culture-jamming assignment modeled after *Adbusters* magazine's uncommercials. For instance, when an image of a child in a sweatshop making Nike shoes is juxtaposed with the swoosh logo and command to "Just Do it," it takes on a new meaning about child labor and the true cost of the shoes. Culture jamming provides a free space for developing ideas; as Stephen Duncombe explains, "freed from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture, you can experiment with new ways of seeing and being and develop tools and resources for resistance" (5). Within the classroom, culture jamming acts as a form of student-created critical public pedagogy, linking class goals of developing digital literacies and creating visual arguments.

In the spring of 2005 (the semester of the composition class that the following examples are drawn from) as I explained the assignment to my composition students, they were relieved to find out that LSU has a free software training lab with Photoshop and I agreed to hold class there for a day. Though an hour and a half can not teach a person everything about the program, it was enough to give students motivation to learn the rest on their own, or go back for tutoring. I taught students to use basic tools, including the color picker, crop tool, lasso and wand selection tools, the type tool, painting tools, and resizing, resolution, and saving basics. Before going to the Photoshop class, students were asked to rummage through magazines, flip through TV channels, or concentrate on an issue that they wanted to depict visually, and bring in a written

²⁰ From the title of Kalle Lasn's *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge—And Why We Must*. We also discussed the implications of essays from Naomi Klein's *No Logo* in terms of gender, globalization, and capitalism.

proposal for the next class period. Next to my email I waited to be barraged with questions about the “correctness” of their ideas. The emails never came. Students showed up to class the next day full of ideas and excited to see what others’ ideas were.

An equal number of students altered existing images as created ones from scratch. While the majority of the topics dealt with the dangerous implications of disinformation, some addressed “annoyingly wrong advertisements.” A surprising number of students admitted to creating what may have seemed like tasteless critiques, but accompanied them with a strong argument to back up their rhetorical choices. For example, one student used a picture of a strangled JonBenet Ramsey and placed it inside of a picture of a Barbie doll box. Underneath the image read: “Mattel: Providing Killer Dreams For Little Girls For Over 50 Years.” Another feminist critique featured a skeletal model (altered by the student) on the cover of *Vogue Magazine*. Selected captions read, “STOP EATING! Experts say food may not be as vital as we thought!” The level of intertextuality, social and cultural relevance, and competency with visual elements were all discussed in class as part of the student presentation, and assessment was based on this as well.

In her reflection, one student wrote, “My favorite assignment throughout the entire class was the third project using Photoshop. It allowed me to create something that was all my own to express my feelings in a way that I couldn’t through traditional writing assignments.” Referring to the assignment, another student said, “It helped my writing by showing me that an important basis for criticism is the recognition of a problem [. . .] that every aspect of language and communication revolves around context [. . .] and that creating a visual explanation helps you better articulate yourself in written or spoken words.” The last part of this quote is probably the most commonly heard response I get to

the emphasis on assignments that require multi-modal literacies. Twice, students with learning disabilities have commented that creating a visual argument made them more comfortable, confident, and articulate in their writing—an implication for future studies.

Some students critiqued products for their visual arguments, such as the economic class-based critique of Mac advertisements in Figure 18. In his presentation, the student who created the image in Figure 1 argued that prices are not a part of Mac television



Figure 18: Mac vs. PC

advertisements as part of their appeal to a higher social class, as opposed to the focus on the value in Dell commercials. He further speculated that this helped perpetuate the elite and hip culture of Mac users. Other students chose to critique films or television shows, such as the student who created the image in Figure 19. She argued that the original movie poster for *Knocked Up*, which features the portly Seth Rogan, perpetuates prejudices against heavier men and reinforces the misconception that all women care

about looks first and foremost. She argued that if Brad Pitt had gotten Katherine Heigl's character knocked up, the movie wouldn't have been a comedy, as the movie depended on the audience's bias against Seth Rogan's looks. Students in this particular semester decided that the best way to circulate their cultural critique images was to put them on a website, viewed as an online gallery,²¹ and to both print pieces of paper with the URL

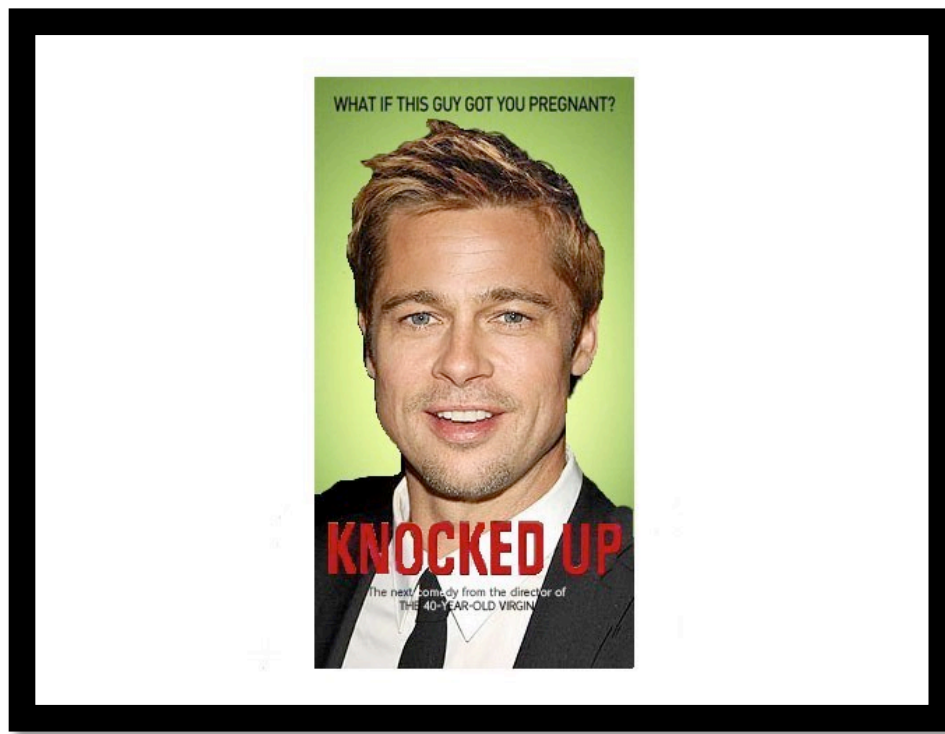


Figure 19: “What if this guy got you pregnant?”

to distribute at coffee shops and to commit to a media blitz of the URL on their personal social networking sites. The anticipation of the audience's reaction prompted several students to make edits to their images prior to submitting them to me for the release date of the website. Public writing assignments have the motivating force of an authentic

²¹ The gallery can be found here:
<http://etoilebleu.com/etoilebleu/visualassignments.html>

audience, so students are especially careful in the peer review and revision stages of this assignment.

The practice of creating and circulating public texts is useful not only in informal educative communities, but in formal educational settings like classrooms, too. In this chapter I have both mapped terminologies related to visual rhetorics and media literacies and framed some of the current discourses surrounding critical pedagogy in the university. I have argued that by designing assignments that ask students to both create texts for public consumption and to circulate these texts through digital media—to engage in the production of ephemeral texts—teachers *and* students can challenge dominant ideas about who gets to create meaning and produce knowledge. Through experience identifying and developing a topic of inquiry, writing for different publics, crafting arguments about local and transnational topics that affect their daily lives, and using digital tools for collaborative composition like blogs and wikis and image-altering tools like Photoshop, students can intervene in media representations and create their own messages. Preparing students to produce and circulate texts, to take part in public meaning-making, should, I contend, be part of a critical pedagogy.

Conclusion

The Eco-Texts class that I described in the first chapter had a service-learning component to it. The project was that we would design an Earth Day celebration at a local charter elementary school in downtown Baton Rouge. The celebration would include building an organic edible garden with the 4th and 5th graders, creating a kid's eco zine for distribution, and having environmentally-themed read-alouds and games. While the day itself went very well, I was more interested in another, perhaps more lasting phenomenon that occurred in my class.

Throughout the semester, we had three unofficial secretaries who kept track of all the things that we didn't have the answers to—from issues that characters in the books we were reading brought to life to campus community issues that raised even more questions. As a class, we compiled a list of things that we wanted to know, and that we wanted others to know: how to build a compost, eco-friendly alternatives to pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, where to buy local food, who to write to about the lack of a grocery store within 2 miles of campus, how to fix a bicycle, where the closest state park was located, and more. After we finished the Earth Day celebration at the charter elementary school, my students sheepishly admitted that they had learned a lot about how easy making a vegetable garden could be and how they wished they had learned the kinds of things that they taught the students that day when they were younger. A few students proposed making a “grown up” version of the eco kid's zine to distribute at the Earth Day celebration downtown (one of the largest in the country, and sponsored in part by the local Georgia Pacific and Exxon). Based on the class secretaries' lists of things the class wanted to know, the students petitioned me to make this a supplemental public

writing project and consider pushing the last analysis paper back to finals week. I agreed, happy that we were in a groove of learning and experimenting that mandated flexibility. A number of students took on these “how-tos” for the project, but a number of other students wrote editorial and explanatory pieces for the zine too, including a tear off petition to send to the mayor.

When it came time for distribution, students were extremely excited to hand out their own pieces of independently produced media and decided to create a web presence as well, complete with an interactive “green map” of the city. Collectively, they created tools, news, events, commentary, and even video, for public knowledge. After the semester ended and I started reading the student feedback from the class, I started thinking about how most students said that the service-learning project was “fun” but the majority said that it was the zine project that was most memorable because it was, as one student said, “a sustainable skill.” There was no service partner, other than an imagined but clearly identified audience of local citizens who would be attending Earth Day. And yet there was a clear sense of action and involvement for the students. This prompted me to begin thinking about the sustainability and community impact of service-learning versus the sustainability and community impact of digital literacy skills or other composing practices that students could take away from the class. In many ways, an aspect of the service-learning project is what prompted the students to engage in public action—collectively writing and distributing zines at a public event. This zine project was very much a media intervention in corporately sponsored Earth Day’s public pedagogy—where citizens are treated as consumers and given free rolls of Georgia Pacific paper towels or can get a free eco-friendly light bulb.

I recently spoke with my two former Eco-texts students, Tessa and Lola, three years after they took my class. Both are still involved in environmental action: Tessa works as a research associate for the Center for Energy Studies at LSU where she works with state and local nonprofits on clean air and green jobs projects. She still rejects the activist label and is “glad to be involved with community organizing that is deemed ‘appropriate’ by all parties at the table.” Lola, on the other hand, was involved with a nonprofit that brought her to Copenhagen for the UN Climate Conference in 2009. It was at this conference, where the UN was completely ineffective in bringing about real resolutions, that she said she began to understand “the importance of civil disobedience—alongside lobbying and ‘working within the system.’” She admits that she would never have imagined that she would say that back when she was in the Eco-texts class, and while she prefers to be called an organizer, she and other organizers get referred to as activists by mainstream media so she is beginning to be okay with that label as well.

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that the public pedagogy of activism, as analyzed through news media, film, and website representations of the protests against the WTO and RNC, encourages people away from public forms of collective activism and towards privatized and institutionally-sponsored ones as a part of the larger project of neoliberalism. As I write this, the Gulf Coast region where I live is quickly becoming devastated by an oil spill due to more of oil company British Petroleum’s documented pattern of negligence in the name of profit (a 2005 explosion at a BP refinery in Texas killed 15 workers because of a disabled warning system; in 2006 a hole in an Alaskan pipeline leaked over 200,000 gallons of oil into the Alaskan tundra, despite BP being told to check it in 2002). This gulf coast oil spill killed 11 workers and there are some

documents that suggest that BP was drilling almost 10,000 feet deeper than their permit specified. Despite this pattern of negligence on the part of BP, there is a tendency that I am watching play out on Twitter and Facebook, for people to chastise anyone who blames BP, saying we should be focused on cleaning it up instead. Should that be the citizens' focus, or is that the focus that benefits BP the most? BP very quickly created a partnership with Volunteer Louisiana to create an online repository of names and contact information for those who want to help with clean-up efforts, but not surprisingly, you have to have certain credentials if you actually want to work to help clean the oil off wildlife and nature. But the partnership functions as a mutually beneficial and pacifying strategy: BP looks good for their volunteer efforts (all things considered) while citizen X feels like they have done their part in signing up online to help out, though they'll never get called, and BP is likely not held accountable in any significant, i.e., profit-threatening, way. Citizens are asked to let the market take care of social issues and public sectors—from schools to health care—but there are ways to interrogate and counter neoliberalism's public pedagogy, starting in the composition classroom with a renewed focus on public writing, specifically in the form of tactical media interventions.

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Appendix A: Syllabi



Eco-Texts

English 2123-15: Studies in Literary Traditions and Themes
Spring 2007
MWF 11:30 – 12:30

Jessica Ketcham Weber.

jketch1@lsu.edu

Office: 43 Allen Hall

Office Hours: MW 10-11:30 and by email and appointment

Class Website: <http://etoilebleu.com/etoilebleu/english2123Eco.html>

Class Blog: <http://www.ecoenglish.blogspot.com>

In this course, we will examine the ways humans construct and interact with nature and the environment in literary texts. We will evaluate representations of the non-human world as well as literary and other cultural constructions of the relationship between the human and non-human. The readings for this course will include works of literature in various genres and theoretical works that apply ecocritical approaches to literature. The texts in this course will closely examine critiques of hyperindustrialization, representations of environmental activists, images of animals, relationships between language, women, and nature, and depictions of food.

Objectives

- define the eco-text as a genre
- discuss the relationships between mental, social, and environmental ecology
- apply principles of ecocriticism to a range of literary genres
- identify common terms

(including: consumption, sustainability, ecology, environment, nature, ecofiction, ecocriticism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, ecoliteracy, mental ecology, and social ecology)

- discuss the representation of nature as if it were a convention of culture
- critique the notion of binaries (nature/culture, mind/body, subject/object)

.Written Texts.

Abbey, Edward. *The Monkey Wrench Gang*.

Boyle, T.C. *Friend of the Earth*.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Prodigal Summer*.

LeGuin, Ursula K. *Buffalo Gals*.

Shiva, Vandana. *Stolen Harvest*.

Wilson, Diane. *An Unreasonable Woman*.

Assorted theoretical readings posted on Blackboard

.Media Texts.

Film: 12 Monkeys, Erin Brockovich, Chicken Run, The Piano, The Corporation

Web: www.treehugger.com and www.grist.org

Music: Various Punk, Folk, Rock, and Blues musicians

.Service-Learning Option.

Service-learning describes a type of course that offers an exciting kind of “hands-on” learning in which you apply what you learn to make your community a better place and hopefully to meet community needs. While helping others, you gain knowledge that’s directly connected to the learning goals of the service-learning course you’re taking (ecoliteracy in this case).

The Service-Learning option for this class is to help build an organic garden at a local elementary school so that they may enjoy the benefits and joys of a natural classroom.

.Range of Abilities.

If you have a particular disability that I should know about, please let me know within the first week of classes per university policy so that I may provide accommodations.

.Assignments.

- Attendance, Participation, and short writing activities (20%)
- Six Informal Response Papers (30%)

Papers can respond to specific questions that I’ll post or may follow this format:

(a) For each reading, provide a one-paragraph summary of the author’s main argument and how that argument is presented and supported; and

(b) For the week's readings as a whole, provide a two-three paragraph personal response in which you articulate your own position on the issues raised and draw connections between these readings and other authors or readings we have read or events from the news or from your everyday life.

- Midterm Exam (15%)

The midterm exam will be an in-class writing activity drawing connections between the texts and particular themes that we've discussed.

- One 6-7 page literary or cultural analysis paper (35%)

Your paper will explore one of the themes/topics that we discuss in class through an analysis of one or more of the texts. In this paper, you will combine a close reading of a text(s) with additional research (using at least 5 outside scholarly sources) to back up your claim. Your essay should, of course, have a clear thesis, a coherent organization, and correct grammar.

NOTE: I do not accept any late work unless you have PREARRANGED it with me. I am quite flexible though, so if the entire class feels as if our pacing is off, I am happy to have a discussion about this.

English Composition 1002 with Jessica Ketcham Weber

Email: jketch1@lsu.edu

Office: 43 Allen Hall

Office hours: TBA

Course Materials:

Texts: Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy, Donald Lazere, Ed., and Course packet

Movies: Outfoxed, The Yes Men, and The Corporation

Our Blackboard Site which can be accessed through your Paws account

A Media Journal

Course Description:

How many times were you exposed to mass media today? You probably have heard the statistics: except for the ones who are still bunkered up, waiting for the Y2K fallout, Americans are exposed to hundreds of mass media messages every day. It is now a widely accepted fact that we spend more time consuming mass media than doing anything else, including sleeping, eating, working, or talking to our children. (Massey 1999).

This class will be practice in analytical, critical, investigative, and persuasive kinds of writing with respect to media, literacies, language, knowledge, and power (see [below](#) for a visual). We'll be writing in a number of basic genres including evaluation and definitional analysis. Writing in each of these genres will require the use of a variety of research strategies and audience awareness will be particularly important. You will learn how to analyze and craft arguments, design and conduct research projects, and produce persuasive visual texts. Overall, we will explore how the media influences us to function, think, communicate, learn, change, and evolve, as well as the problems facing society in the rapidly changing digital environment, including the technical, social, and legal factors shaping information today.

Course Objectives:

- Explore the relationships among language and power (who has it, who doesn't)
- Define civic literacy and critical media literacy for ourselves
- Compare how different cultural-ethnic-social groups are portrayed by mass media.
- Learn the tools of argumentative rhetoric
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to critique your own and others' works
- Use a variety of research strategies (interviews, photos, texts, web sources, etc.)
- Evaluate information and sources

Course Requirements and Grading:

This class is comprised of hybrid learning tactics such as discussion and critique, free-writing, information-gathering excursions, watching films and learning by doing (service learning). All of these tactics are employed in our quest to improve writing skills. Reading is for learning but writing is for thinking and seriously grappling with ideas. I may use

unconventional practices in class (one year we played video games and another year we took photos of body parts) and I welcome your suggestions and feedback. However, as creative as we can be in our pre-writing stages, our writing styles, for the purposes of this class, need to be clear and communicable.

All Four Major Essays/Projects and the final portfolio *MUST* be submitted to receive course credit. Other homework assignments, in-class writing, consistent attendance, and class participation will influence the final grade.

Attendance/Assignment Policies:

This is a workshop and discussion oriented class. Your partners or group members may be depending not only on your attendance but also on your completion of the assignments. In addition, absences affect course work such as discussions, film clips, free-writing activities, photo-prompt-excursions etc. This may not seem grade threatening, except for the fact that I do not accept late work, I do not give make-up work, and I do not give extra-credit. None of these policies will change. If you anticipate an absence due to a university-related activity, it is your responsibility to EMAIL me BEFORE and let me know. If the (excused or unexcused) absence falls on the day that one of the 4 major essays are due, you must email me BEFORE class. In the case of family/personal emergencies, I ask that you please email me as soon as you can to let me know when you are expected back.

A Note On Traditional Essay Form:

Essays should be written in 12pt font, double-spaced, Georgia, Cambria, or Times New Roman font or font family (unless you have a reason for another font which we can discuss), with 1 inch margins, MLA or APA documentation (where appropriate) and the following heading.

Your Name
Date

Teacher Name
Assign. Name

Title (NOT "Essay 1" or "Argument Essay"...something that shows me you thought)

Writing Services:

The LSU Writing Center offers free, individual peer-writing tutorials for all LSU students. The Center is located at B-31 Coates Hall and can also be reached by phone: 578.4439.

Photoshop Services:

Everyone will leave this class with a knowledge of Photoshop. The START program (located in the Basement of Coates Hall) has a free training program (about three hours of your time) that will teach you various software programs. We'll discuss our interests in class during the first week.

DisAbility Services:

The University and I are dedicated to making reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should notify the Office of Disability Services

located in 112 Johnson Hall and all of their instructors of any special needs within the first 2 weeks of class.

Evaluation and Grade Determination:

I will write detailed evaluations of each essay/project. These evaluations will address not only the final product, but also all of the work in writing groups and pre-writing exercises. I will not put a grade on these evaluations for several reasons, the most important of which may be that one tends to pay more attention to the grade than to the evaluation. Instead, I will respond to your work in the unit as a reader responds to papers—I will tell you what I did and didn't like as a reader and the kinds of things you might think of and practice in order to improve your writing in this particular genre. I will assume my evaluation will be coherent enough so that you will know what I thought about your work and your essay/project. If at any point in the semester you are concerned about your grade I will be more than happy to discuss it during my office hours. *We should try to get beyond the business of grades and get on with the business of doing our best to improve our writing and communications skills.*

Final Grade:

Your final grade will be based on your attendance, your class participation, your responses to assignments, and the quality of your writing and composing in the course. Though there is no final exam, there will be a portfolio requirement where you compile and evaluate your work for the semester.

Assignments:

Letter to Editor, 2pp

Choose an issue related to the broad topic of consumerism and media that we have been discussing. This should be an issue that you are concerned about on campus, in your community/ies, in the nation or in the world. Write a letter to the editor of your choice of publication about this issue.

Evaluation Paper, 4-5pp

Choose one news story presented through multiple networks, channels, websites, or newspapers, and evaluate how the story changes or differs with respect to gender.

Compose and Create: Visual text with 1-2pp

Using Photoshop, alter an ad or product, or create your own, to make the existing media message more accurate. Think of this as a persuasive visual assignment with the goal of identity correction.

Rhetorical Analysis, 6pp

Research and analyze an issue as it is discussed within particular online discourse communities and determine how that web space frames the issue.

Appendix B: Permissions



Global Rights and Permissions Administration

20 Davis Drive, Belmont, California 94002 USA
Phone: 800-730-2214 or 650-413-7458 Fax: 800-730-2215 or 650-595-4803
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Submit all requests online at www.cengage.com/permissions.

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05/05/2010

Jessica K Weber
LSU
English
757 Maximilian Street
Baton Rouge, LA 7

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Author(s): SMITH/SMITH/BOBBITT ISBN: 9781428231016 (1428231013)
Publisher: Heinle/Arts & Sciences Year: 2009
Specific material: Chapter 13 pages 109-118
Total pages: 10

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Sincerely,

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Vita

Jessica Ketcham Weber grew up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she spent much of her childhood filling out her dad's lesson plan template sheets, constantly rearranging her bookshelves, giving pop quizzes to her little sister and their stuffed animals, and petitioning elementary school administrators for things such as salad bar rights for all students, not just fifth graders. After a fiery affair with community theatre throughout high school and college, she earned a bachelor of arts degree in English with concentrations in both literature and creative writing from Louisiana State University. Combining her passions for teaching, creative arts, media, and community organizing, she teaches and writes about cultural forms of political resistance, the relationships between media representation and ownership, and the politics of education. In 2009, she was awarded the LSU Graduate School Dissertation Fellowship, and has won several teaching awards at LSU, including the Department of English Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award, the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award, and the Sigma Tau Delta/English Undergraduate Club Teaching Award. Her publications appear in *Agency in the Margins: Stories of Outsider Rhetoric*, *Teaching in the Pop Culture Zone: Using Popular Culture in the Writing Classroom*, *thirdspace: A Journal of Feminist Theory and Culture*, and *Peitho*. In August, 2010, she will graduate from Louisiana State University with a doctorate in English with a concentration in rhetoric, writing, and culture and minors in communication studies and women's and gender studies. Later that month she and her family will move to Seattle, Washington, where she will join Cascadia Community College as a tenure-track faculty member.