

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

DOROTHY KIDD

JULY 26 - AUGUST 1

Examining Committee: Peter Anderson, Celia Haig-Brown, Pat Howard

Answer TWO questions from each area for a total of six questions.

AREA: ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

1. Outline how the alternative communications paradigm, as it relates to Canadian experience, incorporates or rejects earlier forms of communication, especially state-sponsored public broadcasting? Compare this experience with that in Latin America.
2. In your proposal you state that, "Theorists such as Lasswell, Lerner, Rogers and Schramm...promoted the idea that technical innovation, and particularly modern media, would bring solutions to economic and political problems." Compare and evaluate how such a proposition relates to the use of modern media by the alternative communications movement, including what you consider to be the most significant points of convergence with and divergence from the dominant or modernization communications paradigm.
3. It is postulated that one of the greatest strategic mistakes made by promoters of a New World Information and Communications Order in the 1980's was confusing notions of alternatives by proposing the option of state control of information as an alternative to the transnational media monopolies. Given the understanding of the relationship between the dominant media and their respective nation states, as articulated by the McBride Commission itself, evaluate (in your own opinion) why the repercussions of this proposition were not anticipated? How has experience gained during this era been incorporated into subsequent alternative media movements? What contributions have emanated from women's movements in this regard?

AREA: FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

1. Theorists identify a range of feminisms. With this in mind, what is feminist research?

2. While feminist research provides challenges to traditional knowledge production, it has been found guilty of perpetuating existing power relations within. Discuss this statement in relation to feminist research in the last twenty years.

3. The political projects inherent in feminism(s) raise questions around epistemology, research approaches and research results. Discuss.

AREA: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND EMANCIPATORY COMMUNICATIONS

- ✓ 1. How can the Italian autonomia notions of the "socialized worker," the "social factory," and the "political recomposition of the socialized working class" in response to "capital's deepening subsumption" of ever more aspects of contemporary life serve as conceptual building blocks in the construction of a theory to explain what is and is not new about the "new social movements" and the "information society"?
2. Utilizing examples from your reading, compare the analytical frames, goals, and communication strategies of social movements in the north and south. What can they learn from one another? How have "more pluralist discourse-based strategies of meaning" affected the practice and perspectives of new social movements in both locations?
3. Hilary Wainright argues that "in their practical rebellion against dominant forms of authority and the appropriation of knowledge the new movements have developed the tools for a democratisation of knowledge" (Wainright, 98). Using evidence from your reading, research, and/or personal experience, elucidate her argument and evaluate the validity of the proposition.

Social Movements and Emancipatory Communications:
Proposal for an Area of Comprehensive Examination

Outline

There is a seeming paradox in communications study today. At the level of ownership of mass communications, there are far fewer players controlling much more of the highly-centralized and capitalized operations. However, at the same time, there has been an increasing activity world-wide of a variety of new social actors, who are actively involved in production of alternative media, as well as in critiques and restylizations of media messages. In this field of study, I will address the role of these social movements in communications.

According to Lorna Weir, "the term *new social movements* entered the lexicon of social theory during the 1980's" (Weir, 1993:73). The definition embraces a broad range of contemporary social movements, including environmental, peace, feminist, anti-racist and minority organizing, which are defined by their activities within civil society, their focus on identity and cultural politics and their informal organizational structures (Weir, 1993). The significance of this body of literature (Carroll 1992, Touraine 1983, Tilly 1988, Epstein 1990, Escoffier 1991, Hall 1991, Kauffman 1990, Offe 1985, Rutherford 1990,) is the challenge it poses

to earlier Marxist analyses of social change in general, and in particular to concepts of social subjectivity, agency and political organization. Rather than focusing on the development of class consciousness among the proletariat, organized via their economic activity in the factory, and through the Leninist party, Weir notes:

a general claim that the participation of a plurality of political actors is necessary to effect fundamental social change, that no one source of power/domination unifies all forms of subordination, that no one political party can represent all social interests.
(Weir, 1993:74)

Weir agrees with the importance of these claims, but argues as do several others, that new social movements are not a radical disjuncture (Sivanandan 1990, Fuentes and Frank 1989, Plotke 1990) but in fact a continuation of older social movements, such as the earlier feminist movements. But this debate is really not just about social movements. What is at stake is instead the questioning of the value of Marxist social analysis (Witheyford 1992, Sivanandan 1990). New Social Movement theorists, in parallel with many post-modernists, have written off dialectical materialism in pursuit of more pluralist discourse-based theories of meaning. In this proposal, to investigate the contribution of social movements to communications for social change, I will utilize works from both camps in the NSM literature, as well as drawing on texts produced within social movements themselves.

I will begin with the idea of three logics in communications: the market, the state and social movements. I will focus on the dynamic role of social movements within and on the margins of these other logics. I will especially look at social movements uses of communications as instruments of struggle, consciousness raising, cohesion, identity and empowerment (Senecal 1991). I will also draw on the analysis of two slightly earlier social movements -- the Italian Autonomia and Wages for Housework -- who incorporate Marxist insights to reveal the relationships between these three logics and situate the historical agency of a plurality of new and old social movements (Negri, Bologna, Dalla Costa and James).

I also intend to draw on the related literatures of the south, in particular India (Giri 1992, Lowe et al , Mies 1991, Parajuli 1991, Parayil 1992, Sethi 1992) and Latin America (Canclini 1988, Davis 1990, Eckstein 1989, Fuentes and Frank 1989, Martin-Barbero 1988) whose popular or subaltern movements differ in their class composition and in their approach to the state than the northern ones. This grouping will also include a small number of analytical accounts that describe the role of social movements in initiating and defining "alternate" communications (McBride 1980, White 1988, O'Connor 1989 a, 1989b, 1990a, 1990b, Riano 1993), primarily in Latin America.

Finally I will draw on more recent feminist theorizing. What has been the contribution of the social movements of women internationally to conceptions about social subjectivity and social and political agency? (Wainwright 1990, 1993, Sternbach, Saporta and Navarro-Aranguren 1992, Mies 1991, Jelin 1990, Jaquette 1989, Chinchilla 1991). Another group of literature examines the relationships between women, asking what is in common and what are the differences (Snitow 1990, Nain 1991, Mohanty 1991, Minh-ha 1987, Liu 1991, Hurtado 1989, Hartsock 1990, Fraser 1988, 1989, de Lauretis 1989, Bulbeck 1992, Bourne 1987, Anzaldua 1990, Alcoff 1988, and Albrecht 1990) and how these can be reconciled through communications and coalitions.

Questions:

1. What is the logic of social movements within communications practice?
2. What moments/places of congruence exist for social movements (women's groups/movements as an example) in the democratization of communications?
3. How do social movements use media for social change?

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