

**The Media Reform Movement: Historical and Contemporary Challenges (Greenway Ballroom B)**

**Chair: Terri Fishman - Clemson University**

**Angela J. Campbell - Georgetown University** - Media Policy and Social Science Research

Most people agree that media policy should be based on research that meets generally accepted standards for reliability and accuracy. However, in reality, this rarely happens. Both Congress and the FCC have limited ability to conduct research, and the studies produced are often biased. Academic and public interest researchers often lack the time, funding, and data to do research needed to support public interest policies. As a result, much of the research presented to support policy changes is done by self-interested corporations that can both fund studies advancing their interests and suppress those that do not. In addition, some data needed to assess media policy is difficult to collect and quantify. Even well-designed and executed research may produce conflicting results that make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions desired by agencies and courts. Consequently, many policy questions are resolved by tests that put the burden on one side or the other to provide sufficient factual evidence. This paper draws on examples from FCC proceedings to illustrate these problems and explore possible solutions.

**Lauren Kogen - University of Pennsylvania** - Patronage, the Ford Foundation, and Media Reform Research

The process of uniting media advocacy work with the needs of policy makers is a complicated one. This paper will evaluate the Ford Foundation's attempts to address this problem within the past eight years, during which time an aggressive effort was made to bridge research and policy by developing and nourishing a research community for FCC inquiries. Given that bridging this gap requires breaking down institutional barriers between the advocacy and academic realms, this paper will evaluate the attempts of one institution to address this problem within a specific context.

Structured interviews with grantees, and with those working within the Foundation, will be used to explore how goals and objectives were determined by the Ford Foundation in its recent years, and how the portfolio administration conceived the relationship between research and policy with regard to issues of media ownership and concentration regulation. Interviews with activists, advocates, and scholars within the academy will highlight the hurdles that remain in bridging this divide.

**Victor Pickard - University of Illinois** - Media Reform from Above and Below: Lessons from the 1940s Media Democracy Movement

The postwar 1940s witnessed the emergence of a broad-based media reform movement consisting of labor unions, religious organizations, African American groups, educators, dissident intellectuals, civil libertarians, and progressive policymakers. This coalition rose up to contest a host of media failings, including excessive commercialism; overly sensationalistic fare; misrepresentations of marginalized people and ideas; lack of minority-owned and -operated media; runaway media concentration; and a lack of local accountability. In this context, a national debate on media's democratic requirements threatened to destabilize the commercial foundations of the entire U.S. media system, giving rise to a number of progressive media policies. Ultimately, these policy initiatives were variously ignored, contested or co-opted in ways that, taken together, systematically obscured structural critiques, foreclosed radical possibilities, and kept in place a self-regulating, nominally socially responsible commercial media system. Drawing from substantial archival evidence to shed light on key normative policy debates and recover lost alternatives, this study examines the postwar settlement for U.S. media that emerged from decisive policy battles in the 1940s. By gleaning lessons from the triumphs and failures of the postwar media democracy movement, this project is as much about the present and future as it is about the past.

**Katie Gay - University of North Carolina Wilmington** - Student

activist awareness and the media democracy movement

Research shows that student activism historically plays a beneficial role in social movements. However, my research found very little evidence of strong coordinated student involvement in the media and democracy movement. It appears that students are a missing element and could potentially be a vital addition. My research proposes that efforts be made to increase awareness among student activists about the importance of a democratic media system and to encourage more student organizations to form and join the coalition efforts.

The current movement to democratize the media is in a position to readily integrate student activism and benefit from such integration. Multi-issue organizations are an important part any coalition movement. Multi-issue organizations are proven to have positive effects on the rate of protest, both among activists and college students. Students recurrently have engaged in broad coalition efforts, playing an important role in coordinating protests opposing political and corporate policies defined as a threat. Multi-issue organizations employ a diversity of tactics; this has a positive effect on the likelihood of achieving a desired policy outcome. As opposed to other populations and organizations, students and their organizations tend to use more confrontational tactics, tactics that tend to be more successful. Given the importance of tactical diversity on the likelihood of achieving a desired policy outcome, students' already proven successful tactics would further enhance the media and democracy movement's likelihood of achieving desired policy outcomes.

The broad ideological focus of multi-issue organizations allows them to assist in the progress of within- and cross-movement coalitions and establish linkages between individuals and organizations with different movements. The linkages amongst various movements help to generate protest activity, have the potential to expand the movement's ideological focus and agenda, and inspire cooperation and collaboration through the creation of mutual incentives. The campus environment facilitates coalition work as well. Due to its limited geographical area, high levels of interaction among organizations and activists groups, and decreased barriers to

interaction due to often shared backgrounds, norms, and values, linkages also form.

Multi-issue organizations often engage in coalition work, such as in the current movement to democratize the media. Aspects of multi-issue organizations and student activist organizations that have been proven as important to coalition work are reported here as similar and complimentary. Thus, the need for more student activism in the movement is vital. This research makes two propositions. First, greater awareness of media issues among students must be raised. Secondly, the creation and incorporation of multi-issue student organizations based on a broad ideological focus must be sought and encouraged.