

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Dialogue, Activism, and Democratic Social Change

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This article provides a systematic description of various positions on dialogue and their implications for understanding activism and social change. It describes three orientations toward dialogue—collaboration, co-optation, and agonism—which are differentiated by assumptions regarding the pervasiveness of dialogue, the role of difference, and conceptions of power. We argue for a multivocal, agonistic perspective on dialogue that centers issues of power and conflict in activism. Such a perspective illuminates a broad range of activist tactics for social change instead of privileging consensus-oriented methods. These approaches are illustrated with two ethnographic case studies that highlight the importance of lay theories of activism and dialogue.

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Political upheaval and conflict across the world in 2011 from New York and Wisconsin to Syria and Egypt, underscored the tremendous global need for democratic social change in the wake of a slew of crises arising from political repression, corporate corruption, and rapid environmental degradation. The proliferation of research centers on civic discourse, democracy, participation, and voice in a range of universities such as Arizona, Kansas State, Southern California, Stanford, Texas, and Washington, among others demonstrates that communication scholarship has much pragmatic value in offering visions of how such change can take place and how democracy across the world can be deepened and woven into everyday communication practices. Indeed, theoretical concerns with democratic change have arguably been at the heart of much communication inquiry in the past century, and scholars have crafted a diverse range of perspectives on communication processes and mechanisms through which individuals, communities, and organizations procure and enact democratic change.

Throughout, however, we find that scholars have relied on *dialogue* and *activism* as significant tropes to understand specific communication processes involved in such change. There are many ways in which communication scholars have positioned these two concepts with and against each other, so our purpose in this article is to *clarify*

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and elaborate how theoretical and ideological assumptions regarding dialogue influence our understanding of the role that activism plays in enabling democratic communication practice. Dialogue is evident in a number of areas of communication inquiry into democratic practices. Interpersonal communication studies have considered the role of face-to-face dialogue in managing difference and promoting social participation (Cissna & Anderson, 1994; Rawlins, 2009; Wood, 2004). Organizational communication researchers have attempted to understand how communities experience dialogue as they attempt to engage in democratic communication (Medved, 2003; Zoller, 2000). Public relations research has focused on symmetrical communication across a range of publics in the context of social change (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Studies of environmental communication have employed notions of dialogue to understand and frame intractable stakeholder conflicts (Brummans et al., 2008). Health communication scholars have used dialogic theories to promote participatory models of health promotion (Dutta & Basnyat, 2008; Melkote, Krishnatray, & Krishnatray, 2008). Development communication research has employed participatory communication as a key construct to understand meaningful social change (Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1997). And rhetoricians have used the term *invitational rhetoric* to describe ways in which actors may engage in ethical and dialogic exchange (Foss & Griffin, 1995).

Likewise, a wide range of scholars have also employed activism as a major construct in understanding connections between communication and democratic practice (Frey & Carragee, 2007). Examinations of advocacy and activist discourse, for instance, are prominent in rhetorical studies (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993; Fabj & Sobnosky, 1995; Stewart, 1997) as well as cultural studies (Wood, Hall, & Hasian, 2008). Scholars of new media have investigated ways that activists use technology to engage in radical democracy (Pickard, 2006). Social movement researchers have been especially concerned with how activists mobilize collective action as they engage in protests (Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008). Studies of organizational communication and public relations have also attempted to understand how activist organizing practices create opportunities for meaningful social change (Ganesh & Stohl, 2010), how they function as influential stakeholders (Weaver & Motion, 2005), and how organizations might effectively manage activists (L. A. Grunig, 1992; Smith & Ferguson, 2001).

The prevalence and centrality of dialogue and activism in scholarship on communication and transformative social change warrant greater attention to underlying theoretical assumptions. This article describes three primary orientations toward dialogue—collaborative, co-optive, and agonistic—based on assumptions about conflict, power, and the role of difference. We discuss multiple theoretical positions within each orientation and seek to show how hidden assumptions hinder theorizing by delegitimizing certain forms of activist communication as they privilege consensus-oriented methods. We argue for the merits of agonistic theories of dialogue that can shed light on a broader range of activist communication methods and tactics for social change by acknowledging issues of power and conflict as a central feature of dialogue. Following our analysis, we contextualize the agonistic perspective by

presenting two case studies drawn from research projects conducted by the authors in different parts of the world.

Perspectives on dialogue and activism

Generally, the theoretical roots of dialogue research trace back to the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, David Bohm, Martin Buber, Hans Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Paulo Freire, and others. Communication studies have identified several distinct approaches to dialogue in these key works. For instance, Cissna and Anderson (1994) identified several strains of inquiry. One strain draws from Buber's (1958) concepts of "I" and "Thou" to describe the idea of genuine, authentic, and open relationships, where identity and otherness are mutually implicated. A conversation-analytic point of view conceives of dialogue as ordinary conversation, featuring turn-taking, etiquette, and immediacy, but which may include situations where "both parties talked but neither really listened—and neither really expected the other to listen" (p. 26). Another approach draws from Bakhtin to describe language as inherently dialogic in representing difference, otherness, and multivocality (Bakhtin, 1981), wherein dialogue becomes a fundamental way of being in the world.

Three positions on dialogue

Across various approaches, we identify three positions on dialogue that are particularly relevant to understanding connections and tensions between activism and dialogue. These positions vary on the basis of their assumptions about the *pervasiveness* of dialogic phenomena, the constitutive power of *difference*, and the role of *conflict* and *power* relationships.

Extant research differs on the pervasiveness of dialogue, often depending on whether authors approach the concept in prescriptive or descriptive terms. Prescriptive theories of dialogue tend to view it as a specialized and rare form of communication composed of certain conversational and interactional features, a view often influenced by Bohm (1996) or Buber (1958). Conversely, others view dialogue in descriptive terms as an everyday, pervasive aspect of language use and interaction, a perspective often influenced by Bakhtin (Barge & Martin, 2002).

Second, issues of difference are central to dialogic theories. Dialogue involves tensions between needs for convergence, inasmuch as there are desires for consensus and communicative requirements for sharing assumptions, and needs for emergence, or the possibility that new ideas will develop from the representation, construction, and negotiation of difference (Hammond, Anderson, & Cissna, 2003). While some theorists construe dialogue as a nonpolarized method that rules out or overcomes conflict in favor of consensus (Black, 2005; Bokeno & Gantt, 2000), others position argument and debate themselves as dialogic interactions and strategies (Barge & Martin, 2002; Hyde & Bineham, 2000).

Finally, questions of difference and conflict invariably involve issues of power. Although theorists do not always acknowledge the issue, researchers may often

start from different assumptions about the place of power in dialogue. Some, often Bohmian perspectives, propose that power relationships must be set aside to enter dialogue. Others view power differentials as something to be addressed and managed in dialogue (Wood, 2004). Still others see dialogue as a means of overcoming dominance by allowing for marginalized voices and the creation of spaces for change (Freire, 1970; Hammond et al., 2003). And finally, some approaches, often poststructural, implicitly view dialogue as being irrevocably tangled with, constituted by, and disruptive of power (Falzon, 1998).

Based on their different approaches to these issues, we identify three positions on dialogue that have significant implications for how one can understand potential overlaps and tensions between activism and dialogue. These positions do not constitute unique theories of dialogue; indeed, as we discuss later, they are perspectives that often draw from multiple traditions in dialogue inquiry. We refer to the first position as Dialogue as *collaboration*, the second as Dialogue as *co-optation*, and the third as Dialogue as *agonistic*.

Before we discuss connections and disjunctures between dialogue and activism, some discussion of what “counts” as activism is also in order. Like dialogue, activism has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, and scholars have isolated a number of key features of activism. Some definitions have focused on activist *tactics*. For instance, L. A. Grunig (1992) identified education, compromise, persuasion, pressure tactics, and force as defining characteristics of activist communication, while excluding dialogue as a key activist tactic. Other conceptualizations have emphasized *activity*. Diani (1992), for example, suggested that a defining activity of activism is its engagement with conflict, and Urietta (2005) cast activism in terms of the active participation of people advocating a particular set of issues. Kim and Sriramesh (2009) defined activism as “the coordinated activity of a group that organizes voluntarily in an effort to solve problems that threaten the common interest of members of that group” (p. 88). Still others focus on defining *principles* of activism. For instance, Jordan’s (2002) work on activism argues that while contemporary activism is constituted by diverse repertoires, including direct action and dis/organization, culture jamming, pleasure-politics, and hacktivism, the twin principles of transgression and solidarity unite activists.

Clearly then, definitions of activism vary, and different bodies of knowledge even appear to diverge in their collective emphasis on the importance of defining activism, which underscores the political function of definitions in constituting key knowledge interests. We observe, for instance, that research in public relations, often criticized for its managerialism (McKie & Munshi, 2007) appears to have produced a significant number of definitions of activism. Across perspectives and disciplines, however, one finds an emphasis, on contestation as a core aspect of activist communication, and key concepts such as advocacy, conflict, and transgression do appear to be central to activism. While some definitions of dialogue appear to preclude activism, others may implicitly incorporate one or another notion of activism. We discuss these perspectives in the following sections.

Dialogue as collaboration

The tendency to treat dialogue as a specialized form of communication involving consensus, collaboration, equality, and mutual trust is particularly evident in Bohmian approaches and is also sometimes visible in other traditions. Below, we describe these approaches and investigate how adopting such collaborative orientations influences our understanding of activist communication.

Theorists commonly construe dialogue in interpersonal terms. For instance, emergent understanding is seen as a product of dialogic relationship building. This is particularly evident in the organizational learning literature (Schein, 2004; Senge, 1990), which views dialogue as a form of internal learning through open communication and consensus building (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000). Similarly, Bohmian approaches view dialogue as “thinking together,” emphasizing the creation of new meaning through connection and relationship building between individuals (Black, 2005). Bohmian approaches depict dialogue as a specialized form of collaborative communication that emphasizes interpersonal win-win relationships. The focus on collaboration and deep connection can also be found in the work of Goodall and Kellett (2004), who described a hierarchy of communication culminating in dialogue as a transcendent and profound experience, suggesting that “Achieving dialogue often results in a deepened sense of connection between oneself and others . . .” (p. 167).

Some scholars who draw from more poststructural lenses that highlight tensionality have also theorized dialogue as a special form of mutual relationship building and collaboration. For example, Cissna and Anderson (1994) characterized dialogue as including strange otherness and emergent consequences, and although they argued that “contrary to some popular conceptions, dialogue does not preclude heated or even agonistic exchange” (p. 14), they still cast the process in collaborative terms: “Dialogue is characterized by high levels of concern for self (and one’s own position) as well as for the other (and for the position advanced by the other . . . rather than a primary focus on winning and losing” (p. 14). Similarly, Rawlins (2009) highlighted the tensions surrounding difference, power, and friendship, while primarily describing dialogue in terms of sometimes rare and deep interpersonal connections of respect, vulnerability, and openness, resonant with Buber’s I–Thou relationships.

Many collaborative orientations to dialogue emphasize openness as a key marker. Pearce and Pearce (2004), for instance, said that “the defining characteristic of dialogic communication is that all of these speech acts are done in ways that hold one’s own position but allow others the space to hold theirs, and are profoundly open to hearing others’ positions without needing to oppose or assimilate them” (p. 45). Feminist communication scholars who promote invitational rhetoric describe it as a “cooperative, nonadversarial, and ethical” (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 115) form of communication that eschews persuasion, which is associated with patriarchal attempts at domination and control. Indeed, Foss and Griffin also liken invitational rhetoric to Buber’s dialogic I–Thou relationship because the approach requires a willingness to give up one’s position in favor of mutual interests.

Conceptualizing dialogue in terms of interpersonal, consensual relationship building with an emphasis on mutual care and vulnerability has implications for understanding activism. Here, we discuss three ways that consensual views of dialogue may influence our understanding of activism. Scholars may preclude the possibility of activists engaging in dialogue by treating activism as oppositional to dialogue. Others privilege dialogue by stakeholders, including activists, as a preferred means of obtaining social change over protest and other forms of contestation. Finally, a third stance casts internal activist communication as potentially dialogic and external communication as almost exclusively confrontational.

Privileging collaboration over activism

First, theories that emphasize mutual relationship building and consensus often assume that participants put aside pre-existing interests and goals. This idea is incompatible with many depictions of activism. Most obviously, researchers who cast activism largely in terms of protest, and theorize protest as aggressive and violent, rule out the possibility of activists engaging in collaborative dialogue. We often find these assumptions in descriptions of global activists targeting capitalist structures. For instance, Nichols (2003), writing about “new” activism suggested: “The sad reality of today’s global political environment is that we now face a new generation of activists, who could come to dominate—not through force of arms, but through pressure, intimidation and even terror to serve their radical agenda” (p. 137). Creating a startlingly postapocalyptic image, he adds: “Many lead small, roving guerilla bands of increasingly vocal, rapacious, confident militants, preying on weak businesses, ganging up on large companies, taking to the streets, demanding tribute, and threatening to unleash actions that (they hope) will overwhelm industries, life styles, and social, economic, legal and political institutions” (p. 137). Similar language is evident in L. A. Grunig’s (1992) commentary, which cast corporate engagement with activists as a war: “when it comes to a fight, the weapons in each activist’s arsenal might vary. And as the battle drags on, the weapons might become more lethal.” Although such language is the exception rather than the norm, other researchers have tended to unreflexively characterize activists in terms of violence, construing them as incapable of conversation, consensus, or relationship building.

The tendency to separate activism from collaboration-oriented dialogue is even evident in the use of labels such as “anticorporate” for nonlabor corporate campaigns (Manheim, 2001), which frames all activism as inherently antagonistic toward corporations. Characterizing activist communication using words such as *pressure* and *force* also results in implicitly casting activism as distant and confrontational, in contrast with interpersonal and relational depictions of dialogue.

Some scholars construct activism as a form of escalation in confrontation. For instance, Gantchev (2009) developed a sequential model for activism, arguing that activists usually engage in low-cost strategies that include cooperation before moving to high-cost confrontational tactics such as direct action and protest. At its worst, rhetorical associations of activism with escalation permit associations

between activism, violence, and terrorism. Such dichotomous understandings fly in the face of the fact that all over the world, the overwhelming majority of protests, confrontations, demonstrations, strikes, and actions are peaceful (Pandey, 2006).

Even the general association of activism with persuasion can facilitate viewing activism as oppositional to dialogue if we greatly emphasize the idea that dialogue involves listening to, rather than trying to change, the other. Consensual theories of dialogue exclude activism from dialogic methods to the degree that activism involves entering interactions with goals of influence and social change, often in situations of unequal power. These theories thus risk privileging civility over the need for democratic and material social change.

Privileging activist dialogue over activist contestation

Other theorists distinguish between activists who use protest methods and activists who work cooperatively with their targets of change, privileging consensual dialogue as a superior method of social change. For instance, management theorists of activism aimed at global capitalism frame activist dialogue as a two-way, mutually beneficial process and activist contestation as a one-way, “either-or” process. Jordan and Stevenson (2003) labeled protest as “win-lose,” problem-focused politics in contrast to the “win-win” solution-focus of activist dialogue. Stakeholder theories sometimes reflect this argument as well. For instance, Deetz (1992) celebrated the possibility of emergent solutions through stakeholder dialogue, which he contrasted with the merely expressive function of protest.

Public relations scholars Taylor, Vasquez, and Doorley (2003) differentiated between confrontational activists such as ACT UP! members who pressured pharmaceutical companies and activists who worked through dialogue with these companies. Referencing groups who worked cooperatively with Merck, the authors suggested, “This group recognized that confrontational strategies may actually delay the real objective of all AIDS activists—safe, effective treatments” (p. 264). The authors even employed dialogic relationship building as a criterion for ethical corporate stakeholder communication, stipulating that “. . . communication by publics will also be judged ethical if it contributes to the engagement of the relationship with the target organization” (p. 262). Such a statement depicts activist communication as *unethical* if it does not contribute to relationship building with targets of change. Moreover, this approach assumes that consensus and compromise are more *effective* than pressure tactics. Similarly, Smith and Ferguson (2001) observed that although one goal of activism is to “argue for their recommended resolutions to the problem” (p. 294), compromise and negotiation by activists are more fruitful approaches.

Theorists seeking to promote new forms of social change also point toward relational and consensus-driven views of dialogue as more ideal than contention and protest. Like Gergen (1999) who recommended giving up traditional rhetorics of alienation in favor of a “poetic of unity,” Chatterton (2006) posited the need to

“transcend activist spaces and identities, to seek creative alliances, to literally give up activism (p. 260),” suggesting that:

. . . spending enough time with others on uncommon ground often reveals shared concerns and fears, and . . . possibilities that arise, not from activists looking to gain allies, converting people to causes, or building a broad social movement, but from taking encounters on uncommon ground as a starting point for a dialogic and normative politics based up the need for us all to engage in politics as equals (p. 260).

Such a position stakes out creative alliances and dialogue as inherently separate from activism.

At times, privileging dialogue as consensus over other methods of activist social change casts confrontational communication as devoid of substance. Stewart and Zediker (2000) restate Freire’s position that action without dialogic participatory action research is “mere activism” or sloganeering, which actually prevents social change. Likewise, Singh (2008) discounted Huesca’s (2003) call for development through social movements: “Huesca’s call regarding social movements is misplaced; without genuine participation in grassroots development work, joining social movements, while a good expression of solidarity with the oppressed, can devolve into empty sloganeering” (p. 718). He then suggested that telenovelas create the opportunity for such dialogue: “Freire understands dialogues as conversations fostered in a spirit of inquiry that allow the participants to not only comprehend and delineate their world but also to transform it. Such comprehension can come only if people find a cultural voice to tell their own story through a process of dialogue” (p. 702).

Casting dialogue as internal and confrontation as external to activism

Finally, assumptions about dialogue as consensus may lead scholars to investigate dialogue as a collaborative internal activist tool rather than an external method. For instance, Lozano-Reich and Cloud (2009), in a critique of invitational rhetoric, argued that the proper place of dialogue lies in building solidarity in internal activist communication, whereas contestation and confrontation are its proper external functions. Starhawk’s (2002) widely circulated essay “How we really shut down the WTO” talks about the importance of consensus decision making, vision, empowerment, dance, and humor involved in creating affinity groups through which blockades in Seattle were achieved in 1999. A recent strand of such argument is grounded in online activism. For example, Victor Pickard’s (2006) work described online activism as a form of democratic participation, describing how internal organizing that created the Independent Media Collectives (IndyMedia) are dedicated to consensus-based decision making between and within activist groups.

Placing consensus and collaboration at the heart of “internal” activist work can be problematic to the degree that it detracts attention from the critical role that internal contestation and tension can have in social movements. Such work may frame activist organizing as being formally leaderless (Epstein, 2001). While sensitive to

the rhetorical significance of the notion of “leaderlessness” in constructing the communitarian character of activism, we suggest that the notion of a formally leaderless activist group could prevent identifying novel ways in which leadership is enacted and constructed in social movements. For instance, Zoller and Fairhurst (2008) theorized the potential connections between leadership processes, resistance, mobilization, change, and influence. Additionally, bifurcating dialogue as internal and protest and contestation as external may create a crudely confrontational portrait of activist tactics. We discuss this issue further when we unpack the notion of agonistic dialogue. Before that, however, a discussion of dialogue as a form of co-optation is in order.

Dialogue as co-optation

Scholarship grounded in critical orientations toward dialogue often warns about the possibility that dialogue can be manipulated, co-opted, and limited by state, corporate, and other powerful agents. While collaborative notions of dialogue emphasize the need to suspend power relations, dialogue as co-optation assumes that what appears to be collaboration is better understood as a tactic of power. This perspective continues to depict dialogue as a specialized form of communication, but it treats power as pervasive and difficult, if not impossible, to suspend. There are at least three key aspects of such arguments. While some scholars emphasize the inherent fragility and vulnerability of dialogue, others imply that powerful interests are able to rhetorically employ dialogue as a legitimizing activity precisely because it has communicative resonance. Still others stress the impossibility of genuine dialogue given the pervasiveness of inequity and the inherent problems involved in practices of representation themselves.

Dialogue as fragile

While some research in the dialogue-as-collaboration tradition questions activists' willingness to risk being changed through an open and collaborative dialogue, some critical research casts suspicion on their more powerful targets. Representations of dialogue as implicitly fragile and vulnerable are reflected in critical scholarship that depicts dialogue between activists and powerful targets, such as corporate leadership, as being easily manipulated by corporations to prevent larger, more material democratic transformation. For instance, sociologist Judith Richter (2001) described dialogue as a key issue management method used by the infant formula industry to address an activist boycott targeted at formula safety and marketing. Equating issues management with the engineering of consent, she recounted ways in which ostensibly dialogic negotiations were used as methods of covert corporate environmental scanning. She observed that dialogue can be used “to gain intelligence, transfer image and divert attention from more pressing issues” (p. 160). In this light, she argued that activists should think carefully before joining dialogues that feature great power asymmetry and demand greater transparency in dialogues between corporations and their partners in civil society.

In a chapter evocatively titled “Dialogue: Divide and Rule,” Rowell (2002) described environmental dialogue as a “new phase of sophisticated greenwashing” (p. 33) that both pre-empts conflict and co-opts activists. He noted such dialogues are inherently risky for activists because they privatize debates in ways that reduce the public attention necessary for social change. Strikingly, the author paraphrased advice from Ronald Duchin of the public relations company Mongoven, Biscoe & Duchin, about using dialogue to defeat activists: “isolate the radicals, ‘cultivate’ the idealists and ‘educate’ them into becoming realists, then co-opt the realists into agreeing with industry” (p. 33). Similarly, Moberg (2002) characterized the Chemical Manufacturers Association’s Responsible Care initiative, which promotes community engagement and stakeholder dialogue to manage environmental conflict, as “. . . designed to co-opt or marginalize local opponents. Despite the stated emphasis placed on candor by the program’s promoters, all ‘dialogue’ between industry and community members is carefully scripted to ensure that dissenting voices are not heard” (p. 380).

Dialogue as resonant

While the studies above demonstrate the fragility of dialogue, questioning the extent to which activists should risk direct dialogic engagement with powerful interests, several of them also indicate another quality of dialogue that make it amenable to co-optation: its resonance in public imaginations. Arguably, the very fact that dialogue is normative and is construed as a warm and friendly democratic ideal lends itself to the possibility of it being used to legitimize and present corporate and business interests as the public good. This is akin to Habermas’s (1989) classic argument on the structural transformation of the public sphere, notably in the thesis that the idea of a public sphere continues to have strong resonance and relevance despite its increasing mediation by organizational, corporate, and structural interests.

The strategic use of dialogue for the rhetorical legitimation of state and corporate activities is evident in arguments put forward in the studies cited above. Rowell (2002), for instance, discusses Shell’s 1997–1998 dialogues regarding its Peruvian gas operations at Camisea, which he depicted as a means of tempering potential resistance and adding legitimacy to its engagement with affected communities. As Rowell noted “crucially, not up for discussion was whether the gas project should go ahead, but how it should go ahead” (p. 35). Zoller (2004) also found that a transnational business trade advocacy group used the language of symmetrical communication and dialogue to prevent conflict rather than air it, develop unitary positions, and usurp governmental policy-making functions. Critiques of this kind of synthetic personalization (Fairclough, 2001), which employ friendly, relational tropes to prevent dissent and disagreement, further amplify the issue of risk, turning it on its head in some ways. Similarly, Dutta and Basnyat (2008) critiqued the apparently participatory entertainment education-based Radio Communication Project in Nepal as co-optive of more dialogic culture-centered health promotion models. The appearance of participation masked how the program diffused the U.S.

Agency for International Development's pre-existing elite goals. These studies treat dialogue as a form of co-optation because activists take on excessive amounts of risk as they converse with power and also because of the unwillingness of those in power to risk their dominant positions and cede ground to other interests. In this sense, it is not surprising that some activist groups have refused to engage in dialogue with structural interests because they see themselves as participating in bids to preserve the status quo (Zorn, Roper, & Motion, 2006).

Dialogue as impossible

Finally, some studies that are focused on representation, difference, and the problems of liberal pluralist models of democracy express doubt about the possibility of dialogue for social change. For instance, McPhail (2004) was pessimistic about the possibility for interracial dialogue that recognizes racism rather than reinforces the worldview of dominant White groups. Similarly, Kersten (2006) argued that without deconstruction, dialogue replicates social divisions and power differentials. Her work on race dialogue shows frequent: "(a) inability to see and hear the racial Other, (b) lack of common language and experience, and (c) lack of meaningful action" (p. 362).

These positions echo critics of consensually oriented theories of public sphere participation (Fraser, 1990). For instance, Iris Young (2000) questioned conventional notions of democratic discussion, arguing that their emphasis on a common good results in further marginalization of minority groups, thereby preventing deep democracy. This in turn is related significantly to interrogations about the possibility of dialogic knowing and knowability in the work of scholars such as Spivak and others, most explicitly in the argument that attempting to engage with otherness invariably results in its further incorporation into existing systems of meaning and representation (Ganesh, 2010; Spivak, 1999). Dutta and Pal (2010) also drew from Spivak to argue that subaltern groups are erased and co-opted through dialogic methods entailed in dominant neoliberal discourses. The co-optive view of dialogue is an important corrective to theories of dialogue that privilege civility and order over democratic transformation. These theories highlight the significance of contexts of power and conflict that permeate activist efforts. As public relations scholars Leitch and Neilson (2001) argued, "In practice, in cases where access to resources is so unequal, attempting to practice symmetrical public relations might constitute a self-destructive discourse strategy for the least powerful participant" (p. 129). We support the contentions of much of this research, so our point is not to undermine research into dialogue as a strategy for elites to co-opt activist groups. We do caution, though, against maintaining a *presumption* that dialogue between activists and more powerful targets is impossible. Such a position may ontologically reify social actors and their interests by assuming fixed ideological or material positions. Theorists should not rule out the potential for powerful interests to risk vulnerability through dialogue for a variety of reasons or for activists to create dialogic spaces in what may appear to be woefully unbalanced situations of power.

Agonism

We understand agonism to refer to pluralistic views of democratic processes that treat social conflict as central (Mouffe, 1998). Agonistic approaches see dialogue as a phenomenon closely intertwined with radical democracy that emerges out of difference, conflict, disagreement, and polyvocality (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). An agonistic theory facilitates a pragmatic approach to dialogue by highlighting shifting relationships of power, identity, and vulnerability, while simultaneously paying explicit attention to questions of justice and social and material needs.

Agonistic perspectives privilege conflict as an element of social change. The search for common ground is seen as problematic because, as Wood (2004) argued: “The search (and belief in) common ground may thwart, rather than facilitate, genuine dialogue, because almost inevitably the dominant culture defines what ground is common or legitimate” (p. xvii). Accordingly, agonistic perspectives focus on the potential for subverting power relations. Gergen, Gergen, and Barrett (2004) expressed such a position when they said that dialogue “may enable authority to be challenged, multiple opinions to be expressed, or taken-for-granted realities to be deliberated” (p. 44).

While much work on agonism and democracy is largely critical in orientation, it is also important to note that there are overt poststructural sensibilities in the notion. For instance, Falzon (1998) provides a dialogic conception of Foucault’s work, arguing that central to his work “is not structure or domination but our involvement in an open-ended ‘agonistic’ dialogue of forces. Out of this dialogue, forms of social order and entrapment emerge, and are themselves destined to be overcome in the course of ongoing dialogue” (p. 3). At the same time that agonistic theories foreground power and conflicting interests, they stipulate that interests, identities, and relationships are shifting rather than fixed. For instance, Melkote et al. (2008) contrasted the monologism of diffusion health promotion models with the ability of participatory models to transform health workers, patients, and community members through dialogic interaction. This transformation facilitates social change goals versus compliance, such as activating self-help, social support, access to resources, community empowerment, organization, and activism.

Additionally, scholarship rooted in Bakhtinian traditions may support an agonistic approach by emphasizing the dialogic nature of language itself rather than prescribing specific criteria for ideal interaction. For Bakhtin (1981), language is inherently *multivocal* and therefore dialogic. Language is marked by tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces seeking to restrict or open up meanings, respectively (see also Rawlins, 2009). Moreover, Bakhtinian perspectives help illuminate how dialogue interanimates other forms of communication such as argument, discussion, debate, or even polemic. Barge and Martin’s (2002) work, for instance, extends this focus from language to social interaction as they position dialogue as a context-based practical activity and explicate the communicative value of constructive cacophonies of dissent and contradiction.

From a Bakhtinian point of view then, there is a dual quality to agonistic dialogue. At one level, dialogue and conflict can be seen as diachronic, that is, interactionally and pragmatically intertwined. This involves continuing to see dialogue as a form of openness, rather than common ground. At another level, the synchronic effects of contestation itself can be understood as dialogic, in that the very act of challenging dominant systems of power and meaning through argumentative, confrontational, or irrational tactics opens up alternative spaces. In both diachronic and synchronic stances, the emphasis is on different forms and understandings of openness. We detail them below.

Diachronic views

By viewing dialogue within the context of unfolding communication over time, a diachronic view of agonistic dialogue acknowledges ways in which “one-way” communication, including narrative, argument, and persuasion, may make room for or alternate with mutual attempts at openness. For instance, Papa, Singhal, and Papa (2006) theorized a dialectical relationship between dissemination (one-way communication) and dialogue in social change efforts. They depict entertainment education programs as a form of dissemination that encourages dialogue among audience members to promote greater acceptance of marginalized groups such as Dalits and women by dominant groups. Rawlins (2009) interrogated the dialogic potential of narrative among friends to open spaces for civil participation and social movements. Similarly, Porrovecchio (2007) analyzed how WTO activists used testimony, something that might normally be viewed as one-way communication, in dialogic ways by creating spaces for marginalized voices within larger social discussions among a range of publics and counterpublics.

What counts as dialogic openness itself can take multiple forms here, and two are particularly relevant. Openness can take the form of *deliberation*, involving attempts at explanation rather than consensus. For instance, van de Kerkhof (2006) criticized stakeholder dialogues in environmental decision making as negotiations that seek to gain consensus. As an alternative, she promoted a deliberation model of stakeholder dialogue: “Whereas consensus building can be characterized as a process of negotiation, deliberation is about dialogue and argumentation” (p. 282). Similarly, Wakefield (2008) argued for collaborative advocacy as a way for organizations and activists to explain and deliberate positions with the objective of *establishing* rather than dissolving difference.

Openness also can take the form of pragmatic *caution* regarding activist stances toward both collaboration and confrontation. For instance, Hernes and Mikalsen (2002) examined three activist campaigns targeted at the fishery industry, suggesting that greater environmental awareness in the industry has created opportunities for industry partnerships with activists rather than adversarial relations. They described the Greenpeace campaign in terms of cautious confrontation, which involved a mix of militant confrontation and direct action, lobbying and research, and cooperation and collaboration. As Greenpeace has shifted toward cooperation with industry, they

continue to board vessels and attach buoys to nets to prevent the fishing. Rather than privilege cooperation, the authors discussed tradeoffs between effectiveness and visibility.

Synchronic views

Synchronic perspectives involve understanding confrontational activist tactics themselves as dialogic because they effect a kind of discursive opening. Protests, in particular, help relativize a dominant discourse by constructing and rendering visible alternative political stances. Knight and Greenberg (2002), for example, explicitly characterized activism as dialogic, arguing that many activist methods create the possibility for social dialogue, an argument echoed by Henderson (2005). Knight and Greenberg's case analysis of activists targeting Nike resulted in the suggestion that "Antisweatshop activism has thus been able to exploit Nike's own dependence on public image and communication as a way to turn promotionalism back on itself and open up issues such as wages, working conditions, and worker rights to ethical criticism" (pp. 550–551). Public relations scholars observed that activists can create openings through which public relations practitioners can promote ethical changes on the part of organizational leaders (Berger, 2005; Smith & Ferguson, 2001).

Synchronic views expand our understanding of dialogic openness in several ways. For one, they highlight *unpredictability*. For instance, Ólafsson (2007) appropriated Bakhtin to establish the dialogic and multivocal character of protests. Unlike formal political deliberation, protests are dialogic because they involve unpredictable communicative outcomes and do not follow orderly or methodical conventions of structured and politically legitimate tactics such as deliberation: "The protester should rather be seen as someone who tries to expand the arena of political action and dialogue, refusing to submit to the demands of orderly argumentation" (p. 439).

Second, we can evaluate openness in terms of communication that creates social *awareness* and *visibility*. For instance, subaltern groups organized responses to the Human Genome Diversity Project through public argument and debate. This discourse helped create counternarratives about identity and genetics, resist patenting and commercialization, and question dominant assumptions about informed consent, thereby spurring more participatory approaches to genetic research with subaltern groups (Wood et al., 2008). Such a view brings a wider range of communication modes and processes under a dialogic perspective. The dialogic character of contestation is implicit in Deluca and Peeples (2002), who argued that contemporary protests enable new forms of collective democratic communication practices that emphasize postrational notions of embodiment and emotion. Their conceptualization of the public screen involves the very practical question of how it can be used as a new space for citizen discourse, despite the challenges of access, infotainment norms, and image-based grammar.

The postrational and creative character of protest as dialogue is also evident in studies that examine carnivalesque genres. For instance, Weaver (2010) drew on a Bakhtinian tradition in tracing aspects of the carnivalesque in communicative tactics

deployed by MAdGe, a women's group in Aotearoa, New Zealand, against genetic engineering (GE). The group's strategies included humor, irony, provocation, and even grotesque imagery that had dialogic consequences by making GE a public issue, opening spaces for discussion, and resonating with a range of constituents in the country. Boje (2001) also alluded to the dialogic potential of contemporary carnivalesque forms of activism. A strong strand of inquiry in rhetorical studies on the comic frame (Burke, 1968; Carlson, 1986; Schwarze, 2006) also emphasizes the historical importance of carnivalesque and comedic protest as ways of increasing visibility and opening dialogic space.

As a result of these perspectives on openness, agonistic perspectives recognize the potential for dialogue in a wider array of methods than collaborative-oriented theories. In situated contexts of marginalization and silence, radical acts or even property violence may be viewed in a dialogic frame. Deluca and Peeples contrast Seattle WTO protest leaders, who stated that violence detracted from the goal of dialogue, with William Greider's statement that images of broken glass transformed the WTO into an icon of unregulated globalization. The authors considered the "productive possibilities of violence on today's public screen" (p. 138), arguing that anarchist violence gave a pretext for explanations of police violence, which otherwise might have been unreported. While reporters decried the violence, they followed by detailing the substantive grievances of the nonviolent protestors: "far from stealing the limelight from legitimate protestors, the compelling images of violence and disruption . . . drew more attention to the issues" (p. 142).

Finally, we need to consider how various forms of openness are engendered within activist groups themselves, through processes of internal debate, argument, struggle, and contention. While much current scholarship understands internal activist communication as consensus driven and harmonious, other studies have documented how contestation and struggle have historically important internally dialogic effects among activist groups. For one, we know that social movements themselves are often significantly internally segmented in terms of repertoires and ideology (Gerlach & Hine, 1970). Furthermore, movement methods themselves have a constitutive force, creating groups and factions (Enck-Wanzer, 2006). The role of tension between segments and factions cannot be underestimated. For instance, Haines (1984) discusses the radical flank effect within the civil rights movement, arguing that tensions between moderate and radical groups worked both synchronically and diachronically to further the goals of the movement. Hayden (1999) identified similar internal tensions in suffrage rhetoric in the turn of the 20th century.

Cases in activism, agonism, and dialogue

To prevent our theoretical synthesis of agonistic dialogue above from creating the impression that agonism is a concern separate from activist praxis, we offer two case studies from our own ethnographic research that not only illustrate both

diachronic and synchronic aspects of agonistic dialogue, but crucially highlight that activist groups themselves are acutely aware of issues of dialogue, developing pragmatic approaches and analyses of both dialogue and contestation. We present them to underscore the pragmatic and theoretical relevance of deep engagement with contemporary activist practice.

Zoller studied Ohio Citizen Action (OCA) in the United States, an environmental organization that uses “the good neighbor campaign” (GNC) to address local polluters. A campaign in Addyston, Ohio, targeted a plastics company emitting noxious odors and chemicals above permitted levels. The goal of a GNC is to achieve a binding commitment from management to reduce or eliminate toxic exposures. OCA’s handbook recommends that neighbors avoid both submissiveness and belligerence when communicating with management because both are easy to dismiss. The organization recommends that residents speak respectfully, but always as equals (for instance, “calling for” rather than “requesting” a meeting), first appealing to a manager’s conscience as a “good neighbor.” OCA reminds campaigners to express interests (“to breathe clean air”) rather than request specific changes (“50% emissions reductions”) because the GNC process may yield win-win solutions that exceed such requests and simultaneously improve company efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

GNCs offer cooperative companies the opportunity to bolster their reputation by improving their environmental performance, but the model assumes that neighbors will need to raise the stakes before management will respond. GNCs promote asymmetrical pressure tactics, including organizing neighbors, talking to the press, protesting, logging odors, and measuring air quality through lay science methods. OCA also generates thousands of letters to management of the target organization through its statewide canvas.

It is tempting to view these asymmetrical actions as a separate activist repertoire outside of dialogue, yet these moves are seen as an inherent part of the relationship-building process. Canvassing and letter campaigns give OCA influence, and such influence itself is the means by which less powerful groups gain invitation to dialogue. The OCA campaign handbook does not distinguish among tactics based on which are more or less dialogic, including media campaigns, neighbor organizing, and meeting with management, instead seeing them as integrated.

The handbook also illustrates the cyclical and synchronic nature of the relationship between dialogue and contestation, in the process implicitly challenging conventional views of activist groups as starting with dialogue and escalating to confrontation. It does so in a number of ways. First, the handbook recommends that residents continue with their pressure campaign at the same time they engage with management to maintain momentum. The handbook promotes the “Getting to Yes” approach devised by the Harvard Negotiation Project (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Second, the GNC model encourages neighbors to talk to management, even though they may not trust the company to honor any agreement they might arrive at. The “trust but verify” approach is simultaneously suspicious and hopeful, insisting on verifying key issues

through neutral parties until trust has been earned through action. Once agreement has been reached, neighbors and managers generally forge long-term relationships to manage implementation and share information. This relationship is the ultimate goal of a campaign. Thus, the GNC model takes a pragmatic approach to dialogue that acknowledges the power differentials between residents and corporate managers and seeks to redress them as a part of an overall process aimed at productive dialogue. The model also recognizes that the dialogue is not an end in itself—participants have material goals they wish to accomplish—yet this does not rule out a working, dialogic relationship.

The Addyston case highlights how forms of dialogue and advocacy are interwoven, as well as ways in which advocacy can have dialogic effects. While most studies that identify the dialogic potential of confrontational tactics such as protest and direct action use elite, a priori researcher concepts (see Henderson, 2005), the case illustrates that activists themselves are aware of the strategic value of maintaining openness, while also exercising strategic influence. Likewise, Ganesh's study of animal rights activism in Aotearoa New Zealand, also shows that activists themselves understand and evaluate the dialogic potential of confrontational tactics not only in the sense of engendering public debate but also within the movement itself.

Aotearoa New Zealand, has a rich history of animal rights activism, with at least 20 organizations and groups across the country in this country of four million people. Like all social movements, it is multivocalic and internally segmented (Gerlach & Hine, 1970). While some groups, such as Save Animals From Exploitation (SAFE), have worked at a national level, attempting to lobby the government to pass legislation to protect both land and animals, most other groups operate regionally or locally, in areas such as Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland, or Otaki. The relationship between national and local, more radical groups has historically been tensional, yet productive, involving not only the use of particular activist methods, but in the construction of animal rights as an issue itself.

Local activists tend to be more radical and criticize national groups such as SAFE as professionalized and formal, overly reliant on conventional activist tactics:

There is a national group and they are, how do I put this without offending them? They are kind of like . . . Greenpeace, and have salary and offices and on top of that . . . beside them are the local groups which tend to come and go. I have always thought that open rescue and direct action are the way to go, but SAFE disagrees, and they keep on doing the lobbying.

Activists also detailed how dramatic direct action tactics such as open rescues in farms tended to garner attention, arguing that prominent formal groups such as SAFE could not engage in such direct action without legal repercussions. Consequently, it was the tactics of radical activists that were responsible for making animal rights abuses visible: "Without the direct action the national movement would not have any more traction. Without the illegal stuff there would not be a movement. So there needs to be tension between them and us."

In general, radical activists were open to embracing tensions between tactics and methods employed by different groups. Ongoing debates about tactics, especially open rescues, appeared to have resulted in both tacit and explicit support for multiple forms of action across both national and local groups. While various groups continue to disagree about the efficacy of particular tactics, the ongoing discussion has resulted in more tacit support for multiple forms of action. Several activists recounted how national groups explicitly endorsed conventional approaches such as lobbying or school-based education efforts and also tacitly supported controversial and potentially illegal direct action tactics such as open rescues and chain-outs, saying “they know it’s our thing—so [they] accept it.” Thus, continued internal tension and debate about tactical efficacy has had dialogic effects inasmuch as diverse activists recognize the constitutive power of a range of tactics, including institutional moves such as parliamentary lobbying and extrainstitutional maneuvers such as direct action, and they now acknowledge the ability of all these tactics to create greater openness, in the form of increased awareness and visibility.

Activists in the movement were also aware that there were some key tensions between groups in how animal rights issues themselves were defined. As in many other countries, all activists tended to view animal rights in multi-issue terms. However, national-level groups constructed animal rights differently from local groups. Groups such as SAFE were prone to understand animal rights in terms of classic animal welfare, holding out for the possibility of humane treatment of animals by industry. They were therefore much more likely to connect animal rights with specific issues such as GE. Indeed, SAFE has worked extensively on the issue. However, more radical groups tended to connect animal abuse much more directly to the global corporatization of agriculture and dairy, and the consequent intensification of industrial dairying, arguing for basic shifts in production systems to end animal abuse. They were thus much more likely to articulate animal rights as a core component of capitalist exploitation. Two current issues exemplify this: The importing of palm kernel from Indonesia as cattle feed as an animal rights issue as well as the diversion of water resources to enable placing more and more cattle on the same amount of land.

Activists also acknowledged that multiple interpretations of animal rights in different parts of the movement were both inevitable and desirable for the growth of the movement itself. On one hand, SAFE’s approach enabled them to lobby the government on specific issues. On the other hand, by articulating animal rights as an anticorporate and antiglobalization issue, local activists could engage with other groups that worked on global social justice issues, ultimately enabling the movement to draw on more grassroots resources: “Grassroots activists tend to be more radical and more anarchist and more anti-globalisation than say SAFE—if you ask them they say sure we’re against globalization, but they don’t necessarily do so much [whereas] when we talk to people about these issues we always stress that we’re part of a wider movement against the globalization of capitalism.”

Thus, activists acknowledge the dialogic potential not only of confrontation but also of productive internal dialogic tensions within the animal rights movement,

which eventually serve to grow and differentiate the movement. Recently, tensions between radical and mainstream factions in the movement resulted in some radical activists further segmenting the movement by creating a national-level network of animal rights activists called Animal Freedom Aotearoa. The group sought not only to consolidate activist energy and ensure protests at major industry events such as the annual dairy summit but also to put sustained pressure on mainstream groups in the movement such as SAFE to keep lobbying efforts up and not develop compromised solutions with industry. In this way, the tensions between radical and mainstream segments have operated as an internal dialogic over a period of years, which in turn constitutes the movement itself, keeping it alive.

In highlighting that activists themselves operate with lay notions of dialogue that in many instances are more sophisticated than theoretical renditions of their work, our cases illustrate several aspects of agonistic dialogue. The Addyston case clearly demonstrates that activists are aware of diachronic aspects of agonistic dialogue and are able to alternate between or simultaneously use confrontational tactics as well as consensus-based, civil methods. The Aotearoa, New Zealand, case shows that activists are acutely aware of and harness the synchronically dialogic potential of tensions and confrontations, both externally, and among different segments of the movement itself. In both cases, activists clearly enact openness in multiple ways.

Discussion and conclusion

We have outlined three major ways in which scholarly work represents connections between activism and dialogue. When theorists treat collaboration and consensus as defining features of dialogue, three views of the relationship between activism and dialogue are evident. Dialogue is privileged and cast in oppositional terms with activism. Second, dialogic activist methods are privileged over contestation. And third, activist communication may be dichotomized in terms of internal dialogue and external confrontation. When dialogue is understood as co-optation, then it is treated as fragile and risky for activists, as publically resonant and a source of legitimacy for corporate or state domination, or as an impossibility. Finally, when dialogue is treated as agonistic and multivocal, then dialogue and contestation can either be understood as distinct forms, diachronically intertwined, or contestation itself—including protest and other seemingly “asymmetrical” techniques—can be considered synchronically as dialogic.

This article suggests that, just as communication research should not seek to enhance social relations at the expense of addressing social inequalities and exploitation (Rawlins, 2009), it should not privilege consensual dialogue as the best form of social change, an attitude sometimes displayed in theories of dialogue, public deliberation, invitational rhetoric, public relations, and even activism itself. Indeed, it may be that commonsensical understandings of activism as involving confrontation, challenge, and contestation has pushed scholars to treat dialogue in terms of consensus when considering activist practice. For instance, public relations theorists, especially

in Europe and Australia/New Zealand have developed sophisticated conceptions of dialogue that incorporate argumentation and disagreement when considering corporate communication practices (Zerfaß, 2010). However, public relations studies of dialogue in the specific context of activism, with some non-U.S. exceptions (Henderson, 2005; Weaver, 2010), tend to be dominated by a consensus-oriented view that emphasizes symmetrical communication (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009), continuing to risk privileging civility over social and material needs, including social justice.

An agonistic perspective is well suited to shift this bias and aid theorizing about activism and dialogue in a number of ways. First, observations from our own studies as well as those of others have shown that it is unrealistic or naïve to understand activist dialogue in terms of the abandonment or suspension of power differences. Rather, even as scholars understand power as irrevocably imbued in dialogue, it may well also be necessary to understand how power negotiations influence strategies, and that even protests can be important preparatory stages for dialogue. Research could examine ways in which such power moves establish, create, and constitute the grounds for activist dialogue.

Second, an agonistic perspective helps move away from ideas, often explicit in treatments of dialogue as purely collaborative, of activism as a form of conflict escalation. If one accepts the idea that dialogue itself involves tension in the form of a movement, as Mouffe (2000) says, from a construction of “them” as enemies to be destroyed, to adversaries to be engaged with, then research on activist dialogue should treat tension as inevitable throughout the process instead of either escalatory or abnormal. Future studies, accordingly, should seek to examine the multiple ways in which tensions themselves serve to construct contestation and dialogue.

Third, and following from the point above, understanding activist solidarity in terms of internal consensus-oriented dialogue can draw attention away from important dialogic functions of internal struggle and difference. As the case involving animal rights in Aotearoa New Zealand, demonstrates, understanding ways in which activists engage in debate with each other has important implications for how solidarity itself is constituted and how various activist politics and issues are articulated productively vis-à-vis each other. Indeed, the very fact that scholars and activists alike describe contemporary forms of activism as a “movement of movements” (Mertes, 2004) or a “network of networks” (Melucci, 1996) points toward the importance of examining how difference constitutes contemporary activist politics and the overall contingency of activist struggle.

Co-optive perspectives on activist dialogue are keenly aware of the potential risks inherent in dialogue when participants differ in power, resources, or status. In this sense, researchers recognize that dialogic theories must address issues of power and conflict. However, we would note that to the degree that dialogue aims to achieve moments of mutual respect and vulnerability, such moments are temporary and fleeting even in close personal relationships (Cissna & Anderson, 1994; Rawlins, 2009). The particularly fragile nature of potential dialogue between activists and their campaign targets does not mark activism as inherently different from other modes of

communication. Although we cannot assume that either activists or the groups they target will be willing to risk genuine change, the OCA case study stresses the value of maintaining a pragmatic hope for that outcome. The agonistic perspective allows us to recognize the synchronicity of conflict and dialogue and stresses the diachronic unfolding of relations over time.

Finally, agonistic perspectives on dialogue significantly challenge what one might construe as dialogic openness itself. While collaboration-oriented perspectives as well as critical perspectives of dialogue as co-optation tend to construe openness as a form of consensus or vulnerability, agonistic perspectives include many more features of openness. This article has identified several, including caution, deliberation, unpredictability, awareness, presence, and visibility. Given that lay theories of activist dialogue are rich and multiple, we call for more research to uncover the multiple ways in which dialogic openness is enacted in activist practice.

Finally, we hope that this article will spark further examinations of what are often taken-for-granted assumptions about dialogue and activism. Although we argued for the agonistic perspective on dialogue as the most helpful for theorizing activism as a significant source of social change, more broadly, we hope to encourage researchers to be more explicit about their conceptualizations and the influence of this orientation on their work. Both dialogue and activism are communication processes that are vulnerable to valorization and denigration. Moving beyond these dichotomous depictions may help critical studies add greater complexity to our understanding of these processes as well as social transformation more broadly. In an era marked by multiple crises of capital and state that threaten democratic practice, it is imperative that communication research continue investigations into how to deepen democracy. We hope this article contributes to the discussion.

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