ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: Champions of the Public or Purveyors of Elite
Perspectives? Interest Group Activity in Information
and Communications Policy

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Communication is a valuable tool of democratic politics as it is used by citizens to
persuade decision-makers, and it also allows groups to come together and provide
citizens with information about the polity. Today, communication that relies on the
Internet plays an increasing role in how information is exchanged between citizens.
Theorists assert that the democratic potential of the Internet and related communication
technologies is great, given that citizens are able to serve as both producers and receivers
of information. Yet, the policies that underlie the communications industry and the
technologies it produces can limit that potential. This industry and its technologies are
influenced by business interests that can limit democratic potential in favor of
marketplace demands, leaving the policymaking process described in arenas, including as
information and communications (info-comm) policy, as more elitist in nature than
political scientists would otherwise like to believe.

This study seeks to examine how elitism impacts the public interest position furthered by info-comm groups by exploring the following paradox: the leadership of the info-comm policy community help citizens participate in politics while at the same time deem the public generally unaware and uninformed on info-comm policy issues.

This study's primary research question asks whether leadership of the info-comm policy community inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens. The secondary question for this research observes whether the leadership of the info-comm policy community approach their decision-making in a democratic fashion. These research questions and related propositions were tested through semi-structured interviews with the leadership of the info-comm policy community, including info-comm group leaders and the foundation grant officers that financially support them. The responses of the interviewees illustrate the impact of elitism on the formulation of policy positions by leaders and pose further considerations for the activities of this policy community.

The findings of this study support the aforementioned paradox, suggesting that the public's voice in this policy arena may be more limited than we would otherwise expect. This could have implications for the future direction of info-comm policy and its related technologies, ultimately limiting the citizen participation in democratic deliberation.

CHAMPIONS OF THE PUBLIC OR
PURVEYORS OF ELITE PERSPECTIVES?
INTEREST GROUP ACTIVITY
IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father, Robert Wilson Sherman, with whom I wish I had many more years to spend. I also dedicate this work to my mother and sister, Yong Ok Sherman and Paula Sewon Suan, both of whom have only ever wanted me to succeed, and to Mark Horrell Reynolds, without whom my life would be incomplete.

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I offer the sincerest of gratitude to my family, friends, and mentors. Your encouragement and support afforded me the confidence needed to successfully complete the dissertation. Furthermore, your shared laughter (at and with me) helped to make this experience all the more bearable.

Because of you, life is that much sweeter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction

Communication—the exchange of thoughts, messages, and information—is essential to democracy. It empowers citizens to think, make informed decisions, and act. Communication is a valuable tool of democratic politics, as it is used by citizens to persuade decision-makers. It also allows groups to come together and provide citizens with information about the polity. In essence, democracy requires communication.

Today, communication that relies on the Internet plays a critical role in how information is exchanged among citizens. Theorists assert that the democratic potential of the Internet and related communication technologies (also known as information and communication technologies or ICTs) is great, given that citizens are able to serve as both producers and receivers of information. Yet, the policies that underlie the communications industry and the technologies it produces can limit that potential. For example, this industry and its technologies are influenced by business interests that can limit democratic potential in favor of marketplace demands. Because large corporations such as Microsoft and AOL TimeWarner generally have deeper pockets than most other types of interest groups, such business interests hold privileged positions in policy debates and are able to leverage their dollars effectively for their own purposes. The influence of corporations within the realms of campaign finance and media ownership clearly illustrates this point. The ability to amass monetary resources and in turn, affect policy is an acknowledged advantage of corporations.

1

The public interest movement, which claims to represent the greater public good, emerged specifically in response to this corporation advantage. The theory of pluralism supports the very possibility of its emergence. There is competition among numerous interests in a pluralist system and the prevailing of certain interests over is often dependent on the resources supporting it. Resources for political influence are available not only to those with power, such as corporations, but also to citizens. These resources or "slack" in the American political system affords citizens the opportunity to mobilize around certain interests. However, despite the opportunity to participate in the political system, the public interest movement, which takes advantage of such opportunities, has not always been successful.

One explanation for this absence of consistent success by the public interest movement is that the "slack" in the political process, as discovered by Robert Dahl decades (1961) ago, is often weakened by business interests. Because business leaders (unlike public interest group leaders) generally have access to a large amount of monetary and other resources, they often find themselves more successful in having their interests met because of their influence over the political process. And although they cannot block all of the opportunities to political participation available to citizens, business interests, Dahl explained, still have a strong influence on many of those opportunities as well, pressuring policymakers to favor some interests over others.

This has left the policymaking process described in arenas such as information and communications policy as more elitist than political scientists would otherwise like to

believe. Dahl's theory of pluralism was responding in part to the "power elite" writings of C. Wright Mills (1967), an elitist theory of democracy. Mills believed that a power elite in this country, largely comprised of government officials and policymakers, served as its key decision-makers. In order to prevent a power elite from forming and having such influence, Mills promoted a system of populism. Yet unfortunately, a system of populism is not practical, given the sheer number of citizens that would need to participate in political activities.

The argument later developed by Theodore Lowi (1979)—while not directly supporting Mills—does follow from Mills' argument while challenging Dahl's assessment of the political system by revisiting elitist-like tendencies in democracy. Lowi suggests that pluralism rationalizes a conservative tendency in politics where certain interests are privileged. Therefore, although mass interests find representation in the political process, elitism can emerge both where expected, as within business interest groups, and where unexpected, as in public interest groups. Additionally, a pluralist system of interests—although effective in supporting democratic values—is not able to protect what society considers to be public goods (goods that are in the interest of citizens to protect).

The Research Focus of This Study

It is this emergence of elitism in public interest policy communications that will be addressed here. This study seeks to examine how elitism (through group leaders and their respective grant officers) impacts the public interest position furthered by

information and communications (info-comm) policy groups. To address these issues, this study uses a framework that begins with the assumption that elitism is problematic for info-comm policy and for democracy.

This is not to suggest that elites do not positively contribute to politics, as they do in several ways. First, given that the entire population cannot be mobilized, elites engage in the policymaking process as representatives of other citizens. Second, certain policy issues are more technical than others and only an elite few are able to comprehend as well as inform policymakers on these issues. Third, it is difficult to imagine alternatives to an elite-driven model of politics in a society where leadership is an important variable. Nevertheless, elitism poses serious challenges to democratic activities.

Leaders of public interest groups, by not actively engaging citizens as part of their daily activities, can easily find themselves perpetuating their own personal interests. Without creating opportunities to interact with citizens and gain perspective from them, the ability for these groups to develop informed positions on info-comm issues is limited. In addition, the fewer the public interactions, the more difficult it is both to verify and hold accountable the decisions made by the leadership of these groups. Furthermore, many public interest groups rely greatly on charitable foundation funding that can influence the activities of these groups. Therefore, this study's primary research question asks whether the leadership of the info-comm policy community inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens. Propositions to test these research questions include exploring leaderships' interactions with the public, the control they have over

their agenda and strategies, their group's constituencies, and their coalition-building effort, among others.

Public interest groups, similar to corporations, are also not immune to elitism emerging as part of their internal decision-making processes. As corporations can reflect hierarchical internal decision-making process that replicates the elitism of the political system, the same can be reflected within public interest groups, potentially leaving their actions "less than democratic." While other types of interest groups, such as labor unions, may reject this hierarchy within their own internal decision-making processes, it is unclear whether public interest groups, and specifically those that focus on info-comm policy, seek to reject this hierarchy as well. Thus, the secondary question for this research explores whether the leadership of the info-comm policy community approach their decision-making in a democratic fashion. The degree to which leadership consult with their staff and the autonomy they alone have in their policy-making activities provide insight into this question.

Public interest groups, by definition, exist to serve and represent the interests of all citizens. Yet, their ability to derive an articulation of the public interest that is informed through dialogue with citizens is called into question when leaders may be part of an elite themselves and therefore, detached from the concerns of the public while making internal decisions. Moreover, they often compete for and receive funds from grant-making foundations that aim to support their own specific agendas. If info-comm groups replicate an elitist process in their decision-making and activities, then how these groups

articulate the public interest may also be guided by elitist tendencies. In the end, the activities of public interest groups might not differ greatly from their corporate counterparts and, as a result, the public's voice in the policymaking process may continue to be limited.

The aforementioned research questions and related propositions have been tested through semi-structured interviews with the leadership of the info-comm policy community, including group leaders and the foundation grant officers that financially support them. The responses of the interviewees illustrate the impact of elitism on the formulation of policy positions by leaders. The responses pose further considerations for the activities of this policy community.

This study analyzes whether the following paradox exists: the leadership of the info-comm policy community help citizens participate in politics while at the same time deeming the public generally unaware and uninformed on info-comm policy issues. This occurs despite the fact that these public interest groups and the policies they support are strongly in favor of democracy and democratic practices. If this paradox is supported, the public's voice in this policy arena may be more limited than we would otherwise expect. And this would have implications for the future direction of info-comm policy and its related technologies.

Although there are a large number of actors who influence communications policy across the public and private sectors—including governments, universities, corporations, and private individuals—this study focuses only on interest group actors. In addition, although interest groups exist globally, the groups addressed in this study are active in American policymaking on communications issues. Because each country's politics are distinct, this study is only generalizable to those interest groups engaged in American politics.

The groups from whom the leaders were selected are part of the info-comm reform policy community and claim to promote the public interest. These groups are also nonprofit entities that generally rely on foundation funding to support their efforts. Interviewees represent groups that that emerged during the beginning of the public interest movement (Media Access Project, Consumers Union, Benton Foundation) as well as many more recent groups (Center for Digital Democracy, Electronic Privacy Information Center, Public Knowledge).

The community of philanthropic foundations is numerous. Therefore, the criteria for selecting the foundations included those that currently support or have a history of supporting multiple info-comm public interest groups. The foundations representatives interviewed include more established ("Old Guard") foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie) as well as newer ("New Guard") foundations (Arca, Center for Public Domain,

Open Society Institute). The foundations that fund info-comm groups generally include

non-corporate entities, though occasionally, corporate foundations do fund these groups.

Several corporate foundations were solicited for an interview; however, none agreed be

interviewed.

Finally, this study does not attempt to provide a complete history of media advocacy or a

detailed literature review of the public interest movement. The historical information and

literature that is included should be sufficient to provide context to the proposed research

questions. In addition, a brief discussion of various conceptions of leadership is

presented, but is not detailed enough to go beyond what is necessary for the study.

What Is To Come

Chapters One and Two outline the theoretical framework and survey the relevant

scholarly literature related to communication and politics. Chapter One of this work

demonstrates the relationship between communication, American democracy, and the

marketplace. The influence of interest groups in politics, and the elitism that often

emerges within and from them is discussed in Chapter Two. This study's research

methodology, detailed in Chapter Three, highlights the research questions used and

methodological approaches applied to uncover the behavior of this policy community.

Chapters Four and Five present the research findings from this study. Chapter Four

focuses on the demographics of the info-comm policy community, how info-comm

groups define their constituency and whether they have a membership, and how the

groups are held accountable by and interact with citizens. Chapter Five discusses

lobbying activities of info-comm groups and grant officers' influence over their activities,

the group leaderships' impression on the public's understanding of and position on info-

comm policy issues, and the group's internal communication and approach to decision-

making. The final chapter, Chapter Six, elaborates on the implication for this study's

findings on political science, how the findings can be applied to other policy

communities, and future research questions that can be addressed.

Chapter One: How Communication Promotes and Weakens Democracy

This first chapter outlines the theoretical framework for this study. The framework links

a series of ideas together to illustrate the relationship between the importance of

communication in a democracy and how public interest groups are necessary to advance

democracy in a technological environment driven by capitalism. My position in this

study, as Wilson Dizard Jr. noted, is that there is a weakness in those that regulate

communications, "particularly in its heavy reliance on economic cost-benefit standards in

determining both the form and pace of communications and information development"

(1989: 171). And as was more recently observed by Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis

McQuail, the public interest in information and communications policy "is being

significantly redefined to encompass economic and consumerist values" (in Cammaerts

and Burgelman 2000: 127).

The theoretical framework I have chosen to apply to this study combines democratic and

interest group theory as well as a political economy approach. By applying the lens of

democratic theory, values that promote democracy—including rule by the people,

dissemination of political information, and deliberation—inform my perspective on this

study. The perspective taken for this research is that a democratic system assumes

citizens in a democracy should have access to the political process, the ability to become

knowledgeable on political issues, and opportunities to engage in substantive and

influential dialogue about politics. To have all citizens participating in the political

process is neither likely nor particularly feasible. However, measures to increase the

public's involvement in politics are desirable and serve as a check on the decisions of those in power. In my research, I sought to examine whether a group of political actors promote such democratic values in their activities.

Political economy can be generally defined as a theory that explains politics through the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, and how those goods and services are managed. This theory informs my study by emphasizing the impact of capitalism on the development of information and communications technologies. The economic structure of our society—capitalism and its reliance on a market economy—drives the information and communications industry. Consumer preference and their consumption habits often take precedence over democracy and democratic values. Thus, during the course of my research, I took this context into account when trying to understand the activities and decisions of leadership in this policy community.

When taking into account pluralism, the significance of interest groups in the policymaking process is a primary consideration. Interest groups are important political actors because of their role in aggregating political preferences and their ability to influence politics. They can be successful in mobilizing citizens around a particular cause, and can affect change through the political leverage they wield. Public interest groups, in particular, are unique because of their claims to represent the interests of citizens. Given the significance of these roles in our political system's ability to influence politics, the policy positions taken by interest groups and how they arrive at related decisions are relevant points for examination. If these interest groups reveal elitist

tendencies as part of their decision-making process, then their positions and decisions should be called into question to determine whether they accurately reflect the interests of those they seek to represent.

The first part of this chapter addresses the role of communicating information in a democracy through historical examples of the impact of communication technologies, what information and communications technologies are and what effect they have on communications across government, and how social scientists have assessed the communication of political information. The second part of this chapter discusses the values by which communication technologies in the United States are guided. This includes social values related to the First Amendment and the public interest as well as the economic value of revenue maximization, the trend among corporations to move away from democratic communications and towards more regulated forms, and the role of philanthropy and a nonprofit status in the development of communications policy.

The Importance of Communicating Information

Communication is an essential element of democracy, as it comprises the exchange of thoughts, messages, and information. It has been referred to as the most basic of social processes (Ranney 1996: 133). This is because a society, by definition, requires the pursuit of common interests and activities which must be communicated among citizens. Without communication to align those interests and activities, a society that promotes the democratic political principle of "rule by the people" could not exist. Democracy

requires the communication of information about key political facts, concepts, and actors to citizens so as to ensure a reasonable comprehension of politics and the accountability of politicians. This communication of information provides citizens with the necessary tools to make informed decisions about politics, such as the weighing of costs and benefits of legislation or the ordering of interest preferences. Communicating information also motivates citizens to act individually or in concert with others who share similar interests.

What makes communication a powerful component of modern democracy is the ease by which information is transferred from one source to another, from one citizen to the next. Citizens, for example, can simply listen to the radio at work or in their car, have a newspaper delivered directly to their front door, or have daily updates sent to their email or cell phone. Information is communicated across numerous sectors of society, including government, industry (manufacturers, providers, and those that conduct research and development), academia, and advocacy groups. Legislators, for example, frequently communicate with and reach out to their constituents in order to calibrate their policy position on political issues. These legislators find it important to canvas their constituents because "modern democracy, in its responsiveness, expects public servants to act as such" and represent their constituents' positions on issues (Fishkin 1997: 33). Legislators are also responsive because they no doubt recognize that their future in political office rests in the voting hands of their constituents. Additionally, communication allows for citizens to form groups and organizations that provide others with information about the polity. The more citizens learn about public policies and

political activities, the more they become motivated to support a cause or challenge a particular policy. Communication is the process through which both political action and political conflict occur (Ranney 1996: 134). In essence, democratic politics requires the communication of information.

Communication and American Democracy

The vital link between communication and democracy has been, and continues to be, reflected in several technological advances during the course of American history. To begin, the founding fathers instituted the first comprehensive communications network—the infrastructure for the national postal system—to unite the country through the uninhibited flow of information and ideas. In fact, George Washington supported the national postal system because he believed that it would ensure the allegiance of citizens to the country's government. James Madison was equally supportive of the postal system, but reasoned about its significance differently from that of Washington: the system would serve as a check on representatives to prevent any abuses of power (John 1995: 59). Both founders would likely agree that the postal system represents something more than simply the efficient transfer of information. The postal system allows for citizens to truly rule themselves. "If the people were truly sovereign—that is, if they were the final, indivisible, and supreme course of political authority—then no one could plausibly deny the citizenry the right to secure uninterrupted access to up-to-date information about the ongoing affairs of state" (John 1995: 28). The longevity of the postal system and all that it represents is indicative of the important role communication plays in American democracy.

The rise of newspapers and their distribution was a technological advance in communication that brought information and ideas together from a variety of sources. An oft-cited documenter of American life, Alexis de Tocqueville not only observed the influence of the postal system in a democracy, but also understood that newspapers both function to protect freedom and serve to "maintain civilization" (Tocqueville 1990: 111). By this, he suggests that newspapers bring citizens together to share in activities, some of which are political in nature. In addition, Tocqueville notes that newspapers strengthen democratic association (both civic and political) by connecting citizens to a common purpose. He states: "in order that an association among a democratic people should have any power, it must be a numerous body…means must then be found to converse everyday without seeing one another, and to take steps in common without having met. Thus, hardly any democratic association can do without newspapers" (Toqueville 1990: 112). Forging political relationships through the exchange of information and ideas was and remains an important function of newspapers.

Another technological advance that facilitated citizens' exchange of information was the invention of the telegraph and the telephone. The telegraph, the first communications network that relied on electricity, was invented by Samuel Morse in 1844. Funded by the Federal government, Morse's telegraph network was created because of the government's interest in establishing a communications network along the Atlantic coast. Several decades later, the Western Union Telegraph Company, the largest communications corporation in the country, would unwillingly relinquish its throne to the telephone industry. Invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell, the telephone was not widely

used until Bell's patent expired two decades later. However, by the mid-1900s, telephone

use became nearly ubiquitous in households across the country. Telephones differed

from both postal delivery and newspapers as they provided the nearly instantaneous

exchange of information across short as well as long distances. As a function of the

economics behind providing phone service, telephones first connected businesses, and

then private citizens in their homes. Although the principle of universal service—

established by AT&T in its early years—was initially a business model to entrench

AT&T's system in the telephone industry,[1] the principle coincided with citizens' desire to

have access to telephone service (Bailey 1998: 385). Affordable telephone access for all

citizens has continued to be a guiding principle within the communications industry and

among its regulators.

The "fireside chats" initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the New Deal

Era continued the connection of citizens to a common political purpose, while using a

different technological medium—radio. Similar to telephones, radios have the ability to

transmit information instantaneously, but with even more freedom than the poles and

wires used to complete telephone calls. Radio had the "ability to educate listeners, for 'a

democracy will function more efficiently to the degree that the voters are informed and

alert on public affairs'" (Craig 2000: xi). In addition, many citizens were aware of the

power of broadcasting to shape as well as form public opinion (Craig 2000: xi).

Roosevelt's speeches, similar to Tocqueville's observations, illustrate the link between

communication and democracy in American history: communication binds a widely

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[1] Universal service was AT&T's established policy to get as many users as possible connected to its
telephone network. The more users, the better the service, and the more marketable AT&T's product
becomes.

dispersed citizenry into a nation. In the case of newspapers and radios, words are what

bind these citizens.

The age of the television, however, shifted the emphasis away from words toward

images, and this has had a lasting effect on American politics. Television, which owes

much of its success to that of radio, altered how all types of information—including

political information—was transferred. For example, in 1952, viewers sat in front of 15

million television sets in sixty-four cities and watched the first political campaign ever to

be waged on television (Barnouw 1968: 295). Another example was the "Checkers"

speech that Richard Nixon's gave which saved his vice-presidential candidacy amidst a

scandal about illegal campaign contributions. And the television campaign strategies

used by Eisenhower contributed to his victory over Adlai Stevenson, keeping Democrats

out of the presidential office for two decades (Barnouw 1968: 300-303). At present, it is

difficult to imagine presidential, as well as other, election campaigns not run on

television. Television has been used to help define central issues and create a shared

focus of attention for millions of citizens (Sunstein 2001: 35). Thus, it has become an

important element of democratic communication in the present.[2] However, some

scholars have argued that instantaneous forms of communication, such as those which

occur through television, have fundamentally reordered the conception of "publicness."

Communication using old media has traditionally implied the sharing of a common space

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[2] It is important to note that none of the aforementioned technologies are without characteristics that weaken democracy when controlled by their respective industries. The primary example is the role advertising plays in the postal mail, newspaper, radio, and television industries. Because of these industries reliance on advertising revenues—to be discussed later in this chapter—the information transferred to citizens may be biased or limited in some fashion. This is a result of the industry that produces and implements the technologies.

and the free flow of dialogue that is unmediated. However, information and

communication technologies (ICTs) allow for "a new and mediated nondialogical

communication which is not localized in either space or time" (Craig 2000: xiv). This

suggests that communication between two citizens can take place anywhere, is often

asynchronous, can be controlled in some form by another entity, and although it can

encourage dialogue, does not always require it. Email is a good example of this. Two

citizens can be in opposite parts of the country: one in a classroom and the other in a

park. The first citizen could send an email in the morning and the second, receive and

respond in the evening. The email has the potential to be filtered by the Internet Service

Providers transporting it. In addition, the second citizen does not have to respond to the

email of the first because there is no face to face or other immediate dialogue that

requires it.

The implications of this newer and mediated nondialogical form of communication are

great. Not only does there exist less of an opportunity to actively engage in the

exchanging of information through dialogue, but there is an increased likelihood that

these communications can be altered or controlled in some fashion. This control can be

exhibited knowingly or unknowingly to the citizen who is attempting to communicate.

Therefore, although communication is now more accessible and more efficient, it is also

more passive and filtered. As this study will illustrate, the most recent technological

advance in communications to impact citizens—the Internet—has the potential to be

revolutionary as well as debilitating. This potential hinges on the policies and regulations

that guide communications, or more specifically, info-comm policy.

With the advent of the Internet, the manner in which information is exchanged differs

from its technological predecessors. The Internet has led to a shift away from print

transfers of information to an increasing amount of electronic transfers. This shift

towards ICTs has affected the way in which policymakers address information and

communications policy (Dutton and Blumler, in Salvaggio: 78-79; Cuilenburg and

McQuail, in Cammaerts and Burgelman: 126). While almost a half-a-century ago,

broadcasting history scholar Erik Barnouw was still contemplating what "the impact on

our civilization of the shift from printed words, as carriers of information and prestige,"

would be "to the ever present broadcast word, sound, and image" (1968: 4), the impact

of the Internet on both American life and policymaking thus far suggests that it may

surpass that of broadcasting.

Citizens are increasing their reliance on ICTs for information while weakening their

reliance on older forms.[3] This is because the Internet has led to an increasing number of

users being able to access information at a lesser cost than other mediums. For example,

the Internet is accessible as long as basic telephone service is available, which includes

homes, schools, businesses, etc. The cost for dial-up Internet to the consumer is also

relatively low. Newspapers, on the other hand, have experienced a declining audience

according to social capital scholar Robert Putnam. This is especially problematic

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[3] See footnote 1 of "Intellectual Property and New Media Technologies: A Framework for Policy
Development at AAU Institutions", A Report To The AAU Digital Networks and Intellectual Property
Management Committee by The Intellectual Property Task Force, May 13, 1999.

because those who read the news are more politically engaged than those who simply watch the news on television (Putnam 2000: 218). The Internet provides citizens with information similar to that in newspapers (consider how most newspapers now have an online presence) and with even greater amounts of information than previously possible. This is because there is no significant additional cost for server space, like there is for ink and paper, and such space can be updated continuously. In addition, users of the Internet are active, rather than passive, participants in the gathering of information. And interestingly enough, the more interconnected the network is—a fundamental characteristic of the Internet—the more valuable the network and the information that it carries becomes.

The implication behind the increasing reliance on ICTs is noteworthy for policymakers. Given the largely untread waters of ICTs and related policies, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—which regulates communication technologies— has been cautious in proceeding with rulemakings on issues related to such technologies. As a result, ICTs are, at present, much less regulated than radio or television. Therefore, this absence of regulation could have the effect of encouraging the Internet's democratic potential. However, the fact still remains that the fundamental nature of digital technologies allow for more control over how such technologies are used and over what information can be transferred using them. This is a significant shift over the old media predecessors (Napoli 2001: 13). The way in which communication is regulated will likely be reconsidered in the coming years as ICTs mature.

ICTs have unique characteristics that afford it much democratic potential. Among its

characteristics, ICTs determine how information is sent, with what efficiency, and at

what level of reliability. With the advent of the Internet, greater amounts of information

move at faster speeds and to many more users (National Research Council 2001: 5).

Innovations in ICTs have contributed to the explosion of the information society over the

last several decades. The Internet, its architecture and open protocols, interconnect

thousands of networks to create the appearance of one single network (National Research

Council 2001: 3; Noam 2001: 1). And these interconnected networks of the Internet

have led to a dramatic increase in the availability and variety of information (Barber

2001: 46). Simply stated, citizens are able to access more information now than ever

before. "Electronically mediated networks support the development and dissemination of

knowledge and information, allowing the acceleration of adaptation and discovery" (May

2002: 11).

Despite inaction by the FCC mentioned earlier, the activities of government officials and

policymakers are slowly being transformed by ICTs resulting in the creation of an

"information society."[4] Government and policymakers are experiencing this

transformation because communication is at the heart of all social activity and ICTs are

altering that communication. "Society is often seen as the sum of communications that

take place within it, and the impact of technology on communications (and through

communication, on society more generally) has therefore remained at the centre of much

writing on the new age" (May 2002: 9). As a result of the move towards an information

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[4] Though not an entirely new concept and with varying interpretations about its impact, the notion of an
"information society" is presented here without discussion of the specific conceptual criticisms. For more
specific challenges to the concept, see Webster 1995 and May 2002.

society, government agencies and public policy organizations are experiencing structural shifts in how they operate and govern.

ICTs have begun to reshape the organizational hierarchies that exist within bureaucracies. In fact, government agencies are becoming more flat in their hierarchy and this streamlines much of the pre-existing processes. However, this has political implications for democratic accountability as well as social implications for the culture of the organization (Fountain, in Kamarck and Nye 2002). For example, an increasing number of employees within an agency are given more responsibilities and related tasks that they themselves can complete without having to rely on others. This diffusion of responsibility, then, ultimately makes the ability to assign blame more difficult.

The information society's influence on policy implementation has been noteworthy, with an increasing number of public organizations becoming "networked" in recent years. The implementation of new E-Government initiatives by the Bush Administration that help to facilitate the exchange of information and increase collaboration between agencies, is a testament to how ICTs are reshaping the nature of politics. "Over the next ten to fifteen years, the expansion of network-based communications should exert a strong influence on how communities are formed and governed" (Mechling, in Kamarck and Nye 2002: 154). A potential result of this increased communication is that citizens can receive additional information that could increase their knowledge and awareness of political issues. This increased knowledge and awareness could encourage citizens to hold government more accountable for its actions, which parallel the intent of Madison in

his desire to create a national postal system. Ideally, this would encourage a more democratic form of politics. However, we cannot know for certain that ICTs would contribute to society being more democratic. In fact, some believe that society would become less free. For example, some scholars have raised "the great potential in the rise of information systems for surveillance, control through censorship, and the possibility of a social transformation resulting in an authoritarian regime rather than a participatory democracy" (Dizard 1989: 24). This is a legitimate concern, the seeds of which can already been seen in more recent legislation such as those related to Internet privacy and broadcast flags. In addition, there continues to exist a "digital divide" whereby those who have access to the Internet are at a greater advantage than those who do not. Nonetheless, the Internet holds much promise for democracy and some scholars, such as Jay Blumler and Stephen Coleman, have proposed structural changes that could fulfill the democratic potential of ICTs (2001).

The evolution of the information society has risen information to an exceptional status in today's social and political world. It has been framed as a "defining feature of the modern world" (Webster 2002: 1). Modern democracies across the globe are transforming into information societies. One reason behind this transformation is the growing disparity between white-collar (information sector) and blue-collar (non-information sector) forms of employment (Pool 1998: 249). With the rate of the former outpacing that of the latter, the work output of an increasing number of citizens, including those in government, relies more and more on the communication of information, through collection and dissemination. As a result of this growing reliance, how information is

communicated and how it is regulated have become focal points of examination by info-comm advocacy groups because of its potential effect on the social and cultural values central to the democratic process (Napoli 2001: 14). "Communication policymakers are in a position not only to affect the structure and functioning of an industry, but also to potentially affect the production and flow of ideas" (Napoli 2001: 13). Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of ICTs on political communication.

The Politics of Communication

Across the discipline, political scientists investigate questions that address the relationship among politics, communication, and citizenship in American society. These include the fields of public opinion, political communication, and democratic theory. All three of these fields acknowledge the importance of exchanging information in order to ensure political legitimacy, with the citizen at the crux of each of these fields. Why, how, and what citizens communicate determine the way in which democracy will function.

Public opinion research examines the flow of information from government to its citizens (Key 1961; Lemert 1981; Lippmann 1966). V.O. Key's operational definition of public opinion is "those opinions held by private persons which governments find it prudent to heed" (1961: 14). Using this definition, public opinion is distinguished from private opinions in that private opinions are not communicated and are considered by the government to be absent of political value. Public opinions, on the other hand, are expressed and have political value. For Walter Lippmann, the political value of public

opinion is linked to the mobilization of these opinions or "pictures" in the form of groups (1966: 18). This suggests that public opinion is not simply the opinion of one, but represents the opinion of many. When such opinions are mobilized, they afford legitimacy to that which is being expressed. It is only at this point that they become newsworthy or truly public opinions.

Public opinion can be surveyed in a number of different ways, including individual interviews and focus groups. And although some theorists criticize its use, polling is the most common method employed by political scientists and by the media. These polls can be administered relatively quickly and results can be interpreted fairly easily. Polling, however, is very costly and cannot usually be extrapolated with confidence to the entire population. Despite this, polling results are a popular measure of the perceptions of citizens on political issues and positions communicated by the government. Public opinion scholars seek to gauge the degree of citizen understanding and position on political issues. These temperatures can change quickly based on what and how information is being communicated. As a result, such opinions must constantly be reexamined.

The field of political communication is another approach to examining the interconnection among politics, communication, and democratic values in political science. Influenced by Jürgen Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere, political communication seeks to analyze mass media's role in serving democracy (Gunther and Mughan 2000; Jamieson 2000; Ranney 1996), while also being guided

itself by certain democratic principles (Gurevitch and Blumler, in Lichtenberg 1990).

Mass media is defined as media that transmits messages to large numbers of citizens with

whom they have no face-to-face contact (Ranney 1996: 136). Newspapers, radio, and

television fall under the umbrella of mass media. Newer technologies are also reshaping

mass media's relationship to politics and citizens. Political communication analyzes

mass media by applying tools that help to determine what effect such media have on the

information received by citizens. Mass communication plays a critical role in the politics

of all industrialized countries, whether they are democratic or authoritarian (Ranney

1996: 132) because it can taint the way in which the information is characterized,

portraying the information as helpful or harmful to those in society that are receiving its

message. Mass media can also communicate information that citizens might not

otherwise receive through other mediums, such as textbooks or telephone calls.

Political communication also studies how media affect the information citizens receive

and apply to their political thinking and activities. This "mediated" form of

communication can have both a positive and negative influence on the politics in society,

by helping to aggregate preferences and by distorting information for a particular cause

(Bennett and Entman 20011: 2). An increasing number of citizens have stated that the

primary source from which they receive their political information is mass media

(Leshner and McKean 1997; Walker 1983). However, it is important to note that not all

mass media are alike. For example, studies have shown that television is the most trusted

source of information by almost two to one over newspapers and radio (Ranney 1996:

147). This trusting of the information that the mass media provide can have persuasive

power over citizens and what their understanding of and policy position is on political

issues. In fact, evidence has been found to suggest that communication industries are

capable of setting citizens' political agenda (McCombs & Shaw 1972) by favoring certain

information over others. One example that illustrates this would be if a television station

favors a liberal political perspective for news and then only reports on stories that fit that

perspective. This control by an entity such as a private television company could easily

alter or manipulate citizens' political knowledge and participation (Graber 1984;

Patterson 1980).

It is important to note that the impact of media on attitudes and behaviors has historically

been considered weak. This suggests that the media have little to no effect on the

attitudes and behaviors of individuals. However, some political scientists are

increasingly finding media effects in politics, such as within the context of election

campaigns. In addition, this form of communication can be extremely influential when

directed at certain types of opinions. "Communication is likely to be more effective on

issues that the receivers regard as relatively unimportant than on those they see as

crucial" (Ranney 1996: 149). This illustrates that when a citizen does not already have a

preconceived bias about a particular political issue, then they are more likely to be

persuaded by the opinion of another, such as the media. As a result, it has been

hypothesized that the media now have an increased opportunity to influence voters given

the decrease in party influence over the last several decades (Jamieson 2000: 13-14).

Coinciding with this decrease in party influence, one reason for the increased opportunity

for the media to shape the opinions of citizens has likely resulted from legislation and the

absence of regulations that have led to increased media deregulation and ownership limits.

Although mass media entities are, in theory, supposed to adhere to society's democratic values, it has been argued that communications in practice undermines the mass media's ability to support such values (Gurevitch and Blumler, in Lichtenberg 1990: 270). Given this finding, some political communication scholars, such as James Curran (1996), have theorized about an alternative to the current communications system that would better support democratic values.

How communication is used by citizens in politics is also an important theme in the work of democratic theorists. Democratic theory examines the use of language and deliberation as rational communicative approaches to reaching political agreement (Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1997; Habermas 1990; and Young 1996). Deliberative democracy, referred to by some theorists as the truest form of democracy, can be defined as "a reflective process of honestly giving and listening to reasons and arguments among persons who are open to changing their views about facts, interests, and values for the right reasons, and who have the capacity and the motivation to imaginatively occupy the perspectives of others" (Applbaum 2002: 25). Therefore, communication through deliberation is central to the activities of democracy. These theorists determine and examine what are the ideal deliberative procedures necessary to guide communication between individuals. These procedures "capture the justification

through public argument and reasoning among equal citizens and serves in turn as a model for deliberative institutions" (Cohen 1989: 21).

Democratic theory also highlights the importance of participation in politics. Many scholars believe that citizen participation through self-governing activities is much closer to true democratic activity than is representative forms of government. Such participation includes citizen involvement in agenda-setting, deliberation, legislation, and policy implementation (Barber 1984: 151). Additionally, through participation, the goals of society are assumed to be established to maximize the allocation of benefits in a society that matches the needs of citizens (Verba and Nie 1972: 4).

Democratic theory asserts the importance of transparency in the exchange of political information. For example, approaches to resolving moral disagreements in public policy have suggested "the reasons that officials and citizens give to justify political actions, and the information necessary to assess those reasons, should be public" (Gutmann and Thompson 1997: 94). This is because otherwise, citizens are not informed as to the reasoning behind the decisions of officials and are therefore left unable to challenge such decisions. What is required here is the communication of political reasoning that ensures transparency and that also encourages participation beyond a select few, knowledgeable citizens. Numerous threads of political science research strongly affirm the centrality of communications in democracy, by fostering the exchange of information to citizens. Given that the exchange of information is greatly influenced by the technologies that

conduct its transfer, ICTs will no doubt have an impact on the way in which the communication of political information is studied.

The shift in the availability and value of information has undoubtedly impacted the knowledge of citizens. The availability of information has been cited as a contributing factor to increased rates of political knowledge. This knowledge can be defined "as the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 10A). In a democracy, the exchanging of information to citizens is valued because citizens, in turn, can use that information to build political knowledge. Daniel Bell, among others, asserts that "knowledge has always been necessary in the functioning of society" (Bell 1974: 21). Therefore, the technologies that communicate information to build such knowledge are also necessary in the functioning of society.

Political scientists have determined that political knowledge, which includes information about political issues and institutions, has at least two democratic advantages. First, this building of political knowledge facilitates a citizen's comprehension of what comprises the political world (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 11).[5] Though studies of the levels of political knowledge held by American citizens show such levels to be low, certain types of political events, such as campaigns, provide additional information that build their political knowledge. In addition, such knowledge allows for them "to make connections between politics and their own lives" (Jamieson 2000: 8). Making that connection of

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[5] This paper does not address distinctions in political knowledge between women and men. For more on this topic, see Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter (1991) "Stability and Change in the Public's Knowledge of Politics," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55: 583-612.

how politics and policy directly affect one's own life motivates the citizen to become more politically active. This includes staying informed as well as applying that information to political actions such as letter writing, protesting, forum-discussions, and the like. The ability for a citizen to comprehend the political world is a type of civic literacy that serves to increase both citizens' political knowledge as well as political participation (Milner 2002). In fact, "a well-informed citizen is more likely to be attentive to politics, engaged in various forms of participation, committed to democratic principles, opinionated, and to feel efficacious" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 6). A citizen, armed with information and thus, political knowledge, is a more active participant in democracy. And more active participants lead democracy to be more reflective of the interests of its citizens.

Second, political scientists have determined that political knowledge is a pre-condition for political participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Inglehart 1997; Putnam 2000). Knowledge "produces a more articulate public that is better equipped to organize and communicate" (1997: 163). Given that political knowledge is necessary to having a politically active citizen, some scholars may expect rates of political participation to soar. Inglehart concluded that "the rise of postindustrial society or information society leads to a growing potential for citizen participation in politics" (Inglehart 1997: 170). Yet instead, recent years have seen declines in numerous forms of political participation including working for a political party, attending a political rally, and writing a member of Congress (Putnam 2000: 46; Applbaum 2002: 23).

One possible contributing factor to the recent decline in participation rates is that the pursuit of democracy has not been a primary goal in the development of ICTs. The goal of democracy has been overshadowed by capitalistic enterprises more interested in the pursuit of profit rather than that of democratic practice. In other words, market forces supercede democratic principles as the guiding standard in the development and use of communication technologies by companies. In addition, as a contributing factor, the information explosion has also "vastly increased the marketability and value of commercial information by reducing costs of transmission and the transaction costs of charging information users" (Keohane and Nye 2001: 176). Because the exchange of information is less costly and burdensome, the more attractive the information becomes both to the company that is selling the information and the citizen that is purchasing the information. The value of communicating information is increasingly being driven by profit. This is an unsettling path for those interested in exploiting the democratic potential of ICTs, which will be elaborated upon in Part II of this chapter.

The fact that profit-maximization drives the communications industry is not a new phenomenon. As a result of market forces, profit has long served as the primary consideration in the business model of commercial enterprises, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television (Baker 2002: 3). In his history of the broadcasting industry, Barnouw writes that "…almost every [broadcasting] invention became the property of a company, and eventually a weapon in titanic struggles, deals, and mergers, bearing on control of the broadcasting media" (1966: 9). In fact, the communications

industry has traditionally been known as a collection of enterprises that, without a strong advertising revenue base, would quickly collapse and vanish.

The Internet, relying on ICTs, has gone to mimic its broadcasting predecessors by heavily relying on advertising revenue for financial support (National Research Council 2001; DiMaggio et al., 2001). The dot-com bust of the early 21st century affirmed that a similar logic of advertising can also be applied to the Internet (Canter and Siegel 1994). Admittedly, the Internet is frequently used by citizens for numerous nonpolitical activities, including everything from seeking health and religious information, to online banking and auctions, as well as instant messaging and downloading music (Pew 2003). And this is not surprising, given that such nonpolitical online activities generally have more profit-maximization potential than any strictly political activity. As a result, more companies flood the Internet with activities that are largely nonpolitical in nature. Therefore, given that the exchange of information is not simply a fundamental business activity but is also a vital democratic activity (Stiglitz 1999: 4), persuading the communications industry to support the democratic uses of ICTs is seen by citizens as an important policy consideration.

Capitalism, the Market and ICTs

The key issues and actors in the current landscape of the communications industry are numerous. The industry spans the sectors of print, radio and television broadcasting, terrestrial and cellular telephone, cable and satellite services, and the Internet as well as

information technology, which includes both old and new forms of ICT technologies.

Key actors within the communications industry are many, including representatives of

equipment manufacturers and service providers in the aforementioned sectors, as well as

federal, state, and local governments, advocacy groups and think tanks, scholars and

researchers, and the public. These actors influence the public policies related to ICTs and

their applications.

The particulars of these old and new ICT sectors vary greatly, but both share the ability to

foster communication exchanges among citizens. Communications regulation and policy

in the U.S. has been and continues to be guided by both political and economic values.

The degree to which one or both of those values dominate communications regulation

and policy has a direct effect on how information is exchanged among citizens. This

study seeks to examine this relationship between political (democratic) and economic

(market-driven) values. This includes how communications have been shaped over time

to help inform citizens of what problems, if any, there are with the types of regulation and

policies that exist, and what actions are necessary in order to remedy such problems.

With respect to political values, communications regulation and policy are guided by

several key principles derived from a clause in the Communications Act of 1934. [6] The

act states that communications should be regulated in a manner that promotes the "public

interest, convenience, and necessity." These key principles serve to respect the

boundaries of the First Amendment of the Constitution, which ensures the right to free

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[6] The legislative language in the 1934 Communications Act and the 1996 Telecommunications Act read
that communications regulation should adhere to the "public interest, convenience, or necessity." See Pub.
L. No. 416, 48 Stat. 1064 (1934) and Pub. L. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996).

expression. Such principles for communications policy were established and are overseen by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC has interpreted this clause to require the political principles of universal service, localism, the marketplace of ideas, diversity, decency, and the public interest. These principles are all interrelated, as they fall under the umbrella of the public interest principle. This is because such principles (except for decency) have all been determined to support the notion that the viewer or the listener—the citizen receiving the information—should have the opportunity to receive a variety of information from diverse sources (Napoli 2001: 53). And subsequently, this opportunity, when promoted, serves the public interest. Decency is a principle promoted by the FCC that falls in line with the public interest as well. However, it distinguishes itself from the other principles as it discriminates rather than promotes certain information from being communicated.

The principle of the public interest can be defined as regulatory actions and public policies that serve the interest of the public. The FCC has interpreted the public interest principle broadly (and some scholars may suggest too broadly), but has consistently relied upon and applied the principle nonetheless. A recent example of the broad application of the public interest principle is the outcome of the rulemaking process on the media ownership rules, whereby the FCC acted against what seemed in the interest of the public, but nevertheless stated that its decision was in the public interest. The FCC initiated a proceeding to determine whether the current rules that impose caps on the amount of media companies owned by a single corporation in a market needed to be revised.

This issue emerged because it had been many years since the FCC first imposed

ownership caps upon corporations. Since that time, the landscape of the media industry

has changed dramatically. Cross-ownership (e.g. a newspaper and television station

owned by the same corporation in one market) has increased as has competition among

media outlets. The FCC felt that the current ownership caps may be too low and that

competition was sufficiently regulating the media industry. The concern by those

opposed to this proceeding is that a select group of corporations would be able to control

even more media outlets and that the number of distinct information sources (sources not

owned by the same corporation) were already too limited. Although the FCC had

received thousands of comments submitted by members of the general public—with most

of these comments overwhelmingly in opposition to loosening the caps—the FCC

decided to loosen the rules. The FCC claimed in its rulemaking that continuing to

enforce rules that encouraged competition in an environment that already had sufficient

competition was not in the public's interest and therefore, needed to be remedied.[7]

Another example of the inconsistent application of the public interest principle is the

changing standards of broadcast decency that have emerged over time. It is not difficult

to observe that the standards of decency that existed in the early days of television, for

example, are not the same standards that apply today. Television programs, including the

"I Love Lucy" show, for example, portrayed couples who did not sleep with each other in

the same bed and who could not openly discuss pregnancy on camera, despite actually

being pregnant during the filming of several episodes. Certainly, the standard of decency

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[7] See FCC Report and Order 03-127 *In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review*, June 2, 2003; and Future of Music Press Release, "Citizens Urge FCC to Retain Current Media Ownership Rules," May 14, 2003.

fifty years ago was much higher than it is today, but it is also important to note that such standards of decency are still relevant according to regulatory agencies. The FCC's swift investigation into CBS's Superbowl XXXVIII Half-Time Show as well as new legislation on broadcast decency introduced by the 108th Congress support this claim.

The other principles upon which the FCC relies—universal service, localism, the marketplace of ideas, diversity, and competition—clarify how citizens can obtain the opportunity to receive a variety of information from diverse sources. As it applies to the communications industry, universal service promotes access of information to citizens. Localism encourages local voices to be heard, given that issues and concerns close to home often have a direct and greater effect on the lives of citizens than do those that originate from the federal or even state level. The marketplace of ideas suggests that many voices, be them similar or different, should be exchanged, but that some will win out over others. Diversity implies that distinct types of information must have the opportunity to be presented so that citizens are aware of varying viewpoints. And lastly, competition refers to the concept that no one actor should dominate the economic and political activities of all others in the communications industry.

In addition to political ones, economic values also greatly affect communications regulation and policy. This is because the economic value that often guides its regulation and policy is to maximize revenue and minimize costs (also known as profit-maximization). The key reason why economic regulation plays an important role in the communications industry is the need to ensure that market failures, such as natural

monopolies and negative externalities, do not occur (Reagan 1987; Kahn 1998). The

maximization of profits is an inherent activity of the capitalist economic system to which

our society and many other societies adhere. Capitalism is defined as an economic

system in which the means of production and distribution are privately owned, and

development is proportionate to the accumulation and reinvestment of profits gained in a

free market. More simply put, capitalism is the private ownership of products and

services whereby the market determines output based on the amount of profit. Not

surprisingly, the economic values of capitalism exist in tension with the political values

of democracy. Scholars have noted that this tension is a result of the "hands-off" or

laissez-faire approach of capitalism being interrupted by the democratic challenges based

on social values of right and wrong (Heilbroner and Thurow 1998: 25).

As has been observed by numerous economists, the market can still favor consumer

interests over democratic ones. And the implication of this over time may be extremely

problematic for society. Democracy is a system in which decisions are made based on

voting. This is in contrast to a market system whereby owners of capital and consumers

are the basis for decision-making. Some, such as those who work for political parties,

believe in the importance of democratic values guiding decision-making in the policy

arena. Others, such as those who work for organizations promoting free market policies,

believe that markets are more responsive than American democracy and may, at times,

better serve the public interest. There are certainly virtues and vices to both systems, and

occasionally, the interests of consumers align with the interests of citizens. Yet, in the

end, the chosen policy approach often leads to differing outcomes. The school choice

debate illustrates the tension between democratic and market values as well, whereby the public good of providing funds to educate all school-age children (the democratic-based approach) contrasts the use of vouchers for some children to attend better schools while serving as incentives for others (the market-based approach).

As a result of this tension, capitalism and the market have historically influenced democratic politics, and vice versa. But the degree to which one has influenced the other has varied based on scholarly interpretation of political economists who have theorized about this influence. To begin, Adam Smith saw the market as self-correcting, promoting a policy of laissez-faire whereby government should not interfere with the activities of the marketplace. The self-correcting characteristic of the market emerges as a function of price competition among buyers and sellers. Additionally, the market is responsive and produces the goods and services desired by society—also known as the law of supply and demand. If the government interfered with market activities, the market forces would be disrupted and would be unable to correct themselves as needed.

Despite its virtues of being self-correcting and responsive to the needs of society, the market cannot provide certain public goods such as national defense and law, or consistently meet the ethical or social criteria of society. For example, the market may continue to produce goods because they are profit maximizing without ever altering its activities. However, the market would be unable to react to the potential scenario that such goods are either harmful to consume or antithetical to democracy (Heilbroner and Thurow 1998: 29). Market forces are unable to see the greater harm than good that is

occurring. Later theorists have suggested that the continual growth of the market

suggested by Smith has its limitations.

Though Smith's understanding of the market is still discussed today, Karl Marx presented

a different view that also highlights the tension between political and economic values.

Marx believed that the market was a powerful force in maximizing profit for the few, but

that a self-destructive quality is also promoted by the market at the same time. This self-

destructiveness, resulting from the reduction of social classes from many to only two—

the owners and the workers—could ultimately destroy the economy (Marx 1978: 473-

483; Heilbroner and Thurow 1998: 37). Marx sought to challenge the general stability of

the market that was espoused by Smith. Instead, Marx asserted that an inherent

instability existed within the market system and that therefore, capitalism altogether

would ultimately need to be eliminated.

In response to Smith and Marx, John Maynard Keynes recognized the tension between

political and economic values, but thought that these values could coexist in a relatively

stable fashion. Keynes believed that the market requires government intervention at

specific points in time and therefore advocated what has come to be termed a mixed

economy. Living through the depression era of the late twenties and early thirties,

Keynes theorized that capitalism relies on the willingness and ability of entrepreneurs to

make capital investments. When there is an absence of this willingness and ability, the

market stagnates. At this point, only government spending could remedy the stagnation

(Heilbroner and Thurow 1998: 42). In short, Keynes did not agree with Marx's fatalistic

thoughts on capitalism, but also disagreed with Smith's belief in the self-correcting characteristic of the market. Another economic scholar, Milton Friedman, later supported the idea that a free market does not automatically eliminate the need for government involvement (Friedman 1982: 15).

Despite the progression in ideas about capitalism, the market, and their relationship to democratic values, the primary assumption that still underlies all of these ideas is that competitive, profit-maximizing individuals can rely on the market to provide them with their desired goods and services. However, it is also the case that a free market can also drive the preferences of individuals. This suggests that the desires of citizens can be created and manipulated by the market and without the active knowledge of such citizens.

Given the speed with which technologies are changing and through which development in communications is increasing, the maximization of profit can have a powerful effect on the direction of communications regulation and policy. Scientific research in recent decades has led to an explosion of knowledge in numerous areas including information processing and communications technology. This explosion has increased the reliance of countries on a free market system that produces and exchanges information as well as communications technology goods and services. Additionally, trends in globalization signal the interrelationship between and the progress of communications technology and the market. Communication networks are facilitated and supported by businesses; they provide goods and services in addition to information that is necessary for citizens of democracies to function democratically. However, when the networks of communication

limit the number of outlets that provide information, the First Amendment, the public

interest, and its related guiding principles of communication regulation are weakened.

One example of limiting citizens' opportunity to receive a variety of information from

diverse sources relates to the rulemakings that regulate cable companies as Internet

Service Providers. Because of limited regulatory actions taken by the FCC, cable

companies are able to discriminate various information (such as those from its

competitors, for example) passed on to its users when the information is being sent using

the cable companies' networks. This is distinct from the more understandable public

policy position of the FCC regulating content such as pornography, because it has been

left up to the individual cable companies (not a federal policy set in place by the FCC) to

determine what types of discrimination they would like to apply. This discrimination can

take the form of blocked sites, delayed page loading speeds, in addition to the redirecting

to preferential sites selected by the cable company. The reason that this discrimination is

allowed is that the FCC has been cautious to carry out regulatory actions on Internet-

related technologies. In this particular case, the FCC made the determination that cable

companies are not telecommunication services providers, as are telephone companies.

Therefore, the same regulatory policies that apply to telephone companies providing high

speed Internet access—including nondiscrimination of information—do not apply to

cable companies as high speed Internet Service Providers. The ease with which citizens

can communicate using ICTs coupled with the potential inability for First Amendment

and the public interest to be represented in the regulatory and policy arenas reinforce

concerns by citizens who believe that nondiscriminatory, open communication is central to democratic politics.

By illustrating that the marketplace can limit diversity of opinion due to the influence of corporations, this study does not seek to suggest that capitalism or any value that promotes profit-maximization, in its entirety, should be rejected. In fact, a consumer-driven economy is the practical reality in which we live and on occasion, our consumer interests align with our citizen interests. Rather, this study aims to highlight the tension between political and economic values, and then evaluate that tension within the realm of communications regulation and policy by examining the role citizens play in such the public policy process. In fact, that both political and economic values are considered during the communications regulatory and policy process has a direct implication for the democratic potential of ICTs.

In order to test its democratic potential, ICTs must exist within a regulatory and policy environment where the public interest is served. As established in Part I of this chapter, technologies have the potential to promote democracy. And when technologies in our society promote democracy, they are similarly promoting the public interest. Some concern exists among citizens that there is no consistency among what principles ICTs promote and regulations that can be established to either promote or hinder free speech, protect or limit privacy, encourage or stifle diversity of opinions, as well as further or challenge the public interest. As a result, these concerns are important considerations for citizens groups that focus on info-comm policy.

As discussed earlier, corporations that sell communications products or services tend to place more value on the impact of communications regulation on profit-maximization rather than on democratic activity. This is due to the fact that without the potential for profit, there would be little interest in creating a market for a particular set of goods or services. And because democracy is not an especially profit-maximizing characteristic for goods and services, fewer corporations are interested in entering a market wherein democracy or democratic elements comprise the goods and services of that market. Corporations could choose to support regulations that foster democracy. However, the reality is that there is no guarantee and that these corporations place a great value on profit making.

Trends of Corporate Elitism in Communication

The trend among ICTs has been in favor of the demands of the market (i.e. profit-maximization) rather than democracy. One reason is because the communications industry, in some ways dominated by the Internet, has been left largely unregulated in order to allow its development, as noted earlier. The Internet facilitates the two-way communication of information for users (citizens), rendering citizens as both receivers and producers of information. Additionally, the information being received can be customized to fit the user's needs, through the use of portals and filtering. Such portals and filtering easily prevent the user from being overexposed to information. The Internet seems an ideal technology for facilitating "rule by the people" (Barber 2001), through increased exposure to desired information, including that which is political. However,

citizens could choose not to use ICTs for political information or participation. In addition, these features are also harmful to the extent that citizens can easily restrict their own opportunity to receive a variety of information from diverse sources. ICTs were developed to prevent any control of the transferring of information by any one individual or corporation in order to promote free flowing exchanges. Yet, the absence of stronger communications industry regulations, in relation to the Internet, suggests a weakening of the democratic potential of ICTs.

Although it seems that the Internet has the potential to be an extremely democratic medium, we cannot know its potential for certain because it has not yet been unleashed. There is no government-imposed requirement for ICTs to be developed with the express intent of promoting democratic principles, such as the right to free expression of the First Amendment or even the right to privacy one can infer from the Fourth Amendment. In fact, information and communication are becoming increasingly commodified by corporations that are either (1) selling information to users and/or advertising space to other companies; or (2) compiling (and often selling) information they have gleaned from visitors to their website, often without consent (Rasmussen 2000: 94-95; Dean 2002: 3). Such corporations, comprising an info-comm "corporate community," are an elite group that uses the market to reinforce their financial footing (Domhoff 1983: 56). As a result, American "consumers as well as the policy community have moved from viewing communications as a public good to viewing it as a private commodity" (Schiller 1989).

The communications landscape itself has been shifting in recent years because of the perspective that communications are more a private commodity than anything else. In 1997, for example, four corporations owned over 25 percent of all media industry outlets and fifty corporations owned more than 80 percent of those outlets (Compaine and Gomery 2000: 562). In fact, across the globe, six media corporations dominate the exchange of information. These corporations are Viacom Inc., Walt Disney Company, Vivendi, News Corporation, AOL TimeWarner, and Bertelsmann (Mediachannel.org). This is problematic to the extent that the information being presented is less diverse and distinct in content, which can occur as a result of consolidation. As Gurevitch and Blumler note, these giant media corporations "seem committed to the presentation, not of a broad spectrum of ideas but of mainstream opinion currents…" (in Lichtenberg 1990: 269). It is possible, though, that content can remain as or more diverse than before consolidation. However, there is less of an economic incentive for a media entity to vary content if used by a variety of media outlets. Clear Channel Communication's approach to package radio programming across all of their approximately 1,000 stations is one notable example.

In addition to the absence of a strong democratic framework to guide ICTs, the explosion of information has led to less being absorbed by citizens and more being controlled by corporations. This lessening of information absorption, termed "information overload," suggests that citizens are viewing and hearing less (including political information), as the vast amounts of information have led to an extremely competitive marketplace where narrow audiences are addressed (Pool 1998: 249). Studies have shown that citizens see

or hear a decreasing proportion of the information that is available to them—a sort of numbing effect that occurs. A related effect is the fragmentation of audiences, whereby because there is more information that is increasingly targeted at smaller audiences, fewer citizens find much information relevant to them and therefore, simply ignore it (Pool 1998: 251).

The increased information has led to a more competitive marketplace in which a narrow group of companies have become "trusted" sources of information, pushing aside other distributors of information who may be, but are not considered, reliable information sources. As discussed earlier, some information media are more trusted than others (for example, television over newspapers), a phenomenon similar to the "brand naming" of products whereby some names are trusted more than others. This concept of trust also carries over into ICTs, whereby trust is a factor when citizens use the Internet. A 1998 study by Cheskin Research and Studio Archtype/Sapient determined that an Internet company which had a preexisting presence in the "real world" was more trustworthy by consumers than one that did not. In addition, a Website is generally more successful when it has a track record of efficiency and easy navigation by citizens. At that time, Dell Computer, Wal-Mart, and Borders Group were noted as among the most trusted Internet websites. A 2003 study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Intel confirmed the continued importance of brand identity on trust by citizens who use the Internet. The fact that a limited number of sites are trusted over others suggests that ICTs can be used by elite groups of corporations for specific market strategies. For example, the corporations can market only specific types of information, products, and services to

select groups of users. And often, if not always, those users are selected based on their ability to maximize the profit of the corporations. There have been numerous additional studies on trust and the Internet by foundations, such as the Pew Internet and American Life Project, and by scholars, such as Bruce Bimber, Eric Uslaner, Patricia Wallace.

While citizens choose to receive certain types of information (such as political information) using newer rather than older forms of media, these same citizens are further affected by the principles that guide the growth of the communications industries developing these technologies. One example is the pornography industry, which is extremely profitable (Johnson 1996; Thornburg 2002) and which attracts both the attention of those who consume the product as well as those who develop ICTs for that industry. In fact, some of the practical uses of ICTs, such as streaming video and MP3s, were first tested in the pornography industry and paved the way for further investment by other industries (Johnson 1996). Industries, like pornography, are attracted to ICTs because, as noted earlier, there is much more limited regulation that can apply to these media as opposed to older, more traditional forms. ICTs also make pornography easier to produce and distribute than older forms of media, and provide a greater level of perceived buyer and seller anonymity than previous technologies. This is considered a benefit by some consumers as well as corporations. As a consequence, the pornography industry has grown exponentially with the development of the Internet.

Consequently, ICTs are influenced more by market forces than by democratic interests. It seems that many in political science agree that "democracy functions best when its

citizens are politically informed" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). If this is true and considering that the number of citizens who obtain political information through ICTs is gradually increasing[8]—especially for younger citizens according to Pew's Internet & American Life Project—the manner in and degree to which ICTs are regulated is critical to testing the potential for increased democratic access to political information.

If the Internet is left entirely to market forces, the fate of democratic communication is in question, as strategies that promote the primacy of market forces via capitalism may come in conflict with those that adhere to democracy. One potential outcome, as it stands now, is that communication will continue to be guided by corporate decisions that support responses to market forces and benefit corporations rather than the public interest in promoting free expression and accessibility. This would by no means suggest the end of democratic communication, but rather that the ability to ensure democratic outcomes in communications regulation and policymaking would be limited.

Though the Internet, and its related ICTs, are developed and marketed by the communication industry for primarily commercial uses (CSTB 2001; DiMaggio et al., 2001; Lessig 1999), the control exerted by corporations over regulations and policies is not a novel approach to technology. Technology has often been referred to as a tool of control. Herbert Marcuse has written of the *a priori* role of technology as a "form of social control and domination" (1991: 158). He claims that the more we rely on science

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[8] According to Pew, "more Americans used the Internet to get campaign information in 2002 than during the last midterm election four years ago. While much of this increase has come from the overall growth in the online population, a higher proportion of Internet users sought election news than did so four years ago (22% now, 15% in 1998). The Internet was a less important source for such news in 2002 than in 2000, but midterm elections typically engender less public interest than presidential contests."

to legitimize rationality and on the seemingly liberating force of technology, the more we observe "the instrumentalization of man" (1991: 159). And, as Lawrence Lessig notes, the trend on the Internet is towards more control by companies or by the governments that sanction them (1999). Another theorist has gone so far as to suggest that powerful communication companies, such as those in entertainment, greatly affect democratic governance. This is because democracy relies on information being communicated to citizens and the gatekeepers of the communications outlets are the entertainment industry (Dean 2002: 4). In addition, the information that is increasingly being communicated today is nonpolitical in nature. This is because entertainment programming (i.e. reality television, motion pictures, etc.) are the goods that maximize profit for entertainment corporations. Therefore, the entertainment industry is in fact in the driver's seat with respect to how, when, and to whom information is communicated. And although this may be best for consumers, this may not be in the interest of citizens, as decisions to determine social policies are often distinct from decisions driven by individual desires.

Such views that support the influence of corporations can be supported by the trend toward media consolidation in recent times. From 1981 to 1997, the number of media companies that own the market was reduced by 50%, from 46 to 23 (Bagdikian 1997: 21). Additionally, the top twenty media corporations control approximately 75% of the information communicated by the media to citizens (Compaine and Gomery 2000: 562-563). Control over who provides information and who receives it is not a new occurrence. It is important to remember that this control can be leveraged over political information, such as that of campaigns. Early 20th century resistance put forth by

newspapers against radio over advertising revenue was indicative of this power struggle (Barnouw 1968). The shape of the info-comm industry has undoubtedly been affected by this and will continue to be affected if the media ownership rules are weakened by the FCC. It is hypothesized that the weakening of these rules would increase the control media corporations have over content and the uses of information. However, there is no solid evidence to support this conclusion and in fact, the weakening of these rules may have no or the inverse effect.

Critical of the trends emerging in the info-comm industry, Jodi Dean writes that ICTs "present themselves for and as a democratic public..." (Dean 2002: 3). However, she does not believe that democracy is yielded from this rhetoric. Given that the commercial uses of ICTs supersede any democratic ones simply because of the latter's limited marketing potential, the communication industry will continue, as a result of its elitist tendencies, to exclude democratic principles from its business model unless government regulation requires otherwise. The government has historically regulated the telecommunications industry to uphold guiding social principles in the public interest. Communications policy is a telling tale of when capitalism and democracy clash rather than complement each other. "…Net freedom is the freedom of the market, the freedom of corporations to extend market forces throughout the domain of the social" (Dean 2002: 110). Given the industry's strong political influence, it is highly likely that ICTs will continue to support this strategy if left unchallenged.

Given that citizens require communication to build political knowledge, ensuring that democratic principles are supported, rather than hindered by ICTs is an important policy consideration. The democratic policies such as free expression and privacy cannot consistently emerge in a society driven by market forces because they do not generally support commercial environments that sustain profit-maximizing activities. Therefore, incentives are required to encourage policies that promote governance by citizens, not corporations. Voices that support the notion of ICTs being grounded in democracy are needed to allow citizens to have the opportunity to build political knowledge. One consideration is that ICTs should be developed so that citizens have a choice between the fully informed "alternative experiences" across political issues (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996: 6). However, with market forces driving ICTs and the communications industry, citizens rarely have the choice between these informed alternative experiences. It is up to an individual or a group to provide this alternative. An influential set of political actors must challenge the communication industry's influence by asserting that the primary goal in the development of ICTs is to uphold democratic principles. Although the original intent of establishing the FCC was to ensure a similar purpose—to promote the "public interest, convenience, and necessity"—the current deregulatory stance of the FCC problematizes whether or not the public interest is served by leaving policy decisions to communications corporations alone (Napoli 2001: 7). Citizens, as members of interest groups (and notably, public interest groups) can act to promote the "public interest" if they are afforded a prominent political role in democratic society.

Distinct from the function of corporations—but similar in strength of influence– private

charitable foundations play an important role in communications policy. And they are

often overlooked in political science discussions. The actors involved in info-comm

policy, as noted earlier, include representatives of equipment manufacturers and service

providers in the aforementioned sectors, as well as local, state, and federal governments,

advocacy groups and think tanks, scholars and researchers, and the public. Many

advocacy groups, think tanks, and scholars and researchers are largely financially

supported by members and/or by private corporate or charitable foundations interested in

furthering policies that promote the public good. Even if it comprises only a fraction of

an organization's budget, a foundation can have tremendous influence over the outcomes

of that organization.

The reliance on financial support by these groups suggests that private charitable as well

as corporate foundations have the ability to influence communications policy. In fact,

they are considered powerful social institutions. One particular concern about their

powerful influence is that a culture of elitism can emerge from non-member sources of

financial support for public interest groups, which include private corporate and

charitable foundations. A form of elitism naturally emerges in the internal practices of

any organization as it becomes clear that a central authority is best suited to ensure that

decisions are made and actions are taken in a fast and efficient fashion. For example, this

elitism exists in corporations where the number of employees is great, where decisions

must be made quickly, and where the monetary stakes of the business are high. Corporations have applied a "less than democratic" approach to their decision-making processes, including implicit employee policies surrounding political campaign contributions (Clauson, Neudstadtl, and Weller 1998). This approach can have a great influence on advocacy groups and think tanks when corporations serve as their primary or sole source of financial support by resulting in the privileging of certain perspectives and decisions based on elitist influences rather than democratic deliberation.

Additionally, some have argued that the tax-exempt status of charitable foundations— another major source of financial support for advocacy groups and think tanks, scholars and researchers, and the public—creates a culture of elitism similar to corporations where wealthy individuals and families choose to support their own pet causes—a way to promote a form of "private" public policy (Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy 1970: 12). Foundations are not held publicly accountable for their activities and often recruit from the "class of intellectuals" in society who the foundations believe will further their interests. This is not to suggest that Bill and Melinda Gates' support of US public libraries to provide computer and Internet access, for example, is not an admirable or humanitarian action. Rather, this study simply illustrates that the decision-making process on how the use of foundation funds, considered public because of their tax exempt status, is not always public. The tax-exempt status takes revenues away from the government who, with the input of the citizenry, would decide how this money should be spent (although some believe that the tax-exempt nature of the funds make them "quasi-public").

The emergence of a culture of elitism is inevitable due to the dual nature—both public and private—of foundations (Katz 1968; Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy 1970; Cuninggim 1972; Bertelsmann 1999). In fact, private foundations have been criticized as "closed corporation[s]" that exclude the public from their decision-making processes (Cuninggim 1972: 77). A key reason why charitable foundations are criticized is because of the belief that citizens should be able to provide input on how funds set aside for the welfare of the public will be used. However, the manner in which those funds are used is determined by a select group of individuals, usually a grant officer, for example, overseen by a board of trustees. Furthermore, other scholars, such Joan Roelofs, have highlighted the role foundations play in protecting and promoting capitalist ideology and intellectual pursuits rather than the true public interest (2003). The role of foundations is to further knowledge, but the knowledge that they are promoting is rarely questioned in any way.

One remedy to corporate elitism is not to eliminate such foundations, but rather to require that foundations make great efforts to assess the interests of the public and how foundations can address those interests. Otherwise, public accountability on the use of funds is also lessened (Cuninggim 1972: 83). By virtue of the nature of their mission as philanthropic organizations, coupled with a special government tax-exemption status, the activities of charitable foundations that support such advocacy groups and think tanks, scholars and researchers, and the public should reflect the public interest in communications policy. This is vitally important in an industry that is extremely responsive to the needs of consumers, but not always responsive to the needs of citizens.

Chapter Two discusses interest groups, many of which rely on foundations for financial

support. The chapter will provide insight into the importance of these groups on the

policymaking process as well as address their role in info-comm policy.

Chapter Two: Interest Groups and Citizens in Info-Comm Policy

This chapter discusses the influence of public interest groups on the development of policy, including info-comm policy. This includes the roles that both interest groups generally and public interest groups specifically play in American politics, how internal and external leadership can create elitist tendencies in public interest groups, and how info-comm groups can also face oligarchic leadership.

Interest Groups in American Politics

It is difficult to imagine the American political process without the voice of interest groups, as they have been and continue to be central players in democratic politics. In fact, democracy is seemingly inconceivable without organizations (Michels 1915/1999: 61). Interest groups are organized collections of citizens who come together in pursuit of a common cause. These interest groups can influence politics both directly and indirectly. As today's society and political system become more specialized and increasingly complex, the number of interest groups that participate in politics is rising (Berry 1997; Putnam 2000).

The existence of interest groups was first referenced in American democracy by James Madison. In *Federalist #10*, Madison acknowledged that even though citizens are united by common interests, some of these interests will inevitably contradict the welfare of others. When this occurs, the likely result is the emergence of factional clashes.

Madison defines these factions as "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" (Madison 1878: 54). The contemporary form of Madison's factions is known as pressure groups or interest groups. These groups are seen less as a forum for violence and more as a medium for citizens to exercise their freedom of speech and association, and unite for political causes. Madison noted the freedom that characterizes democracy would breed factions that inevitably challenge those in power. Thus, controlling the effects of factions through a republican form of government—where conflicts among the larger citizenry will balance each other—is the only reasonable remedy (Madison 1878: 58). Madison's comments in *Federalist #10* both foreshadowed as well as undervalued the role factions would later assume in American society.

Since Madison, political scientists have frequently interpreted politics through the lens of interest groups, thus acknowledging that these groups are vital to the political process. David Truman was among the first scholars to suggest that politics is better understood as a systematic process of conflicting interests (1951/1971). The interaction of conflicting interests occurs when common pursuits are organized together in the form of interest groups that inform and persuade policymakers and the public about their position on issues. Prior to Truman and the work of Robert Michels, interest groups had not been closely studied in political science, which treated all nonparty interest groups as peripheral to the political process.

Over time, interest groups have acquired a primary status in politics, as they have been extremely effective in leveraging their influence over certain issues and policies. These groups, in their most basic form, aim to shape public policies according to their interest preferences (Berry 1977; Cigler and Loomis 1991; Walker 1983/1994), and can be local, state, national, or global in scope (Scholzman and Tierney 1986; Thomas and Hrebenar 1999). As a consequence, government policy and resulting legislation are now seen by political scientists as determined by group pressure and conflict over these interest preferences (Bentley 1908/1967; Herring 1936; Odegard 1928: 104; Wilson 1973).

Interest groups influence government in a number of ways, including direct lobbying, congressional education, and litigation. For example, interest groups can represent their constituents before government by lobbying for their political agendas to members of Congress as well as relevant agency officials (Kumar and Grossman 1986; Peterson 1992) in the executive branch. Additionally, interest groups often litigate their policy positions in the federal courts (Caldeira and Wright 1988; Epstein and Rowland 1991) or those at the state and local levels.

While a portion of communication efforts is devoted to government officials and their staff, it is also the role of interest groups to inform citizens about a particular policy issue (Olson 1971; Berry 1977, 1997; Walker 1991; Petracca 1997). Thus, other interest group activities include public and media outreach to inform citizens about policy issues. Either individually or through the forging of coalitions, these groups can make citizens more aware of policy problems and potential solutions. Such groups use a variety of methods to communicate including publishing research and policy literature, holding public workshops and conferences, and engaging in public advocacy efforts.

Public and media outreach afford citizens various opportunities to be politically active, such as making donations, taking part in sit-ins or protests, or an elected official. "When political leaders offset the costs of political involvement—when they provide information, subsidize participation, occasion the provision of social rewards—they make it possible for people who have few resources of their own to participate" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993: 242). Thus, interest groups promote the political participation of citizens by minimizing costs (Hall and Waymann 1990). Additionally, interest groups allow citizens to participate in monitoring governmental programs by holding government accountable. All of these activities illustrate the important role that interest groups play in the political policymaking process.

Citizens with access to the political process, as well as those who are politically marginalized, are able to be actively involved in politics by mobilizing and having their interests articulated. This ability to mobilize and have interests articulated is grounded in what scholars call a theory of pluralism (also known as interest group liberalism) (Dahl 1961/1989). Pluralism challenged the previously held theory in political science that only a few wealthy and powerful individuals controlled the political decision-making process (Mills 1967). The theory of pluralism asserts that all citizens have access to and can create change within the political process.

Interest Groups and Their Elitist Tendencies

Although the theory of pluralism has been dominant in the political science literature, it has not gone unscathed by criticism. Critics of pluralism have claimed that government,

as it navigates the sea of interest group pressure, tends to favor the position of a few

groups over others (Gamson 1975: 9). This favoritism has been referred to by E.E.

Schattschneider as "the upper class bias of the pressure system" (1975: 30). It is

reasonable to expect that elitist tendencies emerge in a political system that is not and

cannot be populist. Only the few will engage in political activities. However, this does

not rationalize the potential challenges faced in a society when the few represent the

interests of the many. Additionally, these elite groups are often not held accountable to

the public and therefore, can use their political power to shape public opinion (Gamson

1975: 10). This criticism suggests that a continued pattern of conservative politics exists

within government (Lowi 1979), whereby the efforts of a majority of citizens to mobilize

around their interests can be futile if such political activity tends to reflect the status quo.

"The very success of established groups is a mortgage against a future of new needs that

are not yet organized or are not readily accommodated by established groups" (Lowi

1979: 5). Despite these persuasive critiques that continue to be considered, pluralism

remains the dominant theory within political science, illustrating the importance of

interest groups in the democratic political process.

Elitism emerges not only among groups, but within groups as well through its leadership.

Leadership plays a central role in the activities of interest groups in general and public

interest groups in particular. The definition of leadership used for this study is "a process

whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal"

(Northouse 1997: 2). The key elements of this definition are that it is an *individual* (or

set thereof) who *influences others* in support of a *shared goal*. Leadership is a *process* by

which a leader interacts with others. There exists a vast literature on the many different approaches to and theories of leadership, including the trait and style approaches (i.e. personality vs. behavior), transactional and transformational approaches (i.e. dependent on exchanges between leaders and members vs. inspiration by the leader that motivates the members and in turn, the leader) situational (effective leaders can adapt to situations), contingent (the right leader for the right setting), and leader-member (leadership depends on interactions between leaders and members). Scholars such as James MacGregor Burns and Barbara Kellerman have looked closely at political leadership. Burns popularized the concept of transformational leadership through linking the roles of leadership and followership, whereby individuals inspire followers to better reach the goals of both (1979). Kellerman has focused on furthering a multidisciplinary approach to better understand the role of leadership in politics (1984 and 1986).

Regardless of the theory, leadership plays a central role in the decision-making activities of interest groups. As expected, leaders often set the agenda, determine which strategies to pursue, and are the representative face of the interest group. They organize the interests of the group and ensure that those interests are being properly articulated. Leaders set the tone for how the group will function and encourage others to enlist in their cause. They also influence how the group is financially supported by soliciting members and other private supporters. Although it is in the interest of leaders to listen to and incorporate the input of their fellow staff, members, and other financial supporters, there is not always a mechanism in place within the organization ensuring that this occurs. And although possible, it is often difficult to formally challenge the leadership.

Those who exert leadership can also unduly influence the agenda, strategies, and representation of the group, weakening the forum of diverse interests and citizen participation that is unique to some groups such as public interest groups. This is because interest groups naturally tend to model oligarchies wherein hierarchies can emerge and allow for elite voices to dominate over the majority. Described as the "iron law of oligarchy," this tendency results in the leadership of the group determining its agenda in support of their own interests (informed by the leadership's own ambitions). In addition, those who lead and support these organizations are generally from the upper class, and are interested in preserving their social position (Domhoff 1983). As a consequence, these interests may differ from those of its membership (Michels 1915/1999). The controlling influence of leadership is an almost inevitable result of group organization, and is something that neither pluralism nor democracy can easily remedy. "Only by conflict and a public commitment to explicit goals can egoistic misuses of power be limited" (Michels 1915/1999: 36). These misuses of power can be limited by the public being apprised of the agenda and strategies of these groups (and their leadership) in order to evaluate and validate their efforts.

Securing financial support is another activity of interest groups that is necessary but over which leadership can exert its control. As noted in Chapter One, philanthropic financial support plays an important role in the development of communications policy. The securing of financial support allows a group to be more effective by affording it the ability to increase the group's staff and membership, its ability to build strategic

alliances, and its ability to frame and advocate policy messages effectively. Continued

financial support for an interest group can emerge from two distinct outcomes: success

or tension. If a group is successful in its activities, the expectation is that it should

continue to be financially supported, as it is a productive and effective part of the policy

debate. Thus, its financial support is ensured as long as its success continues. On the

other hand, losing policy battles on occasion (whether deliberately or not) is not

necessarily disadvantageous. Loss gives the appearance of a struggle for success and

suggests, at the same time, that success can only be ensured by long-term action and

financial support. Interest groups can use such losses to their advantage by being

conscious of how they represent their successes and failures. How groups "spin" their

efforts is closely related to their ability to leverage increased financial support.

Related to the securing of financial support is the broader concern of sustainability for

interest groups. These groups, as with others, must find ways to continue their existence

as a matter of self-preservation.[9] Otherwise, the cause for which they are fighting may

weaken if their efforts cannot be sustained (Walker 1994: 104). Self-preservation is also

important because many interest groups organize, *not* due to an obvious gap of a certain

interest articulation in the policy landscape, but rather because those individuals with

expertise and passion in a certain policy area recognize the possibility of merging their

personal income needs with the object of their personal livelihood. Thus, sustaining the

group becomes a critical consideration for both the future of the group and of the leader.

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[9] Groups can organize for one issue and then plan to disband afterwards, but this is a rarity as time, funds, staff, and other resources are not easily earned nor disposed of.

Public Interest Groups and their Elitist Tendencies

Not all interest groups are alike. Some interest groups have more staff and resources than others, some are financially supported by membership dues and others by foundations or private donors. Some are grassroots-oriented while others function as think tanks. Interest groups also vary in the composition of their constituency (Becker 1983; Mitchell and Munger 1991; Berry 1997). For example, many represent the interests of special groups, otherwise known as business interests. Within the info-comm community, these include computer manufacturers, telecommunications service-providers, or entertainment conglomerates. These special interest groups are economically motivated to support the interests of the particular business entity with which they are associated. One example is the Recording Industry Association of America, which regularly lobbies on Capitol Hill in opposition to the piracy of music files over the Internet and in favor of technological protections that prevent the copying of over-the-air broadcasts.

Public interest groups are different from special interest groups in that they are not economically motivated. They organize around interests that are not selectively or materially beneficial to any particular member of the group, but rather are what they perceive as beneficial to the general public as a whole (Friedrich 1962; Held 1970; Berry 1997). By virtue of their name and mission, public interest groups organize and lobby to represent the interests of the public on any number of policy issues. These groups serve as organizations that advocate a collective good from which all citizens can benefit (McFarland 1976). However, this does not imply the existence of a universal public

interest for citizens. Not limited to this definition, the public interest can also represent a perspective which is popular among citizens and one that citizens themselves have influenced. These three definitions can lead to different outcomes in practice (i.e., what is a public good may not necessarily be popular among citizens or a policy which they helped to influence).

How the public interest is defined and applied throughout this study is a combination of two scholarly definitions of the public interest. It combines the definition of a collective good from which all citizens can benefit, with another definition that suggests that public policy can only reflect the public interest when it is regularly informed by and held accountable to the public. Therefore, not only should a public interest group advocate a policy position that would benefit all citizens, but it should ensure that its position is supported by public opinion. These definitions are combined to reflect how public interest determinations should be made. This definition supports the belief that democratic processes are needed to identify policy solutions and to ensure that those policy solutions (including the agenda and strategies to achieve them) are not informed by the self-interest of group leaders or another set of elites, but rather by citizens themselves. Egalitarian democratic participation is a public good itself and therefore, is an integral consideration when defining the public interest. This is especially true for movements, such as info-comm policy, which tend to be technical in nature (requiring a level of expertise) and which have limited resources (preventing certain mobilizing activities). Although elites may be more effective is promoting democracy, the

legitimacy for policies vetted by citizens increases their legitimacy. Thus, incorporating a democratic process that allows this becomes as important as the policy goal.

The public interest movement emerged in the late 1960s to provide citizens and the representatives of their interests with the same rights and resources in policymaking as special interest lobbyists or their litigators. Political movements earlier in American history were formed around similar notions of increasing the public's role in politics. Progressives, for example, asserted that government should administer reforms in a scientific fashion in order to serve the greater good. Additionally, New Dealers claimed that creating strong branches of government would solidly promote reform throughout government (McFarland 1976: 17-18). Public interest groups are distinct from other types of interest groups in that they claim a special status, similar to labor unions: they are "a historically conditioned response to the problems posed for American politics by the rise of large business corporations…" (Vogel 1981: 608). Advocates who brought attention to and popularized the early public interest movement include John Gardner of Common Cause and Ralph Nader, founder of numerous groups such as Public Citizen. The current public interest movement, similar to that of the past, seeks to create change through ad hoc coalition building around policy issues.

In order to serve the public accordingly, public interest groups must have a mechanism to determine what is in the interest of citizens. "The public interest movement often refers to itself as a 'citizens' movement,' a 'consumer's movement,' or a 'people's movement,' precisely because it is the interests of individuals in these relatively 'public' roles that it

believes lack sufficient access to the political process" (Vogel 1981: 609). This requires

interest groups to be particularly effective in listening to and communicating with the

public when evaluating their interests.

As a result, public interest groups must actively work to gain an attentive audience where

their positions can be communicated and refined (Berry 1977: 31). This requires that the

public be able to articulate a shared interest of a particular policy issue. However, this is

a difficult task as the public is a large-scale mass that cannot easily organize to articulate

its vision of the public good. In fact, collective action research illustrates the difficulty in

gauging the public's interest by observing the following: individuals will form small

organizations around a common set of interests without coercion or incentive, while it is

difficult to form large-scale organizations without any economic incentive to do so

(Olson 1971). Reflecting on the public interest in the political process, the question of

how to articulate widespread and unorganized interests in a pluralist democracy is an

important consideration. Nevertheless, public interest groups in a pluralist democracy are

a legitimate part of the political process because they attempt to represent the broad

interests of the latent public.

The public interest group model has varied over time and across policy arenas. For

example, the public interest model included sizable membership organizations using

direct mail solicitations to build membership. The policy battles were primarily over

gaining legal standing in judicial as well as administrative (regulatory) reviews of rules,

policies, and legislation. However, over time, public entities such as interest groups and

experts have become increasingly involved in the policymaking process. They are

consulted with on a regular basis and provide policy suggestions directly to government,

some of which are implemented. In addition, what distinguishes the movement today

from that of the past is the growth of the federal government and the increasing

complexity of policy issues that has allowed for more opportunities within which public

interest groups can participate (Berry 1999: 30). However, the adversarial relationship

between government and public interest groups remains, as the effect of the public

interest model has increased government's role rather than weakened it. The model

varies across policy arenas as well. For example, citizens that support an environmental

public interest group are more able to comprehend both the negative and positive effects

of environmental policy and related legislation. As for info-comm policy, however, the

effects of such policies are not easily determinable for the average citizen. This poses the

challenge of drumming up support for causes related to info-comm policy, as citizens will

rationalize that other policy arenas are more worthy of their support given the more

tangible effects of their efforts.

Public interest groups play an even more important role in society today. Given the

growing social complexity and interdependence of postmodern societies that Inglehart

observed, the increasing policy problems require more complex resolutions (1997: 232).

Therefore, additional input from citizen participation is needed to supplement regulatory

solutions or market incentives towards resolution of policy problems (Sirianni and

Friedland 2001: 13). Because citizens are more informed now than previously, there is a

shift in the distribution of knowledge whereby citizens have access to as much

information as leaders (perhaps excluding any "insider" political information). Interest group participation is moving away from elite-directed modes to elite-guided ones whereby participation is guided rather than dictated by leaders within interest groups and in which a culture of public deliberation that empowers both citizens as well as institutions could emerge.

Public interest groups share the same challenges to democratic participation as any other type of interest groups, but such challenges are even more problematic as its absence weakens the groups' ability to represent the public interest. Numerous challenges can impact the agenda of such groups whose mission it is to represent the public. The foremost challenge with which public interest groups are confronted is the existence of multiple definitions of the public interest for a particular policy issue. The likelihood of multiple definitions arising is increased by the complexity of certain policy issues. And the more complex the issue, the more useful are public interest groups in articulating the diffuse interests of the public (McFarland 1976). Tension can arise when policy issues lend themselves to numerous interpretations of what the public desires at the same time that a public interest group articulates only a single policy position (in order to best effect change). Therefore, it is up to leaders of these groups to more clearly articulate a public interest policy position. However, the ability for a public interest group to clearly articulate a policy position is not without its own obstacles.

Although the proliferation of public interest groups in an information society has led to more narrow representations of individual and group preferences, such narrowness could

make it difficult to gather broad constituent support for a particular policy. Moreover, interest groups tend to encourage a form of hyperpluralism, whereby there are greater incentives to organize around and lobby for narrow interests in government programs, even if those programs are no longer useful (Sirianni and Friedland 2001:11). In addition, it is likely that several groups promote similar policy positions on the same narrow interest. This can lead to competition among natural allies for the attention of citizens and confusion among citizens for which policy position best fits their interest. This hyperpluralism, therefore, discourages the building of coalitions and the promoting of broad interests.

An additional obstacle that influences a group's inability to articulate the public interest in its agenda and strategies results from the financial support it receives. While vitally important to the creation and survival of public interest groups, financial support can result in negative externalities for these groups. One externality is the culture of elite-directed activities that can emerge from public interest groups that primarily rely on non-member financial support (i.e. corporations and private charitable foundations). As noted in Chapter One, public interest groups can easily be influenced in their decision-making processes by the foundations upon which they rely for financial support. This can be problematic when a corporation supports an interest group (given that these corporations have their own economic motivations for supporting certain interest group activities) and when foundations possess a tax-exempt status that affords them leeway to be less accountable to the public.

Given the influence and pressures of financial support by charitably endowed and corporate foundations for public interest groups, it is possible that these groups could reproduce the "closed corporation" in their activities and during their agenda-setting and strategic decision-making processes (Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy 1970: 70). Additionally, although public interest groups exist to represent the public, there does not seem to be evidence that these groups have formal mechanisms in place to prevent the emergence of an elite-directed rather than elite-guided agenda-setting or strategic planning process. Labor unions, for example, explicitly reject elite-directed activities (though it must be noted that oligarchies still tend to emerge within such groups). However, labor unions are a unique case and interestingly enough, their numbers are in serious decline. More common are public interest groups that function like foundations and corporations, which are rarely held accountable to the public for their activities. In addition, any group that has only one non-member source of financial support, whether it is a corporation, foundation, or individual donor, is less likely to represent the broad public than they are to represent special interests. Therefore, public interest groups can easily resort to functioning more like their nemesis—corporations— rather than their claimed ally—democratic public.

Additionally, the actual process of locating the sources of and engaging in competition for financial support can also impact a group's articulation of the public interest. Since the constituents of public interest groups vary based on the nature of the revenues received, the sources of financial support illustrate the distinction between how interests can be organized. Membership groups generally take advantage of already formed interests and simply corral those interests towards their group. Foundations, on the other

hand, often fund public interest groups in order to "discover" or develop latent interests in society. When financially supported by foundations and corporations, public interest groups must work to develop a message that will activate willing participants (Berry 1977: 20), regardless of whether or not this message was originally conceived by the public.

Info-Comm Groups and Their Elitist Tendencies

Groups that claim to represent the interest of citizens in info-comm policy are one example of public interest groups. Policy issues related to info-comm include those mentioned in Chapter One, such as broadcast licensing, intellectual property rights, spectrum allocation, and telecommunications regulation that include universal access and broadband deployment, among others. Info-comm groups are well informed about existing and emerging ICTs as well as their related regulations and policies. As a result, they seek to effect change in the regulatory and policymaking activities of relevant agencies, such as the FCC, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, and Congress

These interest groups are a subset of all interest groups that focus on info-comm policy and within this subset are groups that claim to promote the democratic applications of ICTs in order to encourage deliberative political communication among citizens. These groups fall into different categories (or are a combination of categories): liberal or conservative, advocacy group or think tank, focused only on communications policy or

numerous policies, emerged during the early public interest group movement or emerged more recently, and Washington DC-based or not. Examples include Media Access Project (one of the first liberal communications policy advocacy groups to emerge), Heritage Foundation (conservative think tank that addresses numerous policies), Consumers Union (liberal advocacy group that addresses numerous policies), and the Benton Foundation (liberal communications policy think tank that has existed for several decades).

Info-comm groups claim to uphold the public interest by arguing that their position on related policy issues would benefit the larger public. However, as noted earlier, there often exists more than one definition of the public interest. Determining how these groups and their sources of financial support define and act in the public interest would provide insight into whether the info-comm public interest movement is articulating the public's voice in the regulation and policy development of ICTs. As discussed with respect to interest groups generally and public interest groups specifically, two sets of actors play a significant role in how the public interest is articulated by info-comm groups. These are the leaders of the groups and the grant officers that financially support them. The research conducted for this study focuses on the role these two groups play in info-comm policy.

Although some citizen groups predate the beginning of the public interest movement in the late 1960s, the emergence of media public interest groups—one of the predecessors of info-comm groups—coincided with that time. These media public interest groups formed

in response to the landmark decision from the *Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ v. FCC*, 359 F.2d 994 (D.C. Cir. 1966) case, in which the United Church of Christ (UCC) sued a Mississippi broadcast station over the station's censorship of black news stories, interviews, and opinion pieces. UCC believed that citizens should have the opportunity to participate in the FCC's broadcast license renewal proceedings. As a result, UCC sued the FCC to challenge the activities of the Mississippi station, and to afford citizens legal standing in the FCC's license renewal proceedings. Ultimately, UCC successfully argued its case, and opened the door for increased public representation in the communications regulatory process. This led to a surge of media public interest groups during the following decade that focused on broadcast and related policy issues.

In the history of financial support for public interest groups, no single private charitable foundation is more notable in its support of the public interest than the Ford Foundation. During the 1970s, the Ford Foundation began its support of public interest law firms in pursuit of constructive social change through the broadening of public representation before government and to open up the governmental process (Berry 1999: 26). Public interest activity in policy arenas such as the environment and media reform began to gain strength as a result. The seed funding that the Ford Foundation, as well as the Markle and Rockefeller Foundations, afforded these public interest groups the ability to effect change and ultimately, secure financial support from other donors and grant-making

institutions. These three foundations remained key supporters of such interest group activity for decades.[10]

For the purposes of this study, the first set of key actors who influence how the public interest is defined and articulated are the leaders of info-comm groups. With the development of the information society, it is important to highlight that elite-directed activities become even more problematic. Like interest groups that focus on science policy, the leaders of info-comm groups are technically sophisticated and understand the policy implications of such complex technologies (i.e., these leaders are "technocrats") (May 2002: 7). Therefore, a group that promotes a complex policy issue and is engaged in numerous activities requires formal and concentrated leadership to effectively achieve its goals (Etzioni 1964; Gamson 1975: 11). This suggests that citizens must rely on leaders to understand and interpret information and then, to communicate their own preferences back to them. As noted, this is different from the environmental or women's rights policy where it is are easier for a citizen to comprehend the direct effects of related policies to their lives. Citizens may not, however, easily be able to comprehend all the facets of a particular technical info-comm policy issue.

A culture of elite-directed activities, rather than those that are elite-guided, emerges not only from the natural tendencies of groups and its leadership, but also from citizens' reliance on the technical knowledge of a relative few leaders in specific policy arenas. As such, citizens could be marginalized or easily excluded from the agenda and might

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[10] More on the history of the information and communications public interest policy movement can be found in Milton Mueller et al., "Civil Society and the Shaping of Communication-Information Policy: Four Decades of Advocacy."

have little recourse against or incentive to confront the group and its leadership. In addition to their technical background, the leaders also have the ability to shape the group's agenda and strategies according to their own ambitions and preferences. Therefore, the potential for the agendas and strategies of info-comm groups to be manipulated by leaders is significant. The group's agenda and strategies may be none other than the sum of the private interests of its leaders. In fact, entrepreneurial reasons tend to outweigh those related to economic disturbances as to why public interest groups emerge (Berry 1977: 26). Therefore, the activities of such info-comm groups may not always be reflective of the public interest.

The second set of key actors who influence how the public interest is defined and articulated consists of financial supporters of info-comm policy. Because info-comm groups have historically relied on private charitable foundation support, foundations (both new and old) have continued to invest in info comm media policy and have used their financial support to guide such policies. Grant officers who financially support info-comm groups influence the agenda and strategies of these groups. As a consequence, it is important for info-comm groups to ensure that the deliverables defined in their grant contracts are achieved. Otherwise, sustainability of the group comes into question. For example, info-comm groups, such as Media Access Project have thrived since the 1970s; while others, such as the Center for the Public Domain, were only able to sustain themselves for a few years. The challenge of sustainability can shift the agenda of info-comm groups away from the greater good of the public. Therefore, such groups

must constantly reassess their agendas and strategies in order to be proper representatives of the public interest in info-comm policy.

The manner in which these two actors make decisions directly affects the development of their agenda and strategies. Though these groups undoubtedly recognize that the democratic process has afforded them the opportunity to become key players in the political process, it cannot be assumed that these groups apply a similar democratic approach in their decision-making—especially given the operations and pressures applied by corporate and private charitable foundation sources of financial support. Additionally, info-comm groups often have only small staffs, whereby employees juggle several different tasks and not everyone in the group is as technically versed as the leadership. Therefore, the leadership may find it simply more efficient to make policy decisions with other leaders both within and outside the group. Elite-guided decision-making processes ignore any deliberation with the positions of other staff in the organization and prevent public accountability regarding past, present, and future decisions. The non-democratic nature of decision-making within info-comm groups flirts with the danger of further detaching their agenda and strategies from the interests of the public.

The ability of info-comm groups to articulate the public interest can be more closely examined by better understanding their approach to decision-making. Questions asked of the leadership of these groups and the private foundations that financially support them may shed light on (1) how the leaders of info-comm groups inform their public interest positions while developing their agenda and strategies; and (2) the extent to which grant

officers influence the agenda and strategies of info-comm groups. Responses to these types of questions will serve to test whether the leaders and grant officers adhere to an articulation of the public interest that is informed by the public.

In response to the theoretical framework and literature discussed in these first two chapters, the following chapters will outline this study's methodology and findings. To begin, the methodology for this study is presented in detail in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Significance of Research

The theoretical significance of this study is its contribution to the political science and public policy literature on the prominence of elite-directed versus elite-guided activities in the American political process. If elite-directed activities are more prominent than elite-guided activities in info-comm groups, this can result in an articulation of the public interest that is uninformed by citizens. These activities can be examined by observing the role of leadership within the decision-making and other activities of info-comm groups and their sources of financial support. Therefore, this study seeks to determine whether the articulation of the public interest is informed by citizens' participation in the political process and whether as a result, democratic politics—furthered by communication and its related technologies—is at risk of becoming less democratic and more oligarchic.

Research Question and Proposition Development

To facilitate the analysis of how info-comm group leaders and grant officers obtain an understanding and develop their articulation of the public interest (i.e., the extent to which it is informed by citizens), I designed several research questions, and related propositions that follow from these questions. The central issue for this study is how citizens inform group leaders' and grant officers' articulation of the public interest in info-comm policy.

As noted in Chapter Two, the role of leadership in interest group activity has been widely studied by political science. Additionally, elite interviews have been conducted by numerous political scientists (Dexter 1969; Berry 1977; Fenno 1978; Kingdon 1995; Salisbury 1993). However, the political science literature has spent little time examining this role within info-comm policy groups and the impact leaders have on policy in this particular issue venue. It is important to note that there is current research being conducted on leadership in the info-comm policy arena, including the importance of the interrelationships between government, research and development entities, industry, and civil society in the development of strong ICT societies (Wilson 2003). However, the underlying research questions are distinct from those presented in this research.

The research questions and propositions stated below (and the questions asked of interviewees to address these propositions) follow from my analysis of the literature on democratic theory, political economy, and interest groups. The first research question addresses how leaders and grant officers of info-comm groups interact and communicate with citizens to inform their understanding of the public interest. The second research question examines the extent to which the approach to decision-making by these leaders and grant officers is democratic.

Citizen Interaction and Communication

1. Does the leadership of the info-comm policy community inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens?

In order to evaluate the degree to which leaders of info-comm groups articulate a public interest agenda that is informed by citizens, a set of specific propositions on the leaders' interaction and communication with citizens was developed. These questions address the specific propositions outlined below. As discussed in Chapter One, democracy requires the exchange of political information to allow for increased participation and self-governance. The degree to which information is exchanged between citizens and public interest groups is an important policy consideration. Therefore, assessing this communication will provide insight into whether public interest groups are encouraging democratic deliberation and citizen participation in info-comm policy.

To begin, leaders were asked about their opportunities to solicit information from citizens about their policy position on info-comm issues. This proposition helps identify the level of communication between the leaders of interest groups and the citizens whose interests they seek to represent. If communication between the leaders and citizens is limited, then it is unlikely that the group's articulation of the public interest is grounded in information obtained directly from the public itself. Rather, it is generated by a process that is independent from and inaccessible to the citizenry.

Next, leaders were asked whether constituency-building and public outreach are important elements of their groups' activities. These propositions were included because they specifically address activities centered on communicating with citizens. Constituency-building implies that an interest group has a citizen membership base and that there is interaction and communication regarding info-comm policy both at a

national and local level. Public outreach suggests that an interest group reaches out to the citizens both to learn from as well as inform them about particular policy issues. If constituency-building and public outreach are not central activities of the group, then this limits the ability for an interest group to have a truly-informed articulation of the public interest, especially if their opportunities to get information from citizens are also limited.

Another set of propositions included in this study address leaders' perception of citizens' knowledge on info-comm policy. Leaders who feel that citizens are informed may be inclined to believe that they could benefit from conversations with them. If citizens understand the key issues and players, they may have additional insight into policy issues that could be valuable to leaders. They are certainly informed about their own individual experiences and related problems that could be addressed by public policy. Therefore, it would be advantageous for a leader to learn what they can from citizens. Leaders who feel that citizens are uninformed about info-comm policy may choose not to communicate with citizens because they believe that citizens' input is not valuable. This furthers the elitist tendencies of interest groups, as illustrated in Chapter Two. In addition, when leaders believe that citizens are uninformed, they may choose to create policy messages too complex for citizens to understand, believing that only other policy experts need to understand their message. This further perpetuates citizens' inability to understand the policy issue and inhibits them from making productive contributions to the process.

Additionally, the lack of faith in citizens' abilities to engage in constructive discourse about info-comm policy is another reason why these leaders may not seek to better educate the public as part of their interest group activities and thus, tend towards elitism. Without engaging in dialogue with citizens, leaders also may not take into consideration what segments of the population will be affected by their policy position and how. By not carefully considering who would be both positively and negatively affected by the group's policy position, leaders are unable to assess whether their articulation of the public interest is one that aims to benefit most citizens. They may believe that it does, but that belief is based on anecdotal information rather than concrete, direct interactions with members of their target populations.

A further set of propositions in this study examines the community of leaders and grant officers. The demographics of the community of info-comm leaders and grant officers may have an impact on how the public interest in that policy area is articulated. If the leaders and grants officers have limited interaction with citizens while also not reflecting the demographics of those citizens themselves, it may be difficult for them to articulate the public interest. This is because the ability to be informed by or have access to the policy position of citizens is limited if they are not representative of those interests. And, this can result in the leaders and grant officers pursuing an agenda that runs counter to the public interest or is informed by more narrow interests, such as business and commercial ones. In fact, such lack of citizen representation could potentially lead to the perpetuation of corporate elitism that already exists in info-comm policy, as discussed in Chapter One.

Leaders could be influenced both by their colleagues and by grant officers who provide

financial support for their group. For example, some leaders may regularly interact with

other leaders in their policy area. Regular interaction and dialogue with other leaders

suggest that information is exchanged among them. The more information

communicated between leaders, the more likely that varying viewpoints are shared

among them, including the position of citizens. A subset of leaders in this community

may regularly interact and communicate with citizens, and have an informed articulation

of the public interest. If these leaders who are regularly informed by the public

communicate with other leaders who are not similarly informed, then such

communication would likely increase the degree to which leaders learn about the policy

position of citizens. It is possible that those who hold views independent of other leaders

may be able to better formulate and articulate a public interest position. But this would

only hold true if the leaders had regular dialogue with citizens. In addition, if leaders

principally consider the goals of their sources of financial support when determining their

agenda and strategies—rather than remain more independent and make a good faith effort

to truly reflect the interests of citizens—the position of citizens may not be primary in

their groups' agenda and strategies.

Grant officers who financially support public interest groups were asked to address

similar propositions about interaction and communication with the citizens. As

articulated in Chapter One, private foundations are major players in financially

supporting info-comm groups and therefore, their influence over these groups can be

great. Therefore, it is important to assess that influence and determine how closely the agenda of foundations align with those of the info-comm groups.

First, I asked grant officers about their opportunities to hear the position of citizens on info-comm policy. This proposition helps to identify the level of information exchange between the grant officers and the citizens whose interests their grantees (the interest groups) seek to represent. If communication between the grant officers and citizens is limited, then it is difficult to assume that the grant officers' agendas are informed by or necessarily support the interests of citizens. This is the point at which foundations resemble the closed corporations described in Chapter One.

Next, grant officers addressed propositions related to the importance of public outreach and grassroots constituency-building when financially supporting info-comm groups. These propositions examine the importance grant officers place on ensuring their grantees' activities and positions are well-informed by the interests of citizens. If the grant officers do not find it important for grantees to actively engage citizens or to receive support from citizens through grassroots efforts, then the likelihood that leaders would also place importance on this is limited (if they do not already do so). Interest groups must not only pursue their own agenda, but also ensure that deliverables required by supporting foundations are achieved. When grant officers require (or at least encourage) their grantees to interact with citizens regularly—either through outreach or ground level efforts—this increases the probability that the groups' agenda and strategies are well-informed by the concerns of citizens.

I also asked grant officers to respond to questions that illustrate their perception of citizens' level of knowledge about info-comm policy. If grant officers believe that citizens are informed and have an important perspective that should be taken into account, then they would likely encourage interaction between their info-comm groups and citizens. However, if grant officers sense that citizens are relatively ignorant, such interaction might not be encouraged, thus diminishing the likelihood that an interest group articulates a well-informed public interest position on info-comm policy. This can result in the elitism that similarly emerges in interest groups, especially given the more technical nature of info-comm policy.

A proposition was also developed to explore the extent to which grant officers encourage their grantees—info-comm groups—to educate citizens as a method of influencing policy. If grant officers encourage these groups to educate citizens, then this suggests that there is a fair amount of engagement that occurs between the leaders and citizens. This would assist in providing leaders with a more informed articulation of the public interest. If info-comm groups were not encouraged to educate citizens, then their articulation of the public interest would not be well-informed. Furthermore, grant officers may choose to promote, through grantees, a single agenda that does not encourage communication with the public. If this agenda does not stimulate such communication, then again, the willingness and ability for an interest group to articulate a well-informed public interest position is weakened.

Other propositions that address interaction and communication with citizens include the representativeness of grant officers. Grant officers who are not demographically representative of their grantees' constituents may face challenges in constructing an agenda that promotes informed public interest positions. Unless they have regular interaction and dialogue with the public, the ability of grant officers to articulate such an agenda is limited because they are less likely to understand and empathize with the public perspective on info-comm policy. Additionally, this study proposes that grant officers who consider what segments of the population are positively and negatively impacted by their policies would likely expect their grantees to do the same.

Another proposition in this study examines grant officers' encouragement of their grantees to follow certain time-frames for agendas. Given the shifting nature of political climates, policymakers often employ a mix of short-term (few weeks to a few months) and long-term (a year or more) agendas to resolve timely issues being fought on Capitol Hill while ensuring that long-term efforts are also addressed. However, it should be up to these policymakers to determine the appropriate timeframe in order to fulfill their agenda. If leaders are encouraged by their grant officers to adhere to a short-term policy calendar, then the leaders' ability to pursue a sustainable public interest agenda may be weakened. Given that public interest agendas can require long-term battles spanning a few months to a few years—such as ensuring democratic modes of communication—the ability for leaders to successfully achieve the long-term objectives is diminished because their resources must be diverted to meet the needs of their grant officers. If leaders are encouraged to pursue long-term agendas, there would be an increased likelihood that the

effort could be better sustained and that the interest of citizens would therefore, be better articulated. Yet even still, relevant short-term political battles may arise within which the leader might find it necessary to become involved, but are prevented from doing so by the controlling influence of their grant officers.

A final proposition explores the degree to which grant officers communicate with their colleagues to inform their own agenda. If grant officers regularly interact with their counterparts in other foundations who are better informed about the public interest in info-comm policy, then such grant officers may be likely to incorporate this informed perspective when developing their own agenda. Yet, if grant officers do not consult regularly with their colleagues, this again may limit their ability to be informed about the positions held by citizens.

2. Does the leadership of the info-comm policy community approach their decision-making in a democratic fashion?

In order to assess how the policy agendas of public interest groups are generated, I crafted a smaller set of propositions illustrating the internal decision-making activities of the groups and the funding foundations. As noted in Chapter One, communication is a central feature of democracy. However, the degree to which communication occurs internally in organizations that influence policy remains a question. Therefore, the first set of propositions that address such internal decision-making activities is whether leaders regularly consult with internal staff in order to ensure democratic decision-

making. If leaders have regular consultations with their staff, then their decisions will be informed by more diverse opinions beyond the leader's own. And beyond a diversity of opinions, these consultations between leaders and staff suggest that the decision-making process is deliberative and democratic rather than isolated and oligarchic. Thus, the decisions and activities ofthese groups can be characterized as elite -guided, given that staff have input in the process. If leaders do not have regular consultations with staff, then the groups' decisions and activities would likely be elite-driven, as the leaders would make their own individual determinations for what policies the group should follow.

The second set of propositions explores the autonomy of leaders, which varies depending upon the group structure and the degree of autonomy and its impact on whether decisions are made democratically. For example, if the structure of the group is such that there is no mechanism to evaluate the decisions of leaders (by staff, citizens, or other individuals), then it is difficult to ensure that the leaders' decisions are consistent with those of staff or the citizens whose interests the group supposedly represents.   In addition, the absence of such a mechanism prevents staff and citizens from challenging and improving the decisions of leaders. Ultimately, this weakens the democratic decision-making process within the group. Likewise, I examined two sets of propositions about internal decision-making activities with respect to grant officers. This allowed the study to determine the degree to which decisions are elite-driven (and thus, less democratic) or elite-guided.

Methodological Approaches

The methodological approaches adopted for this study involve documentary and testimonial collections of evidence. The documentary data collected includes scholarly texts for literature reviews, materials made available by info-comm groups and the foundations that financially support them (e.g., history, mission statements, reports, accomplishments, annual report, budget, and the like), articles as well as other publicly available documents (e.g., legal filings, financial reports, and so forth), and additional reliable information available on the Internet.

The most direct method of obtaining primary data on how leadership influences the articulation of the public interest is to conduct one-on-one interviews with the leaders. These interviews are relevant because they allow the study to gauge the leadership's perspective regarding their interest group's role in the info-comm policy community, as well as to probe the leadership's understanding of the public interest in such policy. It is equally important to interview grant officers who financially support these groups in order to determine their degree of influence over the leaders and their understanding of the public interest.

I chose a semi structured interview process for this study. I applied this type because it allows for a specific set of questions to be asked of each interviewee, facilitating comparison of responses, while also allowing for elaborated responses by the elite interviewee. Elite interviewees prefer having the ability to articulate and expand on their

views (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). In addition, this type of interview provides an

opportunity for follow-up questions to be asked after an insightful response or when

further information or clarification is needed.

I created the interview protocol for the semi-structured interviews by considering how to

best address the propositions noted earlier. Past research that applied a similar interview

format as well as other studies on interest groups and leadership were also taken into

consideration. Questions from elite interviews conducted by Jeffrey Berry (1977) and

Jack Walker (1994) were particularly helpful in the development of questions for this

study. A set of primary and follow-up questions for each proposition was developed.

How to organize the semi-structured interviews was also considered. This included

factors such as question order and prompts, among others. Also considered were

interview styles that helped put interviewees at ease and reveal additional information

when needed—important considerations for conducting effective elite interviews (Leech

2002).

Questions developed for leaders were organized into five broad categories: general group

information, reflections on the group's constituency and the info-comm policy

community at large, the agenda and strategies of the group, the group's policy message

and how policy issues are understood by citizens, and how the group is financially

supported. Questions developed for grant officers were organized into categories slightly

different from those of the leaders: general grant program information, perspectives on

the constituency of the program's grantees, the agenda and strategies of the grant program, issue understanding, and what types of projects are supported by the program.

During the end of June 2003, the interview questions were reviewed by departmental faculty members who possess a strong background in qualitative methods. Based on the faculty members' suggestions, the questions were modified to more accurately address the propositions noted earlier.

After the review by faculty members, the interview questions were then pretested with three individuals who were not part of the interview population. Pretests are an important element of interview development (Presser and Blair 1994). These pretests were held in July 2003 and early August 2003 and were carried out in person or by phone. These individuals were either other staff (non-leaders) in an info-comm interest group or leaders in non-interest groups (research organizations) that are active in info-comm policy. The pretest interviewees have experience in the field and have an understanding of info-comm policy. The interviewees were asked to provide comments on the interview protocol, and after each interview, some questions were modified, while others were added or deleted.

The semi-structured interviews with info-comm group leaders and grant officers were carried out in person or by phone. Interviewees were initially contacted by letter, which included general information about my research, university affiliation, and request for an interview, including length of time needed. My business card, as well as one from my dissertation chair, was also included. The letters were sent to increase the response rate

by providing preliminary information to the interviewee about the study as well as establish a sense of legitimacy for the interview being requested (Groves 1990). The mailing of the letters was then followed up by a telephone or email request to schedule an interview. Such follow-up requests have been shown to increase response rates (Tanur 1983).

At that time, and again at the start of the actual interview, interviewees were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous, and that the signing of an Institutional Review Board-required consent form would ensure this. This confidentiality and anonymity was provided to interviewees in order to ensure more forthcoming responses. This is especially important, as these were elite interviews—interviews with key individuals of groups or foundations—within which politically sensitive information could be discussed (Dexter 1970; Berry 2002). In addition, securing an appointment to meet with the interviewees and having them grant me sufficient time to conduct the interviews are challenges more frequently faced when interviewing elites rather than others.

As many of the questions were open-ended and required detailed narrative responses, all interviews were audio recorded and supplemented with handwritten notes. The interview length was approximately one hour per interview for the leaders, with the longest one lasting over one and one-half hours. The grant officer interviews tended to run approximately thirty to forty minutes. Much of the variation in the length of interviews was generally due to extensive responses by the interviewees, but more often resulted

from additional probing questions—a useful and accepted method of elite interviewing (Aberbach and Rockman 2002; Berry 2002). I generally adhered to the order of questions in the interview protocol, unless there was a time-constraint or because responses to other questions were provided out of sequence.

The interviews with info-comm group leaders were conducted in August and September 2003, and interviews with grant officers were conducted from October to December 2003. It was much more difficult to obtain agreement for interviews and also to schedule the actual time with foundation grant officers. These grant officers cited time constraints as the primary reason they were unable to participate in the interview.

During the course of the interviews with leaders and with grant officers, I continued to modify the interview questions as needed. One example of a modification related to the questions that addressed leaders' interaction with other government and non-governmental entities. In the first few interviews, the leaders did not feel comfortable describing their interactions as "collaborations," as this suggested too strong of a relationship. The interviewees recommended that "consultations" would be the more appropriate terminology, and thus, the questions were modified accordingly.

Another example was the elimination of any reference to "goals" when discussing the activities of info-comm policy groups and foundations. One set of propositions explored the agenda-setting and strategies. In order to explore these issues, questions were asked about the "goals" of the group and how they related to their "agenda" and "strategies."

However, interviewees had difficulty articulating distinctions between their "goals" and "agenda." Therefore, per various suggestions, I eliminated "goals" and simply asked questions regarding the groups' and foundations' "agenda" and "strategies." Despite the numerous modifications, the substance of the modified interview questions continued to address the already established propositions.

Upon completion of the interviews in December 2003, I analyzed the interview data using a variety of qualitative methods. The first analysis was descriptive in nature, whereby I outlined and described the different groups and foundations interviewed. This was followed by comparing characteristics and responses of the groups and foundations interviewed. The final analysis was explanatory, whereby I sought to clarify how the groups' interview responses related to my research questions and propositions, and what they suggested for future research in this area. A list of the interview protocol and questions can be found in Appendix A.

Subjects for Study

The selection criteria for interviewees included presidents or senior staff members of national public interest groups that focus on info-commpolicy and grant officers of the entities that financially support these groups. Because there is no comprehensive publicly available list of info-comm groups, the target groups were identified through research of relevant policy activity, examinations of annual published association directories, and conversations with those who study or are active in the advocacy

community. Additionally, mission statements of these interest groups implicitly or explicitly state that they seek to represent the interest of the public. If the statements did not indicate this interest, but the groups are known to be advocacy groups representing the public, they were included in the interview population. Though every attempt was made to ensure that the list is fairly comprehensive, it cannot be considered absolutely comprehensive. In addition, because there is a fine line between "media" groups and info-comm groups, there may be some entities that were mistakenly included or excluded from the interview population.

As noted in Chapter Two, the interest groups selected have certain characteristics that fall into specific categories (or categorical combinations): liberal or conservative, advocacy group or think tank, focused only on info-comm policy or numerous policies, emerged during the early public interest group movement or established more recently, and Washington, DC-based or not.

The ideological leanings of info-comm groups span the political spectrum. Many of them are liberal in their political leanings. However, some are politically conservative.

The info-comm policy groups chosen for this study function either as advocacy groups or think tanks (though a few represent a combination). The advocacy groups tend to partake in intense lobbying/policymaker education with less research, while think tanks spend more resources conducting research. In addition, some groups whose leaders I interviewed are only active in info-comm policy, while for others it is only one of several

policy areas in which they are active. Regardless, in all of the groups, info-comm policy is a key area of focus.

A few groups that emerged during the start of the public interest movement, including Media Access Project and Consumer Federation of America, have managed to survive and are considered major players today. However, most of the groups included in this research were founded within the past ten years. Additionally, most of the interest groups located in Washington, DC due to the proximity to national politics. This provides a natural advantage to those groups given their increased access and visibility to the federal regulatory and policymaking processes.

By virtue of the groups that they fund, any foundation that financially supports multiple public interest groups were part of the interview population for this study. This included both private corporate and charitable foundations. Most of the interest groups included in the study are located in the Washington, DC area, given their close engagement in the new media policymaking process. Most of the grant officers interviewed, however, are not located in Washington, and all interviews were conducted over the phone. My past and present professional associations and personal ties to some groups and foundations facilitated the participation rate of interviewees.[11]

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[11] The research required only minimal costs, given that most interviews were conducted in Washington DC or by phone. I incurred all costs related to the completion of the interviews. These costs included equipment costs (digital audio recorder, blank CDs to send interviewees copy of their interviews), long distance phone charges, documentation supplies (paper, envelopes, and ink cartridges), and transportation (public transportation) to in-person interviews within the DC Metro area.

As a result, 25 of 29 of the new media group leaders identified were interviewed (86 percent response rate) and 9 of 14 of the foundation grant officers identified were interviewed (64 percent response rate). The lower response rate for foundations resulted from the incorporation of corporate foundations that tended not to participate in these interviews, as noted earlier. The response rate that Walker (1994) achieved in his two studies was approximately 55 percent. However, his elite interview populations were much greater (nearly 1,000 interviews). For Berry's elite 85 interviews (1977), he had a response rate of 98 percent. The interview list can be found in Appendix C.

At the time the interviews were conducted, there was much activity occurring within the info-comm policy landscape. Policymakers, industry associations, and advocacy groups were lobbying the FCC to allow for greater flexibility of use in the spectrum bands allocated to unlicensed technologies, and the FCC was in the process of issuing several proceedings to that end. A convergence of technologies in recent years has led the FCC to seriously consider whether its long-standing regulatory scheme can be applied to new technologies. Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), which allows for voice calls to be made over the Internet, calls into question the FCC's regulatory policies for telephone, cable, and the limited policies over the Internet. Interestingly enough, regulatory inaction by the FCC on VOIP has also led to delayed corporate investments in related technologies. As a result, the FCC began a discussion of and initiated a proceeding to determine the appropriate regulatory environment for VOIP-related services.

During the period in which these interviews were conducted, Congress passed legislation that revised the FCC's decision to raise limits on the number of companies that can be owned by a media entity in a single market. Additional bills on Internet spam, increased deployment of broadband, the funding of Internet filters for libraries, an Internet domain for children's content, and the Internet tax moratorium were also being debated. The courts were fielding complaints filed by Internet Service Providers that were subpoenaed to provide information about subscribers alleged to be engaging in peer-to-peer copyright infringement over their networks.

The following two chapters will present the results of the qualitative analyses applied to the interview and other data collected. Chapter Four will center on findings related to the demographics of the info-comm policy community, constituency-building and accountability, and public outreach. Chapter Five will address what was learned about directly lobbying and grant officer influence, leadership's impressions of the public's understanding and policy position on info-comm issues, and internal group dialogue and decision-making processes. The final chapter, Chapter Six, will summarize the findings, discuss the study's applicability to other policy communities, and present additional approaches and research questions for future examination.

Chapter Four: In Search of Citizen Dialogue

This chapter addresses the first research question introduced in Chapter Three: do the leadership of info-comm groups inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens? In order to assess this question, my analysis focuses on the issues of demographics, constituency and membership, and public outreach. Chapter Five continues this analysis by discussing issues related to direct lobbying and grant officer influence as well as impressions of the public's understanding of and policy position on info-comm issues. A list of the interview questions used for this study can be found in Appendix B.

Interviews with leaders from the info-comm policy community as well as research gathered from other sources provide much insight into their interaction and communication with citizens. Responses to the interviews illustrate the degree to which this leadership's articulation of the public interest is informed through citizen dialogue. The goal of my research is to determine whether the politics in this field continues to fit the description offered by William Browne a few years ago: "this is still government by special interest, not by intelligent articulation of general public needs" (1998: 55).

The importance of communicating information in a democracy was discussed in Chapter One. Democracy requires a two-way exchange of information in order for both citizens and politicians to be knowledgeable in the political opinions that they form and the policy decisions that they make. Such knowledge enables citizens to better understand the

impact of politics on their lives (Jamieson 2000: 8) and also increases the likelihood that they will participate in the political process (Milner 2002). However, as noted in Chapter One, there exists a tension between market-driven and democratic values within the arena of communications technologies. In reality, market-driven values are more often preferred over democratic ones by corporations and philanthropic foundations. Interest groups can help to ensure that democratic values are strongly considered by policymakers when deciding how to act on info-comm policy issues. As noted in Chapter Two, interest groups communicate political information to and from citizens. This allows them to augment their own political knowledge as well as to build communities of informed citizens (Olson 1971; Berry 1977, 1997; Walker 1994; Petracca 1997). And public interest groups, because they represent citizens, must articulate political positions that are representative of those citizens. This can only occur through open and regular public dialogue. Thus, in my interviews, numerous questions addressing a range of activities were asked of the leadership in the info-comm policy community in order to gauge the degree to which they encourage communications between themselves and other citizens.

The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning's Listening Project,[12] which includes many of the same leadership of the groups and foundations I interviewed for this study, has also

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[12] The OMG Center is a nonprofit research and consulting organization that recently began to conduct research in order to strengthen the direction of the info-comm policy community. The Center's Listening Project was created to meet four goals: provide a platform for the diverse voices that constitute the diverse field of Internet, communications, and technology policy to express, debate, and discuss strategic issues and opportunities, and define the future direction of the field; support advocates, activists, researchers, and other stakeholders in reflecting on the strategic issues and opportunities raised, and in crafting a broader vision of change; provide a vehicle to communicate what the evolving needs of the field are to people funding communications policy work; and celebrate the field's accomplishments and rich history. Twenty-one of the interest groups and foundations approached to participate in this study are also active in the Listening Project (out of 58 participants). Unfortunately, the Project's activity has remained dormant after

conducted similar research that address parallel issues. Results from their research will

be introduced on occasion during the course of my analysis.

As a reminder, this study acknowledges the absence of a universal public interest for any

and all policy areas. Rather, as noted in Chapter Two, the public interest can represent

ideas that are popular among citizens, ideas that citizens themselves have influenced, and

ideas that are considered good for citizens by self-identified public interest advocates and

representatives (i.e., collective goods such as the rule of law and protecting the

environment). Therefore, my study does not determine whether the articulation of the

public interest by any of the interest groups included in my research is *right* or *wrong*.

However, this study will assess the activities of info-comm groups and foundations by

using the following definition of the public interest: a collective good from which all

citizens can benefit, and which is regularly informed by, as well as held accountable to,

public opinion.[13] The first part of the definition—a collective good from which all

citizens can benefit—is a given assumption for this study. I had not assessed whether

every public interest position is one from which all citizens can benefit. Through

interviews with leadership and data collected from other sources, however, my analysis

closely examines the second part of the definition—the public interest that is regularly

informed by as well as held accountable to public opinion—by exploring it within the

info-comm policy community.

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the initial set of interviews with its participants, as evidenced by the inactivity of the message boards at the
Project's website. See http://www.omgcenter.org/listen (Last visited 05/10/04).

[13] There have been emerged numerous definitions of the public interest (Sorauf 1957; Schubert; Held 1970;
Berry 1997), including whether conceptually it is a goal, process, or that which does not really exist.
Public interest, as defined in this study, is both a goal and a process, as illustrated by the two parts of the
definition.

Demographics of the Info-Comm Policy Community

To begin, leaders of info-comm groups were asked to characterize the demographics of their policy community, and in the process, to comment on whatever came to mind. Most raised traditional demographics, such as race, gender, age, education, and economic class, in their responses. However, others provided different responses.

The most common response centered on the demographic of race. More than one-half of the leaders (52%, or 13 of 25) reported that the info-comm policy community is comprised primarily of whites. A smaller number (16%, or 4 of 25) described the community as predominantly male, relatively youthful, well-educated, middle to upper class, and politically liberal. One interviewee noted that the leaders of these groups were part of "the power elite of C. Wright Mills." A few used professional descriptors to portray the community, citing lawyers, economists, and policymakers most frequently. Leaders also expressed their thoughts about the community in functional terms, including advocacy/consumer groups, civil rights groups, and think tanks. Only two leaders described members of the community as "geeks" or "geektivists." Additionally, several leaders noted that there are too few groups with constituencies or with a focus on civil rights issues. Probably the most notable response came from a leader who asserted that there is "a lot of self-interested activity" among the groups in the info-policy community. This leader was suggesting that some of their colleagues' agendas are influenced more by private rather than public interests.

What these characterizations by leaders indicate is that the info-comm policy community is not very diverse with respect to the common demographics of gender, race, education, age, and income. In addition, the data suggest that the community is comprised of only a few types of interest groups. Thus, the ability for these leaders to articulate a public interest is limited in that their own demographic representation does not reflect the larger population.

The grant officers were also asked to characterize the demographics of their fellow grant officers. The responses varied greatly and tended to reflect less traditional descriptive demographics. Two of nine grant officers noted that their colleagues in the community share similar ideological perspectives, leaning towards left of center. Two others noted that the number of grant officers who fund info-comm policy is relatively small compared to other policy communities. Other comments included that there are more men than women, and that most are upper to middle class. Furthermore, two grant officers described the types of foundations for which their colleagues work, dividing them into larger, traditional, or core foundations; newer corporate entities that conduct foundation work; and development agencies. As a result of these responses, it is difficult to generalize any dominant trends in the way grant officers perceive each other. However, my impression from these interviews is that although there are more women within the grant officer ranks, overall their demographic profile is very much like that of the info-comm leaders.

When leaders and grant officers are demographically representative of citizens, they are able to better identify key concerns given their own personal experience and more easily forge trust with citizens necessary to address their policy needs. Thus, it is possible that the leadership may often pursue an agenda that is counter to the public interest or informed by more private interests. In fact, Roelofs has suggested that non-profit organizations and foundations "in the United States provide jobs for the sons and daughters of the elite who might otherwise be unemployed and disaffected…" (2003). This is probably too cynical of a perspective, but there seems to be some support for this statement given the demographics of such communities. As a result, the concerns of corporate as well as interest group elitism thriving in this policy community remain.

Constituency-Building and Membership

As explained in Chapter Three, leaders and grant officers were asked whether constituency-building is one element of their groups' activities.[14] The groups' efforts to possess and build constituencies suggest that interacting with the public is central to their daily activities. And as a result, such a focus would suggest that their articulation of the public interest is an informed one.

As a starting point, info-comm leaders were asked if their groups had some type of a formal constituency. A constituency is defined as a group of individuals that authorizes

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[14] The groups represented in this research range from small-sized (assets of under $1,000,000) to medium-sized (assets between $1,000,000 and $25,000,000) to large-sized (assets of over $25,000,000), with a similar number falling into each range. The foundations represented in this research range from small-sized (assets of under $99,999,999) to medium-sized (assets between $100,000,000 to 999,999,999) to large-sized (assets of over $1,000,000,000), with a similar number falling into each range.

another to act in its interest and as its representative. Having a constituency affords

leaders a forum to exchange information with citizens about policies, as well as to obtain

their support regarding decisions and policy positions. V.O. Key emphasized that it is the

responsibility of elites to present citizens with information and positions that will help

them to responsibly evaluate policy alternatives (1961: 2). This responsibility is often

achieved by leaders' building membership support for the group. Although who the

group represents (its constituency) and who is active in its group (its membership) are

distinct from one another, there can be overlap between the two. I suggest in this study

that groups with a constituency but without a membership are at a potential disadvantage

in crafting the groups' policy positions as well as in perceived legitimacy of their

decisions and activities.

More than three-fourths (76%, or 19 of 25) of the groups surveyed reported that they

have a constituency. Responses from leaders as to who their constituencies are vary from

the specific, including "libraries, librarians, and library supporters" or "400,000

members" to the vague and general, such as "the public" and "the public policy

community, the FCC, and Congress." When leaders of different categories of groups

were asked why having a constituency was important to them, many expressed that "it

enhances the credibility and reputation to promote policy solutions." A leader from a

group with mid-range assets directly articulated the reason why a constituency matters:

"Policymakers want to know you are representing someone. It is not enough just to be an

expert; policymakers respond to constituencies." This suggests that because

constituencies equate to votes, policymakers are very interested in who is supporting the

group's position. Additionally, another leader noted that "in order to participate in a democracy, voters need to be informed" and that they become informed through the assistance of interest groups. However, another leader who also works in the field of civil rights stated that "there are leaders [in this community] that have not done adequate work to develop a constituency."

Is it true that a constituency provides both legitimacy and accountability for the groups' actions? Or is it actually a group's membership that more strongly and more accurately provides these. Consider that the activity of defining a constituency is one-sided. Any leader of an interest group can claim to "represent" the activities of any one or several sets of citizens. The activity of defining a membership, however, is two-sided in that it requires the interest group to publicize its intent and position on a policy issues, and the citizen to actively agree to and sign on to the group's cause.

As Jeffrey Berry notes, not all public interest groups are real membership organizations (1977: 27), and this is true with the info-comm community. In fact, in reviewing those groups only 40% (or ten of twenty-five) actually have a membership base. Of the ten groups that do have members, only two were established after the public interest movement era (post-1980), as illustrated in Table 4.1a. This is despite the fairly even distribution of the groups interviewed based on longevity.

**Table 4.1a: Frequency of Info-Comm Groups with Members,
based on Year Established**

Year Established	Frequency of Groups with Members
Pre-1960 (before the public interest movement)	40%
1960-1980 (during the public interest movement)	40%
Post-1980 (after the public interest movement)	20%
Total N	10

Additionally, as shown in Table 4.1b, the likelihood of having members decreases as the

assets of the group increases.

**Table 4.1b: Frequency of Info-Comm Groups with Members,
based on Asset Size**

Group Asset Size*	Frequency of Groups with Members	Total N
Low (under $1,000,000)	38%	8
Mid (between $1,000,000 and $25,000,000)	33%	7
High (over $25,000,000)	27%	6

*Asset data were available for only 21 of the 25 groups interviewed.

As a follow-up question on the same topic, I asked whether there are any additional

constituencies to which the leaders would like to reach out. Of the leaders who

responded positively, 84% (21 of 25) felt that there are additional constituencies their

group could reach. This included "all consumers," "all that are afforded American civil

liberties," "ethnic minorities," and "youth," among others. Youth were noted because of

their relevancy to cutting-edge technology issues, and, interestingly enough, it is the

leaders under 40 who tended to raise the issue of mobilizing young citizens. With respect

to how best to mobilize their potential constituencies, several leaders suggested that they

might, among other things, work more with communities, increase educational efforts, attain additional resources, and network.

Accountability of Group Activities

Do mechanisms exist to ensure that a group's activities match the interests of its constituents? Ensuring that this occurs is an extremely challenging task. In fact, only 12% of the leaders (3 of 25) responded that they do so. These groups vary in size as well as constituent-type. Most of the others, however, pointed to more informal and random mechanisms. For example, several mentioned their website and email as modes of receiving comments from constituents. The impression conveyed during some of the interview sessions was that little thought had been devoted to developing a systematic strategy for processing any public feedback that they might receive. On the other hand, the responses from a few leaders suggest that they have thought this issue through and have deployed formalized mechanisms for matching constituency interests, including yearly conferences to vote on the organizations' policy positions, and councils and other committees with seats for citizen members that comprise a more elaborate feedback structure. Board members were also cited to ensure some degree of matching of interests. Unfortunately, board members often fill an elite role themselves within an interest group and therefore, are more akin to leadership colleagues than to constituents. Some leaders also noted that they conduct self-evaluations as a method of their own performance assessments.

The grant officers who financially support these info-comm groups were also asked a few interview questions related to the constituencies of their grantees. Some of the grant officers are employed at "Old Guard" foundations (Carnegie, Ford, Kellogg, Markle, Pew, and Rockefeller) that have been in existence since before the 1950s, and others are employed at the more recently established "New Guard" foundations (Arca, the Center for the Public Domain, and the Open Society Institute). One question was whether the grant officer's program encourages its grantees to build constituencies, and in response, all of them noted that their program does so. When probed further about the types of constituency generally encouraged, responses varied from grassroots groups representing marginalized populations (including youth, women, and minorities) to other advocacy groups. One grant officer of a foundation with mid-range assets stated that they consciously encourage grantees "to build a public interest infrastructure to inform and influence policymaking with regard to new technologies" as well as "to connect locally, nationally, and globally because these current issues are relevant everywhere." In contrast, Joan Roelofs (2003) offered an analysis that foundations encourage interest groups to discourage public participation in national politics by thinking and acting on a more local and non-ideological level. My research findings did not illustrate any clear support for this analysis.

No direct question was asked of grant officers to evaluate whether their activities are, in some form, held accountable to the public interest (which they represent as a charitable foundation). However, recent work by Randall Holcombe (2000) addresses the limited accountability of foundations that are tax-exempt. He argues that in the United States,

47,000 entities are unaccountable because no one has sufficient capacity, incentive, or opportunity to monitor whether and how they further the public interest. Therefore, Holcombe suggests that tax law be altered so as to no longer favor the establishment of foundations. This is certainly one consideration for how to increase public scrutiny. Another consideration would be to change from a private foundation to a public charitable organization, as Pew Charitable Trusts (one of my interviewees) will become in fiscal year 2005. However, this change is not possible for all private foundations, depending on factors such as how many parties actually endow the foundation.

The Listening Project identified the importance of increasing access to resources that support constituency-building and public education about communications policy issues in order to help move a communications policy agenda. As the Project noted in more detail, "almost all Listening Project participants are talking about the importance of constituencies—even those whose organizations have not focused on building them for resource or other reasons." Therefore, although a number of these info-comm groups do not have a constituency, the understanding in the field is that building and nurturing one is important to achieving policy influence.

In addition to assessing the leaders' and grant officers' perspectives on constituency-building, the issue of public outreach was also closely examined. The reason for examining the public outreach activities of a group is because their responses illustrate the amount of effort put forth to actively engage the public, both as a constituency and as

members. The less outreach to citizens that occurs, the less likely info-comm groups will

have an informed articulation of the public interest.

Group Interaction with Citizens

Info-comm leaders were asked whether they involve the public in developing their

agenda and strategies. In response, 64% (16 of 25) stated that they do consult with the

public when developing their agenda. The frequency with which their consultations

occur ranges from daily to monthly. Of the 36% who replied in the negative, several

stated that they do not have good opportunities or mechanisms in place to engage with

the public for this purpose. Grant officers gave a lower priority to maintaining direct

contact with a broad audience, with only 33% indicating that they actively consult with

the public. Though the number of foundation interviewees was smaller than that for info-

comm groups, the overall impression I received was that such consultations are

considered more important for grantees to conduct than for the grant officers themselves.

Additionally, the decision for groups to engage the public may be based on the financial

supporters interested in such interactions.

I also asked info-comm leader interviewees about conducting public opinion polls. The

point of this question was to gauge the degree to which groups consciously survey citizen

opinions and preferences. This type of polling differs from that which is used to

manipulate the public's position on certain policies. As the interview responses illustrate,

just over one-half (13 of 25) of leaders report having conducted public opinion polls on

info-comm policy issues. The rest do not conduct relevant opinion polls for one of two reasons: (1) public opinion polls are extremely costly to conduct and therefore, not preferred among my leadership group, or (2) the output of public opinion polls are of little interest to leaders of info-comm groups. Of those who responded negatively, many stated that they are familiar with opinion polls conducted by others. Therefore, the high price tag is a key inhibitor of info-comm groups commissioning such polls themselves.

In light of the expense associated with conducting public opinion polls, grant officers were asked about whether their program provides funds for their grantees to commission polls. Four of the nine (44%) grant officers, who represent foundations with mid- and high-range assets, responded that they have done so. Additionally, three grant officers reported that they have funded focus groups. When gauging the importance of grantees' public opinion polls, four grant officers ranked it quite high among the goals they would like to promote. Two others stated that it depends on the nature of the work and whether it is reasonable as well as appropriate to do so. The remaining three do not believe that public opinion polling is an important activity for their grantees. In fact, the grant officer who represented the smallest foundation in the interview population stated that "much of philanthropy is intuitive, not studied," and therefore, believes that the usefulness of such polls is minimal. Given that intuition is personal rather than public in nature, this would make it difficult to determine citizen interest.

As a point of comparison, the Listening Project identified the process of developing messages that are accessible to the larger public and to policymakers as one of the

strategies that would shape the future of the field. In fact, a summary from the Project

noted that:

> "Participants acknowledge that developing messages that are accessible to
> the larger public and policymakers is an important part of moving in this
> direction. Further, it is also understood that working this way requires
> players in the field to expand beyond natural relationships to create
> alliances and partnerships that may not be part of their current landscape."

Thus, increasing awareness and two-way communication, in addition to

expanding the sphere of interaction and education, are identified as crucial to

future efforts of the community. However, such interaction with citizens may be

dependent on the financial support made available specifically for that purpose.

As noted, public opinion polls are costly and therefore, a group would be less

likely to conduct one without additional funding.

Table 4.2a and 4.2b summarize the frequency with which info-comm groups and

foundations interact with the public. Groups with large-sized assets tend to interact with

the public more frequently. However, the groups with small-sized assets claim to interact

fairly frequently with the public as well. As for the foundations that financially support

these groups, both the foundations with small and large endowments do not engage with

the public nearly as much as those in the mid-range.

Table 4.2a: Frequency of Info-Comm Groups that Engage in Public Interaction, based on Asset Size

Group Asset Size*	Frequency of Consultation with the Public	Frequency of Conducting Public Opinion Polls	Frequency of Both	Total N
Low (under $1,000,000)	63%	50%	25%	8
Mid (between $1,000,000 and $25,000,000)	43%	14%	0%	7
High (over $25,000,000)	83%	50%	50%	6

*Asset data was available for only 21 of the 25 groups interviewed.

Table 4.2b: Frequency of Foundations that Engage in Public Interaction, based on Asset Size

Foundation Asset Size	Frequency of Consultation with the Public	Frequency of Conducting Public Opinion Polls	Frequency of Both	Total N
Low (under $100,000,000)	0%	0%	0%	3
Mid (between $100,000,000 and $999,000,000)	67%	100%	67%	3
High (over $1,000,000,000)	33%	33%	0%	3

In response to my questions regarding other ways of canvassing public opinion that their programs recommend, four of the nine grant officers said that they generally leave decisions on how to canvas public opinion to the info comm groups themselves. "We try not to recommend specific activities to any of the groups because they know their needs. We just help to dictate resources." This suggests a hands-off approach by the foundations. Another grant officer remarked that they listen to groups of informal advisors and find out from them what they and others are doing to canvas public opinion.

An additional question asked of info-comm leaders was whether public outreach is one of the groups' strategies to influence policy. All of the leaders responded that their group

does engage in public outreach. Leaders were also asked whether their group engages in

other strategies, including direct lobbying (which will be discussed in Chapter Five),

policymaker education, litigation, media outreach, and research. Interestingly enough,

only 60% of them affirmed that they engage in direct lobbying of policymakers.

However, all agreed that they attempt to educate policymakers. For media outreach and

research, all of the leaders stated that they employ these strategies as well; 58% asserted

that they engage in litigation either by themselves or with others.

Grant officers were also asked to consider the types of strategies by grantees that are

encouraged by their program. Responses included 100% for public outreach,

policymaker education, and research, and 55% for direct lobbying and litigation. Media

outreach is also encouraged by all but one grant officer. These responses are illustrated

in Tables 4.3a and 4.3b.

**Table 4.3a: Frequency of Public Outreach Used as a Strategy,
by Info-Comm Groups, based on Asset Size**

Group Asset Size*	Public Outreach Used	Policymaker Education Used	Research Used	Direct Lobbying Used	Litigation Used	Media Outreach Used	Total N
Low (under $1,000,000)	100%	100%	100%	50%	38%	100%	8
Mid (between $1,000,000 and $25,000,000)	100%	100%	100%	71%	71%	100%	7
High (over $25,000,000)	100%	100%	100%	33%	33%	100%	6

*Asset data was available for only 21 of the 25 groups interviewed.

**Table 4.3b: Frequency of Public Outreach Strategy Encouraged,
by Foundations, based on Asset Size**

Foundation Asset Size	Public Outreach Encouraged	Policymaker Education Encouraged	Research Encouraged	Direct Lobbying Encouraged	Litigation Encouraged	Media Outreach Encouraged	Total N
Low (under $100,000,000)	100%	100%	100%	33%	0%	33%	3
Mid (between $100,000,000 and $999,000,000)	100%	100%	100%	67%	67%	100%	3
High (over $1,000,000,000)	100%	100%	100%	67%	100%	100%	3

These responses suggest that the primary strategies used by info-comm groups on a regular basis are public outreach, media outreach, policymaker education, and research. These are valued strategies because they target the specific sets of actors needed to change policy. Research is conducted to develop and provide support for the policy message. Members of Congress and agency officials are educated directly by these groups (i.e., policymaker education) because they are the key decision-makers. Ensuring that public opinion is on their side affords info-comm groups the support they need to illustrate that they are acting in the public interest. It also allows the groups to keep constituent concerns, and those of Congressional members, at bay. In addition, the media is used to get the group's message out to all of the aforementioned actors.

Because coalitions are another means through which info-comm groups can become informed by public opinion, a question was posed to grant officers about whether they encourage their grantees to work with other organizations to achieve their goals. All of the grant officers responded that they do promote coalition-building among their grantees. One respondent, who has provided financial support to a number of these info-comm groups, noted that "you can't tell the groups what to do. But without coalitions,

the groups have no real legitimacy." Three of the nine grant officers do not suggest a particular type of coalition; while the other six indicated that they encourage coalitions with other similar groups. One grant officer, representing a larger foundation, noted in particular that groups should coalesce with others across discipline boundaries, suggesting the need to build bridges and learn from those beyond the info-comm policy realm. This is similar to what was suggested by members of the Listening Project.

The reasons why grant officers encourage coalition-building activity vary widely. Several advise that coalitions allow the groups to leverage resources. Some also suggest that such activities create opportunities for them to gain additional support and expertise, and recognize that they cannot accomplish as much alone as they can with others. Most importantly, one grant officer stated that the groups need to cooperate, rather than compete, with each other. Cooperation is also how several of the grant officers address the challenge of numerous groups fighting over limited financial resources. Additionally, another grant officer from a foundation with mid-range assets indicated that they recommend other possible funding entities to the groups in order to assist them in securing financial support. However, although it is easy to suggest coalitions be forged in order to be more effective and leverage resources, interest groups face difficulties in forming such coalitions. This is because the leaders of these groups surmise that others may gain strength and notoriety as a result, and because this requires a distribution of limited funds and resources that they might not want to share.

Understanding the degree to which the leadership of info-comm groups demographically reflect as well as interact with citizens helps to shed light on how they inform themselves about the public interest. The research question addressed in this chapter was: do the leadership of info-comm groups inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens? After analyzing the leaders' and grant officers' responses, it seems the response tends toward no. The responses from the groups interviewed indicate that the leaders of the info-policy community are not demographically representative of the general public. This could lead to challenges in the leaders identifying key concerns of the public on info-comm policy issues and limit their ability to build trust with citizens in an effort to address such issues. In addition, leaders may choose to pursue an agenda that is counter to the public interest or is informed by more private (corporate) interests.

Although over three-fourths of interviewees responded to having constituencies (in the traditional definition), few of these groups have a membership base. This may be problematic if leaders believe that they claim to represent citizens, but do not have an important resource, like members, to ensure that their positions, decisions, and activities are in the public interest. In addition, although all groups interviewed conduct public outreach and a majority consult with the public in setting their agendas, a minority actually have members or formal mechanisms to ensure that they actively adhere to the interests of the public. Again, these findings heighten the concern that because corporations and other entities that develop ICTs tend to prefer market-driven values, the absence of a strong public interest voice in the policymaking process weakens the likelihood that democratic values will be taken into consideration.

The next chapter will analyze my respondents' perceptions with respect to direct

lobbying and grant officer influence, impressions on public understanding of and policy

position on info-comm issues, as well as the democratic activity that occurs within their

organizations in order to address the second and final research question for this study. By

considering how the leadership of the info-comm policy community is informed about

the public interest and how their internal organizational activities are conducted, I will be

able to better reflect on their levels of citizen engagement in info-comm policy, and what

this means for future levels of engagement.

Chapter Five: In Search of Citizen Dialogue (Continued) and Democratic Practice in Group Activities

This chapter further elaborates on the research question discussed in Chapter Four: do the leadership of info-comm groups inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens? In addition, this chapter concludes with an examination of the second research question introduced in this study: do the leadership of the info-comm policy community approach their decision-making in a democratic fashion?

Direct Lobbying and Grant Officer Influence

Many of the leaders, when first asked about their groups' engagement in direct lobbying, remarked that they represent "a 501(c)(3) organization," as they were reluctant to acknowledge any direct lobbying activities given this exemption. In fact, all of the info-comm groups approached for an interview fall under this classification. The IRS defines a 501(c)(3) as an organization that:

> "must be organized and operated exclusively for one or more of the purposes set forth in IRC Section 501(c)(3) and none of the earnings of the organization may inure to any private shareholder or individual. In addition, it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities and it may not participate at all in campaign activity for or against political candidates." See http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html (last visited, 03/17/04).

The "substantial part of its activities" requirement is defined as the amount of activity in a given year, or it can be quantified as no more than 20% of the annual budget, spent on direct lobbying. After noting their tax-exempt status, some of the leaders expressed that they do participate in direct lobbying, but could not

spend beyond the 20% limit for such activities. Others stated that as a result of

their 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, they could not engage in direct lobbying of any

sort. The latter is a very interesting finding as it suggests that some of the leaders

do not fully understand the legal restrictions and allowances set forth in their tax

status. However, this is not unique to the info-policy community. As a recent

Washington Post piece discusses, a research study was conducted by reviewing

the tax records of 1,700 organizations, and similar conclusions of non-profit

organizations being ill-informed were identified (*The Washington Post*, Section

B-01, November 30, 2003).

Tax-exempt status goes to the very heart of the public interest issue. As Jeffrey Berry

notes, "to understand public interest lobbying, it is essential to examine both the

resources available to these groups and the manner in which the government regulates

their resource capabilities and opportunities" (1977: 45). The IRS explains that such

organizations:

> "must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests, such as the
> creator or the creator's family, shareholders of the organization, other designated
> individuals, or persons controlled directly or indirectly by such private interests.
> No part of the net earnings of an IRC Section 501(c)(3) organization may inure to
> the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. A private shareholder or
> individual is a person having a personal and private interest in the activities of the
> organization." See
> http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html (last visited,
> 03/17/04).

Thus, an organization established solely for private interests would not be tax-exempt

under the law. This is important to emphasize because it suggests that public interest

groups must continually reaffirm their status as representatives of the public through their

activities. Certainly, a group can be established as a 501(c)(3) without ever really informing itself of the contours of the public interest. However, one could also argue that in order to be a group that is perceived as a legitimate representative of the interests of citizens, the group should be able to cite a record of consulting citizens on their policy issues (as the definition of the public interest relied upon for this study asserts).

This issue also directly relates to the charitable foundations that financially support info-comm groups. As discussed in Chapter One, the private nature of such public foundations is often called into question. If foundations are a financial resource for a public interest group, it is possible that grant-seeking groups would first and foremost take into consideration the policy agendas of the foundation, and the group might alter its agenda, strategies, and policy positions in order to improve its chances of securing funding. As a result, info-comm groups might pursue an agenda that runs counter to the public interest, or is informed by business and commercial interests. This could potentially lead to the perpetuation of corporate elitism that already exists in info-comm policy, also noted in Chapter One.

During the interviews with info-comm leaders, I asked questions to determine whether grant officers have an impact on how the public interest is articulated. To begin, leaders estimated the percentage of work time they spend fundraising. Responses to this question illustrate the amount of leaders' time that is taken away from interacting with the public, as well as the degree to which they must focus on being responsive to the interests of foundations, given that most of the info-comm groups I interviewed are financially

supported by charitable foundations. A majority of leaders, 68%, spend less than one-quarter of their time fundraising. This suggests that for groups with small assets, fundraising is not a strong factor in limiting interaction with the public. Tables 5.1a and 5.1b illustrate the average percent of work time spent fundraising by leaders. As the tables illustrate, the leaders of info-comm groups with relatively modest assets and those that were established after the public interest movement spend more time fundraising than their colleagues. Thus, the leadership of more recently established organizations must spend a disproportionate amount of their time securing funds for the group in order to ensure financial stability. More established groups are likely to have resolved their fundraising challenges and, as a result, can devote more of their attention to policy issues.

Table 5.1a: Percentage of Info-Comm Group Work Time Fundraising, based on Asset Size

Group Asset Size*	Average Percent of Work Time Fundraising	Total N
Low (under $1,000,000)	44%	8
Mid (between $1,000,000 and $25,000,000)	18%	7
High (over $25,000,000)	23%	6

*Asset data was available for only 21 of the 25 groups interviewed.

Table 5.1b: Percentage of Info-Comm Group Work Time Fundraising, based on Year Established

Year Established*	Average Percent of Work Time Fundraising	Total N
Pre-1960 (before the public interest movement)	23%	6
1960-1980 (during the public interest movement)	23%	6
1980 to now (after the public interest movement)	42%	11

*Year established data was available for only 23 of the 25 groups interviewed.

One reason mentioned by several of my interviewees as to why limited time is spent fundraising is because numerous groups, especially the larger ones, have created development offices to take on the bulk of this responsibility. Therefore, time taken away from interacting and communicating with the public and direct influence on leaders' agenda and strategies by grant officers could be reduced if the development office is primarily responsible for fundraising. However, this does not preclude the development office from pressuring leaders to follow an agenda and strategies that are desired by the groups' financial supporters.

In continuing the discussion of the influence of grant officers on the activities of info-comm policy groups, a series of questions are raised. When asked whether the program goals of grant officers are taken into consideration during the agenda-setting and strategic planning process, a majority of leaders responded that these goals were taken into account. Indeed, 68% expressed the important role their financial supporters play in their agenda-setting and strategic planning process.

When an inquiry was made into why the program goals of their grant officers are taken into consideration, many of the group leaders asserted that it is because the interests are often shared between the foundations and the groups. If such interests did not match, then the groups would not approach the foundation for funding in the first place, and vice versa. One leader stated that "if programs do not bear any relationship to the grant officers' interests, then there will be no funding available." Another leader of a group with mid-range assets suggested that they "must take the interests of grant officers into

consideration," but that they "shouldn't set the agenda to please grant officers." A different leader illustrated a common thought process: "if my group has five ideas for what to do next and the foundation is interested in funding one of those ideas, then we will bump that one up as a priority. However, we will not create a program or alter an idea to meet the needs of the foundation." Another leader of a group with mid-range assets provided further clarification that

> "the goals are taken into account, although primarily at the margins rather than centrally. We wouldn't have been funded unless our core funding was in sync with the foundation, so our general goals are supported by definition. When tactical decisions are made, they are not determined by the foundation, as we would not completely change direction. Foundations are oriented more towards deliverables."

Therefore, in order to gain financial support, leaders must participate in a sort of dance, whereby the group must attract the grant officer, but the attraction must be based on a mutual set of interests.

When asked about the process, most leaders explained that the level of involvement by grant officers varied. A few leaders suggested that grant officers were hands off and followed a long-arm approach to involvement in their activities. Others noted that they review ideas, provide feedback and suggestions, request information packets, and require regular updates. One leader of a group with mid-range assets explained that:

> "the level of involvement varies depending on the foundation's level of specification. Some foundations have very knowledgeable grant officers, given their large size, so that they can specialize and be very hands-on (checking in and reacting to work). Other foundations are smaller and look more broadly at the body of work completed at the end of the cycle."

This variation in foundation involvement suggests that the degree of influence grant officers have on info-comm groups is diverse, and therefore, it is difficult to predict any direct effect they have had.

Grant officers were asked to illustrate their level of involvement in the activities of the info-comm groups that they financially support. Only two (one with medium-sized assets and the other with high-range assets) suggested that they have a preference as to the timeframe within which they would like grantees to fulfill their agenda. The other grant officers stated that the preferred timeframe for their grantees depends on the project as well as what is achievable and appropriate for the task at hand. They explained that short-term horizons are appropriate for current political battles to which info-comm groups feel they must react. Lengthier grant periods are more appropriate when the groups are engaged in ongoing challenges or attempts to remedy a process. Because such changes take a tremendous amount of effort and time, the longer timeframe is preferred.

When grant officers were asked to characterize their role in and impact on the agenda-setting process of their grantees, the responses were also varied. Six of the nine grant officers suggested that they are fairly involved in the activities of the info-comm groups they support. One respondent of a foundation with mid-range assets explained that their grant-making is a form of social engineering. This is similar to the pursuit of societal consent that foundations try to forge, as discussed in Roelofs' work (2003). The organizations that are financially supported by this program must ultimately create social changes that the foundation would like to see occur. And it is the responsibility of the

grant officers in the foundation to ensure that this is the case. This is not an entirely new

concept as legacy foundations such as Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller promoted ideas

(through funding) to change society. As a result, this grant officer explained, they are

heavily involved in the design process for grant proposals, and that in some cases, the

grantees may not like the extent of the involvement. This respondent noted that the

foundation becomes much less involved once there is agreement on the deliverables for

the grants. The three other grant officers said that they believe their role should be

limited to defining the main objectives, leaving the details to the grantees. Although the

level of involvement based on asset-size was evenly distributed, the "Old Guard"

foundations tended to be much more involved in the agenda-setting process of their

grantees than the "New Guard" foundations. Table 5.2 illustrates this more clearly.

**Table 5.2: Level of Foundation Involvement in Info-Comm Groups
Agenda Setting Process, based on Year Established**

Year Established	High Involvement in Agenda-Setting Process	Total N
Before 1950 ("Old Guard" Foundation)	83% (5 of 6)	6
After 1950 ("New Guard" Foundation)	33% (1 of 3)	3

Impressions on Public Issue Understanding

Another issue to be addressed in this chapter is how leaders and grant officers

characterize the general public's knowledge about policy issues, whether the opinion of

the public is shared or divergent, and whether leaders and grant officers believe that they

enhance the level of understanding among citizens with respect to info-comm policy. As

Fishkin notes, "for ordinary people, the role of citizen does not carry with it the same institutional incentives. Ordinary citizens do not arrive at positions after consulting focus groups, polls, lobbyists, campaign consultants, and spin doctors. Ordinary citizens are not running for reelection" (Fishkin 1997: 42). Hence, there seems to be little incentive for citizens to remain informed about and mobilize for public policy issues.

This lack of an incentive highlights the collective action problem that Olson (1971) identified, as discussed in Chapter Two. As a result of remaining uninformed and immobilized, some claim the public can experience a form of rational ignorance. Rational ignorance is an economic concept that can be defined as citizens having logical reasons for staying uninformed about a number of policy issues. These reasons can include a lack of resources such as time, attention, in addition to others; the payoff from becoming educated about all policy issues is less than the resources needed to be educated on these issues. As a result, one leader of a high-range asset group discussed in depth that rational ignorance was why policymakers had an important responsibility to identify shared values of their constituents and ensure that policy debates are framed around those values in order to encourage citizen participation:

> "Because people still want to be heard, they have to rely on intermediaries, people that they trust who share general values such as the Internet should not be interfered with…Public education means to set up values so that when specific issues come up, people have a sense of what is the better policy direction and in setting these values, policymakers are very important…I don't mean to suggest that these policymakers are elitist, but that it is simply more rational for all citizens to not have to read every detail about a 500-page FCC decision."

This leader suggests that the role of interest groups (referred to as "policymakers") in the policy process is a crucial one. With the reality that citizens informally conduct cost-benefit analyses when choosing to become politically educated, the way in which the issue is framed (or the public interest position is articulated) is extremely relevant to how involved the citizen will become in that policy area. And the more limited the interaction with citizens, the more likely that leaders may perpetuate an articulation of the public interest that emphasizes market-place values over democratic ones.

From the interviews conducted with the info-comm policy leaders, this perception of rational ignorance seems to be widely held. When asked to "grade" the level of understanding of info-comm policy issues by the public, only one leader responded with a grade higher than a "C." In fact, the leaders as a whole gave the public a "D" average with respect to their knowledge of policy issues. When the level of understanding is crossed tabulated with groups that have a membership base, the distribution of grades is similar. Dividing the groups according to longevity shows a similar pattern throughout, except for leaders that are part of the more recently established groups. One reason for this may be that leaders of these groups, far removed from the height of the public interest movement, have become disillusioned about citizen knowledge on these issues, given that the public still remains fairly uninvolved in them. The responses tended to be even lower than those of the groups established before the 1980s, and interestingly enough, these groups are more likely to have a membership base (as noted earlier). If this is the case, then having members may actually play a role in this disillusionment. Perhaps the direct interaction with citizens, potentially including their lack of responsiveness in

discussing these issues, are what led leaders of groups with a membership base to

respond in this way. Table 5.3 illustrates this variation in responses.

**Table 5.3: The Public's Level of Understanding on Info-Comm Issues,
Based on Year Info-Comm Group Established**

Level of Understanding (by Grade)	% of Groups Established Before 1980	% of Groups Established After 1980
A = excellent	0%	0%
B = above average	0%	9%
C = average	58%	27%
D = below average	17%	27%
F = poor	8%	27%
Don't Know	17%	9%
Total N	12	11

*Year established data were available for only 23 of the 25 groups with members.

The most surprising outcome from the responses to this question is the leaders' intense

skepticism about the public's knowledge. If leaders believe the public knows little about

relevant policy questions, then there would seem to be minimal incentive for leaders to

engage the public meaningfully and have any expectation of becoming informed by

citizens who are largely ignorant. This perspective furthers the elite mentality of interest

groups and their approach to politics, as discussed in Chapter Two. However, regardless

of the outcome, the ability for the leadership to state that they have a record of consulting

citizens legitimizes their public interest policy position.

Another way to examine the perspective of leaders is to determine whether they believe

the public shares a common position on relevant policy issues. In considering whether

the public is unified or divided on info-comm policy, the responses varied greatly. Nine

leaders (36%) felt that the public is unified with respect to info-comm policy; while

twelve leaders (48%) stated that the public is divided. In addition, four leaders believe

that they do not have enough information to make an informed opinion about the public's

position. The widely divergent views and notable "insufficient information" responses

suggest that these leaders either do not have a strong understanding of citizens' positions

on info-comm policy or that they do not feel that citizens are sufficiently informed to

reach a common position on these policies. This latter comment was expressed numerous

times during the course of the interviews. For example, one leader stated that he believes

citizens do not have enough information to make an informed decision.

In contrast, when asked about whether the activities of their respective group increases

the level of understanding among the public, 84% of the leaders said they believe that

their work contributes to the knowledge of the public. All of the grant officers suggested

that the work of their foundation helps to enhance the public's understanding of info-

comm policy. However, given the absence of a membership by many of these groups to

serve as a check on their influence, it seems that leaders have highly optimistic

impressions of their contributions in informing and educating the public. One

explanation for this optimism may be the fact that there is often no strong measure of

effectiveness that is employed by these groups (or that even exists, according to

numerous leaders). This absence of a metric may be self-serving for the leaders as it

precludes them from being accountable for their activities. Another explanation for this

optimism is that these groups communicate with the media on a regular basis and that

their ability to be quoted in a media story becomes their test for how they are educating the public.

Learning about who develops the group's policy message is another method of identifying the level of interaction between leaders and citizens. When asked about who develops the group's policy message, only 12% of leaders (3 of 25) responded that they take on that responsibility alone. Two of these three represent groups that have relatively modest assets and the third is fairly well-financed. An additional 20% of leaders (5 of 25) reported that they, along with one other staff member, develop their policy message. The rest, 68% (17 of 25) cited multiple staff members who assist them in the process of policy development for the group. These other staff are generally counted among those identified earlier as playing a consulting role, including board members, presidents, executive directors, and various other directors. In only two cases did leaders mention that the policy message is developed by the members of the group and then is implemented by the leaders. This latter scenario suggests a decision-making process that is not elite-guided. In general, then, the decision-making process that leaders use to form the group's policy message seems to generally be more autonomous and elite-driven.

Impressions on Policy Position of the Public

When asked to characterize the policy positions of the public, the responses fell into two categories. During the interviews, 40% (or 10 of 25) reported that the policy position of the public is largely motivated by consumer interests, such as protection of privacy,

diversity of content, low-prices, and quality products. However, an equal amount (40%, or 10 of 25) responded that the public is generally unaware of or uninvolved with issues related to info-comm policy. One leader stated that they were "not sure the public has much interest beyond their own." Another stated that citizens are "aware of significant changes taking place, but are confused by which way policy should go forward." A third leader stated that the public is "largely uninformed and has a simplistic view of these issues." The leaders who responded in this way vary in terms of the asset-size of their group. Interestingly enough, all but two who believe the public to be generally unaware of info-comm policy issues represent non-membership groups. Table 5.4 illustrates the responses.

Table 5.4: Impression of Public's Position on Info-Comm Policy, based on Membership

Impression of Public's Position on Policy	Groups with Members	Groups without Members
Consumer Interests	60%	27%
Unaware	20%	53%
Other	20%	20%
Total N	10	15

This table indicates that the leaders of groups without members are more likely to believe the public is either oblivious to or simply uninvolved in info-comm policy issues. These results are important because the more that leaders in the community believe the public is unaware of policy issues, the less likely they are to become informed by them. One leader noted that they "would not exist without [members] and that they are more

effective and powerful with a grassroots base." Another leader stated that membership

"enhances the credibility and reputation" of the group and "influences policy solutions."

Comparing these results with the data from Chapter Four on the level of interaction and

communication there is between leaders and the public, reveals a different finding (as

illustrated in Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Impression of Public's Position on Info-Comm Policy
and Public Interaction, based on Group Strategy

Group Strategy	Consumer Interests	Unaware	Other	Total N
Groups that Use Public Outreach as a Strategy	40%	40%	20%	25
Groups that Do Not Use Public Outreach as a Strategy	-	-	-	0
Groups that Consult with the Public	38%	50%	13%	16
Groups that Do Not Consult with the Public	44%	22%	33%	9
Groups that Conduct Public Opinion Polls	23%	46%	31%	13
Groups that Do Not Conduct Public Opinion Polls	58%	33%	8%	12

Table 5.5 indicates that strategies to interact with the public influences groups' into

believing that citizens are unaware of info-comm policy. When comparing this with the

results of Table 5.4, it seems that membership and consultations have an opposing impact

on how leaders view the policy position of citizens. However, I believe that the

consultations and opinion polls noted by these leaders are more passive in nature than

having a membership, and therefore, that membership is the stronger indicator in

influencing leaderships' impression of citizens' policy position.

Internal Group Dialogue in the Decision-Making Process

The last section of this chapter addresses the second of two research questions presented

in this study: do the leadership of the info-comm policy community approach their

decision-making in a democratic fashion? As noted in Chapter One, communication is a

central feature of democracy. However, the degree to which communication occurs

internally in organizations that influence policy remains a concern. In order to assess the

research question, my analysis focuses on the internal dialogue that occurs for decision-

making and policy message development. Interviews with leaders from the info-comm

policy community as well as research gathered from other sources help to reveal whether

their decision-making activities follow a democratic model. Responses to the interviews

illustrate the degree to which these leaders approach decision-making.

As explained in Chapter Three, leaders and grant officers were asked about their

community. Their respective groups' efforts to collaborate with others within and

outside of their group encourage decision-making that is informed and dialogical. As a

result, this would suggest that their decision-making process is relatively open, tending

toward a democratic system, as opposed to a closed, elite-dominated one. Open dialogue

within a group is required if there is to exist something resembling democratic

communication among staff. As noted in Chapter Three, regular consultations with staff

allows for decisions that are informed by diverse opinions beyond the necessarily small

leadership circle. Additionally, consultations between leaders and staff suggest that the

decision-making process is deliberative and democratic rather than insulated and oligarchic.

Several questions about the internal deliberative process within the respective organizations were asked of leaders and grant officers. The leaders were first asked about whether they consult with internal staff members, and all replied that they do. When asked about the type of staff included in such meetings, most responses generally cited other senior staff, such as board members, presidents, executive directors, and managing directors. Some mentioned research directors, communications directors, and policy directors, among others; the organization with a relatively small staff (5 people or less) indicated that they consult with everyone. Most of the leaders also noted that they consult with other staff routinely (ranging from daily to weekly). Only 8% (or 2 of 25) said that they interact with their staff less frequently than on a weekly basis.

Leaders were also asked to gauge the level of knowledge on info-comm issues of the staff with whom they consult. A majority of leaders (56%, or 14 of 25) responded that the staff with whom they consult have a high level of knowledge on relevant info-comm policy issues. The other 44% reported varying levels of staff knowledge.

This clear frequency of dialogue with internal staff suggests that the decision-making process of these groups may be more elite-guided (where elites play a less controlling role) than elite-driven (where elites are in control). In addition, given that slightly more than one-half of the leaders believe their staff to be highly knowledgeable, the

implication is that the dialogue between the leader and staff is generally rich and potentially influential in the groups' decision-making process. In those cases where leaders meet regularly with staff in whom they have confidence regarding their competency on the issues and the process, one should expect some genuine give-and-take to occur. However, it seems that there is a significant amount of consultation with staff despite the leaders' lack of faith in their knowledge on these issues. Without a strong background in info-comm policy, a staff member cannot expect to be taken seriously or to exert an influence in decision-making, thus leaving the leaders to make their own private determinations on how to proceed.

Grant officers were also asked about their interactions with staff and, again, all of them reported that they consult with staff within their foundations. All grant officers (100%, or 9 or 9) reported that they consult with other staff members at their foundations. The staff generally consulted are the senior personnel mentioned previously by leaders. However, only 44% of grant officers (4 of 9) rated the knowledge level of their staff as "high." The other 56% reported varying levels of staff knowledge. Therefore, although the program officers consult with their staff, the prospect for true democratic dialogue is somewhat limited because less than half of the grant-officers believe the personnel within their foundation to be up to speed on info-comm issues.

The research questions addressed in this chapter were: do the leadership of info-comm groups inform themselves about the public interest through dialogue with citizens? Do the leadership of the info-comm policy community approach their decision-making in a

democratic fashion? After analyzing the leaders' and grant officers' responses on these issues, it seems the response for the first research question remains no, while the response to the second research question is yes.

In addressing the issue of grant officer influence, a majority of groups reported that they tend to develop their agenda and strategies with assistance from their foundation supporters. This parallels the responses by the majority of grant officers (especially in the "Old Guard") that they are very involved in the agenda-setting process of their grantees. Additionally, what it means to be considered a tax-exempt organization serving the public interest remains in question when there are few mechanisms to ensure the accountability of either foundations or the groups. Moreover, the smaller and younger groups devote more of their time to fundraising which can (1) be a distraction away from interacting with the public and (2) can lead to increased funding pressures in response to the interests of their foundation supporters.

While the leaders of these groups believe they contribute to the public's education on info-comm policy issues, most have little regard for the knowledge of the public on and generally believe that citizens are unaware of these issues. The leaders' perception of low citizen knowledge creates an additional concern as to whether it is beneficial for leaders to actively engage with the public, given that many view it as a lost cause. Therefore, although these groups are willing to engage the public at some level, their skepticism of citizen's knowledge about and policy position on info-comm issues perhaps prevents them from engagement beyond an arm's length.

The final chapter will discuss the key findings from this research, reflecting upon the pre-existing political science literature, address the research's application to other policy communities, and pose additional questions that would further enhance the study of the articulation of the public interest in info-comm policy.

Chapter Six: The Public Interest in Info-Comm Policy

Upon reflection of the research conducted for this study, there are several sets of concluding observations I would like to raise. The first revisits the findings of info-comm policy as they relate to the political science literature discussed in the first two chapters, and the second addresses the applicability of the findings to other policy communities. The final set of observations considers what possible alternative research approaches and questions could help to gain further insight into this policy community.

What the Findings Suggest for Info-Comm Policy

This study was initiated to explore the degree to which self-proclaimed public interest groups within the info-comm policy community actually represent a "public" voice. The absence of the public's voice in this policy arena is both ironic and problematic. It is ironic because the exchange of ideas through communication is at the crux of info-comm policy, and when the public's voice is limited, so is the exchange of ideas. It is problematic because democracy requires communication and the absence of citizen input on info-comm policy may weaken the development of the democratic potential for communication. Therefore, the public needs to play an active role in the creation and maintenance of info-comm policy in order to test the potential of ICTs increasing participatory access to the democratic process.

This study also operates on the assumption that the public would likely be inclined to support policies that promote the democratic potential of ICTs. This is because such potential increases their access to and communication of information. Info-comm technologies are developed by corporations, most of which are profit driven, such as mass media corporations (Baker 2002). Therefore, unless corporate executives are convinced that developing technologies with democratic potential is a profitable activity, there is no way to ensure that such technologies will emerge without any intervention. One illustrative example is found in how the Internet changed once it became privatized. The Internet quickly became a haven for advertising, while democratic dialogue became only a small portion of the content exchanged. This limited dialogue could also be the result of the public's interest in political discussion being overshadowed by consumerist desires. Nevertheless, one powerful resource for promoting change is public policy, which can have the effect of directing the development of technologies.

Policies established by government set the tone for the development of these and other technologies. Corporations recognize this and are thus heavily involved in the policymaking process to promote their own interests. Their involvement often manifests itself in the form of business interest groups. Additionally, public interest groups— existing to represent the interests of a broad public—are also part of the policymaking process. However, the existence of public interest groups does not suggest de facto informed articulations of the public's interest nor does it, in this case, imply support for developing the democratic potential of new technologies. Given the importance of the

democratic potential of ICTs, how does the current policy community fair in terms of their commitment to understanding and representing broad-based constituencies?

This study determined that interest groups that apply pressure on policymakers in support of certain interests have many different methods of interacting with the public, including engaging in public outreach, citizen consultations, and public opinion polling. However, many of these groups do not have mechanisms that ensure that their internal decision-making processes and activities parallel the interests of a broadly defined public. In fact, only slightly more than one-third (36%) of the groups have an actual membership base. As a result, a disproportionate number of interactions with the public may be limited to a one-way dialogue: providing education rather than obtaining information. And although leaders generally stated that they believe the work of their group contributes to a better understanding of info-comm policy among citizens, most leaders reported that they believe the public's comprehension of issues is generally low; Many believe citizens are, by and large, simply unaware on these issues. In addition, grant officers share a similar belief. However, they do not require their grantees to interact with citizens.

Thus, the findings from this study highlight the uncertainty of whether info-comm groups engage in a two-way dialogue with citizens (both educating and obtaining information from citizens). Indeed, some responses by leaders seem clearly to contradict other responses they provide. Their reported consultation and outreach activities may be more limited or less constructive, in actuality, than the leaders may believe them to be. And there is little emphasis placed on these activities by their financial supporters. As a

result, the public's voice seems to remain underrepresented in the info-comm policy arena. If this is the case, what are the implications of a public interest position that is not informed by citizen input?

The possible effects from citizens not having a strong voice in the policymaking process regarding ICT development are considerable. After a long period of corporate dominance, citizens strove to gain influence in the info-comm policy process during the late 1960s, when a number of public interest groups were created and began to flourish. However, this study found that even the flourishing of these groups does not ensure that citizens can be active participants in the info-comm policy process. And because the public would likely promote the democratic potential of technologies, citizen participation in the activities and decision-making process of public interest groups helps ensure that groups support democratic policy positions. Without groups that support the democratic potential of technologies, and in the absence of any such regulations that promote them, corporations will continue to be, first and foremost, influenced by profit. Thus, ICTs will continue to be developed according to their commercial promise. When the profitability of these technologies contradicts the promotion of their democratic potential, the full and free exchange of information and ideas could be held hostage to profit margin calculations. The views of some groups will be marginalized, while others will be favored. This privileging has an influence on the policies that are decided upon, the actions that are taken to implement them, the individuals who will benefit from or be disadvantaged by them, and the future policy debates that arise as a result. The effect of limited citizen input is also easily perpetuated in the policymaking process, as policies

that are uninformed by the public may be taken into consideration while future policies are developed.

Applicability to Other Policy Communities

This study, addressing the degree to which citizens inform the articulation of the public interest, is generally applicable to other policy communities. Indeed, interest groups that address any set of policy issues will likely be able to learn from this study's findings.

The demographics of the info-comm community are not unlike many other policy communities. Predominately white, male, with college degrees, and with middle-class or higher incomes, the info-comm community illustrates the types of individuals who generally comprise the leadership of the policymaking arena, including interest groups and financial supporters. The environmental movement, as well as most other policy communities, share similar characteristics, although there may be more gender equality in some of those communities. Such demographics suggest that the leadership of interest groups might be an elite class themselves, and that public interest groups in any policy community with similar demographics might face more challenges in accurately reflecting the interests of citizens than they would if the leadership was comprised of a more diverse group of individuals.

Another similarity between this and other policy communities is the structure of leadership within interest groups. Each interest group, in some form, experiences elitism

and its effect on decision-making processes. As evidenced in Chapter Two, elites and elite perspectives in politics and policymaking have been studied by a number of scholars. The structural realities of leadership in any interest group and foundation open the door for elite perspectives to become privileged over others. Regardless of whether the issue is trade, education, health policy, or transportation, the voice of the few can overshadow those of the many. Given that this is also true in any organizational setting, examining how and with what frequency group leaders communicate with other staff and with citizens is a part of this study that can be applied to other policy communities.

The building of a membership base is another similarity across the interest group universe. Interest groups are not, by definition, required to have a membership. And their financial supporters also do not require such membership in order to obtain funding. However, those with a membership base have a built-in mechanism for citizen dialogue and can also help ensure that the needs of their constituents are being met. In this study, I found that smaller-sized info-comm groups tend to be membership organizations, as are groups established before 1980. And those groups without a membership tended to believe citizens are less aware of info-comm policy issues. Given this, such findings may apply to other policy communities and suggest some trends both on the types of groups that have a membership base and on whether these groups feel citizens are informed about their respective policy issue.

Limited accountability by constituents is another important area of concern in the study of interest group politics and organizational dynamics. Most leaders responded that they

do not have a formal or systematic mechanism in place that measures their activities with the interests of citizens. This was not considered a high priority for the leadership of interest groups or foundations. The same may be true in other policy communities and is problematic in those communities when they are comprised of leaders not demographically representative of the public and are without membership. Although these are not privately run enterprises, many of these interest groups are recipients of tax-exempt funds. Therefore, the challenge of how to hold these groups more accountable for their activities remains.

Many interest groups value the interaction with citizens as an important part of their operation, regardless of whether they have a membership base. Groups across the board recognize the importance of interaction between leaders and citizens. This interaction allows for an exchange of information between leaders and citizens, and provides legitimacy to the work of the group. The leaders of environmental and civil rights groups, for example, regularly implement strategies and engage in activities that allow them to consult with the public. In Chapter Five, I illustrated that many forms of public consultations are not necessarily resource intensive (except for public opinion polling) and that low-asset interest groups fare almost as well as high-asset groups in terms of conducting these consultations. Thus, opportunities to consult with the public are attainable strategies for most interest groups, regardless of size.

This study's findings illustrate info-comm leaders' general belief that citizens' knowledge of info-comm issues is fairly limited. For public interest groups, this is

particularly problematic. It implies that not only do these groups have to spend less time influencing policymakers in order to educate the public, but that public interest groups may believe that efforts to inform citizens are futile and as a result, leaders and others in the group limit their interaction with citizens. In some other policy arenas, such as abortion rights and capital punishment, the topics may be less technically complex, thereby facilitating citizen knowledge and understanding about the issue. However, there are degrees of complexity, and the ability for a public interest group to inform as well as be informed by citizens remains a challenge.

Additionally, numerous policy communities recognize that the general advocacy enterprise is greatly influenced by the market. An example is the energy policy community, which is guided by the availability and accessibility of energy resources (McFarland 1976). As a result of this reliance on the market, corporate actors tend to play a prominent role in the policymaking process. Corporations contribute substantial amounts of financial support in order to effect change in the policymaking process. Because of the emphasis on the market, corporations tend to make decisions based on what will accrue the most profit. However, for public interest communities, what is in the best interest of citizens does not always equate to what is profitable. In other words, the public interest does not always align with business interests, thus requiring tremendous effort on the part of public interest groups to challenge these market-driven interests. This challenge, which has an effect on a group's interaction with citizens, is shared by those that are part of the info-comm community (as explored in Chapter Two) and all other organizations that claim to represent the interests of some constituency. In

fact, the market is a consideration in the decision-making processes of many different types of interest groups.

Moreover, as the *Washington Post* editorial on tax-exempt organizations highlighted, many policy communities believe that they are unable to lobby members of Congress directly. It is true that the Internal Revenue Service does pose certain limits on the lobbying activities of such organizations. However, there is still a considerable amount of time and revenue that each organization can devote to this end. This is significant because the key policymakers are congressional members and without taking advantage of sanctioned opportunities for direct lobbying, interest groups representing any policy community are disadvantaging their constituents and their financial supporters in their activities.

Furthermore, survival is a paramount interest for groups in any policy community. Securing financial security that guarantees survival likely figures prominently in the decision calculus of leadership. Some groups have been able to address this problem better than others. Moreover, a stable funding source is necessary to engage in advocacy activities, and financial resources determine which strategies a group can consider. How groups address this challenge and the impact it has on a group's actions are important, regardless of the policy field.

Finally, no organization is precluded from engaging in democratic decision-making as a result of their specific policy issue area. Whether the group's decision-making process is

democratic depends on the structure of the organization and who is included as part of the process. When groups develop a more elite-guided (rather than elite-driven) decision-making process by which staff who work under the leaders have access to the process, there is likely to be an increase in the diversity of input that lead to both a more democratic process as well as a better informed one.

Thus, on a number of counts, the findings of this study may be applicable to other policy communities. In addition, my research has lead to a set of more informed research questions that can be applied to the study of interest groups. I will address these research questions in the concluding section.

Next Steps

Having conducted this study and now with the benefit of hindsight, there are alternate approaches to this study that I can suggest as well as more refined research questions for future research investigation.

In examining alternative approaches to conducting the study, there are several that seem promising. First, it would be quite useful to compare the activities of info-comm community with other policy communities. A wider sample might include policy communities that share similar traits with the info-comm community as well as those that differ tremendously. This way, one could determine whether the responses and activities from this study are truly unique to the info-comm groups and what common themes and

generalizations can be expressed. In addition, one would be able to identify whether obtaining an informed articulation of the public interest is a challenge faced by other policy communities, and perhaps learn what tools exist to address this challenge. This original study was intentionally limited to focus on info-comm groups. However, this resulted in the inability to directly compare results across policy communities.

A second alternative approach to this study would expand the scope of interviewees to include citizens. Though this would shift the fundamental focus of the study, there is much information that can be gained from doing so. Ideally, the most desirable method for such data collection would be public opinion polling. However, this requires sufficient financial support, which is not a trivial matter and which was not readily available prior to the launch of this study. Focus groups of citizens could be conducted in lieu of public opinion polling. Although focus groups have limitations, as does any methodology, this is a more cost-effective and time efficient approach to gaining insight from the public.

When conducting polls or focus groups, questions might be asked that help to verify or contradict some of the statements given by info comm leaders. For example, questions could address the frequency of forums to interact with info-comm groups (both in terms of being educated by these groups as well as helping to inform them), the opportunity to provide feedback on policy messages, understanding of info-comm issues, and policy positions on the issues. My expectation is that a sample of citizens would help to corroborate or challenge the perspective that leaders provided on their interaction with

the public. In addition, one might also more clearly identify the public interest positions

of citizens on various issues related to info-comm policy. Surveys of citizens, however,

were not part of this original study due to its narrow scope.

A third approach would be to reinterview the leaders and grant officers. During this

reinterviewing process, I would focus more narrowly on the questions related to public

interaction, including consultation, education, and outreach. Upon reflection about this

study, I realize that there were a number of questions that were included in the interviews

in order to prevent the interviewee from identifying what exactly was the focus of the

interviews (i.e. they served to function as a distraction, but nothing more). However, in

weighing the costs and benefits of including such questions, I am still unclear as to

whether the benefits of including the distraction questions as part of the interview was

more beneficial than if I had asked more pointed questions. The interviews were

lengthened in order to ask additional distraction questions, but required the interviewee to

toggle back and forth in their minds about what they thought with respect to various

issues. In retrospect, I might have preferred to ask fewer distraction-type questions, if

any at all. Given the time this would have saved, I could have also added some questions

that asked the interviewees to identify specific activities and provide examples and

descriptions of their interactions with citizens. Of course, without questions to distract

the interviewee, the reliability of responses could, to some degree, be called into

question. Yet, my impression is that focusing on questions that address the specifics of

activities would illustrate whether their interactions with citizens were frequent and

informative (i.e. providing insight into whether the interviewees were hedging their responses in order to "spin" the interview session in their favor).

Another method of data collection that could be used would be to conduct a survey in place of one-on-one interviews. The advantage of conducting a survey is that the interviewees would be required to provide discrete responses, given the nature of surveys, and thus, more comparable responses than I had otherwise received through first-hand testimony. In addition, the data from surveys are generally considered more reliable than those collected through interviews. In this case, there may have been some interviewees who would have been more likely to complete a short survey, given time constraints, over what was generally a one-hour interview. Of course, the disadvantage is that additional information from follow-up questions supplied by the interviewees during in-person interviews would not have been captured. The semi-structured interview approach was originally chosen for this reason.

Unfortunately, it was not suggested to me until late in the interview stage that I ask of interviewees exactly what information and communications policy means to them. I would have liked to include a question or two that addressed that directly. This way, I would have been able to provide a definition of info-comm policy from the perspective of the leaders and their financial supporters, rather than simply from theorists outside the community. I did, to some degree, obtain such insight from the interviews. However, it was not as consistent as I would have preferred nor did I receive a response from all of the interviewees on this issue.

Another approach that could be applied to this study would be to have interviewed the staff of both the interest groups and the foundations. This way, the responses of the leaders and grant officers could be corroborated, and it is likely that additional information and perspective on the staffs' role in the decision-making process could be obtained. The staff who work for the groups and foundations are in a position to influence the decisions of the leadership. This also suggests that staff members can help to ensure that such decisions are elite-guided, rather than simply not elite-directed. There is also much to be gained from learning about the staffs' impressions of their leadership, and better understanding how the leaders interact with others internal and external to the organization.

Questions that would be asked of the staff include the level of interaction they have with leadership and as part of the decision-making process, their knowledge of info-comm policy issues, their perspective on how the organization engages citizens, what voices or perspectives tend to win out in the decision-making process, how grant and grantee outreach is conducted, and the level of communication that occurs between the leaders and their respective grant officers. Again, because of the narrow scope of this study, only leaders of these organizations were interviewed.

If possible, it would also be extremely useful and very interesting to conduct onsite research with several info-comm groups. Jeffrey Berry conducted a similar effort, whereby he served as an intern at a number of public interest groups (1977). What is most desirable about conducting this type of research is that it allows for the researcher to

arrive at her own conclusions about the leadership based upon direct observation over a period of time rather than on the stated impressions and opinions of others. This would also allow for a more detailed mapping of the activities internal to an organization. The emphasis using this approach would rely less on asking certain types of questions, and more on observing the behavior of leadership within their normal, everyday context. This would have required additional time and resources on my part, which would have been extremely difficult to obtain during the course of this study.

Upon consideration of the research questions that were the basis for this study, I would like to revisit and further refine them based on my original findings. Because of the lack of clarity in responses from leaders on how much they interact with citizens and how much input they receive from the broad public, I would reformulate my research question in a more narrow fashion: to what degree does citizen input inform info-comm policy? This would allow me to specifically identify how much citizen input is considered by leadership in their policymaking calculus. Then this could then be compared with the data from this study to determine whether leadership's conception of the public interest is actually informed by citizens.

Given this new research question, I would more closely examine the leaderships' interactions with citizens and put forth the following propositions:

1. Leaders spend a greater proportion of their time educating the public rather than obtaining information from them.

This first proposition examines the details of leaders' interaction with the public. By gauging the amount of time spent educating as well as obtaining information from citizens, I could more accurately assess the degree to which the public does inform leaders in their policymaking calculus.

2. Leaders do not believe that obtaining citizen input is important to their policymaking calculus.

This next proposition would help to determine what value leaders place on receiving citizen input to inform their message development, policy position, strategies and the like. My suspicion is that leaders place more value on educating than on obtaining information from citizens. This value will be determined from the previous proposition. However, this particular proposition would allow me to go one step further and determine whether leaders believe that obtaining such input is useful in the first place.

3. Leaders who believe citizen input is important to their policymaking calculus represent membership organizations.

Based on some of the findings from this study (including leaders' perception of citizens position on info-comm policy), I suspect that the leaders of groups with a membership base place more value on citizen input as part of their policymaking considerations than do those without a membership base.

4. Leaders only engage in activities that enhance their group's likelihood of receiving financial support.

Because sustainability is a fundamental concern for every organization, it is reasonable for an info-comm group to choose its activities based both on what is required by their current financial supporters and what may be attractive to future financial supporters. However, this suggests that the focus of their efforts is not as strongly grounded in public engagement. Therefore, this proposition will help test the control financial supporters have over the activities of info-comm groups and provide further insight into why public interest groups have varied emphases on citizen interaction.

5. Leaders compete with their colleagues for financial support and this makes coalitions among the various groups difficult to forge.

I heard from many leaders that there are limited resources available and thus, the groups must compete against each other for those resources. I also heard from some leaders that there is tension among the leaders as a result of this competition and therefore, coalition building was difficult. I would want to more closely examine that competition and the tension it creates.

6. Leaders do not have specific strategies in place to obtain citizen input.

The strategies inquired about in this study addressed public outreach and public opinion polling, to a more limited degree. A set of questions that focus only on strategies to obtain information from the public (i.e. not how they educate citizens) would help to gauge the amount of information they receive.

7. Leaders do not receive input from citizens on a frequent basis.

This proposition would serve as a check on the responses leaders would give from the previous proposition. If they claim to have specific strategies to obtain citizen input, but do not apply those strategies on a regular basis, then the degree to which leaders obtain information from citizens is limited despite the existence of those strategies.

8. Leaders generally do not consider citizen input in their policymaking calculus.

Another set of questions would follow up questions about specific strategies for what is done with citizen input after it is received to explore how such input is implemented by the leader, if at all. In addition, these questions, combined with those regarding strategies to obtain citizen input, would serve to illustrate a roadmap for how such input is brought into an organization and then, what happens to that information.

9. Leaders do not test their policy messages with the public.

I would inquire as to whether leaders test their policy message with citizens in some form and if so, what is done with the feedback provided by citizens. This proposition is similar to the previous question about specific strategies, but targets the role of citizens in policy message development, which was not closely addressed in this study.

10. "Old Guard" foundations are more involved in the info-comm group's agenda-setting process than are "New Guard" foundations.

As one of the findings from my research illustrated, more established "Old Guard" foundations tended to be move active in setting the agenda of their info-comm grantees than did the more recently established ones. Given that this is the case, it would be worthwhile to study more closely the role that foundations play in this important process undertaken by interest groups. This way, I could determine what characteristics about the "Old Guard" foundations lead them to be more involved than others.

As for the second research question in this study about democratic approaches to decision-making, most info-comm group leaders and grant officers reported that their activities are largely democratic in nature. In other words, staff from all levels of the organization have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. This is not to suggest that the groups and foundations are absent any elite-directed activities, as such elitism is bound to emerge. However, they already seem to have mechanisms in place to allow for democratic dialogue. As a result, I would likely abandon any follow-up to this research question in future studies.

Concluding Thoughts

My current research has contributed to the study of interest groups by illustrating that the articulation of the public interest for info-comm policy is only marginally informed by citizens, and that therefore, the political vehicles to promote the democratic potential of ICTs are weaker than previously imagined. A more informed articulation requires interest groups and their financial supporters to encourage increased citizen input as part of their regular activities. As a result, I anticipate that this study serves as one of several useful starting points for future research, including its application to the study of interest groups in any policy community. There are many additional approaches and research questions as well as related propositions that might be explored in further research. As many group leaders and grant officers have noted, a limited amount of research on the info-comm policy community has been pursued to date. Conducting additional studies would not only enrich the academic literature, but would also help to better inform the policy community itself.

Appendix A: Research Propositions

Public Interaction

1.   Do the leadership of info-comm groups inform themselves about "the public interest" through dialogue with the public?

Proposition 1.1:   Leaders do not share a consistent conception of the "public interest."

Proposition 1.2:   Leaders believe that the public is uninformed about info-comm policy.

Proposition 1.3:   Leaders limit their opportunities to hear from the public about info-comm policy issues.

Proposition 1.4:   Leaders consider the goals of their funding sources when developing their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 1.5:   Leaders do not consult regularly with other leaders to help develop their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 1.6:   Leaders do not seek to change public opinion by educating the public about info-comm policy.

Proposition 1.7:   Leaders develop policy messages that are too complex for the public.

Proposition 1.8:   Leaders do not view public outreach as among the highest priorities of their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 1.9:   Leaders do not view building a grassroots constituency as among the highest priorities of their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 1.10:   Leaders do not carefully consider what sub-groups within the population will be impacted by their activities.

Proposition 1.11:   Leaders do not demographically reflect the constituency they claim to represent.

2.   Do grant officers influence the articulation of "the public interest" of the info-comm groups they fund?

Proposition 3.1:   Grant officers do not share a consistent conception of the "public interest."

Proposition 3.2:   Grant officers believe that the public is uninformed about info-comm policy.

Proposition 3.3:   Grant officers limit their opportunities to hear from the public about info-comm policy issues.

Proposition 3.4:   Grant officers value short-term deliverables over long-term goals.

Proposition 3.5:   Grant officers consult regularly with other grant officers to help develop their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 3.6:   Grant officers seek to change public opinion by educating the public about info-comm policy.

Proposition 3.7:   Grant officers want their info-comm grantees to have similar agendas.

Proposition 3.8:   Grant officers do not view public outreach as among the Highest priorities for their grantees agenda and strategies.

Proposition 3.9:   Grant officers do not view building a grassroots constituency as among the highest priorities for their grantees agenda and strategies.

Proposition 3.10:   Grant officers do not carefully consider what sub-groups within the population will be impacted by their activities.

Proposition 3.11:   Grant officers are demographically similar.

Democratic Decision-Making

3.   Do the leadership of info-comm groups develop their agenda and strategies democratically?

Proposition 2.1:   Leaders do not consult regularly with other internal staff to develop their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 2.2:   Leaders have substantial autonomy from their group in their policymaking activities.

4.   Do grant officers of new media groups develop their program goals democratically?

Proposition 4.1:   Grant officers do not consult regularly with other internal staff to develop their agenda and strategies.

Proposition 4.2:   Grant officers have substantial autonomy from their foundation in their grantmaking activities.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Questions for Interest Groups

General Questions

1.   From publicly available literature, I understand that your organization focuses on
        new media issues/has a new media program on [A] [B] […]. Is that correct? Are
        there any others?

Constituency & Community

2.   Does your organization have a constituency that it represents through its
        program(s) noted earlier?

2a.   If so, who are they (i.e. business, government, the entire public, a segment of the
        public, other)?

2aii.   Why is having a constituency important to your program/organization?

2b.   Are there constituencies (in addition to the ones mentioned above) that you would
        like to reach?

2bi.   And if so, how could that potential constituency be mobilized?

3.   Are there any mechanisms in place that ensure that the activities of your
        organization match the interest of your constituents?
4.   What segments of the population benefit from your program?

4a.   What segments of the population are disadvantaged by your program?

5.   How would you characterize the demographics of the new media policy
        community that includes organizations like yours?

Agenda & Strategies

6.   How would your characterize your program's/organization's agenda(s) in these
        programs?

6b.   Is the agenda for these programs short-term or long-term in nature?

6bi.   Why?

7.   What strategies to influence policy does your program/organization engage in:
        lobbying, litigation, public outreach, other?

7a.   Who is the focus of those efforts?

7b.   How frequently are these strategies employed?

7c.   What percentage of your program's/organization's financial resources is devoted to these strategies?

7d.   What percentage of your program's/organization's internal staff resources are devoted to these strategies?

7e.   If your program/organization litigates, who does it generally represent?

8.   When developing an agenda or strategies for this program, do you consult with other staff internally?

8a.   If so, how frequent are these consultations?

8b.   What are the titles of those staff?

8c.   What is the level of understanding on the part of these staff on the new media issue of [A], [B], […]?

9.   When developing the agenda and strategies for this program, do you consult with leaders of other new media programs/organizations?

9a.   Could you name or simply describe the organizations with which your organization would choose to consult?

9ai.   Please explain why your organization does consult with them?

9b.   Could you name or simply describe the organizations with which your organization would not choose to consult?

9bi.   Please explain why your organization does not consult with them.

10.   When developing the agenda and strategies for your program on the new media issue of [A], [B], […], do you consult with any of the following groups: business entities groups, public interest groups, Federal Communications Commission, Congress, the Courts, the public, other? (Can answer yes/no)

10a.   If so, in what manner do you conduct these consultations?

10ai. How frequent are these consultations?

10b.   Is your program/organization familiar with or has your organization conducted any public opinion polls on the new media issue of [A], [B], […]?

Policy Messages and Issue Understanding

11.   Who develops your program/organization's policy messages (e.g. how your program/organization relays its position on the new media issue of [A], [B], […]).

11a.   Who is your program/organization targeting with your policy messages?

11b.   Are these messages effective?

11c.   How does your program/organization know that these messages are effective?

11d.   Does program /organization receive feedback as to the clarity of your policy message from its target audience?

11e.   How?

12.   How would your program/organization characterize the policy positions of the following groups on the new media issue of [A], [B], […]: business interest, public interest, interest of the Federal Communications Commission, interest of Congress, interest of the Courts, the public, other?

12a.   How did your program/organization arrive at these characterizations?

12b.   Are these characterizations ever reassessed?

13.   How would your program/organization characterize the level of understanding by the following groups of your program on the new media issue of [A], [B], […]: businesses that focus on new media policy, public interest groups that focus on new media policy, Federal Communications Commission, Congress, the Courts, the public, other? (Can answer A-F or elaborate)

13a.   Do you believe [businesses, public interest groups, Federal Communications Commission, Congress, the Courts, the public, other] to be unified or divided on the new media issue of A], [B], […]?

14.   Does your program/organization increase the level of understanding for [businesses, public interest groups, Federal Communications Commission, Congress, the Courts, the public, other] about the new media issue of [A], [B], […]? (Can answer yes/no)

15.   In general, what has influenced your program/organization's policy position (i.e. a particular movement? Thinker/intellectual? Book/philosophy?)

Program Funding

16.   What percentage of your work time do you spend fundraising?

17.   Are the program goals of your funders taken into consideration during your program's/organization's agenda-setting and strategic planning process?

17a.   Why are they taken into consideration?

17b.   If so, how are funders involved in those processes?

17c.   Who are the funders of your new media programs (foundations, businesses, individual donors, other)?

Concluding Questions

Given the types of questions I've asked of you today, can you suggest any individuals or organizations with whom I should speak?

Will it be possible for me to contact you if I have any follow-up questions?

Is there a section from this interview that I should not be including in my dissertation manuscript?

Do you have any other questions for me?

Questions for Foundations

General Questions

1.   From publicly available literature and interviews, I understand that your program funds the following new media organizations. Is that correct?

1a.   Do you support any other grantees that work on new media issues, but which are not nonprofit entities?

1b.   How would you characterize the typical project that your program funds?

Grantee Constituency

2.   Who, beyond your grantees, benefit from the output of the grants made by your program?

2b.   Who are disadvantaged from the output of the grants made by your program?

3.   Does your program encourage your grantees to build a constituency?

3a.   If so, what type of a constituency is encouraged?

4.   Are there any mechanisms in place that ensure that the activities of your program's funded projects match the interest of your grantee's constituency?

4a.   Are there any mechanisms in place that ensure that the activities of your program's funded projects match the interest of the population that benefits from your program?

5.   How would you characterize the demographics of your foundation colleagues that fund new media issues?

Agenda & Strategies

6.   What is your program's agenda in funding new media organizations?

7.   What types of strategies does your program generally encourage for your grantees to employ: direct lobbying, policymaker education, litigation, public outreach, media outreach, research?

8a.   Does your program encourage your grantees to build coalitions?

8ai.   If so, with whom?

8aii.   Why?

9.   When developing the agenda for your program, do you consult with other staff in your organization?

9a.   What are the titles of those staff?

9b.   What is the level of understanding on the part of these staff on new media issues in general?

10.   When developing the agenda for your program, do you consult with other foundation funders of new media organizations?

10a.   Could you name or simply describe the foundation funders with which your program would choose to consult?

10ai.   Please explain why your foundation does consult with them.

10b.   Could you name or simply describe the foundation funders with which your program would not choose to consult?

10bi.   Please explain why your program does not consult with them.

11.   When developing the agenda for your program, do you consult with any the following: businesses, public interest groups, Federal Communications Commission, Congress, the public, academics? (Can answer yes/no)

12.   Has your program funded any public opinion polls on new media issues?

12a.   Is it important for your grantees to conduct these polls?

12b.   Are there other ways of canvassing public opinion that your program recommends to its grantees?

Issue Understanding

13.   Do you believe that new media organizations are diverse or unified in their policy positions on new media issues? (Can answer yes/no)

14.   Do you believe your program, through the grants that it makes, increases the level of understanding for [businesses, public interest groups, Federal Communications Commission, Congress, the Courts, the public, academics] on new media issues? (Can answer yes/no)

Project Funding

15.   Does your program solicit grant applications or is it an open application process?

15a.   Why?

15b.   If your program uses an open application process, could you characterize the level of competitiveness?

16.   What are some of the common reasons that grant proposals are denied by your program?

16a.   Who makes that determination?

17.   Does your program consistently suggest revisions to the deliverables of grant while the proposals are being negotiated?

17a.   Are these revisions generally accepted and implements by your grantees?

18.   How would your characterize your program's role in and impact on the agenda-setting process for the new media grantees that you support?

18a.   What is your preferred timeframe for a grantees' agenda: short-term or long-term in nature?

19.   How does your program address the challenge of numerous new media organizations competing over limited foundation resources?

Concluding Questions

Given the types of questions I've asked of you today, can you suggest any individuals or organizations with whom I should speak?

Will it be possible for me to contact you if I have any follow-up questions?

Is there a section from this interview that I should not be including in my dissertation manuscript?

Do you have any other questions for me?

Appendix C: List of Name and Address
of Interest Groups and Foundations Interviewed

Interest Groups

Alliance for Community Media, 666 11th St. NW, Ste. 740, Washington DC, 20001

Alliance for Public Technology [N], 919 18th St. NW, Ste. 900, Washington DC, 20006

American Civil Liberties Union, 1333 H St. NW, 10th Fl., Washington DC, 20005

American Enterprise Institute [N], 1150 17th St. NW, Washington DC, 20036

American Library Association, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC, 20004

Benton Foundation, 1625 K St. NW, 11th Fl., Washington DC, 20006

Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington DC, 20036

Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington DC, 20001

Center for Democracy and Technology, 1635 Eye St. NW, Washington DC, 20006

Center for Digital Democracy, 1718 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington DC, 20009

Center for Media Education, 330 L Mary Graydon Center, Washington DC, 20006

Center for Public Integrity[P], 910 17th St. NW, 7th Floor, Washington DC, 20006

Civil Rights Forum on Communication Policy, MIT Community Lab, Rm 9-541, Cambridge, MA 02139

Common Cause, 1250 Connecticut Ave. NW #600, Washington DC, 20036

Consumer Federation of America, 1424 16th St. NW, Washington DC, 20036

Consumer Project on Technology, P.O. Box 19367, Washington DC, 20036

Consumers Union, 1666 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 310, Washington DC, 20009

Donald McGannon Communications Research Center [P], Fordham University, 113 W. 60th St., New York, NY 10023

Electronic Frontier Foundation, 454 Shotwell St., San Francisco 94110

Electronic Privacy Information Center, 1718 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 200, Washington DC, 20009

Free Press, 26 Center St., 2nd Floor, Northampton, MA 01060

Future of Music Coalition, 1615 L St. NW, Ste. 520, Washington DC, 20036

Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington DC, 20002

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, 1629 K St. NW, Ste. 1010, Washington DC, 20006

Manhattan Institute [N], 52 Vanderbilt Ave., 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10017

Media Access Project, 1625 K St. NW, Ste. 1118, Washington DC, 20006

National Indian Telecommunications Institute, 110 N. Guadalupe, Ste. 9, Santa Fe, NM 87501

New America Foundation [PI], 1630 Connecticut Ave. NW, 7th Floor, Washington DC, 20009

Progress and Freedom Foundation, 1401 H St. NW, Ste. 1075, Washington DC, 20005

Progressive Policy Institute, 600 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Ste. 400, Washington DC, 20003

Public Knowledge, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste. 650, Washington DC, 20009

[P] Served as a pretest interviewee; [I] Served also as an actual interviewee; [N] Interview requested but not conducted.

Foundation Interviewees

AOL/Time Warner Foundation [N], 75 Rockefeller Plaza, 4th Fl., New York, NY 10019

Arca Foundation, 1398 19th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

Carnegie Corporation of New York, 437 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10022

Center for the Public Domain, 3937 St. Marks Rd., Durham NC 10070

The Ford Foundation, 320 East 43rd St., New York, NY 10017

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation [N], P.O. Box 23350, Seattle, WA 98120

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, One Michigan Ave. East, Battle Creek, MI 49017

Albert A. List Foundation, 1328 Broadway, Ste. 524, PMB 117, New York, NY
        10001

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation [N], 140 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL
        60604

The John & Mary Markle Foundation, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16th Fl., New York, NY
        10020

Open Society Institute, 400 West 59th St., New York, NY 10019

The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2005 Market St., Ste. 1700, New York, NY 10018

The Rockefeller Foundation, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018

Verizon [N] (No mailing address available)

[N] Interview requested but not conducted.

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