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#Yo Soy 132 and Occupy: Social Movements and the Media

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**#YO SOY 132 AND OCCUPY:
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE MEDIA**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
#Yo Soy 132 and Occupy Within Mainstream Media.....	12
Chapter 2	
Specific Strategies and Recent Actions of #Yo Soy 132	28
Chapter 3	
The Affect of the Internet.....	41
Chapter 4	
What Does a Democratic Media Really Mean?.....	56
Conclusion	69

Introduction

“For an authentic democracy, ‘¡Yo Soy 132!’”

The belief that a truly democratic state cannot exist without freedom of the press has been engrained in the minds of American citizens since our Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution in 1787. Despite the fact that most would still deem this as an essential facet of our democracy, it is unclear whether or not a free press continues to exist in our country today. When considering that a free press was initially defined as an open marketplace for ideas, the fact that a very limited number of large corporations, or “The Big Six”, “Big Five”, or more recently the “Big Four”, dominate the entirety of mainstream media in our country today sheds doubt on the true diversity of perspectives we are privy to as media consumers (*Our Media, Not Theirs*). As a possible counter effect to the media oligopoly in the United States, the Internet has been a resource for news and information from an incredibly wide range of sources for over a decade, which many believe minimizes the effect of the restricted perspectives provided by large corporations. Our society has come to rely heavily on the Internet for just about everything, a trend that is growing with the prevalence of smart phones, perpetuating the idea that the Internet can and should be accessed anytime, anywhere. In fact, it is hard for many of us to imagine going a day, let alone a lifetime, without having the Internet and the information it provides only a click away. If the majority of Americans lived without quick and easy access to the Internet, we might be more inclined to protest the corporate control that exists in mainstream media. For now, the Internet seems to sooth any

worries about the dominance of giant corporations that control the information we receive in mainstream news.

Despite our seemingly limitless access to information, or perhaps because of it, very few Americans are aware of an expanding social movement playing out just south of the border. #Yo Soy 132 is a youth movement seeking to democratize Mexican media through a variety of tactics, including social media and protests. Although the movement remains relatively unacknowledged by mainstream media in the United States, and many Americans have never heard of #Yo Soy 132, the implications of the movement's purpose are important for everyone, not just for Mexican citizens. For one, the lack of coverage in American mainstream news and subsequent lack of publicity surrounding the movement in our own country may show that corporate control has a larger influence that cannot be counteracted by "limitless" news information provided by the Internet. Even though the United States and Mexico have had tenuous relations in the past, a democratic system of media is a basic right that citizens from both countries demand. The founding beliefs of #Yo Soy 132 are strikingly reminiscent of the standards of democracy in our own country, as the following description from the group's website shows:

We understand it is important to construct a moral imperative and a collective will that has the capacity to enact change. We recognize that individuals aren't inherently different; rather there exists an inequality of opportunity, conditions, and circumstances that we as a movement seek to correct... for an authentic democracy, '¡Yo Soy 132!' (*translation mine, yosoy132media.org*).

The fact that the movement aims to combat ideas, rather than individual people, is an important foundational element. #Yo Soy 132 is continually evolving its tactics, but at its core recognizes that true democracy cannot exist without a free and unbiased press, which doesn't currently exist in practice. I will discuss in detail the evolving positions of the #Yo Soy 132 movement on conditions of media control and access, and ultimately show how their concerns about a democratic press in Mexico may be understood in relation to limitations within mainstream media in the United States. I will explore the possibilities of resignification within the existing conditions of access and consider whether the actions of the movement are valuable in starting conversations and enacting change in the country.

From the beginning, the movement has pointed to the necessity of action rather than simply talking about what needs to change. The movement doesn't self-identify as being a part of critical media cultural studies as defined by media studies and cultural studies scholars, but there are strong connections between the goals of #Yo Soy 132 and the description of this theoretical tactic put forth by Douglas Kellner in *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*:

A critical cultural studies adopts norms and values with which it criticizes texts, artifacts, and conditions that promote oppression and domination. It positively valorizes phenomena that promote human freedom, democracy, individuality, and other values that the project adopts, defends, and valorizes in concrete studies and situations. Yet a critical media cultural studies also intends to relate its theories to

practice, to develop an oppositional politics aimed at producing a progressive turn in contemporary culture and society through contributing to a development of a counterhegemony to the conservative hegemony of the past years (94).

To better understand the tactics of #Yo Soy 132, I will continue to refer to Kellner's ideas of critical media cultural studies in the context of enacting a form of oppositional politics promoting the democratization of Mexican media. Specifically, I will consider the ability of the movement to relate 'theory to practice'.

While thinking critically about the oppositional politics of #Yo Soy 132 and its attempt to fight unequal power structures in Mexico's media, I want to analyze the structures of media in the United States, consider the tactics of another social movement, and discuss how media coverage impacts public reception and knowledge of the movement and the issues being addressed. In Mexico, political parties are the most influential source of power in the media, whereas large corporations are the most significant influences in what information is readily accessible for public consumption in the United States. Within the past two years, the Occupy movement has made waves internationally and I will use it as a point of comparison for the #Yo Soy 132 movement throughout my investigation. On the official website, which acts as an open forum for ideas, Occupy defines itself as:

An international movement driven by individuals like you. All of us have many different backgrounds and political beliefs but feel that, since we can no longer trust our elected officials to represent anyone other than their wealthiest donors, we need real people to create real

change from the bottom up. Organized in over 100 cities in the United States, #occupy aims to fight back against the system that has allowed the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. We no longer want the wealthiest to hold all the power, to write the rules governing an unbalanced and inequitable global economy, and thus foreclosing on our future (*occupywallst.org*).

The language used by the Occupy movement in this description is very similar to the language used in the self-identification of #Yo Soy 132, particularly in the attempts to draw a wide range of individuals from diverse backgrounds to take part in the respective movements. Many were surprised to find that people were willing to “take to the streets” for the Occupy cause in a way that hadn’t occurred in a long time, particularly in the United States. Yo Soy, even while shifting its focus, has always emphasized the importance of protest and maintaining visibility in public spaces.

The goals of both #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy, according to their public statements, are to combat unequal distributions of power and wealth that have manifested themselves in our societies. I have chosen to use the Occupy movement as another ‘case study’ because of the similarities to the Yo Soy movement, but mainly because I am interested in looking at the public reception and media response surrounding the two causes. I want to understand how media systems have an influence on public knowledge and how systems of control can greatly affect the information we are privy to as a public audience. The Occupy movement, particularly during the public sit in and protests in Zuccotti Park in New York City’s

Financial District, has received intense media coverage from mainstream and alternative media sources alike. The group's call to action, "We are the 99%", is recognized by an incredibly large audience, even as its active public presence and media coverage has waned in the past year. This public knowledge of the Occupy movement is undoubtedly due to the widespread reporting in news media in the United States and internationally, which is in stark contrast to the relatively quiet media coverage of #Yo Soy 132. Again, because of the lack of mainstream media coverage, very few Americans are aware of the Mexican youth movement, and I am interested in looking into the power structures and conditions of access to information that contribute to the disparate amount of attention paid to these comparable movements.

I am not the first person to have made the connections between the ideologies of these groups. In fact, they have worked together on specific social issues in the past. For example, a coalition recently formed called "Two Countries, One Voice" has received support and member participation from both #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy. This joint effort is emblematic of the similar desires of the movements to combat societal systems that put so much power and money in the hands of so few, subsequently removing power and influence from the masses. "Two Countries, One Voice" (TCOV) is protesting the influence that businessman Carlos Slim has on Mexican and American media systems and economies. On their website, the coalition states, "Mexico has a tremendous poor, rural population that could elevate its socio-economic status if it could end Slim's monopolistic practices and achieve better access to reliable and affordable telecommunications

(*twocountriesonevoice.com*).” TVOC is fighting against wealth that is accumulated by only a few, special interest groups, who aren’t interested in advocating for the rest of the population. In 2010, Carlos Slim was ranked the richest man in the world by *Forbes* magazine, and therefore is an obvious symbolic choice of someone who represents the “1%”(*forbes.com*). Slim’s overt attempts to control telecommunications companies and subsequently Internet access in Mexico are representative of the larger problems that both countries face when media is managed by so few. Current conditions of access bring into question our understanding of a democracy – is a true democracy attainable without freedom of the press? Is an entirely democratic and free press even possible in our world today?

The two movements have chosen to come together in certain areas of interest, such as their choice to bring attention to the huge amount of power in the media held by the world’s richest man. However, they have primarily focused on different issues, with #Yo Soy 132 born out of political protests against Enrique Peña Nieto and later moving its focus to changing the structures of Mexican mass media and with the Occupy movement maintaining a variety of social and political platforms from the beginning. It is not only the issues they are addressing that are largely different, but also the systems in which they are working. A very small percentage of Mexicans have Internet access at home in comparison to the United States, Mexico’s poverty levels are much higher, and the structures of power in the two countries’ media are different. These social differences will be a large part of

my analysis as I look into what types of environments are most conducive to enacting change and in combating such large and powerful entities.

#Yo Soy 132 and Occupy surfaced at similar moments, enlist similar language to express comparable goals, encourage as many individuals to take part in their causes as possible, and have even attempted to combine efforts to attain specific goals. The similarities between the movements are of particular interest when considering how little publicity #Yo Soy 132 has managed to receive compared to the Occupy movement. One of the most obvious reasons for the difference in media coverage can be attributed to the specificity of Yo Soy compared to Occupy. A social movement that began with efforts from Mexican University students and that is, for the most part, focused on changing specific media structures in one, poorer country is going to receive less media coverage than one that pushes a broader, international agenda. However, considering that the immense power of the media is being questioned and critiqued by Yo Soy and its international presence, there are certainly more causes for this disparate coverage that cannot be accounted for based on specificity alone. In addition to a close look at the power structures that exist in the two countries, the different tactics of resistance that both movements have employed and the conditions of access will be important factors to address. As mentioned earlier, the Internet is an incredibly important source of information to consider, particularly in how it affects the tactics of the movements.

Internet access can bring both positive and negative effects for social movements. Since Mexico and the U.S. have vastly different levels of access to home computers and the Internet, they face different challenges. For instance, there has

been extensive debate about the lack of active political protest in contemporary American culture. In a chapter titled, "Where The Activism Is" Trebor Scholtz cites a few reasons for this decline:

In the economically developed world, the disappearing public sphere plays people into the hands of the social Web. [North Americans] are fighting off the onslaught of information and it is not just the disappearing public sphere that makes true political engagement difficult. In the United States, people work endless hours. How do you squeeze in activism in this precarious situation? The Internet makes it in many ways easier to engage (356-357).

The "disappearing public sphere" and the replication of these spaces online is a true phenomenon in the United States, and is something that Mexico has yet to experience, in part because a smaller percentage of the population has access to the Internet at home. This lack of access means they must physically gather to discuss issues, spread information, and more. I will make efforts to look at these differences and the effects they have on #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy.

These movements bring into question very complicated ideas about media systems in the United States and Mexico. To begin, I want to gain a better understanding of how the media systems in the two countries operate and how the social movements integrate and act within these systems. This will lead to my analysis of current tactics and strategies, and a discussion of the influence Internet access and penetration has on public knowledge, and whether higher rates of Internet access automatically imply a higher level of public awareness. Finally, I

want to determine what a 'democratic media' would really look like, and whether it is something that can exist in our current society or in the future. My analysis will remain, for the most part, focused on the #Yo Soy movement because it is seeking the democratization of media specifically, and though it still isn't widely recognized by mainstream media, it continues to be very active in protests and with its Internet presence. Occupy, on the other hand, has been less visibly active after the huge protests that occurred on Wall Street for a two month period. Again, Occupy is focused on democratizing other systems in our society, and hasn't focused on combating corporate media control at this point in time, which means I am more interested in looking at the way Occupy has been received by the media instead of analyzing the tactics and strategies as I aim to do with #Yo Soy 132.

#Yo Soy 132 in particular is interacting with the idea of media literacy in its critique of the "sets of institutions" in mass media, as described by Justin Lewis and Sut Jhally in *The Struggle Over Media Literacy*,

"The mass media, in other words, should be understood as more than a collection of texts to be deconstructed and analyzed so that we can distinguish or choose among them. They should be analyzed as sets of institutions with particular social and economic structures that are neither inevitable nor irreversible. Media education should certainly teach students to engage media texts, but it should also, in our view, teach them to engage and challenge media institutions" (439).

It is essential for social movements such as #Yo Soy 132, and Occupy (though not directly in relation to media) to view the structures that they are challenging as

“neither inevitable nor irreversible”. I aim to understand these movements in part through this lens of media literacy and look at how the participants are educators, teaching the public about what they believe needs to change structurally in our society.

#Yo Soy 132 and Occupy Within Mainstream Media

Although American media has a global reach unparalleled by any other country, it is important to remember that many other unique, culturally specific media structures exist in the world. There is overlap between Mexican and American media in many ways – Televisa exports the *telenovelas* that it first made famous to the U.S. and across the globe (*televisa.com*). Similarly, as stated in *Media, political power, and democratization in Mexico*, “Mexico’s development has of course been deeply affected by the influence both of its powerful neighbor to the north and of the global economy more generally” (Hallin 98). In other words, it is important to remember that no media system, under the influence of globalization, functions in a completely independent manner. It is easy for Americans to assume that since other countries may receive more media programming from us than we do from them that all countries depend on media created in this country. However, this isn’t the case, as Mexican media is much more than just an appendage of American media. In this chapter I plan to establish the current structures of media in Mexico and explore the differences between American and Mexican media.

The historical context of politics and media in Mexico will permit a better understanding of the current situation and the reasons for #Yo Soy 132’s fight for democracy. To begin with, the impact of the “one party dominant” regime of the PRI should not be underestimated. While most Latin American countries have experienced widespread repression resulting from dictatorships, the impact of Mexico’s government and historical corruption is less obvious to the outside observer. The PRI party was dominant since the Mexican Revolution from 1910 -17

until 2000, making it the longest-ruling party in the world. Even during the party's twelve-year hiatus when the President represented a different ideology, the PRI still had extensive influence in the political realm of Mexico. In 2003, after extensive restructuring, the party won the greatest number of seats in Congress and was just 5% short of winning a true majority (*histclo.com*). In 2009, the PRI re-gained plurality control of Mexican congress after a period of dominance by the PAN (National Action Party), and in December 2012 Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI completed the party's slow return to power by winning the election. Peña Nieto's presidency represents a new face of the party, but also reinforces the extent of power the PRI has managed to maintain in the country even after a period of time when presidents from different political parties were in control. Peña Nieto's presidential election didn't come without controversy, and there were extensive protests at his inauguration spearheaded by the #Yo Soy 132 movement. As I will explore later on, the #Yo Soy movement claims a non-partisan approach, but protested on December 1st due to the accusations that the PRI has repressed dissenting viewpoints in the media and in protests.

Since the PRI party has never self-identified as a true dictatorship and has primarily avoided widespread, systemic violence, how is it that the party has managed to dominate for the majority of the past century? No matter how well a country is run, a true democracy doesn't support the political control of one single person or party for that length of time without some level of corruption. First, upon the establishment of the PRI in 1929 under the name National Revolutionary Party, it was determined that each Presidential candidate would name his own successor.

This system was maintained until President Ernesto Zedillo refused to do so after his term ended in 1999 and Vicente Fox of PAN won the election in 2000. Although the Mexican constitution states that each President can only be in office for one term, power was continually passed on to those of the same party and same politics (*histclo.com*). It is also widely known that in the past, the PRI party made deals with leaders of massive drug cartels in the country to maintain relative peace. Rama Anahi and Gabriel Stargardter from *Reuters* describe the 71 years of consecutive rule as “a mix of populism, patronage, corruption and repression” (“Chronology: checkered history of the PRI’s rule in Mexico”). This political corruption managed to affect media publications in Mexico, where news reporting is largely uncritical of any political decisions.

Although many things may be different about the current political reality in Mexico than they were in the past, the connection between media and politics remains as strong as ever. It is incredibly difficult to find any dissenting viewpoints in the mainstream news media about the recent election of Peña Nieto. Reports of potential electoral fraud were countered by claims that the PRI’s association with corrupt elections is an outdated assumption, outlined by Rafael Romo in his article, “Mexico’s new leader measured against old corruption” (*CNN.com*). Most media outlets have maintained that since there has never been proof of fraud, these accusations of corrupt behavior are misplaced considering there has been widespread reform within the PRI and politics as a whole in the country. While it may be true that Mexico now holds Presidential elections every six years, that violence is diminishing in the country, and other notable changes towards

democracy are occurring, the political motives of the PRI and the relationship those motives have with hegemonic views upheld by the media cannot be ignored. To site one example, the online version of *Televisa* reported on August 31, 2012 that the power of presidency was being passed to Enrique Peña Nieto for being “the candidate who received the highest number of votes during the election on the 1st of July” (*Translation mine, noticierostelevisa.esmas.com*). There is absolutely no acknowledgement in this article about the large protests that were occurring, instigated by groups such as #Yo Soy 132, at the time of publication. Rather, there are lengthy quotes from the Tribunal Electoral de Poder Judicial de la Federación (the representative from the Electoral Court of Judicial Power) in an official ceremony acknowledging Peña Nieto’s victory. This report represents a subtle but persistent bias that continues to exist in Mexican mainstream media today.

The timing of the PRI’s return to presidential power and the coinciding establishment of the #Yo Soy 132 movement is no accident. We have been presented with a unique look at the cooperation between media and politics in Mexico, because “the political character of Televisa’s news has been particularly obvious during election campaigns” (*De-Westernizing Media Studies* 99). The resurgence of the PRI and the protests led by the movement have naturally led to misunderstandings of the intentions of #Yo Soy. As Daniel C. Hallin explains, the political structures in Mexico are so closely intertwined with the media structures that it is easy to assume they are the same entity:

Within Mexico, Televisa’s dominance was not unlike that of the PRI; with three and eventually four networks, it claimed the attention of 90

percent of Mexico's vast television audience. It is probably correct to say that there is no country comparable in size to Mexico in which a single private company so dominates the airwaves (97).

Essentially, the power held by Televisa very closely reflects the historical power of the PRI party in Mexico. It is understandable that many would assume a protest against the PRI party was a protest against the ideologies of the party and Peña Nieto, specifically. However, the protests are attempting to draw attention to the problematic media structures, their relationship to political parties, and the subsequent impact such a relationship has on the information available on television and more generally in the mass media. Peña Nieto as an individual is also highly representative of the close relationship between media and political culture in the country. As reported by *The Telegraph* in the article "Mexico elections: Enrique Peña Nieto pledges a new era", "The telegenic lawyer, who is married to one of the country's most popular soap opera actresses and enjoys unrelentingly favourable coverage from Mexico's major broadcaster, led a remarkable turnaround for a party once ambivalently known as 'the perfect dictatorship', taking back the presidency" (Sanchez). Peña Nieto has the charisma, upbringing, face, and even wife that are often associated with a movie star or celebrity. The language used by the *Telegraph* and other publications further emphasizes his positive relationship with television, not just for his party's supposed relationship with Televisa, but also because of his overall persona.

Now that a brief historical context for Mexican political and media systems has been established, it will be easier to interpret the way that #Yo Soy interrogates

with this history and with the current media situation in their country. The #Yo Soy 132 movement was born out of student protests that occurred during Enrique Peña Nieto's visit to the Ibero-American University as part of his political campaign for the Presidency in May 2012. Enrique Peña Nieto's campaign followed a period of restructuring and slow resurgence of the party, and his campaign appeared to stand out amongst weak opponents. However, as reported by Leonidas Oikonmakis from *Roarmag.org*, during his speech at the University, students weren't buying the new PRI image. Perhaps reminiscent of the controversial campaign tactics of prior decades, news stations owned by the two dominant media corporations in Mexico reported that the student protestors were planted by opposing political parties and weren't actually independent individuals associated with the University (*Roarmag.org*). This was an attempt by the media to make it appear as if those who were protesting Peña Nieto's campaign weren't legitimate and were just a sign of the corruption that exists in other party campaigns. In response to these false claims by mainstream news media, 131 students who said they were in fact protestors at the event created a YouTube video showing their Ibero-American ID cards and stating their student ID numbers as proof of the incorrect reporting and showing they were in fact "legitimate" protestors.

During this past election cycle, likely due to the more obvious connections between political parties and media during campaigns, many groups and individuals accused the media of providing biased coverage of the elections, specifically in support of the PRI party. Televisa, the largest mass media company in Latin America and half of the media duopoly in Mexico, had been accused in the past of

selling favorable coverage to political candidates. It is important to familiarize oneself with Televisa and TV Azteca in order to understand the impact of potentially biased reporting from the two dominant media sources in Mexico. CNN contributor Nathaniel Parish Flannery describes the effect of biased coverage:

Televisa controls 70% of the broadcast television market, and its broadcasts reach 95% of all homes in Mexico. Unlike cable TV or the Internet -- platforms that offer a plethora of options -- viewers frustrated with the perceived political slant of news coverage on Mexico's broadcast TV networks have few alternatives. Especially in Mexico, a country with limited cable and Internet penetration, broadcast TV plays a central role. Right now the country has only two nationally broadcast TV channels. Javier Aparicio, a political economy professor at CIDE, a prestigious research institute in Mexico City, explained that his 'main concern is the concentration of the media industry in Mexico.' He added, 'Televisa has an important influence in campaigns in national elections' (*CNN.com*).

According to Hollywood Reporter, "the television duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca control a combined 95 percent of the nation's television stations". It has recently been recognized that the distribution of media control is unjust, and the Federal Competition Commission (CFC) ruled in June 2012 that a broadcast license for a third national channel must be granted within the next two years (*thehollywoodreporter.com*). Although the decision may not produce large changes in Mexico's media system, it shows that members of #Yo Soy 132 aren't alone in

their concerns and that regulating forces are taking some action against the current conditions.

The Guardian, a mainstream British online and print publication, is one of the largest media outlets worldwide to have reported on the legal infringements made by Televisa. On June 7, 2102, *The Guardian* published a report “based on a large cache of documents” that proves Televisa sold favorable coverage to several different candidates, including Enrique Peña Nieto, going as far back as 2005 (*guardian.co.uk*). The report created a commotion in left wing media but was largely ignored by mainstream outlets. Televisa claimed the documents used in the report were inauthentic and demanded an apology from *The Guardian* – the article with the timeline of events surrounding the controversial report is preceded by: “this article is the subject of a legal complaint by Televisa”. It will be interesting to see how the legal situation surrounding the report develops, but no matter what the outcome, the concerns of #Yo Soy 132 are legitimized further by the report presented by *The Guardian* on Televisa’s actions.

According to *The Guardian*, Televisa has mainly provided favorable coverage for Peña Nieto, but the issue of corruption between mass media and political candidates encompasses more than the most recent election campaign. Considering Televisa was accused of selling coverage to a variety of political candidates, it doesn’t appear as if there is a strict alliance between the PRI and the media corporation. As far back as 2005, and maybe even earlier, any political party or candidate who was willing to invest the money was granted favorable coverage. PRI just happened to be the party with the deepest pockets in the most recent election,

and therefore received the most (biased) airtime. This points to deeper seeds of corruption that exist in Mexican media, and is the reason for the developing focus of the #Yo Soy 132 movement. If the young people involved in #Yo Soy 132 had chosen to only take issue with the alliance between Televisa and the PRI candidate, then Peña Nieto's victory would have essentially brought an end to the movement. Although they initially targeted the two in their protests and the outcome certainly wasn't the one they hoped for, the movement has begun to shift towards a non-partisan approach in order to tackle the larger issues brought to light by the recent election.

With a better understanding of the systems of media in Mexico and with a general framework of how the political and corporate powers have worked and continue to work together, it now seems pertinent to make a comparison to the systems of media in the United States. American media has long been considered unique for being operated by independent corporations outside of any sort of governmental control. This is a generalization, of course, as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is one example of a regulatory system overseen by the government. The official website describes the FCC as an organization, "established by the Communications Act of 1934 and operates as an independent U.S. government agency overseen by Congress" (fcc.gov). It would be unrealistic to expect a media system to operate entirely outside of the influence of government, but American media is still widely considered to function independently and democratically. It is certainly true that there isn't direct cooperation between one

specific media corporation and one political party in the United States as there is in Mexico.

If the government simply regulates rather than directly influences the information released by mainstream media, who does have control? This is a question that few Americans consider seriously, because on the surface it appears as if an incredibly wide range of companies are responsible for the information in magazines, on television, in news publications, and more. Many would be surprised to find out that each of these companies is under direct control of only a few media conglomerates. There are some disparities in the number and types of corporations that are in control of mass media in the United States, but what is clear is that the power of such a large and influential information source lies in the hands of very few. Ben Bagdikian, in his book *The New Media Monopoly*, claims there is a “big five” – meaning five corporations controlling mass media – while others claim “big six” or more recently “big four”. Currently, the largest entities in the United States, starting with the largest, include The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Time Warner and Viacom. Although different theorists site different numbers depending on the time their work was published, it doesn’t change the reality of the media oligopoly that exists in America. In fact, if anything it simply shows how power has become more restricted to specific groups as time has gone on and companies continue to merge. An “oligopoly” is a market form in which a market or industry is dominated by only a few, reflective of both the United States and Mexico.

Regardless of the number of corporations that control American media in 2013, this type of control has only come to fruition in recent years. In fact, according to theorist Ben H. Bagdikian:

It would have been difficult to imagine in 1983 that the corporations that owned all of the country's dominant mass media would, in less than twenty years, shrink from fifty separate companies to five...their steady accumulation of power in the world of news, radio, television, magazines, books, and movies gave them a steady accumulation of power in politics (*The New Media Monopoly* 28).

What is particularly problematic about the media oligopoly in the United States is that the illusion of diversity of perspectives and opinions that arise from independent publications is maintained. Cable television offers hundreds of channels and nearly as many sources for news information. Magazine racks at the grocery store are filled with publications with a range of titles and appearances. However, what isn't presented to the public is that giant corporations control the information under the appearance of independence and diversity. The connection between political power and media conglomerates in the United States might not be as far from Mexico's reality as it appears at first glance.

Not only does the information come from the perspective of so few corporations, these corporations are managed by CEOs with strikingly similar perspectives and backgrounds that in no way reflect the diversity of viewpoints held by the American public. The CEOs are as follows: Robert A. Iger of The Walt Disney Company, Jeffrey Bewkes of Time Warner, Rupert Murdoch of News Corporation,

and Philippe Dauman of Viacom (*businessinsider.com*). Although these names on paper don't reveal much about these CEOs, it is interesting to compare their backgrounds and the subsequent perspectives they might offer the media outlets they control. It is evident that the profiles of these men are in no way reflective of the general population of the United States. They are all incredibly wealthy, which is a natural consequence of owning such large corporations. However, as for factors that aren't direct consequences of their business endeavors, they are also all white, older in age, and male. Even if each of these men take a proactive approach to considering other perspectives and hiring employees of more diverse backgrounds, their own backgrounds cannot be denied. That is a big if considering that people of color owned only 1.9% of commercial television stations in the United States in 2001, according to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (*The Future of Media: Resistance and Reform in the 21st Century*), despite accounting for one third of the population (González 107). This is just one example of how hegemonic views reflective of their positions in society are continually reinforced in mainstream media.

I would like to acknowledge that it is unlikely each of these CEOs micromanages the smaller publications that are under the control of their corporations - for example, Jeffrey Bewkes, CEO of Time Warner, probably doesn't directly influence the content of *People* magazine, which is owned by his corporation. However, this doesn't mean that the limited perspective of older, white, male CEOs at each of these corporations, that essentially control all of mass media in the United States, is any less problematic. In the end, all of the information

we are privy to in the U.S. comes from these corporations and these perspectives. When power lies in the hands of so few, it is a serious issue. Mexico may have just one major media corporation in the country, but ultimately the lack of diversity in perspectives offered by Televisa that dominate their media may be just as singular as the perspective offered by Time Warner, News Corp, Viacom, and Disney in the United States.

Ronald V. Bettig and Jeanne Lynn Hall delve into some of the reasons this allocation of power within American media is problematic in their book *Big Media, Big Money* by closely examining specific mergers that have occurred within the past twenty years. Bettig and Hall begin their discussion on media mergers by claiming that occasional acts of “self-flagellation and *mea culpas*” (15) expressed by media corporations themselves only serve to reinforce the public’s belief that those in control of the media are aware of potential biases. However, the public may have a feeling of false confidence since “such self criticism leaves serious gaps in mainstream coverage of media issues. Most notable, perhaps, is the lack of any systematic analysis of the processes and effects of media concentration. Media mergers have implications that resonate beyond Wall Street, but these are seldom explored” (*Big Media, Big Money* 15). For example, they cite the widespread discussion of the infamous *Time* magazine photo illustration of O.J. Simpson in the 1990’s, where his skin was obviously darkened. The magazine ultimately recognized the problematic implications of the cover, and in doing so the public was left satisfied with their self-criticism and the promise to do better in the future. However, in reality the recognition of specific, individual media bias fails to

acknowledge any larger systemic failure. Media mergers aren't criticized in mainstream American media because it is practically guaranteed that those publishing the reports are under the larger umbrella of the corporations themselves.

Aside from the underlying biases present in American media due to the delegation of power and lack of diversity in perspectives, there are also political implications from the powerful impact of these corporations. As Bagdikian states in *The New Media Monopoly*, "Prudent politicians treat the country's most powerful corporations with care. But politicians treat the country's most powerful media corporations with something approaching reverence" (29). It is understandable that a politician interested in furthering his or her career would hesitate to draw attention to issues surrounding corporate media control in America. If this were a priority for politicians, it could result in negative press across mass media. Although many would hesitate to compare American media with the corruption that exists in Mexico, this "reverence" doesn't appear to be so different from the political biases present in Mexican publications. Hallin reminds us that in Mexico, "The mass media have been an important part of this system of political power. Journalism is traditionally *oficialista* – passive and self-censored, with most political coverage based on official press releases, and with many areas of controversy being off limits" (99). What makes an '*oficialista*' approach in Mexico any different than the 'reverence' we see in America? This is an important question to consider, and to compare the situations I will briefly discuss the affiliation between the Occupy movement and American mass media with what I have already briefly discussed about the positions of #YoSoy in regards to Mexican media.

The Occupy movement also confronts societal structures where only select individuals are privileged while the needs of the “masses” are ignored. This is how the slogan “We are the 99%” came to be, as Occupy intends to draw attention to these arrangements in society. What is intriguing about the movement is that they have yet to make media corporations a central cause. I believe this is part of the reason that Occupy has received mass media attention that is in stark contrast with the small amount of coverage experienced by #Yo Soy 132. The media isn’t afraid to draw attention to a group that is criticizing economic disparity in the United States, so long as no one is talking about disparity in media control. While Occupy received intense media coverage during their immense protest in Zuccotti Park, the attention was relatively short lived and mostly focused on the economic issues the movement was addressing at the time. In November 2011, *The Huffington Post* reported on the intense spike in media coverage:

Media analysis from the week of November 14-20 showed that the economy dominated news cycles, taking up 22 percent of coverage. The study notes however, that Occupy Wall Street coverage made up a majority of that coverage. The week before, total coverage of the protests accounted for only 1 percent of news stories. According to the index, clashes between protesters, police forces, and government officials caused the spike in media coverage to occur. (“Occupy Wall Street Gets Most Media Coverage Yet”).

The fact that the media coverage spiked in response to the physicality of the protests on Wall Street is an issue I will take up later in reference to the importance

of street presence for social movements. At this point, I simply want to note the contrast between media attention on Occupy in the States compared to media attention on #Yo Soy in Mexico. This is partly due to the different levels of corruption that exist in Mexico that in the U.S., but I believe part of the reason Occupy received intense media coverage during their peak on Wall Street is due to their attention on issues other than media power dynamics. It is difficult to say whether or not American media would have chosen to cover Occupy's protest efforts if the focus had been on problematic media structures rather than economic issues. However, it is interesting to think about how media coverage might be affected when so few people have so much to lose if particular issues are represented regularly in mainstream media. This is true in both Mexican and American media systems, as they exist today.

Specific Strategies and Recent Actions of #Yo Soy 132

Now that the historical developments of media structures in Mexico and the United States have been established, I want to describe the specific strategies and tactics of #Yo Soy 132 within this larger context. This chapter will focus on #Yo Soy, but I will continue to reference the United States and whether or not there is any media coverage on the movement in this country. To begin, I will discuss how the tactics of #Yo Soy have evolved in recent months, particularly given the changing political atmosphere and election of Enrique Peña Nieto. Through my research, it is clear that the movement has changed in many ways since its inception, and its main focus has been on developing its image to coincide with the main goals of the movement.

Once it was declared that Peña Nieto would become the next President of Mexico, #Yo Soy 132 began to refocus its efforts away from the protest of specific political candidates and move towards seeking the democratization of media. Although the movement has chosen to maintain distance from a partisan fight, the movement hasn't completely departed from its original tactics and still maintains its ties to the University system. Over 130 local assemblies have formed, consisting of groups of people associated with an educational institution who are in communication with one another. The movement utilizes the connections within the University system to maintain cohesion within the large and populous country. The official #Yo Soy 132 website describes its revamped motivations as follows, "#YoSoy132 is a grassroots movement that acts in accordance with eight General Principles to link and guide the participation of all parties involved, and in turn,

contribute to building a greater public awareness about the current situation in Mexico” (*translation mine, yosoy132media.org*). The eight General Principles of #Yo Soy 132 are written as a guide for all local assemblies and everyone else participating in the movement, and act in accordance with the First Amendment of the United States of Mexico guaranteeing basic human rights. The General Principles are titled as follows: Non-partisan, Pacifist, Inclusive and Plural, Political and Social, Autonomous and Responsible, Respect for Freedom of Expression, Commitment to Nation Building and Transformation of Society, and Rejection of False Democracy and Taxation. Each Principle is followed by a detailed description for groups and individuals functioning under the #Yo Soy 132 name to follow.

For the purpose of my project, I am most interested in the principles of #Yo Soy 132 that express the need for members to maintain an inclusive, plural, non-partisan, and autonomous approach to their actions. The Inclusive and Plural Principle states, “The movement aims to include all individuals who, no matter what part of the country they are from, share the principles governing the #Yo Soy 132 movement...the movement rejects certain ideas and principles but has no prejudice against any individual person or group of people” (*translation mine, yosoy132media.org*). This principle in particular underscores the desire of the movement to include as many voices as possible, showing that it rejects the idea that the power of representation should be relegated to particular individuals or groups of people. This contrasts with the apparent goals of mainstream media corporations, that choose to only support the perspective of dominant political groups that have bought favorable coverage.

The Non-Partisan Principle emphasizes this idea by stating that the movement doesn't associate with any party, encouraging as many people as possible to participate. This has been a controversial claim by #Yo Soy 132, as it has been difficult for the movement to maintain a strong and consistent message while shifting entirely to non-partisan tactics. A major turning point marking this ideological shift came when #Yo Soy 132 decided against continuing protests of the election results and the validity of Peña Nieto's victory, saying it would honor the decision of Mexican citizens. Even so, participants in the movement have faced criticism that they continue to uphold a partisan approach, particularly in support of presidential candidate Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador (*El Sol de Morelia*). Current participants, if they maintain the standards of the Guiding Principles, are most interested in involving as many Mexican citizens as possible for a more autonomous ideological representation within the movement than the current press supports. Even those associated with the PRI party can become involved if they believe the corrupt nature of mainstream media in Mexico needs to change – no matter if the results of this particular election cycle worked out in their favor or not. However, considering the movement was born out of protesting a specific political candidate, it will have to work hard to prove that they are in all actuality a non-partisan organization.

A more recent example of an effective maintenance of its non-partisan approach can be seen with #Yo Soy 132's refusal to participate in a protest for the Two Nations Organization. I mentioned this organization, also referred to as the "Two Countries, One Voice" campaign, in my introduction as a joint effort between

Occupy Wall Street and #Yo Soy 132 to protest Mexican magnate Carlos Slim, who *Forbes* recently named the world's richest man. On August 7, 2012 the "Two Countries, One Voice" campaign organized a protest outside of a Saks Fifth Avenue store in New York City, as Slim owns a large portion of the high end store. Although the groups made it very clear that they support one another and there is solidarity in the missions of the organizations, they admitted to a slight difference in politics. In an article from *The Nation* organizers were quoted as saying:

In light of the peaceful protest called by the Two Nations organization, the decision to not participate was made because Democratic Party operatives were involved, a situation that goes against the principle of the nonpartisan Mexican student collective (Kilkenny).

It is important that #Yo Soy 132 is clear enough in its nonpartisan approach to be able to distinguish itself from another group that it otherwise agrees with. This is proof of progress and shows the "student collective" is confident in their abilities to stay true to their specific tactics and strategies, even as #Yo Soy 132 grows and connects with other organizations.

Although this event represented progress in the commitment to a nonpartisan approach, there was some confusion surrounding the event and whether or not Yo Soy would be directly involved in the protests. When it was finally clarified that it would not, due to its desire to maintain a nonpartisan approach, an article had already been published in *The Nation* and other online sources stating otherwise. The article in *The Nation* had to add an update after it was published, because information was initially circulated claiming that #Yo Soy

132 would be present alongside Occupy protestors. The update said there was a miscommunication between group members and as a result, there was misinformation reported about the event. This protest reveals several aspects of how the movement is developing: while those involved are making an effort to maintain a nonpartisan approach, they need to also work on their ability to communicate their message more efficiently if they hope to establish a stronger presence in the United States. I will discuss the international progression of the movement in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Finally, the Autonomous and Responsible Principle states, “The movement builds its autonomy through the commissions that compose it and the decisions they make through dialogue. Members of the organization assume a shared responsibility and, in turn, recognize and value the internal arrangements of the universities participating in the movement, valuing the free democratic expression of all” (*translation mine*, yosoy132media.org). The movement wants to make cohesive decisions while still taking into consideration the ideas of all groups and individuals involved. As mentioned previously, and what is evident in the Autonomous and Responsible Principle, is that it still maintains strong ties to the university and student populations. The movement targets young, university-educated people as core constituents, evident in its valuing of “internal arrangements of the universities participating in the movement”. By focusing on maintaining connections between different university assemblies, it is easier for the movement to uphold a cohesive message. However, it is important to consider that even though the movement is student based, it is attempting to change media access

for all citizens of Mexico. By targeting university communities as communicated by its principles, the movement excludes the poorer and uneducated population, whether purposefully or not. As the tactics of the movement evolve, there will need to be a consistent reevaluation of the non-partisan practice and potentially exclusive call to action.

While the details of its tactics are still a work in progress, the desire for fair representation in mainstream media has been well established. Historically, media and cultural studies scholars have interrogated with the idea of representation by forming a consensus about how far a media representation strays from a “true” idea, pointing to “misrepresentations” in the media while forming their critique around quality. Stuart Hall considers representation in a different manner than many scholars who preceded him and in a way that is more useful in understanding the tactics of the movement. Hall prefers to think of representation as having a complex relationship with the consumer of the image, and believes that each relationship between the consumer and the representation can lead to infinite interpretations. In the film *Media and Representation* he says:

The representation (of the media) is the way in which meaning is somehow given to the things which are depicted through the images or whatever it is, on screens or the words on a page which *stand for* what we’re talking about. And if you think that the meaning that it is giving is very different from or a kind of distortion of what it *really* means, then your work on representation would be in measuring that

gap between what one might think of as the true meaning of an event and how it is presented in the media (Hall 7).

Ultimately, Hall doesn't see representation as something that occurs after an event, rather it is constitutive of the event and occurs *within* it. #Yo Soy 132 is performing work on representation by confronting the limited perspective offered by mainstream media. Rather than claiming that what it sees in the media is wrong, it focuses on voicing a range of opinions and perspectives that are otherwise ignored by mainstream reporting. For instance, the group's founding act – creating the YouTube video where 131 students showed their ID cards – provided an entirely different “representation” than what was reported by news media. In showing their identification cards, they weren't simply claiming the dominant media was wrong in their reporting on the protests, they were creating a “measurable gap” within dominant representation and their own. This is powerful because it allows consumers of the media to make up their own minds about the truth. #Yo Soy 132 is seeking the opportunity for a more diverse representation of ideas, because the current system only allows for one or two powerful groups to provide their perspective in mainstream Mexican media. Unfortunately, the opportunity for individuals to provide different representations than those portrayed by Televisa and TV Azteca are slim to none. Different representations of particular events and other news events exist, but they aren't broadcasted like the preferred readings of those in power. The movement attempts to bring attention to the corruption in this media duopoly so that there can be more opportunity for diverse representations to be considered.

Very importantly, Hall links representation directly to power - the groups with power in society are the same groups that have power in the media - the two are inextricably linked. In an introduction to the film, director Sut Jhally explains,

Hall understands that communication is always linked with power and that those groups who wield power in a society influence what gets represented through the media. Hall wants to hold both these ideas: that messages work in complex ways, and that they are always connected with the way that power operates in any society, together at the same time (4).

Very specific choices are made by those controlling the media about who gets represented and how, therefore societal power dynamics are constantly interacting within media representation. When power is distributed across a wide range of groups with varying perspectives, representation in the media is much more reflective of a society's diverse beliefs. Unfortunately, this ideal situation vary rarely exists within contemporary media systems.

In another important document published on November 7, 2012 by #Yo Soy 132 titled "A New System of Media, The Minimum Requirements" the group acknowledges the influence of power in Mexican media. In the introduction, the group states, "Media communications affect all social issues, they can condition, transform, and choose to make them visible or invisible" (*translation mine*). The document was created, in theory, as a set of requirements that all groups involved in journalism and mass communications should follow - a call to action for a free press. The document emphasizes the particular importance of the democratization

of media in Mexico at this point in time, “in a global arena with countless advances in technology and civil rights, Mexico suffers greatly from a lagging democracy” (*translation mine*). It is clear that #Yo Soy 132 is in agreement with Hall’s theories about power in representation, and it doesn’t believe that a true democracy can exist unless the dynamics in Mexico shift. Within the listed requirements in the document, the authors ask for equal opportunity for representation for all social and political groups in mainstream media, allowing for a more equal spread of power in representation. Currently, Mexican citizens have little opportunity to participate in the “work of measuring the difference in representation”, as described by Hall, in a meaningful way. They don’t have the same opportunity to express their perspectives as the political parties that work with dominant media sources, which ultimately drowns out any oppositional voices.

Hall’s ideas about representation will continue to be crucial to my interrogation of the #Yo Soy 132 movement and will make clear what types of resignification are possible for the citizens of Mexico using Twitter and other media platforms while considering limited Internet access in the country. The heavy forces of power that exist in Mexican media uphold one type of representation, from the perspective of a majority political party and the two dominant media corporations. Hall emphasizes that it is impossible for media to represent any event in an “accurate” way, but it is important to consider what forces of power are behind the types of representation that exist and are valued in mainstream media. For those involved in the movement, there is a focus on providing alternative, non-partisan

representations for media consumers than those that come from the two major networks.

Twitter has become a major resource for the movement, the username #YoSoy132 has the description, “If we don’t fight together, who will bring light to this darkness?” (*translation mine, twitter.com/YoSoy132Media*). With Twitter, when more people are active in a particular group – re-Tweeting, using the handle, and linking to other online sources – the chances of the group trending and reaching a wider audience is more likely. Twitter has the benefits of creating an online community, provides a way for members to communicate, and provides information for those unfamiliar with the movement. Twitter is just one media platform #Yo Soy 132 has used to resignify events that are reported in mainstream media. There are constant tweets from the group’s account that bring attention to media issues and directly question the type of reporting on Televisa and from other sources. Participants use social media outlets such as Twitter to denaturalize the preferred reading of news events provided by mainstream media by providing alternative representations.

Acting as an archive for the movement – there were 6, 775 tweets from the #YoSoy132 handle as of April 3, 2013 (*twitter.com/YoSoy132Media*) – it is possible to see how its goals and motivations have developed. For instance, on September 12, 2012, shortly after Peña Nieto was announced as the President-elect, #Yo Soy posted a series of two tweets stating in full: “Calderón: ‘the result of your politics are visible. The television duopoly today is more powerful than it was six years ago...and Peña Nieto is the President elect. It cannot be denied that Televisa

constructed this candidacy” (*translation mine, twitter.com/YoSoy132Media*). In quoting Felipe Calderón, the movement is echoing his doubts on the authenticity of Peña Nieto and it is clearly aligning against the PRI candidate. This tweet is just one small representation of the stance that the movement took during the election. As I have discussed before, this perspective shifted once it was clear that Peña Nieto would officially become President of Mexico despite protests. The shift can be seen in tweets from the past few months, with tweets that are much more focused on raising awareness about democracy and media issues. For example, in recent weeks the movement has brought attention to the new protocol surrounding protests being enforced by the Mexico City’s mayor, Miguel Ángel Mancera. A tweet from April 3, 2013 reads, “we are talking about the new protest protocols of @ManceraMiguelMX (*twitter.com/YoSoy132Media*)” with a link to a site explaining the changes. Again, these tweets are just small examples of the messages the movement is choosing to send to its constituents, but they fairly accurately reflect the transitions it has made in seeking a non-partisan approach in recent months.

The central Facebook page for the movement is updated somewhat regularly, at a rate of two to three posts per month. This isn’t an incredibly active online presence for the movement, but considering that each post receives thousands of “likes” and “shares”, it is clearly reaching a large number of constituents and maintaining interest online. The page itself has 220,326 “likes”, and each person who has liked the page receives updates on his or her newsfeed. Like Twitter, Facebook is largely considered a social media tool for younger people, both a positive and a negative aspect of the social media site, as #Yo Soy 132 relies heavily

on college populations to disseminate their messages and propel the movement forward. The fact that the Facebook page exists doesn't necessarily exclude a wider range of people from participating, such as older or poorer populations, but it will be important for the movement to continue to access audiences in a wide range of settings and through varying strategies if it wants to involve more people.

It is important to consider whether or not the online presence of #Yo Soy 132 is providing a valuable intervention into the construction of hegemonic views provided by mainstream media in Mexico. This is a very difficult question to answer, because it is clear that the movement recognizes that so much more work needs to be done. In reality, very little has changed in the construction of Mexican media since the movement began. However, consciousness raising and bringing the public's attention to the issue is a very important first step, and the movement seems to be focusing its attention on this specific strategy. The most productive way at determining whether or not the group is successful in raising awareness surrounding the democracy of media in Mexico is by looking at how it has developed its methods of accessing its constituents through online mediums and other means. Through the research I have conducted that looks at the specific tactics and strategies of #Yo Soy 132, I believe the group has effectively established and maintained its main goals and begun to reach a wider audience through global protests. It still has to make progress in establishing a singular spokesperson for the cause so that there is no confusion when it comes to events or causes it is involved in. The protests of Saks Fifth Avenue in New York presented a great opportunity for the group to establish solidarity with Occupy while also

distinguishing itself and the #Yo Soy cause. Unfortunately, a lack of communication can result in a misinformed public and confusion about the purpose of the movement. The efforts the group has made to reach global audiences, to work within a society where there is limited Internet access, and to maintain a high profile street presence will be put to waste if it can't find a way to make its message clear and concise for their audience to understand. To me, this appears to be the most pressing issue for the movement, but considering the progress that has been made in other strategic sectors, it is something that I anticipate will change for the better in the months to come.

The Affect of the Internet

In the United States, Internet access is often a privilege we take for granted, and it is easy to forget that a home computer with online capabilities is not a given in all parts of the world. Even though the #Yo Soy 132 movement has a strong online presence, the same cannot be said for Mexico. The number of Mexican households with personal computers and access to the Internet reflects the poverty levels in the country. In December 2011, there were 42,000,000 Internet users in Mexico, representing 36.9% of the population. "Internet user penetration", or the percentage of people with regular online access, is expected to rise to 40.5% in 2012, and continue to rise until it reaches 53.8% in 2016. Experts believe this projected increase will occur more quickly than typically seen in other countries, meaning the situation will begin to improve for Mexicans substantially in the coming years. However, current numbers are low, and considering #Yo Soy 132 is a movement almost entirely based online, these statistics make it more difficult for the movement to reach people from different economic backgrounds in an effective way. The online communities formed by #Yo Soy 132 are primarily accessible to the university population. Also, since fewer people have access to the Internet, it means that mainstream news channels controlled by Televisa and TV Azteca are more widely influential. For many Mexicans who aren't in the university system because of their economic status, television and newspapers are their only resources for gathering news and information.

However, there is potentially good news for the #Yo Soy 132 movement within the statistical analysis of Internet access. The results of the "User Analysis"

portion of *New Media Trend Watch* are more encouraging. Although it shows that Internet penetration is relatively low in Mexico, Internet engagement is very high. This means that people who do have access at home spend lots of time online on a variety of different sites, including social media sites. Mexicans aged 15 and up with Internet access at home spend up to 5 hours a day online, and Twitter and Facebook represent a large portion of those hours. While Microsoft and Google sites are the most frequented of the Web, Facebook visits are up an astounding 224 % since March 2010. Additionally, in a Global Report from September 2012, 11.7 million Mexicans were listed as active Twitter users – people who post at least once per month from any type of device. These statistics are incredibly important for #Yo Soy 132 because they show that the people who do have access to Internet heavily frequent the sites integral to the movement’s success. EMarketer, one of the companies behind the global analysis of Internet access, says, “Although social media adoption is naturally limited by Internet adoption, Internet users in Mexico have embraced social networks more enthusiastically than individuals in other countries. The number of social network users in Mexico will reach 30.3 million in 2012, accounting for 65% of Internet users, according to eMarketer” (*newmediatrendwatch.com*). Even though social networks appear to be an excellent way for the movement to reach its constituents, it is still important to acknowledge that a huge number of people don’t have Twitter and Facebook accounts because they don’t have Internet access at home.

Although the movement may be necessarily limited in whom it is able to connect with in its own country due to lower levels of Internet access, they have still

managed to extend the reach of the organization in other ways. According to recent estimates by the movement, as reported in *Latina Lista*, there are over 50 active branches of #Yo Soy 132 internationally, in addition to the hundreds of university branches that exist in Mexico. Although the presence of the group is now international, the focus is still on national issues. The group's rationale for investing people and protest efforts in so many countries, including the United States, China, Australia, England, and more, is that wherever Enrique Peña Nieto travels he will encounter protest. Again, they make it clear that they aren't necessarily protesting Peña Nieto or his political party in particular; rather they are bringing attention to problems of "media manipulation, economic monopolization, and more" that continue to exist under his administration (*Latina Lista: The Smart News Source*).

It is clear that the movement faces a daunting obstacle with limited Internet penetration in Mexico, but questions of access have also provided the incentive for those involved to get their message out in other ways that don't lie within the structure of television news or a biased media. In *Media Culture*, Douglas Kellner emphasizes the importance of "(relating) its theories to practice", in other words actually getting out into the world and working to change "the conditions that promote oppression and domination" (94). The fact that there is still such a large portion of the population without Internet access in Mexico provides an incentive for #Yo Soy 132 members to get out onto the streets and protest. Each time a group of people under the #Yo Soy 132 name is visible in the public eye, more of the Mexican public becomes aware of the important issues the group is fighting for. The Internet is just one resource for reaching a wide audience and maintaining

connections between individuals who otherwise wouldn't be able to communicate. The movement has a strong online presence and values the Internet for the opportunity to present alternative views than those seen on mainstream television channels, but importantly, participants in the movement still protest regularly across all parts of the country. Political apathy develops when a social movement focuses solely on maintaining a strong Internet presence because it creates the feeling of progress when very little actually changes.

As I have outlined previously, Mexicans may have difficulty accessing the alternative perspectives to mainstream media that the movement offers. However, since the movement so heavily emphasizes the intense effects that media has on social and political issues, any person who is troubled by the messages put forth on the news will be supported by #Yo Soy 132 in working against the dominant powers. By maintaining a strong presence in "the streets" as well as in the virtual world, #Yo Soy 132 is able to access a wider range of people. However, it remains to be seen whether the movement is capable of reaching out to citizens outside of the educated, middle to upper classes in the fight for a democratic medium. There seems to be a continual reflection and conversations surrounding the tactics that will best serve the movement, considering how it has evolved since its inception. Yet again, this tactic aligns with Kellner's *Media Culture*, as he emphasizes the necessity for "constant reflection and debate over the methods and goals of cultural studies" (95). The continued internal evaluation of the movement, seen through an adaptation of its message and tactics, allows it to strengthen both an online presence but also establish its presence in the public sphere. Self-reflection is a

particularly important element in the movement's efforts towards resignification of Mexican media.

The primary focus of my project has been on the overt influence that political groups have over mainstream media in Mexico. However, as I mentioned in my introduction, there are specific – and limited - institutions that control all aspects of mainstream media in our own country as well. With a greater capacity to reach alternative media and news information through the Internet, we seem much less concerned than the citizens of Mexico about the current state of our media systems. Even considering the notoriety of Occupy, there are no visible social movements that are specifically calling for a wider distribution of power in communications. However, there are many media scholars who have brought attention to the concentration of power, two of the most notable dissidents being Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols in *Our Media, Not Theirs*:

A handful of enormous conglomerates have secured monopoly control of a vast stretch of the media landscape. The oligopolistic structures they have created make a mockery of the traditional notion of a free press, where anyone can launch a medium and participate in the marketplace of ideas (25 – 26).

Many Americans have responded to McChesney and Nichols by claiming that the Internet is in fact an open marketplace for ideas, and combats any concerns they have about corporate control in the rest of media. I can't help but make some connections between our own, questionably democratic systems of media and the fact that there has been so little coverage of #Yo Soy 132 in mainstream American

news. The lack of reporting cannot be blamed on a lack of information, as *The Guardian* report of the Peña Nieto Televisa buy out says, “US diplomats raised concerns that the frontrunner in Mexico’s presidential election, Enrique Peña Nieto, was paying for favourable TV coverage as far back as 2009, according to state department cables released by WikiLeaks” (*guardian.co.uk*). Although it is impossible to conclude why American dominant media has chosen to ignore the #Yo Soy 132 movement, it sheds doubt on the idea that we don’t need to be concerned about corporate control. The problem with thinking that the Internet has a democratizing affect on the singular perspectives offered by mainstream media is that one has to take the initiative to find the alternative information and news sources. If an American has never heard of the #Yo Soy 132 movement, for example, why would he or she choose to type those words into a Google search bar? Sure, the information is out there, but it is also overwhelming and at times difficult to filter through such an abundance of news. It is important to acknowledge that the flood of unfiltered information found on the Web may simply overwhelm users and create a feeling of apathy in learning about important world events.

The scholarly debate surrounding the affect of Internet access on our desire and capability to access information was recently discussed in a more mainstream venue, in an opinion piece published in *The New York Times*. In his article, “The Land of the Binge”, Frank Bruni posits:

In theory our hyperconnectivity and surfeit of possibilities have broadened our universes, speeding us to distant galaxies, fresh discoveries and new information. But in reality they’ve just as often

had a narrowing effect, enabling us to dwell longer on, and burrow deeper into, one way of being, one mode of thinking.

Bruni points to a potentially dangerous side effect of the Internet, a resource that promises the possibility of access to as much information as we desire about any topic imaginable. Rarely is any sort of negative side effect to this “surfeit of possibilities” questioned, because it has been so engrained in our society that the Internet is an endless source of information, free of control of any corporations or outside influences. In the most simplistic sense, the click of an individual’s mouse is the only factor that affects the content a user accesses. However, as Bruni explains, this can mean that we become complacent about seeking out a variety of perspectives and simply look for the type of material we most enjoy and contain perspectives we agree with. Relating this issue to the effect of the Internet on social movements, this can mean that when a group is attempting to reach wide audiences online, in reality it is only accessing those who seek out their information and therefore are likely to support the cause to begin with. It also means that groups may become complacent in working to get their message out in other ways besides online, which leads me to a discussion of online “slacktivism”.

In *Digital Media and Democracy*, edited by Meg Boler, there is a chapter titled “Where The Activism Is” in which author Trebor Scholz discusses the effect of the Internet on social movements across the globe,

Activism is more than action in favor of social or political change...it extends beyond street protests, etc.... It now includes also the toolbox of the social Web. Claims about its potential need to be balanced

between the proclamations of the click-happy techno-positivists
(355).

Scholz is recognizing the Internet for its potential to connect people across the globe in a way that has never before been possible. In the past, consciousness raising and protest were limited to the streets, and information would disseminate across news reports in papers, magazines, radio, and television. “Techno-positivists” claim that we have moved beyond these archaic times of limited and slower dissemination of information, while other people, including Scholz, believe that media users can become complacent in participating in social movements in a meaningful way. It is difficult to substantiate what “meaningful” activism looks like but, nonetheless, it is important to think critically about whether a social movement that is primarily active online and measures success through factors such as “likes” and “re-posts” is likely to result in tangible change. For this reason, as I have suggested previously, there might be certain advantages to #Yo Soy 132 working primarily within a country like Mexico where Internet penetration is still limited.

The Occupy movement garnered so much media attention during those weeks in Zuccotti Park due in part to its physical presence. People were informed of the planned occupation primarily through online networking, which proves the power of such a tool. However, the people involved took the crucial next step in raising awareness by actually gathering in one space and using protest as a way to spread their message. Thousands of protesters remained in the park for weeks, some even choosing to stay for several months, reinforcing their commitment to the cause. This was the type of protest our Internet savvy culture had forgotten was

possible, and since it was so different than tactics of other social movements in recent years, Occupy garnered widespread media attention. I believe part of the reason that Occupy has lost some momentum in recent months is because they have lessened their widespread street protest efforts and returned to a more strictly online presence.

In attempting to understand where #Yo Soy132 and Occupy interact with social Web and use is to their advantage, Alesanda Renzi offers a useful definition of a new term. Renzi discusses “tactical media” and what it means to interact with the Internet as a social movement. She says, “In general, tactical media are expressions of dissent that rely on artistic practices and “do it yourself” media created from readily available, relatively cheap technology and means of communication (e.g., radio, video and Internet)” (*The Space of Tactical Media* 72). It is my opinion that both social movements use tactical media as a way to encourage participation and disseminate their messages, considering both have used video as a method to interact with constituents and others interested in the movements. YouTube has become an incredible resource for such organizations, as Renzi points out, for being a “relatively cheap technology”. While both movements clearly use tactical media, as defined by *The Space of Tactical Media* to their advantage, other scholars have made more specific distinctions about what it means to be successful in maintaining a presence in the public sphere. Understanding the effectiveness of a movement’s presence in the public sphere has become increasingly difficult with the influence of the Internet and the way it changes our understanding gathering, communicating, and interacting. Considering a few different scholars’ perspectives on the public

sphere, differences between #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy become more clear, and this is almost entirely due to differences in Internet access.

Many scholars have recently been interested in this idea of physical presence in our society and how our definitions of communication have drastically changed. An interest in interaction and physical space has led to an analysis of the “public sphere” and how the definition has developed in recent years with the impact of technology and the Web. Peter Dahlgren has been a leader in this discussion, and has formulated a very clear understanding of the public sphere in our globalized world. Dahlgren says that we have to understand the public sphere as inhabiting many different spaces, no longer defined simply as a gathering of people outside of the home. He breaks it down into ideas of structure, representation, and interaction. Formal institutions, organizations, sources of finances, control, regulation, and more define the structure, which subsequently defines the construction of communication (*The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation*). In terms of #Yo Soy 132, it is directly confronting the structure of Mexico’s public sphere by bringing attention to the amount of control that Televisa and cooperating political parties have over the media. Televisa is one of the “formal institutions” that greatly impacts frameworks of communication in Mexico. Occupy, in a general sense, is questioning formal institutions such as corporations that impact distribution of wealth in society. Dahlgren defines representation as the output of the media - the type of information that is distributed which raises questions of fairness, accuracy, completeness, ideological tendencies, and more. Finally, interaction refers to communication between individual consumers and

media and interactions between people. Therefore, the “public” aspect of “public sphere” is much more than just a media audience. The public develops from deliberation between individuals who consume media and discuss what they are viewing.

The structural dimension of the public sphere is what has changed most with the presence of the Internet in society. Peter Dahlgren discusses the impact of the Web:

In regard to the Internet, the structural dimension directs our attention to the way in which the communicative spaces relevant for democracy are broadly configured. This has to do with such things as the manner in which cyber-geography is organized in terms of legal, social, economic, cultural, technical, and even Web-architectural features. Such factors have an impact on the ways in which the Net is accessible (or not) for civic use (*The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation* 149).

Dahlgren explains concisely how communicative spaces are highly impacted by the connective nature of the Internet. However, he is one of few scholars to acknowledge the fact that even though many westernized countries have widespread Internet access, there are still many places around the world that don't. Civic engagement is highly affected in a globalized world when only limited sectors of a society have access to the Web, such as the case in Mexico. The world's public sphere may be sprawling and more highly connected than ever before, but there are still large segments of the global population that are necessarily excluded from

these interactions. Again, this is a huge factor in the ability for #Yo Soy 132 to disseminate their message across their home country.

Scholz continues the analysis of the impact the social Web has had on tactics and strategies of interaction in regards to political engagement of social groups. He also brings up the idea of the public sphere and how it has been highly impacted by these technological changes. He has a slightly different perspective than Dahlgren because rather than redefine the public sphere to reflect current modes of communication in society, he believes that it has disappeared and been replaced by online discussion.

In the economically developed world, the disappearing public sphere plays people into the hands of the social Web. [North Americans] are fighting off the onslaught of information and it is not just the disappearing public sphere that makes true political engagement difficult. In the United States, people work endless hours. How do you squeeze in activism in this precarious situation? The Internet makes it in many ways easier to engage (*Digital Media and Democracy, Tactics in Hard Times* 356-357)

I find Scholz's argument much less nuanced than Dahlgren's, as he makes too many generalizations when discussing political engagement and the "disappearing public sphere". For instance, he seems to conflate long working hours with the fact that Americans are less likely to gather publically, whether for protest or to simply interact with one another. This seems like a weak argument, because there are countless examples of European societies that continue to prioritize this type of

social and political gathering even while experiencing similar societal shifts as in the United States. Like many others, Scholz also fails to acknowledge the lack of Internet penetration in certain societies while claiming it provides an easier way to engage. Despite my issues with Scholz's argument, he still makes some important claims about how North Americans in particular are valuing physical, public, civic engagement less due to a number of factors. In this sense, he points to a major differentiation between #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy – one is working within a society that still values gathering in public arenas, while the other is functioning in a society with a disappearing public sphere associated with civic Web engagement.

Apart from the impact that the Internet has had on our ability to interact with one another through public spheres, there has also been much discussion on the potentially democratizing effect the Internet will have on societies whose media systems are regulated by any number of sources. In the United States, this means corporate influence, and in Mexico it means both corporate and political influence. As mentioned in previous chapters, many American in particular have been dissuaded from taking action against corporate media entities due to ability to access limitless information from online sources. Robert W. McChesney has been a voice of dissent amongst these claims of the democratizing effect of the Internet. In *Policing The Thinkable* he says, "it is true that the Internet is changing a great deal about our lives...[but] the Internet is not going to launch viable commercial competitors to the existing media giants" (*The New Media Reader* 102). For McChesney, it seems the arguments positing the ability for the Internet to connect individuals to one another and to more information are flawed. For the movements

in question, if they are to follow the ideology of McChesney, it means that they must work more diligently to communicate in ways that aren't restricted by giant media corporations or the social Web that appears to be out of the reach of such entities.

After examining the online and "street" presence of #Yo Soy 132, it is evident that those involved in the movement are using the resources available to them to continue the momentum and publicity gained from the recent Presidential elections. #Yo Soy 132 was established as a youth, student initiated movement and continues to organize through the university system, an effective tactic that allows the movement to maintain a cohesive effort throughout the country, but ultimately excludes many of those who cannot afford a college education and don't have Internet access. Social movements, including #Yo Soy 132, need to be aware of "preaching to the choir" and only reaching out to those who are already educated about the problematic structures of Mexican media. In order for real change to occur, it is necessary to include as many people as possible in the development of the movement, starting by investing in a truly non-partisan approach and reaching outside of the university system. Unfortunately, when only 30 percent of the country has Internet access at home, certain communities are inherently isolated from the online efforts of the movement. For this reason specifically, the movement needs to continue to protest to garner a wider public presence. Even though it is problematic in some ways, limited Internet access may be the driving force behind the protesting efforts of #Yo Soy 132, encouraging participants to inhabit Kellner's emphasis on "relating theory to practice". As I have suggested by discussing the lack of mainstream media and public knowledge about the movement in the United

States, widespread Internet access doesn't necessarily imply a more highly politically and socially aware public. #Yo Soy 132 is still a growing and subsequently imperfect movement, but show no signs of turning complacent in seeking the democratization of Mexican media.

What Does A Democratic Media Really Mean?

In the chapter titled “Where the Activism Is” from Meg Boler’s *Digital Media and Democracy, Tactics in Hard Times*, Trebor Scholz makes his stance on a democratic Internet clear in when he says, “net neutrality should be the frontline of media activism today...which protocol dominates has a lot to do with real power and money” (363). I understand Scholz’ position, as I too believe in the importance of keeping the Internet free from the influence of large corporations. Despite feeling confident in the significance of this particular issue, I am much less certain that I understand what it means for a media system to be democratic. Does an entire media system have to exist outside of the influence of “power and money” as Scholz believes the Internet should in order to be democratic? If this is the case, is a truly democratic media possible anywhere? How far are the United States and Mexico from achieving this particular state of communications? These questions can all be answered in different ways, depending on how we perceive and define democracy in media. Though I don’t presume to be able to provide a prescription for what a utopist media system looks like, I am dedicating this chapter to exploring what a democratic media might include and why it is an important issue for the citizens of Mexico and the United States to consider.

Now that I have discussed the implications of the greater media structures in both the United States and Mexico, the current tactics and strategies of the #Yo Soy movement, and the effects of the social Web and Internet access on social movements in general, I will situate the discussion more generally to look at what it really means for a media system to be democratic. Democracy is so highly

esteemed, but in practicality it is difficult to determine when a system reflects democratic values, particularly when a society is seeking democracy in its most “true” form. I will discuss larger structures of media and their implications, the connection between civic discourse in the media and civic mobilization which points to the importance of the issue, and steps that have been taken in Mexico and America towards media reform to work towards democracy in communication systems. Within this discussion I will compare how different scholars have defined democracy in media to show how many perspectives exist surrounding the issue.

It is clear that #Yo Soy 132 is up against a very powerful force, not just because of the sheer size and power of Televisa and TV Azteca specifically, but because of the way television news is constructed in society. The construction of news media makes viewers automatically assume that what we see on TV is the truth. This means the effects of unethical mainstream news tactics and reporting are extremely detrimental. The constructed belief of television news is a powerful force in Mexico and practically every other country in the world. In *Media Semiotics*, Jonathan Bignell discusses the codes and structures, and subsequent ideological effects, of television news.

TV (and TV news in particular) involves the viewer, but disempowers the viewer, positions him or her as passive, at the same time. The ways that the medium of news works (its narrative codes, news values and mythic meanings) may appear to take precedence over the ‘content’, which the news medium communicates (128 - 129).

In other words, there are already inherent structures that exist across society that establish our tendency to absorb subjective interpretations of events as if they were objective. Kellner adds, “The artifacts of media culture are thus not innocent entertainment, but are thoroughly ideological artifacts bound up with political rhetoric, struggles, agendas, and policies” (*Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern* 93). When a TV news station provides “bought out” coverage of a political candidate, the effect of presenting the subjective as if it were objective is two-fold. The television news audience is presented information through a medium that is believed to be unbiased in the best of circumstances, though in reality is not, and are being given information that is purposefully slanted. As Mexican citizens become more aware of the biased tendencies of the news media, the possibilities of resignification for #Yo Soy 132 increase, because more people are likely to seek out a perspective that isn’t heavily influenced by these powerful forces.

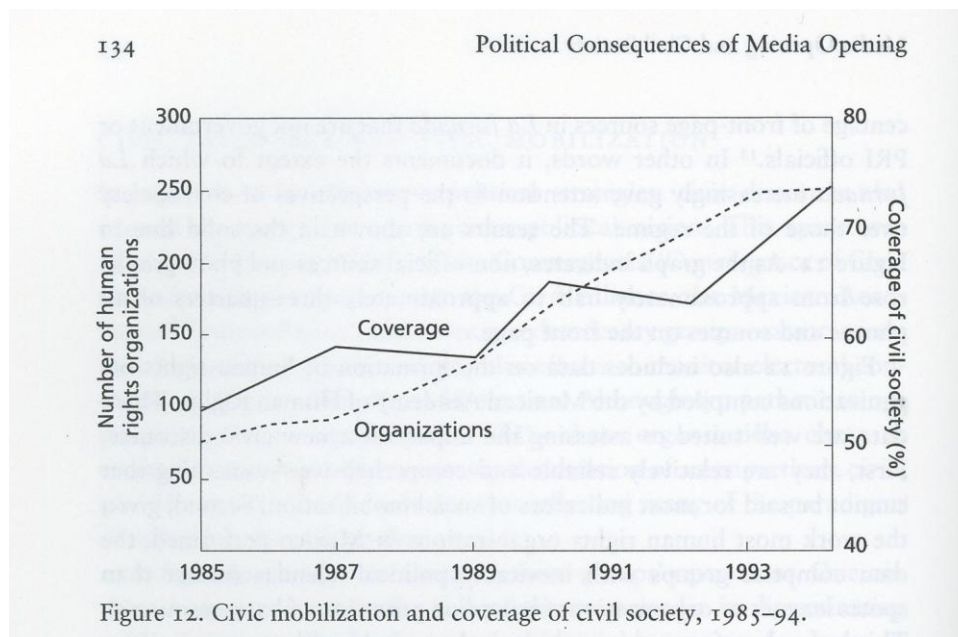
Not all hope is lost for media reform in Mexico simply because of the way news media is structured in society – all we need to do is look back at recent examples of large structural shifts that have occurred in the country to recognize large scale change is still possible. #Yo Soy 132 is calling for a shift in media regulations to allow for a more democratic press in lieu of the current situation, where large corporations controlling much of the information are heavily influenced by political parties. This call to action is incredibly similar to a societal shift that occurred in the 1980’s in Mexico when the public reacted strongly against cases of electoral fraud and were compelled to take action. I want to make a comparison

between this historical shift in Mexican society to the goals of #Yo Soy because it proves the powerful influence of media on public interest and desire to create change. This example in recent history also shows that independent media can in fact make an impact on public opinion, even when a singular corporate perspective dominates the system.

After widespread accusations of electoral fraud in the 1988 presidential election, many non-partisan organizations such as *Convergencia* (Convergence of Civic Organizations for Democracy) formed as a popular effort to monitor electoral conditions in Mexico. This widespread effort to create a nonpartisan, civic, pro-democratic movement to change the way elections were run reflected many of the strategies adopted by the newly invigorated independent press. “Independent media were vital to these groups’ operations,” (132) says Chapell H. Lawson in *Building the Fourth Estate*. For instance, during the 1994 presidential campaign, mainstream, “traditional” media that was highly pro-PRI regime published predictions of the party’s victory. These polls were countered by data collected by independent news sources that showed there was very little evidence to the mainstream media’s claims, to encourage people to go out to vote on Election Day. “The dissemination of polling data proved crucial to efforts by civic and opposition groups to monitor elections and prevent electoral fraud...the press emphasized the deplorable distance between the symbolic and institutional levels of civil society and thus created a cultural climate conducive to change” (Lawson 132). The fact that there was actually discussion about what was wrong in the way Mexican

politics functioned in the 1980's and '90's created the desire within citizens to take action and create change.

All too often people discount the power of the media and claim that they aren't affected by the messages they receive, and therefore don't see democratization of media as an important issue. Another common response to the call for media reform is that individuals are simply unaware of biases that exist and subsequently don't understand that changes need to be made. Chappell H. Lawson takes up this issue and uses empirical data and historical examples to prove that media reform is in fact an important issue, particularly in Mexico.



As Figure 12 suggests, there is a strong empirical relationship between increasing journalistic attention to the viewpoints of civil society and the organization of civil society itself. This relationship also holds when different indicators of press coverage are used, such as calls for political reform and explicit endorsements of civic

mobilization in independent publications. Civic groups thus emerged and grew at roughly the same time that media outlets like *La Jornada* gave them greater attention (133).

Lawson is quick to point out that this relationship doesn't prove that the prevalence of independent news reporting in Mexico caused social mobilization. However, it does show that the two factors are related in some way, which is very important for the #Yo Soy 132 cause. This historical example legitimizes the main focus of #Yo Soy to democratize media. Lawson's connection between press coverage and civil engagement shows that it is incredibly important for media to report on protests. With reports on civil unrest in the media, civic engagement becomes more prevalent. In recognizing people that already taking action, the media legitimize the concerns of citizens who might be feeling the same way. On the other hand, if there is never any suggestion of civil unrest in the media, a façade of a perfect society is maintained which subsequently discourages people from speaking out about their concerns.

Lawson provides historical data to show how Mexico has struggled in the past to support a democratic media system, but how close are we to attaining this goal in current society in both Mexico and the United States? Many scholars are skeptical that the situation at present is desirable in supporting freedom of expression and alternative perspectives. In *Resisting the Conquista of Words*, Bárbara Renaud González discusses the underlying biases that exist across media in the United States. "The media, English or Spanish-language, no longer serve us. The democracy enshrined in our Constitution gives brown and poor people what the

rest of the world envies: the freedom of speech; yet we have been betrayed by media that are supposed to protect our right to speak out” (106). González contextualizes her argument in the Constitution and compares what is written to the current reality. She claims that the opportunities for non-white people and those of lower socio-economic classes to express their opinions through mainstream media are limited. The failure to acknowledge these populations reinforces hegemonic structures formed by the white, male-dominated elite, and creates the impression across society that those are the only voices that matter. While we struggle to define democracy in American media specifically, an easy first step is to do what González does and look at the Constitution and compare the way our society currently functions to what the founding document claims is necessary for a true democracy. I believe both countries, Mexico and the U.S., could benefit greatly from this type of comparison between reality and what the countries claim to stand for. Although Mexico and The United States may emphasize different ideals of democracy in their Constitutions, it can be beneficial for both countries to consider whether media systems align with what is written. As I have discussed in previous chapters, though it is rarely recognized in our own society, those who control the major media corporations in the United States offer a very limited perspective that isn't reflective of the diversity of people in the country.

In addition to her analysis of the United States, González also speaks to the current conditions of media in Mexico supports Lawson's understanding of a democratic press, as she explains that the ability to express opinion or even simply discuss important societal issues is vital to create real change:

Without the ability to speak freely, the people in a democracy lack the ability to debate issues of utmost importance. Without free speech, we cannot educate each other about who we are, what we've seen, and what we want. And without free speech in the media, we risk losing the democracy that has taken us this far – as difficult, hard-won, and messy as it is. ... We consume ideas from people who don't know us, people who want only that we will make them even richer still (106).

I appreciate González' recognition of how much progress has been made in regards to democracy. This is evident when looking to the 1980's and '90's when the focus of independent publications was to combat widespread electoral fraud, which doesn't exist to the same extent today. However, she says that the advancement that has already occurred should not be an excuse to stop seeking further progress and demand change. Her claim that Mexican citizens are consuming information from "people who don't know us" is particularly powerful in emphasizing how those in power in media in both countries aren't reflecting the perspectives of those who are consuming the media. When we are constantly fed a point of view that isn't our own, we soon adopt it. Although this is discouraging, looking back at Lawson's data, it has also been proven that the opposite can be true. If #Yo Soy 132 can continue to remind Mexicans and people across the globe that a free and democratic press is important, and give them the opportunity to participate in the cause, civic action and real change will follow.

The similarities between American and Mexican media cannot be denied, and throughout my research I have come to recognize that the issues the two countries face, particularly considering issues of democracy, are incredibly similar. For instance, after #Yo Soy 132 and other social groups protested the December 1st inauguration of Enrique Peña Nieto, there were accusations of a media blackout in the U.S. of the dissent. Independent, online media source RT.com published an article that drew attention to these protests in a way that very few, if any, mainstream news sources did. A person who commented on this article responded passionately, “The blacked out biased media of the USA has slipped in keeping the masses ignorant. It’s not something you wanted to wake up to...but it sure beats pretending that nothing’s wrong” (*RT.com*). Recognizing that it isn’t a pleasant reality to face, the person who left this comment believes that mainstream media would rather ignore any type of political dissent and focus on the idea that Mexico is entering a new political era with Peña Nieto’s election. I found it interesting that even though RT.com was one of the few sources I could find that mentioned protests during the inauguration, they never specifically state that members of #Yo Soy 132 were leading the charge – I had to find that information on the organization’s official site. This can indicate several potential issues – it is another example of the failure of #Yo Soy to communicate their goals with the public, or it is an indication that even independent media needs to make further effort to report on political events in a more complete way.

Whether or not there is any evidence of a media blackout in the United States in regards to current situations in Mexico or on other important world issues, it can

be said with certainty that as a society we perceive media mergers with complacency. Media mergers are a huge threat to the media's capacity to function in a democratic fashion. In *Big Media, Big Money, Cultural Texts and Political Economies*, Ronald V. Bettig and Jeanne Lynn Hall discuss a merger announcement that was met with such a response:

The *New York Times* ran a lead editorial following the merger announcement (between AOL and Time Warner), acknowledging anxiety about the potential societal effects of the monopolization of the media market in the hands of a few companies. Finally, however, the editorial suggests that the deal will increase access to high-speed Internet services and lead to 'broader choice'. For the *New York Times* editors, the more serious threat posed by such economic concentration was the U.S. political system: the ability of such 'corporate behemoths' to 'buy political influence.' The editors concluded that there was no need to scuttle such mergers but rather to reform campaign finance laws (25).

It is a successful tactic for editorials to acknowledge the unspoken fears of an audience, yet ultimately provide sufficient "proof" to show that there is no need to worry. This is what the *New York Times* did in response to the AOL and Time Warner merger, making a giant corporation even larger and further diminishes the number of perspectives offered in American media. Unsurprisingly, the same editorial chose to sooth the audience's fears of limited perspectives by touting the power of the Internet to more than make up for corporate influence in other media.

The merger will provide faster Internet connections, making surfing the Internet even easier, and therefore allowing audiences to access more information than ever before. Whether or not this information will offer varied, diverse perspectives isn't addressed. Finally, the editorial deflects the need for change away from media and towards politics, which is an arena that the public understands is responsible for protecting our freedom of expression.

Although articles such as the editorial in the *New York Times* may suggest a more political approach that implies a certain partisanship, Robert W. McChesney views it in a different way. In an interview with Meg Boler, McChesney says,

Media reform is both a nonpartisan movement and it's a progressive movement. It's nonpartisan in the sense that the sort of reforms we're working on are not, for example, to censor certain types of political speech and enhance others, or to air our viewpoint more than other viewpoints...This movement is about building a media system that does justice to the democratic needs of a self-governing people...There are people, or interests, who currently have significant power in our government and society who like the status quo (59, *Digital Media and Democracy, Tactics in Hard Times*).

In his argument for the importance of media reform, McChesney reminds his audience that a media system should support a "self-governing people", not tout particular political perspectives over others, rather reflect the changing beliefs of the American public. This quote is particularly relevant to the #Yo Soy cause because they too are attempting a non-partisan approach to their demands because

the group believes that large corporations and political parties shouldn't predetermine what information should be available for public consumption.

While McChesney aims to take partisanship out of a political approach to media reform, he also has approached the issue with a different lens entirely. For example, in "Policing the Thinkable" he says,

By most theories of liberal democracy, such a concentration of media power into so few hands is disastrous for the free marketplace of ideas, the bedrock upon which informed self-government rests. The key to making markets work in the consumers' interest is that they be open to newcomers, but the present conglomerate-dominated markets are not even remotely competitive in the traditional sense of the term (*The New Media Theory Reader*, 101).

His economic approach to the issue appeals to another type of audience, and reflects the way that this issue can be approached in so many different ways. The complicated understanding of why we need a democratic media is just as nuanced as what a democratic media really means. McChesney shows that he can alter his language to speak about the same issue to appeal to different audiences. He clearly believes that the democracy of the media in the United States affects social, economic, and political realities of the country,

Although it is a complex issue, and the scholars I have cited all perceive it in slightly different ways, it is clear that they agree in what particular standards should be maintained. Those standards exclude the dominance of large corporations, a reality that is still very present in Mexican and American media. Ultimately, as a

society we need to acknowledge that information is power, and as long as that power lies in the hands of a few we will never have access to the information that confirms our democracy.

Conclusion

Why does the media matter? As someone who is interested enough in the subject to have chosen it as a focus of study in college, it is all too easy to forget that for many people, media just doesn't seem to be that important. Why would anything need to change about the media if we have constant access to this information, accessible any time and any place? As long as we watch the news on TV or read about current events online, we are staying up to date on the most important issues of contemporary society and therefore we are being responsible world citizens. While the tendency for many people to brush aside the problems surrounding structures of media as unimportant may be exasperating to me as a student, I can only imagine the frustration felt by social groups that are addressing these very issues in hopes of improving communication and access to information. For #Yo Soy 132 and even for Occupy, this means having to constantly work to convince the public that the issues they are addressing are important. After spending a large portion of my senior year looking into these particular social movements, the structures that exist in Mexican and American media, power dynamics, Internet access, and more, I have found that while I have many questions that remain unanswered I am more confident than ever that media is an important issue.

For both #Yo Soy 132 and the Occupy Movement, the fact that they are raising awareness around issues of power and politics in the media is revolutionary in itself, because in order for change to occur, citizens of the two countries must first recognize that there is a problem to begin with. In *A Culture of Collusion: An Inside Look at the Mexican Press* Jorge G. Castañeda says, "Until the Mexican government

decides – or is forced to decide – that a relatively free media, despite its risks, is preferable to the authoritarian status quo, there is no hope for change” (133, “Limits to Apertura: Prospects for Press Freedom in the New Free-Market Mexico”).

Castañeda points out that it is much easier for the public to ignore problems of the media, whether in the U.S. or Mexico, than to think about them or commit to working to make a change. When a system appears to work perfectly fine as is, it is difficult to get people invested in creating change. For instance, Castañeda points out that in Mexico the media attempts to maintain the appearance of free and democratic reporting. He explains, “The often undetected paradox: when it doesn’t really matter, the media are relatively open. When things really matter, the media are totally closed...At best, guarded optimism is warranted – after Cuba and perhaps Haiti, Mexico certainly has the least-free press of any country in Latin America” (138-140, *A Culture of Collusion: An Inside Look at the Mexican Press*). This “undetected paradox” is what #Yo Soy 132 hopes to draw attention to and begin to change.

In considering what can be done to change these structures, the idea of critical literacy is crucial for both movements. #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy must continue to educate their constituents about how to become literate in media, as described by Peter McLaren,

The task of the critical educator is to provide the conditions for individuals to acquire a language that will enable them to reflect upon and shape their own experiences and in certain instances transform such experiences in the interest of a larger project of social

responsibility. This language is not the language of the metropolitan intellectual or the high priests of the post-avant-garde, although it may borrow from their insights. It is the language that operates critically by promoting a deep affinity for the suffering of the oppressed and their struggle for liberation (49, “Decentering Pedagogy”, *A Critical Encounter*).

By empowering their constituents with the language that enables them to question and confront structures of media in the United States and Mexico, #Yo Soy and Occupy are encouraging a more literate community of people. When thinking about the connections between #Yo Soy in particular and scholars such as Douglas Kellner and Stuart Hall, it is evident that it is following this model of literacy education by “(borrowing) from their insights”. This new type of cultural literacy is essential to involving the masses in changing current structures, and if both movements are successful in this type of education they will see tangible change in the near future.

After all of my research, large and daunting questions remain. Has #Yo Soy 132 been successful at drawing attention to the influence of political groups and corporations in Mexican media? What is the logical next step to continue the momentum of the movement? What more needs to be done? What mistakes have been made that should be recognized in order for the group to avoid repeating them? To bring in the idea of our interconnected world of media, what can #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy learn from one another? What does the United States need to do to improve our own media and take steps towards achieving a democratic system of communications? Is that even possible in our current society? I have asked myself

these questions and more upon reflecting on the information and insights I have gathered surrounding this myriad of issues. I don't pretend to know the answers to all of these inquiries, but the time I have spent researching these issues has allowed me to have some insight into what the future might bring for these organizations and for larger media systems in the U.S. and Mexico.

I believe that #Yo Soy 132 has been successful at drawing attention to media issues in Mexico, particularly evident in the hundreds of chapters of the organization it has established across the globe to draw attention to the problematic relationship between political parties and media in Mexico. That being said, maintaining cohesion within the organization becomes more difficult when there are so many chapters to consider. Many social groups that use protest often struggle to determine whether a wider audience is most important, or whether it is more beneficial to maintain a smaller constituency that is more highly educated about the issues and in agreement about the goals of the organization. #Yo Soy 132 has gone back and forth on this issue since the inception of the organization, whereas Occupy has made it clear from the beginning that they want to involve as many people as possible to address a wide range of issues. Comparing the two organizations is very useful in understanding what each one does successfully and how they can learn from one another. I believe #Yo Soy 132 would benefit from a narrowed focus with emphasis on establishing a strong message with more direct goals. The group has had difficulties establishing their non-partisanship, but as I showed earlier, they have worked tirelessly to distance themselves from any particular political alliance in order to appeal to as many Mexican citizens as

possible. I think a major reason this development of identity has been so difficult is because politics and media, particularly in Mexico, are so closely tied that it is nearly impossible to maintain a neutral approach.

This connection between politics and media has been one of the larger issues #Yo Soy 132 has dealt with while raising awareness surrounding the goals of the movement. However, it is my opinion that the organization could begin to use this connection to its advantage to draw attention to the issue and to make people care about the current media situation. As I mentioned earlier, it can at times be difficult to incite passion in the public when it comes to the media. Even though political issues are inherently more divisive, politics never fails to bring out passions in all of those involved. If #Yo Soy 132 is able to draw attention to the connection between media and politics without maintaining specific alliances to political parties, they will likely be more successful in integrating more people from their home country into the cause.

One of the most exciting aspects of my research was discovering that the two groups I had chosen to look into for my project had recognized their own similarities in objectives and had decided to come together over certain issues. The “Two Countries, One Voice” movement gave tangible proof to what I had previously just hypothesized – that #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy are addressing overlapping issues. Both groups are extremely concerned with the problematic structures in our societies that allow so few individuals to make decisions for the general population about what type of information is important and what can be accessed. When considering the figure of Carlos Slim, the man the “Two Countries, One Voice”

movement has confronted, it is easy to see how quickly a single person can change the fate of media and access in a country. Slim is doing what he can to monopolize Internet access in Mexico, and for a country that is already lagging behind in Internet penetration he is a very troubling figure. Of course, Slim is only one representation of larger issues in both the United States and Mexico, and the movements have to be wary of focusing too much on him as an individual. Although he may have too much power in the media as an individual, portraying him as a villain may individualize the problem and draw attention away from the structures that have allowed him and similar figures in the United States to exist in the first place.

Amongst these more specific inquiries that remain surrounding the two movements, another more general and daunting question remains: what kind of effect is Internet access going to have on the future of media reform in the United States and Mexico. When looking at the tactics and strategies of #Yo Soy 132, I noted many different examples of how the group has managed to maintain a strong presence in the public eye by communicating in other forums outside of the online sphere. I spoke to the importance of protest for the movement, and I believe there is a connection between the higher levels of Internet access in the States and the fact that protests are much less common in contemporary society than they were even just 40 or 50 years ago. My parents were a part of a generation that used protest to solicit change for any number of causes – civil rights, equality, anti-war, government reform, and more. In researching #Yo Soy 132, its particular efforts as a movement seem much more reflective of my parent's generation in the United States than the

current reality. Although it is disheartening to think that the Internet may make people in America less likely to leave their homes, protest, and take action “on the streets”, the fact that Occupy used some of those very tactics shows that not all hope is lost.

As someone who approached this project with little understanding of the way media is structured in America, I was incredibly surprised to find how many similarities exist between Mexican and American systems. For so many reasons, the two countries have attempted to create distance between identities, which makes any sort of structural similarities difficult to conceptualize. As a country, the United States need to stop using our privileged high rates of Internet access as a reason for not changing the power structures in mainstream media. The Internet may not be such a “free enterprise” in the near future, and even if it remains relatively untouched by corporate control, I have shown other inherent shortcomings of the way we seek out information online. That being said, I don’t want to discount the incredible capacity to connect with others in a way that has never before been possible simply by having access to the Web. #Yo Soy 132 can teach us about the importance of maintaining a physical street presence across Mexico and the world, while Occupy can teach us about the amazing capacity to draw attention to a particular cause by organizing and executing protests that create mainstream media mayhem. Where #Yo Soy 132 has developed longevity in their organization, Occupy has succeeded in creating a shorter but much more intense and widely recognized protest movement.

I have made it a goal to be clear through my research and subsequent critical inquiry that American and Mexican media are inextricably tied – not only for the physical proximity of the two countries and the continued globalization of communication, but also due to the structures of power that maintain hegemonic views in both media systems. I have learned that even societies that presume to have more ideal or democratic systems should constantly be working portray a wide range of perspectives, especially those that go against hegemonic views. This type of open media allows citizens to have agency in forming opinions, since alternative viewpoints are presented for consideration. The current structures of media in Mexico and the United States work on a variety of levels to exclude particular opinions and perspectives. We need to consciously seek out information about groups like #Yo Soy 132 and Occupy – they are valuable resources where we can learn about particular issues and work to change communication structures in tangible ways. As these movements have shown, we must first recognize the need for growth and change before we can conceptualize what a truly democratic media system means for us.

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