

1 Goal-Driven Participation

The social process of participation is neutral, but people's objectives are goal driven and therefore divergent, and this is what qualifies as social change.

1.1 Social Disorganisation

"Social disorganisation should be viewed in terms of the ability of the acting social unit to mobilise itself for concerted action. What is important, accordingly, are not the disturbing problems that the acting unit encounters or the strains and disruptions that it experiences. Instead, the importance lies in how the acting unit copes with the problems and disruptions. If the acting unit can maintain an ability to act in a concerted and organised way, it is not disorganised, however pressing and acute may be the changes it is undergoing" (Blumer, 1990, p. 118).

1.2 Diversification

"To understand [participation] and to attempt to study its social effects, it is essential to see this network in this large and diversified form. Much of its nature in this large and diversified form is not visible or indeed present in what happens at given separate points. Studies that are confined to restricted points are thus likely to yield not merely a partial but a distorted image of [participation]" (Blumer, 1990, p. 25).

1.3 End Forms

"No one knows what will be the end form of the system of [participation] and of its supposed end results. If indeed there is an end form" (Blumer, 1990, p. 78).

1.4 Alternative Social Developments

"To seek to characterise social happenings in early [participation] by projecting into them a set of hypothetical final results of the [participatory] process is not a worthy substitute for empirical observation and analysis. Empirical observation and analysis of what happens as the [participative] process enters group life shows a picture of alternative social developments such as we have been refereeing to" (Blumer, 1990, p. 80).

1.5 Social Settings

"Thus, the condition would be that in one kind of social setting the [participative] process would have a given social result; in a different kind of social setting, it would have a different result. Consequently, all that is needed to explain social happenings under [participation] is to combine the [participative] process with the social setting. The combination would seem to provide a simple solution to the problem that I have been considering at such length" (Blumer, 1990, p. 81).

2 Neutral Participative Processes

“We noted the following important matters: (1) that the [participative] process introduces only a bare framework at each line of entry; (2) that a wide range of alternative social developments exist vis-à-vis the bare framework; and (3) that the [participative] process does not determine or explain the particular alternative that comes into being. Thus, we are forced to conclude that while the introduction of the [participative] process is highly productive of change, the process itself is neutral with regard to the form and the nature of the change” (Blumer, 1990, p. 82).

2.1 Social Vacuum

“The [participative] process does not operate in a social vacuum. It takes place always in a social setting with people, culture, institutions, and social organisations. It is to be expected that if the social settings differ significantly, the changes induced in them by the [participative] process will differ” (Blumer, 1990, p. 134).

3 Einstein 100 - Theory of General Relativity

A short film celebrating the centennial of Einstein's theory of General Relativity.

<https://youtu.be/6XSAVqm0XBI>

“An analysis of what takes place at these points of contact between the [participative] process and the social setting reveals a different picture. The picture is different in important respects. The initial factors, the x and the y, undergo alteration in interacting with each other, and furthermore, are subject to appreciable change by the entrance of new factors into the process of interaction. One cannot account for the z, the determinate social change, by a combination of x and the y; the determinate social change is the result of a process of development in which the x and the y themselves undergo change and in which other factors than the x and y may enter. What is important is the process of development and not the x and y factors that are presumed to set it off” (Blumer, 1990, p. 141).

- If we can reconcile Space and Time as a relative (relational) concept, i.e. Spacetime, can we reconcile Social Arrangements and Meaning as a relative (relational) concept, i.e. Socialmeaning?
- In General Relativity if mass changes then there is a change in both time and geometry. Neither is the product of the other, or the conditions by which the other results.
- Rather, they are the setting and the process by which things are arranged.

- What are the processes of development that give us the participatory social arrangements and meanings that we see around us today?
- If we change the meanings, then we change the social setting. If we change the social setting, then we change the meanings. The two are relational.

The question is what takes place in the process of arrangement?

“The changes have to acquire the form and character that permit one to identify them as determinate social changes. The ‘determinate social consequences’ are not present initially at the points of contact, but arise as a result of a process of formation. This simple observation is of central importance because it directs attention to the process of formation instead of to factors antecedent to the process. The vital question becomes, **what takes place in the process of formation?** rather than, What are the constituted factors that precede the process of formation and that are presumed to lead to its products? An analysis of this process reveals the two points mentioned above, to wit, that the initial antecedent factors are subject to change in the process of formation, and that the process is open to the entrance of new factors at different points” (Blumer, 1990, p. 142).

In Newtonian physics the apple falls from the tree because it is drawn by a force, in relativity the apple has nowhere else to go, as spacetime is distorted.

In terms of participation:

- What are the processes of formation?
- Where do the processes of formation take place?
- What do the processes of formation consist of?
- How do the processes of formation operate?
- How are the different processes of formation accounted for?

Participation is the result of social processes that follow the shape of Socialmeaning - that is social arrangements and meanings that are relative. Change one, and you change the other.

“As the many illustrations show, the framework is indifferent to the social form that it takes and to lines of social change that it sets into play. [Participation] is neutral with regard to the nature of the social changes that may arise in operation” (Blumer, 1990, p. 76).

4 Framework of Participative Roles

- The framework of roles in community media that was identified earlier, draws from the general literature relating to community media, and suggested that there are different dispositions in community media practices.
- This included the following roles, which have been further expanded to include a suggestion of what motivates the people undertaking these roles, and how this would be observable in community media situations:

Table 3 Community Media Roles

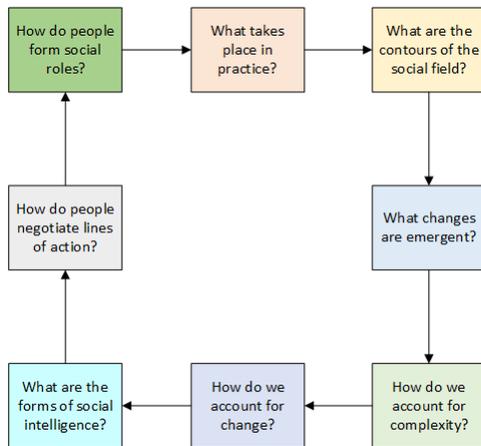
Role	Motivation	Action
The Activist	Promotes social change	Campaigning & political action
The Steward	Ensures continuity	Support for institutions & guiding social change by degree
The Representative	Encompasses all views	Speaking on behalf of others
The Collaborator	Ensures active participation	Getting people working together
The Cipher	Uses established & accumulated knowledge	Relating a pre-determined message
The Consumer	Uses & incorporates what is at hand	Combines and uses media products at hand
The Inspector	Ensures things are ready to work	Checks that work is undertaken at appropriate standards
Devotees	Plays a role in the existing social order	Follows figureheads and leaders

4.1 Role Characteristics

- Many questions are raised by what is meant by each of these role characteristics, how they work in practice, and what the implications might be for an understanding of community media if the starting point of any future analysis is undertaken in relation to different role frameworks that are identified.
- Attention might be given to the interaction of different social processes, as they are embodied in a set of roles that individuals assume and act out in their social and organisational situations, rather than simply as they might be said to operate discursively in the institutional arrangements, the textual products, the policy arrangements, and the inherited scholarly debates that preceded empirical examination.
- This is why Herbert Blumer insists that an empirical researcher should put preceding concepts and ideas out of their mind before they enter the field, and that they should not attempt to hypothesise or instrumentalise the situation before them.

- Consequently, if we are able to adapt the MBTI framework, or others like it, we may conclude that a different set of social processes are at play in the situations that we examine, and that these processes are relative in their operation.

4.2 Contours of the Social Field

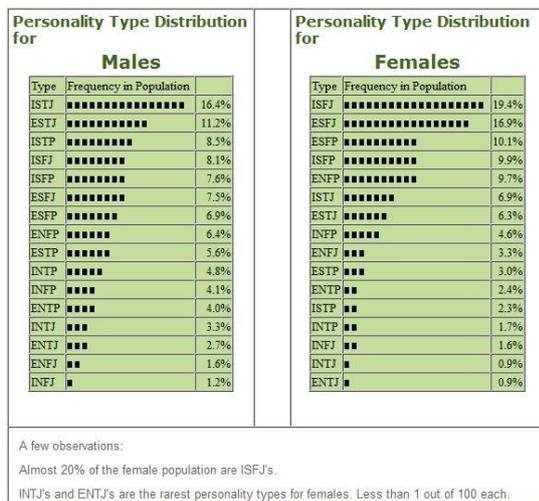


- We can potentially find out more about what is taking place in practice as they signify the contours of the social field, and as they represent changes in the established or emerging configurations of these fields.
- The symbolically interactionist engagements that people use and adapt to make sense of the world are never fixed, but are subject to an ongoing degree of change that is complex and widespread.
- As John Dewey suggests, intelligence is “both a form of experience, and a facilitator in experience” (West, 1989, p. 74).
- People must be able to negotiate their lines of action for future accomplishments, and one way that this is achieved is in the adoption of embodied social roles.
- If we follow the people who play out these roles, and listen to the definitions and the explanations of how they operate and situate themselves as **role-makers**, as **role-takers**, or as **role-disrupters**, and so on, then we will be able to better understand the processes that are driving social change in action.

Table 4 Community Media MBTI Roles

MBTI Role		Disposition	Action	Social Role
Artisan	Operator	Present – Hedonistic	Harmonic	Promoter
	Entertainer	Future – Optimistic	Tactical	Crafter
	Playmate	Past – Cynical	Artcraft	Composer
	Liberator	Place – Here	Artistic	Performer
	Negotiator	Time - Now		
Guardian	Administrator	Present – Stoical	Associative	Supervisor
	Conservator	Future – Pessimistic	Logistical	Inspector
	Helpmate	Past – Fatalistic	Commerce & Material	Provider
	Socialiser	Place – Gateways	Dependable	Protector
	Stabiliser	Time - Yesterday		
Rational	Coordinator	Present – Pragmatic	Deductive	Field-Marshall
	Engineer	Future – Sceptical	Strategic	Mastermind
	Mindmate	Past – Relativistic	Sciences & Systems	Inventor
	Individuator	Place – Intersections	Ingenious	Architect
	Visionary	Time - Intervals		
Idealist	Mentor	Present – Altruistic	Inductive	Teacher
	Advocate	Future – Credulous	Diplomatic	Councillor
	Soulmate	Past – Mystical	Humanities	Champion
	Harmoniser	Place – Pathways	Empathetic	Healer
	Catalyst	Time - Tomorrow		

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5 Reflections on Interviews - Process-Based Outcomes

When we examine the roles that advocates and champions, and others, undertaken in community media life-worlds, we have to keep in mind that:

- Each set of individuals and advocates have a different set of expectations and way of explaining the values that underscored what they are attempting to accomplish.

- They will be mindful of the potential for different alternative routes that might be available, and which they might negotiate with others.
- They will be mindful that subsequent forms of organisation might vary in what is best suited to achieve their desired level of functional sustainability, especially within the resource boundaries they perceived as available to them.
- As a recognised form of organisational practice, then, what advocates will describe cannot be defined in terms of orthodox instrumental planning and modelling, such as a managerial accountability model, or a structured learning model, as defined by linear literacy models.
- Each advocate may represent a model of *temporary, informal* and *ad hoc* social organisation that was closer (i.e. more congruent) with the communities of interest they represent.
- These forms of community are primarily focussed on the practices of media production and their associated accomplishments (i.e. as a widening of technical capability); or as communities of identity based around shared cultural accomplishments (i.e. a feeling of them against us).
- In some instances, these groups may act as reciprocal and informal learning community, combining a rich mixture of shared interest, co-developed practice, and identity accomplishments, signifying social belonging.
- The primary form of engagement exhibited by advocates in their accounts of their community media participation practices, then, will be driven with regard to a high level of personal commitment and investment to their chosen community media cause and values (i.e. as a democratic and ethical impulse).
- Any interviews and observations can be read in a number of ways, though the most relevant approach is their alignment with the central feature of symbolic interaction, that the “human person has a self,” and thereby “has the capacity to thematise [themselves] reflexively and to act toward [themselves] as toward any other object.” (Baugh, 1990, p. 86).
- The demonstration is of an intense and probing reflexivity on the part of each of these advocates that is not only a product of the interview and observation process, but is corroborated through the wider schemes of their activities.
- Advocate are attempting to develop and accomplish something that is outside of the common frame of reference for most people who consume media, or most people who run traditional learning organisations, or most people who participate in the encircling practices of social organisation management.
- It is understandable that they seem to do so without any prescribed or recognizable plan, any set of tested guidelines, outside formal political discourses and routines, or with reference to delineated social theories or models of human motivation.

- Advocates often give intensely personal responses to the circumstances, they are not planned or calculated, and they do not fit a standard set of categories of description or a standard form of operation.
- They are a demonstration of the creative process of thinking, the ambiguous process of definition, and the potentially fraught process of the pursuit of lines of action, as they seek to implement the common ground of values, emotions and beliefs.
- This demonstration takes place in relation to themselves (as selves), in relation to the interest groups that they form (as communities), and in relation to those that they interact with and negotiate with (as social objects).
- Community media advocates are people who are working solidly to grasp the variable and changing nature of the social environment that they are part of;
 - the variable and emerging world of media practices and forms of media representation that they encounter;
 - the shifting and changing sensitivities of the people that they seek to engage with, either from the communities themselves (i.e. the amateurs),
 - or from the organisations that are established and set in their routines of expert practice and administration (i.e. the professionals).
- These are people who are struggling to **intervene in meaningful ways** as mediators in the conceptual frameworks of lived community experience, emerging technical proficiency, and intransigent institutional social organisations.
- What they embody, therefore, are the “interdependent relationships between forms of communication, and the incorporation of media, presentations, and people in a world of moving events that imparts an evolving character to each of them” (Blumer quoted in Baugh, 1990, pp. 83-84).

6 Models of Engagement

- Each of the advocates is well informed about the different potential models of community engagement that were available to them, however, this awareness might be mainly gained from personal experience, or from attending short courses or development sessions offered within the associated community media sector.
- This commonly involved talking with other community media advocates, and maintaining a presence within community media networks.

- These forms of engagement took the arrangement of a *location* in which people who were affected by specific issues could come together.
- The challenge facing advocates is to articulate an appropriate model of communication and strategic development that can be enacted within the social situations that they work within, while also fitting within the pattern and principles of community engagement and participation that they advocate.
- Community media leaders recognise the need to motivate and manage the expectations of volunteers, partners and collaborators, thus facilitating their ability to participate in the different community media groups on their own terms, rather than by importing an external, artificial or prescriptive framework of involvement and imposing it on them.
- Advocates seek to generate a community of self-interest based on mutual understanding, interaction and collaboration that draw its principles from peer-to-peer learning, assisting those from marginalised communities to find their voice, and to recognise the potential social benefits of using media to represent aspects of community life, both to itself, and to other associated communities.
- We should shift our attention from thinking what it is that participation does, to how different people define, respond, process and negotiate different stances, dispositions, feelings and attention schemes to their sense of engagement and participation (i.e. as they are played out in the form of roles).
- Future studies should ask, therefore, how do we understand or feel about our participation in specific settings, keeping in mind that these are relative (i.e. they are relationally defined) accomplishments?

7 References

- Baugh, K. (1990). *The Methodology of Herbert Blumer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- West, C. (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.