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HABITUS

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Dear readers,

You hold before you the second volume of HABITUS, Yale’s undergraduate social science journal with a primary focus on sociology. This issue’s theme is Movement(s) and we could not have selected it at a more appropriate time. Societies around the world are currently erupting, some with anger and some with hope, but all have shown a desire for change, to move forward, to improve, and to progress. From Occupy Wall Street to the Arab Spring to the Tea Party, people are waking up, looking up from their individual pursuits to become more socially aware, and realizing that we as people are connected at the hip. Every movement we make moves you and every movement you make moves us.

Although the flurry of movements is incredibly exciting for us on a personal level, in actuality, these social changes are all part of a larger course of human history. No one can give a definitive answer of where these movements will ultimately end up, but that will not stop us from pursuing the knowledge to hazard a guess and to blaze our own path of history.

But in order to do so as social scientists, we must question and find meaning in these actions, not take them for granted. We ask you to think about how and why these movements have happened. How did people become inspired to make meaningful change and to accept the challenge of a social but also deeply personal mission? What are the roles of institutions, experts, intellectuals, and the individual on the epic scale of society? Is it possible for us to develop theories about social change that could help us explain the past and make future predictions?

Our namesake, HABITUS, comes from the theory developed by
the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to help understand the limits of human action. He claims that in considering our present decisions, we are forever influenced by our past developments, but he does give us a chance for transcendence. Through knowledge, we can become conscious and aware, capable of overcoming our past to become completely free movers.

With this second volume of HABITUS, we invite you to take the next step in your journey for knowledge.

—HABITUS Editorial Board

Questions? Comments? Concerns?
Contact us at yalehabitus@gmail.com
Flipping open your laptop, you type in fac and let your computer fill in the rest of your most frequently visited web address. Pictures from last Friday night pop up on your feed and you scramble to untag yourself. But it’s okay; your private setting is protecting you, so your grandma or future employers won’t have access to these. Facebook is the shining new symbol of America, giving users free and equal access to information while protecting them through private settings... right? In the age of mass information, Miranda Peeples (CC ’14) traces an emerging privatization and fragmentation by privately own sites such as Facebook in the public sphere of the internet that is reminiscent of the privatization of public physical space such as shopping malls. What are the implications of this movement? Is this public space really free and equal as it seems? Written in AMST 002: American Consumer Culture in the Twentieth Century.

Imagine a world, an idealized version of this reality. One where individuals are empowered to recreate themselves, create multiple selves, escape the roles and rituals they perform in the actual world, and transcend superficiality to forge profound relationships. Imagine a reality where citizens can edit the image they project to society, materialize, publicize, and enhance their actual world relationships, and take the word “friend” to a new dimension. Imagine a space where both of these worlds, these idealized realities, can exist, simultaneously, among countless others. Imagine the internet.

But this vision of mass access to creative liberty grows increas-
ingly elusive as the materialism of the actual world infiltrates the online world, blurring the boundary between producers and consumers, obscuring the distinction between work and play, complicating the relationships among privatization, privacy, and public space, and posing serious questions about online rights and sovereignty. In her exploration of consumer culture in postwar America, Lizabeth Cohen, author of, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, examines the privatization of public space, a movement which posed “ominous implications for the preservation of democratic freedom” by limiting citizens’ right to freedom of speech in pseudo-public areas (277). Yet while Cohen cites suburban shopping centers as an example of the privatization of public space, it is also possible to apply the concept to the internet.

In the same way that the vision of “equality through mass abundance” in the Consumers’ Republic post-World War II conceded to a reality of unequal consumerization, the public domain of the internet has begun to surrender to privatization, fragmenting into a variety of privately owned social networking sites, such as Second Life and Facebook. Ostensibly, these social networking sites succeed where the ideals of the Consumers’ Republic failed; internet users creating Facebook accounts are assured that “it’s free and always will be,” are granted full and equal access to the networking site, and have equal opportunity to personalize their pages, stretching the word “consumerization” beyond the material and into cyberspace.

Yet despite these achievements in equalizing the internet experience, the disparity between vision and reality persists. In participating in these privatized public networking sites, Facebook and Second Life users actually surrender some of their democratic rights. On these privately owned social networking sites, users are restricted in what they can publicly display, how they can display it, who they can interact with, and how they can connect with others. Furthermore, although
users are allegedly granted control over the information they render public, the administrators of these social networking sites maintain the right to modify default privacy settings, sometimes without the consumer’s knowledge or consent. In this way, the individual’s right to freedom of speech and right to privacy are jeopardized by participation in these privatized public networks.

Although the idealistic vision of the Consumer Republic has remained relatively static since the “first-wave consumer movement” of the Progressive Era (13), the dynamic process of Consumerization in the Republic has come to transcend material boundaries and probe into cyberspace, where the Cohen’s idea of “equality through mass abundance” has morphed into a vision of “equality through mass access.” However, even this vision of equality crumbles in the face of a reality where privately owned social networking sites fragment public internet space and encroach on the rights of individuals. The disparity between vision and reality that emerged in postwar America widens as the process of consumerization moves to shape American lives online.

This extension of commercial culture into the virtual sphere has corrupted the vision of the internet, fragmenting a space designed for the free exchange of ideas into a collection of privately owned online communities. In this new culture of “virtual materiality,” individual rights to free speech and privacy are threatened by the privatization of public space, and corporate owners of online communities enjoy unrestricted access to user’s personal information as well as total control over how members present themselves, interact with others, and relate to their society. Free space has been fractured, the internet has been colonized, and its vision of “equality through mass access” has been exploited and packaged by private corporations.
How do you choose a topic or a field of study? Too often we forget that to truly present a worthy subject requires much more than just expressing some knowledge – it also requires sharing the personal emotion behind the journey. Leland Whitehouse (SM ‘14, Anthropology) takes us on a drive through Cleveland and its surrounding neighborhoods, providing social commentary along the way about his personal relationship with a great city down on its luck. His powerful personal essay reminds us that social science ought to draw its inspiration not just from objective study of the social world, but also from our personal connections with it. Written in ENGL 120: Reading and Writing the Modern Essay.

I was born in an underdog city. Cleveland has spent the last fifty years watching its steel mills empty, rust then crumble, smelling its Cuyahoga River dump the refuse of a gutted downtown into Lake Erie and listening as the rest of the country reminds us that we’ve got problems. We read about our hometown in textbooks under the headings “urban sprawl” and “white flight”. Forbes tells us we have the worst weather in America¹. The Browns lose to the Pittsburg Steelers systematically and resolutely (9 - 41 last January). The Cuyahoga caught fire in 1969, and might as well have lit up again every year since for all the infamy it’s held on to. Our schools are bad and our crime rate is high

and everybody knows it and so do we.

I grew up among the wealthy and white. The overdogs. I could tie a bow-tie before I could ride a bike. University School, “where every boy is known and loved,” just built a multi-million dollar science wing. The indoor track has a view of the 220-acre campus, which contains a woodland lake, running trails and a trout hatchery. I learned how to swim at the Hunting Valley Country Club, five minutes away, where they lend you a blazer for dinner if you’ve forgotten to bring one yourself. My childhood best friend, Cooper, had a horse stable.

It’s a fifteen-minute drive West from the pruned maple trees of Hunting Valley downtown to the skeletal memory of industry. The ten-mile stretch of road connecting them was an economic artery for decades – the million-dollar homes in Cleveland’s outer-ring suburbs, among them Gates Mills and Hunting Valley, were built by fortunes amassed in the once throbbing city center. Now that the factories have shut down, no longer pumping smoke into the air over Lake Erie or jobs into the Rust Belt, the two-way flow of traffic and money has all but stopped.

For the first seven minutes, it’s Fairmount Boulevard; BMW SUVs and heirloom apple trees all the way. These are the homes of the truly and traditionally rich. They are the inheritors of an east-coast gentry fantasy, their cultural roots traceable back to 18th-century Connecticut settlers who carved their woodland kingdoms out of the wilderness of the Western Reserve. They are dignified sportsmen with an eye for the tasteful. Fathers own custom-built shotguns and world-class binoculars. Mothers dabble in jewelry-making and philanthropy. The kids have fly fished in Patagonia. There’s a leather-bound set of Dickens books in the den. Everybody loves Dickens. Nobody goes downtown unless the orchestra is playing.

The suburbs fade quickly. Halfway to the city limit, in Cleveland Heights, boutiques begin to interrupt the rhythmic blocks Tudor
houses. Then homes and yards are replaced altogether by the institutional architecture of Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Cleveland Clinic.

Once you pass the clinic, it’s a hundred blocks of “used to be” on Chester Avenue. Used to be a printing house, used to be a sewing factory, used to be a jazz club back when Count Basie came once a month. Used to be high-end housing for the Kings of Steel. The avenues of the east-side of downtown Cleveland – Carnegie, Euclid, Chester, Superior, Prospect -- have names that ring of abandoned optimism, like WPA murals left to crack and flake. The glass is mostly broken, and the sidewalks are full of weeds. There are no bus stops, no cop cars, no bars, though it looks like there once were. The streets are wide and open, built for heavy traffic but no longer travelled by it. Nobody lives here.

It ought to be lonely on Chester Avenue. A photo of it, hung on an art gallery wall in unfamiliar lighting, might make a convincing portrait of abandonment. But I’ve driven through this scene too many times in good company for it to provoke anything but warm nostalgia in me – Saturday afternoon en route to a baseball game, glove in lap, or Friday night heading to a concert with a girl in the front seat. These buildings haven’t changed in fifteen years. They haven’t filled up and haven’t fallen down; old weather-worn fixtures of my childhood that have watched me come and go as they watched generations of Cleveland families do the same.

The drive along Fairmount is similar in its friendly familiarity. The whole street is dotted with cozy memories. I played cards on those living room floors, chubby legs crossed on Oriental rugs. For years, I lit bonfires in the woods out back and did my homework on the antique dining room tables. In high school I drank beer on the patios when parents were in Brouges for New Years. I am at home on Fairmount, cared for and well protected in my Oxford cloth shirt and khaki pants.
Fond recollection only goes so far, though. For years, I was moving to the Rocky Mountains and that was that. Cleveland was a place to leave. It would always be home, but home promised to be a shrinking landmark in the rear-view as I headed westward and upward and out. It’s easy to catch yourself muttering this place sucks on chilly November days as the clouds roll in to dump their half-frozen load on city blocks mostly the color of coal or rust. Chicago has a lakeshore that looks like a postcard and Pittsburg won the Super Bowl a couple of years ago. Even Detroit’s got the residue of Motown humming in its girders. Cleveland doesn’t always feel like an easy place to defend, even internally. And so, often, it goes undefended. We take our portion and eat it cold, resigned to our inferiority.

It has taken a few hundred miles and a few dozen New York You’re from where?! smirks to show me the error in all of that. I’m away for college now, and from a distance I’ve found that Cleveland feels like family. I boil at my big-city ivy-league buddies’ smug attempts to console me for coming from a city with such a lack of sex appeal. Some poor staff writer for the Yale Daily News wrote an article about how miserable it must be to watch sports in Cleveland, and I tore into him for 1,200 words in a venomous letter to the editor. Maybe he wasn’t totally off the mark (it’s rough watching your boys get it handed to them up and down the field year after year), but Cleveland is home and home is something to be defended.

In truth, my home is nowhere on the route from the woods to downtown. I have always been a generously included outsider among the powerful and wealthy. I swam in the country club pools but never had the membership; sat courtside at the Cavs games but never paid for the tickets. And for much of my life I was at most an observer of Chester, forever passing through without an inclination or excuse to wander its battered pavement. The distance has given my heart a chance to make sense of its fondness.
I couldn’t have helped developing a tender appreciation for the ruddy-faced polo-shirted families who helped raise me. The rest of Cleveland took a little initiative to fall for. I only came to love my hometown by driving the side streets and staying long enough to breathe the air in all the way. Now, I’ve been in the blues clubs and the Polish bars and sculpture studios. The coffee tastes just as good as it does in Manhattan and it never costs four dollars a cup. It doesn’t take long to pick up on the fact that Cleveland is a tragically well-kept secret that’s just in need of a leg up and a little cash. The whole place is vibrating with energy and gritty creativity; all that’s missing is some capital and an audience.

It’s a shame that I never had any luck prying my country clubbing buddies away from the pool and dragging them into the city. Their allegiances to Cleveland end where the maple trees end, and their adventures end there too. In truth, though, it’s really more theirs than mine. My people are from rural Arkansas and Ohio; their people have city parks and neighborhoods named after them. All that’s needed to fix Cleveland’s financial anemia is for the grandsons of its titans to start feeding the city that fed their trust funds.

It only takes is a couple of memorable evenings – Cleveland-brewed beer at a bar with a view of the river, a conversation with an artist at the opening for her series of reworked warehouse-iron sculptures. You’ve just got to get out of the car long enough to let the smell stick in your coat. From then on, there’s no spitting the hook. Once you’ve seen that your hometown looks like a metropolis in limbo, waiting on a paycheck, pride meets guilt and produces responsibility. It’s ours, and we owe it.
Not June 4th and Not July 4th: A Ritual of Its Own (Notes from a sociologist-qua-summer activist)

Amy Tsang

The sight of picket signs everywhere, banners stretched across rows of people like shields and the sea of people, moving down the streets like an unstoppable current. But there was something different about this movement— the way that it had different undercurrents but embraced all of them as one. In Hong Kong, Amy Tsang (CC ‘12, Sociology) sought to understand a protest this summer through the lens of a sociologist. In a series of photos, Tsang explores what the gathering meant for the individual participants but also the larger contemporary culture of Hong Kong.

For a total of 6 hours outdoors, I marched and stalled, chanted and sweated with social workers and sociologists, slumdwellers and socialists in the brutal Hong Kong humidity. The sweaty but steely bodies around me brandished placards and chanted in megaphones. Slogans called for the abolishment of tenement slums, reinstatement of certain electoral rights, and even for Chief Executive Donald Tsang to step down.

Those around me championed causes from democratic political reform to housing reform to gay rights. Our large human mass penned in between police-installed railings, would periodically grind to a halt as police tightly controlled the flow of traffic, prompting members of
the mass to shout and bang drums. We were all dehydrated. But few spirits were dimmed.

It was July 1st of this past summer, and I found myself among the upwards of 100,000 bodies marching along the 3.5 kilometers, roughly two and a quarter miles, that lie between Victoria Park and Hong Kong’s Central Government Offices. An annual event that clogs walkways and halts traffic, I was nevertheless witnessing its largest turnout since 2004.

I was there as a full-fledged participant during my internship at a small and outspoken NGO in Hong Kong called Society for Community Organization (SoCO). But the sociologist in me couldn’t help playing observer as well, wondering how exactly one might explain this peculiar event, its uniqueness, and its meaning.

This exodus I was witnessing has occurred yearly since July 1st, 1997,
We assembled in the park around 3pm.

The Police - “We’re watching you watching us.”
Yes, there was the directly political…

Signs read: “If we don’t come out and stand up today… Tomorrow we won’t be able to come out and stand up.”
An elderly resident of a Sam Shui Po slum demands housing reform.

...But also the local and the heartfeltly personal.
A gay pride exhibit

a date that saw Hong Kong’s transfer from British colonial sovereignty to rule under the Chinese Communist Party of the People’s Republic of China. Those in the Mainland call this Hong Kong’s “Return” (回归) to China. But in contrast and in contest, Hong Kongers call it the “Handover.” It is the Handover that inspired the first protest rally on July 1st and that is commemorated on by every march that has since occurred on that same summer date.

The original July 1st march of 1997 clearly critiqued Chinese rule, venting the anxieties of a populace living in an exceptional place (enjoying what they called a highly developed “free market” and “free society” under the British) and believing themselves to hold exceptional identities. They feared that they would lose civil liberties, prosperity, and Cantonese culture when taken over by the less developed and authoritarian mainland China, simultaneously a backward barbaric neighbor and a menacing Big Brother. So they took to the streets. And they did this year too.

This description may perk up ears in 2011. But no, July 1st is not an Arab Spring. The crowd on July 1st is a politically rights conscious populace, one that treasures human rights and rule of law, exercising the civil liberties they do enjoy to call for the maintenance and expansion of them. They express dissatisfaction with present conditions and demand changes. It is collectively critical of the establishment, but at the same time it is not revolutionary. It is different.

For one, the march happens every year, and so it is more an anniversary than a climactic revolution. One might immediately compare it to another famous anniversary ceremony: the commemoration of June 4th, 1989, the date of what those inside Mainland China call the Tiananmen Incident and what those in it call the Tiananmen Massacre. Every June 4th, masses of Hong Kongers fill Victoria Park to the brim for a candlelight vigil to mourn the date and speeches are given lambasting the Chinese Communist Party. It is the only place on Chinese soil where this can happen legally.

But July 1st is not simply another redux of July 4th a few weeks later. True, July 1st, like June 4th is critical. And while not as strongly so, it too
is controversial. It is legal, but no one whose career ambitions involve the Mainland would go and many people would not want to be photographed attending. But a main reason I think July 1st is something different, is not only is that it’s not quite revolutionary, but rather: it is really not just about the Mainland and the Communists; it is really very much about Hong Kong.

Of course, in some way, everything is about China. Hong Kong is now part of China and those who govern Hong Kong at the top are picked by Chinese leaders; their legitimacy is intertwined. But at least this summer, a lot that’s been written on signs and chanted in chants haven’t been phrased in terms of China. So much that’s said have been about grievances and concerns that have been locally grounded- from discontent over housing to specific complaints about a wildly unpopular electoral law for local LegCo representatives- or about human rights values that are broadly universal- from animal rights to gay rights to the environment.

Thus I would say the voices chanted on July 1st are not a monotone about the Handover or a mourning of anything like June 4th. Rather, July 1st is a hodgepodge chorus of voices. Quite literally. While on June 4th, a handful speakers are chosen to orate from stage with a coherent message, on July 1st, any civic-minded citizen, political party, or civic group joins the flowing masses and chants and hands out tracts about whatever it wants. That content of the conversation is not just the Handover or China but somewhat more broadly, what the Handover makes Hong Kongers think about.

Which is several things. They think about what they see wrong with China and their anxieties about what they don’t want to be imposed. They think about what uniqueness and rights and freedoms and quirks they wouldn’t want to lose. But thinking about the date on which the status of Hong Kong as a territory changed also frankly seems to make them think about themselves. By casting an Other, they think of what their ideal Self looks like. What do we value? What do we believe our society should be? Hong Kongers reaffirm their sense of unique identity and appreciation of their civic culture that treasures rights and calls for social justice and thus
We’d marched all day well past nightfall. It was around 9pm when we planted our signs at our final destination.
they decry problems big but also small. Hong Kongers continue to face an ambiguous identity and uncertain future. Yet every July 1st they pour out onto the streets to stand up and voice what they don’t and do desire and ultimately who they are.

In some ways, I could not help but compare the event to another famous summer date—July 4th for Americans. Firstly, it was oddly the first thing that came to mind when my fellow marchers asked me if Americans did anything comparable. I know the comparison seems odd and too comical at first. Picture Americans celebrating July 4th by chanting about everything flawed in America and chanting the reforms we demand with a gay pride parade thrown in. It’s unimaginable because I think we Americans tend to view the idea of politics as dirty and protest with suspect. But on July 1st in Hong Kong, along with the tone of righteous indignation of chants there is a sense of bubbling pride, of patriotism; there was an air of jubilance, solidarity, and self-satisfaction as we marched down the avenue that at times feels like a parade, a celebration. If not a celebration, at least a ritual. July 1st marchers are not celebrating their society’s values through speeches or empty clichés fireworks but celebrating democratic values by exercising those very rights. What could be a more civic-minded ritual than that?

In this way, July 1st is both movement and ritual, challenge and celebration. To compare Hong Kong’s July 1st to July 4th in addition June 4th is not to diminish it, but rather serves to highlight a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what a unique kind of movement this annual mass movement of sweaty people is. Neither revolutionary nor static, it is a dynamic ritual of its own.
Over the past few decades, the traditional Eastern practice of yoga has exploded in the West, but how did it grow from a strange and exotic custom into a popular movement sweeping the globe? Moreover, what makes yoga appeal to people as more than just exercise and stretching? In her enlightening essay, Cristina Poindexter (TD ‘13, Sociology) explores the social reception of yoga and how alternative medicinal practices become standardized in the West. By focusing on the growing movement of yoga, she explains the role of institutions in transforming yoga from a quack medicine to an accepted method for improving health and reveals the incredible power of experts influencing our lives. Written in AMST 247: Media and Medicine in Modern America.

In 1893, a man named Swami Vivekananda gave a speech at the Parliament of the World’s Religions at the Chicago World’s Fair that marked a pivotal point in yoga’s westernization. This speech marked the time when yoga began its shift from a set of practices grounded in philosophy designed to facilitate spiritual enlightenment, towards a distinctively Western form of the practice permeating contemporary popular culture, that promotes the two modern values of health and freedom (plus that million dollar stretchy yoga pant industry) (Strauss). Since Vivekenanda’s speech, many have taken yoga into new territory, where
its physical health benefits are isolated from the rest of the practice, a fact that ever aggravates the yoga community. Nevertheless, while yoga in America has been unique, it has always been viewed as an Eastern practice, set apart from Western medicine.

Is yoga a quack medicine? Whether the practice has benefits or not, “quack” is simply a label given to denounce, a term we will consider here to mean useless, representing those untested health practices that are unconventional, even deviant, with no real health benefits (often dispersed by greedy businessmen or untrained people claiming a legitimate medical background). The very uncertainty surrounding health and disease has led to the creation of established medicine and the popularization of science in order to better distinguish medical practices that work from those that don’t.

In recent years, attempts have been made by yoga practitioners and health officials to bring yoga into the medical mainstream – an effort that has split both the yoga and medical communities within the United States. In this essay, I will demonstrate that the roots of the division in both communities are a result of long-existing efforts to standardize the yoga practice – efforts that will continue into the future. These efforts in standardization have divided the yoga community because purists believe standardization westernizes yoga, stripping it of its most powerful spiritual, philosophical and meditative aspects. These aspects, they argue, are the very reason why yoga has flourished in the West: America is missing this kind of spirituality. The same standardization effort has divided the medical profession as its critics believe yoga’s nature cannot be medicalized and thus, it cannot be legitimized by scientific medical standards.

Yoga is not the first Eastern health practice introduced to the West: practices such as acupuncture or chiropractic, once seen as “quack” themselves, have been re-termed “complementary and alternative medicines” (“CAM”) and have been integrated into the Ameri-
can medical establishment. Some even receive insurance coverage (Winnick). As an Eastern practice, yoga is following in the footsteps of those Eastern traditions which came before it. In order for any medical benefits to be recognized, yoga and other Eastern practices must be subjected to Western scientific scrutiny and standardization, or medical critics will not trust the practice and potentially denounce it as a “quack”. Highly dependent upon the media as a source of medical information, the public will rely on such medical critics and distrust the practice’s potential benefits. It is due to the desires of two groups that yoga is moving towards standardization. CAM practitioners, who believe in CAM’s legitimacy, as well as those outside the CAM community (government, general public and medical establishment) see yoga’s potential to revolutionize the health of the American public.

By comparing yoga’s Western history with that of other complementary and alternative medicines, we are able to circumvent debates of quackery to analyze current standardization efforts. In his study From Quackery to “Complementary” Medicine, Winnick analyses changes in amount of coverage of CAM in five prestigious medical journals: JAMA, The New England Journal of Medicine, The American Journal of Medicine, Annals of Internal Medicine, and Archives of Internal Medicine (Winnick 38). In doing so, three distinct phases emerged, corresponding to the history of medicine in America and the profession’s response to the growth of CAM. These three stages, summarized as the “condemnation”, “reassessment”, and “integration” stages, explain the way CAM evolved from being viewed as “quack medicines” to “complements” and “alternatives”, and finally, actual integration into the medical establishment. By analyzing both amount and tone of coverage of CAM in medical journals, Winnick circumvents the most challenging obstacle in understanding the growth of an un-standardized health practice: there is often no data as to the practice’s growth because of its very un-standardized nature.

During the first, “condemnation” phase, Winnick found that cov-
verage of CAM in medical journals was very low, and those articles that did exist almost uniformly took a negative stance on CAM, distancing it from the legitimacy of contemporary medical practices by “expressing sharp disapproval of [CAM] therapies, exaggerating their risks, and making preposterous the idea of anyone using these treatments” (Winnick). This period coincided with the last of the golden years of doctoring, (1965 to the mid 1970s) a time when public opinion viewed medicine quite highly. Many were optimistic, and there did not seem to be a need for alternative health practices when American medicine seemed so promising and scientifically legitimate. Though Winnick did not include yoga as one of the CAMs analyzed in his study (ayurveda, yoga’s dietary counterpart, was), analyzing yoga’s history in America reveals the same trends in medical opinion as other complementary and alternative medicines. From Swami Vivekananda’s speech in 1893 through the 1920s, yogic practices were slowly brought to the West through individual teachers who had lived, studied, or spent extensive time in India. In 1924, a Swami named Kuvalayananda established the Kaivalyadham Yoga Ashram in Lonavala, India which conducted lab experiments to establish the efficacy and beneficial effects of a yoga practice. The first dedicated to scientific research, this ashram attracted researchers such as Yale’s K.T. Behanan, who conducted studies researching health benefits of yogic practices and first introduced yoga to the American medical establishment by publishing a book on his studies (Behanan 213-225). However, these “studies”, one in which he tested “mental change” resulting from breathing techniques practiced only on himself, as well as another in which he claimed yoga’s health benefits after inverting mice in test tubes, were not conducted with the most scientific scrutiny. Though Yoga: Its Scientific Basis introduced many in the medical establishment to the traditions of yoga, it did so more successfully in its philosophical discussions than its “scientific studies” (Bentley 196-197).

This marks an important split within the yoga community as yo-
gis in the West began to realize that yoga needed to evolve in order to apply well to a different culture with different values. In her book Positioning Yoga: Balancing Acts Across Cultures, Sarah Strauss gives three reasons for yoga’s growth in popularity in America: a shift towards Western values of health and freedom, continued interest in Orientalism, and Globalization. In attempting to scientifically research yoga’s health benefits, Behanan’s research marks a shift from the Eastern tradition, which values yoga primarily for its philosophy and spirituality towards Western traditions, which begin to value it more for its physical health benefits. In this sense, the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Ashram is an example of Winnick’s first phase. In conducting scientific research on what some saw as spirituality, Behanan was trying to appeal to the West. Only by enlisting allies within the established medical community would yoga gain legitimacy in the West. As we would expect (by looking at the history of Westernization of other CAM practices), this research was met with opposition, especially as it was not conducted according to Western medical standards. As one critic aptly notes in her review of Behanan’s work, “No details of procedure are given”, “the results presented are regrettably meager”, and they “are personal expressions unsupported by objective data” (Bentley 196). The Kaivalyadhama Yoga Ashram is important symbolically in the global yoga community’s attempt to appeal to a broader Western base, but was still met with strong doubts and not seen as a legitimate source of medical data (a claim with which I regrettably agree). This just marks the beginning of the split between yoga and medical communities.

During the health care crises from the mid 1970s through the early 1990s, coverage of CAM in medical journals rose sharply, except for a slight dip in the 1980’s corresponding to the explosion of the fitness movement. Winnick examines a significant change in the tone of these articles towards one of “introspection” within American medicine. In a sense, the prevalence of CAM itself identifies the medical establishment’s faults: just because an authority is said to
be the authority does not mean people will automatically hand over their trust. One researcher in favor of CAM for its possible cancer treatments observed, “The general view of the medical establishment is we’re losing the war on cancer and AIDS. The people who have survived unconventional treatment merit immediate attention [to learn the secret of their success]” (Young 279-298). The public was interested in these complementary and alternative medicines, especially as major scientific roadblocks stagnated American medical researchers. In fact, a study by Harvard researcher David Eisenberg (a member of the OAM) found that 1 out of 3 Americans in 1990 had used some kind of unconventional therapies and total visits to alternative therapists in 1993 actually outnumbered visits to primary care physicians 425 million to 388 million (Eisenberg 246-252). As a result, Winnick notes that “spokespersons for the profession examined relations with patients and shortcomings in treatment in an effort to understand the public’s attraction to [CAM]” (Winnick 47).

Yoga played a role in these trends. By the 1970s, multiple schools of yoga had been founded in the States, schools which began associating themselves to form a community of American yoga, standards included. These movements were independent of any state mandate and represent the efforts of those within the yoga community who saw areas for growth, expansion and improvement through association. A few notable examples of initial yoga associations in America were The American Yoga Association (founded in 1968) and the California Yoga Teachers Association (founded in 1973). This latter group established the first nationally recognized two year Yoga teacher training program, developed the first code of professional standards and turned their newsletter into Yoga Journal magazine in 1975 (Chapple 71-76). In 1982, Unity in Yoga held its first national yoga conference, and by 1997 a group called Ad Hoc Yoga Alliance was formed to create minimum standards for yoga teachers. In 1999, Ad Hoc Yoga Alliance merged with Unity in Yoga to form Yoga Alliance, which holds the
most widely recognized certification standards for yoga teacher training programs and yoga studios of all styles today (Macy). There may have been those “yoga purists” who opposed yoga’s standardization (which was the result of organization within the yoga community), but both yoga “purists” and “innovators” began to create their own establishments: organizing so as to withhold a certain level of standard within their community.

We have seen how yoga has paralleled the growth of CAM through a “condemnation” and a “reassessment” phase, growing into the third, “integration” stage from the 1990’s to current day. The third stage which led to CAM’s growing legitimization by the medical establishment is the “integration” stage, in which scientific research by or for the medical community tests benefits scientifically in order to familiarize a Western audience unfamiliar with CAM practices. Imperative to our understanding of the standardization of new health practices in the past two decades is the creation of the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM) in 1991, which later evolved into the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) as it reflects the growing trend within American society towards the use of CAM (Eisenberg 250). In 1991, the Senate Appropriations Committee, “not satisfied that the conventional medical community as symbolized at the NIH has fully explored the potential that exists in unconventional medical practices,” created the OAM first as an advisory panel that was to take into serious consideration the possibility of “CAM cures” by conducting scientific research of CAM itself (Young 279). This committee, and subsequent organization, was extremely controversial within the medical community. In fact, when the director of the NIH at the time, Bernadine Healy, resigned, “she had deemed the project to link qualified research scientists with true believers in therapies like homeopathy and magnets, in order to conduct experiments, as foreshadowing nothing but disaster. ‘We had no choice,’ she observed: the agency could not refuse a mandate from the Congress” (Young 281).
Another scientist ventured that the OAM would “resemble an Office of Astrology” (Young 281). The split between the medical community, in the words of a doctor conducting research on behalf of the OAM, was “like the Berlin Wall coming down”. However, despite controversy over the official association between medicine and Eastern practices once considered quack, the OAM and NCCAM nevertheless began researching, with positive results. These results would lead some within the medical community to begin integrating CAM practices, while others who doubted its effectiveness pushed for more research (and thus, even more standards).

CAM, yoga included, had finally found solid footing within the medical establishment, an “integration” which started off controversially but has continued strong since. From here on out, in Winnick’s study, content analyses of the articles themselves reveal an abandonment of efforts to upright outlaw CAM as they had previously and amount of CAM coverage in medical journals skyrocketed (Winnick 47). The medical establishment could no longer ignore CAM’s rising popularity and use amongst the general public it was also supposed to serve. Studies such as Brownstein’s and Dembert’s “Treatment of essential hypertension with yoga relaxation therapy in a USAF aviator” opened yoga to new fields in the 1990’s (Brownstein & Dembert). In this study, an aviator with a six year history of mild essential hypertension was trained in yoga and after six weeks, discontinued medication as his diastolic blood pressure remained within normal levels (Brownstein & Dembert 684).

Indeed, this takes us right up to the present day, as yoga is beginning to be used in American hospitals and other medical establishments in addition to standard treatments. In 2008, Donna Karan, a famous fashion designer who has been practicing yoga for 42 years, donated $850,000 towards a yearlong experiment combining Eastern and Western healing methods at Beth Israel Medical Center in NYC testing the controversial notion that yoga, meditation and aromathera-
py can enhance regiments of chemotherapy and radiation (Lloyd). Thus we see that popular interest and those willing to compromise in both communities led yoga to be incorporated into mainstream medicine.

Though yoga can be studied alongside other complementary and alternative medicines or Eastern health practices, it is important to note the nature of yoga which forms a central challenge to understanding its legitimacy. The goal of all yogis was not, and is not, necessarily to incorporate yoga into the mainstream of American medicine: the yoga community, national and global, has split over this issue. After all, many practice yoga for reasons not attributed with health or medicine at all, and value it expressly because of its independence from the establishment. These “purists”, as I shall term them, are a strong force against its standardization, if not organization, as they believe it is changing the nature of yoga from a practice rooted in philosophy, spirituality and meditation, available to all, into one diluted for a Western audience by concentrating solely on its physical effects. Within these “yoga purists” there is a split as well: between those who oppose any kind of standardization (who believe the democratic nature of yoga means it should be free to do as it wishes) and those who do not mind a level of standardization, as long as it does not change the fundamental nature (or specific style) of yoga.

Many states (e.g. Michigan and Virginia) now require teachers and/or studios to be licensed and pay a fee to the state in an attempt to begin regulating yoga and enforcing a certain level of standards in the training of future teachers (Sulzberger). In a similar attempt, the state of New York sent out letters in 2009 to select New York yoga studios accusing them of breaking the law because they were training future yoga instructors without a license. In a state where yoga studios had never before been required to even apply for a license, New York State was threatening $50,000 fines towards yoga studios that were not “licensed”, angering both camps of “yoga purists”. Those “yoga purists” who believe in the freedom and democracy of yoga do not organize
amongst themselves and thus, exist as a conglomeration of smaller studios – many of which are small enough that a $50,000 fine would shut them down completely. Even larger studios or associations that do not mind a level of standardization were upset because they feared regulation by the state would inevitably change the Eastern traditions of yoga (“The Issue”). In response, yoga teacher trainers across the state founded “Yoga for New York” in June of 2009 opposing licensing. Eventually, with the support of Senator Eric Scheiderman, they introduced a bill exempting yoga teacher training programs from licensing. The bill passed in both the assembly and the senate in early 2010 and New York is the first state to have opposed the trend of state licensing (“The Issue”). However, let us note the irony in this example. Now, in order to avoid state certification (and organization), New York “yoga purists” organized themselves from inside their very community for one of the first times. Even those who most fervently oppose yoga’s organization organized themselves – the first step towards any kind of standardization! As more controversial topics emerge, the yoga community divides itself neatly into its own internal organizations, making it easier and easier for the government to begin institutionalizing and standardizing the practice.

Science has made incredible advances and tremendous discoveries, enables people to cure horrible diseases and live longer lives. However, the ambiguous ways of the medical establishment are not always synonymous with our beliefs about what is best for our health. We can agree that they use a convincing tool called science in order to prove a track record of success, but at the end of the day, we are individuals free to do what we feel is best for our health. Personal experience matters regardless of what authorities tell us. Medical science as it exists today is a relatively recent phenomenon, especially when considering the human race has existed for thousands, if not millions, of years without it. As long as it produced results, Americans gave it their trust, but as medicine began to stagnate, the public switched their
attention to new options.

These alternative traditions, spread to the US through globalization, were met with varying opinions from within both their own community and throughout the medical establishment. The medical establishment split into two camps from the very beginning: one which worried that their own legitimacy would be tainted by association with such controversial practices and another camp hopeful that CAM held new possibilities for improvement of health in general. Despite opposition, Eastern practices, of which yoga is a shining example, were new, mysterious and unfamiliar to the Western audience. They were prime targets for labels of quackery, but due to this very curiosity, hope and growing dissatisfaction with established medicine, CAM continued to develop despite its opposition. By analyzing the history of yoga in the West and its parallels with the history of other complementary and alternative medicines, we see its dramatic rise in popularity in the United States. In turn, this popularity led to scientific research and government regulation by the very authorities that had denounced it as quack a century before. As long as the research begun at nationally recognized establishments such as the NCCAM continues to show positive results, yoga will continue its trend towards standardization in its continual search to find and settle into a distinct role in Western society.

References

Dayna Macy, email message to author, November 29, 2010


The Crusade of the Censor: Anthony Comstock and the Anti-Vice Movement

Jennifer Shelby

In a nation still rebuilding after the disruption caused by the Civil War and characterized by a shift from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, one man stands out as having led the charge against all “obscene materials.” Anthony Comstock (1844-1915) made it his life’s mission to purge the United States of emerging pornographic and other sexually explicit materials. Jenny Shelby (TC ’13, Sociology) analyzes Comstock’s professional social movement and his methods of frame alignment and collective identity in defense of Christian purity and as a challenge to free speech. How did the anti-vice movement begin and gain support, and what ramifications did it have on American life? Written in SOCY 216: Social Movements.

In post-Civil War America, when the nation was in the throes of momentous social upheaval and transition, one man dutifully mobilized the crusade to purge his beloved country of the obscenity and vice that he felt threatened its very foundation. Anthony Comstock, a zealous Christian made impassioned social activist, would spearhead the anti-vice movement in America in the 1870s. This social movement would wage one of the greatest censorship wars in American history, a war that would span forty years of Comstock’s life (Blanchard and Semonche 317) and forge enduring political impacts. Anthony Comstock and his followers would destroy “over 43 tons of vile books,
28,425 pounds of stereotype [printing] plates, two and a half million obscene pictures and 12,954 negatives” (Trumbull). The anti-vice movement would change the course of free speech legislation in the United States, providing for the Comstock Law and the austere stringency of censorship enforcement.

As with any social movement, it is necessary to understand the historical context that embraced and applauded Anthony Comstock and his anti-vice crusaders, a context that allowed for the triumph of his movement through the enactment of supportive legislation. The social, political, and religious climate in America of the 1870s allowed for the success of the anti-vice movement and its lead crusader, Anthony Comstock. This paper will discuss the relevant historical backdrop of the anti-vice movement as well as analyze the sociological aspects of networks, resource mobilization, framing, and identity as crucial components of Anthony Comstock’s crusade in the Victorian America anti-vice movement.

**Historical Basis**

The end of the Civil War in America signaled a new era in social structure. Northern industrialism was on the rise and soldiers, often unwilling to return to the constraints of hometown family supervision, were moving into the more densely populated cities for employment opportunities (Blanchard and Semonche 318). The cities of the North offered anonymity and an onslaught of culture: new ideas, new literature, new art, and much to the dismay of the Church, the availability of a social scene mixing alcohol and members of the opposite sex. Women were emerging from the private sphere and struggling for a voice in public, and the women’s suffrage movement was picking up steam following the passage of universal male suffrage in the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. Women were also beginning to publicly engage in open discussion of sexuality, birth control, and abortion. Advocacy
of greater sexual freedom was beginning to permeate women’s movements. Additionally, waves of European immigrants flooded the Northern cities, riling xenophobia and shaking the status quo. These newcomers were perceived not only to be “more vulnerable to the appeal of sexually explicit materials, they also were accused of being purveyors of such materials” (Blanchard and Semonche 318).

Sexually explicit material was a product of the city made possible by the burgeoning printing business. Print media was on the rise in the 1870s, and “cheap pulp paper and high-powered printing presses were creating a new mass readership among the young men and women flocking to the cities” (Weisberger). Progressive social movements flourished with the ability to widely disseminate information, and the expansion of print media bolstered movements for unionization, nationalism, and suffrage (Langman 43). As will be discussed later, Comstock and the anti-vice activists would come into conflict with these progressive social movements, conflict that would help shape the identity of the anti-vice movement. Social movement theory argues “technologies of communication have been integral moments of modern social mobilizations” (Langman 43). The anti-vice movement would also use print media to disperse its message and rally support. Not all print media carried a social message, however, and swells of cheap smut novels provided entertainment for the masses. New York City was particularly known for printing guidebooks to its brothels (Weisberger).

To the clergy and concerned members of the upper-middle class, the city was quickly becoming a breeding ground of sin and vice. As authors Della Porta and Diani discuss, “social problems do in fact exist only to the extent that certain phenomena are interpreted as such by people” (74). The perceived moral decay prompted religious reaction to preserve the city’s sanctity, and as author Donna Dennis writes, “In attempting to impose their moral values on wayward urban clerks and workingmen, the wealthy male leaders of the anti-vice societies were motivated by a nostalgic yearning for cohesiveness and order in a seem-
ingly anarchic, dangerously diverse world” (372).

This “nostalgic yearning” was arguably fostered by a sense of waning solidarity, and Dennis writes, “the campaign against obscenity reflected a desire to restore the homogeneous moral code that bound together the farm communities and small towns that successful urbanites had left behind” (371-372). In 1893, sociologist Emile Durkheim would theorize that laws within society were reflections of the “collective consciousness” of that society, “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of society,” (Durkheim 39). Under Durkheimian theory, America in the 1870s was in transition from mechanical solidarity, or solidarity by homogeneity of beliefs, into organic solidarity, or solidarity through differences, as manifested by the division of labor. According to Durkheim, a society bound by mechanical solidarity exerts punitive laws, or laws to punish anyone who deviates from the collective values expressed through the collective consciousness. The anti-vice movement would seek to punish anyone found to be in association with material or behavior deemed “obscene.” Obscenity was often determined by a deviation from Christian ideals of purity. As will be addressed later, the anti-vice movement was largely a religious movement, supported by Christian organizations. Durkheim argues “religious law is always repressive” (Durkheim 38) to ensure mechanical cohesiveness of the community, and “an act is criminal when it offends the strong, well-defined states of the collective consciousness” (Durkheim 39).

America’s collective consciousness of the 1870s fostered a pervasive longing to return to antebellum mechanical solidarity. The desire for order and structure begged to be fulfilled by a strict adherence to newly developed legislation, and indeed, the Reconstruction in the South was mediated by the passage of amendments to the Constitution. As authors Blanchard and Semonche write, “prior to the Civil War, reformers had relied on moral suasion to convince wrongdoers
to abandon their sinful ways. After the war, the crusade for voluntary personal reform was increasingly displaced by a reliance on legal reform” (323). In a time when the law was lord, religious zealots saw the potential for bringing the Lord into law.

The Emergence of a Leader

Those deeply concerned by the perversion of cities sought a figurehead to concentrate their spiritual anxiety into a political agenda. Anthony Comstock would emerge as their messiah. A devout Christian born in 1844 and raised in New Canaan, Connecticut (Blanchard and Semonche 319), Anthony Comstock would lead a social movement that would become the longest and most monumental moral crusade in American history.

Like many Union soldiers, Anthony Comstock returned to the North seeking employment after serving in the Union Army in St. Augustine, Florida, during the Civil War (Trumbull). Raised a faithful Christian in a small farming town, Comstock was appalled by what he perceived as vice and sinful obscenity running rampant in the city. Authors Blanchard and Semonche detail Anthony Comstock’s transformation from a concerned Christian to an anti-vice activist:

Increasingly outraged at the behavior of others in New York City, he began his life as an anti-vice crusader simply by demanding that the police force saloons to abide by Sunday closing laws. After some success in that battle, Comstock began the more substantial campaign against sin and degradation that would occupy him for the remainder of his life. Focusing on sexual debauchery, he targeted anyone who peddled sexually explicit materials. (320)

A biography of Anthony Comstock, written by C.G. Trumbull in 1913 and entitled “Anthony Comstock: Fighter,” glorifies Comstock’s
self-righteous fight against the obscene. Comstock, in his years of business experience as a store clerk in New York, “had come to know young business men, over and over again, whose lives were plainly being ruined by their interest in the obscene pictures and literature and other devilish things that they had easy access to” (51).

The anti-obscenity laws at the time were too lenient, in Comstock’s opinion, and according to biographer C.G. Trumbull, “the traffic in vile merchandise was brazenly open. There were no federal laws against it; there were only feeble state statutes concerning books and pictures, with nothing to do with other articles” (55). Over the course of the next four years, Comstock would personally raid newsstands and underground bookstores, acting “wholly by himself” (Trumbull 55) to confiscate any material he deemed “obscene.” His personal zeal and vigorous devotion would propel him to lead the movement to rid the country of all “obscene” material that could potentially damage Christian ideals.

**Mobilizing Existing Networks**

Reactionary bastions of religious morality demanded action to combat the threat of encroaching vice in the city, but Christian organizations lacked sufficient leadership to spearhead the crusade. Anthony Comstock realized that the obscenity problem he perceived was too great to conquer on his own. Overwhelmed by shouldering his battle against printed obscenity alone, Comstock appealed to the New York City Young Men’s Christian Association, the YMCA.

Comstock hoped to align himself with the powerful Christian organization, since leaders of the YMCA had “lamented the ready availability of sexually explicit literature on the streets of New York” (Blanchard and Semonche 323). The YMCA was already a special interest group, predisposed to provide wholesome, religious socializa-
tion to young Christian men. As authors Della Porta and Diani write, “social networks often create opportunities for transforming predispositions into action” (119). Comstock would mobilize the network of the YMCA into his anti-vice army. In 1872, Comstock wrote a letter expressing his desire to lead a crusade against the obscene, and impressed YMCA leaders sought him out and offered Comstock a position as an agent of the YMCA to seek and attack all forms of vice in New York City, at a salary of $3,000 a year (Blanchard and Semonche 323). In March 1872, the YMCA created a separate organization for Comstock to lead, the Committee for the Suppression of Vice (Blanchard and Semonche 323), a committee composed of leaders and members of the YMCA. Comstock redirected the existing network of the YMCA to fight in the anti-vice movement. Comstock was appointed the position of Committee secretary—though he remained the effective leader—since the post of secretary would allow him to serve without term limit. He would hold this position until his death in 1915 (Boyer 2).

The Committee for the Suppression of Vice was renamed the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (the NYSSV) in June of 1873 (Blanchard and Semonche 323). The anti-vice campaign was not a grassroots movement, and the NYSSV was in fact just one professional movement organization in the larger anti-vice movement of Victorian era America. Comstock’s New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was the most prominent anti-vice society with the most prolific legacy, but the NYSSV was just one of dozens of similar professional social movement organizations in the Northeast. “Social Movements” authors Della Porta and Diani define the characteristics of a professional social movement organization:

1. A leadership that devotes full time to the movement, with a large proportion of resources originating outside the aggrieved group that the movement claims to represent; (2) a very small or non-existent membership base or a paper membership (membership that implies little more than al-
allowing a name to be used upon membership roles); (3) attempts to impart the image of ‘speaking for a constituency,’ and (4) attempts to influence policy toward that same constituency (145)

The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was not a product of the lower or middle classes, but rather “the NYSSV was a powerful moral reform organization because it mobilized privileged people, many of them wealthy and highly respected, into a campaign to ensure the reproduction of the families and the social world of the upper and middle classes” (Beisel 49). Comstock mobilized his fleet of moral crusaders from participants in the existing YMCA network, simultaneously mobilizing financial backing from the wealthy supporters of the YMCA. In the book “Imperiled Innocents: Anthony Comstock & Family Reproduction in Victorian America,” author Nicola Beisel compiles data to demonstrate that over 80 percent of the men who donated to the NYSSV were considered “high white collar” (51) professionals, and approximately thirty percent of the Society’s financial supporters were millionaires (51). J.P. Morgan and copper tycoon William E. Dodge ranked among the Society’s financial backers (Boyer 6). The booming capitalism of Northern industry had made millionaires, and now these men could invest their earnings into a movement to repress what was seen as the vile vices of the lower classes.

Framing the Fight

Comstock, even while so thoroughly convinced of the righteousness of his crusade, took careful effort to frame his battle in the most positive terms to attract the most supporters. Leadership in religious movements, according to Della Porta and Diani, is dependent upon the leader’s ability to “manipulate ideological resources and to embody the movement as a whole” (142). As the figurehead of the anti-vice
movement, Comstock was endowed with the leadership authority and visibility to promote his own framing of the movement. A frame is a schema of interpretation that identifies the positions of a social movement and serves to mobilize followers. Authors Della Porta and Diani assert that a successful social movement frame must not only resonate with its targeted audience, “but which the broader culture in which a movement develops” (81). “Frame alignment” takes place when a movement converges its interpretive schema of reality with the population they intend to mobilize (87). Frame building allows an organization to relate its goals to more general sentiments, and “collective action thus becomes possible at the point at which mobilizing messages are integrated with some cultural component from the population to which they are addressed” (82).

In Comstock’s own words, printed in the North American Review in 1891, his fight was for the children:

Upwards of twenty millions of youth and children are in a plastic or receptive state open to every insidious teacher, and subject to every bad influence—a period of life when character is forming and is most easily moulded […] This nation’s highest interests today centre in these millions of youth and children (162)

Comstock’s framing message for his movement was a message of protection and preservation, a message with wide appeal to Americans desperate to maintain the stability of the status quo after a tumultuous civil war.

The Society would disseminate its message in pamphlets, printed using the same technology that was in question for producing obscene materials. One pamphlet, printed and distributed by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice in 1901, appealed to a deeper level of patriotic sympathy to arouse support. Entitled “An Appeal On Behalf of 33,842,769 Children and Youth Institutions of Learning in the
United States,” this pamphlet capitalized on the recent assassination of President William McKinley. The Society offered their services as a continuation of McKinley’s noble devotion to children, noting that he was a man of God. The Society sought donations in McKinley’s honor, specifically aiming to raise “at least Three Hundred Thousand Dollars, to be used in the future defence of the Moral Purity of the 33,842,769 children … to be known as The William McKinley Fund” (7). To donate to the Society was to honor the late President. To donate to the Society was to be American. Yet above all, the Society appealed to their religious duty in keeping children pure: “Our plea is for the young; for the future welfare of our beloved society; for the uplifting of society; the upbuilding of the Church, and the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth” (“An Appeal” 48).

**Collective Identity**

The members of the NYSSV and its supporters were all linked in their common identity: they were Christian, they were American, they were concerned for children, and they were appalled by the perceived rampant obscenity in American cities. Authors Della Porta and Diani assert that a collective identity is crucial to the distinction of a social movement, as a collective identity binds its participants and “is strongly associated with recognition and the creation of connectedness,” as well as “brings with it a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause” (21).

Though Comstock’s primary adversaries were the printers and distributors of obscene material, the NYSSV’s actions came into direct conflict with the progressive social movements of the time. According to sociologist Ron Eyerman, a social movement defines itself by defining its opposition, meaning that “collective identity and solidarity must be forged, a process which necessarily involves marking off those inside from those outside, the Other against which the movement...
moves” (194). The anti-vice movement would define itself as the morally righteous “us” versus the impure and unholy “them.” The anti-vice movement would combat the liberal social movements of the time, especially the seemingly “obscene” movement for birth control and abortion rights, which collectively fell under the scope of the Victorian age women’s movement. It was criminal at the time to disseminate information about contraception and abortion, and feminist scholars would later argue that “obscenity regulation thus reflected men’s desire to punish ‘new women’ for asserting sexual and reproductive freedom and to reinforce traditional gender roles by forcing them into unwanted pregnancies” (Dennis 372). The anti-vice movement was largely fighting to uphold decaying Christian ideals, and the preservation of the nuclear family was central to this battle. By identifying its opponents, the anti-vice movement could solidify its identity as protector of Christian morality.

The National Arena

Anthony Comstock gained national attention in 1872 when he targeted Victoria Woodhull, a prominent women’s rights activist and the first female candidate for President, running on the Equal Rights Ticket in 1872 (Blanchard and Semonche 325). Comstock had Victoria Woodhull and her sister Tennessee Claflin arrested for publishing a newspaper article, deemed obscene, about a well-known Protestant clergyman’s affair with a socialite (Blanchard and Semonche 326). Though the sisters escaped charges, Victoria Woodhull’s public speaking career was ruined and she moved to England with her sister.

The acquittal of the Woodhull sisters incensed Comstock and the YMCA, and Comstock turned his attention to modifying existing obscenity legislation. On May 16, 1873, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was incorporated by the Legislature of New York (Bennett 1014), largely because the society counted the mayor of New
York City and several prominent politicians in its ranks of supporters (Boyer). This political binding granted the society legal responsibility for “the enforcement of laws for the suppression of the trade in, and circulation of obscene literature and illustrations, advertisements, and articles of indecent or immoral use” (Blanchard and Semonche 326). The NYSSV, like similar societies at the end of the nineteenth century, became a vigilante organization empowered by legal sanctions to protect and preserve their moral code through citizen’s arrests and espionage.

With swelling power to enforce the law, Comstock sought stricter legislation. He was outraged by his inability to arrest obscene vendors for their tendency to distribute materials through the mail, since there was no legal basis for action. In early 1873, the NYSSV, led by Comstock, staged an attack on the United States Postal Service, petitioning directly the U.S. Congress. Comstock, “armed with loads of sexually-explicit materials” (Blanchard and Semonche 326), appealed to Congress to pass more stringent legislation. Given the historical climate previously discussed in this essay, as well as the financial power of Comstock’s backers, Congress heeded his request with little debate and, on March 3, 1873, Congress enacted a monumental censorship law (Comstock “Third Annual Report” 10). The resulting legislation, titled “An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use” (Blanchard and Semonche 327) would popularly become known as the Comstock Act. The Comstock Act made it a penal offence to mail any “obscene, lewd, or lascivious book, pamphlet, picture, paper, print or anything other publication of an indecent character” (Comstock “Third Annual Report” 11). As part of the appropriations for the Act, a special agent position in the postal service was created to confiscate obscene materials, and the Postmaster General appointed Comstock, without question, as this agent (Blanchard and Semonche 327). The social movement, and the social movement’s key leader, had made its way into the United
States federal government.

The Movement’s Magnitude and Success

According to the Third Annual Report of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, published in 1877, the Society had arrested a total of 244 people in the first three years of operation, 122 of whom were sentenced for their trade in lewd materials (17). Additionally, in just those three years, the society had destroyed 21,141 pounds of books, 209,533 pictures, 14,400 stereotype plates for printing books, along with tens of thousands of other letters, playing cards, newspapers, abortionist supplies, and print material. The society also confiscated 63,819 “articles for immoral purposes, rubber, etc.” (17), presumably condoms. The destruction of materials ruled “obscene” would continue at the same vigorous pace for the duration of the movement, even beyond Comstock’s death in 1915.

Two years before his death, Anthony Comstock proudly proclaimed that he had been responsible for “destroying almost 160 tons of obscene literature and the conviction of enough people to fill a passenger train of sixty-one coaches, with sixty of the coaches containing sixty people each and with the last one almost full” (Blanchard and Semonche 361). He boldly claimed responsibility for “$237,134.30 in fines and imposed jail terms of 565 years, eleven months and twenty days on the defendants” (Blanchard and Semonche 362), figures that were likely not far from truth, since Comstock maintained meticulous records as the secretary for the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to fully explore the depth and magnitude of the anti-vice movement in this short paper. With thousands of arrests and hundreds of thousands of books burned, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, bolstered by the Comstock
Act, would comprise a social movement that, as one critic says, became “subversive of the very principles of American liberty and destructive to individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution of our country” (Bennett 1014). In fighting to suppress obscenity, the anti-vice crusaders subsequently fought to oppress free speech.

The success of a social movement depends on the perspective of the viewer. Those within the movement and those outside often have very different perspectives of whether or not a social movement was successful. Comstock and the anti-vice movement failed to actually purify America, largely because the “obscene” material they were battling became increasingly popular in American culture. But one thing is for certain: nearly 140 years later, the Comstock Laws are still in effect, though the legal definition of what is “obscene” has changed drastically since Comstock’s time. The success of the anti-vice movement in part lies in its legacy. Continuations of the anti-vice movement after Comstock’s death would uphold the anti-obscenity laws to crusade against impure books in the school system, against birth control information in the mails, and against sexual expression. As Della Porta and Diani discuss, the primary area for measuring the success of a social movement is the creation of actual policy that favors the movement’s goals (229). The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, backed by anti-vice activists and led by Anthony Comstock, succeeded in enacting their anti-obscenity legislation goals into federal law. Additionally, Della Porta and Diani assert that another gauge of social movement success is if the movement contributes to a distinct change in the way the political system functions (233). Comstock was appointed to a federal position created specifically for him under the Postmaster General, and his vigilante Society was empowered by law to enforce the anti-obscenity legislation.

The movement emerged at a time when America was looking to preserve its solidarity, and Comstock’s message of protection for youth—the nation’s future—was well received. Much of the anti-vice
movement’s success owes to Anthony Comstock’s fierce dedication as a leader. He effectively mobilized existing networks; provided a movement frame with wide appeal to attract support; and developed a collective identity for the movement, as patriotic Christians, by defining the anti-vice movement’s progressive opponents. The fight of the anti-vice crusaders, who burned books and art in the name of protecting our nation’s children, continues to shape our dialogue about censorship in America today. Anthony Comstock was a formidable challenger of free speech.

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Equating Class and Ethnicity in the Dynamics of Social Mobilization of Democratizing Mexico

Vinicius Lindoso

How do people create an identity, bargain with institutionalized powers, and affect political change? To what extent do class and ethnicity propel or divide a social movement? What motivates social change? **Vinicius Lindoso (SM ‘13, Global Affairs)** grapples with these questions in examining how the complex overlap between class and ethnicity in Mexico shaped its democratizing social movements during the 1980s and 1990s. In examining these dynamics between class and ethnicity, Lindoso presents these identities and interests as a crucial medium through which popular movements bargained with institutional powers. Written in PLSC 407: Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity.

Much has been said in academia about the dynamics of Class and Ethnicity within the context of social mobilization. Anthropologists, social historians have attempted to create models of individual and collective behavior, which political scientists have then used a basis for analytical studies aimed at explaining and predicting whether communities will mobilize through peaceful or armed political movements. The late nineteenth century saw Max Weber and Karl Marx lay down the concepts that for some time served as the basis of much debate among students of social mobilization theory. While the Marxist theory of class insisted on a dichotomous model involving capital and labor—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—Weber defended a three-fold definition
of class consisting of wealth, status, and power (Clarke 2000). More importantly, he pertinently defined “ethnicity” as a variant of the status category of class, “involving primordial sentiments of group affiliation on the basis of a shared culture and sense of belonging” (Parkin 1982 qtd. In Clarke 253). In what concerns social mobilization theory, Weber’s analysis of class and ethnicity have been proven more accurate than the Marxist argument that class ought to be the chief determinant variable in all social interactions. Nonetheless, despite Weber’s attempt at explaining ethnicity in terms of class, the two elements are nowadays largely seen as inherently different, if likely to intersect within a number of social contexts (Clarke 2000).

It is precisely this intersection of class and ethnicity that this paper is devoted to analyzing within the context of Mexico’s democratization period, ranging from 1976 to 2000 (Osorio 2004). Within the context of the demise of the PRI hegemony over Mexican politics and taking into consideration the changes to the Mexican socio-economic reality brought about by economic opening and globalization, I attempt to analyze the dynamics of social mobilization, focusing on the peasant movements of the 1970’s as they allegedly evolve into indigenous movements pursuing highly politicized ethnic agendas. In so doing, I advance two main arguments. First, I propose that within this particular chronological, geographical, and demographic frame class and ethnicity are equated vis-à-vis one another as factors for group identification and collective action. In sum, class and ethnic identities – for the purposes of this paper, the concept of “peasant” and “Indian” – define the same group of individuals, acting as “cards” within those individuals’ identity repertoires. I then reject the argument, proposed by Professor Guillermo Trejo Osorio, inter alia, that the rise of “ethnic” mobilization and the political primacy of indigenous movements during the latter part of the democratization period followed and, to a certain degree, caused a re-orientation of collective social identifica-
tion away from class and the “peasant” – or, campesino identity (2004). Moreover, I argue that not only did class play an important role within the indigenous movements of the 1980’s and 1990’s – especially in the provinces of Oaxaca and Chiapas – but it remained, in fact, the leading participation identity of those movements while ethnicity served as the medium, or social network, through which social mobilization took place and the class-driven interests were comprehensively articulated. Let us now consider the role of class and ethnicity in the formation of the Mexican indigenous peasants’ identity repertoire.

Campesinos or Indígenas: Assessing the identity repertoire of Mexican indigenous peasants’ communities.

Before delving any further into the discussion of class-based and ethnic-based identities among the Mexican indigenous peasantry, it is necessary to clarify just what exactly is meant by “identity repertoire”. Posner defines an individual’s identity repertoire as the outcome of a process of identity construction, undertaken by both institutions and individuals which “involves a mix of subconscious social learning and conscious investments… in particular group memberships” (2005: 7). Posner contends that this process “can often be traced to specific state policies, regulations, and administrative structures: that is, institutions” (ibid), which then leads to the second process of his social identification model, identity choice. This is the process, perceived as the “product of a deliberate decision designed to maximize profits” (11) through which an individual selects his or her identity from the repertoire of identities previously formulated in the construction phase.

Though Posner applies his analytical model to Zambia, it proves very accurate in explaining the changing dynamics of group identification in post-revolutionary as well as democratizing Mexico. The PRI,
in its post-revolutionary political hegemony, was able to fabricate an identity repertoire for the destitute Mexican indigenous classes that allowed for half a century of relative social tranquility, not basing national reconciliation on official exclusion of indigenous landless groups, but rather on “inclusionary corporatism [which] did not represent only the peasants or landed elite, but instead sought compromise, combining limited land reforms with capitalism” (Marx 1998: 277). The PRI sought to quell popular unrest by integrating the indigenous communities within a highly structured social spectrum; in other words, the PRI ultimate project was to

assimilate a rather diverse cultural mosaic into a mestizo hegemonic project – ‘revolutionary nationalism’ – [that] served as the privileged policy tool to turn Indians into peasants...Spanish-speaking Mexicans [and] priistas (Oso-río 2004: 252)

Through corporatist structures and organizations such as the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), indigenous groups were gradually turned into peasants (campesinos). Indeed, Mexican indigenous population did not just join the ranks of Mexican peasantry; rather, they became the Mexican peasantry so that they were able to benefit from whatever little benefits trickled down from Ciudad de Mexico to the Southern and Central states. Thanks to the PRI’s “revolutionary nationalism”, one thing the nouveaux-paysans were well aware of was that “as Indians, land and resources were nearly unattainable” (ibid). The PRI’s rural corporatism, thus, falls under Posner’s model of social identification in that government institutions acted to provide “common knowledge about the incentives faced by everyone in society [giving] them the power... to shape [identity repertoires] but also to coordinate identity choices” to maximize the intended benefit to the state (Posner 2005: 6).

It is true that the campesino identity “instituted” by the PRI upon
the Mexican indigenous groups was strengthened by virtually fifty years of relentless efforts to co-opt the campesino movements through specious promises of implementation of land tenure programs. The fate of ethnicity in this interim period, prior to the “cycles of indigenous protest” begun in 1974 (Osorio 2004), is nevertheless worth of consideration. It is very easy to take for granted the fact that ethnicity as a mobilizational (mobilizing?) identity lay dormant until the 1970’s, superseded and completely substituted for by the much more salient, government-sponsored campesino identity. However, closer inspection of the reality of the group will reveal that while the process of identity construction was clearly determined and delineated by the PRI’s rural corporatist policies, the process of identity choice cannot be understood in terms of the either/or dichotomy between campesino and indígena identities. What came out of the PRI’s corporatism was, in reality, not the destruction, or even the substitution away from ethnicity, but rather the creation of a convoluted hybrid social identity based at once on class and ethnicity. Boyer explains in some detail this combination:

Campesino identity formation was governed by a very different cultural logic. Rather than defining the politics of identity in terms of exclusivities, in which people had to describe themselves using one category or another…rural people who defined themselves as campesinos took a more eclectic route. They created a conceptual vocabulary that allowed them to represent themselves by using one category and another. By the second half of the twentieth century, rural people regularly defined themselves (and were defined by others) through an accretion of hybrid terms: for example, as indigenous campesinos, landholding campesinos, or even as Catholic campesinos. (2003: 236)

To this very day, “the lowest social class is fundamentally composed of
indigenous peoples” (Jusidman 2009: 198). The persistence of ethnicity as a major identity in the Mexican countryside via these *campesinos indígenas* was certainly not foreseen or accounted for by the PRI political chiefs. It would have major future implications throughout the democratizing period, when a number of factors put Mexican indigenous identities back in the spotlight. Most importantly, the creation of this hybrid indigenous peasant identity profoundly and inexorably bound class to ethnicity in Mexico, shaping the nature of social mobilization in the famous (or infamous) uprisings of the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Now we must turn to the second part of the story of identity construction in Mexico. After virtually half a century of PRI hegemony, and, consequently, the dominance of government-sponsored *campesino* movements associated with the CNC over indigenous groups, a number of factors colluded to change the basis of the Mexican social contract, and thus reinvigorate social mobilization in different forms: the ballot, social protest, and armed struggle (Vadi 2001: 134). As we seek to infer what kinds of identities played a more dominant role within each means of mobilization, we will eschew discussion on the political competition of the period in order to devote greater attention to both social protest and its unruly sibling, armed struggle. However, we must first determine just what kinds of identities comprised the identity repertoire of the groups mobilizing against the government between the 1970’s and 1990’s.

Osorio is particularly helpful in outlining just how the different state and non-state institutions in Mexico went about constructing a new roster of identities for the Mexican indigenous peasantry. He argues, based on statistical analysis of data from the *Mexican Insurgency Database*, that between 1976 and 2000, Mexican social mobilization underwent inherent changes in its identity, going from *campesino* to

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1 Translated from Spanish: “La clase social más baja está fundamentalmente constituida por población de origen indígena.”
indígena via both domestic and international factors. To be more precise, Osorio argues that this change was the contingent result of a set of actions by the Mexican government, the Mexican opposition, and the Catholic Church, which together put an end to the peasant identity of Mexico’s indigenous community and introduced the concept of “indigenous people” as a political identity.

In terms of state action, he claims that the “end” of the peasant identity came as a result of President Salinas’ constitutional reform of Article 27’s land reform policies, which “after a series of policy changes that throughout the 1980’s had slowly dismantled Mexico’s post-revolutionary agricultural policy” meant the end of the political pact between the state and the campesinos established by the 1917 Constitution (Osorio 2004: 266). On another hand, because provinces and municipalities that were ruled by indigenous customary law banned political party competition, the PRI sought to declare indigenous territory those electoral districts in which opposition forces could potentially win. The opposition, Communist and Socialist parties, also provided logistic support to indigenous groups, with the “goal to gain access to independent popular movements and leaders that would help... battle electoral fraud” (Osorio 2004: 324). As for non-state actors, it was up to the Catholic Church to contribute immensely to the politicization of ethnicity and the rise of indigenous movements as it struggled to combat the Protestant and Evangelic inroads into the Mexican poorer social strata. Through the Vatican-approved process of “inculturation” of the gospel among indigenous populations, bishops, priests, missionaries, catechists and pastoral agents directly participated in the formation of peasant indigenous organizations and movements (Osorio 2005: 311, 146).

On these three fronts, class was rapidly replaced by ethnicity as the favored form of institutionally-construed identity. That is not to say, however, that the PRI completely abandoned its campesino basis of support. In many provinces, the CNC remained an important actor
in co-opting the indigenous peasantry and quelling fears that neo-Zapatismo might spread northward. Opposition parties also did not whole-heartedly embrace the concept of indigenous identity-based social mobilization. As Osorio points out, once multi-party competition was established in a given locality, “the left did not encourage but discourage indigenous protest,” choosing instead to co-opt indigenous leaders in a process of “vertical integration” (2004: 324). Opposition parties such as the Party of the Democratic Revolution, in fact, placed an entirely different, but, for our purposes, tangential political identity on the Mexican indigenous peasant’s identity repertoire: the citizenship identity (2004: 271).

While these discrepancies suggest that institutional identity construction was not dichotomous or perfect, studies tend to support the fact that throughout the democratization period, ethnicity became indeed a very powerful, and maybe the only identity that could be used by popular movements to mobilize and bargain with the institutionalized powers. It is interesting to see, though, that the rise of ethnicity as a focal point of social mobilization, especially during the 1990’s, does not mean that indigenous peasants started to ignore their “peasant” identity. As mentioned before, those two identities by then were too interwoven and the overlap great enough as to cause the terms campesino and indígena to be used interchangeably. With that in mind, I turn to discuss the dynamics of class and ethnicity within the Mexican “indigenous” social mobilization of the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Class via Ethnicity: The changing dynamics of collective action throughout the Mexican democratizing period

I now turn my discussion to the 1980’s and 1990’s events of the so-called “cycle of indigenous protest.” Having shown how within the
context of the Mexican indigenous peasantry, class-based and ethnic-based identities are equated in their potential for fueling collective action, I now propose a three-fold argument: First, I reject claims to the effect that by the 1994 Chiapas uprising the Mexican peasant identity was “dead” and fully replaced by a highly politicized indigenous identity. I then propose my own theory of identity choice for the Southern and Central Mexican indigenous movements, contending that class – the campesino identity – de facto remained the propelling force behind the political bargaining of alleged “indigenous” groups. I finally explain that, though class was the true participation identity – which is defined by Gould as “the particular identity whose normative and practical implications are relevant for successful recruitment in the case under consideration” (1995: 14) – for, say, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) or, more clearly, the Independent Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students (COCEI), ethnicity was their chosen medium of mobilization and interest-articulation.

Throughout his dissertation, Osorio continuously affirms that the Salinas Administration introduction of “indigenous peoples” in the Mexican Constitution to shield the government from the results of the unpopular constitutional reform of 1992 “opened the door for the switch from Class to Ethnicity” (Osorio 2004: 267). I argue here that while ethnicity did become an important factor in the social movements of the 1990’s, even then those cannot be wholly understood without accounting for their campesino roots. Osorio himself argues that “no national or regional party ever campaigned on ethnic grounds during the whole transition from authoritarian rule to democracy” (2004: 274), and that post-Chiapas uprising, the CNC increased its activities “making sure that their members would stay away from the ethnic sirens” (294). Furthermore, at the same time that ethnicity was allegedly on the rise as a powerful mobilizational identity, the PRI was pouring huge amounts of money into comprehensive transfer programs such as PRONASOL, which signaled the repeasantization, of indigenous peas-
ant communities who had failed to perform satisfactorily in state agricultural modernization programs (Gates 1993). Together, the CNC and PRONASOL were able to quell any interest in ethnic mobilization in many areas bordering the tense Southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, while also reviving whatever remained of the corporatist ties between campesinos and the Mexican state.

But what of those groups who insisted on rebellion, either through armed struggle such as the EZLN or through political activism such as the COCEI? Here too, I argue that, though ethnicity was instrumental to their articulation of interests and mobilizational capacity, class remained their main participation identity. According to Boyer:

The Zapatistas sought above all to buttress their rights as indigenous people, but as their choice of appellation implies, they have also resuscitated the revolutionary ideal of agrarian militancy…. Rather than conceiving of indigenous people and campesinos as two distinct groups, their sometime spokesperson Subcommander Marcos has treated the two categories as essentially indistinguishable, thus drawing upon another culturally embedded notion. More than anything, he has played upon ideals of class struggle and revolutionary citizenship (Boyer 2003: 237)

Given the enormous publicity of the indigenous nature (and both domestic and international appeal) associated with neo-Zapatismo, the argument that they retained a class-based identity might sound counter-intuitive; it becomes less so when we differentiate between the movement’s ethnic “appeal” and its campesino “appellation”. To be clear, I take “appeal” to be the social medium through which the movement conducted its domestic and international publicity and bargaining with the government, whereas “appellation” refers to the nature, or core elements, of the Zapatista (territorial) demands and the elements
used to encourage social mobilization within communities (recruitment strategy), which falls in line with Gould’s definition of “participation identity.”

Though perhaps the most famous and drastic social movement of late twentieth century Mexico, the EZLN was but one of a few movements to challenge the country’s ethno-socio-political status quo. Throughout the 1980s, the Independent Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students (COCEI) effectively opposed the PRI and the Mexican political establishment within the Southern state of Oaxaca, which neighbors the EZLN’s home state of Chiapas. The COCEI effectively established the “Socialist Republic of Juchitán” – a municipality where the movement claimed political autonomy, cutting all ties and communication with the Mexican government. The movement had a very solid *campesino* identity, but ethnicity remained highly instrumental to its activities, as the movement’s success “hinged on its appeal to Zapotec and regional identity in contradistinction to the PRI, which was seen, locally, as an alien force” (Clarke 2000: 227). Here, we also find the need to distinguish between the movements’ ethnic “appeal” and its *campesino* “program” or “appellation,” though in this case they are much more clearly delineated than in the case of the EZLN. The very roots of the COCEI movement are extremely class-based, as its name foreshadows. What makes it pertinent to my argument is less that it promoted a *campesino* program, but that the way or the medium through which they did so was ethnicity. For example, much of the COCEI's success in publicizing its demands and generating community awareness can be explained by the engagement of Zapotec Indians in Juchitán who “transformed their courtyards and fiestas into fora for intense political discussion” (Clarke 2000: 228).

So far I have demonstrated that ethnicity did not become the most prominent participation identity, though it may have been the most prominent public feature of Southern Mexico’s indigenous movements
of the 1980s and 1990s. I have also argued for the lasting importance of the campesino identity as a participation identity for social mobilization during the latter part of the democratizing period, though I have also argued that ethnicity played a major role as a medium for indigenous movements’ domestic and international publicity and bargaining.

Bearing in mind the last part of that argument, the ensuing question is: Why did these social movements choose to articulate their interests through and attach themselves to ethnicity – namely, their indigenous identity? When speaking of the changing dynamics of institutional identity construction, Osorio provided us with part of the answer. Domestically, as described in the first section, the Catholic Church, Socialist and Communist opposition parties, as well as the PRI contingently boosted the role of ethnicity in social mobilization while seeking to articulate their specific interests. Internationally, indigenous identity was also on the spotlight: “Convention 169 (UN) [on land and natural resources] also became an immediate reference point for indigenous organizations and movements in Mexico” (Osorio 2004: 260). Most importantly, within the context democratization and the PRI’s loss of hegemony, an ethnic “appeal” served to distinguish anti-establishment social movements from the CNC-affiliated campesino base. Movements’ declaration of their indigenous identity reflected not so much the nature of their program as their political nature. They were indigenous not because they were not equally campesinos – they often “invoked a political discourse that emphasized campesino solidarity” (Boyer 2003: 237) –; they were indigenous in contrast to the CNC-affiliated, corporatist campesino movements. Because the term campesino became so connected with the Mexican political establishment, ethnicity became the preferred medium of interest-articulation, publicity, and bargaining of groups seeking to challenge the state. Again, I argue that ethnicity was only the medium rather than the identity of social mobilization precisely because, as proposed by Boyers, even so-called indigenous movements espoused class-oriented, traditional campesino programs in
regards to land allocation. Their choice of self-classification based on ethnicity was driven primarily by procedural, rather than substantive needs to distinguish themselves in the public (domestic and international) sphere from movements co-opted by the establishment.

Concluding Remarks

In the introduction, I propose to explore two arguments that can hopefully cast a new light on how class was perceived within Mexico’s democratizing social movements of the 1980s and 1990s. The first argument is that ethnicity and class are equated vis-à-vis one another as factors for group identification and collective action. In sum, campesinos and indígenas consist of the same group of individuals, who select either identity at different points in time in order to maximize their personal and collective benefit (Posner 2005). Having found that literature on the region is generally supportive of that claim, the way was then open to explore just how those two identities merge, converge, and supersede one another within the collective identity repertoires of Southern Mexico’s indigenous/peasant movements.

My second argument consisted of three parts: I first rejected the concept advanced especially by Osorio that the rise of “ethnic” mobilization and the political primacy of indigenous movements during the 1980s and 1990s was accompanied by a re-orientation of collective social identification away from the campesino identity. I then showed evidence suggesting that not only did class play an important role within those indigenous movements – especially in the provinces of Oaxaca and Chiapas – but it remained, in fact, the leading participation identity of those movements. Finally, in order to account for the role of ethnicity in the late twentieth century Mexican social protest, I concluded that ethnicity did not serve as a “participation identity” but rather served as a medium, or “appeal”, through which social movements distinguished and publicized themselves relative to the country’s political establish-
ment and the international community. While they did incorporate some *indigenous* characteristics to their actions and demands, the bulk of their political and social program was nonetheless driven by class-interests. Ultimately, we find that regardless of the clamor for ethnic mobilization, and because of the huge, near total, overlap between indigenous peasants’ *campesino* and *indígena* identities, class interests and identity remained an integral part of the indigenous mobilization into the latter stages of Mexican democratization.

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The second volume of Habitus has so far journeyed through diverse examples of social movement(s) and exemplars of chronicling them. But the job of social science is not solely to document movement(s) as they pass us by. Rather the process of reflection that we are charged with is meant to be ongoing, to dig deeper and pose the larger and more enduring questions that social movement(s) raise about the nature of society and human motivation. Theory is a vital means by which how we seek to understand social reality as scholars. But that does not mean the process is impersonal or detached from our individual beings and the real world. Rather, the act of theorizing itself involves subjectivity, and an intellectual holds transformative agency in his or her field. And to some extent we all might act as intellectuals.

In the following essay, Christopher Robertson (University of Texas at Austin ‘12, Sociology) explores precisely the above. What conditions, exactly, enable social actors to generate revolution? The essay links our world of current events to these Big Questions and offers an inspired reexamination of what answers the classic social theorists Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu might have to offer. It highlights, incidentally, how these answers suggest the centrality of the intellectual (both as group and as practice) to potentiating the capacity for revolutionary change in society. Written in PHL 334: Marx and Western Marxism.
2011 witnessed a wave of revolutions and rapid social changes that spread around the world at an unprecedented pace. From the Arab Spring that brought down authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, to the so-called American Autumn initiated by the Occupy Wall Street protests, revolutionary unrest is one of—if not the—defining sociological story of the year. At the core of these movements is a series of often-unarticulated questions concerning what motivates social actors to take part in collective actions. What are the necessary conditions—if any—for movement participants that predict when and where social unrest evolves into public protest? And how does it come to be that a group of people transform, as C. Wright Mills said, “private troubles into public issues?”

This essay will suggest possible answers to these questions by reading the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu through the lens of the Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci.

For over a hundred and fifty years, the writings of Karl Marx and his interpreters have been informing, inspiring, and examining revolutionary movements around the world. At the heart of the Marxist tradition is a revolutionary project for the exploited of the world to become conscious of the conditions of their domination, actualizing the potentialities of their collective power in order to overturn the capitalist system and reap the material fruits of their own labor. As for how the working class masses come to this point of revolution there exist nearly as many theories as theorists. And yet there is another practical question beyond historical conditions, teleology, and tactics at the core of any theory of revolutionary change: that is, how do social actors make the move from tacitly accepting their dominated position to recognition that their lives could be otherwise? To speak of workers having “nothing to lose but their chains” is insufficient without an ad-

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equate explanation for the subjectivity required in order to bring about such a radical break in history. This paper will explore that aspect of the revolutionary project in the Western Marxist tradition by looking at one of its most influential thinkers, the Italian communist philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci. Specific to the topic of subjectivity and revolutionary potential, it is his ideas concerning: intellectuals as creators of hegemony; the importance of culture as a vehicle and tool for hegemonic projects; and the personal dimension of critical self-examination as praxis, which serve to unpack the conditions necessary for the transformation of an individual into a radical subject capable of revolutionary action. The influence of theoretical innovations such as these has managed to extend far beyond the confines of Marxist intellectual circles.

So too has the influential work of eminent sociologist Pierre Bourdieu impacted disciplines beyond the social sciences. Although his career hit its stride nearly fifty years after Gramsci wrote his most famous work, the Prison Notebooks, many of Bourdieu’s concepts are complementary to and similar to much of the Italian communist’s oeuvre, albeit not from an explicitly Marxist orientation. Bourdieu’s work can be read as working against and building upon many of the themes in Western Marxism with sympathy, nuanced critique, and (often) substantial disagreement. Both thinkers sought the dialectical synthesis of antinomies, whether in orthodox Marxism or the social sciences. The Marxist polarity between base and superstructure is scrutinized by Gramsci as mediated via his conceptions of hegemony and culture just as the primacy of theory and practice are united in his notion of revolutionary praxis. Similarly, the binary of subjectivist-constructivism and objectivist-structuralism are synthesized in a social praxeology with Bourdieu’s sociology of practice.² And within both thinkers’ normative

projects—though in Gramsci’s it is much more explicit—lies the role of intellectuals not only as producers of knowledge, but as harbingers of social transformation.

Their respective ideas on the revolutionary character of intellectuals do differ in many ways, which will be expanded upon later. But for the purpose of introduction it is worth noting the attention they both give to the role of intellectuals in civil society. For Gramsci, the organic intellectual is tasked with representing his or her local milieu for an explicitly transformative purpose. For Bourdieu, intellectuals (and especially social scientists) are producers of symbolic capital transmitted through the education system, a system (or field) that is a site of struggle for cultural classification, where reflexivity is the hallmark for uncovering forms of symbolic and structural violence—that is to say, there is a normative dimension to how he conceives the role of intellectuals.³

This paper will attempt to show how Gramsci and Bourdieu’s theoretical frameworks can compliment and strengthen each other, particularly as they both address concepts of change, revolution and subjectivity. In addition to pointing out similarities between the two, this paper will also emphasize the aspect of Bourdieu’s thought often critiqued as straitjacketing agency, namely his understanding of people’s capacity for resistance against domination.⁴ By filtering Bourdieu’s account of change and subjectivity through Gramsci’s revolutionary project we get a clearer vision of the possibilities for thinking about social change within both of their intellectual work. This argument will consist of: (1.) a delineation of the two thinkers’ respective accounts of subjective change, from the misrecognition of an individual’s objective conditions to recognition via reflexivity and self-

³  Ibid., 194-195.
⁴  Richard Jenkins, Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Domination, (Sociology 16 (2), 1982), 270-281.
awareness, (2.) a constructive Boudieuian critique of standard Marxist theories of class consciousness, and (3.) a discussion of the role they envision intellectuals to play in uncovering ideological forms of domination that exist as taken-for-granted beliefs, opinions, and dispositions embedded inside agents that contribute to their material exploitation and symbolic domination.

**Everyone is a Philosopher in a Field**

Any account of how Gramsci theorizes the proletariat’s capacity to make revolution must have an understanding of his notion of hegemony. Essentially, hegemony can be defined as having both descriptive and proscriptive qualities: first, it is the institutions, social relations, and ideas woven by intellectuals to create a cultural ‘fabric’ at the level of superstructure within civil society; second, it has a strategic purpose, whether employed by the ruling or working class, to exert influence and maintain control through public consent. Both of these qualities bring the role of people, social actors endowed with—at least to some extent—agency, to the fore. Whether they are participants in institutions and social relations, creators and repositories of ideas, or the ones using hegemonic strategies to influence civil society, individuals are nevertheless making choices. Gramsci sees capitalist society as being sustained by the ruling class through the enforcement of hegemonic control over the working class in the realm of ideas and culture—or what orthodox Marxists would call the ‘superstructure’—via intellectuals. It is, therefore, the task of the proletariat to produce its own organic intellectuals who can provide an alternative-hegemony of revolutionary theory and practice (or praxis) as a historic bloc. Once this historic bloc is estab-

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lished, a rupture in history can realize the revolutionary moment for a socialist transformation of society.

The ideas, social relations, and institutions used by intellectuals to establish hegemony can be seen as cultural intervention, or cultural hegemony. In order for culture to be used as a tool of hegemony, it is implied that culture is contested, fought over, and exists as something to be won or lost by the intellectuals who carry and convey legitimating power. This idea of culture as a sight of struggle for hegemony brings us to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of field. He uses field in contrast to the “vacuous notion of society” or any other seemingly integrated totality of systemic functions, common culture, or overarching authority easily collapsed under a societal logic. Instead, field denotes a social space of “play” where agents struggle over the boundaries of goods, services, status, and knowledge depending on the position they occupy in that space; a field is a field of power, a space of conflict and competition, albeit within a certain definition and boundary, such as the literary, religious, or scientific field. Each of these spaces of play contains different “rules of the game” where social actors define and redefine positions of inclusion and exclusion. In relation to Gramsci’s emphasis on intellectuals, they can be seen as operating within distinct fields—although fields often overlap onto one another and are in the end subsumed under the broad meta-field of power.

The intellectual field is a designated matrix of institutions, cultural markets, and organizations where producers of knowledge (i.e. intellectuals, such as academics, writers, and artists) compete for symbolic capital, that is, the cultural expressions which “carry the most weight” among a segment of the population. Symbolic capital could be books and essays, popular art, academic papers, internet media, or language

7 Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 16-17.
and words more generally. As creators of symbolic capital, intellectuals reproduce and reinforce stratification along social-class lines, albeit without their attitudes and behavior necessarily being reduced to a fixed class position. Bourdieu certainly emphasizes the structural—as opposed to instrumental—function of intellectuals, but without collapsing all social roles to a crude determinism where the economy is singularly responsible for class and class is singularly responsible for social position. His idea of class contains more room for movement and change by emphasizing the capacity social actors have in creating distinction as way of struggling for position within a particular field. In short, the intellectual field augments the idea of hegemonic power by giving analytic clarity to the way hegemony is established by intellectuals themselves, however constrained their space of play within the field may be.

Again, for Gramsci an intellectual is a distinct social category. And it is one divided between traditional intellectuals who serve the bourgeois status quo and organic intellectuals who are charged with creating alternative hegemonies that represent the specific milieu from which they originates. But this is not all there is to his definition. In the section on ‘The Intellectuals’ in the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci makes the claim early on that “all men are intellectuals…but not all men in society have the function of intellectuals” [my emphasis]. Certain people have the function in society as intellectuals, yet not others, as a result of how the intellectual field is socially constructed. By universalizing the fact that “non-intellectuals do not exist,” Gramsci has also universalized a space for possible struggle within the field to include non-specialists. All people are philosophers, hence all fall under this universalizing potential for critical thought and the same potentia for the production of symbolic capital as other philosophers (and intellectuals). True, but the

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9  Ibid., 232-233.
milieu from which these universalized philosophers come is local, and Gramsci is right to emphasize the need to remain cognizant of one’s embeddedness within a specific locale in spite of their universalized capacities. Gramsci falls in line with Bourdieu’s sociology by stressing the local influence of a particular milieu on an individual’s universal capacity, even if the two thinkers differ as to the teleology of that individual’s class position.

On Misrecognition and its Material Consequences

One of the great differences between Gramsci and Bourdieu is their respective emphases on revolution. For Gramsci, a revolutionary communist and politician, his intellectual work is essentially a practical project for the realization of socialist revolution. His theoretical acumen is put to practical use in his call for a philosophy of praxis, where theory and practice are synthesized in a dialectical relationship. Bourdieu’s thought shares a somewhat similar dialectical mode of thinking, though in a different context, namely the social sciences. His social praxeology is a way to transcend the binaries of structuralism (which overemphasizes the way institutions, culture, and the economy determine a person’s practical life) and constructivism (which overemphasizes the capacity for agents to ‘construct’ their own reality and make undetermined choices). 11 This transcendence can be thought of as a theoretical tool for overcoming the pitfalls of both objectivism and subjectivism, exemplified by Louis Althusser and Jean-Paul Sartre, respectively.

In contrast to Gramsci’s praxis, Bourdieu’s praxeology is not explicitly revolutionary; in fact, the word “revolution” seldom appears when Bourdieu discusses the kind of social change required to break

superstructural domination, instead choosing to use the word “rupture” at the individual level. This is a key difference between the two thinkers and thus also a theoretical divide waiting to be bridged: that between Gramsci’s theories of change across collectivities and Bourdieu’s at the level of the individual. According to Bourdieu, in order for these ruptures to occur within a group it is a requirement that there must be more than simply a move away from “…scholarly common sense in its ordinary form. We must also break with the instruments of rupture which negate the very experience against which they have been constructed [Bourdieu’s emphasis],”\(^\text{12}\) and it is the job of the social scientist to provide an education at the social level capable of inserting this break in the transmission of doxic knowledge.

One critique that is often leveled against Bourdieu by his critics is that his models are too static and fixed, not allowing enough room for resistance, change, and interruption in history. But Bourdieu grants that although this is one way to interpret his work, it is a misreading and form of “pessimistic functionalism.”\(^\text{13}\) Whether material or symbolic, all forms of domination operate in relation to active resistance. In fact, resistance and struggle is a component built into the various fields themselves. As he says, “The dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force, in as much as belonging to a field means by definition that one is capable of producing effects in it (if only to elicit reactions of exclusion on the part of those who occupy its dominant positions).” He states this with the caveat that although there is the capacity for resistance more often than not it is submission built into the dispositions of the dominated that explains why they do not resist as much as intellectuals (or Marxists) would expect them to. And this is where the normative vision of Bourdieu’s sociology comes into play insofar as “one of the tasks of sociology is precisely to examine under

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 251.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 80.
what conditions these dispositions are socially constituted, effectively triggered, and rendered politically efficient.”

It is in a liberatory vision for sociology’s political implications that the similarities between Gramsci’s organic intellectual and Bourdieu’s reflexive sociologist appear to occupy similar social roles; however, it is also in their respective theories on intellectuals where the greatest divide can be seen. Indeed, Bourdieu has been critiqued as having espoused a theory where liberatory power rests with traditional, not organic, intellectuals. From this angle Bourdieu is guilty of a kind of social scientism, or intellectual elitism, insofar as social scientists occupy a privileged position for exposing the workings of symbolic domination in a way that the “common sense” of the exploited and dominated are blinded to.

If one accepts this critique then Gramsci is presenting a drastically different way of understanding the role of intellectuals than Bourdieu. According to Gramsci, then, what role does the non-specialist, i.e. the universal intellectual non-intellectual, play in resistance? What are these conditions under which people’s dispositions are awakened to their dominated class position and infused with the creative energy for revolutionary transformation? The answers to these questions require a look at agents themselves in order to better understand their subjective interpretation of practical life at the level of individual lived experience.

Bourdieu’s answer to why people submit to their own domination comes from the way that he sees external structures as becoming internalized into a person’s habitus, the structuring mechanism that operates within agents. Habitus is a key concept for Bourdieu, as this is how he explains the relationship between historic systems and the way they socialize people in distinct ways; it (habitus) is a “practical ra-

14 Ibid., 81.
tionality” that is creative and inventive, but within the limits of its own structure “which are the embodied sedimentation of [the] social structures [that] produced it.” The creative element of habitus, in contrast to its structured element, is that it must react when it encounters a particular field. That is, people have the capacity to make choices—however limited the concrete options may be. Yet the kinds of choices one makes are themselves limited in the way a person’s habitus has already internalized a specific disposition towards those choice-options. This internalization of disposition is the result of living life, picking up influences along the way, taking in a specific culture, and being influenced by the symbolic power of some authority or structure that the individual (mis-)recognizes as being legitimate. Gramsci makes the same point, but in a much simpler way when he says that “we are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the mass or collective man,” and that “the personality is a strange composite” containing both “stone age elements and principles of a more advanced science.”

As much as the habitus of the dominated is an internalized “structuring structure,” it relies on misrecognition of the historical conditions that shaped its subjectivity. Bourdieu gives an example of what misrecognition is when he refers explicitly to the concept of ideology as traditionally espoused by Marxists. For something to be ideological it must not appear to the subject or itself as such, and it is this misrecognition that gives ideology its symbolic efficacy. But this begs the question of how can an agent move beyond misrecognition, if that’s even possible, and what the practical, political implications would be for a habitus cleansed (to whatever extent) of accumulated pre-reflexive beliefs, opinions, and dispositions.

16 Ibid., 19.
17 Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, 324.
18 Bourdieu and Wacquant, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology, 250.
On Reflexivity and the Critical Faculty

It is clear by now that according to Gramsci and Bourdieu, the path beyond misrecognition and towards counter-hegemony needs a subject capable of creating a rupture first within his or her own subjectivity and then within society. For Bourdieu, this rupture comes with the emphasis he gives to reflexivity in his sociology of practice; for Gramsci, it begins in the everyman-intellectual taking ownership of a critical awareness that moves from “common sense” towards recognition of his or her class position. The passage where he makes this explicit is worth quoting at length:

To criticize one’s own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world. It therefore also means criticism of all previous philosophy, in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy. The starting point of critical elaboration in the consciousness of what one really is, and is “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory.19

His goal is to renovate and make critical an already existing activity everyone, being philosophers, already do, in order that they may be able to break with common sense (i.e. the “deposited” histories that mask the concrete reality of working-class existence).20 To put it in Bourdieu’s language, Gramsci sees critical self-reflexivity as a way for the proletariat to break the cycle of misrecognition that structures their habitus in such a way that they tacitly consent to the violence of their own domination.

Bourdieu, contrary to what his critics say, sees a similar space

19 Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, 324.
20 Ibid., 330-331.
for resistance and change, although it is in theorizing the practice of reflexive sociology where he gives this topic the most attention. He makes the point clearly when he says: “The force of the preconstructed [habitus] resides in the fact that, being inscribed both in things and in minds it presents itself under the cloak of the self-evident which goes unnoticed because it is by definition taken for granted. Rupture in fact demands a conversion of one’s gaze and one can say of the teaching of sociology that it must first ‘give new eyes’...to produce, if not a ‘new person,’ then at least a “new gaze,” a sociological eye.”21 This means there must be an “epistemological rupture” where “the bracketing of ordinary preconstructions and of the principles ordinarily at work in the elaboration of these constructions, often presupposes a rupture with modes of thinking, concepts, and methods that have every appearance of common sense, of ordinary sense, and of good scientific sense (everything that the dominant positivist tradition honors and hallows) going for them.”22

Habitus as Class Consciousness

There is, however, a critique of Bourdieu that appears to hold water when one is attempting to use his thought as a tool for theorizing revolutionary change. For all his emphasis on the emancipatory potential in reflexive sociology, Bourdieu does not give the concept primacy in how he conceptualizes sources of resistance within the cycle of social reproduction. Instead, the wellspring of struggles for change, according to Bourdieu, is reduced to a seemingly formulaic mismatch between an actor’s habitus and his or her structural opportunities in given field. But, as the argument against Bourdieu goes, if resistance is simply reducible to a dislocation between habitus and field, then what space is

21 Bourdieu and Wacquant, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology, 251.
22 Ibid., 251.
left for the emancipatory aspect of sociology that Bourdieu so keenly emphasizes as the discipline’s transformative gift to the world?23

In contrast with Gramsci, who takes pains to emphasize a practical theory of action full of revolutionary potential, Bourdieu is cautious about making these kinds of claims. The traditional Marxist notion of class consciousness—where the proletarian masses recognize their class position as a result of social and economic conditions—fits relatively easily with Gramsci’s project for revolution via the establishment of alternative hegemony and the formation of a new historic bloc. This is problematic for Bourdieu and explains his aversion to making the subjective implications of reflexivity a central feature for why struggles for resistance originate. He sees in the Marxist use of consciousness a kind of Cartesian Dualism that places too much emphasis on the purely mental structure of ideological domination.24 Yet by distancing his work from the Marxist concept of class-consciousness he inadvertently reduces what is, in fact, the revolutionary core of his own work: that change, struggles of resistance, and rupture in the cycle of social reproduction, can take place in part as a result of the radical perspective one gets when they take on the “new gaze” of the “sociological eye.” Regardless of Bourdieu’s critique of the Cartesian element in Marxism, indeed it is his critical project for a sociology capable of transformation at the level of the individual where we are given a new way to begin thinking about class-consciousness—whether he would approve of this term or not. When a social actor begins transforming at the level of habitus they are no longer solely dealing with the mental structures that guide action, but also the dispositions embodied in his or her concrete relation to the world, and this is precisely where a new


site for revolutionary subjectivity might yet emerge.

What is explicitly revolutionary in Antonio Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis is implicitly revolutionary in Pierre Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology. As long as agents act on the basis of a subjectivity pre-reflexively constructed by an unmediated objective influence, they cannot help but remain subordinate to a habitus that renders them as subjects. Only through socio-analysis can social actors confront the domination embedded into institutions, symbolic forces, dispositions, and concrete relations that are lodged deep within their habitus. A recognition of the revolutionary potential in Bourdieu’s thought opens up new possibilities beyond the similar, albeit much simpler concepts of Gramsci. By appropriating Bourdieu’s theoretical and methodological tools, we can widen the emancipatory project by demystifying the pre-reflexive, uncritical structures that stand in the way of enacting a new radical subjectivity capable of revolutionary change.
