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Consumption Rituals and the Complexities of Institutional Resistance

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This presentation focuses on the complexities of resisting a dominant institution by examining a context where people do not celebrate a consumption ritual where the ritual elements are a primary means for connection. It shows how contesting is contextually contingent, based on a broader constellation of relational and identity goals.

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Contesting Institutional Arrangements

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Paper #1: The Role of Ideology in Contesting Market-Based Institutional Arrangements

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Paper #2: Professional Contests and the Emergence of Social Media as an Institutional Field

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Paper #3: Market Evolution Through Shifts in Institutional Logics

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Paper #4: Consumption Rituals and the Complexities of Institutional Resistance

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this line of inquiry by asking how institutional arrangements are subject to change through both formal and informal social processes, undertaken by individuals and forms of collective action. Mitchell and Handelman explore the centrality of ideology to contesting institutional arrangements, and advocate field theory to examine the interplay of individuals and institutions at various levels of analysis involved in contesting arrangements. Smith and Humphreys investigate how different professional fields seek to influence and control the structuring of an emergent field – social media – through forms of institutional work. Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli explore how markets evolve through the institutional work of actors as they appeal to, or distance themselves from, various institutional logics at play in the US yoga market. Weinberger explores how individual consumers negotiate collective consumption rituals aligned with dominant social and cultural institutions.

The Role of Ideology in Contesting Market-Based Institutional Arrangements

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Recent scholarship in marketing and consumer research has focused on how market-based stakeholders work to bring about changes in the organization of firms and value offerings in commercial industries. For example, Humphreys (2010) demonstrates how gambling industry stakeholders worked to achieve institutional legitimacy for gambling practices and venues. Martin and Schouten (2014) investigate how consumers of minimoto motorcycles were instrumental in the creation of a new market previously overlooked by incumbent firms, such as Harley-Davidson. Similarly, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) demonstrate how a group of marginalized female consumers, frustrated by their lack of inclusion in fashion offerings, mobilized alternative institutional logics to expand the range of available product offerings. These empirical studies demonstrate the fluid nature of rules, norms, and processes that structure social action and relationships, within and between market-based stakeholders (Carson et al. 1999). Further, these studies have directed attention to the importance of understanding processes of strategic legitimation (Suchman 1995) for understanding how such fluidity is negotiated and resolved by consumers and marketers. However, while legitimation implies a congruence between values and acceptable behavior (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975), what is not clear from this growing body of literature is the role of ideology in establishing such congruence within institutional arrangements.

While numerous definitions of ideology exist (see for example Eagleton 1991), at the core it represents a particular “configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence” (Converse 1964, p. 207). In other words, ideology represents a value system in which certain activities, beliefs, and relationships are considered to be more appropriate or desirable than alternatives.

Ideology is typically reserved for discussions of political affiliation, however it also forms an important aspect of consumption practices (Hirschman 1988; 1990), in particular as it influences meaning-making activities at the level of everyday consumption (Belk 1988; 2010; Belk et al. 1989). For example, Hirschman (1990) describes the ideology of affluence, and the ways in which wealthy consumers attempt to achieve “secular immortality” through practices consistent with values rooted in social class ideologies. Crockett et al.

SESSION OVERVIEW

The purpose of this session is to explore emerging scholarship investigating how individuals and organizations contest institutional arrangements. In the context of marketing, institutional arrangements are the formal and informal rules and norms created by actors and organizations to facilitate exchange behaviors (Carson et al. 1999, p. 115). Investigating the economic and social arrangements that exist within and between marketers, consumers, and other stakeholders has long been a central feature of marketing scholarship, historically aligned with the institutional school (Shaw and Jones 2005). Viewed ostensibly from the perspective of firms, this work, and the theorizing it supported, has tended to focus on how to effectively structure relationships between stakeholders to deal with threats such as opportunism and speculation (Bucklin 1965). This focus produced influential research into governance mechanisms, such as contracting (c.f. Bergen, Dutta, and Walker 1992; Rindfleisch and Heide 1997), designed to help marketers reduce risks and stabilize relationships and channels (Grewal and Dharwadkar 2002).

More recent work has shown that economic and social institutional arrangements can come into existence through less formalized, social processes. For example, Humphreys (2010) uses a social-constructionist perspective informed by institutional theory to show how members of the gambling industry worked to legitimate gambling in the United States. Central to the macro-level shift in views on gambling was the legitimation of both gambling as a social practice, and the organizations associated with the practice (e.g. casinos). Thomas et al. (2013) show how individuals and institutions in heterogeneous consumption communities rely on frame alignment processes to ensure continued existence of the community and its practices. Martin and Schouten (2014) chronicle how consumers provided the impetus for the emergence of a minimoto motorcycle market, through a series of pre-market and market translations among individuals and institutions. These examinations of how institutional arrangements are created through social processes raise questions concerning how market-based stakeholders might contest arrangements.

While individual and collective resistance is one form of contest (c.f. Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007), Scaraboto and Fischer's (2013) investigation of what they term ‘frustrated fashionistas’ demonstrates how consumers can alter the scope of existing institutional arrangements. The papers in this session seek to further

(2004) show how normative political ideology influences relatively routine consumption habits of African Americans. Khan et al. (2013) show that conservative ideology may inform everyday purchasing habits implicitly or unconsciously. Luedicke et al. (2010, p. 1028) demonstrate how consumers construct moralistic identities using mythological and ideological tropes as resources. They do so by linking these moralistic identities to market-based resources, which allowed them “to venerate and validate their own ideological beliefs and values while casting different ideological views . . . as antagonistic threats to a sacrosanct moral order.” Likewise, Kozinets and Handelman (2004) show the use of ideology to construct the identity of oppositional groups with the goal of contesting the moral order around consumption generally, in order to broker broader ideological change. Taken together, these socio-cultural investigations anchor on substantive human values (Slater 2011 p. 35), and illustrate how those values reflect ideological positions that inform one aspect of consumers’ social action, namely consumption. These studies also demonstrate that the rules, processes, conventions, and accepted relations within market-based institutional environments are at least in part ideologically constituted, highlighted through consumers’ attempts to legitimate reconfigurations of such arrangements.

While the studies above have investigated ideology in the context of consumption-driven meaning making at the level of consumers and consumption, what about marketers? Prior work from Holt (2002; 2004; 2010) highlights that marketers are adept at generating ideologically-informed cultural materials. Handelman et al. (2010 p. 35) demonstrate how marketers engage in ideological framing in order to overcome the limits of the fluid contexts within which strategic decisions must be made. This is consistent with the notion of marketing as a cultural technology (Slater 2011), suggesting de-centered ideological commitments on the part of marketers. Thompson and Tian (2008) and Peñaloza (2000; 2001) have built theory with respect to this position, highlighting the processes by which marketers produce cultural meanings through commercial myth-making (Peñaloza 2000 p. 82). In all of these studies, marketers commodify certain heterogeneous ideological, or mythological, identities in accordance with deliberate framing attempts (Thompson and Tian 2008; see also Thompson 2004). In this way, marketers seek to strategically legitimate particular market-based institutional designs (Carson et al. 1999) through positioning of products and services.

The variability present in market-based institutional arrangements, as chronicled in the studies discussed above, suggests that social structures represent a form of reified ideology, embodied in institutions and institutional arrangements (Friedland and Alford 1991; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Institutions are socially constructed through the beliefs and practices of individuals (Berger and Luckmann 1966/2008; Castoriadis 1987), suggesting that ideology informs the social relationships of particular institutions. Further, ideological commitments represented by institutions are malleable, particularly as they are forced to adapt and react to social disruptions (Holt and Cameron 2010). This fundamental malleability manifests in contests, undertaken by consumers and marketers, which leverage ideology as a way to establish new configurations of institutional arrangements.

Building upon earlier work in sociology and psychology, and in particular that of Pierre Bourdieu, field theory has emerged as an approach to understanding the interplay of individuals, forms of collective action, and meso/macro social structures (Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Martin 2003; 2009; 2011). While predominantly used to understand configurations of social actors with respect to particular issues (Hoffman 1999), field theory has also been used

to understand how ideology creates anchor points (Kozinets 2008; Zizek 1989/2008), around which individuals and institutions can root their identities.

This presentation will set the conceptual stage for the rest of the session by explaining and illustrating a field theoretic approach to market arrangements by examining the emergence of the 3-D printing market. This conceptual understanding and application of a field theoretic approach will help frame the empirical papers that follow in this session.

Professional Contests and the Emergence of Social Media as an Institutional Field

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Social media is emerging as a domain of discourse and practice that potentially intersects with many industries and fields. Previous research has studied the emergence of industries and consumption practices, detailing the process through which industries (Humphreys 2010), consumption practices (Giesler 2012), and market segments (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013) become integrated with dominant norms and values. Yet most of these studies have centered around company-consumer dynamics. We aim to examine inter-field dynamics in the legitimation process. Using Abbott’s (1988) theory of the system of professions, we examine the process through which different professional fields contend for control over the processes, practices, and tools broadly labeled “social media,” which may be conceptualized as an emerging field (Maguire, Hardy, Lawrence 2004). How do contests between rival fields play out and what are the results of these contests for the meanings of the new domain?

Abbot argues that professions vie for control over particular fields of knowledge and defend boundaries of knowledge against outsiders. He says, “Study of organizational forms can indeed show how certain occupations control their knowledge and its application. But it cannot tell why those forms emerge when they do or why they sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. Only the study of competition can accomplish that.” (1988, p. 2). The empirical question, then, is how professions vie for control over particular domains of knowledge and defend those claims against rivals. Although Abbott’s framework has been used widely to understand knowledge contests in established fields as diverse as healthcare (Scott 2000), higher education (Slaughter 2004), and accounting (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006), we use it to examine dominance for knowledge over new technological processes and innovations.

The professional formations that result from these contests over new technologies have critical importance for understanding the structuring of consumer life. For example, if the field of journalism were to dominate social media, it would infuse the domain with principles based on the civil sphere, a watch-dog ethos, but perhaps also a short term, headline-driven cycle of attention. On the other hand, if marketing were to come to dominate the new field, a different set of norms and values—namely measurement, prediction of behavior, and other logics would come to the fore. That is, certain orders of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) might emerge that would have been unrealized if the contest had ended differently. For instance, Marwick (2013) shows how the norms and values of a particular tech culture shaped meanings of status and even particular functions of social media such as self-branding, functions that, in turn, can shape consumer subjectivities.

To understand the process through which professions contend over the domain of social media, we conducted a study of public discourse during the period of its emergence from 2008 to 2013. We collected all articles that mentioned “social media” in the three highest

circulation newspapers in the United States, the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today (n=6,877). Using qualitative and quantitative content analysis, we examined the emerging logics for understanding the new phenomenon and analyzed the strategies by which different fields claimed dominion over particular aspects of the new field.

We find that various professions – including marketing, entertainment media, journalism, and information technology – as well as loosely affiliated institutional entrepreneurs, vie for some control over the emerging field of “social media.” These groups engage in institutional work to stake a claim over the jurisdiction and its associated knowledge, practices, and tools. Four prominent ways in which the professions contest the field are through: professionalization attempts, issue translation, knowledge generation and assertion, and field-specific practice development.

First, the professions try to assert their place in the field through professionalization attempts such as establishing domain-relevant associations or sub-associations and forming relationships with degree granting institutions that can train people to specialize in social media. This work helps the professions to formalize and organize their approach towards the field, as well as to gain legitimacy by partnering with credible organizations such as universities. Professionalization has previously been associated with the institutionalization of fields (Lounsbury 2002).

Second, the professions stake claim to the emerging field by engaging in issue translation. That is, they demonstrate that the issues over which they hold cognitive legitimacy to professionally address are also significant in the domain of social media. For example, marketers might claim that understanding consumers is an important component of social media, or journalists might argue that public discussion is a central aspect of the field. In making such claims and translating these issues into the emerging field, professions attempt to transfer their legitimacy into the domain as well, constructing the shape of the field in the process.

Third, the professions contest the domain by generating and asserting abstract knowledge about the field. Abbott (1988) asserts that developing such knowledge is central to making legitimate claims of professional jurisdiction. The professions engage in such behavior by publishing white papers, funding academic research (e.g. MSI), providing outlets for dissemination and debate (e.g. conferences), etc.

Fourth, the professions contest their positions by engaging in field-specific practices that solve societal needs. Marketers deliver products and services to consumers via social media, journalists deliver news, the entertainment industry delivers content, etc. Abbott (1988) suggests that professions which fail to offer solutions to societal needs associated with their work risk losing relevance and control over their jurisdiction. The professions seek to avert this fate by developing practices that solve needs which are at the intersection of their traditional jurisdiction and the emerging field of social media.

Understanding professional contests can help us better understand the forces that structure consumer relationships with technology, from norms and values associated with using social media to material infrastructure of particular social media tools (e.g. presence of advertising, mobile features, etc.). Our findings have the potential contribute to consumer research on the integration of technology into consumer life (Giesler 2008; Kozinets 2008) and better understand the process of institutionalization that produces so many structuring conditions for consumer choice and practices (Martin and Schouten 2013; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013).

Market Evolution Through Shifts in Institutional Logics

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Institutional theories in organizational theory and sociology posit that individuals and organizations exist within larger institutional environments that contain taken-for-granted social, cultural, and symbolic meaning systems that define their social reality. These environments are subject to “logics,” both symbolic and material organizing principles that direct and circumscribe thoughts, decisions, and behaviors of individuals and organizations via “socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules” (Friedland and Alford 1991; Thornton and Ocasio 1999, p. 804). Recent work in marketing illustrates the centrality of institutional environments and logics to understanding dynamics of markets. Scholars have shown how institutional environments impact creation and evolution of markets and how market actors may challenge as well as draw on institutional logics to change markets (Giesler 2008, 2012; Humphreys 2010; Martin and Schouten 2014; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). In this article, we extend on these theoretical accounts of market dynamics by exploring how markets may become subject to multiple logics and the complex institutional work of institutional actors in augmenting/repressing these logics.

We selected the United States yoga market for our research context as it provides a vivid case of historical plurality and variation in its institutional logics. We conceptualize the yoga market as an organizational field consisting of multiple brands (yoga studios, gyms, schools, yoga gurus), consumers, and regulatory agencies (government, professional associations). Through a historical analysis of the last three decades, we seek to identify the institutional logics that guide actions and understandings in this market, understand the mechanisms by which they diffuse and shift, and the conditions that support their sustenance.

We collected data from a variety of archival sources to construct an analytical narrative of the logics guiding the yoga market. First, to study the evolution of logics constituting the market over time, we examined newspaper articles about yoga. We collected articles with the word “yoga” in the headline and the lead paragraph from the New York Times (n = 868) and the Washington Post (n = 604) published from 1980 to 2012. Following a procedure similar to one in Humphrey’s (2010) study on the legitimization process of casino gambling, we began by qualitatively analyzing the newspaper articles, coding for themes and characteristics of logics. The three field level logics of spirituality, medicine, fitness and a societal logic of commodification that pervade the yoga market emerged as a result of this analysis. Then we conducted an automated quantitative content analysis of the population of articles from 1980 to 2009 using the computer program called LIWC (Pennebaker, Francis, and Booth 2007) to assess the changes in attention to logics over time.

Our analysis illustrates how the plural logics of spirituality, medicine, and fitness characterized the yoga market with the medicine and fitness logics gaining increased attention over time and how distinct market actors sought to amplify and repress these logics in line with their interests and agendas. Our qualitative analysis shows that over time institutional entrepreneurs (journals, brands, institutions) attempt to strengthen/weaken normative associations with yoga. Our findings reveal a set of institutional work that actors in this market adopt to influence organizational arrangements. These strategies range from creating normative associations (Yoga Alliance, Yoga Fit) and advocacy (Hindu American Foundation, Open Source Yoga Unity) to changing rule structures (Hindu Government) to name a few examples. (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). The institutional

work of these distinct actors not only helps sustain the plural logics in the market but also impact the relationship amongst the logics.

Exploring the dynamics in a market with multiple logics, the contributions of our study to extant research on market evolution and change in institutional arrangements are threefold. First, our analysis documents how plural logics are created and sustained in markets. Our analysis reveals that markets do not necessarily shift from one dominant logic to another (c.f. Humphreys 2010) or are organized around two countervailing ideologies that exist in tensions with each other (c.f. Giesler 2012), but rather can be characterized by plural logics with brands with distinct interests influencing the relationality among logics that permeate the marketplace. Second, while previous marketing studies focus on managers' and media's framing strategies to account for the conflicts in markets, our analysis brings to attention how multi brand contestations undergird the balances and tensions crafted among logics in markets. Third, extending on the framing and brand revitalizing strategies, we uncover a series of institutional work that actors in pluralistic fields can adopt to legitimize particular institutional arrangements.

Consumption Rituals and the Complexities of Institutional Resistance

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This presentation focuses on the complexities of contesting social institutions by examining a context where people do not celebrate a dominant consumption ritual in their community where the ritual elements are the primary vehicle by which community members connect. Collective rituals create "conventions that set up visible public definitions" of who one is, in what stage of life, and to what groups one belongs (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 65). Through successful participation in collective rituals, individuals reaffirm their relationship to others in the group performing the ritual, to associated institutions, and to shared beliefs (Etzioni 2004, p. 11). They reaffirm emotional ties and group solidarity (Bell 1997; Cheal 1988; Collins 2004; Durkheim 1973; Etzioni 2000). Ritual is also a "tool for social and cultural jockeying; it is a performative medium for the negotiation of power and relationships" (Bell 1997, p. 79; Bourdieu 1977, pp. 36-37). As a result, when one makes a choice to not engage in a consumption ritual that is dominant in their community, that individual risks not reaffirming their relationship with celebrators. As such, not participating is potentially disintegrative (Etzioni 2004, p. 22) and marginalizing, because connections are not reaffirmed (Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). Because of this, institutions like collective rituals are extremely powerful. Despite a healthy focus on collective ritual participation, particularly on gift giving, in consumer research, fewer studies have focused analytically on consumption rituals as powerful social institutions nor resistance to these types of institutions. This presentation focuses on understanding the complex choices non-celebrants must make and the ways non-celebrants interact with ritual elements to both resist and at times engage with this dominant institution.

Recent research has examined the ways that consumers use marketplace resources to contest existing institutional arrangements based on their ideological beliefs or identity (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013, Izberk-Bilgin 2012, Scaraboto and Fischer 2013, Thompson 2014). This paper builds on that work as well as research on consumption rituals (Otnes and Lowrey 2004; Rook 1985; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991) by focusing on the complexities of not celebrating dominant collective rituals, where the rituals literally dominate the social, cultural and political landscape. I use an institutional and cultural frame to build on Swidler (2001) whose

research focuses on how culture is used and how institutionally informed cultural resources enable and constrain meaning making and action. As well as Lamont and Molnar's (2002) research on symbolic boundaries. While the meaning making and boundary work that occurs by celebrants of rituals has been the focus of research, here I focus on the problems created by collective consumption rituals and the implicit and explicit strategies and practices deployed to navigate around and through rituals as dominant social and cultural institutions.

The context for this study is Christmas in America, the most dominant collective consumption ritual in the US. Unlike some rituals, it is overly inclusive, incorporating even those who prefer to not participate, what Brahm Levey (2006) describes as "smothering", meaning that at times the ritual serves to marginalize non-celebrants through failing to recognize their identities as non-celebrants. The data draws from a project where I conducted 27 interviews with and collected 20 diaries from Americans who choose for ideological reasons to *not* celebrate Christmas. Theoretical and purposive sampling techniques were used to understand a range of decisions and meanings related to Christmas practices. The participants in this study range in age and SES and are engaged in a variety of social groups in their communities (i.e. work/school, leisure, children's activities). The processes of data collection and analysis were iterative. The data were organized using the NVIVO software program, which was also used for preliminary grounded theory analysis (Spiggle 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1998). After initial grounded theory analysis of interviews with Jewish informants, additional data was collected purposively based on emergent themes and analyzed.

I find that for much of the year, boundaries that mark differences between individuals in the same community remain in the background, yet during the Christmas season, the ritual creates a meaningful divide between celebrants and non-celebrants. Most informants are not "anti-Christmas." Instead, the dominance of the institution creates a set of problems in their lives as retailers, government offices, media, workplaces and schools operate as if most participate in the non-religious consumption elements (sending cards, giving gifts, going to parties, decorating, etc), and deploy these as tools for relationship work amongst community members. While these ritual elements are not themselves religious, they are nested within ideological practices that run counter to identities and beliefs of non-celebrants.

This dominant institution creates a tension for non-celebrants between their goals of maintaining relationships with celebrators and protecting their and their children's identities as non-celebrators. To alleviate this tension between these two countervailing goals, they must actively manage the symbolic boundary between themselves and the dominant celebrating group. Thus, beyond just resisting these institutional forces, informants use dominant ritual elements as cultural resources for boundary work. I find that they contingently deploy four strategies based on these relational and identity goals: participating, disengaging, appropriating, and traversing. Participating involves not resisting and instead engaging in the ritual elements in service of relational work, backgrounding the symbolic boundary between celebrators and non-celebrators. Meanwhile disengaging means actively rejecting smothering ritual elements through everyday practices such as not attending parties. Appropriating is complex and involves using ritual elements from the dominant institution for their latent relationship purposes but stripping them of their original meaning to facilitate connections between non-celebrants, and traversing is the attempt at using ritual elements to both do relationship and identity work, maintaining and minimizing the symbolic boundary. By bringing together research on

consumption rituals, institutional resistance, and boundary work, and by focusing on the broader social context of non-celebrants lives, the presentation builds on all three areas by showing the complexities of resisting dominant social institutions.

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