

# The Pedagogy of Urban Media Literacy

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## Abstract

This paper is derived from my experience in teaching "Urban Images in Media and Film" at Columbia College Chicago. The course employs an interdisciplinary humanities approach to the study of the city, analyzing not only how images and meaning are shaped by the media arts but also how students can become empowered through everyday and media practice. The course, therefore, facilitates a critical space for self-reflection on the teaching and learning of media in the urban setting and its relationship to the development of critical thinking skills in the liberal education curriculum. The paper has two parts. In the first section, I explore the general pedagogical issues in teaching Urban Images. In the second section, I explain the structure of one unit of the course, emphasizing the pedagogical strategies for empowering students by cultivating critical, counterhegemonic artistic and cultural responses to mediated images.

## An Overview of the Course and its Pedagogy

The catalog description of the course states that "Urban Images in Media and Film is a survey of how metropolitan life is portrayed by film, television, the press, and other media. Students will discover how the city is depicted by artists, writers, and filmmakers to convey a philosophy of urban life. Students will also learn to analyze film and documentaries and discuss ethnicity, migration, crime, and fear of the city." Through their work in class discussion, short papers, examination, projects, and term papers, students demonstrate success in meeting the following learning outcomes: "Upon completion of the course, students should: demonstrate a base of historical and sociological knowledge about urbanism; demonstrate familiarity with a core body of film and video concerning the city; demonstrate the ability to offer informed and compelling written and oral critique of urban issues in media; demonstrate knowledge of and critical integration of a body of writing on urban issues."

This paper, and the course, argues that it is the role of the liberal education teacher not only to show students of arts and media that they are responsible for the images they create but to provide the skills by which to understand and analyze their own practices of making meaning. Whether or not students themselves hail from an urban center, the course conveys the central role of such images in shaping public policy and opinion. Further, while the messages conveyed by those cultural forms are not always consistent or uniform, the themes are largely negative (Fischer, 1984). As the industrial city evolved, "it also emerged as a discursive construction... a charged imaginative creation of fantasy, terror, and desire... [T]he city was cast as the necessary mirror or American civilization, and fundamental categories of American reality--whiteness, heterosexuality, domestic virtue, feminine purity, middle-class respectability--were constituted in opposition to what was said to exist in cities" (Orsi, 1999, p. 5). Therefore, we practice asking questions about the urban politics of images and representation. We investigate not only anti-urban bias and urban stereotypes but also the strategies of resistance to these dominant views, emphasizing our own political accountability as citizens and creators of culture. "Central to a pedagogy of representation is providing students with the opportunities to deconstruct the mythic notion that images, sounds, and texts merely express reality" (Giroux, 1994, p. 88). When we study the urban politics of the popular media genre referred to as "Reality TV," students are faced head on with their faith in the "real." The class session in which we study the production codes and ideological values governing programs such as "Cops," "America's Most Wanted," and the various ubiquitous newsmagazines, is almost always a breakthrough moment for student self-reflection. Students begin to uncover the ways in which video realism is a formatting strategy that

tells a very particular urban story (Andersen, 1995). Above all, they become engaged in the vital enterprise of learning not only how but that the real is mediated, produced rather than given. As Trinh T. Minh-ha (in Giroux, 1994) has remarked, "To address the question of the production relations...is endlessly to reopen the question: How is the real ...produced? Rather than catering to it, striving to capture and discover its truth as a concealed or lost object, it is therefore important also to keep asking, how is truth being ruled" (p. 88)?

In bringing the tools of the liberal arts to the critical analysis of images in the everyday world, I have tried to focus on "demystifying the act and process of representing by revealing how meanings are produced within relations of power that narrate identities through history, social forms, and modes of ethical address that appear objective, universally valid, and consensual" (Giroux, 1994, p. 87). As art and media practitioners, our students are already predisposed to a healthy skepticism regarding images. They are open to learning the language of critique, especially in terms of the hegemonic nature of mass media. What they seem to have little recognition for are the complex ways in which they, as both consumers and creators of culture, can resist such dominant representations. Insofar as the core of Columbia's mission is the education of students "who will author the culture of their times," the larger challenge is to provide our students with a sense of possibility and alternatives (Columbia College Chicago Catalog, 1997, p. 5). In the remainder of this paper, I will explore a variety of everyday artistic and cultural practices in order to understand the possibility for and nature of counterhegemonic media practice.

### **Artistic and Cultural Responses to Mediated Images**

In choosing the focus for this paper, I've selected one unit of the Urban Images course, entitled "Little Cities: (Im)Migrant Communities of Resistance," which comes at a mid-point in our fourteen week semester and is designed to shift the emphasis of study and implicate students in a new way. The instructional materials include scholarly essays, personal essays, and mediated images covering topics of vernacular architecture, foodways, and ethnic religious festivals. Central to this strategy is recognition of the diverse makeup of Columbia College. "Columbia College's student body is representative of the rich diversity of a modern metropolitan area," with almost forty percent of students coming from minority groups (Columbia College Chicago Catalog, 1997, p. 10). Because so many of the prominent urban stereotypes are linked to the denigration of urban peoples, especially immigrants and migrants, this unit focuses on the self-defining and self-affirming everyday practices of such peoples. Typical of this anti-immigrant sentiment is the famous Plan of Chicago, devised by groundbreaking architects Burnham and Bennett. Their 1909 Plan (in Campbell & Kean, 1997) suggests that the "time has come to bring order out of the chaos incident to rapid growth, and especially to the influx of people of many nationalities without common traditions or habits of life" (p. 164). Commenting on this statement, Campbell and Kean (1997) point out that Burnham and Bennett's language indicates that "the most well-intentioned [urban] planning has within it precise ideological purposes, in this case, to control the immigrant masses and prevent disorder on the streets" (pp. 164-5). Because such views dominate not only mediated images but also texts of urban planning, literature, and journalism, the course materials for Unit Seven emphasize the resistant practices of urban immigrants and migrants.

Alongside this content emphasis, the unit places particular value on pedagogic strategies for cultivating counterhegemonic artistic and cultural responses to mediated images.[1] It attempts to address a pedagogical problem which erupted in a variety of ways, best addressed by one student's despairing comment in class. She, a student filmmaker, had been doing a fine job of analyzing the many stereotypes of urban places

and urban peoples. So fine, in fact, that she put forth earnestly, "I can see that the mass media is hegemonic. What I don't get is what we are supposed to do about it. In fact, there are no films that go against these stereotypes." I remain tremendously grateful to this student for both naming and requesting what she needed. In response to her concern, I promised, "By the end of the semester, you will see lots of filmmakers, writers, and activists who are going against the grain. I promise that if they are invisible to you now, they won't be by the end of the term." What I realized, due to her honesty, was the hunger our students have for alternative notions of the real. I realize how vividly they long for other ways of being and thinking. And above all, how much they want to find and name artistic practices of resistance.

The task became creating a fuller experience of the pedagogy of representation. As part of the process of the pedagogy of representation, teachers must also "offer students the tools to challenge any notion of subjectivity grounded in a view of history as unchanging, monolithic, or static. Identities are always subject, as Stuart Hall points out, to the play of history, culture, and power. Consequently, identities undergo constant transformations" (Giroux, 1994, p. 88). What my student so clearly expressed was the failure of our pedagogy to offer our students strategies of resistance and a sense of agency. Thus the pedagogic problem that defines the work of Unit Seven is the task of cultivating counterhegemonic artistic and cultural responses to mediated images. What my students sensed was missing from our explorations was a more complex approach that would allow for investigating not only anti-urban bias and urban stereotypes but also creating strategies of resistance to these dominant views, emphasizing our own political accountability as citizens and creators of culture.[2] What remains of my remarks is a presentation of how I implemented that strategy in terms of instructional materials and pedagogical approach.

### *Step One: Defining the Counterhegemonic*

We begin with the process of defining the problem. Student reading and analysis turns toward Joseph Sciorra's "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City" (1996). This essay aims to create an alternative discourse of urban architecture by focusing on the counterhegemonic nature of the Puerto Rican casitas of the South Bronx. Casitas, a form of vernacular architecture, are small shack-like structures created of found materials, reproducing a pastiche of Puerto Rican architectural styles. Often opening onto a veranda or garden area, the casitas are painted in the bright colors of Puerto Rican rural traditions. Over and against the clichéd images of the South Bronx offered by political candidates, news reporters, and film directors, Sciorra (1996) wishes to re-view the vernacular architecture of the casitas and their impact on the community's vision of itself. In an area most often imaged and imagined as the Frontier where the Wilderness begins, a zone occupied by "savages" contained by Fort Apache, Sciorra (1996) reflects on the "struggles of people of color to change the conditions in which they live, by creating space of their own design that serve as locations of resistance to a system of inequity and domination" (p. 61).

This analysis depends on the analytical framework of cultural hegemony, articulated by Gramsci and developed by Raymond Williams (in Sciorra, 1996). According to their work, "hegemonic process involves the creation, manipulation, and maintenance of cultural symbols by the dominant class that serves to achieve a consensus among subordinate groups to the legitimization of the existing social order as controlled by the former" (p. 78). This cultural hegemony is maintained through formal institutions, "such as schools, churches, or the media, as well as through artistic, intellectual or scientific rends or formations" (Sciorra, 1996, p. 78). However, and this was the most

useful phase of the lesson for our students, there exist at any given moment cultural forces that undermine the prevailing hegemony. "One way that individuals and social groups contest the existing hegemony is through alternative forms of cultural expression and ways of being that critique the dominant conception of the world" (Sciorra, 1996, p. 79). Sciorra (1996) names casita architecture as one such element of the culture of contestation. "The built environment is a stage for community celebrations such as rites of passage, religious feasts, and ethnic festivities. In addition, these feasts invariably include the preparation and serving of typical food. These cultural performances bring together landscape, architecture, music and foodways in powerful and emotionally charged ways" (p. 81). The casitas, from their method of construction (communally through accrual) to their social functions, accomplish a complex set of counterhegemonic tasks, including physical autobiography and landmarking memory.

### *Step Two: Naming the Counterhegemonic in Everyday Practice*

"The vibrant, life-affirming culture of New York casitas is a counter voice questioning political negligence and economic tyranny that have left so much destruction in their wake. These [are] creative and courageous alternative behaviors – planting, building, singing, dancing, eating, and laughing on embers and ruins..."(Sciorra, 1996, p. 86). The rest of the unit is structured on our analysis of this list of "Alternative Behaviors." The aim is to present students with a notion of everyday practice (praxis) which redefines the everyday sphere in political terms. [3] Simply asking the question of how planting, building, singing, dancing, and eating can be understood as alternative behaviors sets in motion a vigorous discussion. Students are accustomed to applying political critique to the limited sphere of professional politics, to economics and perhaps even to media. But they are shocked and exhilarated to confront everyday practice in such terms. Above all, they are thrilled to see through a new lens that revalues everyday practice in terms of cultural resistance. [4]

To expand our consideration of this notion, we turn to several media texts. First, a documentary called *Little Italy* and second, the opening scenes of George Tillman's film *Soul Food* (1997). We begin by viewing a brief section of the documentary called "The Table as Temple," which presents a variety of commentaries on Italian-American culinary traditions. Participants who represent a diversity of Italian-American voices describe the social and cultural values attached to ethnic foodways. Students then respond to these notions, attempting to process, question, clarify, and concretize Sciorra's (1996) notion of everyday practices of resistance. I ask students to consider eating and foodways as a form of counterhegemonic practice. Students have passionately taken up this subject, providing thoughtful reflections on the cultural loss involved in moving to a fast-food diet. We've extended our analysis to include reflection on the inner city marketing practices of major fast food chains, strategies that target African-Americans in particular ways. Indeed, I've witnessed amazing student epiphanies that link fast food (consumed at higher rates by poor people of color) to the loss of cultural memory. A television student from Japan testified that the materials on food and counterhegemonic practice had changed her self-understanding and everyday practice. Her moving letter to me commented, "I was so impressed [by *Soul Food*] because I never ever [considered that] food [preserves] cultural memory...I recognized that I'm forgetting my [own] cultural memory. I've been in the U.S. for three years...However, I haven't eaten my country's food at all for a year...So after studying food which is the cultural memory, I was impressed but a little sad." This is one example of how intellectual reflection on everyday practice can prove transformative in our classrooms. Once students have opened up a set of questions around this idea, we then move to an analysis of the cinematic strategies of *Soul Food*. The purpose of this visual text is to provide a bridge which clarifies the notion of counterhegemonic everyday practice and extends it to strategies of artistic counterhegemonics. [5]

### *Step Three: Identifying the Counterhegemonic in Artistic Practice*

We analyze Soul Food's opening scenes in terms of formal construction, editing, music, establishing shots, character presentation, and dialogue. Since this has been the bulk of our practice during the first half of the semester, students are remarkably adept at identifying the many ways that Soul Food resists dominant urban representations. The opening scenes contain no gang-bangers, no rap music, no shoot outs, and no burned out cars or houses. In fact, the film opens by panning a family photo album. The images therein emphasize generational continuity, family solidarity, and achievements such as graduations. The narrator, a young African-American man, speaks articulately and passionately about his parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and extended family. The establishing shots include a family wedding and a quiet, middle-class African-American enclave on Chicago's South Side. Finally, the film's narrative is structured around the continuity of family meals. Scenes of present and past events show the group around Big Mama's table. Dialogue in the kitchen emphasizes the intergenerational and counterhegemonic work of preserving historical memory through the culinary traditions of soul food. When we discuss how the film portrays eating as a counterhegemonic practice, we can then connect these reflections to the artistic choices of the filmmaker. The stakes of this discussion are raised considerably for our students because the film is one of the rare cinematic productions which focuses on Chicago's South Side, which features a predominantly African-American cast, and which was created by a multi-ethnic team of artists, headed by George Tillman, a Columbia alum.

At the end of this exercise students have not only redefined their everyday practices in terms of cultural politics, but have also created a template of concrete artistic strategies used by an alumnus in action, an artist who makes these issues tangible in a traditional media format. Our systematic analysis of how the filmmaker creates images meaningfully fosters a pedagogy of representation that establishes "spaces: where meaning can be rewritten, produced and constructed rather than merely asserted" (Giroux, 1994, p. 90). The pedagogic strategy of this segment of the class might best be described as a pedagogy of place. "Ethnicity as a representational politics pushes against the boundaries of cultural containment and becomes a site of pedagogical struggle in which the legacies of dominant histories, codes, and relations become unsettled and thus open to being challenged and rewritten" (Giroux, 1994, p. 91). This unit of Urban Images reframes the stereotypical monolithic city presented in dominant anti-urban images and considers instead the fluid and dynamic little cities created by cultures of resistance. In thinking about and naming those cities of resistance we turn to the everyday and artistic practices of immigrant, migrant, ethnic, racial, and cultural groups—those multiple groups precisely so demonized in the anti-urban images of mass media. [6]

This pedagogy of place is anticipated in the next text of our class session, bell hooks' "Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice" (1995). She describes the radical project of learning to think about space politically. She asserts that she "learned to see freedom as always and intimately linked to the issue of transforming space and claims that concern with space is a mode of oppositional practice that documents a "cultural genealogy of resistance" (pp. 146-7). hooks argues that the documentation of black vernacular architecture and landscape design is "absolutely essential, because in today's world we are led to believe that lack of material privilege means that one can have no meaningful constructive engagement with one's living space and certainly no relationship to aesthetics" (p. 149). In responding to this brief, yet provocative essay, students have often reconsidered their imagination of the "projects," which dominate the west and south sides of Chicago. Indeed, in light of these comments, they often for the first time consider the psychological damage of proscribed cubicles of identical urban space. They begin to imagine the cultural and personal loss attendant on the devastating politics of property played out in urban public housing. Although "public housing never housed more than a minority of the residents of any major American city," it is "part of the perceptions game, one of the symbols that helped drive white flight (Suarez, 1999, p. 36). Ray Suarez (1999) argues that it "may also be one of the things most easily changed. A public housing development...with a population that's virtually all poor and all black, expresses in microcosm what many Americans see when they look at the entire city. The housing project and the city itself are seen as places of chaos, crime and social breakdown" (p.36). Thus, this critical reflection on place is vital to our

students' lives as citizens. To extend the range of hooks' commentary on place and space, we move to another set of materials concerning everyday practice and urban space.

To extend our consideration of the politicization of space, we move from the politics of private space to those of public space. Here we turn to urban public religious ritual from nonmajority religious cultures. The text materials draw on the rich traditions of urban ethnic religious practices in public space. In Chicago, as in New York, "giants of commerce and industry built skyscrapers in the central business district. In the neighborhoods of the city the little people, the immigrants the ethnic minorities, built houses of worship as symbols of their identity and their ethnic pride. The church or synagogue was always the finest building the congregation could afford. It was often a symbol of continuity with the past, a link with the Old World, as well as being a center of social life and worship. Here the ethnic languages were spoken and the national traditions were preserved" (Lane & Kezys, 1981, p. 17). In light of this insight, our materials turn to the counterhegemonic role dramatized in public urban spaces affiliated with these churches.

Among these, we consider Robert Orsi's (1995) groundbreaking sociological work on the religious feasts of Italian Harlem, combined with short analyses of feature film and documentary video footage of street processions from Mexican-American and Polish-American urbanites. The marking of sacred space in the practice of popular religious devotion suggests a love of place in poor urban neighborhoods not often taken into account and yet critical to a complex understanding of such communities (Orsi, 1995). In neighborhoods often imaged as "slums," these rituals emphasize the solidarity of neighborhood life. Most often portrayed as people who simply want to get out as fast as possible, neighborhood dwellers often display a passionate love for the neighborhood. According to Orsi (1995), "It could be a quite sensuous love, an intense sensitivity to the sounds, smells, and tastes of the neighborhood. Italian Harlem had a taste for its residents, the taste of good bread and sausage sold in the local stores; and it had a smell of grapes and tomatoes and peppers and Italian cooking which survives in memory longer than the polluted air of the place" (p. 47). Orsi's analysis links foodways to public popular religion for several crucial reasons. These are both vehicles of counterhegemonic memory, linked to identity and community. His analysis of the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Italian Harlem points to a simple but radical truth of urban immigrant communities. Even in poor, densely populated, and physically deteriorating places, the neighborhood was a place that people came to love, a place where—against the odds—immigrants and their children created a community life. [7] In stark contrast to the popular imagination of urban immigrant ghettos, counterhegemonic urban practice must begin by assessing the radicality of love of place. [8]

To bring Orsi's documents to life, we turn to a clip from Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather II* (1974). This sequence involves a panoramic view of the "feast" of San Rocco established in a miraculous tracking shot along the street and across the rooftops of Little Italy. This shot, apart from its clear artistic value, captivates students who may not have had access to such public displays of non-majority religious culture. Students are fascinated, but tend to relegate such images, lovely though they may be, to the dustbin of history. Therefore, we follow this brief feature film segment with raw video documentary footage from recent street processions in Chicago. This footage (Zika, 1999) documents the Good Friday reenactment of Christ's Passion in the Mexican-American Pilsen enclave of the city's southwest side. [9] Additional footage (Gunkel & Gunkel, 1999) presents a sunrise Easter procession in the Polish-American enclave of Ukrainian Village located on the near northwest side of Chicago. [10] In these video documents, the artistic aura of Coppola's marvelous production design is gone. The historical patina of Production Designer Dean Tavoularis' lush color palette has evaporated. Here we consider unedited, untutored, video footage of local passion. Once again, I ask students what they see. Students tend to fall uncharacteristically silent after viewing this material.

Perhaps the notion of seeing everyday religious practice as a form of cultural resistance is particularly difficult for our students to grasp. In the dominant view of a secular, Protestant, even post-Christian culture, such acts most often seem like archaic throwbacks, perhaps quaint and superstitious folkways that add "local color" to gentrifying neighborhoods. These nativist views do not take into account the fact that these processions are part of living and changing identities, made anew through such ritual actions. The radically counterhegemonic import of such public

religious practice is more easily understood when posed against the dominant ethos. In her thoughtful essays on memory and cultural identity, Helen Barolini (1999) recalls the shame she felt about Italian American homes, gardens, names, and churches, which seemed embarrassing—too ornate, too foreign. She suggests that it was the pristine, classic simplicity of the “white new England church steeple on the village green to which taste was expected to conform, not the rococo excesses of Catholic sanctuaries, much less the gaudy, overwrought, paganized pageants of saints enacted in the streets” (Barolini, 1999, p. 168).

One might speculate that students, trained in seeing through the dominant cultural imagination of Protestantism, are confused when trying to read images and signs that either predate or contradict that imagination. In Protestant individualized space the distinction is maintained between interior and exterior, between street and house as opposed to familial Catholic space in which the domestication of public space is palpable. Molded in the traditions, iconography, languages and religious vernacular of ancestors, these events function as acts of cultural resistance. Rather than serving as retrograde and conservative actions these religious processions, in the tradition of pilgrimages, serve “not so much to maintain society’s status quo as to recollect, and even to presage, an alternative mode of social being, a world where *communitas*, rather than a bureaucratic social structure, is preeminent” (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 39). In particular, they continue to be acts of resistance that mark the occupation of ethnic enclaves by a gentrifying force. Elsewhere in the course, students study the mainstream media’s portrayal of gentrification (Smith, 1992). We also include a guest speaker visit by a local community activist fighting gentrification in the primarily Latino Pilsen neighborhood. Thus, they are able to link various forms of activist political and religious praxis on a continuum of alternative and counterhegemonic behaviors. These topics are most appropriate to study in Chicago, renowned for its diversity of ethnic neighborhoods and most certainly its churches. It is estimated that more than 2000 churches stand within the city limits (Lane & Kezys, 1981). These very public religious rituals transform urban space into sacred space, an act most certainly defiant of the anti-urban images of decay and despair. In the ethnic urban context, religious ritual can be read as another form of alternative behavior. [11]

#### *Step Four: Reflections on Cultures of Resistance*

What Unit Seven attempts to achieve is a pedagogy that moves from merely reading off the meanings of images to interrogating the conditions that produce mediated reality. “At issue here is the need to develop pedagogical practices that do more than read off ideologies as they are produced within particular texts” (Giroux, 1994, p. 90). In interrogating how the real is produced, students open a new space of possibility, the space of their own narratives and images. Our students’ urban subjectivities are another form of urban creation. “City people have been challenged to make identities for themselves at the intersection of communities, between their experiences of the world and the accounts that outsiders give of them...Urban subjectivities are situational...”(Orsi, 1999, p. 54). By linking artistic practices to everyday practices in the common context of counterhegemonic praxis, students are given a new path for personal, communal, and artistic self-definition. Indeed, simply naming practices of resistance can be a powerful pedagogical tool. “By engaging representations as historically and socially constructed texts, cultural workers can provide a site for students to create counter narratives of emancipation in which new visions, spaces, desires, and discourses can be developed that offer them the opportunity for rewriting their own histories differently within rather than outside of the discourse of power and social struggle” (Giroux, 1994, p. 90). In this interdisciplinary approach to urban study, we analyze not only how images and meaning are shaped by the media arts but also how these images and meanings shape pedagogy for artists. bell hooks (1994) speaks eloquently of her dual realization that English is the oppressor’s language but also “that this language would need to be possessed, taken, [and] claimed as a space of resistance” (p. 169). We must apply that notion to the language of images, which are both the tools of our pedagogy and our students’ work as media and arts practitioners. One quiet and

reserved student, a biracial young urbanite whose passions were graffiti art and the 1893 Chicago's World's Fair, wrote to me after the course. He commented, "I want to be able to be heard, not just fade in with the rest of the unaware sheep. I am now all about 'communities of resistance'." Above all, the pedagogy of *Urban Images* seeks to cultivate a sense of informed possibility for student voice in contributing to and creating cultures of resistance.

### Endnotes

[1] This methodology in part responds to the concern that cultural studies critique too often sees texts of popular culture as little more than containers of ideology, transmitting that ideology to duped and manipulated masses. The problem with such a view is that it leads to "a politics of simple opposition and to a criticism which is little more than a constant unmasking of dominant ideologies at work" (Bennet & Woollacott in Storey, 1996, p.35). Thus, this unit emphasizes the productive role of the audience.

[2] I use the term "culture" in the context of cultural studies, not defined primarily in aesthetic terms, but rather understood "as the texts and practices of everyday life" (*Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 1996) This use of the term allows for the further understanding of culture as a terrain of conflict and resistance, as a key site for the production and reproduction of the social relations of everyday life. This notion sees culture as an arena of "consent and resistance" (Hall in Storey, 1996, p. 2).

[3] My use of the term practices draws on Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). De Certeau argues that everyday practices—speaking, writing, walking, cooking, etc.—should not be dismissed "as merely the obscure background of social activity," but should instead be analyzed as tactics through which seemingly passive consumers act upon, resist, and function as producers of late capitalist society.

[4] This textual focus on everyday practice is also linked to the key notions of Gramsci's analysis, which according to Henry Giroux (1999), offers "the important recognition of culture as a terrain of consent and struggle, but also the political imperative to analyze how diverse groups make meaning of their lives within a variety of cultural sites and social practices in relation to and not outside of the material contexts of everyday life" (p. 15).

[5] This pedagogical practice builds on "Gramsci's recognition that the study of everyday life and popular culture needed to be incorporated strategically and performatively as part of a struggle for power and leadership..." (Giroux, 1999, p. 17).

[6] This choice of instructional focus attempts to consider the cultural studies use of hegemony theory which extends Gramscian analysis into an "ethnographic cultural analysis which takes as its object of study '[t]he lived experience which breathes life into [the]... inanimate objects [of popular culture]'" (McRobbie in Story, 1996, p. 5).

[7] As Ray Suarez (1999) notes in his provocative analysis of white flight and suburban migration, "I've spoken to hundreds of people who mourn the loss of a sense of place tied to block, school, and neighborhood church. When you talk to them further, you may also find that they were busily helping to create the new rootlessness during the years of urban change." (p. 25). His book chronicles some of those forces, including racism and fear. Suarez argues that Americans have severed "more completely the connection between place and well-being than any other people on earth... One place, we've told ourselves, is interchangeable with another, and the [suburban] landscape we've built in the last fifty years seems to bear that out" (p.18).

[8] According to Orsi (1999), Catholic urban experience was "so thoroughly articulated to place that Catholics identified their neighborhoods by the names of their churches... They celebrated this Catholic ecology in an annual round of processions, carnivals, and block parties" (p. 50).

[9] Pilsen, on the Lower West side of Chicago, originally port of entry for thousands of Europeans, esp. Bohemians, today forms the center of Chicago's flourishing Mexican community. Every year, Pilsen residents continue the Good Friday ritual of the Via Crucis. Mexican Catholics reenact the Last Supper of Christ at Providence of God Church at 18th and Union. Following a mock trial, the crowd follows "Christ" as he carries his cross along 18th Street to Harrison Park where he is "crucified." The body of Christ is then carried to St. Adalbert Church. The procession is widely covered by the mainstream media and attended by thousands of residents and spectators alike. "Unlike other celebrations, the Way of the Cross symbolizes



the suffering endured by local families as they struggle for economic survival in the city" (Pacyga & Skerrett, 1986, p. 253).

[10] Chicago's Ukrainian Village neighborhood, found in Westtown from Damen Ave. to Western Ave. on the east and west and Division St. & Chicago Ave. on the north and south, is home to a multi-ethnic population of primarily Ukrainians and Poles, although closely bordered by Mexican, Italian, and Puerto Rican communities. The neighborhood faces an ongoing battle to preserve its ethnic and religious enclave against skyrocketing property taxes and the other effects of gentrification to the north, south, east and west in Wicker Park, Humboldt Park, Grand Avenue, and East Village. St. Helen's Church is the central Polish Roman Catholic parish of the neighborhood, which is called Helenowo in Chicago Polish nomenclature.

[11] Of course, one would need to expand such analysis by emphasizing the complexity of such practices. The pedagogical emphasis of this material highlights the counterhegemonic but does not claim that such practices are merely or simply subversive or counterhegemonic.

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