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*Planchando Consciousness: Public Accountability, Call-Out
Culture, and a Praxis Sketch in Queer Activist Scenes*

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***Planchando Consciousness: Public Accountability, Call-Out
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by

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Preface: Paranoia, Political Loyalties, and Nepantla

My interest in “call-out culture” began at least 3 years ago, when I worked for a multicultural student center aiming to train students into developing a social justice political vocabulary. Through this space, I learned frameworks and words that allowed me to make sense and put into political context the experiences of growing up as a migrant gay Mexican in Idaho and eastern Oregon. I developed deep friendships, became involved with activist organizations outside the university, and developed an academic and a closeted artistic bent to what I wanted my activism to be. I felt like a badass using polysyllables like intersectionality, oppression, micro-aggressions, privilege of all sorts, and reading on histories that I never learned in my earlier educational years. But I also experienced that same loneliness and alienation I wanted to get away from for so long ever since I migrated to the States. That alienation of not “fitting in” in some of these spaces. Of not being cultured enough, gay enough, queer enough, manly enough; not Raza enough, not radical enough, not angry enough. Facing disappointing looks from local activists for not expressing overt anger at moments of injustice, being told by a militant radical that he was gonna beat the shit out of me for my quiet outlook all brought me back to that same place. That same place of alienation, of cultural rupture, of what must I do to perform the image of the in-your-face-activist in order to be accepted? In the same way I asked, what must I do to perform the anime-nerd to the white engineering students in college? What must one do to be authentic?

In that same multicultural student center, I developed communication skills to articulate and respond to the social conditions that allowed everyday discrimination and indignities I faced during high school and college—from comments like “Mexican flu” during swine flu epidemic to taunts about my parents working in the fields. In my final year in college, my cohort of co-workers called out student government for lack of inclusion, for their empty diversity rhetoric, and for their lack of efforts to address racism on campus. In the same vein, we also called one another out for any breaches of language, using an oppressive term, behaving in a way that aligned with privileged behavior like “dominating the conversation”. We sought to embody in our practice the

ideals of social justice, of inclusion, and of changing ourselves for these lofty ideals. Yet something began to gnaw at me. In the same process of “checking ourselves”, that is, of reflecting of how actions reflect privilege and what alternatives we could think of, we also began tearing at each other. One co-worker, Liz, threw a co-worker who was just learning the buzzwords of social justice under the bus. Jen was eating Chic-Fil-A, which in our time it was “problematic” to eat due to its homophobic associations. Liz took a picture of Jen, and uploaded it to GroupMe, an application for group communications where our co-workers could get information all without Jen’s knowledge. Dan, a white gay male co-worker who espoused militant queer views, saw the image and began calling out Jen for participating in homophobia. He queried whether he should invest in an organization that kills Asians, given that Jen is half Korean. That comment angered Monica, an Asian American friend and co-worker who then called out Dan for his tacit racism. When Jen accessed GroupMe and saw the thread, she responded angrily that it was very rude for Dan to disrespect her for her lack of knowledge and for his comment on Asians. In the midst of this blowup, no one mentioned Liz, until after the fact when Monica and I had a conversation about the incident. Liz eventually left the job for continuing problems with other members of the staff. However, the way in which we carried ourselves, correcting our speech, tone, and body positions remained part of our practice of changing ourselves, of “dismantling racism and oppression” from ourselves and taking personal responsibility for these social ills.

During that time, I began to follow blogs that prescribed calling out and introspection of privilege as our practice for “everyday survival”. I would read sources like Everyday Feminism or Black Girl Dangerous or Son of Baldwin who would present marginalized queer voices, all espousing staunch radical positions, dreams of violent insurrection, of liberated utopias, and practical self-care with a focus on the small everyday acts. These sources mentioned systems like capitalism or slavery, but the focus was on what people did, and motioned the duty to change ourselves, to check ourselves and purge our sins of privilege from our lives; to be repentant allies and subservient to the truly oppressed voices. *Privilistics*- privilege checklists copying the Peggy McIntosh

“White Privilege” formula (D’Arcy 2015), and stories from the “truly marginalized” characterized my reading experience in these sites, but I followed them anyway like their large queer following from all over the nation.

Given my above background, I began working on this research project with paranoia. I delved into the Austin queer activist scene in search of a trail that could better explain why internal disputes and relationships ended because of calling someone out. That is, I wanted to understand why the practice of a call-out bred such internal conflict within activist scenes? What enabled this practice to internally burn relationships and potential organizing in these spaces? The call-out, a practice of public accountability where you publicly expose someone for an action deemed problematic by the group, attracted my attention, given my own history in calling others out and on being called out myself for “replicating privilege” or “silencing marginalized voices”.

I initially wanted to know why this practice led people out of activism altogether, and why it made it difficult for actors to sustain commitment and build alliances beyond their own identity groups. Explanations abounded, from those that emphasize the authority of marginalized voices over the “hurt feelings/ego” of the transgressor (Tatum 2015) to the usual buzzwords of privilege and “failure to understand” what oppression is. Neither satisfied me, as I noted call-outs that we have done to each other as people of color with diverse identities, where we tore each other apart for the title of America’s Next Top Radical (Flores 2014), or in Vladimir Lenin’s terms, *Ultra-Leftism*, in flaunting the most radical position. In the face of observing Liz’s orchestrated call-out against Jen, who just started learning the language of social justice, these standard insider explanations of why we do what we do presented me with a puzzle to investigate further. Why do we call-out? For what purpose do we do it? At what point does this practice, whose intent is to shape consciousness become abusive? Jen lost interest in social justice and disconnected from the student center largely because of this instigated incident.

During my investigation over the summer months, an anxious feeling lingered. What if in illustrating social mechanisms that enable call-outs to become abusive I

somehow “fed the enemy”, as some loyal to the causes of social justice would say? What if, in exploring the uses and abuses of the call-out, I inadvertently allowed political enemies like Rush Limbaugh, and those railing against politically correct or “PC” culture on universities to dismiss the goals of social justice? My paranoia kept me beating around the bush at the initial stages of the interview process. I constantly journaled to unpack my feelings of potential betrayal to groups such as queers of color in their struggles for recognition and justice. I imagined myself being publicly slandered for being an “able bodied cis man” that would dare question the authority of truly marginalized voices, as if I was further endangering our existence by investigating into this case. Yet in the midst of such labyrinth, there laid faint strings. These strings sometimes formed a trail leading to walls with signs carved on them. These were signs of previous explorers who gave me valuable hints, insights, and have witnessed the same, or worse dynamics like online harassment and abuse over social justice (Cross 2014, 2015; Dzodan 2011). Their insights into why this practice of call-outs led to what they called “call-out culture” kept me going in the fogs of anxieties and fears.

Over time, as I continued interviewing activists, advocates, board members, allied activists within this queer activist milieu, I began to see there was more to the call-out than just public punishments. I began to notice more skilled uses of this practice of accountability, a discursive tool that members have at their disposal when they cannot rely on formal and legal mechanisms of justice. Respondents shared with me stories of successful callouts that addressed internal corruption within organizations, but also attempts where the call-out backfired or turned for the worse, into berating and harassment. In capturing these wider applications, uses, abuses, and failures of this practice, I began to unpack conditions under which this discursive tool is successful. Successful in not just correcting problematic behavior, but of further building cohesion and shaping political consciousness of groups. However, I have also begun to unravel some of the conditions under which the call out becomes abusive and destructive within activist scenes. Instead of correcting and transforming consciousness, how did the call-out created spaces that demand loyalty and allowed for no contradictions, no error, no

transformation, but posturing in its stead? As such, I attempted to find that elusive path between uncompromising radicals willing to have NO discussion about call outs whatsoever (Cross 2015), and political enemies seeking to discredit and smear the efforts of anyone committed to social justice with deriding labels like “social justice warrior”. In a way, how does one go about criticizing subcultural milieux of the political Left without coming off as conservative or traitor? Has political discourse become so polarized that there is no room for critical intervention? Feminists have faced this question and continue to struggle over this question, as much as socialists and liberal social justice fans grapple with these questions from their respective angles.

Yet something was missing to me. What are the larger organic roots of this current practice in our state of left politics today? What are the invisible and historic roots that have shaped call-out culture into the many manifestations today? For these questions, neither feminist nor critical race nor postmodern theory satisfied me. I turned to political economy and historical materialist traditions. Guided by the insights of Antonio Gramsci, I began to clear the fogs of ideas to see deeper, invisible, organic, and historic processes of production, capital, and its ideological forms that queer elders have lived through and that our current generations live through now. In the process of collecting interviews, I met a great many people. I met guides who pointed me in different directions of the labyrinths of the queer activist scene; I began to map in higher resolution the diverse ideological currents that shape queer political practice. I met respondents and tapped into my own networks for contacts that could walk me through their trails. My study recruitment page reached some people in Oakland, California and Seattle, Washington which allowed me to get perspectives from cities with a longer genealogy of queer struggle, but also presented me with very similar themes from their stories. In this thesis manuscript lie such stories, collected from members of the queer activist scenes in Central Texas and Oakland and Seattle.

The paranoia lingers still, even as I continue to read academic and non-academic sources on this practice within left activist scenes. From the apologists who reject any internal criticism for fear of “feeding the enemy”, to those who left disillusioned, to those

who continue their activism despite these problems. I hope that in presenting this research project, I can exorcise, if only a little, the ideological ghosts that haunt our Rio Bravo of ideological camps in Left subcultures (Anzaldua 2002). Perhaps a paranoia of potential betrayal, of navigating between spaces and ideological borders is part of what the work of a nepantlero consists (Anzaldua 2002). To be uprooted from one soil onto another, and to experience the rupture of crossing borders, of language, of culture, of nations, of ideologies, of gender, is to have a *facultad* that makes one alive to these nuances, these cracks in the borders we make to barricade ourselves from others. I invite you reader, to come with me into the practical entanglements of consciousness raising; of how those of us who name drop and grovel to saints like Anzaldua and recite radical platitudes put their ideals into practice. I invite you to see its fruitful manifestations but also its corrupt and toxic versions, and to sense with me the organic roots and intellectual streams that give the conjunctures of “call-out” culture their character.

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by

Mario Venegas, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

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Abstract: I investigate the ideological mechanisms that enable a defeatist and neoliberal conception of social justice that inform what queer activists describe as “call-out” culture. From a Gramscian point of view, I argue that the call-out, a means for correcting problems in consciousness and behavior, loses its constructive potential and becomes a punitive practice under the vocabulary of postmodern identity politics. This process creates a Foucauldian Ostrich subject who must police contradictions to sustain a static notion of safe space. I rely on in-depth interviews with queer activists in Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, Texas and in Oakland, CA and Seattle, WA. From these interviews, call-outs carry a key function within queer activist scenes. One, they shape political consciousness insofar as they address egregious acts like corruption or sexual harassment, and two, they sharpen one’s political position to the extent that they provide a practical means beyond prognosis of the problem. Empirically, these consciousness shaping call-outs form part of Gramsci’s Philosophy of Praxis, of working with contradictions and ironing out consciousness and political practice as a means to unify them. However, under a postmodern social justice model that displaces questions of strategy, call-outs become tools to police identities and demand loyalty, thus impeding any coalition

building that weaves across different identities. Foucauldian Ostriches mobilize the call-out to create gatekeeping within activists and to impede any practical coalition building. As such, their practice aligns with neoliberal common sense in that they prescribe individual solutions to structural problems and circumscribe the terrain of struggle within cultural consumption. I then follow with theoretical tools from Gramsci such as common sense and the Philosophy of Praxis to develop call-outs that address the everyday indignities from the level of common sense, reconceptualize the call-out as a means to sift through contradictions so as to develop good sense. Finally, I provide conceptual tools from Gramsci and queer of color theoretical work to begin to develop a more historical materialist conception of queer politics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction- Burning the Scene

What began as a brown and black women's private Facebook group whose purpose was to connect, organize, and talk about the experiences of being brown and black in Austin escalated into its demise within hours of its founding. In response to the Sandra Bland incident and deaths of trans women of color in Texas, the group was an attempt to bring women both cis and trans to connect with one another. Within hours of its creation and pending invites from many women, Rebeca, a trans Latina asked how many trans women were there, to which an administrator responded "none that we are aware of but you're welcome to be the first". Reading such response as dismissive, the thread escalated into online arguments and to its eventual demise from within when Rebeca called out the group for tokenizing her and not having any trans women in the group, to which she did not feel safe. Within minutes of this call out, Rebeca's friends joined in to berate the organizers and other members for their role in tokenizing and not being inclusive enough. Lorena, one of the members of the group, and Oscar, a close friend of Rebeca who initiated the call out, expressed divergent views. Lorena relates,

"There was no engagement beyond the berating, like 'you fuck up this one time and there is no doing any better. If you can't see how you've fucked up we're not gonna tell you how, we're gonna just gonna tell you that you're fucking up, and you can't ask us for direction because that's tokenizing and it's just a mess'"

Oscar on the other hand, interpreted the group's squabble as a lack of understanding for his friend's position of marginalized body. That is, he read the comment of "being the first" as kicking Rebeca out of the group and for her to organize her own, to which he responds as "that privileges certain types of activism that trans women of color don't have access to". Feeling unwelcomed, they felt justified in calling out the hurt that the comment caused Rebeca. Both Oscar and Lorena's perspectives speak to the *call-out*, a public accusation in the blogosphere and in physical activist spaces (Dzodan 2011; Tran 2013) that someone has said or done something problematic and oppressive. Some of these accusations range from not using inclusive language or the correct gender pronouns to address someone, to speaking from a place of privilege which

entails tone-deafness and insensitivity to the experiences of oppressed groups. In some areas of the United States, the practice is colloquially referred as “calling people on their shit” (D’Arcy 2014) and known as “call out culture” by sectors of the social justice blogosphere (Cross 2015). However, this incident raises important questions regarding this practice and its intent, which were at the heart of the online group battle. One, what kind of political vocabulary and framework enabled people like Rebeca to react how she reacted, and to call out the group for what she registered as a grievance? What kind of political subject does this orientation to politics create? How do intellectuals in these groups, under this political orientation shape movement building? And finally, how does the contemporary political vocabulary shape the uses and abuses of calling out?

To answer these questions, I argue that the call-out, a means for correcting problems in consciousness and behavior, loses its constructive potential and becomes a punitive practice under the vocabulary of postmodern identity politics. Indeed, under a postmodern identity politics model that focuses on individual acts and outcomes over larger processes that led to these outcomes, the call-out rejects contradictions in people’s consciousness and lifestyle. By “politicking over lifestyle” and actions (Portwood-Stacer 2013, p. 9), this practice polices movement actors in their consciousness and choices and thus creates what I call a “Foucauldian Ostrich” subject. This subject scrutinizes contradictions for problematic acts, and seeks to sustain a pure and static notion of a “safe” and inclusive space. As a result, the ostrich subject uses the call-out to prevent coalition building across identity groups, since under this logic, other groups are “fucked up” in their privileges and cannot see how they’re perpetuating oppression, so there is no point engaging with them.

While it is easy and very tempting for analysts to dismiss people like Oscar and Rebeca as politically immature, or worse scapegoat them, their use of the call-out has real consequences for movement building. One, this practice alienates potential allies and newcomers into movements by scrutinizing identities and choices and conceptualizing people as “fucked up” or “problematic” with no redemption. Second, these groups prevent broader coalition building by relying on a static images of perfect inclusion and

safety that allows them to reject anyone that doesn't live up to such expectation; thus they reject contradictions in people's acts and consciousness and demand that one must be pure in their commitment and action or invite public condemnation. Hence the ostrich behavior of not meaningfully engaging with anyone who does not conform to these pure standards. Third, by conceptualizing oppression and power as a diffuse phenomenon that traces to discourses, everything from the structural to the mundane carries equal oppressive magnitude, thus creating infinite sources of domination that one must constantly combat or at least find refuge from. Fourth, this post-modern orientation to domination as diffuse obscures structural mechanisms and processes that engender the daily manifestations of violence. Indeed, neoliberal logics of consumerism and the structural inequalities they obscure remain intact, as these orientations to social justice prescribe individual solutions to structural problems (Atasay 2015; Kauffman 1990; Wilson 2007). And very importantly, the structure of postmodern call-outs hinges on a specific political vocabulary that is out of touch with the contradictory common sense of peoples who do not think in the terms of university trained queer activists and academics-the intellectual classes, thus creating a split between the movement intellectuals and the people outside who the intellectuals aim to represent. This split perpetuates a common sense conservative image of "the little man" vs "the high nosed elites" that allows conservative pundits and their rabid manifestation of Donald Trump to capitalize for their own causes.

I construct my above argument using concepts of *common sense* and *Philosophy of Praxis*, as developed by Italian socialist thinker Antonio Gramsci, with an understanding that social movements are not homogenous, as there are competing frames and intellectual positions within these movements. Indeed, the Philosophy of Praxis according to Gramsci is "both the theory of contradictions in society and at the same time people's practical awareness of those contradictions" (Gramsci 2000 [Forgacs], p. 429). The Philosophy of Praxis is a specific conception of Marxism that seeks to unify theory and practice (p. 429) by forming a collective will that can bridge the practical awareness of contradictions in society with more developed conceptions of the world. This process

of “absolute historicism, of bringing down to earth and worldliness of thought” (Gramsci 1970 [Hoare] p. 435) is done through the work of intellectuals from dominated classes to educate, lead, and shape the contradictory consciousness of peoples’ common sense to good sense. This approach allows analysts to understand the actions and words that activists and people use and to see the contradictions between these two, with the goal being to integrate the theories and social justice icons we grovel towards, and the practice we put such theories into. I connect this approach to what Gloria Anzaldúa calls the ability to see with both *eagle and snake eyes* (Anzaldúa 1999, p. 24); the eyes of theory and the eyes of practice respectively.

Further, a Gramscian point of view to understanding the Philosophy of Praxis is that one understands the role of intellectual classes in diffusing and shaping the common sense of people, be they activists or conservatives. By *common sense* Gramsci refers to the “philosophy of non-philosophers”, the contradictory sediments of ideological domination that also include raw and basic conceptions of the world, from old prejudices to philosophical intuitions about inequality and violence (Gramsci 2000 [1934], p. 326). Examples of contradictory sediments include working class whites who despite facing class barriers still hold racist conceptions of migrants and blacks, or campesinos who despite their sense of awareness of exploitation may still express sexist and homophobic attitudes and expressions. Through the common sense, neoliberalism and postmodern models of politics make themselves seem natural and inevitable (Gramsci [Hoare] 1971, p. 154). The common sense then, given its fragmentary and contradictory mix of ideas reflects ideological battles that occur in multiple terrains of struggle. Part of the Philosophy of Praxis then is to work through the common sense, its contradictions, in order to iron out a more coherent *good sense*, hence my use of the verb *planchar* with consciousness.

To take a Gramscian approach to call-out culture is to seriously consider the role of intellectual leadership and structures of ideological production (Gramsci 2000, p. 380) in shaping the vision, division, perception, and conceptions of the world, power, and action for queer activists-member of queer intellectual classes. A Gramscian approach

also means understanding the ways in which ideological production and political practice are linked to material, organic, and historical processes of capitalist development. Speaking to the importance of ideology and its material relations, Gramsci stated, “to the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is “psychological; the organize ‘human’ masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc” (Gramsci 2012 [1971], p 377). This quote means that analysts understand the connection of current ideas and models of social justice in relation to historical and material conditions of the period in which they are valid, that of late-capitalism, or *neoliberal governance* (Dardot et al 2014; Harvey 2005; Jameson 1990).

As a result, it is important to understand the transition of capitalism from Fordism to neoliberal restructuring in tandem with the backlash against radical left movements, but equally important, to understand how this period resonated with poststructuralist ideas about social change, which prescribed specific ways to orient the action of peoples. Indeed, as Gramsci noted, ideas serve a material and historical function in a given conjuncture and are not developed in a vacuum (Gramsci 2012 [1971], p. 196). As such, to make sense of our current conjuncture, we need to unravel the role of intellectuals and ideological production in relation to our current state of material production.

Of equal importance, empirically informed analysis of call-out culture and how queer activists experience this practice provide a grounded means to apply Gramscian concepts. After all, Gramsci’s approach to Marxism means engaging with people, understanding their conceptions of the world, and where they stand in the intellectual leadership of their communities. As such, to understand the current situation of call-out culture and what led people like Rebeca and Oscar to shut down the budding Facebook group, I draw on 24 in-depth interviews with queer activists who are involved in various activist scenes in Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio Texas. Among the 24 interviews, I include three respondents from Oakland, CA and Seattle, WA who share similar experiences in their respective scenes. I focus on the queer activist scene because their political genealogy holds identity as central, with internal splits among mainstream

LGBT who seek integration to the state via government and non-profits, and radical queers who seek deconstruction of identities and developing new forms of sexuality beyond heterosexual conventions (Gamson 1995; Sycamore 2008). Because identity is central to their framework and organizing, identity politics and its various forms, particularly its post-modern influences shape the orientation and prescriptions for political action. Using the concept of *social movement scene*, defined as the network of spaces and actors that comprise a movement where actors interact (Leach & Haunss 2009), I conceptualize the *queer activist scene* as a network of spaces and actors who exchange information and organize events and actions across real life and virtual platforms. However, in a Gramscian sense, these actors also have their own intellectuals who compete for ideological leadership as presented in debates, articles that they circulate, and political vocabularies that are in vogue in these scenes, from “trigger warnings” to “liberation” to iconic philosophers and thinkers that shape their understanding of the world and self.

To develop my argument, I examine key intellectuals that developed post-modern currents of thought and contextualize them in the transformation of capitalism from Fordist economy to neoliberal re-structuring, which coincided with the defeat of social movement victories in the US and with their domestication via non-profits and criminalization (INCITE! 2009; Mananzala & Spade 2008; Sycamore 2008). In presenting this historic and organic transition, I trace the process in which poststructuralist thought, particularly in the social sciences resonated with this period of defeat and cynicism and became common sense in political vocabulary, as diffused in university multicultural centers, gender and sexuality centers, and via identity politics blogs and intellectual productions today. As a result, these intellectual positions, particularly derivatives of Michel Foucault’s thought create a Foucauldian Ostrich subject whose vision of political action is to invigilate for impurities such as lack of inclusion and to resist in local terms any form of everyday oppression in act and speech.

Despite the postmodern condition of political ideologies, actors in queer activist scenes use the call-out in productive ways as well. Drawing on empirical evidence, I will

present the different means that activists in these scenes use the call-out as a way to shape consciousness or resolve a problematic process. At the same time, I will also present the empirical abuses of the call-out and trace these abuses to the influence of postmodern thought as embedded within neoliberal restructuring. I acknowledge that the postmodern connection to “call out culture” has already been explored (Cross 2014), but I add that this connection is rooted in historical-material conditions that in tandem, have transformed political orientation.

Finally, I present alternative pathways to hacking the call-out and making it work as 1). a means for shaping a coherent consciousness, 2). Working with the common sense of peoples and embracing its contradictions, and 3). to better connect the intellectual classes- the activists, organizers, and artists with the groups they serve and with other marginalized groups. One final qualification. My focus on call-out culture is within the context of internal dynamics in activist scenes. That is, I focus on how activists and scene members such as artists and allies interact *within* these scenes. I make a distinction between call-outs as they happen within scenes and among members to address internal problems like sexism or undeveloped consciousness, and more contentious call-outs done to political enemies like Donald Trump or police implants. As such, my analysis and quotes center on the former type of call-outs that we do to one another within community.

Chapter 2: Foucauldian Ostriches: Organic Roots to Present Conjuncture

In this chapter I establish my theoretical framework that guides my historical analysis of the forces that led to the uses and abuses of the call-out in queer activist scenes. Specifically, I break this chapter into two parts. The first part begins with an analysis that explores the underlying institutional, historical, and political economic changes that have brought us to our present political condition, what Nancy Fraser characterizes as the “Post-Socialist Condition” (Fraser 1999, p. 5), or “Post-New Left” era (D’Arcy 2014). I rely on the analytic insights from Antonio Gramsci to trace the organic changes in capitalist modes of production during the 1970s and 1980s-what is termed as the period of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005). I then trace these politico-economic transformations with the conservative responses to social movements in the United States during that period, which allowed for a shift to post-modern identity politics. I finally show how these identity politics connect to neoliberal forms of life that shape the current conceptions of social justice today. In reviewing these currents of social justice practice, I locate the resonance of these New Left modes of contention with post-structuralist political visions of practice that allowed for the shift into what L.A. Kauffman terms, the *anti-politics of identity*. Through this review of literature, I explain how neoliberal restructuring, along with post-modern identity politics led to a depolitization of social issues and a shift to a language of social justice that emphasizes individual solutions to structural problems (Kauffmann 1990).

In the second part, I elaborate the type of intellectual position that post-modern conceptions of politics create and how queer intellectual classes propagate what I call a *Foucauldian Ostrich* position. I emphasize the role of intellectuals and their production, as they play significant role in giving a social group a sense of coherence but also in shaping the discourse, terms of the debate, and vision for groups they represent, as the case of conservative intellectuals and their think-tanks did in shifting immigration discourse to the right (Gonzales 2014, p. 23). To define an intellectual class in Gramscian terms is to establish that intellectual classes play a social function in giving social and

political groups their sense of identity and coherence (Forgacs 2000, p. 301; Gramsci 1971, p. 5); and further, that intellectuals are not confined solely to academics or traditional intellectuals, but it includes intellectuals of marginalized groups and people with practical and organizational experience: from activists, to organizers, to board members, to artists who propagate ideas and ways of thinking of the world. As such, analysts need to understand the means through which post-modern identity politics and its form of social justice get propagated through sites of ideological production and via activist networks.

Post-structuralism and the neoliberal subject: Historic and Intellectual Links

To understand the forces that led Rebeca and her friends to shut down the Facebook group among women of color, one must understand the organic processes that allowed for these philosophical positions to resonate and become dominant in this practice of “call-out culture”. There are key factors that became fertile ground for these frames to emerge and become common sense for recent generations of activists. One is the genuine concern with problems of sexism and racism within left organizations in the United States, dating from the writings of Sara Evans on sexism in the SDS and SNCC (Evans 1980) to feminist literature that calls out intimate partner violence within activist communities (Chen et al 2011). In response to sexism and the marginal role of women in New Left movements emerged the politics of identity that asserted the importance of identity and of personal sphere of life in movement building (Kauffmann 1990, p. 26). That is, early activists emphasized that the personal sphere of life is just as political as the public sphere, thus politicizing areas of life such as sexuality and gender identity/expression as intimately tied to power struggles. From this context, and in response to totalizing agendas that erased the internal differences of women and people of color, activist organizations emerged such as queer Latin@ organizations in the 1980s, what some term *la epoca de oro* for queer Latina/o organizing (Quesada et al 2015, p. 10). Second wave feminism also arose in response to the sexism of men in SDS and SNCC of which members like Todd Gitlin benefited from; the women organizers stressed the importance of identity and difference in their struggles and that women’s struggles

differed from those of men (Evans 1980). While this period of internal turmoil allowed for a proliferation of various New Left movements, such as student movements, women's movements, and queer movements (Bernstein & Taylor 2013; Breines 1980; Evans 1980), their politics of identity also became breeding grounds for a post-modern counterpart. L.A. Kauffman (1990) asserts that politics of identity developed a counterpart, what she terms the "*anti-politics of identity*" where the project of personal transformation became an end in itself rather than it leading to a broader goal of movement building (p. 27). Unlike politics of identity, whose goal was to change oneself, create spaces that acknowledge the different struggles of each group, and to change the personal and private realm of life prior to changing structures, in anti-politics of identity, the goal is for activists and anyone committed to social justice to scrutinize lifestyle choices and embody the politics of the future society they wish to see. From dumpster diving to going vegan to introspective reflection on privilege in personal life, these politics sought personal transformation as the ultimate goal (p. 31). As such, to deviate from the presentation and practice of the transformed liberated self is to invite calling out from others. Of key importance here is that Kauffmann, in a footnote connects this parallel development with poststructuralist and post-Marxist conceptions of power and political action where the political disappears and it is all undifferentiated discourses (p. 30). I explore these intellectual currents next.

Arising from the period of turmoil in France during the 1960s, and in rebellion against structuralist and modernist thought, poststructuralism challenged the meta-narratives and universal philosophies of its predecessors with key intellectuals like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida (Dempsey & Rowe 2004). This intellectual movement, characterized as post-modernism rebelled against Enlightenment thought and played out across diverse fields from aesthetics to architecture to philosophy (Powell 2007). Among this vast and contradictory intellectual lineage were reactions to the failures of Marxism, historical materialism, and the shift to the discursive and linguistic as a realm of knowledge and power (Foucault 1991; Laclau & Mouffe 1987). In exploring what allowed postmodernism to fester into the political agenda and vision for

the emerging New Left movements, David Harvey asserts that “[t]he New Left was preoccupied with a struggle to liberate itself from the dual shackles of Old Left politics (particularly as represented by traditional communist parties and ‘orthodox’ Marxism) and the repressive powers of corporate capital and bureaucratized institutions” (Harvey 1990, p. 354). In doing so, the New Left, such a feminism and queer movements also abandoned historical materialism as a framework and the idea of the working class as a means of mobilization (p. 354), and thus shifted to cultural politics and this, Harvey asserts, underplayed the surge into postmodernist currents of thought. Yet this transition did not occur in a vacuum, as the conservative movement in the 1970s and 1980s also launched what Alfonso Gonzales describes as a war of position to build a political and ideological infrastructure to roll back on the victories of the civil rights movement (Gonzales 2014, p. 23). Through think tanks, billionaires, foundations, and intellectuals, the conservative movement played a key role in waging cultural wars during this period and reformed itself into the New Right as part of the neoliberal reformation of their party by appealing to moral and silent majorities and fueling racist sentiments among working class whites (Gonzales 2014; Harvey 2005). Through this process, the conservative movement rolled back against victories made by civil rights, student, and identity movements by shifting common sense into a more conservative discourse, such as the case of immigration politics where to talk about immigration is to frame it in terms of a good and bad immigrant binary (Gonzales 2014, p. 9).

In this climate of defeat for movements on the Left, identity politics in rejecting historical materialism, took a poststructuralist turn that shifted attention from dealing with structures of domination across diverse identities to mitigating oppression in the act, thought, and discourse in relation to identities. With the defeat of the socialist projects in Germany and the Soviet Union, Left politics took what Nancy Fraser (1998) calls a “post-socialist condition” and what Steve D’Arcy calls “post-New Left” politics (D’Arcy 2014). Faced with the overwhelming power of the late-capitalist state to domesticate social movements via NGO’s (Quesada et al 2015, p. 11; INCITE! 2009), to undermine social safety nets, and to criminalize direct action bred a climate of cynicism and

forbearance, to which postmodern conceptions of power and their futility in escaping power resonated greatly. Indeed, the goal of changing the systems was still valid, but it had to be delayed with changing oneself first and minimize the impact of oppression in the everyday (D'Arcy 2014; Fraser 1998). This forbearance resonated with the genuine frustrations of racism, sexism, and discrimination within social movement leaders, which facilitated its conversion into political common sense in Leftist thought.

In tracing this link to poststructuralist thought, in particular post-Marxist literature, I focus on key intellectuals who articulated poststructuralist concepts and posed important challenges to Marxism, as their works continue to be seminal in studies of sexuality, domination, and gender. In their work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe challenged core tenets of orthodox Marxism by using Gramsci's concept of hegemony and war of position and giving it a poststructuralist makeover, thus removing any historical relations to how these concepts developed and to how historical conditions shape class identity. The authors drew on philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida to re-define hegemony as an articulated and antagonistic discourse that dominates and shapes socio-political subjects by representing a totality from a particular social group (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. x).

A consequence of this conception of hegemony and class is that they try to remove any 'essentialist' and fixed absolutes to class and domination by pointing out its contingent construction via discourses and articulations (p. 105). A kernel concept that sustains Laclau and Mouffe is the notion of discourse, that every action and meaning is part of a discursive regime that is socially constructed and historically situated, thus deconstructing any absolute or objective laws of history and taking jabs at Marxist conceptions of materialism and progressive evolution of class (Laclau & Mouffe 1987). The rise of the poststructuralist positions, particularly in political theory and social change, gave clear importance to language and discourse as a fundamental site for the exercise in power, as it gave due diligence to expressions of power such as racial slurs or transphobic language that do have an impact upon marginalized peoples. This intellectual lineage, in particular Foucault's also significantly expanded the realm of gender and

sexuality as understood in the West and through which queer people, both whites and of color come to learn to understand their identity and how these gender identities are constructed in the world they inhabit (Butler 2007; Foucault 1990). It is also through this school of thought that queer of color intellectuals developed important bodies of work drawing from feminist, queer theory, and postmodern approaches that allow their diverse identities to not be pinned down and to explore marginal subjectivities (Cantu 2009; Ferguson 2003; Muñoz 1999; Quesada et al 2015). Equally important, poststructuralist conceptions of power allowed marginalized activists to register the ways in which sexism, intimate violence, and authoritarian leadership played out in activist communities (Chen et al 2011; Dempsey & Rowe 2004). However, despite its major successes and the vast realm of thought that poststructuralism has brought upon, this shift to discourses and diffuse power conceptions are not without fundamental problems.

A key implication of reducing oppression and exploitation to discourses that reinscribe such violence in any and all acts is that concrete and historical structural factors disappear. In Foucault's conception of governmentality, the state is only one of many forms of governing that people do to one another and its power to dominate is diffuse (Foucault 1991). Indeed, since all acts both structural and private are discursive, they have equal oppressive magnitude and thus all reinscribe such oppression (Kauffmann 1990, p. 30). Because history disappears in postmodern thought, a colloquial word like "crazy" loses its historic meanings and instead carries equal oppressive magnitude as physical violence from the state. Oscar, a queer Chicano activist poet illustrates this equation poignantly when discussing the problem of politeness in calling-out. He relates: "Call-outs happen because people are being hurt and if I set to you my anger and that hurt that you're causing me, the severity of what's happening is not gonna be addressed, you're gonna think that I set my tone [speaking to tone policing and the accused's response] rather than like *you're fucking chopping my arm off* you know. If I'm nice about it, you won't necessarily see it how much what you're doing actually hurts" [my emphasis]. In his experience of dealing with racist remarks and calling out oppression in the act, he emphasizes the problem with being nice about calling out and

shifts attention to the hurt being caused. Oscar illustrates that all expressions of power carry equal significance as physical violence in his exaggerated statement of chopping his arm off (Kauffmann 1990).

As a result of assigning equal political magnitude, anyone adhering to this position is hyper-sensitized to register any act and speech as oppressive as physical and structural violence, which justifies anger and call-outs to address the registered hurt. These ideological positions shape the vision and division of actors who subscribe to them and thus orient them to a position of hypervigilance, a defensive and reactionary position. However, this false equivalence of magnitude gives no way to differentiate what exactly is at stake in an act of oppression. That is, by saying “crazy” and getting called out for it for being ableist, as it happened to Cynthia (a black Chicana bisexual playwright), does it equate in magnitude to being discriminated and kicked out of a domestic violence shelter as it happened to Jessica (a mixed race bisexual activist from Dallas) during a time of need? Or to being raided at night by ICE agents (Gonzales 2014)? The structures that mete out inequality and violence disappear and oppression is abstracted as a diffused “white supremacy” that is everywhere (Reed Jr 2009) with no clear vision to concrete structures that produce and enable violence across identity markers.

Katherine Cross asserts that at the heart of post-modern discourse lies a deep cynicism that anything can be changed (Bewes 1997, p. 4; Cross 2014), since power structures are so deeply entrenched and diffused that the only thing we can do is to struggle in our identities and rely on our own experience as the true way to know things. Indeed, according to post-modern intellectuals like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the body and identity are the only sites of struggle where change can happen, but even then the most one can do is make a parody of identity, to performatively challenge identity within our bodies and disrupt these deeply entrenched gender and power discourses (Butler 2007, 175; Harvey 1990, p. 46). This prescription is also refined as *dis-identifications*, where marginalized queer people of color perform mainstream cultural objects as a way to disrupt the original consumerist and assimilationist purposes for which fashion and identity is construed (Esteban-Munoz 1999, p. 7). That is, queers

of color do not fully assimilate to the mainstream culture, nor do they reject it (p. 2). Instead, they reformulate cultural works and products in a way to dis-identify and give new meaning to products such as music, fashion, and art. While disidentifications may carry potential for new conceptions of struggle, the post-modern roots of these ideas do not go beyond the personal site of struggle nor do they give direction for coalescing acts of will to collectively challenge systemic oppressions. As David Harvey asserts, these models of localized resistance displace questions of political-economy, and focus solely on culture leaving capitalism unchallenged (Harvey 1990, p. 48). After all, what is the point of doing so since there is no one concrete target, but rather diffuse targets everywhere?

As a result of conceptualizing identity as a site of struggle that responds to power as if it is distributed through air conditioners, the most one can do to change is to examine our identities and everyday struggles in order to minimize the impact of oppressions from racism to classism (D'Arcy 2014). The poststructuralist view of politics conceptualizes social change in an individualist way, in which each individual becomes the change they want to see and as it spreads, individual changes will inexplicably lead to large systemic changes. Yet despite these successes and problems, postmodern philosophy also emerged during a period of capitalist restructuring globally, from the welfare state of Fordism in the United States to a regime of flexible accumulation, a marketization of everyday life, what is termed neoliberalism (Harvey 1990, 2005; Jameson 1991; Zamora 2014)

This period of restructuring and transition from Fordist economy to hyper-marketization of everyday life also involved an organized conservative effort against social safety nets and victories from the civil rights movement, as well as emerging left ideologies of liberation from the 60s and 70s (Gonzales 2014; Harvey 2005). As such, in the neoliberal means of governance and social restructuring, people become reconfigured as consumer and entrepreneurial subjects, under objective relations of the market as the one determining individual freedom and a multiplicity of choices (Dardot et al 2014; Ventura 2012). One connection between post-structuralist thought and neoliberalism lies with the work of Daniel Zamora. Zamora (2014), in an interview for *Jacobin* magazine

criticizes Foucauldian thought in that Foucault sympathized with neoliberal restructuring as a way to see his ideas of governmentality play out in a less authoritarian way than in socialism (Zamora 2014). This critique further supports the link between post-structuralist/post-modern thought and the restoration of class power to elites, at least at the level of intellectual production.

Of key importance however, is that this conception of action and change resonates with neoliberal logic of individual rights and consumption by suggesting individual solutions to social problems and shifting attention to lifestyle choice and presentation as a means to solve such problems (Jameson 1991; Kauffmann 1990, p. 32). That is, individual rights and expressions becomes a fertile ground for neoliberal logic of the individual consumerist to foster and express itself as activist identity (Harvey 2005, p. 56). As such, these individual and cultural acts of symbolic resistance become fair grounds for commodification and for market logics to operate, thus creating a market in personalized resistance (Haiven 2013). Indeed, under neoliberal governance, diversity as cultural expression and recognition is allowed insofar as it does not fundamentally challenge the logic of accumulation (Hale 2005). Moreover, Daniel Zamora further criticizes Foucauldian thought in that Foucault's shift on diffuse power and on the ways micro-power affects our identities in everyday life shifted attention from problems of structural inequality and redistribution to those of personal recognition and cultural domination (Fraser 1997, p. 13; Zamora 2014).

Despite these developments, two important and conflicting key points stand out. One is that post-modern discourse and ideas about identity as constructed allow marginalized identities to build subjectivities and to command some form of power, no matter how subjective, in the larger matrix of social arrangements, such as using the gender neutral Latinx. Yet simultaneously these same frameworks block movements such as queer activism and racial justice from addressing structural arrangements that enable the privileges and micro-acts to come about in the first place. Moreover, these views separate problems of economic exploitation from those of cultural oppression and problematically pit them against each other (Marion-Young 1997, p. 148). As a response

to the problems of Marxism, poststructuralist identity politics emphasize culture and identity expression as sites of struggle yet leave intact structures of economic distribution, erosion of social safety nets, and state violence against people of color (Fraser 1997, p. 13; Fraser & Naples 2004, p. 1110; Gonzales 2014; Marion-Young 1997, p. 149; Zamora 2014). As David Harvey, in his work *The Condition of Postmodernity* argues, postmodern thought provides no politics, no strategy, but instead ghettoizes the voices of the “Other” to culture as their *only* site of struggle (Harvey 1991, p. 116-117). That is, postmodernism relegates queers, people of color, and subaltern groups to cultural and linguistic work and prevents these groups from developing critical leadership beyond just culture. This is evident in the way multicultural and gender/sexuality centers in universities are allowed some form of critical expression insofar as they do not touch political-economic questions and questions of capital and distribution, parallel to what Charlie Hale calls the *indio permitido* in Guatemala, where cultural rights proliferate but there is little on economic and political independence (Hale 2005). One indeed could think of postmodern thought as a cultural fog that is diffuse but whose purpose is to obscure, not to reveal the machineries of the state and capitalism and the violence these processes carry.

In sum, I present the historical and intellectual developments that led to the shift from political aims that sought to challenge social structures of domination to a political shift in Left groups with an aim to mitigate oppression in the act, thought, presentation, and culture. This shift, characterized in the New Left movements through its rejection of historical materialism, coincided with neoliberal restructuring. This restructuring meant the undoing of state programs and shifting those to nonprofits, placing the burden to activist organizations in providing such services (Quesada et al 2015, p. 11). This project of class power restoration via conservative backlash and intellectual wars of position allowed conservatives to shift public discourse to market logics and to the creation of a customer based and entrepreneurial citizen who is allowed diversity, but not political challenge. During this period (1970-1980s) of social and political restructuring, post-structuralist intellectual traditions played an intellectual, moral, and cultural role in

obscuring these changes in political economy by focusing on the micro-acts and the more diffuse forms of power. From a Gramscian point of view, the role of intellectuals is key to understand the ways in which their function is to facilitate the cultural and intellectual shift to these modes of production, of which postmodernism is a part, particularly among queer and leftist activists of our contemporary period. Further, a Gramscian point of view, as he demonstrates in his analysis of situations, allows analysts to trace between the organic and the conjunctural (Gramsci [Forgacs] 2000, p. 205). That is, the organic, larger historical processes and shifts in capitalism that shape the present moments in time- conjunctures, such as the neoliberal present and its shift to an authoritarian form (Gonzales 2016). Having laid out the larger historical and organic trajectories that lead to the formation of post-structuralist political practice, I now present the current activist subject that these political orientations create.

Foucauldian Ostriches: Postmodern Political and Intellectual Subject

I presented the role of postmodern intellectual traditions in giving late-capitalism, specifically neoliberal restructuring, its cultural and intellectual function (Harvey 1990; Jameson 1991). Further, these conceptions of the world shaped the political orientation and practice for emerging New Left movements who on the one hand, for legitimate reasons sought to create more inclusive movements that addressed problems like sexism and anti-queer violence, but on the other hand rejected historical materialism and became fertile grounds for postmodern politics to grow. Through the development of postmodern conceptions of social justice, the goal of changing structures becomes replaced with that of changing oneself and taking personal responsibility for oppression and exploitation. I present in this section that these ideas become part of the common sense in social justice and activist thought that they often go unquestioned and are made to seem inevitable. One of these terrains is ideological diffusion and production, be it media, articles, or social media.

In the postmodern turn in Left activist thought and practice a key concept gained traction, that of *privilege*. By privilege I refer to the ways in which dominant groups, be

they whites or heterosexual men benefit from the systemic forms of racism and sexism in both the material and historical dimensions as well as in the cultural and quotidian levels (McIntosh 1989; Wise 2008). A key site of ideological production where post-modern views of social change form part of the common sense in activist discourse lies in the frameworks of privilege that arise from the work of anti-racist writers like Peggy McIntosh and Tim Wise. Learned in workshops, trainings in university multicultural centers, activist conferences, and diffused via blogs and articles, this frame focuses on the ways privileged identities in society benefit from the systematic distribution of material and symbolic capital (McIntosh 1989; Wise 2008). However, in line with postmodern political common sense, these perspectives prescribe that in order to mitigate these unfair advantages, whites and people benefiting from social privileges should give up their privileges and become individual allies in the struggle for oppressed people of color, a model which D'Arcy characterizes as the *allyship model* of social justice (D'Arcy, October 2014).

A consequence from this discourse is that privileged identities need to “check their privilege” so that their actions and words do not silence marginalized voices (Smith 2014) in spaces such as activist meetings. For example, whites need to be deferring and on the margins to the voices of people of color, men to women, cisgendered people to transgender people, etc given that these marginalized perspectives rarely get a chance to be heard. Despite the genuine concern, there have been critical intellectual productions that examine this model and how it invites call-outs that police identity. For instance, Andrea Smith (2013) asserts that the privilege model fails to account for the ways social structures create the privileges and enable identities with privilege to act the way they do. In Gramscian terms, rather than challenging the institutions that distribute unequal resources, this model of privilege becomes too focused on the superstructural dimensions, the quotidian life of the late-capitalist state by policing behavior rather than developing strategies that can challenge and change structures such as the state that enable these privileged behaviors to occur. And very importantly, this model allows for whites to disengage from any structural and organizational work by presenting themselves as a

guilt-ridden subject, what has been termed “white guilt” that takes a form of personal responsibility for personal forms of racism, but offers nothing strategic in developing means to address it systematically (D’Arcy 2015). Indeed, this individualized privilege model allows for white actors to repent for personal privilege, make personal pledges to combat racism, but ultimately get self-comfort and believe that one is doing their part to end racism. Under a personalized privilege model, whites get excused for showing guilt and tears, but provide no concrete steps to develop any strategy to combat concrete institutional forms of racism such as lead poisoning in water systems. Instead, the appeal for guilt and repentance is against an abstract white-supremacy that is discursively reproduced and must be invigilated against in the act and thought taking place in the individual body. Further, by focusing on personal responsibility, this model of privilege resonates with neoliberal common sense notions of individual change to fix larger problems caused by structures of capitalism and the state.

By focusing on individual identity with its intersections or what is known in social justice vocabulary as *intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1993; Hill-Collins 2000), these political conceptions of action and change lead people to a state of siege where one must constantly find refuge from these micro and diffuse forms of oppression. As a result, resistance becomes personally disruptive and focused on creating spaces that can insulate one from these omnipresent forms of domination until they can formulate alternatives, if possible (Foucault 1991). This implication and configuration to action creates a type of subject position that I call *Foucauldian Ostriches*. I choose Foucauldian out of all the postmodern intellectuals because his work has on the one hand deeply enriched the study of gender and sexuality; hence his popularity among feminists and queer intellectuals. Yet on the other hand, his work dissolved any form of concrete political strategy, and displaced the questions of capital with localized resistances (Harvey 1991, p.45, 117). By ostriches I refer to the way in which ostriches bury their head in the sand to parallel the way in which one must create and enforce a “safe space” that shelters one from the omnipresent forms of oppression. As such, these ideological currents develop an intolerance for contradictions, such that in order to understand the ostrich, one must

speak like them, share their language, their specialized words, and see the world through identity lenses that do not reproduce/reinscribe oppression in any act, speech, or gesture. That is to say, liberation is figured as a private project to be achieved via individual change (Kauffmann 1990), thus aligning with neoliberal logic of individual consumption (Jameson 1991) as previously discussed.

However, that is not to say that identity politics are inherently wrong and must be dispensed with, nor is it to suggest that those who subscribe to them do not know any better. Empirically, these politics of identity (Kauffmann 1990) are in competition with other frameworks within queer activist scenes, as there are reformist models for doing work, to art-making as activism as in the case of queer artists like Cynthia, to socialist alternative conceptions of action, and in what respondents like Jude and Daniel call “restorative politics” that celebrate the persistence and creativity of queer people of color. Even Lorena, a staunch critic of “call-out culture” at the opening vignette nevertheless sees value in the postmodern politicking of everyday life. That these actors debate and understand competing views of social justice attests to the internal contradictions and ideological tensions within queer activist scenes. These ideological positions and their intellectuals compete for ideological leadership but must not only attain the lead, they must sustain it to remain dominant in their spaces. This race for ideological leadership is sustained through productions such as blogs and via social media such as Tumblr and Facebook where posts circulate criticizing one position or advocating their own. These ideas are also disseminated in universities, multicultural centers, student organizations, and departments such as women’s studies with professors and staff who subscribe to postmodern positions (Patai & Koertge 2003), thus making postmodern identity politics a leading and competing position in the swath of political positions within these activist scenes.

Foucauldian Ostriches, with their roots in anti-politics of identity and their prescriptions of personal change as an end in itself, circulate their ideologies via articles and blogs through activist networks. Some of these sources of intellectual production and dissemination include sites like Everyday Feminism or Black Girl Dangerous, which are

poles for ideological production on post-modern identity politics that includes *privilistics*-essentially privilege checklists for the identity du jour (D'Arcy 2015), prescriptions on how to respond to being called out (Tatum 2014) but also circulate critical commentary on the practice itself (Dzodan 2014; Flores 2014; Tran 2013). Daisy, a white Jewish butch queer who organizes around Jewish queer identity from Oakland, CA illustrates this previous point: "It's this idea that if you don't know the right people you don't have access to spaces, to events, to dates, to knowledge. If you're not friends with the cool people on Facebook, you don't get to share the same five articles all over the place". Daisy follows her quoted comment by stating that these networks create gatekeepers of knowledge and events that to her coalesce in what she calls "insider culture", relating to the idea of being back in middle school cafeterias with cliques. That these ideas and frames for understanding the world persist attest to the way in which poststructuralist political thought form part of the common sense in the discourse of queer activists and allies in these activist scenes who, to cite Daisy, "there is also the feeling there is like a right way to have politics or right way to think things, if you're not using the right term for this, you're an outsider, if you're not using you know, if you're using a term that was used three years ago you're an outsider" thus speaking to the dominant ideological position that Foucauldian Ostriches occupy in these intellectual classes.

In summary, I traced the larger structural changes in capitalist mode of production during the period of neoliberal restructuring along with the period of conservative reaction to social movements in the United States. This period of restructuring meant shifting relations of the self as individuals who pursuit goals via the market and whose fault is solely that of the individual for any problems. In this shift, postmodern intellectual traditions, particularly in the social sciences shifted intellectual views to the everyday forms of governance, domination, and shifted away from structures like the state, its systems such as homeland security, and theorized power as a more diffuse image, as if it flows through air conditioners. As such, I argued that these postmodern philosophies, despite their contributions in understanding gender and sexuality, also

contributed to entrenching neoliberal forms of living as part of the contemporary neoliberal common sense. In this period of defeat for socialist projects, for any revolutionary movements, New Left movements like feminism and queer activist and social justice visions rejected historical materialism and shifted to a politics of forbearance. This political shift meant the transforming the self and propagating individual solutions to structural problems, thus shifting ways of thinking about combating racism in the act, and not in the social arrangements that enabled it. Second, I explored how intellectual classes of queer activist scenes propagate these ideas, that take form in the discourses of privilege, personalized social justice, and its implication of policing behaviors, speech, and conduct. One practical way of doing so is by calling-out: publicly accusing transgressors for “problematic” acts. An implication of this mode of practice is that one must create spaces to mitigate the impact of these infinite sources of oppression, thus creating what I call a Foucauldian Ostrich intellectual subject. One who polices conduct, speech, and habits for “problematic” acts, and becomes disconnected from people outside of their own university and activist spaces.

The call-out, as defined in the introductory chapter, has roots in Baptist practices of outing sinners in public (Young 2007, p. 113). However, this practice is nevertheless used for more than just exposing problematic behavior. From private correction of consciousness to public exposure of problematic events, the call-out serves to publicly rectify wrongs and can work to build consciousness and improve someone’s political position (Venegas 2016 forthcoming). However, when this practice is embedded in a logic of mitigating oppression in the everyday, particularly under Foucauldian Ostrich ideologies, it takes on a damaging form whose ultimate function is to alienate actors, forge bunkers and prevent any broader coalition building beyond the elect pure. That is, the call-out becomes a means of ideological policing that replicates the logic of the neoliberal consumer subject who must present themselves in specific political loyalties, share similar tastes, and spouse the same vocabulary to be a member. I present my methodology for the empirical cases first, then I present the uses and abuses of this practice in the next two chapters following my methodological discussion.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Capturing Experiences of Call Outs

For this investigation, and for practical and time reasons, I relied on 24 in depth semi-structured interviews from a sample of queer activists and allies from two major Texas cities, Austin and Dallas. Of these 24, three are from participants living in Oakland, CA and Seattle, WA. In-depth interviews allow me to capture the ways in which activists understand the call out as a practice, drawing from their own experiences and interpretations. The in-depth interview also allows participants to reflect on past experiences and explain to researchers why they see this practice the way they see it. Through interviews, actors assume a narrative whole (Swidler 2001) that gives them access to past experiences of the call-out that they have witnessed, practiced, and done to them, including reactions and reflections on the practices. However, a major weakness of this method is that it encounters a problem of inference where anecdotes and explanations may not necessarily match the actions of the participant. Indeed, someone can tell me they repudiate the call-out and see it as toxic, but I cannot see how they react when a call-out happens, do they disrupt the instance? Do they participate with the accuser? As such, to compensate for this problem of inference, I asked participants not only how they felt at the time of the call out, but what actions did they took at the time of the event, and what they wished they could have done differently. While interviews do not capture the element of real time, they draw on the extensive history of participants' involvement with activism and on reflection to construct the various forms that this practice of accountability and discipline takes within queer scenes.

The actors

Over the course of three months, from May 2015 to August 2015, I interviewed queer and LGBT identified activists, advocates, and allies who are involved in various agendas of social justice activism: from socialist to right of center respondents, from those in conventional political activism to everyday forms of micro-activism, to those occupying positions of power via board of directors, to those using arts as activism. This is a sample of a larger queer intellectual class that shares models of social justice as a

practice and goal, as some perform work to achieve justice for queers across issues of race, religion, gender, and health access. The participants I interviewed all have various political approaches to their work, from conventional contention via rallies, speaking and debating against council members and institutions, to those who believe the struggle to be in their acts and identities- the politicking of lifestyle (Portwood-Stacer 2013). They participate in different spaces within their localized queer scenes, from queer festivals to public town hall meetings to private conversations in homes, and in on-line groups that serve their needs. My respondents range from ages 20 to 57, and span a wide range of activist practices and attitudes, from those who are very active in political work to those who left disappointed to veterans from older generations to younger generations. Further, what connects all of my respondents is that they all have at least some college education, as nearly all of them have gone to college either in Texas, California, Washington, or have grown up with activist peers and parents, such as Michelle, a multi-racial trans woman from Seattle, Washington. That my respondents share common political vocabularies, visions of social justice, educate others, and are politically involved in organizing attests to their roles as members of their queer intellectual classes.

My sample spans the areas of Austin, Dallas, San Antonio (1 person) in Texas, and three from out of state in Oakland, CA and Seattle, WA. I include these out of state interviews because their experiences with call-outs and “call-out culture” is a phenomenon that occurs nationally, as various blogs and electronic anecdotes account, but also because these practices are done in online spaces such as Tumblr, Facebook, and Twitter. Because a significant number of my respondents (22) use social media, they can access articles, resources, groups, and followers that match their political and activist interests. This also means they have access to viewing call-outs being done in their groups, to other people in comments sections, and can also access blogs and articles that speak to this practice, whether it is sites that prescribe how to be called out, to sites that repudiate the practice altogether. Interviewing participants about their online experience allows them to draw from this virtual space and gives me glimpses into closed online

spaces that I would not otherwise be able to access based on my own identities as a gay Mexican male who reads as cis-gendered and passes as straight to the eyes of others.

Recruitment and Participation

To recruit participants, I used two methods. One, through the use of flyers and Facebook events where I listed my criteria and the purpose of my study, and how to contact me. The flyers did not yield me anyone even though people tore tabs but no one contacted me. It was through the Facebook public event that I created that I was able to obtain a substantial amount of respondents. This result is telling about how participants get information and how much more accessible it is for participants to use social media and the immediate access to the internet to contact me. From this method, I was able to obtain at least 18 of my respondents, including the out of state respondents who heard of my study via Facebook. The second method was through informants and snowball sampling. I had two informants, one of whom I interviewed and who then referred people to me, the other who knew people in the Austin queer milieu. These two informants allowed me to tap into their social networks of activists to recruit participants, spread word about my project, and showed me screen shots of call outs that blew into public arguments on Facebook.

The only criteria is that participants are involved in queer scenes either as activists or allies, and have participated in some form of activism that I listed above. Once I contacted participants and screened for eligibility, we conducted interviews in one of the following methods. I either met one on one in a quiet semi-private space such as a coffee shop or their homes, or we interviewed via media like Skype. Interviews via the latter expedited the time to meet in person and allowed us to talk in personal spaces from home where anonymity and confidentiality are far relatively more secure than in semi-private spaces like coffee shops. The interviews lasted an average of 70 minutes, all of them recorded and transcribed with password protection. There was only one participant who requested to do a written interview since he left to a place with no internet, to whom I sent my sets of questions. For the Dallas interviews, I traveled to Dallas in June to meet with one participant who then became an informant for the remainder of the project.

After the interview and my short stay, “Bert” and I kept in contact until his visit to Austin in July where he helped spread word about my study through social media. In late July I met with “David”, a local queer Latino artist and actor who helped me invite participants in Austin and provided me with screen shots of a recent Facebook fight on call-outs posted in public. It was through him that I learned about the different factions within the Austin queer milieu and that I was able to reach out to some members of various groups here in the city.

During the interviews, participants shared a bit about their personal history as far as home is concerned, how long they have been living in Austin, other places they lived, and how they identified in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation (See Appendix 1). They also shared causes and issues that they are passionate about: from reproductive justice to art making as activism to getting representatives into office, to participating in rallies and marches, to practicing their politics in creating spaces and embodying their beliefs through dress and speech. This diversity of political participation attests to how diverse the queer activist scene is, but also how these causes for social justice are interconnected such that respondents participate in multiple causes in such a conservative state. Participants also shared when they first became conscious and passionate about the issues they invest time, and what sources or people inspired them to commit to their work. Participants shared a common definition of the call out, their opinions on it, and they also shared experiences where they have seen this practice take place, when they were called out, when they called somebody out, and responses from the publics to these callouts. We also spoke of places where they see this practice happen, their first encounter with this practice, and some offered alternatives to accountability in their activist spaces.

From all of these interviews, I analyzed data via narrative coding and thematic analysis. I relied on creating themes and concepts that participants used, such as “toxic” or “shame”, and from these I weaved them into larger themes that allowed me to create the following shapes and dimensions for call-outs. Two key dimensions stood out from the analysis: publicity levels and relationship depth. Publicity levels range from the

private realm such as one on one conversations, to the virtual public such as online forums and social media. Relationship depth illustrates to whom the call-out is used; from close friends to acquaintances to strangers to political enemies (See Appendix 2). That is, the call-outs I present address “problematic” issues that depend on the relationship tie that respondents have with the transgressor, and also on the level of publicity. For instance, a close friend can be called out on a smaller group or even in private, whereas a political enemy or an act of sexual harassment is called out to a broader public.

It was during the interview process and the analysis of the stories shared that I noticed that call-outs were not entirely “toxic” as some respondents claimed. I noted other functions of the call-out as used by many an activist in their work, and as such I organized my results in the following manner. First, I present the uses of the call-out to make demands, improve a political position, shape someone’s consciousness of an issue, and also punish transgressions such as sexual harassment or corruption. These progressive uses of the call-out are key elements in unifying ideals with the practice and thus form part of the Philosophy of Praxis that Gramsci elaborates. Under this philosophy, progressive call-outs work through the contradictions of peoples’ common sense and help shape these conceptions into a more coherent good sense. I then present the forms of the call-out that postmodern conceptions of social justice enable, by registering identity, inclusion, and speech as problematic and worthy of public condemnation. That this internal diversity of call-outs exists attests to the wider swath of political and intellectual positions to social justice not limited solely to postmodern models. However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, postmodern models of social justice, embedded within a context of flexible accumulation and precarious labor conditions have become part of the social justice common sense, and this is even more so among queer activists for whom much of their intellectual development owes to the work of Foucault and to postmodern inspired intellectuals that shaped their vision, division, and logic of practice for engaging the world around them.

Chapter 4: Conscious Accountability: Uses of the Call-out

In Chapter 2, I traced the connection between neoliberal restructuring in the United States and the role of post-modern philosophies in both creating critical discourses on gender and sexuality, but also obscuring concrete structures of coercion and consent such as the state. I elaborated how this process coincided with a shift to a social justice vision that focused on individual acts and solutions to structural problems, and how these enabled call-outs that police actors conduct, consciousness, and speech. However, the call-out is not used solely to police and berate, but when used effectively, to reform consciousness, develop more a coherent political good sense, and integrate budding activists into their scenes. In this chapter I focus on the productive uses of the call-out.

Conceptually, call-outs of this type fit within a Gramscian approach in that they serve to correct and sift through contradictory sediments in peoples' common sense understandings of the world. Gramsci himself was a master of this practice as he consistently called out social democrats and other Marxists within Italian politics (Gramsci [Hoare] 1970, p. xxiv; Gramsci [Forgacs] 2000, p. 103). The goal however was not to berate them just for the sake of abuse, but to help his colleagues see, even if through forceful argument the error of their ways and to ultimately develop more coherent and strategic politics. With this theoretical base, through the use of the call-out, actors mobilize public pressure as a means to force someone to be accountable and correct problematic acts they have done. Empirically, I present two key functional mechanisms of the call-out within queer activist scenes that activists have at their disposal to address problems such as corruption, "problematic" behavior, or sexual harassment. Through this practice, actors iron out wrinkles in their consciousness and develop further political positions within the queer activist scenes, as the title suggests. As such, I use *integrative call-outs* to describe the gentle and inclusionary range of correcting transgressors and their process of reintegration into the space. This set of practices range from the correcting someone privately to the public exposure of wrongs and subsequent action to remedy the wrong. In these gentler practices, transgressors are often given a second chance and are thus re-integrated into the scene.

These forms of call-outs take place primarily among three forms of publicity. Drawing from Erving Goffman's notion of stages where social actors present themselves to public life (Goffman 1959), the first is the private/backstage space, such as one on one conversations, and private messaging away from any publics and members of the scene. The second form of publicity is the scene public, a localized public consisting of members of the scene who are present. For instance, this type of space includes present members in an activist meeting, or audience members at a rally, or queer festival or performance. The third publicity level is the virtual public, a wider public space where not only scene members are witness but also members from scene networks not confined to real space. This type of space includes social media such as Facebook groups both open and closed, event pages with comment sections, and newsfeeds for scene members. In what follows, I present in escalating order of transgression the ways in which the call out is mobilized and used to correct and move forward in developing someone's political position. I finally situate these call-outs as key elements in forming a Philosophy of Praxis approach to shaping consciousness.

Integrative Call-outs: Education and Discipline

In this form of integrative accountability, actors employ constructive strategies to "educate" errants and to re-integrate them into the scene once they have become aware of their wrong. Respondents who advocate for this type of accountability do not necessarily mobilize public pressure, but when they do, they give the accused an "out"- a way out of public pressure and reintegration into the group. Based on respondent data, a key distinctive feature of this type of consciousness shaping practice is that it is usually reserved to neophytes, close friends, and people within activist circles. To illustrate the range of these practices of accountability, I present one type of integral discipline in at the most private level. I then present another form of contentious accountability at a more public level.

Off-scene Coaching

In off-scene coaching, actors pep talk one another and give each other advice to prevent them from repeating "problematic" behavior in their space, particularly after the

fact. This happens both outside the spaces that comprise the scene, and in the midst of these spaces. The coaching occurs one on one as someone with more experience takes an errant aside from the scene to inform them of their act. In this form of private correction, the call-out seeks to address a problem with speech-whether it is using an offensive term, or mannerisms that reflect privilege such as “man-spreading”- a term to denote how men take up physical space in everyday life via their bodies. I present one case to illustrate. Abraham is a 30-year-old black gay man from Austin, TX who is involved in voting registration and in creating validating spaces for queer men of color both in Austin and Houston. First exposed to feminist and queer perspectives as a university student, Abraham learned the postmodern political vocabulary of Foucauldian Ostriches, hence his emphases on creating validating spaces. Abraham shared a time where his former supervisor pulled him aside to correct his misgendering of a genderqueer individual during his time at a feminist education center.

“My boss would have to pull me to the side and tell me “you know, they prefer you use *ze, hir*, you know, *ze hir*, not him or her or anything like that”. So that was one on one, and never like ‘oh! don't call me that’ in front of a bunch of people”

A key aspect from Abraham’s experience is being ‘pulled to the side’ and being corrected for his mistake, as opposed to being told in front of the people in the space of his mistake. Yet Abraham has not experienced the public call-outs that he claims he has seen done to others, and has only experienced being corrected in private conversations out of the public’s eye. As a result of these experiences, he has learned to use private call-outs, such as when he confronted his neighbor one on one for parking his motorcycle on a sidewalk, which violates American with Disabilities Act to inform him about his parking habits. To Abraham, “even though it's a little embarrassing to get called-out and even though I can't recall getting called-out in front of a bunch of people- everything is a learning experience. Just thinking about it makes me uncomfortable”. Despite the discomfort, Abraham sees these experiences as learning moments that people have to go through in order to learn. A key feature of Abraham is his training from a gender and sexuality center in his university years, which reflects to how he came to learn dominant

ideologies of viewing privilege, gender identity, and sexual identity from postmodern intellectual positions that advocate for individual change.

At least four respondents, Abraham included, preferred this mode of correction more so than being exposed in public. Of key importance is that this form of correction is performed off-stage, as the actors suspend their participation in the scene and someone with more knowledge coaches the accused on proper conduct and terminology in these spaces. Second, actors get a second chance as they are corrected in private and learn to not repeat the same mistake again when back in the scene. This form of gentle discipline allows activists and scene members to improve their consciousness in these off-stage moments without public pressure and learn to speak to others with the appropriately inclusive terms. That is, they learn the language of social justice through addressing everyday forms of oppression, are given a second chance, and develop some degree of consciousness for future interactions. Third, from a Gramscian point of view, Off-scene Coaching allows actors to shape each other's contradictory consciousness to make it more coherent with the ideologies they subscribe. While not aimed at creating a subject that engages with historical necessity, this form of call-out provides a raw ingredient to fully integrate into a Philosophy of Praxis approach. Finally, this practice is done to people with whom the accuser has a relationship, from one of employment to one of being close friends, as Abraham's boss did to him. However, off-scene coaching is not always preferred in queer activist scenes, as actors have other means at their disposal.

Processual Call-outs

In this form of public accountability, members of the queer activists not only expose problematic acts, but also articulate the larger process at hand that they find problematic. A key difference between this type of public correction and the smaller consciousness-shaping moments is depth. That is, the accuser does not merely point out the problem but offers a course of action to address the larger problem, process, or practice in the situation. Whereas with consciousness shaping call outs, where errants are corrected for their conduct, in processual call-outs, it is not a particular act of a particular

individual, but a larger practice such as corruption or organizational processes like funding and staff. In Processual Call-outs, participants have the power to disrupt and stop the action until the problematic dynamic is fixed. To illustrate I present the experience of Paul, a gay African American local from Austin who is a board member of two queer organizations and is an activist that empowers youth voices locally. When asked about call-outs that have been unproductive, he expressed concern that if he were to tell me unproductive examples, that the ‘enemy’ -the conservative Right wing- would capitalize on these and say “see it’s the tyranny of these marginalized folk!”. Instead, he opted to express productive examples of where he called out an unfair process at a conference of queer activists and youth. At this national queer youth conference, youth issues were not addressed in workshops nor were youth accommodated, so Paul and some young activists planned a complete halt, as he relates:

“we had some young people come up to the stage and said, ‘we’re gonna make a statement, we’re gonna stop this conference we’re taking it over, this is our conference now’ and there were all these corporate slogans on the second floor and over that we put banners that we have created, so instead of advertising a Master Card, it was talking about an issue for young people, like uh ‘twenty percent of all homeless youth are queer’, or something like that. And we went up on stage and there was no opportunity for rebuttal from the conference organizers by intention.”

In this space, the conference where youth went to connect and learn skills, Paul stopped the entire process to bring problems to public attention. One was the corporate affiliations such as Master Card, but two and most importantly, was to hold the organizers accountable for their lack of inclusion of youth perspectives. In this instance, Paul and the queer youth activists suspended the entire action by taking the stage and forcing the organizers to accommodate the excluded youth; until their demands were met, the conference remained suspended. Indeed, Paul and the youth’s demands were met and were able to continue the conference on their own terms. What distinguished this call-out is the amount of depth and practical execution that Paul placed into it; he did not just list the grievance, but he also enacted a plan of action to fix the problem.

From a Gramscian point of view, the uses of these call-outs not only inform but shape the discipline of actors within these scenes to develop their politics, their conceptions of the world, and grow into members of the intellectual groups that comprise these scenes. That is, through the call-out, people like Paul and Abraham sift through the contradictory sediments of people's consciousness in order to make it more coherent with the views of social justice as defined in their activist space. In Paul's case, those who invoke public pressure attempt to stop the scene and seek to fix the problematic process, even if it means shutting down the event or ending relationships with the accused. Paul's case demonstrates the effect of disrupting the queer conference by not only bringing to public attention the problematic processes of corporate funding, but of also the exclusion of youth voices. In these cases, accusers expose problematic processes and seek to change the situation in order for the event to live up to the goals of inclusion and continue its vigilance against oppression from within the scenes.

In sum, Off-Scene Coaching and Processual Call-outs are a means to hold individuals and organizations accountable by privately coaching or disrupting a process in order to sustain actors' ideals of inclusion. Within these two distinct forms of accountability, there are two key features. One, is that concern for the accused is related to the ties and bonds between accused and accuser. Abraham's supervisor corrected him in private, away from local gazes. As Paul states: "if I'm personally interested in the relationship I'm probably gonna do a private call out". In Paul's case of organized disruption, their concern was with holding the conference accountable to their goals even if it meant jeopardizing the professional level of relationship to the organizers. These examples illustrate the role of relationship depth that private and integrative call-outs maintain, as they restore order to the norms of inclusion and attempt to restore connections between accused and accuser. Second, these practices, particularly at the lower levels of publicity, involve some concern for the accused and often give them a way to correct their behavior, albeit with some warning. However, should the person not listen or continue to commit the same transgression, or worse, if they commit acts such as racist violence, activists in these scenes resort to harsher and more public means of

calling-out, as Paul's quote finishes: "But if you're upset about something and you want to express a point of view then a public call out is certainly appropriate". In the next chapter I present punitive call-outs that are often inflected with Foucauldian Ostrich ideologies of neoliberal responsibility and often devolved into ideological policing of actors.

Chapter 5: Is this a Movement or a Clique? Abuses of the Call-Out

In Chapter 4, I focused on the productive methods that call-outs effectively shape actors' consciousness and help them develop a more nuanced conception of the world. That is, I demonstrated through empirical cases how call-outs are used to elevate the consciousness of individuals within queer activist scenes into a more coherent set of intellectual and political positions. Under a Foucauldian Ostrich frame of social justice, the call-out, a practice that serves to publicly correct and challenge oppression within communities takes on a perverse form. Indeed, a logic of personal responsibility fuels these types of call-outs as expressed in the phrase "it's not my job to educate you on your oppression" used by many an activist in these scenes. A second key feature of this type of call-out is that ties with the transgressor are severed and they are thusly stigmatized as problematic, whether through breaches of conduct and discourse. Third, the accuser mobilizes shame by placing the accused as problematic and unredeemable by citing past transgressions, and inviting collective condemnation from others. In this chapter, I examine call-outs inflected with Foucauldian Ostrich ideas of diffuse power that register every action and thought as equally oppressive as structural violence.

One form of this call-out is the *intrusive call-out*. In intrusive call-outs, accusers seek out aspects of a person's life, whether a past action, or present, to call out in public and bring them to shame and thus discredit them. These call outs exhibit an accused as "problematic" or "fucked up" for others to see. At least five respondents expressed concern and criticism over intrusive call-outs. For instance, Gonzalo, a trans-male queer Chicano artist who lives in Oakland California, shared an experience of being outed in front of his mother for dating issues.

"G: I was in a Latina writing group and suddenly a member who I didn't even know very well announced that she could not go forward in the group until I had chosen and committed to only one of her two friends I was seeing. I'm not sure honestly if this was a real call out or some other brand of social douchebaggery, but the sentiment stemmed from the same organ of intrusive righteousness"

M: How did you feel when you were called out?

G: Shitty. I felt like my time was being wasted, like I was being shamed in front of my friends and mother! I did not learn anything except that haters are going to hate, which really wasn't news anyway. My dating life was none of her business."

Gonzalo further relates that the same person is known as an enforcer of call-outs in her radical community. The accuser brought the grievance to public as a means to mobilize public pressure in order for Gonzalo to decide on his personal commitment. Further, that his dating life was "none of her business" speaks to Gonzalo's effort to draw a line in what is political and public and what is private and personal, which to a Foucauldian Ostrich, everything carries equal magnitude and is fair game for calling out.

Lorena, a queer Puerto Rican organizer whose work focuses around reproductive justice in Austin shares her increasing frustration with how call-outs are used to silence debate. She posted a public rant condemning the toxic ways in which call-outs have shut down organizing and alienated newcoming actors to activism. While she received great reception to her public post, she relates:

"then I got people like 'this one time you did something fucked up you don't have a voice' and I'm like okay motherfucker this one time I did do something fucked up but I apologized and acknowledged that and moved on from two years ago when I did a fucked up thing but I do have a voice and you don't get to say that"

Lorena challenges the accusation of doing a "fucked up" thing by expressing that she moved on and acknowledged what she did. Intrusive call-outs seek to not only place actors as problematic, but exposes personal details of their private lives as a way to moralize the call-out and invite condemnation from audiences, as it happened to Lorena and Gonzalo. This practice scrutinizes personal details for contradictions in actors' choices and acts, and allows the Foucauldian Ostrich subject to discredit such person by dressing them as "fucked up". This practice is not confined only to one on one interactions, as they can be taken to broader publics and invite public sanctioning like boycotts.

Inés, a heterosexual Latina who organizes around mental health for women and participates in the discourse of identity politics that she learned as a student in college, complicates the problematic label that the queer and trans community assigned to a

Cuban working class hip hop duo. Because the female duo attended a music festival for “women born women” - and thus colluded in trans-misogyny, queer community voices called for a boycott for the group which Inés found more complicated than just being trans-misogynists. She notes that the people calling the artists out were educated and with US citizenship while the duo:

“are both gender non-conforming immigrants and like they are struggling on a day to day basis to make ends meet as performers and even though they don't support trans exclusivity you know, it was a gig that they took in order to pay the bills to survive and to continue supporting other people's work because I think a lot of what is great about this group is they do a lot of free things for social justice causes in the community, so it's like, it's not so black and white, right.”

Inés complicates the static label of “fucked up” by giving context to the artists’ situation and what it meant for them to make ends meet in Austin. She notes that the accusers did not see beyond the act of performing at a trans-exclusionary music fest and that by boycotting the group, it would actually hurt the artists more financially. As such, intrusive call-outs focus on past actions and seek to dismiss the person or group as problematic and a failure for reinscribing oppression. As Ines noted, these forms of identity politics are learned in university spaces and via internet access, which creates gatekeeping and lack of access to people with no formal education or technological literacy. Next, I present other forms of call-outs that mobilize static conceptions of inclusion and identity as a means to dismiss and reject contradictions in consciousness and act.

Calling Out Exclusion: Inclusion Litmus Tests

In this form of call out, those who take a Foucauldian Ostrich position to social justice mobilize inclusion as a perfect standard to discredit and dismiss people or events for not living up to including every identity in the book. As it happened in the Facebook group at the introduction, by not having perfect inclusion of every identity, Foucauldian Ostriches mobilize words like “tokenizing”, that while rooted in real experiences, are used not to improve but to destroy the space, as in the women of color Facebook group.

For instance, Daisy relates an experience organizing a solidarity event for Ferguson, Missouri from her queer Jewish organization.

“Somebody who was not involved in planning that action created a Facebook event for it, and it turned into this whole craziness. People who weren't involved and had no idea who was planning it or what the intentions were being like “this is racist, there is no Jews of color involved in planning this, why hasn't been there a call for Jews of color to lead this?” and that actually was not the case at all, the folks who were organizing it were white folks black folks everyone and Jews and a real range of races and ethnicities and had been very thoughtful and involved, very thoughtful and involved and based on color who was taking what pieces and who was stepping up and who was stepping back but that wasn't all typed up on Facebook”

In this attempt, the people calling out the event used inclusiveness of voices and participation as the fuel to paint the event as problematic, and thus calling for boycott, as one comment stated “Fuck you! nobody should go to this”. Daisy’s experience, along with the Facebook group incident reveal a static conception of inclusion that Foucauldian Ostriches use as a litmus test to dismiss and disrupt events and organizing. In this image of inclusion, an event must be inclusive to every single identity in the book in a way that does not tokenize. While rooted in legitimate and historical concerns, the use of inclusion as a litmus test, with no solutions offered to improve on inclusion, becomes an enabling mechanism to mobilize destructive call-outs. Lorena, in reflection to the defunct group at the opening vignette adds:

“A bunch of people were asking like what would've been a better approach? Cuz had we not invited her [Rebeca, the trans Latina] it wouldn't have been inclusive. We did invite her it was not inclusive. We did invite enough people, we did invite enough people and they're like, they haven't accepted their invites yet because it's six hours fucking old. It's like *there is no room for error, there is no room for growth* (emphasis my own)”.

Lorena’s reference to no room for growth and error captures this static idea of inclusion that does not allow for mistakes or development to occur, as if there is no organic means for an event or process to develop. A key feature of these inclusion litmus

tests is that they assume perfect inclusion of every identity to be the goal but ignore the practical realities to actually achieving that goal from an organizer's point of view. Lorena expressed that point of view by indicating that the group was not totally inclusive because it was only a few hours old. Lorena speaks from a practical point of view that sees inclusion as limited by realistic concerns such as time and other factors. Further, Inclusion-Litmus Tests take on the model of a customer complaint, in that it is the job of the provider, not the customer to fix the problem without any means for direction. This logic replicates a personal responsibility model of accountability in line with neoliberal governance. Rather than attributing the lack of inclusion to lack of internet access, precarious work schedules, and multiple job shifts, the fault lies with the individual for not providing the service they were supposed to serve for people like Rebeca. There is a customer-provider relationship under this kind of call-out that prevents cooperation between the parties to develop more realistic and dynamic inclusions, but instead provide a one-way accusation that prevents any coalition building between women of color. The phrase "and you can't ask us for direction because that's tokenizing and it's just a mess" from one of Rebeca's supporters attests to this relationship. While rooted in genuine concerns for inclusion of marginalized perspectives, Inclusion-Litmus Tests is one of varied techniques that Foucauldian Ostriches have at their disposal to impede the messy process of coalition and broader movement building by extension.

Identity Call-Outs: "You're cis straight white, who are you have an opinion?"

Foucauldian Ostriches, in their search for a truly inclusive space that is free from any and all forms of domination, dismiss any perspective that comes from any privileged identity as inherently problematic and as not having an opinion. Indeed, among the awful call outs that Lorena describes, dismissing someone by identity and not transforming the social relationships that underpin these identities is one factor that makes call-outs like these toxic and unsettling. For instance, Matthew, a heterosexual working class white activist who is also an ally to queer causes expresses criticism of being labeled "middle class" by other activists in meetings where postmodern identity politics dominate the

discourse. He expresses: “like what does that even mean to call somebody middle class? like to me it's a derogatory term almost coming from certain sections of radical activists, like you are middle class because why? What is the basis of that term? Except for to invalidate my perspectives somehow, because it comes from a place of economic privilege, I don't understand it.” Matt contests that label by sharing he comes from a rural working class town and that just because he is a graduate student activist does not make him at the same level as someone with middle class. Of key importance here is that class is used as an ahistoric identity label with no nuanced indicators other than skin and education. However, class is used more as a personal identity label rather than as a social position shaped by objective relations of production; that “middle class” is used as such indicates the postmodern roots of identity politics that disconnect questions of identity from history and political economy and leave Foucauldian Ostriches to analyze oppression on a very conjunctural level (D'Arcy 2014; Harvey 1990).

Cynthia, a black Chicana queer playwright shared an instance where during discussion after a play, a white man made a misguided comment after which he got told by a member of the audience, “this play isn't for you white man”. For Cynthia “It created this situation where nobody felt comfortable saying anything after that. Like not even the people of color, and so I was like uuuhhhh and then I ended up saying something just to keep the conversation”. While there are legitimate reasons to challenge the white person for the comment he made, Cynthia noted that the berating did not help at all in the conversation, if anything to her it created a space of surveillance for any contradictions in consciousness. One way to further test this is, if a Mexican street vendor said the exact comment, would the same person in the audience berated her for it?

In both Cynthia and Matt's instances, this type of call-out conceptualizes identity as static and a stigma, as if whiteness and Latinidades are ahistorical and not grounded in shifting transformations of the state and of capitalism. This ahistorical treatment of identity is symptomatic of postmodern intellectual influences, since this intellectual project seeks the rejection of history, meta-narratives, and conceives identity in the ephemeral and present form. In a context of flexible accumulation (Harvey 1991, p. 147),

postmodernism shifts the terrain of struggle to cultural production and allows capitalism to further commodify culture and identity, thus treating identity as static and stripping it of any history. Under these conditions, identity becomes a site for call-outs that register identity as markers of authenticity and police identity for any sort of consumption out of line with its notions. Further, by conceiving of privileged identity as problematic, and conversely, by conceiving oppressed identities as pinnacles of truth, these call outs reinforce essentialisms that one, are not mutable, and two, relegate identities to be the sole voice of authority on their own experience without possibility for error or growth (Patai 1992). In their search for a utopic world, anything that does not live up to such image is to be dismissed as problematic and not worthy of attention. Third, by treating identity as static and treating people of color and queers as pinnacles of truth, Foucauldian Ostriches ghettoize these identities in culture and as perpetual victims, ignoring that people like Sylvia Rivera had the capacity to fight back whether through organizing or physical violence (Conatz 2012). The perpetual victim image through which Foucauldian Ostriches operate cleanses contradictions in social groups and ignores that queer people of color have the capacity to develop leaders, establish their own intellectuals, and command some agency beyond just culture but also in politics and economy. And ultimately, these Foucauldian Ostrich conceptions of politics, as manifested in Identity Call-outs are a product of a conjuncture of postmodern ideologies that form part of the common sense of late capitalism, where it is more convenient to ignore material and political structures that engender these violences.

Policing Contradictions: Call-Outs and the Search for Purity

Under Foucauldian Ostrich models of change, power, and action, postmodern call-outs create a climate of fear where actors are afraid of being put on the spot for their acts. Lorena relates: “I had trans women, trans women of color or genderqueer people, white folks brown folks, black folks or queer folks come up to me and however many months since I've been in Austin be like ‘yo I don't feel safe in community with this whole clique of people who are like the Call-Out Masters’”. As an experimental artist, Gonzalo is

afraid of being thrown under the bus as he has seen done to other people even though for him, it is his work to challenge conventions we take for granted.

In some cases, these forms of call-outs, especially when embedded in an internet culture of harassment become abusive. Michelle, a multiracial trans activist who organizes for prison abolition and sex worker movements in Seattle, WA related to me an instance where a friend of hers was targeted by an accuser who kept harassing her with pictures of mutilated animals, to the point that she had to move out to another region and live out her life differently. She shares, “my friend is very sensitive to mutilation as she tried to commit suicide before, so those images hurt her”. This incident started because Michelle’s friend said a problematic comment on an online thread for activists. Michelle relates there was a groupthink attitude of tearing people apart and punishing them for their problematic consciousness.

These practices create a climate of flaunting correct posturing and vengeful responses, perhaps as if to compensate for past oppressions, in which as Daphne Patai describes “demands for loyalty thrive and very little fresh air gets in” (Patai 1992, p.41). In Gramscian terms, this pursuit for ideological purity, for the truly oppressed, entails a rejection of contradictions that lead to utopian images frozen in time, devoid of life that become “idle whims, dreams, longing” (Gramsci [1971], p. 175). In pursuit of these dreams of a world free of power and domination, Foucauldian Ostriches enforce this frozen utopic image to alienate queer actors in scenes, like Lorena related, but also to impede forming necessary coalitions in the present moment, despite the practical problems these goals present. In practice, poststructuralist identity politics, while expanding the scope of subject positions and focusing on the diffuse power relations, do not facilitate movement building; they create cliques that demand loyalty with correct posturing and discourse, as Daisy and Lorena attested. To tie these observations with the historical forces that I examined in Chapter 2, Foucauldian Ostriches are a product of a conjuncture, that of neoliberalism. As their practice of politicking is focused on the cultural realm, from fiction to how one looks and speaks, and their treatment of identity is ahistorical, Foucauldian Ostriches represent the logic of neoliberalism and its cultural

logic of postmodernism. They do so by one, embodying the loss and rejection of history, including any meta-narratives as their treatment of identity attests; two, by shifting the terrain of struggle in culture and seeking its expansion to accommodate the multiple identities that they embrace (Harvey 1990, p. 48), thus allowing for more commodifiable identities; and three, by prescribing individual solutions to structural problems such as their claims for personal responsibility in privilege, or publishing *privilisticles* on sites like Everyday Feminism. Given these organic roots, call-out culture is a product of postmodern and neoliberal discourses of self, politics, and its cynicism for any form of social change that greatly obscures the global mechanisms of violence and the material conditions that engender the privileged and problematic behavior that Foucauldian Ostriches invigilate against.

I have one important qualification in presenting these forms of post-modern call-outs. There is the danger of scapegoating women of color as “angry instigators” as has been done by mainstream treatments of internet outrage, call-out culture, and student protests against racism (Cross 2015; Ronson 2015). To address this concern, I focused on the intellectual roots of post-modern identity politics, mutated into the anti-politics of identity (Kauffmann 1990) that members of queer intellectual classes, regardless of identity subscribe to and participate in as they learn these in blogs, social media, and university spaces. To reiterate, I emphasize that by rejecting contradictions such as mistakes or lack of perfect inclusion, Foucauldian Ostriches mobilize public pressure not to correct, but to berate or even to harass. Despite these destructive and alienating uses of the call out by Foucauldian Ostriches, the practice can nevertheless be hacked and re-used for movement and consciousness building purposes, in a way that embraces contradictions in consciousness, not reject them. I sketch out a roadmap for reforming the call-out in more productive ways, and to lead to a larger moral and intellectual reformation of queer activist classes in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Towards a Moral and Intellectual Reformation of Queer Activist

Intellectuals

In this chapter I sketch raw materials within queer activist scenes to one, disarm Foucauldian Ostriches, and two, to conceive a more productive and dynamic conception of the call out. Finally, I sketch pathways for queer intellectual strata to reconnect with a materialist conception of identity and lead to a potential moral and intellectual reformation that is connected with the experiences of queers of color who do not speak in the same terms of Foucauldian Ostriches, yet who nevertheless find ways to survive, and to better trace the connections between capitalism and queer identity. For this, I rely on the productive uses of the call-out I presented in Chapter 4, and I also use Gramsci's Philosophy of Praxis as a guiding beacon. Gramsci develops the Philosophy of Praxis as a method to develop consciousness with classes and subaltern groups, and to understand the processes through which domination by ruling classes is sedimented in people's conceptions of the world and of themselves (Gramsci [Forgacs] 2000, p. 326). A key concept is that of *common sense*, in which groups carry contradictory sediments of ideological domination as well as a raw and basic conceptions of the world, from old prejudices to myth to folklore to philosophical intuitions about inequality and violence (p. 326). Part of the Philosophy of Praxis is for organic intellectuals of their respective groups to develop people's consciousness through their common sense and discursive structures, to eventually shape the contradictory common sense into a coherent good sense. To develop consciousness then, one must start with working with these contradictory fragments in consciousness and habit, not rejecting them as "fucked up" in the name of purity.

Common Sense Approaches to Accountability

A major problem with Foucauldian Ostriches is their rejection of contradiction and their failure to understand common sense understandings of the world beyond their own university trained ranks, since these contradictions in discourse and lifestyle are framed as problematic and given equal political significance as state violence. As such,

banter and witticism, laden with common sense expressions and folk wisdom are as oppressive as actually chopping an indigenous worker's arm off in a rubber factory in Perú (Robbins 2007). Yet to engage with the historic present, common folk knowledge and practices like banter and humor are one way to shape consciousness more coherently, as are cultural productions. In fact, queer activist scenes already have strata of artists and producers like Gonzalo and Cynthia whose work can reach multiple audiences to the extent that they present and question reality without sanitizing it in the name of static safety. Further, to address the question of micro-aggressions, of the small indignities in which racism, homophobia, and sexism are manifest, the sedimented common sense provides queer actors with tools to respond to them. For instance, Jean, a white genderqueer queer educator based in Austin relates how one of hir students responded to a question of sexuality.

“One of my students got asked what his sexual orientation was, and he was somebody who didn't like anybody to know his sexual orientation. I'm still not sure I know his sexual orientation, and so he would say “unless you're interested in dating me, you don't need to know that.” Then he'd say, “are you interested in dating me?” which of course would just fluster people but he got his point across and there was chuckling that happened. It was light and it was profound.”

Jean relates how one of hir students used humor to divert a question of sexuality and of the risk of him being outed for it. Further, at a queer hip hop film screening of *Pick up the Mic*, one of the singers, a lesbian chola from Oakland related one time at a cafeteria that she was hazed by boys for being a marimacha, to which she responded: “fuckers, you want some shit, huh?! I get more pussy than you ever will” to which the boys left her and her partner alone (Hinton 2006). These two cases illustrate that one, the actors who responded to the micro-aggressions did not use any polysyllables that Foucauldian Ostriches use when calling out, such as “problematic” or “oppressive”, but instead relied on their own common sense ways of responding, whether through humor or through some contentious comeback like the lesbian chola did. Second, these examples further demonstrate that to people like the chola, they rely on their own contradictory common sense understandings of sexuality to reply back to their aggressors, without any academic

language. They rely on the historic present moment and practical experiences to respond to the indignities they face, which is something that Foucauldian Ostriches, and members of queer intellectual strata need to embrace if they are to be better connected with the peoples they represent.

To engage with audiences both newcomers and outsiders means to start at the level of contradictory common sense, to start with the widespread imagery and cultural tropes that conservatives mobilize well, such as the PC label, or the image of “little man” versus the “urban elite”. As such, cultural productions from queer scenes would do well to present reality with its messy contradictions, with the ableist words that became colloquial such as “crazy” and to ultimately lead a discussion to how and why such words become common sense in the first place, instead of dismissing it as just ableist without any explanation. Moreover, there needs to be an understanding that words like “intersectionality, positionality, marginalized, and privilege” lose currency as they are stretched to cover almost anything, and ultimately lose strength to persuade and to transform (Sehgal 2015). As such, one challenge for queer intellectual strata such as activists, artists, organizers, and academics is to be able to articulate metaphoric and common sense equivalent meanings of the specialized language of social justice but without using these buzzwords, and instead mobilize cultural images, tools, and folk knowledge to make that connection between the common sense to these specialized words that get us dismissed as PC from an outsider point of view.

With the understanding in mind that the goal is to shape consciousness via common sense, we can conceive of a Praxis Call out that goes beyond accusation and takes it a step further by engaging the person in how they messed up in what they did and to help them make sense of the problem in a way that goes beyond berating or worse, harassment. To counter the logic of “it’s not my duty to educate you”, if one is committed to raising awareness, then one needs to develop wide varieties of cultural tools and images coming from places like pop culture, music, witticism, banter, and plays as a means to persuade. Doing so would also erode the elitist barrier that the current buzzwords of social justice create and take power from the gatekeepers of knowledge that

Daisy spoke of. Persuasion via common sense should not be a tactic that only right wing conservatives and Donald Trump can use to reach people like street vendors, farmworkers, and working class whites.

Returning to the uses of the call-out in Chapter 4, from private correction to processual types, I respond to the question of under what conditions are call-outs warranted? Under what conditions can activists mobilize public pressure to address problematic behavior and dynamics? Because the call-out mobilizes public pressure to force accountability, and because it requires a more thorough level of identifying the problem and formulating a plan of action, this practice is best effective when dealing with more grave problems such as sexual harassment, and internal corruption as in the case of Paul, while the private versions of it work best when used to correct small problems in consciousness away from public eyes. Jean's case, and the Pick up the Mic interview with the lesbian chola demonstrate that more folk based approaches and comebacks work best for addressing the smaller indignities, as they meet such indignities where they are at, at a lower level of political magnitude. A call-out may backfire however, as there is room for response and for comebacks, or for not following through entirely. I provide a small case for contrast. In one interview with Jude, a black queer lesbian native of East Austin, she related an instance where queer activists of color attempted to call-out Queerbomb, a music festival, for its many "problematic" dynamics in Austin. In making a list of how Queerbomb was "white, classist, and heteronormative", the Queerbomb organizers responded that this tactic was being divisive. One member contacted Jude, who directs a queer people of color organization and she responded:

"We go to Queerbomb because there are queer people of color who are gonna be there who don't know anything about us so it's a potential space for outreach and then we do that because that's our work. It was critical to why we needed to continue to create our own shit. Instead of going to Queerbomb why don't you do your own queer people of color party?"

Unlike Paul's case, where he managed to organize the youth to stop the conference, the protesters at Queerbomb only made a list to call-out the event but did not capture the

organizer's attention and failed to get their complaints listened to, which led to Jude's pragmatic response of organizing their own qvoc party instead. In similar fashion to how Rebeca led the crusade against the women of color group, a call-out that did not formulate a practical plan of action fell apart and Jude noticed as she interrogated why would they just make a list instead of creating their own space.

By embracing contradictions in people's consciousness, and working with these contradictions, one can begin to formulate more practical means and strategies to coalition building. In purging the defeatist and individualist model of social justice, a Philosophy of Praxis conception of accountability will help the ostriches to leave their hole. Indeed, by embracing contradictions in consciousness and registering them as part of the sedimented domination that is part of how raw conceptions of the world begin, people can begin to engage in common sense mediated conversations and find points of connection with other people who may share similar intuitions against oppression but may not have a coherent view of it. This would also mean speaking with people outside of queer activist cliques and educated strata, but with queer workers, sex workers, working class people who do not think in such elitist terms. By beginning with this premise in mind, queer activists and those committed to social justice can avoid registering every act as oppressive and perpetuating a siege mentality that is ultimately debilitating (Patai 1992). By registering contradictions as fertile grounds to engage with, and mobilizing cultural images and common folk tactics like wit and humor, activists can develop a sense of will that goes beyond the rigid "endangered species" stigma that marginalized identities are supposed to perform (Conatz 2012), and in fact, be able to fight back against the many forms of oppression, from the tentacles of micro-aggressions to the organs of violence from the state, at least as a goal. However, this goal is not as straightforward and simple as it sounds. Gramsci notes that the work of intellectual reformation and consciousness raising "is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried" (Gramsci [Forgacs] 2000, p. 334). This passage means that the struggle to reform intellectual development of queer activists and of the masses will mean a long protracted

ideological, cultural, and often tiring battle to shift discourse and common sense understanding, to stand up to massive systems of ideological diffusion from education to media to government, all of which function to sustain current modes of neoliberal governance. However, despite its small chance of victory, to engage in this pathway, what Gramsci calls a *war of position* (Gramsci [Hoare] 1970, p. 238), is to mobilize intellectual strata of subaltern classes in order to build a moral and intellectual leadership. As to what direction this potential leadership goes, I argue that postmodern conceptions of social justice, Foucauldian Ostriches in particular, are an impediment for this development of hegemony from below.

None of this is to suggest that we should ditch identity politics wholesale, since identity in its many varieties mediates the lived experiences of subaltern groups in the US. However, what needs to be dispensed with is the individualist model of social justice, a product of post-modern thought that conceives oppression and power as diffuse as air molecules, with every act having equal oppressive magnitude. This, along with prescriptions of insulating oneself in spaces and invigilating them for impurities entrenches a defeatist disposition to justice by eliminating concrete structural factors, and by focusing on chopping tentacles rather than identifying and formulating a plan to get at the heart of the beasts. In abandoning historical materialism, for better or for worse, the New Left movements became fertile grounds for postmodern conceptions of power and change to inform their agendas, and the outcome has been call-out culture, cliques that demand loyalty, and frozen conceptions of the future along with a cynical climate for change. It is to this point, that of rejuvenating historical materialism that I address next.

Towards a Historical Materialist Conception of Queer Identity and Politics

To be sure, postmodern conceptions of power and social change have significantly expanded the realm of thought for conceptualizing gender, sexuality, and the micro manifestations of power in everyday life outside of the state for marginalized identities (Butler 2007; Ferguson 2003; Foucault 1990,1991; Munoz 1999). In practice, postmodern conceptions have served to register the intimate ways in which racism,

sexism, anti-queer violence play out inside social movements and in everyday life (Chen et al 2011; Dempsey & Rowe 2004). However, these kinds of politics, because they get too focused on the superstructural elements of oppression, lose sight of the material and social mechanisms that give these oppressions their birth. As Harvey has argued, postmodern thought from Foucault's diffuse power to Deleuze's language games leaves no politics, no direction to develop any strategy to counteract these larger material forces, and "it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power" (Harvey 1990, p. 117). As such, as I have demonstrated in chapter 2, these ideological positions entrench neoliberal common sense discourses by circumscribing the terrain of struggle to culture and personal life, and prescribing individual solutions to structural problems, thus creating a Foucauldian Ostrich subject who must constantly fight these infinite forms of domination. As such, their most useful function at best is taxonomic, to identify what is and is not oppressive. Further, as Adolph Reed Jr. asserts in his critique of anti-racism, "this exposure convinces only those who are already disposed to recognize. Those who aren't so disposed have multiple layers of obfuscating ideology, mainly forms of victim-blaming, through which to deny that a given disparity stems from racism or for that matter is even unjust" (Reed Jr, 2009). Reed speaks to the role of common sense in obscuring what is racist and what is not, such that to convince someone who is not disposed to the language of social justice is to work with the neoliberal common sense discourse of personal responsibility rather than using specialized terms that only those with the language can understand. Moreover, because postmodernist thought displaces political economy, and treats the state and power as free floating discourses, concrete targets like the homeland security state (Gonzales 2014) become abstracted into an abstract discourse, like white supremacy that people have to invigilate against in their own bodies by "checking themselves" and pledging personal responsibility for addressing racism (D'Arcy 2015; Reed Jr. 2009).

In this section I lay out ingredients to work towards a queer historical materialist approach to identity and politics that synthesizes the insights of queer scholars with those of the Marxist tradition, so as to connect the ways in which phases of capitalism and its

conjunctures shape the ways in which queer and sexual identities proliferate and are expressed, but also how sexuality is entangled within material forces of production and labor. Ingredients abound. Gramsci and Harvey provide key ingredients in understanding how capitalism contains a regime of accumulation that is also accompanied by a regime of social regulation (Gramsci [Forgacs] 2000 p. 290; Harvey 1990, p. 121). Harvey borrows from the ‘regulation school’ to define a *regime of accumulation* as “the stabilization over a long period of the allocation of the net product between consumption and accumulation” (p. 121) while he defines its accompanying *mode of social regulation* as “the form of norm, habits, laws, regulating networks and so on that ensure unity of the process, i.e. the appropriate consistency of individual behaviours with the schema of reproduction” (p. 122). To illustrate, I present a bit from Gramsci’s writings.

In his writing on Americanism and Fordism, Gramsci noted how the Fordist regime of accumulation also required a specific form of the family and of sexuality in order to sustain a reproduction of labor, such as for instance enforcing prohibition, as he notes: “The enquiries conducted by industrialists into the workers’ private lives and the inspection services by some firms to control the ‘morality’ of their workers are necessities of the new methods of work” (p. 290). This inspection included regulating sexuality, and enforcing a heterosexual monogamous model of the family (Harvey 1990, p.126). Yet contradictorily, as John D’Emilio points out, this relationship of capitalism to the family also meant creating a labor force whose family ties are weak so as to promote worker mobility (D’Emilio 1983 p. 108). In exploring this contradictory relationship, D’Emilio notes that gay identity became crystalized as wage labor spread and production becoming socialized, which made it possible to release sexuality from the “imperative” to procreate (p. 104). In his essay, D’Emilio makes the connections of the spread of capitalism in facilitating the construction of a gay and lesbian identity in the US, thus further making the material connections between sexuality and how regimes of accumulation, and their accompanied social regulation influenced its emergence as gay and lesbian identity in the US during the first half of the 20th century.

From the gender and sexuality literature, there is powerful work that attempts to construct what Lionel Cantu calls a queer materialist approach (Cantu 2009, p. 13). That is, in his work *The Sexuality of Migration*, Cantu demonstrates that sexuality is a key dimension in shaping the immigration experiences of Mexican men and constructs a framework that allows him to see how political economy is interwoven with sexuality, as his cases of gay tourism and the erotic journeys of men who not only work and migrate but engage in sex demonstrates (p. 97). Cantu's work is in conversation with political economic perspectives that erase the sexual dimension of immigration but nevertheless shape migratory patterns. Further, Quesada et al in their work *Queer Brown Voices* record the lived histories of queer Latina/o activists in Central Texas, for whom most of their experience revolves around making space for queer Latina/o voices that are often ignored in heteronormative Latino activism and also within white LGBT activism (Quesada et al 2015), as Jude expressed during our interview: "the queer Latinos said you know what? We are tired of going into Latino spaces and they're saying why you gotta bring up the queer? And tried to go into queer spaces and they say "why you gotta bring up the race?" so we said, you know what? We'll create our own space".

One key dimension to add in bridging these two perspectives; those of Gramsci and Harvey, with those Cantu and Quesada and Vidal-Ortiz is to add a historical dimension that analyzes conjunctures and traces its organic roots in order to understand how queer identity is formed in relation to material forces of production, but also what material conditions engender anti-queer and anti-trans violence. If we are to better understand the death of Monica Loera in Austin (Hernandez 2016), along with the deaths of trans bodies in Texas, a queer Gramscian point of view would ask, what are the material conditions and modes of social regulation that enable this violence to occur? What contradictions in late capitalism's relationship to the family enable violent reactions that place queer and trans bodies as scapegoats? Rather than focusing on a free floating trans-misogyny that people just need to unlearn, a historical materialist framework would historicize the emergence and formation of queer identities in historical context, similar

to how D'Emilio did in explaining how the spread of capitalism in the United States facilitated the creation of a gay and lesbian identity.

Similarly, this would also mean asking, to what extent does neoliberal restructuring allowed for the formation and adoption of a queer identity and way of knowing? That is, if queer theory's goal is to destabilize identities and categories in the postmodern tradition (Butler 2007; Cantu 2009; Ferguson 2003), to what extent is queer identity, different from gay and lesbian, a product of neoliberal restructuring, whose aim is to also destabilize social relations and reassemble them in a regime of flexible and precarious accumulation? (Chomsky 2014; Harvey 1990, 2005) Finally, a queer historical materialist approach would also connect with practical issues that queer bodies face such as labor access, labor conditions, structural violence meted out against them by the state. Such an approach would allow activists to develop concrete agendas of action that would go beyond the policing of people's contradictions in consciousness and the pursuit of an ideological purity that Foucauldian Ostriches long for. By connecting queer identity and struggle to history, members of queer intellectual strata would be better connected with subaltern queers who do not have the same level of traditional literacy and would have to leave the ivory tower to connect on a more common sense level, thus eroding the elitist gatekeeping that current uses of social justice discourse promote.

Chapter 7: Gramsci is NOT Dead

In this investigation, I examined the intellectual productions that enabled groups like Oscar and Rebeca to berate and impede organizing in the Facebook group, which led to its demise. In doing so, I argued that the call-out, under poststructuralist conceptions of power and social change becomes an impediment to coalition building and to consciousness raising by rejecting contradictions in pursuit of an utopic image of safety and inclusion. Under post-modern conceptions of power and action, Call Out Masters become what I call Foucauldian Ostriches in their labor of rejecting “problematic” behavior and seeking a pure space free from all forms of power, what Gramsci characterizes as utopic and an escape from present reality (Hoare & Smith 2012 [1971], p. 175). Foucauldian Ostriches are a product of neoliberal market logic in that one, they prescribe individual solutions to structural problems such as “checking one’s privilege” and finding personalized ways to mitigate oppression. Two, this logic of action is alienating to building coalition and impedes broader blocs across various spheres of civil society that can create *durable* counterhegemonic discourses and visions. To elaborate this argument, I traced the intellectual roots of Foucauldian Ostriches to postmodern intellectual production such as Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe, the former of which had views that sympathized with neoliberal restructuring (Zamora 2014). Further, using Harvey’s insights, postmodernism actually harms the Other that they claim to emancipate by ghettoizing them in culture as their *only* site of struggle, and “denying them access to universal forms of power and leadership building” (Harvey 1990, p. 117). By tracing the organic connections to poststructuralism and its resonance with the conservative backlash of the 70s and 80s against social movements, I traced how poststructuralist ideas underplayed the abandonment of historical materialism of the emerging New Left movements, and shifted their vision to one of forbearance and mitigating oppression individually, thus enabling call-out culture as its manifestation. To trace the persistence of these ideological positions means to also study its means of diffusion, so I analyzed how Foucauldian Ostrich ideologies are diffused in queer activist scenes via blogs like

Every Day Feminism, Black Girl Dangerous, and Tim Wise; through university multicultural centers, gender and sexuality centers, and departments that still produce these ideas; and through debates and posts that sport academic social justice buzzwords en vogue.

I also presented through empirical interviews ways in which the call-out is used productively within queer activist scenes, but also how post-modern call-outs are abused to become an impediment to building any movement or coalition of parties. I then sketched how a Gramscian Philosophy of Praxis can wrest the call-out from Foucauldian Ostriches and remake it into a means to sift through contradictory sediments in consciousness and to have it work through an understanding of common sense. Indeed, by mobilizing cultural productions and common sense tools, praxis call-outs have the potential to go beyond berating and harassment and to further connect queer activist intellectuals with the grounded and practical experiences of people who do not speak in their terms. This connection is key, as it is a raw foundation from which to build coalitions based on lived and practical realities, and ultimately, a coherent historic bloc that can fight back against systemic racism and sexual violence from the state. This pathway is nevertheless full of “contradictions, retreats, advances, and failures” (Gramsci [Forgacs] 2000, p. 334), but it at least provides a strategy and an engagement with historically present politics that postmodern philosophies fail to address. Finally, I presented raw ingredients to begin a sketch to a queer historical materialist frame that would allow the queer intellectual strata to better connect with history, the material forces that have shaped who we are, and in practical terms, with queer elders who have passed and those who still live. Doing so would allow analysts to ground queer experiences within historic changes in the forms of capitalism, but also interrogate the ways in which neoliberal governance is manifest in queer aesthetics, modes of living, and political practice, and to shift to an understanding of how queer subaltern subjects make sense of, and survive despite these massive social and historical changes. That is not to say this shift has never been done, but it would allow for the development of a strategy to address

violences such as Monica Loera's death or the violences that queer bodies face from the state, rather than attribute it to some free floating discourse.

Contrary to intellectuals like Richard Day, who asserts that Gramsci is no longer relevant for movement building and instead advocates for anarchist practices (Day 2005), I present practical problems that post-modern conceptions of politics enable via the practice of calling out. By presenting the conceptual problems with thinking of power as diffuse and displacing the question of power and domination, and by laying out possible pathways to reconstruct the call-out as a means to shape consciousness and develop conceptions of will that can effectively challenge systemic and everyday violence, I respond to Day that Gramsci lives. Perhaps not with anarchists, Tumblr social justice, coffee shop radicals, or Foucauldian Ostriches, but Gramsci lives as glimmers of political hope in the common senses and sedimented consciousness of peoples situated in different locations in the matrix of late capitalist domination. By embracing contradictions and working from these opposing consciousness, a praxis call-outs can one, help iron out the good sense from the domination sense, and two, develop a sense of will that allows for contradictions to be engaged and transformed dialectically, that is, dynamically. In presenting these alternative pathways, people like Oscar and Rebeca can hopefully move beyond the ideologies they learned and develop better ways to unleash their potential in a durable and meaningful way. Finally, understanding the intellectual currents that birthed call-out culture in its toxic manifestations is key to one, begin an honest conversation about what ideas shape activist practice and vision of the world, but two, to create room for alternatives that can give queer groups a concrete target, such as corporate influence in Pride parades, elite aesthetics and consumerist common sense in gay culture and identity, the whitewashing of the Stonewall riots, and the state control of trans bodies in spaces like restrooms (Mananzala & Spade 2008; Sycamore 2008).

To reject contradictions in pursuit of a static image of safety and inclusion, is to reject life itself, with all its messiness and mistakes. Finally, to remain an ostrich who is drunk for an idyllic world without engaging the present moment, from domination and the common sense, towards that ideal world is to remain oblivious to state structures that

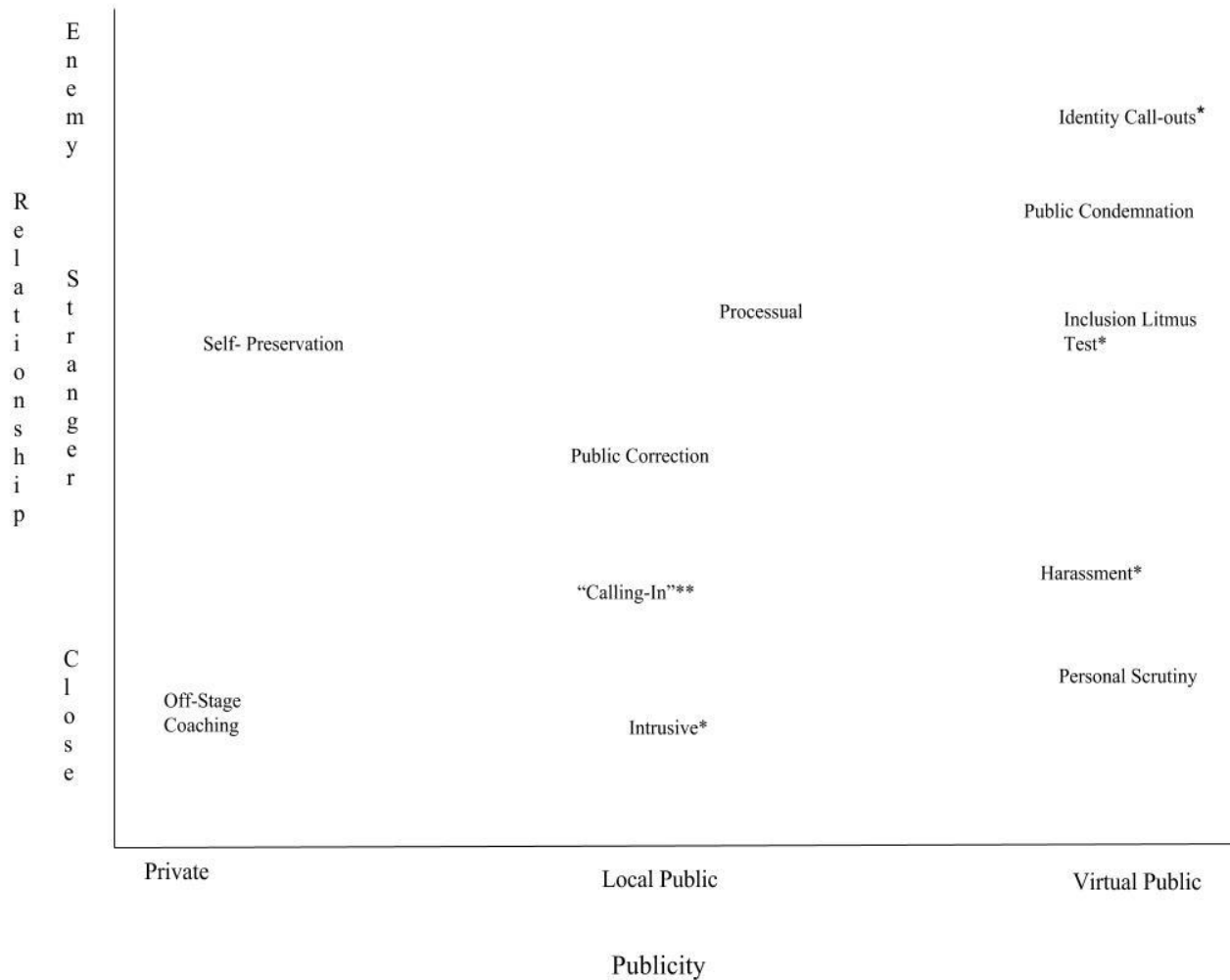
will eventually chop the ostrich's head while in the sand. We are seeing this as universities cut back against humanities, arts, and social sciences, impose austerity and re-design education as a business model (Haiven 2014); as the homeland security state continues to deport and detain undocumented migrants (Gonzales 2014); and as police continue to murder people of color of various sexualities and gender identities across the US. That increased state violence and austerity regimes, with rabid reactionary violence, accompanied with precarious working conditions speak to a shift in neoliberal governance that is taking an authoritarian turn (Gonzales 2016). Postmodernism as a practice for social justice is at best taxonomic (Reed Jr 2009), and at worst a cynical impediment to any concrete and practical movement building. I write this analysis to speak to the rise of student protests against structural racism around the US, and to their bubbling consciousness with hopes that they can purge the defeatist post-modern sediments from their ideological visions, and truly find a dynamic and dialectic union between the organic structures that create racial and sexual violence, and their subjective experiences living under these systems.

Appendix 1: Table 1 List of Respondents

“Name”	Gender	Race	Sexuality	Scene Role	Location
Esteban	Male	Latino	Gay	Board member	Austin, TX
Abraham	Male	Black	Gay	Activist	Austin, TX
Canute	Male	White	Straight	Ally, activist	Austin, TX
Dash	Male	Indian	Straight	Ally, activist	Austin, TX
Ines	Female	Latina	Straight	Board Member	Austin, TX
Jude	Female	Black	Lesbian	Organizer	Austin, TX
Bert	Male	Black	Gay	Board Member	Dallas, TX
Daniel	Male	Mixed	Queer	Blogger	Austin, TX
Tino	FTM	Chicano	Queer	Artist	Oakland, CA
Mark	Male	White	Bisexual	Activist	Lakeway, TX
Daisy	Female	White	Queer	Organizer	Oakland, CA
Jean	Genderqueer	White	Queer	Activist, educator	Austin, TX
Matt	Male	White	Straight	Activist, ally	Austin, TX
Jessie	Male	Latino	Gay	Board Member	Austin, TX
Felipe	Male	Latino	Gay	State Worker	San Antonio, TX
Sheila	Female	Black	Bisexual	Poet, Activist	Dallas, TX
Oscar	Male-questioning	Chicano	Queer	Activist, Blogger	Austin, TX
Paul	Male	Black	Gay	Activist, Board member	Austin, TX
Cynthia	Female	Black	Bisexual	Activist, playwright	Austin, TX
Jess	Female	Mixed	Bisexual	Activist	Dallas, TX
Roger	Male	Black	Gay	Playwright, Organizer	Dallas, TX
Jade	Female	Black	Bisexual	Activist	Dallas, TX
Deborah	Female	Latina	Queer	Organizer	Austin, TX
Michelle	MTF	Multiracial	Queer	Activist, Organizer	Seattle, WA

Appendix 2: Types of Call-outs

Table 2: Types of Call-outs



*Under Foucauldian Ostrich visions of social justice that exaggerates the ‘personal is political’, these are abusive call-outs that treat identity and inclusion as static and ahistorical.

** “calling-in” refers to a term respondents use to mean a gentler public accusation reserved to close friends and employees, that provides those accused a means for reintegration into the scene.

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