**Incorporating Space and Play in the Study of Contemporary Contentious Politics:
The Case of the Critical Mass Movement**

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Processes of globalization are unevenly developing with economic activities concentrated in urban spaces. This increased urbanization has exacerbated global issues and significantly altered the way of life for many people. It has also changed the composition of cities, in some cases creating global cities, which have opened up new spaces and possibilities for contention as the local and global levels are intimately connected. Urban social movement actors' activities are informed through this spatial understanding. Thus, research on contentious politics can benefit from observing how spatialities affect contentious action. Spatial perspectives illuminate the connections between daily life experiences and broader social, political, and economic processes. Urban spaces reveal the continuities between culture and structure; *both* cultural and structural approaches can benefit by incorporating spatial analyses for studying contemporary contentious politics. One of the tactics employed by activists is their use of play to reclaim space, inscribing it with new values and meanings to challenge hegemonic groups. Investigating the intersection of play and space can enhance our understandings on the development and trajectories of contentious action. This thesis examines the Critical Mass movement as a case study to illustrate how space and play are a part of an integral process through which these actors perceive, shape, and participate in contentious politics.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the world has experienced an unprecedented amount of transnational interaction and transformation in global processes that are significantly affecting the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. All of these developments have been encompassed under the concept of globalization. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006: 396) defines globalization, "as a set of unequal exchanges in which a certain artifact, condition, entity or local identity extends its influence beyond its local or national borders and, in so doing, develops an ability to designate as local another rival artefact, condition, entity or identity." These unequal exchanges tend to favor hegemonic or dominant social groups, states, interests and ideologies over the counter-hegemonic or subordinate social groups, states, interests and ideologies on a world scale. Hence, the dominant features of globalization are the characteristics of hegemonic groups.

A growing concern about the expansion of global capitalism is the impact of neoliberal practices on urban spaces. Since the 1990s, movements critical of neoliberal policies have developed. Organizations such as Reclaim the Streets, Carbusters, and Critical Mass started critiquing corporate groups who were increasingly privatizating of public spaces. The argument many of these groups made was that privatization of public space undermines its previous function as a place for community. The primary method these groups have employed is the direct action of taking over the streets through play in order to challenge spatial practices where

driving is the only means of transportation. The commandeering of roads is an active critique of the automotive industrial complex, while inscribing new meanings and values to public roads. There are several factors contributing to this movement's development. One of these factors is the rise of global cities. The multiple processes that constitute globalization shape specific, rather than universal, structurations of the economic, the political, the cultural, and the subjective. In so doing, new spatialities are produced (Sassen 2001). This has been possible because capitalism needs cities to absorb surplus. This intimate economic relationship between cities and corporations has grown more dependent over time as more people migrate into cities. Over half the world's population live in urban areas. It is important to note that, occupying the same space does not mean community will develop. The privatization of public spaces as populations grow negatively impacts staging areas where citizens have historically formed community. Forging new networks will be more difficult as urban population grows and public spaces decrease. This movement's goal to reclaim public space is vital, "because these cultural spaces are meaningful, because they matter so much in the public construction of identity, perception, and community-- because they are worth fighting for--they emerge as essential zones of conflict and control" (Ferrell 2001: 14). Therefore, this concern affects more than just cyclists but the public at large.

Andre Drainville (2004) provocatively posits that the global economy has become a place where social forces are operating with regard to urban politics. He suggests that global politics are situated in local spaces. He argues that the categories in use to capture the intersection of the global economy and politics are spectral. Drainville (2004: 8) states, "we must keep in mind that global politics is placed politics. Although it appears to float above places and contexts, it is being invented and articulated in actually existing localities." By observing these localities, we can situate the importance of space for two strong emerging social forces- - global corporate

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power and the multitudes of disadvantaged actors. This spectral position builds upon previous work on the ways neoliberal policies rely on and impact cities; as Sassen (1996: xiii) explains, "in my own work I have been grappling with the emergence of new types of subjects and spaces. The global city makes possible the emergence of new types of political, as yet not formalized subjects." Recognizing that local place-based activism has the capacity to bring politics into the world economy signals that there is something happening in the domain of informal politics.

For Drainville (2004), these localities are global cities because they are concentrated areas of economic, political, and social forces. The global city is a site where global corporate capital and multitudes of disadvantaged populations can engage with each other. The site of this engagement is where place-based politics (e.g., anti-gentrification struggles) may become a form of global politics. The space of the city is a far more concrete space for politics than that of the nation. It becomes a place where non-formal political actors can be part of the political scene in a way that is much easier than through formal channels at the national level. "The unbundling of the national along with the specific dynamics of de-nationalization as instantiated in the global city have contributed to creating operational and conceptual openings for other actors and subjects" (Sassen 2001: 22). Street-level politics makes possible the formation of new types of political subjects that do not have to go through the formal political system. It is in this sense that those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, can gain a presence in global cities. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that most contentious visible social movements occur within these spaces. These spaces are staging grounds for grievances for particular places. These contested places are likely to be where grievances are aired and addressed (Martin and Miller 2003).

To understand contemporary conflict over how the world should be organized […] it requires a world-level perspective attentive to the larger processes of conflict, accommodation, and reform taking place between challengers and authorities as well as to the particular issues or movements around which social forces organize (Smith and Wiest 2012: 1-2).

In addition to broadening our scope, it is necessary to observe precisely how these hegemonic practices are taking form in physical space and shaping spatial practices. Drainville (2004) argues in favor of using the city as a unit of analysis. According to Drainville, this allows for exploring contextualized local orders without losing a sense of the overall global corporate neoliberalism.

Robert Park (1984) argues that the way a city is constructed reflects who we are because it is created out of our heart's desire. The spatial structures of global cities are shaped by those in power and do not reflect the desire of the majority. Harvey (2010: 329) explains, "the right to the city, as it is now constituted, is too narrowly confined, restricted in most cases to a small political and economic elite who are in a position to shape the city more and more after their own desires." Wherever globalization has penetrated economically it has brought in its wake a cultural invasion (Redner 2004). Aspects of urban life many groups value are steadily disappearing due to capitalism priority of profit above all else. This is a significant factor in making the city a battleground between hegemonic and counterhegemonic groups. Additionally, there is a lack of physical space available in a city. Oldenburg (1989) warned that these economic practices are effectively eliminating free spaces for community and play, which he refers to as "third places," where people come together and interact. Oldenburg (1989) argues the lack of third places fragments society and alienates citizens from each other. Counterhegemonic groups see this as a negative consequence, while hegemonic groups see this as a positive

outcome and a mechanism for better control. Contestation over space is at an all-time high and appears to be intensifying. What is at stake is the physical area along with spatial structures that shape the cultural meanings and actions within them. Harvey (2009) argues, this contestation is an attempt to protect people's way of life which is also their right to the city. "The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (Harvey 2009: 315).

Most of the general public is unaware of how neoliberal economic practices have significantly impacted the spaces that they inhabit. Neoliberal economic practices of privatizing public spaces shape activities within them. One of the ways social actors have contested the privatization of space is their use of play. Play can serve as an effective tactic to draw attention to contested spaces while subverting the social practices of space. Play in this regard serves as a form of collective action that promotes community and protest. Therefore, Critical Mass, along with other groups that have an intimate understanding of their spatial environment use play as a tactic to reclaim public space, exposing the meanings behind the everyday practices of space as well as offering alternative views on other possibilities for this space. Play acts as a way for movement participants to express their inventiveness and creativity by adapting to existing repertoires situated in the shifting political and cultural environment. Observing the way play affects movement activity can help explain the trajectories and processes of contentious politics. Therefore, investigating the intersection between space and play in contentious politics can reveal the disconnect between structure and culture. Understanding the role of structural and cultural approaches enhances our understandings of past, present, and future trajectories of contentious action in public spaces.

Previous work by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), Lefebvre (1991), and others, has highlighted ways studies of contentious politics can benefit from spatial analyses. This thesis follows this tradition, arguing that the interaction between play and space is a relevant site of study. Spatial processes are an essential part of both structural and cultural processes. Therefore, incorporating an analysis of space can reveal how structure and culture shape each other. This type of analysis provides a bridge to help break down the false dichotomy between structure and culture that still exists in social movement studies (Poletta 1997). Incorporating an analysis of space and play can bolster cultural analyses as well as structural approaches to achieve a more well-rounded approach for studying contentious politics. Political contention dynamics can benefit from attention to the spatial constitution and context of social, political, and economic processes, and the ways in which these processes are spatially experienced and contested. Thus, an in-depth analysis of spatialities can provide a rich field of inquiry for understanding how and why contentious politics transpires, since space is both a medium and result of social action.

1.1   SPACES OF CONTENTION

Space has always been an important element of social life. As Wise (2008: 108) explains, "spaces and territories precede us, supersede us, make us who we are, and are our legacy." Because space is so important in helping create identity and community, it is highly contested and has been a constant source of conflict throughout history. Space has been given some attention in social movement literature but it is frequently treated as a container for social action. Sewell (2001: 51-52) elaborates this argument, writing, "with rare exceptions, the literature has treated space as an assumed and unproblematized background, not as a constituent aspect of

contentious politics that must be conceptualized explicitly and probed systematically." Consequently, space is often regarded as a rigid structure and as an objective given. The social actions that occur within and outside of spatial structures are regularly redefining the cultural meaning of these spaces in a dynamic process.

Space is a semantically complex concept that requires systematic theorization in order to properly introduce it to rigorous analysis of political contention. Space can refer to an abstract idea that represents a quantifiable characteristic of the real world. It can also refer to the more concrete sense that designates a specific location with real boundaries and its relation to human interaction that can be used, observed, and experienced. This concrete conceptualization of space is analogous to structures. Structures shape people's action and it is also their actions that constitute and reproduce structures in a mutually constitutive relationship (Sewell 2001). Hence, social relations are spatial. Altering spatial conditions will likely alter these relations and subsequent actions. Previous attempts that treated spatial structures as mere containers for social action prevents an earnest investigation into how space matters to the mobilization, practices, and trajectories of contentious action.

Space is not only a physical or geographic location but represents the intersection of various social and political forces. Thus, space has many dimensions to consider such as the practices that go on within that space; how it is socially constructed and represented; how it relates to other spaces; and how it is perceived by actors within and outside this space. Space comes in different forms or "spatialities" including but not limited to scale, place, networks, positionality, and mobility (Leitner et. al, 2008). Social movement literature has most frequently observed the politics of scale but this is only one aspect of space which comes with certain epistemic implications. Nicholls et al. (2013: 12) reminds us, "the theoretical task at hand is

therefore not to demonstrate which spatiality is more important than another but rather to identify the various roles of different spatialities in social movements and how they intersect with each other to affect social movement dynamics." All of the spatialities are co-implicated, contributing to the complex ways social movement activity operates. Prioritizing one type of spatiality in particular neglects the interrelatedness of other spatialities. This understanding hinders an overall assessment of movement behavior.

In addition to the spatialities discussed, there is another kind of space worth highlighting known as "free spaces" (Poletta 1999). This concept is useful because of its ability to integrate culture into structuralist models of collective action. Collective action in free space signifies the greater capacities of cultural challenge to destabilize institutional arrangements. Given that free spaces are a perceived threat to hegemonic groups, reducing their presence is a way of minimizing collective action against powerful interests.

Free space refers to small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization (Poletta 1999). Free spaces provide an environment in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue.

> Free spaces supply the activist networks, skills, and solidarity that assist in launching a movement. They also provide the conceptual space in which dominated groups are able to penetrate the prevailing common sense that keeps most people passive in the face of injustice, and are thus crucial to the very formation of the identities and interests that precede mobilization (Poletta 1999: 3).

Free spaces within movements contribute to the spread of identities, frames, and tactics from one movement to another. They can also act as an "abeyance structure" that sustains the movement through doldrums of non-receptive political environments (Taylor 1989). This ability to sustain movement efforts is also displayed in the role of play. Play serves as a powerful coping mechanism, even in the most difficult circumstances, including war. For example, armies facing famine in the Persian wars resorted to playing games in order to distract soldiers from hunger. The power of play to refocus attention to collective action is a powerful force that requires further examination.

1.2   PLAY IN CONTENTIOUS ACTION

Social movements are generally considered serious endeavors for social change; hence, an often overlooked aspect is their use of play. The media and critics are quick to dismiss the playful side of movement behavior as detracting from their political intent but play is an essential component of social movements that has a number of functions.

> Play is the experimental and sometimes joyful quality of activism in which participants imagine and enact new selves, social relationships, and means of politics. It can include self-conscious forms of playing – laughter and humor, theater, and music – the spontaneous moments of resistance and liberation in the face of danger or victory, and the "making up" of new selves and forms of politics (Shepard 2001: xv).

Thus, play can serve to raise awareness, challenge a series of social mores, build group solidarity, sustain participation, shape strategies and tactics, and provide enjoyment. Play acts as a tool to disrupt what is wrong with the world while generating images of what a better one might look like (Shepard 2011). In this way, play can be conceived as an act of prefiguration.

In addition to the lack of attention to play in social movement studies, the role of play is being transformed by capitalist elites in society. There are endless forms of entertainment today but most would not qualify as play because they lack the important condition of freedom. Play consists of ad hoc, non-routine, and joyful conducts where individuals break free temporarily from the disciplined constraints of daily life, normative obligations, and organized power. There is a strong tendency in modern times to structure and institutionalize fun in the form of, for instance, participating in organized leisure activities such as; going to bars, discos, concerts, and the like. However, the inevitable drive for spontaneity and invention renders organized fun a tenuous entity (Bayat 2007).

Fun is increasingly becoming appropriated into designated places by profit-seeking power holders. Thus, play has important implications for space and vice-versa. This space-play dynamic can be observed in a process Jeff Ferrell (2001) describes as "disneyfication," where real places are being stripped of their original character and commodified into a sanitized format. Disneyfication entails the implementation of a theme park model to society catering to and producing consumers.

> The experience of a theme park space is one that has been carefully planned out;
> as a visitor you are carefully led to experience the park in a certain way, to engage
> in certain activities and not others. The well-run theme park is a machine that

teaches people how to relax and have fun, but most of all teaches them how to

consume (della Porta 2006: 46).

The standardized culture of consumerism imposed through these projects is severely affecting free thinking and free action, which is what power holders want. Sanctioned forms of play are connected with material interests and profit, while unsanctioned forms of play are connected with no material interests and no profit which is negatively viewed by capitalists. Authorized play is counterintuitive to what play embodies because it essentially strips the freedom that underpins play. Disney design strategies have been behind urban gentrification projects that prioritize affluent populations. Major cities that have grown to have a specific identity are losing their character and public spaces are more regulated, blurring the lines between the private and public spheres. Engaging in play can be an effective way to combat these developments.

Because fun and play are inextricably tied to expressions of freedom they can be subversive. Play has the ability to disrupt and invert the social hierarchies of space which draws the attention of authorities. Moreover, play threatens authority because, as a source of instantaneous fulfillment, it represents a powerful rival archetype, one that stands against discipline, rigid structures, single discourse, and monopoly of truth. It subsists on spontaneity and breaths in the air of flexibility, openness, and critique—the very ethics that clash with the rigid one-dimensional discourse of doctrinal authority (Bayat 2007). Predictability is a source of control for the system and, because of play's capacity to ignite the unexpected, those who favor law and order remain wary of its unsanctioned manifestations. Authorities often seek to close spaces where improvised play takes place (Shepard 2011). Furthermore, for a social

movement to create a place to play is to challenge core workings of capitalist social arrangements. Yet, there is more to it than that, it is also a lot of fun.

Play is the primary tactic employed by Critical Mass. Organizers of Critical Mass understand play reflects the needs to build solidarity, sustain action, challenge spatial practices, and provide enjoyment. Furthermore, this understanding of using play as a tactic has developed out of experiencing the dominant car culture in society.

2.0   THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CAR CULTURE

The automobile industry offers a prime example for observing how contemporary global economic practices affect the spatial structures that shape social life. The "automotive industrial complex" is a highly profitable collection of industries that is heavily tied to other capitalists' interests. The media portrayal of automobiles and constant promotion of cars through advertisements instills a car-centric culture in societies to the point that driving is taken for granted and the cars people own contribute to their social status and sense of identity. Consequently, bicycling as a form of transportation is negatively affected by the material infrastructure and dominant cultural norms (Furness 2010). This car-culture reflects the broader process towards the atomization of social life – dissolving community, pushing towards individualism, and controlling public space. The increasing privatization efforts of power holders are intruding into the public realm, blurring the line between what is public and private. The aims of those in power are to redefine the meaning of public space that align with their interests. This can have serious implications because, "public space always becomes a cultural space, a place of contested perception and negotiated understanding, a place where people of all sorts encode their sense of self, neighborhood, and community" (Ferrell 2011, 14). The looming danger is the idea of interpellation, which posits the people occupying these spaces will internalize these dominant practices to reinforce the interests of the powerful. As Zack Furness (2010: 5) astutely notes:

The historical transformation of the United States into a full-blown car culture is commonly, though somewhat erroneously, attributed to choice or desire, as if the aggregation of individual consumer choices and yearnings necessarily built the roads, lobbied the government, zoned the real estate, silenced the critics, subsidized auto makers, underfunded public transit, and passed the necessary laws to oversee all facets of these projects since the 1890's.

This narrative is a wildly misleading trope in U.S. culture that detracts from the fact that elites are making these decisions. Despite the multitude of detrimental consequences resulting from the automobile industry, most people firmly believe it's their right to own and drive a car, ignoring these effects.

Automobiles transform city streets that were previously areas for social interaction into sterile traffic corridors. Road infrastructure is set up in a way that make cars the only viable means for transportation. The street is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists and public transportation is inconvenient because of car congestion. This logic is self-perpetuating, discouraging the use of anything but a car. As a result, there has been a broad movement developing since the 1990s, consisting of several anti-car groups, aiming to restore public spaces as a place for community and reclaim the streets from private, corporate interests. Carbusters Magazine is a publication dedicated to educating people about the negative consequences of the automobile industry. They actively promote the use of direct action and frequently report on groups like Critical Mass and Reclaim the Streets. Reclaim the Streets was created in London as an anti-car protest to declare the street was meant for more than just automobile traffic. This group uses direct action tactics to occupy the street by staging festive parties. These parties spread have throughout the UK and to the rest of the world.

Although the original intent was to protest automobiles, their claims have expanded into critiquing neoliberal economic practices because they see the capitalist system as the root of the problem. Critical Mass also started in the 1990s. Reclaim the Streets and Critical Mass have much overlap in participation because of their similar interests. As Furness (2010: 80) observes, "Critical Mass has also been used to pay tribute to cyclists killed by automobiles, and occasionally integrated into political protests and Reclaim the Streets events." "Reclaim the Streets members are just as likely to show up at British Critical Mass events" (Ferrell 2001: 135). Overlap in participation has helped to reinforce each other. The Critical Mass ride in Prague developed out of Reclaim the Streets events.

Despite the dominant car culture, millions of people still ride a bicycle but most of them do so for leisure, sport, and exercise. Negative consequences of automobiles worsen; including longer traffic delays, increased costs of car ownership, fluctuating gas prices, oil dependency, harm to the environment, and over 40,000 motor vehicle crash deaths in the U.S. annually. Using the bicycle as a mode of transportation becomes more appealing. Major cities like New York and Chicago saw approximately an 80 percent increase in bicycle use between 2000 and 2006. For the first time since the car became the dominant form of American transportation after World War II, there is now a grass roots movement to reclaim the street by cyclists. In the last couple decades, thousands of miles of bike lanes have been placed onto roadways. Many politicians are promoting bike use by implementing more bike-friendly measures. This has been in large part due to this broad movement critiquing automobile dominance and putting this issue into public debate.

3.0   CRITICAL MASS MOVEMENT

The following section will use the Critical Mass (CM) movement as a case study to illustrate how participant's understandings of space and play inform their activities. It draws on literature focused on the Critical Mass rides, survey data collected from 239 participants at the Chicago ride and interview data gathered from nine participants of the Pittsburgh ride-–including a director of the local nonprofit organization Bike Pittsburgh, and the author of *One Less Car*.

Organizers of the Critical Mass movement are familiar with the many of the ways economic policies are affecting their way of life because they experience them directly. Cyclists are also aware of their positions within society as a result of this. Riding a bicycle provides an opportunity to see the world differently than from behind the wheel of a car; as Zack (interview, 2015) recalls, "through riding I started to think about what it meant to be on the streets and who's allowed to be there and what kind of norms govern that." Conversely, motorists do not think about these issues because they are taken for granted. Through his experience, Zack went on to pursue cycling as an academic interest and to author the book *One Less Car*. Riding a bicycle can also provide firsthand experience related to neoliberal economic processes akin to disneyfication. As CM participants Vasquez and Reboredo (2012: loc 2346) describe:

> The surging fetishism surrounding the car and its promotion provoked its gradual
>
> colonization of space that would break what had until then been the principal

function of the city – a meeting point. Cities were transformed into places of

transit (places of passerby). This spatial colonization expelled citizens from the

places where their public lives had previously taken place, pushing them toward

the private sphere, first in their homes and then towards malls/shopping centers,

that in time would become the "Main Street" of an city.

Critical Mass is one of the pioneers in speaking up against the automobile industry and late capitalism as a whole. Chris Carlsson (2012: loc 277), the founder of Critical Mass, explains, "Critical Mass is a reclaiming of public space from a culture bent on privatizing everything and reducing human life to a series of commercial transactions." Privatization and isolation have led to the disintegration of community and its continued fragmentation. The actions of Critical Mass are informed through these spatial understandings. CM has made efforts to reclaim the street as a shared place for community. As Sewell (2011: 55) states, "social movements and revolutions not only are shaped and constrained by the spatial environments in which they take place, but are significant agents in the production of new spatial structures and relations." The resulting efforts of Critical Mass have been able to change the meanings and practices of urban spaces. CM participants are temporarily creating new— cultural and political—spaces by asserting their rights to the street and inscribing new values and meanings in hopes of changing future interactions and understandings of this space.

Critical Mass originally started in San Francisco in 1992, when a dozen cyclists wanted to ride home together for safety on the road. All cyclists know that "getting out in the middle of traffic is scary, especially alone" (Stu, interview, 2014). Alongside the physical dangers of trying to share the streets designed to give primacy for automobiles, cyclists also experience the cultural attitudes towards non-motorized transportation through interactions with motorists. As

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Erok (interview, 2015) reflects, "it's a battle every day. Drivers have no clue why you're there. They honk at you and they scream at you." All cyclists at some point have had to deal with these types of altercations with motorists and having a free, open space to share these sentiments resonated with many cyclists.

The group ride developed into a monthly gathering which quickly caught on through the dissemination of flyers with numbers in the hundreds after a few months. Word about Critical Mass rapidly circulated and the rides grew in size and popularity. Critical Mass rides spread to over 300 cities worldwide with some rides reaching 80,000 participants. This happened before the prevalent use of the internet and points to the value of networks, especially weak ties. Networks can be viewed as a space for communicating and spreading knowledge physically and virtually. Networks can connect actors and movements locally, nationally, and transnationally. These networks provide a valuable resource for various actors to strategize and organize across different mediums. Mark Granovetter (1973: 1360) argues, "that the analysis of processes of interpersonal networks provides the most fruitful micro-macro bridge. It is through these networks that small-scale interaction becomes translated into large-scale patterns, and that these, in turn, feed back into small groups." Strong ties are confined to their own particular small groups and is difficult to branch out; meanwhile, weak ties create the connections between groups and act as shortcuts, making the transmission of information more efficient. It is through these weak ties that information about the rides was disseminated to new outlets and facilitated the spread of CM rides. Although the internet has now become widely accessible, the importance of networks has not diminished. By looking at Table 1, we can observe that 69.5% of respondents found out about Critical Mass through word of mouth or friends (networks) as opposed to 10.5% of respondents hearing about CM through the internet.

This finding indicates the importance of the spatiality of networks. These networks are crucial for sharing knowledge about strategies and tactics, while developing commonalities, and alternative visions for society (Leitner et. al. 2008). Critical Mass rides could not have spread to over 300 cities worldwide, before the internet, without these networks that operated locally, nationally, and internationally. In 2011 when the internet was widely accessible, it was still through networks that people found out about the Chicago ride. While the internet may not be used much for outreach, it still provides an essential tool for organizing, sharing ideas, and maintaining networks. This process reflects a growing trend in contemporary social movements to utilize advancing technologies. As Blickstein (2001: 358-359) outlines:

> While face-to-face interaction among participants has been vital to sustaining CM rides, cyber-interaction via electronic discussion lists was critical to the diffusion of Critical Mass in the 1990's. The internet has served as a space of debate about the group and as a medium for spreading information about Critical Mass to distant locations. Critical Mass has used cyberspace effectively to reinforce participation in the local civic sphere and to aid in the quick and cheap transfer of ideas and activist models to distant places.

All of the participants I interviewed noted the importance of the internet. As Tyler (interview, 2014) states, "I stay in touch with social media. Critical Mass via Facebook has opened doors to a ton of social connections that people who I would typically never run across, never have the opportunity to talk to or hang out with. I use social media every day to keep in touch and stay updated about events." This statement also reveals the organizing potential of the internet that can alleviate the lack of resources. As Stu (interview, 2014) elaborates, "now that we have social media and all these other ways to get information out, we can put it out a month

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ahead of time and change the normal time/place. We can do that now. We didn't have that ability before." Cyclists from around the world can share their experiences through this platform.

Critical Mass typically meets on the last Friday of every month at a designated place and time to go on a group ride through the streets. These rides exhibit anarchist sensibilities, as the decisions for routes are made spontaneously through voluntary association. This informal organization has a non-hierarchical, decentralized structure without leaders or members. Its stance is open and inclusive; as Carlsson (2012: loc 325) explains, "Critical Mass sidestepped that pitfall [class] by welcoming everyone, not on the basis of their employment, but on the basis of their transportation choices." The rides operate through direct action tactics of reclaiming the street through a practice described as "corking." The purpose of CM is to ride in solidarity as a group. In order to maintain the cohesion of the mass a few riders block traffic at upcoming intersections so that everyone can proceed freely through red lights without interruption. This act temporarily suspends and inverts the social hierarchy of this space and provides a glimpse of another possibility for cyclists, spectators, and motorists alike. As a result, many rides have been met with resistance by authorities. In order to avoid legal ramifications, CM argues that the rides are spontaneous gatherings and not a form of protest. This position has not been completely successful, as some rides have been met with resistance by authorities. The amount of resistance by authorities varies by place and context.

Place represents the sites where people live and socially interact. The physical layout of place – road infrastructure, locations of buildings, residences, amenities, and so forth – mediates social actions within them and displays the power structure. The ways in which place is designed can significantly influence the possibilities for contention. Because meanings of place are socially constructed, they are subject to change. Many social movements attempt to resignify

place by reappropriating space or producing new spaces to express their contention with existing practices.

The New York Critical Mass ride provides an example of how place affected the course of their ride. When the rides started in the early 1990s there was not much bike infrastructure in place to facilitate traversing the city on bike. Initially, the rides in New York only attracted a group of 30 or 40 participants. In order to increase participation, a core group of a few committed participants employed themed rides to add more fun. They also appealed to advocacy organizations to further promote the ride. The usual meeting destination was also changed to be more accessible and visible for people. Stu (interview, 2014) reflects on the importance of a core group of organizers, as he states, "it takes a few dedicated/actively involved people to make things happen but once those things have happened everybody else can get on their bike and ride." These committed individuals at the New York CM understood the particular politics of place and were able to save the ride from disappearing and increased participation enough to make it into a self-sustaining ride.

In 2004, the Republican National Convention (RNC) took place in New York. This event gave this particular CM ride more political intent than usual and participants intended to ride past the demonstration. Because the ride was planned to coincide with the RNC and overall anti-war effort, it attracted cyclists from outside New York with approximately 5,000 participants in attendance. Police presence was at an all-time high (some in riot gear). For the first time in New York, CM participants were arrested, even cyclists not participating in the ride. This activity carried over for the next 18 months following the event with increased police presence and continued arrests. CM participants responded by shifting the politics of scale and appealing to national and international audiences by presenting it as a global human rights issue. The

politics of scale refers to the different relational levels--local, national, and global--that actors engage in to challenge existing power relations. This framing strategy made the discussion more than just cyclist's rights but about civil rights that concerned the nation and the reputation of New York as a city. Eventually the courts judged in favor of the cyclists but the actions that occurred and the perception of this place have been altered because of them. As a result, the attention helped to grow the Brooklyn Critical Mass; but for the New York mass, the range of participants are not as varied as they once were. This police presence may have deterred participation from people of color because they are typically targeted first.

> Critical Mass may never be utilized as a platform for engaging with issues of race
> and mobility, or used to create the genuine movement against the racialized norms
> of car culture, but there are possibilities that present themselves if participants are
> willing to critically interrogate their positionality and attempt to build coalitions
> among people of different races, classes, ages, and genders who understandably
> have different stakes in improving urban mobility for bicyclists, pedestrians, and
> public transportation users (Furness 2010: 103).

Social actors all vary by their distinct positions within society based on people's identities, gender, race, status, sexuality, and other dimensions of social difference. Social positions shape individual subjectivities, which in turn shape their course of action. Social movements must negotiate the challenge of dealing with diverse individuals which will influence their tactics and goals. Positionality can affect participation of different demographics in different spaces. In Chicago, police presence assists the rides rather than disrupting them which may encourage more demographics to participate. It is common to see people of color and even children at the Chicago rides, whereas other rides without this kind of position, like the Pittsburgh ride,

does not have any people of color or children participating. In March 2006, the Pittsburgh ride was stopped by police and issued citations to participants. Police also proceeded to arrest an African- American man who was not a part of the ride nor did he have a bicycle. While this incident does not necessarily prove that police presence deters people of color from the rides, it certainly raises questions about who is allowed to participate, how privilege comes into play, and the positionality of class, gender, and race.

Despite these issues, the unique experience produced out of these monthly gatherings is a significant factor keeping the rides alive for the foreseeable future. Since Critical Mass occurs once a month, it may seem like an ephemeral community but social ties develop between people. The consciousness raised will carry on well after the ride and, in turn, create the foundation for new or overlapping communities. Hugh D'Andrade (2012: loc 593) attests to these processes, as he recalls:

> I have made literally hundreds of friends I would never have otherwise known: cyclists and activists, artists and subversives, city planners and brilliant, interesting people I've stayed close to for twenty years. And I've been involved in dozens of projects- political, artistic, and social- which originated in Critical Mass or took those communities as a building block.

These sentiments were echoed by all the participants I interviewed.

While Critical Mass has a clear agenda and purpose–-raising awareness, celebrating the bicycle, and taking back the streets-–there are no specific policy goals or targets. This amorphous quality leaves CM open for interpretation, which has caused it to be identified under a number of labels such as an idea, anarchy, informal organization, protest, bike ride, or political, cultural, and social movement. As Bernie Blaug (2002: 73) explains, "depending on who you ask,   you'll

always get a different description of what CM actually is." The lack of specific targets or goals may have several implications. First of all, it keeps the activities of the group flowing with fewer constraints. The openness for interpretation can be beneficial because it can be accessible to more people. Secondly, not worrying about reaching specific goals can prevent disappointment when they do not happen which can sustain movement activities. Conversely, the lack of specific initiatives may dissuade long-term participation for some individuals who seek tangible outcomes. The lack of initiatives may seem ineffective through an instrumentalist view but it this absence of specific goals that contributes to the success of CM spreading to cities across the world. The flexible form of CM acts as a global framework malleable to the wide range of characteristics defining each urban environment.

> We could talk about the Masa Critica as a leisure ride, encounter, or monthly celebration, but here by contrast, we'll represent it as a "prototype," that is, as a permanently open process, work-in-progress, creative and capable of maximizing links, networks, and relationships (Vasquez and Reboredo 2012: loc 2318).

It is myopic to view the efficacy of a movement only in terms of tangible outcomes, as some authors of cultural movements have suggested that their cultural activities are more enduring and historically important than their political achievements (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). This is not to say that CM is not interested in seeing better policies towards cycling but that this objective is outside the realm of its responsibilities. In fact, tangible outcomes have occurred through the activities of CM with DIY bike workshops, bike infrastructure, interest groups, nonprofits, etc., emerging out of the dialogue opened by CM. As Thiago Benicchio (2012: loc 1915) notes, "Critical Mass was the "Big Bang" for all the public and private initiatives concerning urban cycling, and also a significant inspiration to many other cities in Brazil." The ideology CM

spreads is making people reconsider their automobile dependency, political activity, and views of society.

The introduction of Critical Mass in a new place oftentimes acts as a catalyst for bike initiatives to be put into motion but once this happens the rides typically follow a general pattern or life-cycle. As Carlsson (2012: loc 240) notes:

> There seems to be a common trajectory in which a ride begins small and slowly, gaining adherents over months and years. The euphoria of a cooperative, joyful reinhabitation of urban space is hard to sustain after a while. It may go on, as it has in San Francisco for 20 years now, but it is not the same as it was in the remarkable first years. It is instead a semi-institutionalized monthly event, accepted as part of the fabric of a city's life. People who discover it later may tap that same euphoria for a while but the overall tone of the ride is determined by the folks who push it in one direction or another.

A participant quoted from the San Francisco Critical Mass page reflects:

> The fact that San Francisco's ride is so predictable and often boring, lacking in any internal political discussions, publications, social dialogues, or anything close to what made it so vital in its first five years, doesn't make it meaningless or irrelevant. It is still a gathering point, a place where people meet, where ideas can hatch, and month after month, it's a training ground for spontaneous self-organization. It is still the case that every month something completely unexpected COULD happen, and for people on their first or early ride, it can still impart that euphoria we all know so well. I still experience it from time to time and I've been riding for 20 years! (sfcriticalmass.org)

This description of the life-cycle seems to fit the Chicago ride well. Initially the rides were free spirited and disruptive but now they have been semi-institutionalized with police escorts at the rides. Despite passing its initial momentum, the rides still attract new participants. Looking at Table 2, 43.5% of participants are experiencing Critical Mass for the first time. Thus, the rides are still attracting new people which has significance. As Zack (interview, 2015) explains, "I'm of the disposition that them [rides] being fun and attracting more people allows cycling to become more of a visible issue; in a way that enables people to ask their own questions and generate conversations that are political in nature. There is an important pedagogical value in this act alone that can point people beyond the bicycle toward more engaged, substantive forms of collective action."

While attitudes towards bicycles share some degree of consensus globally, they still differ depending on the politics of place. For instance, bicycling is such a prevalent and normal part of daily social life in Amsterdam that efforts to start a Critical Mass ride was met with very little interest. Among CM rides, the extent of corking, amount of riders, infrastructure, and physical geography cause each ride to vary. Thus, debates over the homogenizing effects of globalization tend to be overstated because local contexts of place still matter. Certain events or opportunities can spur some of the rides to have a more political orientation; as Wray (2008: 137) states, "rides in various cities are often calibrated in this way to connect explicitly to political matters." This was the case with the New York ride and the 2004 Republican National Convention. The most successful turnouts have often been associated with some form of political opportunity. In conjunction with political or social factors, the physicality of place is also a factor. The particular geography of Pittsburgh provides a distinct environment that affects how CM operates there. All of the people I interviewed agreed that the physical terrain of

Pittsburgh poses an obstacle. George (interview, 2014) notes, "the physical geography is the challenge. It's so unique, so much hillier than any other city in this country." This spatial factor limits certain routes that can be made in Pittsburgh; as Joyce (interview, 2014) further elucidates, "Pittsburgh's hilly so not as many people will come out for a ride if they think they are going to have to climb big hills." Because of its malleability, each CM has a different feel depending upon the specific context of the city and even within each city as participants change from month to month.

Critical Mass engages in play as a prefigurative model by operating in the way they envision society should operate. As an anonymous participant argues:

> It's not something we do to score political points or to gain any particular demands. It's an expression of life itself, and it is still a chance to taste however fleetingly a brief moment of another way of life, one not dominated by the frenzied rush to and fro from work and home, not reduced to buying and selling, an experience that is valuable for living it, and smelling it, and sharing it… and nothing more (SFcriticalmass.org).

This playful tactic opens up a free space for cyclists to discuss new ideas and share information. As Carlsonn (2012: loc 351) elucidates, "on a planet confronted by unprecedented crises--economic, ecological, social, and technological--the ongoing public experimental zone opened by Critical Mass is a crucial laboratory for reinventing how we live together on Earth." In Pittsburgh, this collaboration produced a pamphlet for the best cycling routes to go about the city.

Free spaces can also act as stepping stones into politics. For many participants, riding in CM is their first taste of any kind of political experience which may lead to further involvement.

The director of the nonprofit Bike Pittsburgh organization came to assume this position through his CM participation. As actors support each other and gain new tools, other engagements in more formal political work become feasible (Shepard 2011). Imagining alternative ways of how society operates is essential for beginning change. The free space created is a place for autonomous free thinking and reflection. Rotafixa (2012: loc 3501) attests to this process by stating, "with Critical Mass we (re)-discovered a way to relate to the world around us, and rediscovered the point of connection among all human beings."

> The shared experience of being in motion, together with co-presence in particular places, may induce negotiations of differences among movement participants, while also helping create the collective understandings, visions, strategies and tactics essential for collective action (Leitner et. al. 2008: 165).

Alongside the cultural and political aspects, at the core of the rides is simply enjoying them. The rides have a festive, celebratory feel as riders typically shout happy Friday to onlookers. Looking at Section 1.01(a)(i)Appendix A, 68.2% of participants claim they ride for fun, while 13.8% claim they ride for advocacy. It is likely that participants do it for both reasons but the majority of participants ride for enjoyment, which keep the rides going every month. Joyce (interview, 2014) states, "the main reason for participating is enjoyment." Nick (interview, 2014) states, "I think fun is the most important factor. You can say you have all these political motives but it comes down to getting people together and engaging with people on a social level. If it's unpleasant nobody's going to do it." There are certainly people who have political intent in mind but they are part of the minority among the group and most likely the committed organizers.

Play is intricately tied to expressions of freedom which can also be empowering. For the most part, riding a bike is an individual experience and often filled with anxiety in sharing the road with cars that act like bicycles do not have equal access to the road. This can contribute to a sense of powerlessness. Critical Mass gives the chance to feel safe in a group and provides solidarity and empowerment.

> I believe I can speak for many people when I say that Critical Mass made me feel for the first time that the city is mine, too, and it is what we make of it. For a few moments, the streets that scared us were the streets that made us smile. And our joy was contagious it made more people want to ride bikes. We were changing the city through joy (Kalil 2012: loc 957).

Erok (interview, 2015) also feels shares this feeling as he states, "it empowered me to realize there was a movement of cyclists and to dedicate the next 10 years of my life to organizing cyclists and making our lives better." He also saw similar results through his own work, as he goes on to state, "here it [CM] empowered a lot of people to give cycling a try. I've talked to numerous people and that was their first time taking a ride around the city and they got up hills they never knew they could get up. It helped shrink the city for a lot of people. It made the city more accessible that might not have tried it on their own." Similar sentiments from participants in completely different places reveals the empowering capability of CM. As Adam Kessel (2002: 111) explains, "it is powerful not because of the message it sends or the image it conveys, but because it engages and empowers its participants, welcoming anyone who wants to chip in." Experiencing this joy and empowerment can change the subjectivities of participants and their future actions. Ryan (interview, 2014) claimed participation enhanced his bicycle identity and, "it [participation] supports my civic engagement." George (interview, 2014) reflects, "even

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nights when I was riding by myself, I felt a totally different level of empowerment, enjoyment and enthusiasm than I had before the rides. I became more civically engaged after participating." Tyler (interview, 2014) states, "there was an instant connection and feeling of community. It made me identify more as a cyclist." Nick (interview, 2014) elucidates, "I think Critical Mass had a huge impact on me. I think that if I never went to that I probably wouldn't be where I am today. I wouldn't be in the bike industry or care so much. I probably wouldn't even ride a bike. It strengthened my bike identity." Nick's participation led him to open up his own bike shop and serve the cycling community.

"Despite the contention that such activities are counterproductive, movements continue to put the right to party on the table as a part of a larger process of social change; the logic being that humor and pleasure disrupt monotony while disarming systems of power" (Shephard 2011: 3). Many anarchists have long held onto this value of celebration, as a popular slogan identified with Emma Goldman states, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution." According to the interview data and Table 3, most of the participants are there for social reasons but their presence assists the aims of the organizers. The organizers themselves also enjoy the rides. As Zack (interview, 2015) states, "I think for a lot of people it [enjoyment] is, even for people that it is a political thing they still have a good time on the ride." It is important to note, these are not mutually exclusive groups. At times, participants that are there for social reasons may become politicized in some way through this experience. As Camarena (2012: loc 2810) explains:

> Some riders with radical ideas go on to create bike kitchens in low-income
> neighborhoods, or facilitate bike co-ops for migrant bicycle riders. Perhaps they
> move on to new projects like urban gardening, or an occupation movement. Other
> riders with more moderate political views take up office in City Hall as   transport

and urban redesign experts, or establish a nonprofit organization to lobby for bicycle rights. Others have kids, and nostalgically keep going on the ride, while holding office jobs and a mortgage. Some are just goofballs loving the opportunity to dress-up in costume and ride. Still others become merchandisers of fixies, messenger bags, and chic fashion.

The main reason why CM attracts the attention of the media and other audiences is because the rides are a visual spectacle. With the more popular rides, one can expect to see bikes towing speakers blasting music, cyclists dressed up in costume, families with children and even animals, custom bikes of all shapes and sizes, and cyclists playing musical instruments. CM rides typically occur on Fridays and during rush hour traffic which increases their chance of visibility, especially when turnout is high and routes venture through busy areas. As Erok (interview, 2015) recalls, "I saw it on the street and was like what was that?" Successful turnouts can produce a mass large enough that one cannot see its end. This visual spectacle raises the attention of people stuck in their cars, pedestrians, tourists, media, and authorities increasing the chances of their messages to be heard. This can lead to opening discussion with more formal channels, such as political actors or city council members. This visual presence is tied to the spatiality of mobility because of where these rides take place. Mobility refers to the material or virtual mobility of individuals or objects through space, within and between places. This view takes the term movement literally by observing the various areas where social movements are taking place. Where these actors decide to protest can shape the experiences of participants.

For example, the Chicago CM ride often passes through the "magnificent mile" an iconic area of the city usually dominated by motorists. It is only through CM that cyclists have a chance to safely ride in the middle of this road. This exclusive opportunity draws all kinds of people to

participate, even families from the suburbs that would typically not ride their bikes in the city at any other time. Such play is important not only strategically, but also in terms of affect and emotional need (Shepard 2011). Sharing joyful experiences simultaneously creates community and builds collective identity connecting more people together. As Erok (interview, 2015) recalls, "I'm still friends with a lot of people who I met at Critical Mass. One of my closest friends, we often talk about how we wouldn't have met had it not been for Critical Mass and how many people we've met that we're still friends with and still involved in cycling. I think a lot of the cycling community did come from those original meetings."

CM brings together people from all walks of life through the free space opened up. Dave Horton, from Lancaster, England, attributes CM to giving light and creating connections for various groups' efforts for social change which would have otherwise remained disconnected. As Horton (2002: 63) explains, "Critical Mass here has always been an occasion for the coming-together of the city's ordinarily dispersed constituency for social change […] CM provided us with an opportunity to set aside those minor differences which often keep us separate, and to unite instead along our similarities." This coming together brought with it a sense of community that encouraged more interactions in public. He goes on to claim, "herein lies the undoubted importance of CM; it is a tool not only for enhancing the activist identities of individuals, but also for building a wider sense of political community" (Horton 2002: 64).

The work resulting from the Critical Mass movement has helped initiate more bike infrastructure projects, increased the amount of cycling, and the bicycle is starting to be seen as a more viable form of transportation. For example, Critical Mass was first introduced to Budapest in 2004 and instead of monthly rides they occur twice a year. This ride boasts one of the most successful turnouts with an average of 40,000 participants. Kuku (2012: loc 4240) reflects:

As the demonstrations grew bigger and bigger, the town began building some new bicycle lanes and the two-wheel symbol suddenly appeared in political campaigns. As of today, 20-30% of Budapest's population use the bicycle occasionally, and 4-5% choose it for their daily commute. That's quite the triumph: when we began in 2004 urban cyclists were generally regarded as suicidal. The most important achievement of Critical Mass was the shattering of this fear.

This statement reflects changes in both physical and cultural perceptions regarding bicycles.

For the most part, Critical Mass may not be directly implementing bike infrastructure but they have been able to put cycling issues on the table for more formal bike organizations to negotiate demands with the state, local government, and city council. CM can certainly help or hinder more formal bike organizations based on their actions; as Zack (interview, 2015) proposes, "in certain places it helps cycling advocates and other cities it does not. As much as it rubbed people the wrong way, it made legitimate bike advocacy seem that much more reasonable. By all the accounts of people I've heard, it made a huge difference in changing conditions." Dave Snyder, the executive director of the San Francisco Bike Coalition (SFBC, largest bike advocacy group in SF), claims, "taking into account the negatives, Critical Mass, at its most raucous heights, is still great for the bicycling movement. We used the attention focused on the event to direct interest toward our agenda" (Snyder 2002: 112). The resulting publicity grew SFBC membership from 1,110 to 1,500 in 3 weeks and a few years later tripled its membership to 3,300. Carlsson (2012: loc 267) recalls:

The Bike Coalition itself wouldn't be what it is today—it was nearly dormant when Critical Mass started and now it has over 12,000 dues paying members. In

other parts of the world, especially Italy, Hungary, Brazil, Mexico, and Spain, Critical Mass has been an important incubator for new political energies to coalesce, and new initiatives addressing broader questions of city life.

Similar sentiments are shared around the world. In Manchester, England, Vanessa Bear (2012: loc 1147) explains, "it's not just bike projects that have grown from the roots of Critical Mass. A plethora of other projects have been created and helped to grow through CM." Adonia Lugo discusses how Critical Mass helped build the LA bike movement, as Lugo (2012: loc 858) notes, "Critical Mass brought together people who had experience working in other kinds of movements, and the rides would soon lead to more official advocacy work." Elisabeth Lorenzi describes how CM has mutually expanded with the occupation movement in Madrid, integrating several movements and creating bike projects. As Lorenzi (2012: loc 1188) notes, "DIY workshops are connected to each other through common initiatives related to bicycling in Madrid, in turn open a window on connections among social centers, other movements, and the general citizenry." In Rome, with an average of one car per inhabitant, the introduction of CM produced a new political voice and, "it started to spread like wildfire, shaping a new kind of political awareness" (2012: loc 1762). In Puerto Rico, "much of this attention to cyclists, and the success of Energia ROja y Negra's efforts can be attributed to the initial and continuing awareness raised by La Masa rides" (Cepeda-Borrero et. al. 2012: loc 4555). While it is difficult to measure motorists' attitudes or quantify exactly the growing number of cyclists, all of these examples point to the ability of CM to open up discussions on cycling issues, even if they are not directly implementing any policies.

The continued efforts of older CMs, activities of newly established rides, and work of other bike-related organizations are gradually changing attitudes towards cyclists as it is

becoming more normalized and motorists are being more exposed to them, as Erok (interview, 2015) reflects about attitudes, "it's definitely changed a lot I barely get into arguments now. Increased exposure is probably one of the bigger ones. Cycling is in the news a lot and it's deemed now as a more legitimate form of transportation." As more bike infrastructure gets put into place--bike lanes, bike-friendly public transportation, bike racks, and bike rentals--these spaces are changing in meaning and creating better attitudes towards the bicycle. Erok further explains, "It's [bike infrastructure] been proven around the world that it increases cycling which then increases driver's expectations and makes them feel a little more at ease. If you see one cyclist a week and you get mad, you see one cyclist an hour or more you're not going to get mad every single time when you know how to respond and drive around it." Aside from the activities that go on outside of the rides, Critical Mass remains one of the few outlets for people to question the functionality, design, and ideology of spatial structures and consider alternative views for society.

4.0   CONCLUSION

The expansion of global capitalism is increasing urbanization and creating global cities. These global cities are creating new spaces and possibilities for both counterhegemonic and hegemonic groups. While the scale is tipped in favor of elites, disadvantaged groups have been able to utilize their spatial understandings to enact effective challenges to dominant practices. One of these tactics is the use of play, which has been able to temporarily invert social hierarchies in space and inscribe new meanings and provide alternative views on how space could operate. Thus, Critical Mass can be viewed as a significant risk to power holders because they display anarchic sensibilities that operate outside the purview of normative society and undermines hegemonic practices. Another cause for concern by authorities is that these rides are unsanctioned and unpredictable, making them less likely to be controlled. Furthermore, these rides are free forms of expression that capitalists are unable to profit from. Bayat (2007) explains this issue from a Marxist perspective:

> Modernist sensibilities including bourgeois rationality ("time is money"), according to which modernity discards collective fun because of the latter's counterdiscipline—immoral, irrational, and disorderly dispositions. According to this view, those in pursuit of fun challenge the idea of the modern individual as an organized, disciplined, proper, and in-control being (452).

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Critical Mass's use of play disrupts this sense and security of order, stability, and tranquility that characterize the conservative image of a sensible world. Fun also presupposes a powerful paradigm, a set of presumptions about self, society, and life that might compete with and undermine the legitimizing ideology of doctrinal power when these ideologies happen to be too narrow, rigid, and exclusive to accommodate ethics of fun (Bayat 2007). Therefore, as innocuous as it may seem, a simple bike ride has the potential to unravel the social fabric of certain spaces.

Spatial practices are essential for Critical Mass in terms of its physical manifestations, building solidarity, and constructing alternative visions for space. Critical Mass activities are informed through their understanding of spatialities. The direct action of reclaiming the street exposes the meanings behind everyday practices of space and temporarily provides an alternative view of how society could function. This process can be viewed as spatial agency, "the ways that spatial constraints are turned to advantage in political and social struggles and the ways that such struggles can restructure the meanings, uses, and strategic valence of space" (Sewell 2011, 55). Which areas and routes that the CM rides negotiate have significant impacts on how others may perceive certain spatial practices. The efforts enacted by CM have indirectly resulted in more bike infrastructure, policies, and bike friendly institutions which contribute to changing the meaning and use of such spaces. CM participants are actively challenging the primacy of the automobile through a variety of spatial practices to open up the discussion and possibility for new modes of thinking and ways of utilizing public space. Although conditions have slightly improved for cyclists, the contestation over space in the city is building, and cyclists among other disadvantaged groups must utilize their spatial understandings to effectively resist imposing actions by capitalist elites.

By investigating the role of culture in spatial structures, we can understand more about the causes and effects of modern protest. An analysis of space and play provided insight into the Critical Mass movement's activities in a way that would have not been possible employing other frames or theories. I believe future studies of past, present, or future social movement activity can benefit from incorporating this type of analysis.

The conceptualizations of space and play discussed in this thesis not only build upon a cultural approach but they also enhance traditional theories as well. For instance, converging with resource mobilization models' attentiveness to the networks and organizations that precede insurgency, the notion of free spaces highlights the specifically cultural dimensions of prior networks. Therefore, space and play can facilitate breaking down the false dichotomy between structure and culture and act as a bridge towards a synthesis of various approaches. Additional research is needed to build a more systematic and theoretically informed model for space and play to fully appreciate their analytical utility.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY DATA

Survey data was collected from 239 participants from five different Critical Mass rides in Chicago during 2010-2011. I used systematic random sampling by handing out surveys to every tenth person I saw. I also made sure to survey participants who were over the age of 18. There was a limited time span (approximately 30 minutes) between the gathering of participants at the Daley Plaza until the ride began. Typically, I was able to collect about 50 surveys at each ride. Tables 1,2, and 3 are frequency distributions of respondents' answers to questions on how did you hear about Critical Mass, how many CM rides have you participated in, and why did you participate.

Table 1

How did you hear about Critical Mass?	Frequency	Percent
internet	25	10.5
friend/word of mouth	166	69.5
witnessed event	16	6.7
flyer	4	1.7
Total	239	100.0

Table 2

How many CM rides attended?	Frequency	Percent
first time	104	43.5
2-4	65	27.2
5-9	27	11.3
10<	38	15.9
Total	239	100.0

Table 3

Why participate?	Frequency	Percent
fun	163	68.2
bike awareness	33	13.8
Total	239	100.0

INTERVIEW DATA

The interview data consists of 9 semi-structured interviews with organizers and participants. Each interview lasted about an hour with some taking two hours. I located research subjects initially through the Critical Mass Facebook page to identify key players. Then I followed the recommendations of initial interviewees for additional participants. Because the Critical Mass group currently consists of perhaps a dozen regular participants, this is an adequate sample.

Interviewees

Stu − He is a middle-aged man who commutes by bike from the suburbs to the city and the recognized 'leader' of the current Critical Mass group, although he does not believe in leadership. As he states, "the mass of people that form the CM in any given city tends to be rather formless, leaderless and that's kind of the point. We don't want a leader necessarily, we don't want someone calling the shots necessarily." He has been the driving force behind the resurgence of CM since its 4 year hiatus. He restarted the group with a specific purpose in mind − to take CM rides to the outer limits of the city to address the lack of awareness and infrastructure that is preventing more bike commuting to and from the city.

Joyce – She is an older woman who enjoys cycling with little bike advocacy in mind. She participates purely for enjoyment and going on group rides, although she agrees with the mission Stu is attempting.

Tyler – He is in his early 30's and commutes by car from the suburbs to the city but not by choice since the roads are inaccessible by bike. He is an avid cyclist who promotes bike advocacy and enjoys group rides of every kind, not limited to CM.

Dave – He is a middle-aged man who has a diverse set of interests and more of a leisure cyclist. He rides a bike for enjoyment and to stay healthy. He believes in the mission of Stu but mainly participates to ride with other cyclists.

George – He is in his 20's and partnered with his best friend Ryan to start another Critical Mass group because they wanted Critical Mass to stay in the city. They are not opposed to Stu's group and would like to combine them if possible but that has not happened yet. He is more idealistic and identifies as being a 'hardcore anarchist' along with Ryan. They profess their critiques of broad issues associated with neoliberalism, while this is rarely mentioned among the other group which is more practical and has a stated mission.

Ryan – He is in his 20's and started the other group with George for the purposes of raising awareness and trying to get more people to start riding bicycles. This group just started in the summer opposed to Stu's group that has been operating for a little over a year. It seems that this group is still figuring out through trial and error on how to proceed considering they just started. They seemed to attract more novice cyclists who are ill-prepared and have less experience, whereas Stu's group consists of more seasoned cyclists who are well-prepared.

Nick – He is in his early 30's and an avid cyclist who owns a bike shop. He has participated in Critical Mass before but not currently. He founded the Flock of Cycles ride in hopes of

promoting bike advocacy in a lawful way by obeying traffic laws because the previous Critical

Mass started to get a bad reputation from a couple unruly students who purposely tried to

aggravate motorists.

Erok – He is currently one of the directors of the local nonprofit organization Bike Pittsburgh.

He was one of the early participants of Critical Mass in Pittsburgh during the early 2000's. He

has not participated in any recent Critical Mass rides.

Zack Furness – He participated in the earlier Critical Mass in Pittsburgh during the 2000's. He

has also participated in Critical Mass rides across the country but not currently participating in

any Critical Mass rides. He is also the author of the book *One Less Car*.

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