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Expressing Criticism, Emotionality and Community In the Spanish Socioeconomic Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the cultural ideologies underlying the pervasive critical social movement that has arisen from the contemporary socioeconomic crisis in Spain. Interviews and chat room responses to crisis related newspaper articles provided the material for a case study utilizing ethnographic methods.

The following research questions aim to unveil pervasive cultural ideologies: what are the particular meanings and functions of criticism and protest for Spanish people during a time of civil unrest and socioeconomic crisis? What role do new media/social media play in the facilitation or inhibition of this critical protest language in Spain?

Keywords: Socioeconomic crisis, Spain, cultural ideologies, crisis ideologies

INTRODUCTION

Spain is the fourth largest economy of the Euro zone, and after Greece, Spain is at the heart of the European financial crisis. There is a 26% unemployment rate and a 51.5% unemployment rate for people under the age of 25. The price of housing has dropped 25% since 2008 and Spain's major banks are deeply indebted (La crisis en España en Numeros 2012). Furthermore, 22% of Spanish households are below the international poverty level and 25% are at great risk of falling into poverty (Hidalgo 2012). For the past five years, Spanish society has witnessed and experienced an economic and social crisis and decline of general welfare. With the election of the conservative Popular Party in 2011, austerity measures were put into place in attempts to reduce the deficit and ameliorate the situation. The Spanish people have been hit the hardest by these measures with deep funding cuts to education and healthcare and a labor reform further limiting worker rights and compensation. Spanish citizens have demonstrated generalized unrest and dissatisfaction with the situation and particularly with the austerity measures. Tens of thousands of citizens marched in Madrid and Barcelona after Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announced he would cut 150 billion Euros from the budget, mainly in health and education, over the course of three years (Kilkenny 2012). Austerity measures have given rise to several grass-roots movements that actively protest on an almost daily basis in the country's main cities. These protest groups encompass all branches of society from university professors and students to those who have lost homes due to foreclosure (Poggioli 2012). An overwhelming 77% of the population support protest activities (Kilkenny 2012).

This generalized dissatisfaction has been recently exacerbated by a series of scandals linking the Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to cases of corruption and the embezzlement of public funds. Secret party documents were published showing Rajoy had received 25,000 Euros a year over the course of eleven years in kickbacks, along with other party leaders (Ortiz and Reinlen 2013). The Spanish public met this information with mass demonstrations in front of the Popular Party headquarters with calls for party leaders' resignation (Ortiz and Reinlen 2013). Over the past three years, a culture of protest has clearly emerged in Spain spearheaded by the 15M (a group that takes its name from the date their first unified demonstration took place) or Indignados (the indignant) protest movement in May of 2011. As such

strong responses to the crisis have emerged in Spanish society, it seems particularly relevant to look at them more closely in terms of their social significance and impact.

In a time of crisis and of deep social unrest, it is warranted to study how Spanish people are "taking it," how they are conceptualizing the situation they are living and how they are reacting towards the crisis on more personal levels. A deeper understanding of people's perceptions and participation in the pervasive crisis mindset may reveal implicit cultural ideologies that may explain the most effective ways of building a path towards a betterment of the situation and promote consciousness of the ameliorative paths for citizens and government officials. The understanding of social phenomena warrants an ethnographic study that will attempt to understand the particular system of meanings that has emerged within Spanish protest culture.

What are the particular meanings and functions of criticism and protest for Spanish people during a time of civil unrest and socioeconomic crisis? What role do new media/social media play in the facilitation or inhibition of this critical protest language in Spain?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Manuel Castells, the world is experiencing a shift towards the social order and dynamics of a globalized system in which critical issues for a nation's people and government are shaped by "globally interdependent processes" out of the control of sovereign state territories (Castells 2008, 78). Crises of efficiency, identity, equity and legitimacy are taking place globally. The crisis of legitimacy is perhaps the most pervasive and relevant to Spanish politics today and to citizens who are experiencing a growing distrust of political parties, politicians, and the institutions of representative democracy due to the practice of media politics and the politics of scandal (Castells 2008, 78). Because of this generalized mistrust in the capabilities of government to resolve pressing issues, the emergence of non-governmental groups function to give a voice to the needs of the people. This description of the dynamics of the emergence of critical voices fits the Spanish story and supports the argument that the critical movement is not only a reactive phenomenon but one deeply embedded in a larger process of global transformation of power structures, making the Spanish case—as soci-

ety facing a crisis in representation—extremely relevant in deepening our comprehension of our present reality on a global scale.

Some communication research suggests that governments are a type of organization easily prone to communicative “mistakes” when handling crisis events; “Errors such as denying and evading responsibility for the event without sufficient evidence, shifting the blame to some other entity without due cause, or lying about evidence surrounding the crisis appear with troubling regularity” (Ulmer 2010, 793). Taking these factors into consideration, Spain’s crisis is not only related to the tangible risk of Spanish people’s livelihoods and material well being, but it is an image crisis in which the Spanish government is unable to regain its trust from the public. In other words the Spanish government is going through a public relations crisis and inhibiting the establishment of proactive communication that will lead to ameliorative paths (Kent 2010). The Spanish government continues to deny its participation in corruption scandals and denies any negotiation with the Spanish people on slackening austerity measures (Ortiz 2013), worsening their image in the public eye. These insights may indicate that even though a Spanish person is not directly affected by the economic crisis, even though that person may not have lost their job or their home, they are likely to feel distrust towards the government, making participating critics even more numerous than those directly affected.

Media also participates in the criticism of the crisis situation and solidification of a critical social movement. Media audiences are “able to intervene in political stories with a degree of effectiveness that would have been unthinkable ten or twenty years ago,” due to the emergence and expansion of new media outlets (Gurevitch 2004). The Internet and social media have played an integral part unifying and voicing opinions about the economic crisis. Bloggers and independent journalists have emerged as a more accurate voice of the people and have given a name and a face to the *Indignado* movement: a movement or state of mind/attitude that has developed from strictly protest organizations to a more specific and active support system in which young and old are involved in dealing with the crisis.

In order to understand the nature of critical social movements, we must understand what triggers the phenomenon. One major reason people join in vocal outrage against a power structure is because they experience an emotional response towards a

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– Jasper

grave offence (Jasper 1998). According to Jasper, “ ‘Moral shocks,’ often the first step toward recruitment into social movements, occur when an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action” (Jasper 1998, 409). This “moral shock” can be traced time and time again throughout contemporary Spanish media with reports of corruption and political scandal and a sudden emergence of a new protest group denouncing the specific act. Furthermore, “the ability to focus blame is crucial to protest, and it differs according to the perceived ultimate causes and the direct embodiments of each threat or outrage” (Jasper 1998, 410). As the Spanish people have found such an embodiment and source of threat in their politicians and bankers, the unification of their voices has been relatively straightforward and focused on that particular group.

Once these common precepts are set to invoke outrage and indignation, protest groups form comradesly bonds and an ideology within. Common “feelings towards institutions, people and practices outside the movement and its constituent groups” (Jasper 1998, 405) are generated and identifiable. These common feelings are collective action frames, “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford 2000, 611). Examples of these action-oriented sets of belief are vast within Spain’s current social climate and apparent in active protest movements such as 15M, Democracia Real Ya, and many others. Some of the core framing tasks of collective movements such as these include: identifying the issue that demands change, attributing who or what is the source of the problem and urging others to act in unison toward change (Benford 2000). Differ-

ent people may participate in social movements with varying degrees of involvement. One of the most pressing factors for a person to decide to participate in a social movement is the “perceived effectiveness of the action” in question (Passy and Giuni 2001). Many feel impotent, without power to change, and materially, they have been. It is in this grey area of what to do that the true social crisis emerges.

As we have seen, Spain’s situational narrative fits the criteria that delineate a socio-political crisis. A supposed crisis of legitimacy, communicative mishandling of the crisis, and the media’s role in solidifying social movement are all factors at the surface of the situation. However, to superficially brush the external causes and outcomes of the situation will not aid in confronting the crisis. In order to truly construct paths towards general advancement we must comprehend the motivations behind citizen’s actions and interpret their particular perceptions of the crisis. The cultural ideologies that lie at the heart of the social movement must be unearthed and made sense of if we are to construct a more nuanced understanding of the social dynamics at play and the possibilities for social transformation that it represents.

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the functions of criticism and protest for Spanish people and their attitude towards media in the crisis context, participants’ only requirement for inclusion in this study was having Spanish nationality. I collected data from two main source groups. The first was a group of Spanish individuals ranging in age and occupations. I conducted one on one interviews with 10 individuals, via email correspondence. Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions in order to promote discussion and to prevent limiting the participant in terms of their particular use of phrases or ideas. Open-ended questions were open to change and flexibility according to participant responses.

My second data set was retrieved from online chat discussions responding to two different articles about the crisis. Both articles were retrieved from the online edition of a prominent Spanish newspaper, *El País*. To comment on an online *El País* article, a user does not have to be a regular *El País* reader. Any person who wishes to comment on an article is redirected to a site in which a user generates a name with which to identify themselves and they are able to enter their comment. The advantage of looking at public chat forums like these is that participants are extremely open about their views. Additionally, these online commentaries are unsolicited and thus they constitute an invaluable form of naturally occurring data. Selecting particular articles limits the focus of the chat discussion to topics relevant to this case study. One of the articles I took reader comments from was entitled “*Movimiento 15M: los ciudadanos exigen reconstruir la democracia.*” (“15M Movement: citizens demand reconstruction of democracy”). It was published immediately after the May 15th protests across Spain in 2011 against unemployment and for government, economic and social policy change. The article received 42 comments. The second article I selected was entitled “*De la Gran Recesión a la Gran Desafección.*” (“From the Great Recession to the Great Disaffection”). It dealt with citizen’s perceptions of the crisis over a year later and delineated how in many ways the crisis had worsened and that Spanish democracy has not been able to take any ameliorative actions. This article had 84 comments.

ANALYTIC PROCEDURE

The purpose of this study is to understand what meanings and functions protest and criticism have for the Spanish people and how, if at all, media impacts their particular way of formulating criticisms of the socioeconomic crisis. In order to conceptualize the meanings Spanish people attribute to protest and criticism and to understand its functions within Spanish society, terms of definition and description must come from Spanish people themselves. Taking an emic point of view, we are able to see particular actions through the meanings that the members attribute to their own communicative acts and departing from member's meanings is the only way to morally understand cultural phenomenon (Lindolf and Taylor 2002). By using an ethnographic methodology, the Developmental Research Sequence as proposed by Spradley (1980), I will be able to categorize the meanings of participant's communicative practices using their own terms of understanding. After recording what people say and do in regards to criticism, protest and perceptions of media in their own terms, I must take a further step in order to uncover cultural meaning and meaningful communicative patterns. As Spradley states, "in order to move on and describe the cultural behavior, the cultural artifacts, and the cultural knowledge, you must discover the patterns that exist on your data" (Spradley 1980).

Starting from the notion that patterns exist among my data and that these patterns must be organized and labeled integrating emic terms of meaning, the Developmental Research Sequence will provide the ideal analytical structure for my purpose. The Developmental Research Sequence is used to understand semantic meanings or relationships. There are four steps of identification of components to fulfilling the purpose of analysis: domain (components of the cover term), taxonomic (categorization of the domain meanings), componential (different attributions given by the members), and theme analysis (identifying what the previous components say about culture).

After collecting participant's information and knowledge, I am able to categorize their meanings and interpretations of the crisis situation into a taxonomic analysis or smaller units of meaning that address particular ideas throughout the data. From a taxonomic analysis I am able to reach a domain analysis or cover term that will synthesize the many taxonomic components into more broad categories. Within each domain I will

attribute a different componential analysis in which taxonomic terms are given meaning based on qualitative contrasts between them. After these modalities are attributed I will be able to come to a theme analysis of the domains, here is where the underlying story or cultural theme of member's terms and meanings may be extracted. Themes can include core values, core symbols, worldviews and orientations (Baxter and Babbie 2004). Since I am attempting to understand how Spanish citizens perceive the crisis and to discover the meanings they attribute to denouncing the crisis, I am essentially searching for Spanish values and worldviews within the crisis mindset. Thus, the developmental research sequence will effectively lead to the formulation of a description of such values and views.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After having identified patterns of expression in defining and talking about the crisis situation among chat discussion exchanges and interviews, four main domains arose out of the analyses. These four domains were quickly identifiable among the data and spoke to participant priorities in conceptualizing the crisis. These cultural themes/priorities are as follows: (a) talk about allocating blame for the crisis situation, (b) talk about finding solutions for the crisis situation, (c) expressing emotionality and community and (d) expressing positive and negative attitudes towards media within the crisis context.

Talk about whom to blame

One of the most common topics that arose out of participant discussion was the allocation of blame for the crisis. The first core-framing task of a social movement is to attribute and identify the source of the problem since “social movements seek to remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue” (Benford and Snow 2000). Participants had clear yet contradictory ideas on who was responsible for the crisis. Three main types of blame were identified, foreign structural/governmental blame, Spanish structural/governmental blame and Spanish societal blame.

The first is conceived as externally imposed on Spain by foreign governments, institutions, economic structures and policies. Structures such as de-regulated banks, multinational corporations, capitalism and globalization were among the most attributed with fault for the failing financial system. Policies like governmental austerity measures imposed by the European Union and Germany. Particular hostility was felt towards Germany as the foremost power in the E.U. and towards their Prime Minister Angela Merkel. Other attributions of fault were given to the housing market bubble, American financial rating systems and in one isolated case immigration was blamed for the precarious economic situation. These external placements of blame resonated with a sense of helplessness and injustice inflicted on the Spanish people and Spanish government.

The Spanish government, however, was far from being irreproachable. Participants fervently denounced Spanish government and policies as being exclusively culpable. Inept Spanish politicians, unethical internal corruption, and bank-government relationships were named as working in their own self-interest and not for the people. Both the Popular Party and PSOE were blamed for corruption and misspent funding alike. Prime Minister Rajoy was also named as Prime Minister Merkel’s crony who did her bidding without question, thus Rajoy was characterized as a weak traitor to the people’s welfare.

The third identified culpable group was perhaps the most surprising. Neither Spanish nor foreign government and institutions took as much heat from the Spanish people as the people themselves. Participants assumed responsibility at a socio-cultural level for the crisis. Participants described Spanish people as retrograde, “uncultured, hedonistic and lazy.” They accused citizens of being generally indifferent to bad governmental practices and not truly critical of themselves and of the power

structures in which they are complicit or of which they are complacently accepting. Some participants attributed these negative characteristics to being part of Spanish culture or the “Spanish way” of doing things: all talk and no action. The most pressing factor in this particular expression of critique is perhaps not the fact that Spanish people blame themselves for the situation, but the strong sense of guilt they feel knowing they are part of the problem and not being able to or not knowing what to do to ameliorate the crisis.

At the same time participants were defensive of the Spanish people and characterized themselves as the Spanish “pueblo” betrayed by Spanish government for their own benefit. This juxtaposition is crucial in understanding Spanish citizens deeply embedded “Us vs. Them” ideology in which one group tends to present themselves in positive terms and others in a negative light (Van Dijk 1993). As we have seen, the *us vs. them* dimension occurs on several different levels in the crisis context. At one level it is *us* (Spain) vs. *them* (foreign powers and institutions) and at another it is *us* (Spanish society) vs. *them* (Spanish government and politicians). According to Van Dijk, “such discourse structures usually have the social function of legitimating dominance or justifying concrete actions of power abuse by the elites” (1993, 22), suggesting this construct is not a fabrication of the Spanish people but rather a reaction to concrete injustices. Allocating blame or “pointing the finger” at those that are responsible is an outcry against some form of injustice, in this case Spaniard’s feelings of misrepresentation and betrayal by their government resulting in a severe decline in the people’s welfare. Thus talking about whom to blame functions as an ideologically unifying act and a way to confront and oppose those enacting injustices as well as a self critical act attempting to find solutions, which brings us to our next finding: talk about formulating solutions.

Talk about Finding Solutions

Faced with mounting issues of unemployment, loss of rights and benefits and corruption, it is no surprise that Spanish people are speaking of ways to fix the situation. In the face of blaming institutions, government and themselves for the crisis, Spaniards are also actively searching for ways out. The second core-framing task of social movements is Prognostic framing and “involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the

problem” (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). Articulations of solutions vary greatly yet through a componential analysis of participants opinions I was able to divide the domain “talk about finding solutions” into two subcategories: internal solutions and external solutions.

I understood external solutions to be those solutions outside of the direct power of the average citizen (i.e. the responsibility of government or powerful entities). These included changing established structures such as finding alternatives to capitalism and labor and legislative reform. Other external solutions concerned Spain’s relationship with the European union. Many felt that “standing up to the E.U.” would be a start. Abandoning the use of the Euro as Spain’s currency altogether was also a popular solution. Finally, participants saw the government as the main entity capable of change. Arguably, the government is in the hands of the vote of the people, but as earlier mentioned the people feel betrayed and misrepresented by their government, thus I understand the government as something outside of the will and power of the people. These responsibilities included reconstructing democracy to better fit the needs and priorities of the people and establishing good governance and transparency.

Internal solutions, or those dependent and in the hands of the people to carry out, were much more pervasive in participant’s proposed solutions. Many saw that true change had occurred within government and institutions, yet they lacked any hope or confidence that change would ever come on the institution’s own accord. Participants called upon social awakening, consciousness and revolution as the only paths to real positive change. When asked who she thought was most capable of solving the crisis, participant Ana, 34, said, “It is a problem of social ideology.” In other words the government had to solve the crisis but for that to happen Spanish mentality had to change. Participants attributed social movement as one of the main levers of change.

Many participants also had clear ideas on what was needed to ameliorate the situation: social awakening and government reform. They take on great responsibility for social action and movement (the only true path out of the crisis according to them). They recognize they are the solution but characterize themselves as asleep and in desperate need of a social awakening. Within the context of prognostic framing, the problems

of consensus, action mobilization and overall “what to do” are addressed in this stage of reacting to crisis situations yet there is often an inconsistency between problems and viable solutions (Benford and Snow 2000). Concerning this discrepancy between awareness and action, participants felt they were far from any real change and did not see a clear path to reach the so-called awakening of society. On the other hand, they did see value in social movements, yet such movements do not encompass all of society and their effects are seldom tangible in a crisis where tangible results (jobs, healthcare, education) are needed. Nonetheless, as participants themselves recognized, Spain’s crisis is not only a material one but also an ideological one.

Expressing emotionality and community

Participants expressed deep emotionality towards crisis events and solidarity with those affected by the crisis. Complementary to action framing theory is the emotional dimension of social movement. According to Jasper, “emotions accompany all social action, providing both motivation and goals” (1998, 397). Participants associated strong emotions with news about the crisis, how they were affected in their daily lives and expressed solidarity with those most disfavored by the situation. The domain and taxonomies here were divided into two main subgroups that qualified the emotions as either pessimistic or hopeful.

The only taxonomy categorized under the “hopeful” component analysis was the feeling of hope under the title “social movement gives hope.” The lack of expressions of hope speaks to the more pervasive negative emotions associated with the crisis and the remaining sixteen taxonomic components (categorized under pessimistic). Nonetheless, this one glimmer of hope is significant within this study. It aligns with the ideas expressed in the *talk about solutions* section in which participant’s hope for betterment is placed on social movement and consciousness, making the emotion relevant to and consistent with other findings.

Several different negative emotions were associated with the crisis: sadness, anger, misery, suffering, helplessness, demoralization, indignation and fear were among the most prevalent ones. Sadness and anger were often associated with news of *desahucios* or evictions of people who had to default on their mortgages and were forced out of their homes along with their families. This distinct practice seemed to deeply affect partici-

pants and on several occasions *desahucios* were a source of negative emotional reactions. News about the crisis in general proved to be demoralizing and frustrating. Many participants expressed nervousness and sensitivity towards the crisis, especially when speaking about it with others.

Carmen, aged forty-five and a journalist said, “I have a stable job so I shouldn’t really notice the effects of the crisis, but uncertainty is very contagious.” Uncertainty and insecurity were both emotions that seemed to plague participants no matter what their economic or occupational standing was. Another pervasive negative emotion was fear. Fifty-eight year-old participant Remedios concisely reported her emotions when asked how she was personally affected by the crisis, “With pain, with fear, with the knowledge that a new era has arrived: an era of the power of money over human beings, of the loss of civil rights and a return to a masked slavery, and to ignorance.”

In the face of adversity it is common for societies to band together in solidarity against said adversity. According to Schuyt, “solidarity as a social phenomenon means the sharing of feelings, interests, risks and responsibilities” (1998, 297). Participants shared common feelings about the affected by the crisis even though they were not directly impacted, signaling they are enacting solidarity perhaps as an emotional reaction. There is no social movement without emotion to motivate and/or justify it (Jasper 1998). The concept of solidarity amongst those affected by the crisis supports the “us vs. them” framework in which societal conceptions of the crisis can be understood. The “us” is further reinforced by negative emotions and by an emotional alliance against the government and powerful institutions.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS MEDIA

The final trend found in participant contributions was a distinct rift amongst conceptions of the role of media in the crisis context. On the one hand participants characterized media as serving the needs and interests of politicians. On the other hand, participants lauded social media for facilitating the consolidation of social movements. Before initiating this study, I had a clear idea that media was a strong proponent for social consciousness and protest activities. However, I had not taken into account the negatively perceived nature of more traditional media outlets like newspaper, radio and television in the crisis context. As a result of this dichotomy, the final domain of the study was divided into two major componential analyses: positively perceived social/new media and negatively perceived mainstream media.

Positively perceived media outlets include Internet media, more specifically social networks, blogs and chat and texting technology. Participants understood these to positively affect the crisis situation. Participants spoke of new media and technology as essential facilitators of protest gatherings and social movements. Many participants reacting to the article about the 15M protests mentioned new media had the power to make democracy accessible and “change the rules of the game” for citizens to have direct influence on policy. Many participants in this chat room session spoke of a direct democracy facilitated by social media and voting via the Internet. Commentator *uno_cualquiera87* spoke of this possibility being closer to reality than ever, “In this day and age it is not a utopia, it can be a reality!” Other participants mentioned they exclusively relied on social networks for news and information about the crisis because they felt mainstream media misrepresented it. Patricia, a 36 year-old journalist, said, “Since about two years ago, I have relied on social media to get to information (...) I hardly consume information from mainstream media, nor the press, nor radio, or television.” Overall new media seemed to be a vehicle for change, participation and freedom of expression.

Participants are moving away from a media they understand as subservient to power structures, mostly mainstream traditional media outlets. Most participants believed the media to be a propaganda machine, strictly aligning with the views of biased and powerful owners. Many participants felt that news stories misrepresented the crisis in a sensationalist manner, with

a controversial title and little depth or understanding of causes. One participant living outside of Spain said she received a very distorted view of the reality of the crisis, which made her abstain from television news and made her rely on alternative Internet sources. In addition, many mentioned the lack of quality of mainstream media as a direct result of the crisis. With major cutbacks in funding of public news sources and mass layoffs of experienced journalists, the remaining few professionals must take on the workload that was previously distributed amongst many, degenerating the quality of news reports and feeding the “press conference without questions” dynamic of retrieving news from a self-interested source.

“ Since about two years ago, I have relied on social media to get to information (...) I hardly consume information from mainstream media, nor the press, nor radio, or television.” – Patricia

Again we see an “us vs. them” ideological construct appearing within this domain. The Spanish people represented through and supported by new media against government owned and biased traditional media. Participants viscerally depicted the two medias: one as transparent and liberating and the other as dark and secretive. The idea that new media is a crucial factor in promoting social change aligns well with the proposed solutions section of this study. Social empowerment was viewed as one of the only legitimate ways of changing the crisis situation, yet there was a lack of direct proposals on how to reach a level of social consciousness that can lead to real social transformation. By linking participants understanding of new media as a facilitator of social movements to the idea that social awakening is necessary for change, viable and realistic paths towards change may be constructed.

Out of the four domains discussed, several themes emerged, uncovering distinct cultural ideologies: an us vs. them mentality,

a strong sense of community and emotionality and a deep sense self-criticism that calls upon social awakening and movement. Discovering these cultural ideologies were referred to earlier in this paper as necessary to the betterment of the crisis situation. A deconstruction of the social discourse allows for a process of reflection and action that can inform the reconstruction of the democratic life and social and economic conditions of Spanish society.

CONCLUSION

In the context of a socioeconomic crisis, Spanish people have been outspoken and critical. With a closer look at the modalities and meaning of said criticism we are able to better understand the function of this communicative act and create paths to confronting and ameliorating the situation.

From this study we have determined that the Spanish people have allocated blame in a complex and multi-layered fashion, determining who is to blame is a crucial and unifying step in social movements. Thus understanding this step in the Spanish context clarifies the nature of Spanish criticism. When determining who was to blame or who was at the source of the crisis, participants were divisive. They blamed external forces like the Spanish government, socioeconomic structures, foreign governments and institutions like the EU. They conceived of these entities as alienating and against the interests of a unified people, so we understand this conception within an *us vs. them* ideological framework. We also saw that Spanish people were self critical in attempts to find solutions to the problem.

The second step in creating a core frame in social movement was deciding on what exactly these solutions could be. As Spaniards spoke of finding solutions, we again identified a strong us vs. them sentiment, and again great responsibility in enacting solutions were taken on by the Spanish people. As they see their government unresponsive to their needs, many determined the solution to be in social movement and social organization for an overthrow of standard power systems. However they recognized that people have not reached this mobility and called on “social awakening” as something that must come in order for a true betterment of the situation. There is also a sense of self-deprecation as a people, they know what they need to do but are far from achieving it.

In understanding what motivates the Spanish people to

criticism and protest, a deep emotionality and the enactment of solidarity was recognized. Spanish participants felt they were a unified “pueblo” in the face of hopelessness and rights limitations. Fear, insecurity and helplessness were negative emotions that people identified themselves with and served the to come together in the face of adversity. This emotional response and resulting community further contributes to the *us vs. them* mentality.

In understanding how media facilitated or inhibited social movement and protest participants claimed that it did both and made a clear distinction between the functions of new media and traditional media. In the distinction, participant further contributed in formulating the us vs. them mindset. Us being the Spanish people liberated, unified and empowered by new media and them, a corrupt and self-interested government served by a biased mainstream media. Since participants proposed social movement and awakening as one of the main ways to positively change the Spanish crisis, recognizing new media as a proponent of this change revealed a viable and more realistic path towards said solutions.

In short, Spanish participants conceive the crisis in highly negative and emotional terms. They think of themselves as under attack from their own government and powerful institutions that dictate economic and social policy. Thus they have unified in the face of this threat and feel that the only way to overcome the crisis is through the consciousness and mobilization of society against an elite that does not serve their interests. They understood new and social media to be instrumental in said consciousness and mobilization. The socioeconomic crisis in Spain and the people’s reactive social movement must be understood in a dynamic and contemporary way, taking into not only the physical effect of the crisis on a vast majority of the population, but also the deep emotional and psychological effects that the crisis entails. The utmost importance of new media in the facilitation of the critical movement must also be considered. If governments and institutions truly wish to confront crisis in Spain, they must not stop short at an economic and quantitative consideration but tackle a crisis of government legitimacy and re-establish a democracy and a media system that will regain the trust of an entire nation.

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

This study is extremely limited in terms of the scope of views of the Spanish population. It does not consider the views of those who do not describe themselves as critical of the crisis. It attempts to understand the motives and meanings of those who are critical. Perhaps the study would benefit from the opposing view and a contrast with those citizens who defend government austerity measures or those who do not feel affected by the crisis and those whose perceptions of the causes might differ from those that emerged in the limited data set of this study. It would also be interesting to follow up this study with an understanding of the change in perceptions over the next few years according to changes in the crisis.

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