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Privileged Mexican migrants in Europe: Distinctions and cosmopolitanism on social networking sites

## Abstract

This article examines the ways in which classed distinctions are related to the construction of increasingly cosmopolitan identities on Social Networking Sites (SNSs) amongst Mexican migrants from relatively privileged backgrounds living in Europe. It centres on how user demographics shape many of the concerns and outcomes pertaining to the use of SNSs. It considers the implications of the fact that SNSs are predominantly used by a demographic considered as non-marginalized, mobile and as possessing relatively privileged economic, cultural and social backgrounds. It analyses the ways in which online identities are constructed on SNS profiles using multimedia content to represent specific lifestyles and cultural practices that are used to make distinctions amongst participants, and are related to social, cultural and economic capital. A critical analysis is presented as to how users represent cosmopolitan identities online through the display of tastes and lifestyles in SNS content and into how these representations relate to users' privileged positions in Mexican society. Bourdieu's concept of distinction is used to emphasize the

utility of considering different forms of capital in analysing the use of SNSs and profile content generated by a specific demographic. This article demonstrates how the analysis of SNS use may contribute towards an understanding of how classed

distinctions are made based on this use and of how users negotiate the posting of profile content according to these distinctions and manage (select, edit and share) their representations.

**Keywords**

social networking sites

Mexicans

migrants

Europe

Bourdieu

classed distinctions

identity

representation

**Introduction**

Digital multimedia platforms such as Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are an increasingly popular means of digital communication for migrant groups, who use them to stay in touch with others and to create and consolidate new ties made in the countries to which they have migrated (e.g. Komito and Bates 2009). This article explores the use of SNSs, particularly Facebook, among relatively privileged Mexican migrants in Europe, a group who have a higher level of education and greater socio-economic resource than the average Mexican (AMIPCI 2010) and the majority of Latin American migrants in Europe (Sandoval 2007).

Some of the implications of the fact that SNSs are predominantly used by a demographic of people perceiving themselves to be cosmopolitan, mobile and wealthy are considered here. According to the data collected in this study, a large amount of multimedia material used for self-representation and interaction on SNSs refers to specific lifestyle and cultural practice related

to the economic, cultural and social capital of users, material whose presentation contributes towards a process in which distinctions are made, in the Bourdieusian sense of the term (1984).

Notions of cosmopolitanism along with notions of planetary cosmopolitanism have been highly contested and to an extent overtheorized. In the debate over these notions we can find increasingly widespread concepts of 'cosmopolitization' (Beck 2011) or 'the vernacular cosmopolitan' (Bhabha 2000) and direct critics to the term cosmopolitanism that entail complexities related to the concept of 'the global' (Gilroy 2004) or humanist views based on the potential of cosmopolitan citizens (Appiah 2006) amongst many other contributions that are not explored here but acknowledged as elements that challenge a fixed definition of the concept. While some authors agree that cosmopolitanism is related to a certain degree of universalism and openness to experiences, cultures and people from a variety of places around the world, some others argue that it can also be seen as 'ordinary' (Skribis and Woodward 2007) or associated with opportunities such as travelling, accessing international cuisine or music, amongst other opportunities related to the global.

This article does not aim to go into the details of these debates but rather uses the concept of cosmopolitanism as proposed by Hannerz (1990). The participants in this research were affluent enough to be able to work professionally or study in Europe, commonly seen as a place that offered them a set of opportunities that were harder to find in Mexico. They considered themselves interested in travelling and living in different countries but had a preference for the European lifestyle and its benefits such as a high standard of education, highly qualified and well-paid jobs, cheap means of travelling, second nationalities or citizenships and free health services. Setting up carefully crafted networks with other Mexicans helped them to find further opportunities, to reinforce their Mexican identity and to acquire social status.

However, use of these networks also entailed practices of exclusion.

The concept of cosmopolitanism as propounded by Hannerz (1990) emphasizes cosmopolitanism's relation to practices of exclusion in transnational networks, which in this case is conformed through SNS use. This article explores this concept critically as a Bourdieusian form of cultural and social capital (Jakubowicz 2011; Weenink 2008) largely dependent on economic resource and found in SNS interactions. It explores how SNS users make distinctions based on what they share and view over their personal networks. With reference to Goffman's (1969) impression management, cosmopolitanism can be seen as a form of self-identification that SNS users often seek to include in their self-representations online. This article analyses how networks of likeminded (Bauman 1998) migrants are built through the use of cosmopolitan representations on SNSs that perhaps ironically tend to impoverish rather than enhance users' cultural outlook, inasmuch as this process keeps these people in a networked bubble of affluent contacts, leaving them oftentimes less open to the rest of the world's population and to understanding and appreciating real cultural varieties and identities.

Relatively privileged Mexican migrants in European countries tend to be 'cosmopolitan' in outlook – and thus resistant, in principle, to isolation – and yet were found to be presenting lifestyles on their SNS profiles that position them within an 'affluence bubble', or a safe and secure encapsulated space (Jansson 2011) of privilege disconnected from the local contexts. Empirical material was collected through in-depth interviews and analysis of multimedia material, such as photographs of visits to different countries, comments about taste and preferences for international luxury products and posts demonstrating knowledge of different locales.

All of these may be understood as means of referencing cultural, social and economic capital, and hence as means of representing cosmopolitan capital

on these sites. The emphasis in this article is on the relation of SNS use to a process of increasing cosmopolitanism. This entails a critical analysis of how economically privileged migrants present cosmopolitan identities online and how this relates to and reproduces their privileged positions in the material world (Wilken 2012).

Analysing the cultural practices of Mexican users on SNSs can reveal how relatively privileged users assemble their online identities and make cultural, social and economic distinctions through representations that use multimedia content. This work takes a critical position towards SNS representations in their relation to the creation and maintenance of distinctions. The theoretical framework combines concepts drawn from the fields of sociology of culture; globalization, technology and connectivity; migration and cosmopolitanism; and cultural and media studies, in particular those related to migrants' cultural practices and media use. The analysis emphasizes the use of the concept of capital towards an understanding of how privileged migrant Mexican users make classed distinctions and negotiate the self-representation of cultural and economic attributes according to these distinctions.

**Context and theoretical background**

We may consider connectivity as a defining feature of a global world and as a condition brought about and reinforced through a set of cultural practices conducted by individuals as part of their daily lives. We explore the use and creation of Internet networks in regard to their increasingly significant role in individuals' lives. Persons and groups are increasingly interrelated through the use of new technologies and the networks created through these.

Castells calls this the network society. He argues that we are actually living in a society in which the key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks (1996). 'The network

society is a global society. However, this does not mean that people everywhere are included in these networks' (Castells 2009: 25). It is important to understand how the use of networks and connectivity shapes the social and cultural outcomes of the privileged and how this relates to a process of increasing cosmopolitanism. In the network society not everyone is included and perhaps the representation of cosmopolitanism seen in SNS exchanges between these privileged Mexican migrants living in Europe illustrates the danger of connectivity through SNSs. It further divides people along class and economic lines rather than creating dialogues. According to Hannerz (1990), critically speaking cosmopolitanism can be considered as a state of mind or a perspective in which transnational or global networks are commonly used to generate experiences considered to have aesthetic value, which are actually based on failed attempts at engagement with a plurality of cultures and can be related to an attitude of self-indulgence that creates a kind of exclusion of others.

Cosmopolitanism as analysed by Hannerz is one of the concepts used here to emphasize how networks of relatively privileged individuals in the contemporary world are reinforced online through the use of SNSs. Hannerz stresses that cosmopolitans are interested in alien cultures but not necessarily committed to them; they can be narcissistic 'dilettantes and connoisseurs' (Hannerz 1990: 239) who express their competent knowledge of other cultures by means of cultural practices that are charged with specific symbolic meanings. Hannerz' approach permits an analysis of emergent phenomena in SNS use in regard to social, economic and cultural aspects of the contemporary world. This allows us to recognize that the digital cultural practices of the relatively privileged who see themselves as cosmopolitans may be significant in analysing how networks of wealth are perpetuated and reinforced through the use of SNSs.

Instead of exploring the theoretical definition and possible meanings of

the concept of cosmopolitanism, this article illustrates how cosmopolitanism can be used as a 'grounded category', referring to it as 'something that people do', as Rovisco and Nowicka (2011: 2) define it. Hannerz's concept of cosmopolitanism allows us to see it as something that can be studied through the analysis of cultural practices of specific groups. Privileged Mexican migrants in Europe see themselves as cosmopolitan. They are aware of their aspirations and access to various opportunities including international work and study, sociability, consumption and mobility (Glick Schiller et al. 2011). However, they only seem to be as engaged with other cultures as far as it affords them a more comfortable lifestyle. As Calhoun puts it, they are 'citizens of the world' who have a lifestyle that allows them to be 'frequent travellers, easily entering and exiting polities and social relations around the world, armed with visa-friendly passports and credit cards' (2002: 873). The theoretical framework based on Hannerz (1990) is also related to more recent work around cosmopolitanism, which can be readily linked to the use of Bourdieu's different forms of capital. For example, Weenink (2008) studied how a group of parents acknowledged providing their children with social and cultural capital

in the form of internationalized education, a concept that clearly differs from the notions of cosmopolitanism as global connectedness or a curiosity in the other.

In the context of a globalizing world supported by global communication networks, images and symbols of cosmopolitan attributes are frequently claimed by migrant groups and recognized as important sources of self-representation, and such images are usually centred on consumption practices. Examples might include textual or image references of users going skiing at Aspen, having access to the most expensive clothes stores in New York, Tokyo and Paris, or going to yoga lessons in India during the summer. During our fieldwork, it emerged that relatively privileged migrant Mexican SNS users are

often keen to show off their social and geographic mobility alongside their increasingly cosmopolitan identities. These identities are often represented as part of capsular groups in which individuals share mobility, consumer preferences and financial assets that fit with their view of the cosmopolitan.

According to Goffman 'when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation' (1969: 26). He calls this drive to tailor our behaviour and representations to deliberate ends impression management. As a number of Internet researchers have stated (Tufekci 2008; boyd 2008; Gibbs et al. 2006), Goffman's work can be very useful in the analysis of online profile content in relation to social connections made over SNSs. This article uses Goffman's concept in an attempt to understand the relation of differing user methods of impression management to cultural, economic and social backgrounds. This may help to understand the specific ways in which digitalization shapes how individuals from specific backgrounds present themselves to others through online representations.

The literature on migration, diaspora and Internet usage tends to centre on the underprivileged 'other'. Few publications, however, demonstrate the social specificities of interaction between privileged migrants such as expatriates and professionals (see Moores 2006; Moores and Metykova 2009; Jansson 2011). Polson (2011) analysed how the majority of professionals who migrate from non-industrialized countries are from relatively elite backgrounds since the middle classes in these countries have insufficient resources for such a geographically mobile existence. Polson explores the emergence of a new globally mobile middle class composed mostly of college-educated individuals who migrate since they can find better opportunities abroad than in their countries of origin. She shows how these people's use of social media is a key factor in the creation of groups and organization of events, which allow them to generate further connections. Polson used a Bourdieusian approach

to analyse how cultural capital is related to 'the global' in international networks.

For several years, a number of existing studies have emphasized the fact that more highly educated people (Bonfadelli 2002) and those with greater economic resource tend to be more active Internet users (Jansen 2010; AMIPCI 2010; Wilson et al. 2003). Polson points out that this new global class illustrates their capital through both online and physical interactions that reveal international attributes such as multilingual skills and experiences drawn from living in different countries or working for multinational corporations.

This article draws in part on those studies that have examined the importance of online networks and looks at how migrants' self-representation is highly shaped by a sense of cosmopolitan identity. We look at how the use of

SNSs is challenging notions of identity and its online construction. We focus on how digital communication on SNSs shapes the ways in which Mexican migrants from relatively privileged backgrounds represent themselves and make distinctions based on the material shared on these sites, across their transnational networks.

We argue that many privileged Mexican migrants represent themselves as connoisseurs of the world through the consumption practices of a jet setter demographic. Although this is a global phenomenon, these consumption practices nonetheless have cultural meanings, which interact with local cultures. These practices may be inferred from the content of online profiles such as specific messages, photographs and videos that either illustrate a user's consumption directly or else their knowledge of places, cultures, experiences and tastes. The concept of class is useful in comprehending the social consequences of SNS access and use by this demographic. Bourdieu's theoretical framework is used here to address the ways in which SNSs are used

to gain and manage different forms of capital, which are largely centred on a cosmopolitan outlook.

Jansson (2011) carried out a study based on Scandinavian expatriates and their use of networked media, and showed how cosmopolitan capital (based on cultural and network capital) can work as a form of sociocultural distinction. 'Cosmopolitan capital' is a form of capital that entails the expression of global openness and engagement but that largely depends on economic capital, knowledge of other cultures and transnational social connections. He points out that:

the key to reach valid conclusions on the functions of social media is the 'constitution and logic of cosmopolitan capital' as it 'brings us back to the fundamental question of socio-cultural reproduction, pointing to the structural unevenness in terms of cultural and technological resources, but also to the prospects for cultural mobility and learning'.

(Jansson 2011: 254)

We found Jansson's concept of cosmopolitan capital useful for understanding frequently observed practices involving exclusion based on classed distinctions shaped by cosmopolitan outlooks represented online.

 Bourdieu understands social, cultural and economic capital as interrelated forms of power in different fields of cultural production that exist within capitalist societies. For Bourdieu, a field is a setting or social arena in which agents and their positions are located and engaged in the pursuit of desirable resources (1984). Examples include the academic field, the philosophical field, the journalistic field, etc. For this study, the concept of field was useful in understanding the social contexts within which privileged Mexican migrants living in Europe use different forms of capital.

Bourdieu considers one type of capital as capable of being transformed or converted into other forms within a given field (1986, 1993). For instance in the artistic field, an individual's knowledge of art, a form of cultural capital, may aid them in making social connections that could lead to job opportunities, a process by which cultural capital is transformed into social capital and hence subsequently into economic capital. This is not to say that the only value attributed to cultural understanding should be its function in a field of expertise nor that the usefulness of a social contact should be the only value attributed to having an acquaintance or friend, as this would be a severely reductionist treatment of social and cultural complexities. However, in regard to capitalist societies and their accompanying concerns based on wealth and career success, Bourdieu's work places these more functional, material and quantifiable aspects to cultural practice under intensive scrutiny. Many privileged Mexican migrants suggested that they use SNSs in order to share information related to cosmopolitan capital, emphasizing the social advantages they seek through their use of the sites.

Bennett, Savage, Bortolaia, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal and Wright point out that 'the shortcomings of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of gender also proved a compelling challenge' (2009: 1). According to Skeggs, Bourdieu's understanding of gender is primarily as 'a sexual difference' (2004: 26). Therefore, Bourdieu's theories cannot account for the ambivalence and instabilities in gender definition that have been analysed by theorists challenging established concepts of gender and sexuality, such as Butler (1993), who see gender as a performance, an assignment and as the embodiment of a set of ideas, but not necessarily as an implied sexual state. However, Skeggs points out that Bourdieu's theories can frame an argument in which gender can be understood as multiple entities, 'a resource, a form of regulation, an embodied disposition and/or a symbolically legitimate form of cultural capital' (2004: 24). In a similar conception to Butler's, Skeggs (1997, 2004) points out that Bourdieu's

approach can be used to analyse cultural practices in relation to gender formation,

provided that we bear the limits of his theories in mind and that the

concept of gender is conceived of as socially constructed. Although gender was

not the focus of this article some differences were observed between females

and males according to the material posted on SNSs, which are discussed

below.

Methodology

Among Mexicans a combination of social, economic, geographic and cultural

elements such as age, education, occupation and income may profoundly

influence a person's ability to gain access to the Internet and their likelihood of

migrating to Europe. Most Mexican Internet users have a higher than average

level of education and a better than average socio-economic circumstance for

the country (AMIPCI 2010). This shapes the ways in which the demographic

use the Internet, and the networks and groups that develop through said use.

Most of our participants were relatively privileged since they had better than

average wealth and level of education when compared to Mexicans overall

or to Latin American migrants in Europe. A large number of Latin American

migrants in Europe earn at a low-income level and are undocumented, but

15 per cent of relatively privileged migrants enjoy better conditions (Sandoval

2007). Most of our participants were professionals or students who had the

financial wherewithal to move to Europe, seeking employment or educational

opportunity. They consider themselves 'cosmopolitan' and use SNSs to create

and consolidate connections, often with other migrants under similar circumstances.

For example, one participant stated the following:

While living in Europe I was looking for friends similar to me and

I made a party for Mexicans living in the UK. Looking at their profiles

I could discriminate and choose who I wanted to contact and invite

because I could see the information about their jobs, education and photos.

Similar views were found amongst other participants, who also wished

to create or consolidate connections with others. This discussion is based on

research carried out between 2009 and 2011 with 39 participants between

18 and 35 years of age living in England, Spain, Finland, Germany, France,

Hungary and Switzerland. The methodology combines a qualitative, textual

and ethnographic account based on the analysis of everyday practices carried

out on SNSs, the creation and use of online profiles and the information

and representations that they contain. Online participant observation was

conducted specifically with respect to the content of online profiles; online

questionnaires were used, and online and offline in-depth interviews oriented

towards ascertaining the decision-making process involved in using SNSs

and the choices made in the construction of profiles and uploading of diverse

forms of content.

Initially we focused on acting as SNS members ourselves, by creating

online profiles and observing and establishing relationships in groups and on

pages such as those of Mexican societies, student and professional groups. The

use of groups on SNSs is a notable part of users' construction of identities on

these sites and a user's affiliation with a group is commonly a fact shared with

their contacts. Such group membership thus acts as an affiliation token that

may communicate something about the educational or professional trajectory

of the user (for example in the case of groups of schools, universities, companies

and institutions) or something about their tastes and interests (in the case

of groups related to hobbies such as scuba diving, hiking, musical bands, literary

groups, etc.).

In conducting research we collected data that could provide a general

sense of participants' views on SNS use, and some personal information

specifying social, economic and cultural backgrounds such as education level,

occupation, knowledge of languages and hobbies, time spent living in Europe

and the reasons for migrating, all of which were obtained using standardized

online questionnaires. A total of 39 questionnaires were sent to potential participants and 24 completed questionnaires were received back via e-mail and SNS.

While the questionnaires were used to collect specific written data related to the participants' social, economic and cultural background and contexts, the study also included ten real-time online in-depth interviews that provided us with a deeper sense of their lifestyles and cultural practice online. These lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. The participants were physically located in different parts of Europe. The use of Internet technology made it possible to communicate with these participants in real time using relatively few resources whilst still obtaining a real sense of their modes of expression, tone of voice and general demeanour, complemented by observations from their online profiles and their answers to questionnaires. Using these questionnaires we also obtained written consent from the participants; this allowed us to use the data displayed on their SNS profiles and collected during the course of research for the purposes of this investigation.

Discussion: Different forms of capital and online
profiles

Juan, as many other Mexican SNS users, constructs and represents his identity as cosmopolitan using a range of multimedia material. Half American and half Mexican, he has online profiles on various SNSs. He has lived most of his

Although there were many similarities in the kinds of material posted by males and females there were also clear differences that seemed to fit in with stereotypical images of femininity and masculinity. For example, women tended to pose with softer attitudes than men, by smiling more often at the camera and having more close-ups on their profile photos wearing elegant outfits, whereas men tended to look more serious. Looking sporty or portraying

a 'professional look' by wearing a suit was also more common amongst

men. During the research one participant used his network to support his girlfriend's

efforts to win an international modelling contest that was decided in

Spain by the number of votes collected online. While he sent short messages

to all his contacts explaining his girlfriend's ambition, she made use of her

image to promote her profile by sending photographs that were used in the

contest and links to some of her videos, attaching links and messages in which

she asked for support. She used her image as a form of capital in order to

win a contest that would provide her with economic benefit and social status.

Although she did not win the contest, the use of her boyfriend's large network

of friends was an important element in her performance in the contest and

was mobilized as a form of social capital.

Profile information posted by participants was often related to lifestyles,

hobbies and tastes. Users' contacts generally fit with their own social and

personal ambitions. This is in part because SNSs are particularly suited to

fast and direct communication of specific multimedia content. For example,

Adolfo, a musician whose main preoccupation was his intention to study a

postgraduate degree in either Europe or Iran, used to post a great deal of information

on his interest in European and Iranian cultures. He used his profile to

share his tastes for classical and traditional music, and start discussion groups

on these areas of interest, all at least in part as a means of strengthening his

relationships with users living in Europe or Iran with similar interests, who

might help him to achieve his goals. Not only do SNS users negotiate the

sharing of information to suit audiences from different social circles, they

negotiate what to share according to their own interests, future plans and

professional fields, as discussed in the following section.

The act of representing oneself as possessing specific economic, social

and cultural attributes is not a straightforward issue. A degree of concern was

shown by participants over a perceived lack of depth to the nature of interactions

taking place through these sites. For example there is 27-year-old Jose, a student living in Germany and working in a restaurant. Jose views SNS presentations as frequently related to signifiers of prosperity and knowledge such as travelling the world or attending exclusive events, a representational practice that he personally dislikes. In his opinion these practices illustrate a very 'superficial' level of interaction. Jose explained this in the following way:

At the beginning I uploaded photographs of me and my friends, at the beach, of my travels … But after a while I decided to erase all my photographs from Facebook. I used to upload them just for the sake of sharing, but I realized that it was just to show off… A lot of people show off with their pictures and messages. It's like 'Look, I'm in Paris' or blah, blah, blah … I decided to erase my photographs because I see it as a very shallow way of sharing … It's just a desire to show off … a need to show what you have, which places you've been to … it's just to fit in with a predetermined social group. I think it has just been reduced to that and I don't like it. I'm not interested in belonging to a group that's going to judge you only by the places you've visited or by your looks and career.

While there may be a tension between an individual's sense of self and the impression management (Goffman 1969) on their profile, self-representations nonetheless feed back into and shape users' sense of self in the material world. Digitalization of self allows the user to shape their impression management and roles through the use of multimedia materials that are often carefully crafted and edited in order to be just right to present to a variety of viewers who may come from a number of different social circles belonging to the user. The sense of status and privilege attached to visiting places frequently becomes the prime focus, and any more profound, subtle or developed cross-cultural understanding risks being eclipsed by these representative practices.

This echo chamber of communicative exchanges appears to exacerbate existing tendencies amongst young affluent migrants to regard foreign travel as not much more than a means of collecting of experiences that help them in their affirmation of social status.

Fields and use of social network sites

For privileged Mexicans, SNS profiles are very often viewed as a way to promote their work and to reinforce their positions in different fields such as the artistic, academic or journalistic, to strengthen their cosmopolitan capital and facilitate social, cultural and economic opportunities while living in Europe. Roberto, a 32-year-old freelance make-up artist who has lived in France and Germany at different times, likes to post material related to his job on Facebook.

I have been called on many occasions by people saying 'Hey, I've been checking out your book; please call me on this number'. This has happened through Facebook and I've got jobs (in Germany and Mexico) thanks to it.

Many of the posts made by Roberto function as representations of his work, and his profile itself is full of references to his specific professional field. Through featuring his work on his SNS profile, Roberto has gained recognition by agents in his field, resulting in job opportunities.

According to Bourdieu, the structure of a field is modified 'by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field' (Johnson 1993: 30). As Roberto uses his Facebook profile to establish relationships based on the representation of his work, he is also able to modify the field through communicating over his network of contacts. Roberto finds his SNS profile very useful for keeping in touch with numerous colleagues, TV and cinema producers, and

photographers and modelling agencies that provide him with job opportunities as a freelance make-up artist. He uploads material indicating his experience and abilities, and acquires opportunities within his specific field. Many others consider using SNSs to be helpful in maintaining contact with people for professional purposes, and indeed view this as one of their most notable benefits. This shows how SNS use by privileged Mexican migrants has an impact on the social formations and connections made over these sites based on engagement within specific fields.

Their professional fields directly influence certain negotiations that users make over what to share on specific SNSs, with a tendency towards the creation of 'cosmopolitan capsules' (Jansson 2011). Jansson demonstrates how the balance of encapsulation and decapsulation from relatively safe and secure spaces that separate expatriates from their wider contexts is shaped by the use of networked media (Jansson 2011). De Cauter (2004) suggests that technologies such as computers, gated communities, cars and aeroplanes are 'capsular' 'in so far as they provide a protective cocoon, which not only connect people to (some) others, but simultaneously, separate them from problematic forms of alterity' (Morley 2011: 286).

For example, Ariel holds a senior position within a multinational company whose headquarters are in Germany. She uses a number of SNSs for different purposes and tries to keep her Facebook use personal. Users employ SNSs to their own advantage with respect to their respective fields, exemplifying how these fields may be altered by SNS use. Fields also have specific 'rules of the game', which shape the ways in which SNSs may best be used for advancement within a specific field. For the field in which Ariel is most involved, the world of business and finance, she prefers to use other SNSs such as Xing.com (http://www.xing.com) as professional platforms. Ariel's use of Facebook is preserved for communication with friends and family, which means that she thinks twice about who she adds to her contact list and has chosen to ignore messages

from certain old acquaintances wishing to use this network for furthering their engagement in their own fields and who are not of interest to her.

The remote and time-delayed nature of SNS communication makes it easy to ignore others' messages without the need to justify this or to provide explanations, something that could be seen as an obstacle to users' efforts to increase social capital via their use and take advantage of them for professional advancement. Users may exclude others by omission, simply through refraining from replying to their communications or requests, by ignoring them or by deleting them. For example, Ariel is interested in establishing and reinforcing relations with other migrants living in Europe who enjoy similar privileged conditions, irrespective of whether they work in different fields. She uses SNSs such as an expat community called Internations (http://www.internations.org/) or joins groups on Facebook of professional Mexicans living in Europe.

Some new SNSs are aimed at niche markets and at users with specific social characteristics or interests, while others seek to enlarge their user base by attracting members from as wide a range of social, cultural and economic backgrounds as possible. As some SNSs are designed for specific purposes and fields, there are also SNSs designed for certain classes with cosmopolitan attributes, such as A Small World (http://www.asmallworld.net), 'a private international community of culturally influential people who are connected by three degrees', or Internations, which is directed at expatriates. These will provide excellent material for further research. Use of Facebook, a site not directly designed to create or reinforce international groups, nonetheless may be dominated by a concern with cosmopolitan capital, as appears to be the case for many participants involved in this study.

Conclusion

This article has shown how self-representations created by relatively privileged

Mexican migrant SNS users are highly influenced by specific cultural, social and economic backgrounds, and has related this to an analysis of the construction and representation of cosmopolitan identities online. Many of the communicative practices observed on SNSs may be understood as related to users' awareness of social differences and cultural distinctions. These differences shape the ways in which these Mexican migrants construct, assemble and use their SNS profiles, and the ways in which they read and interpret one another's profile content. According to the material studied here many participants represented themselves as affiliated with a certain segment of society or indeed as being of a particular global class. Using Bourdieu's approach to the analysis of cultural practices, we have adopted a critical position in order to address how the power relations of class are articulated through online self-representations and how these shape the ways in which these privileged Mexican migrants interact through such sites.

Communication over SNSs by privileged Mexican migrants living in Europe often involves practices that may encourage and reinforce exclusion and segregation. That is, the same forms of cosmopolitanism presented by the participants are intertwined with forms of segregation that are exclusionary of 'alien' cultures. It could be argued that encapsulating technologies such as online social networks are spaces where these different forces – narrow segregative cosmopolitanism and the potential for a more vital kind of cultural exchange and understanding – live and are contested.

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