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3 “THE TIP OF THE DAY”: FIELD
5 THEORY AND ALTERNATIVE
7 NUTRITION IN THE US
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15 **ABSTRACT**

17 *Field theory is waxing in the sociology of science, and Pierre Bourdieu’s*
19 *work is especially influential: his characterization of field structure and*
21 *dynamics has been especially valuable in drawing attention to hierarchi-*
23 *cal and center-periphery relations in science and technology, and to the*
25 *stability and reproduction of science and technology practices. What field*
27 *theory does less well, however, is to capture the existence of multiple*
29 *(including marginal) logics around a given sociotechnical object. Nor*
31 *does it capture the dynamics of a specific logic of neoliberal capitalism in*
33 *the US: the cultural and economic value of entrepreneurship that empha-*
sizes the continual reconfiguration of social relations, which has its roots
in a longer US history of progress-through-reinvention, and is abetted by
new technologies designed to continually “update” and remix. Much
better at capturing these qualities, we argue, is an institutionalist theory
in which dynamism, not stasis, is foregrounded, and there is room for
multiple, contradictory, and non-cognitive logics to co-exist. Using
the expansion of “alternative nutrition” in the US, we show that its

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Fields of Knowledge: Science, Politics and Publics in the Neoliberal Age
Political Power and Social Theory, Volume 27, 223–258
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39 **ISSN: 0198-8719/doi:10.1108/S0198-871920140000027016**

1 *formation took place via the conjunction of parallel streams of social*
3 *action that encompassed diverse logics and encouraged creativity and*
5 *hybridity. More generally, variability in field stability and qualities, not*
7 *static fields, deserve analytic attention.*

9 Dr. Andrew Weil is one of many contemporary purveyors of the promise
11 of unbounded health and vitality via the endless application of scientific
13 ideas about nutrition (Weil, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2007). Weil and his peers,
15 such as Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Loren Cordain (author of *The Paleo Diet*),
17 follow in the footsteps of US nonscientists who have used scientific claims
19 to advocate dietary change as a means to physical, and often spiritual,
21 health and well-being or forms of self-improvement. Sylvester Graham, **AU:2**
23 the advocate of vegetarianism, alcohol abstinence, and frequent bathing
25 was one of the earliest health advocates; another well-known proponent,
27 Francis Moore Lappé, author of *Diet for Small Planet* (1971) helped place
29 vegetarianism back into mainstream American culture by illuminating its
31 relationship to environmental sustainability. For much of American history,
33 these advocates were frequently denounced as quacks. In any given
35 decade, only a few attracted many devotees through the sale of books and
37 cookbooks, public presentations, and by word of mouth. Yet today, there
39 are thousands of these purveyors of alternative diets, catering both to very
specific and quite broad audiences: there are diets for the vegan athlete, for
new mothers who want to “get their body back,” and the Daniel Diet for
Christians who want to lose weight. No longer spread just through relatively
static and slow forms like books, most of these diets are continually
“updated” via email messages, smartphone applications, new web content,
recipes, and “tips of the day.” Moreover, their interlocutors draw on diverse
sources of authority, blurring the boundaries of the logics of economics,
spirituality, and science. Taken together, their claims and practices are an
unstable web of constantly changing and hybrid logics organized around
eating for health. Indeed, incorporated into the messaging of these interlocutors
is that instability is a normal social state.

There is no “center of gravity” among alternative nutritionists; although
some, like Dr. Weil, become popular and wealthy, every day more purveyors
offer new combinations of science and promises of “wellness.” The
“field of alternative nutrition,” if it could be characterized that way, would
look more like an ever-changing web, than like a well-defined battlefield.
The low barriers to entry – one needs a web site and a book, both cheap to

1 produce – encourage creativity and hybridity. The evolution of alternative
2 nutrition over the past forty years (as we show below, it became much more
3 visible in the 1970s) is not a story of “shocks” and big battles through crafty
4 strategic action by actors with clear preferences and the capacity to see a
5 field in nearly objective terms, as some have emphasized (McAdam &
6 Fligstein, 2012; Venkatesh, 2013). Nor is it a story of the role of rules and
7 laws shaping a field (Albert & Kleinman, 2003), nor of the power of a dominant
8 logic overtaking all others. Its proliferation, we argue, is the result of **AU:3**
9 the co-emergence of neoliberal entrepreneurialism in culture and economy,
10 and political and cultural attention to spiritual and physical health.

11 The collective character of alternative nutrition, too, is distinct from the
12 tight and circumscribed field that Bourdieu’s (1993) analysis of fields
13 implied. In alternative nutrition, producers are producing for consumers,
14 and in the contemporary US, consumers are always in-the-making, that
15 is, one of the ways that profit is generated is through the continual
16 co-configuration of consumer identities and products. Such reshuffling and
17 shifting makes the array of alternative nutrition possibilities look something
18 like a constantly moving kaleidoscope to which new color shades are always
19 being added. Scientific ideas, bodies, spiritual and political logics and
20 advice, and economic logics are mixed together as packages for consumers,
21 and reflected in the ways that producers market themselves, as well.

22 We come to this discussion as skeptics about the value of field studies
23 as compared to institutionalist approaches. Our goal is to take up some
24 of the unresolved questions about field-based studies of technoscience,
25 and to draw on institutionalist theories and other theories to attempt to fill
26 those gaps. In particular, we emphasize institutionalism’s attention to the
27 co-existence of multiple logics, its concern with social change and creativity,
28 the existence of multiple motivations among actors (over and above
29 “winning,” which Bourdieu and his followers have emphasized), and field
30 formation rather than field dynamics. These are critical elements in the
31 study of science and technology in contemporary life, especially in a neoliberal
32 era, in which dynamism and change are socially and politically valued.

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FIELDS AS SITES OF FIGHTS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

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39 The sociological and STS turn toward studying fields is in part a reaction
40 against the study of social institutions, and the Foucauldian emphasis on

1 diffuse power relations with few possibilities for change. In the former case,
2 field analysts are jettisoning the early functionalist underpinnings of old-
3 and new-institutionalism that presumed stability, shared norms, and until
4 recently, provided few mechanisms for understanding change via conten-
5 tion (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Lounsbury &
6 Ventresca, 2002). In the second case, analysts drawing on Foucault's work
7 have been attentive to power-as-outcome, but with little attention to the
8 causal role of law and material relations, or to social movements in making
9 meaningful change (Binkley & Capetillo, 2009). Pierre Bourdieu's concep-
10 tualization of fields (1993), which starts with analyst-defined objective field
11 positions and the subjective meanings that actors ascribe to possibilities for
12 action within the field, is the most influential in US sociology, and increas-
13 ingly, in the sociology of science (Albert & Kleinman, 2011), so that is the
14 version we engage here. Analyzing fields through this lens offers possibili-
15 ties for understanding struggles over power, and the resulting reproduction
16 of domination. Although Bourdieu argued that fields took different forms
17 in different times and places, his interest was neither in overlaps among
18 field logics nor in democratization processes, but rather in understanding
19 what Norbert Elias would call "states" of social life, or the means by which
20 social life is reproduced (Elias, 1969). Because of their value in illuminating
21 inequality, fields are now waxing as conceptual tools, able to capture the
22 topography of poles in an arena of struggle over material and symbolic
23 power through which inequalities are constituted and made durable
24 (Emirbayer, 1997; Go, 2008; Martin, 2003).

25 Analysts of scientific fields have demonstrated that scientific fields are
26 reproduced through the effects of rules (Kleinman, 2003; Moore,
27 Kleinman, Hess, & Frickel, 2011), ideologies (Hess, 2014), habitus (Albert,
28 Laberge, Hodges, Regehr, & Lingard, 2008), and institutional location
29 (Hess, 2011). Contemporary field analysis depends heavily on *a priori*
30 definitions of fields; indeed, in Bourdieu's original formulation, he advo-
31 cated that analysts begin with objective arrangements, and thus, avoid
32 using actors' categories. Thus, analysts have identified the global political
33 field (Go, 2008), the scientific field (Bourdieu, 1975), and the fitness field
34 (Maguire, 2008), for example. These ontologies can be especially valuable
35 for seeing the center and the periphery cross-sectionally, and for observing
36 the effects of relatively fast-paced or singular causes of change, such as
37 changes in laws or a change in a political regime. Thus, by firmly bounding
38 the subject, the effects of "inputs" can be easily observed.

39 Yet there is reason to suspect that attention to objective conditions might
not capture all field dynamics. Some analysts, for example, have shown that

1 formal rules are sometimes decoupled from practical actions in the scientific
field (Whittington & Smith-Doerr, 2008). Panofsky (2011) helpfully takes
3 apart the presumed homogeneity in scientific fields, showing that forms of
capital from one part of the scientific field do not always lead to capital
5 accumulation in other parts of the field. Similarly, Hess (2012) raises
questions about the extent to which the structural hierarchy that Bourdieu
7 presumed is the most useful way to study fields, an issue that Savage and
Silva (2013) also raise. As Savage and Silva (2013) argue, the not-centers of
9 fields (they are not “boundaries,” nor are they “edges”) are also sites of
invention, even if those inventions do not immediately make it to the center
11 of a field. Attending only to the center, they demonstrate, would force us to
avoid scrutinizing heterogeneity and sources of novelty that may not be
13 highly rewarded in the short run (see also Moore & Hala, 2002).

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It is critical to investigate when and why something else becomes
15 possible, or even thinkable, even though it may not become part of the
mainstream, or may be dormant for long periods (Moore, 2008).

17 Moreover, although Bourdieu called for analysts to attend to the varia-
bility of fields, what he did not anticipate, nor emphasize, was that under
19 particular conditions, the very notion of the stable field might be less useful.
Bourdieuian field theory is predicated on the idea that habitus sets out
21 what is possible and that domination of the cultural, political and economic
terrain is a key aim. Actors know what they can and cannot do, and what
23 sorts of consequences might happen as a result of certain kinds of actions
that they undertake to maximize their position relative to others in a field.
25 Yet this assumption leaves out multiple motivations, and the kinds of
actions that feminists, institutionalists, critical race theorists, and scholars
27 of social movements have identified: those that can leave actors worse off,
materially and professionally, as they pursue goals that might have collec-
29 tive, long-term or other values, but which do not immediately maximize
their own position. Scientists who act to promote social justice at a cost to
31 their career, in Bourdieu’s logic, would have to be forced into a Procrustean
bed in which they were merely attempting to advance their position in a field
33 of scientists. To be sure, analysts of scientific fields attend to contenders
who lose (Frickel, Campanella, & Vincent, 2009, for example), but even this
35 sort of analysis is more concerned with “structural” dynamics of winning
and losing than the content of claims, or with theorizing action as derived
37 from multiple motivations.

Again, David J. Hess is an exception: in his long-term project on alterna-
39 tive pathways, he makes clear that there are multiple reasons for action
within a scientific field, which include something other than dominance over

1 other producers (see, e.g., Hess, 2007). For our purposes, it is critical to
2 reject the assumption that field domination is what motivates actors. It may
3 indeed be what motivates some, but it hardly exhausts the range of possible
4 motivations actors might have, including those that promote greater social
5 goods at a cost to individual actors. Moreover, we want to draw attention
6 to the fact that actors might discover motivations through action, and may
7 or may not be clear about what the range of possibilities for action might
8 be. Social movements can play a role in shifting fields, because at these
9 moments – what Zolberg (1972) called “moments of madness” – relations
10 of power are more visible, and actors begin to articulate new possibilities,
11 with varied and sometimes surprising results.

12 Finally, although embodiment was a key element of Bourdieu’s analysis
13 of systems of domination (1984), most studies of science and technology
14 fields have little to say about embodiment as a target of actors nor about
15 embodiment as a means of knowing. Bodies were critical sites of
16 Bourdieu’s analysis of habitus, and are, in the contemporary moment, key
17 sites of technopolitical action. Analysts of neoliberalism have had much
18 more to say about how embodiment becomes a target of political action
19 (Guthman, 2011; Harvey, 1998), and the very vehicle through which actors
20 constitute themselves politically (Bernstein, 2007).

21 We offer a neoliberal institutionalist view that allows for states ranging
22 between contention and harmony, multiple logics of action, uncertainty,
23 path dependence, and in which centers are only one of the sites of mean-
24 ingful social action. We turn next to an examination of this framework, and
25 then move to our analysis of the emergence and dynamics of alternative
26 nutrition to illustrate its value.

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29 **INSTITUTIONALISM MEETS NEOLIBERALISM**

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31 Alternative nutrition providers draw on diverse logics, which we define, fol-
32 lowing Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012) as “frames of reference
33 that condition actors’ sensemaking choices, the vocabulary that they use to
34 motivate action, and their sense of self and identity” (p. 2). Thornton et al.
35 argue that any given object might be subject to multiple logics, some of
36 which might compete with and some of which might sit awkwardly against
37 each other. Moreover, they decouple logics from institutions, allowing
38 logics to travel through law, through networks (including professional net-
39 works), markets, families, and other social relations. In doing so, Thornton

1 et al. break with old and new institutionalisms that tightly coupled logics
2 and institutions. In doing so, they allow for structures of meaning and
3 action, such as race or gender, to shape action, even if they are not specific
4 to a particular field or institution, and indeed, cross-cut them in various
5 ways. They also challenge Bourdiesian field theory, which treats fields as
6 constituted by defining and narrow logics that limit possibilities for action,
7 and which are given a priori, rather than configured through action.

8 As a general theory, Thorton et al.’s “institutional logics” perspective is
9 useful for identifying variability in logics as one of many possibilities in
10 studying action around an object or topic (and they leave open the option
11 that some forms of social action might be more homogenous than others).
12 But their framework has a major shortcoming: it is an ahistorical frame-
13 work. Different geographical and sociopolitical contexts will produce logic
14 mixes – and different cultural values that might shape when and how such
15 mixes could be deployed and how they shape action. The US form of neoli-
16 beralism, we argue, encourages the mixing of varied logics, particularly in
17 the marketplace, such that even formerly competing institutional logics have
18 become multiple, intertwined, reinforcing, and complementary. Christianity
19 and sex, for example, used to be counterposed; but today, one can find
20 organizations, manuals, discussion groups, and elaborated languages that
21 advocate that Christians not only have sex, but enjoy it in particular ways.

22 As a historically and geographically bounded set of cultural ideas and
23 practices, neoliberalism takes many forms and practices (Connell & Dados,
24 2014; Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb, 2002; Harvey, 2005). The US form
25 enhances possibilities for hybridization of field logics, not only by infusing
26 economic logics into other fields, but more generally by rewarding innova-
27 tion, creativity, and opportunity seeking. Thus, it is not simply that every-
28 thing is turned into a product; it is that entrepreneurship and its purported
29 outcome, innovation, are increasingly rewarded and viewed as the nation’s
30 economic “engine.” This is not a brand new development in the US, for **AU-5**
31 here, the “new” has always been linked to notions of nationhood and pro-
32 gress. But certainly, the speed with which it is taking place is remarkable,
33 and citizenship itself is increasingly framed in entrepreneurial terms as well
34 as citizens are called upon to be savvy “consumers” of formerly public and
35 non-economic goods such as health care and education, and pushed to
36 choose the best investments for the greatest returns to retirement, volun-
37 teerism (as human capital), education (including “continuing education”),
38 and religious practices (e.g., Jesus as a “life coach”).

39 Not only are citizens asked to take on new risks in this system, they are
also called upon continually to seek new information and to use it to

1 manage and revise extant self-investments (Rose, 2007). In terms of human
nutrition and health, “investments” are supposed to lead to a long and
3 healthy life. Becoming ill is a failure of individuals, encouraging not only
more knowledge seeking but opening up opportunities for the differentia-
5 tion of products (Metzl & Kirkland, 2010). What is striking about how
alternative nutrition purveyors sell their wares is that they do so by linking
7 claims not to sober scientific facts and dire warnings about what will hap-
pen if their advice is ignored: instead, they connect to consumers’ bodies
9 via emotion, thus using strategies of engagement far from the distance and
sobriety with which scientists normally present their work.

11 A second historically and geographically specific change, and deeply
related to US neoliberal entrepreneurialism, is the rise of Internet technolo-
13 gies. They have, first of all, lowered barriers to entry to information-related
practices such as alternative nutrition. Like other technological disruptions,
15 moreover, the Internet promotes innovation (Baron & Shane, 2008) by
changing the speed of knowledge circulation, and permitting new knowl-
17 edges to be circulated in multiple forms (e.g., videos, writing, still images,
sound). To return to the kaleidoscope metaphor, it permits the mixing of
19 more kinds of representations, combined with the rapid changeover of any
given representation (e.g., one’s computer “updates” without being asked).

21 Contemporary technologies and neoliberal logics of entrepreneurialism
mutually reinforce each other, such that the Internet increases the speed of
23 the circulation of ideas as well as goods and allows for formerly distinctive
media (film, print, still imagery) to be combined in new ways for new audi-
25 ences and consumers. These media also offer more possibilities for circulat-
ing alternative views from those that dominated former institutional logics,
27 with relatively low costs. Alternative nutrition, which is heavily dependent
on the Internet for growth, relies on this kind of mixing, made possible in
29 part by these technologies.

In addition to illuminating the value of an institutionalist approach that
31 takes neoliberal capitalism seriously, our other goal is to make an empirical
case about the changing nature of science in public life. After a period of
33 the dissipation of scientists’ monopoly on truth about the natural world in
the 1970s, science has become more “modernized” with new actors making
35 scientific claims (Hess, 2007; Moore et al., 2011). Making claims in the
name of science is no longer nearly monopolized by scientists, yet there is a
37 popularization of scientific knowledge through its linkage to common sense
realism (i.e., knowledge is true if it works or makes sense to an individual
39 through practical experience). Alternative nutrition makes individuals’
bodies the arbiters of the truthfulness of scientific claims, with significant

1 consequences for the power of science, and scientists. Alternative nutrition
2 purveyors rely heavily on metascientific analysis of extant research, depict-
3 ing themselves as charismatics who have special abilities to sort through
4 pools of knowledge, and come up with the correct interpretations. They
5 also rely on personal experience, as well, using their own bodies as signifiers
6 of truth, a move that is distinctly different than the traditional efforts of
7 scientists to keep their own bodies outside processes of truth-making,
8 unless they were disciplined through machinery such as microscopes.

9 Because most alternative nutrition purveyors have web sites that are con-
10 tinually updated, they, too, contribute to the sense that scientific knowledge
11 is unstable and that an entrepreneurial attitude – looking for ever more
12 knowledge to fine tune one’s health, a job that is never done – is the key to
13 good health. The embodiment of the practice – literally consuming things
14 that are new or labeled new – deeply instantiates neoliberal ideology and
15 contributes to the destabilization of ideas about nutrition. Thus, although
16 the alternative nutrition purveyors rely on science, they undermine some
17 key elements of its authority, namely, its relatively slow pace, the sobriety
18 and disinterestedness of its practitioners, and its emphasis on law-like
19 (i.e., stable) ideas. The unsettledness of information delivery – everyday
20 updates, new recipes – not only signifies a more porous field but constitutes
21 the instability of scientific knowledge as a durable object and makes it much
22 closer to a commodity whose value is its ability to personally affect us.

23 We turn, next, to analysis of how and why alternative nutrition emerged
24 as an expansive set of social relations, rather than as an occasional thesis
25 put forth by a charismatic figure. We show that its rise was related to the
26 conjunction of social movements and neoliberal capitalism in the US. We
27 then turn to an examination of the character of two exemplary claimants –
28 Dr. Andrew Weil, of Dr. Weil.com, and Kim Barnounian, one of the
29 authors of the vegan *Skinny Bitch* diet series.

31

33 **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE EMERGENCE OF** 34 **ALTERNATIVE NUTRITION**

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36 Before we embark on our analysis of this “field,” we want to be reflexive in
37 our treatment of the concept. Identifying a field (or a population, an insti-
38 tution, or a network) can come from extant theory or empirical studies, but
39 it can also be created by investigators to bound an object of analysis.
We could call the nutrition interlocutors that interest us part of a field of

1 “self-help,” or of a field of “biomedicine,” or any number of other fields,
2 but that fact supports one of our key ideas, which is that it is important to
3 attend to the contemporary situation in which some fields, particularly
4 those dominated by professions such as science, are made more porous and
5 malleable. We examine the way that “alternative nutrition” came to be an
6 arena of action characterized by logics drawn from distinct social processes
7 (federal eating policies and the spread of “counterculture” styles of living)
8 and most recently, by a highly unstable set of logics. We illuminate the
9 weaknesses of field theory in explaining this history, and the comparative
10 value of institutionalist approaches.

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Forming a Field?

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15 Human nutrition developed as a scientific specialty in the late nineteenth
16 century, beginning with the experiments of pioneering chemist Wilbur O.
17 Atwater. Inspired by European nutrient charts, first as a student at Yale
18 University and then as a professor at Wesleyan University, Atwater under-
19 took the measurement of macronutrients, including fats, carbohydrates,
20 and proteins, and micronutrients. In 1893, Congress allotted funding for
21 studies of human nutrition deficiencies; Atwater took advantage of this
22 funding and developed new studies of the digestibility of food and its use
23 as human body “fuel” (Maynard, 1962).

24
25 Despite this early government funding, few of Atwater’s analyses were
26 used by anyone other than other scientists, and this pattern continued in
27 the 1920s when the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
28 became a permanent home for human nutrition research in the federal gov-
29 ernment, with food composition as its central activity (Beecher, Stewart,
30 Holden, Harnly, & Wolf, 2009; Levenstein, 2003). The practical application
31 of this new knowledge began in earnest in the 1930s via the USDA Home
32 Economics Division. Led by Hazel K. Steibling, the division translated
33 scientific knowledge into practical guidelines for food relief for the poor
34 (Dupont, 2009). Given the USDA’s dual role in promoting agriculture and
35 human nutrition, not surprisingly, many of the food products and food
36 groups about which most information circulated were those overproduced
37 by US agriculture, including wheat, meat, and dairy products (Pollan,
38 2009). Dieticians, food columnists in women’s magazines, schools, and
39 women’s clubs were the major vehicles through which scientific research
was disseminated. By the 1950s, human nutrition science was a well-defined
(if not prestigious) scientific field, separate from chemistry, its original

1 home. Human nutrition programs were flourishing, particularly at Tufts
University, The Johns Hopkins University, and Columbia University. This
3 traditional arrangement of the field, with bench scientists carrying out
research funded mostly by the government, and the dissemination of this
5 knowledge via a layer of technical interlocutors, was based on the idea
that the problem of nutrition was largely a problem of applying the right
7 scientific standards to individuals.

9

11 *A Field in Formation Fragments: From Nutrition to Hunger and Back Again*

13 But in the late 1960s, human nutrition came to be a hot political topic,
decentering the technical foci and introducing new actors into the field. In
15 1967, members of the Congress of Racial Equality and other civil rights
field organizers organized an investigative trip to draw attention to the
17 problem of hunger among the largely African-American poor southerners.
The liberal Field Foundation of Chicago sponsored three members of the
19 US Congress Subcommittee on Poverty, four physicians, and a civil rights
attorney to travel through Mississippi and Alabama to document the extent
21 to which American citizens were going hungry. The trip brought them into
contact with forms of malnutrition they had only read about. In their
23 report, the doctors wrote:

25 We saw children being fed communally, by neighbors who give children scraps of food
because their parents have nothing to give. We saw children who were horribly dis-
eased, with obvious signs of malnutrition, including distended bellies and hair loss, and
27 mental lassitude and poor cognitive development. Other children had only partial
vision, and many were missing teeth or whose teeth had never come in. It was hard to
29 believe we were examining American children of the twentieth century. (quoted in
Maney, 1989, p. 8)

31 Based on this report, the Field Foundation and a group of attorneys and
poverty activists created a documentary called *Hunger in America*, which
33 aired on CBS TV during prime time to more than 10 million viewers. It
used graphic footage and doctors’ testimony rather than the cold calculus
35 of numbers to convey its message. The next day, Congress was flooded
with calls from outraged citizens who demanded that something be done
37 about the problem. A new subcommittee, the Senate Select Subcommittee
on Nutrition and Human Needs (SSCNHN), was quickly organized by
39 Agriculture Committee members Senator George McGovern (D-SD) and
Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) (Kotz, 1971; Maney, 1989).

1 The Field Foundation trip and the subsequent video placed food back
on the nation's *political* agenda for the first time since the Great
3 Depression, and it included a role for Congress as a mediator of political
and scientific claims and concerns. The Senate Subcommittee took testi-
5 mony from civil rights workers, nutrition scientists, government employees,
and many others (although only one poor person was ever asked to speak
7 in the committee's nine-year history), seeking to understand why so many
people had too little to eat and why the food that they did have – some-
9 times via transfer programs like the USDA's surplus food programs – was
of such poor quality that it produced hunger and malnutrition. This
11 committee's work was instrumental in generating an extraordinary set of
policies to address the problem of too little money and too little food,
13 including increases in food stamps and the establishment of school break-
fast programs. The human nutrition problem now included the problem of
15 too little money, too little food, and too little nutritious food (Eisinger,
1998; Maney, 1989).

17 Like other scientists who came to participate in public political debates
in the 1960s and 1970s (Moore, 2008), some nutrition scientists were espe-
19 cially eager to join the debate and discussion, and to seek new ways to
address the nutrition needs of the poor. Joan Gussow of Columbia
21 University, Neville Scrimshaw of Tufts University, and especially, Jean
Mayer of Harvard, and later Tufts, University were particularly important.
23 Mayer chaired the 1969 White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and
Health that President Nixon organized after *Hunger in America*, and was
25 influential in getting members of Congress to support antihunger programs.

Field theorists might treat this participation strictly in terms of competi-
27 tion with others in the field of human nutrition, as an effort to gain status
and power over other scientist competitors. But such a view provides a
rather thin conception of human motivation and has little place for any-
29 thing like sympathy. While we do not have any direct evidence of the
thoughts and emotions of actors like these but neither do we hold reductionist
31 assumptions about motivations. Certainly other evidence suggests
that these kinds of actions are motivated by more than professional
33 advancement or expectations of massive field change; indeed, for scientists,
participation in public political debates may be harmful to them, leaving
35 the Bourdieusian field analyst with few tools, save perhaps that actors
made an incorrect reading of the field or lacked skill (McAdam & Fligstein,
37 2012) to explain this kind of action. The field concept, and the notion of
39 "habitus" may therefore be limited, given their conceptualization of how
social life is ordered and how actors participate in it.

1 When actors undertake projects that defy standard field logics, some
 3 hope that others will follow suit, but nonetheless many still participate
 5 in these kinds of actions despite considerable professional and personal
 7 costs (Moore, 1996). Although to some degree Bourdieusian field theory
 9 can accommodate the participation of individuals in multiple fields (and
 11 the various types of capital that they acquire and convert across fields),
 13 the concepts of field-based capital and habitus may be too restrictive.
 15 Institutionalist theory permits actors to have multiple motivations
 17 (Clemens, 1997; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Sarasvathan, Dew, & Ventresca,
 19 2009; Thornton et al., 2012), and it enables the *discovery* of interests through
 21 action. The participation of high-profile nutritionists like Gussow, Mayer,
 and Scrimshaw opened up new possibilities for action around human nutri-
 tion, making the problem of nutrition for the poor a robust subject of study
 at Tufts and other universities (Maney, 1989). It did not displace bench
 science relating to the chemistry and biology of human nutrition generally
 as the engine of the field, but it did help to encourage many other nutrition
 scientists to participate in a variety of public political debates over nutrition.
 This “social movementization of professions” (Moore, 2008) was common
 the 1970s, offering what Hess might call an “alternative” pathway for
 professionals.

23 *Neoliberalism and the Informationalization and Personalization of*
 25 *American Dietary Advice*

27 This moment of attention to nutrition as a political and economic problem
 29 of poverty was short lived. By 1977, a rather extraordinary field shift had
 31 taken place: the SSCNHN speakers had little to say about the problem of
 33 too little to eat and much more to say about the health consequences of *too*
 35 *much* food and too much of particular kinds of foods for all Americans.
 37 The new assumption about the social problem of nutrition was that
 39 Americans had enough money but had *deficits of information* about what
 to eat. Moreover, the new target of eating policy was the citizen at risk of
 cancer and heart disease, not of malnutrition (Nestle, 1993). In January of
 1977, the SSCNHN announced the release of a new set of human nutrition
 guidelines, *Dietary Goals for the United States*, the first that had been
 produced in the US since the *Basic 4* guidelines release in 1955 (SSCNHN,
 1977). For the first time, federal guidelines called upon Americans to eat
less of some things, including salt, sugar, and fat, and to *increase* their
 intake of other foods. This new balancing act was distinctly different from

1 what was encapsulated in earlier guidelines, such as the 1956 *Basic 4* or the
2 1943 *US Needs Us Strong* guidelines, which both encouraged a foundational
3 diet with minimum servings of each kind of food. In 1979, the American
4 Society of Clinical Nutrition produced another report, sponsored by the
5 Surgeon General's Office, which drew similar conclusions about the
6 American diet, asking Americans to undertake an assortment of monitoring
7 activities to generate health. The new guidelines were different than earlier
8 guidelines for a second reason, too: the problems they were supposed
9 to solve went beyond chronic illnesses and included lassitude in schools,
10 problematic family life, dental problems, low birth weight, and a range of
11 other ideas. In turn, the ideas were advanced by policy entrepreneurs who
12 testified before Congress or who had influence in the USDA, whose charge
13 it was to create the guidelines. The federal human nutrition research agenda
14 turned quickly toward studies of nutrition for health. In 1977, a report by
15 the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) – requested by Senator
16 Hubert Humphrey (D-MN) and written by a diverse group of blue-ribbon
17 scientists, health advocates, economists, and dieticians – declared that
18 American nutrition research had done a dismal job of identifying the links
19 between eating and diseases, and recommended increased funding (GAO,
20 1978).

21 The 1977 guidelines – fully fleshed out for the public in the 1989
22 *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* – are impor-
23 tant because they are mark a critical shift in the imagined user of the guide-
24 lines. Earlier guidelines presumed that a woman was cooking for a family.
25 But the new guidelines presumed an “average” individual in need of infor-
26 mation, not money. Furthermore, the language of the new guidelines
27 included new economic metaphors; for example, “consumers” were to
28 modify what they purchased and what they ate. A new law required that the
29 guidelines be updated every ten years, based on the latest research, a law
30 that some critics have said “confuses” publics, because the basic ideas about
31 what is healthy to eat are neither complex nor novel (Nestle, 2007).

Of course, these debates about nutrition cannot be understood without
33 reference to the broader set of shifts in how disease was conceptualized and
34 how people came to be ill. As Brandt (1997) argues, by the early 1970s an
35 emerging critique of modern biomedicine and medical technology centered
36 attention on the question of responsibility for disease and its prevention.
37 According to influential economic conservatives such as John Knowles of
38 Rockefeller Foundation, there were diminishing returns from technology
39 and tertiary care; instead, the failure was in the prevention of disease.
The goal of health and longevity, in Knowles' view, rested firmly with

1 individuals, who in the previous decades had forfeited their health with an
"orgy" of greed, avarice, and overeating, the "diseases of affluence."
3 Knowles called for a return to the Puritan values of self-discipline and moral
restraint. Eager to reduce the "dole" implicit in rising health expenditures,
5 Knowles suggested that the "idea of a 'right' to health should be replaced
by the idea of an individual moral obligation to be preserver of one's own
7 health ... a public duty if you will" (quoted in Brandt, 1997, p. 90). Disease,
in other words, was no longer a random event but a failure to take precau-
9 tions against publicly defined risks. By the 1970s, Knowles' ideas had
reached the mainstream: in 1978, Joseph Califano, Director of Health and
11 Human Services, said, "We are killing ourselves by our own careless habits"
(Brandt, 1997, p. 90). What these habits were would have to be unpacked
13 not only by scientists, but by the critics of mainstream nutrition.

15

Individuation and Personalization with a Smile: Nutrition as Lifestyle

17

The flourishing of the counterculture in the US emerged in parallel
19 with these events. Rising prosperity made it possible for explorations of self,
aesthetics, and sexuality, normally available mainly to the bourgeoisie
21 (i.e., "bohemians") to be undertaken by a much wider variety of people.
One of the most important features of this period was the flourishing of
23 scientific forms of self-fulfillment, whose apotheosis was what came to be
known as the Human Potential Movement (HPM) centered at the Esalen
25 Institute in California. The secular answer to spiritual quests, it was inspired
by psychologists Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May. The
27 HPM saw endless potential in human beings for creativity and self-
expression, after their basic needs were met, and encouraged people to use
29 quasi-scientific principles to improve their lives (Goldman, 2012; Puttick,
2004).

31 The revolutionary aspect of the HPM and of the broader cultural ethos
of "loosening" – ridding oneself of the strictures of convention – was the
33 new form that the relationship between experts and citizens took (Binkley,
2007). At least, "loosening" was advice given to men; for women, "loosen-
35 ess" in mind and body has significant social consequences, an issue that is
not taken up by most analysts of this period. At the end of a particularly
37 technocratic era in American history, universalistic scientific advice, deliv-
ered from an Archimedean point of nowhere and everywhere, was discred-
39 ited. Science remained a powerful cultural and political tool, but scientists
qua scientists had been discredited as objective purveyors of scientific

1 information. Scientific authority and scientific claims had become unbound
3 from each other (Moore, 2008). The new form through which scientific
5 claims were delivered was personalistic – the speaker and the recipient
7 were presumed to have a certain kind of intimacy (Binkley, 2007; Kripal,
9 2007). Thus, expertise in the HPM was delivered not in universalistic
11 terms, but through people with personalities, gurus whose charisma and
13 experience were the filters for the production and assessment of scientific
knowledge. As scientists’ broad claims to scientific authority were eroding
(Moore, 2008), there was an expansion of “experts” and expertise in culture,
such that there was a widening number of scientific claims via populist
projects such as retreats, special courses, and classes – even as these pur-
veyors of knowledge were often portraying themselves as “anti-experts”
(see also Lave, this volume).

15 In the alternative health field *wellness* came to dominate discourses and
17 practices. Originally developed in the 1950s, its major proponent, James
19 Dunn, described wellness as follows:

17 [A]n integrated method of functioning which is oriented toward maximizing the
19 potential of which the individual is capable. It requires that the individual maintain a
21 continuum of balance and purposeful direction within the environment where he is
functioning. (Dunn, 1961, pp. 4–5; quoted in Miller, 2005)

21 As part of this shift, exercise came to be seen as both important for mental
23 and physical “well-being” but also as a pleasurable individual activity.
25 Running, which grew enormously in its popularity during the 1970s, is
27 perhaps the quintessential. The New York Marathon, for example, had 300
29 runners in 1972; in 1979, more than 3,000 participated in the race
(Whorton, 1982, p. 180). The popularity of Kenneth Cooper’s concept of
“aerobic exercise,” introduced in his 1968 book of the same name, helped to
fuel this rise (Cooper, 1968).

31 Perhaps even more significant for understanding the conjoining of
33 science, pleasure, and the body was the development of scientific methods
of personally tracking one’s exercise. Recording distances, times, and
35 “personal bests” became commonplace in books about sports pursued for
fitness. Jim Fixx’s *The Complete Book of Running* (1977), for example,
37 advocated such record keeping, and so, too, did other competing running
books. Cooper’s book told readers that regular exercise was critical and
39 specified the frequencies with which people should engage in it. All manner
of books appear on other individual level sports, with instructions on
how to engage in them. Colin Fletcher’s *The Complete Walker* (1971), for
example, told readers how to outfit themselves and stay alive and well on

1 extended backpacking trips, formalizing and adventure into the wild with
advice on how to experience nature safely, rather than to be surprised by it.
3 Gyms, which used to be spaces for working-class men who boxed or were
part of the esoteric culture of bodybuilding, attracted a new, middle-class
5 (and at first largely male) membership, who participated in bodybuilding
using not just free weights but “weight” machines, as individualized prac-
7 tice that was part of an overall “fitness” regime. Gyms served as training
places for the middle classes to learn how to move their bodies to “burn
9 calories” and other outputs that were now expected to take up Americans’
leisure time (Maguire, 2008).

11

13 *Counterculture Nutrition as Politics: The Challenge to Industrial Food*

15 Challenges to the industrial food system from the counterculture took a
similar form. Some Americans came to believe that urban and modern life,
17 including food, were too corrupt and alienating, and they went “back to the
land” to raise their own food. Critiques of food as “plastic,” chemical-laden,
19 and non-nutritious became more commonplace. Environmentalists decried
the effects of animal grazing on land, and ethical concerns for animals cre-
21 ated a surge in vegetarianism. Some of these concerns were organized into
food co-ops, but these tended to be short lived (Belasco, 2006). A particular
23 form of feminist nutrition emerged during this time, with the publication of
Laurel’s Kitchen in 1976 by three Bay Area mothers and wives. A lifestyle
25 guide as well as a cookbook – it was subtitled “a handbook” – the authors
advocated vegetarianism and home cooking in a communal context. Food
27 was as much about style of living as it was about the proper diet to acquire
health, and women were to be the leaders of a new food movement, starting
29 in their kitchens (Robertson, Flinders, & Godfrey, 1976).

Between 1970 and the early 1980s, then, the science of human nutrition
31 in the US, long a cozy world of research scientists focused on minimums
and recommendations for citizens who were not ill, began to shift gears.
33 New research emphases were on nutrition for health, and new audiences
for that knowledge were set in place by the new nutrition guidelines
35 (which were taught in schools), and by a counterculture that viewed food
production and eating as matters of morality and politics. One of the most
37 prominent civil society food organizations, The Center for Science in the
Public Interest, founded in 1971, became exclusively focused on problems
39 of nutrition and highly visible in numerous food debates in the 1980s and
1990s. The problems of the poor had largely faded from view by the time

1 that Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980, but there was a new
2 world of attention to preventing illness and its connection to styles of
3 living.

4 This set of shifts is not the result of an easily identified event, but the
5 evolution of a field as a result of economic interests of the state and other
6 actors, the development of a sense of civic participation among nutrition
7 scientists and nutrition NGOs like the Center for Science in the Public
8 Interest, and new audiences for particular kinds of lifestyle-related eating
9 and consuming knowledge that fell outside the scientific frameworks
10 offered by the government. They were unquestionably shaped by a shift in
11 ideologies away from collective problems and solutions to individual harms
12 and solutions, a framework methodically pursued by Ronald Reagan dur-
13 ing his Presidency, and by the socialization of some nutrition scientists,
14 who came to look for new ways to use nutrition knowledge to address
15 social problems. Civil society groups, and publics not organized, sought
16 alternatives to supermarket-based industrial food unthinkingly consumed.
17 Not surprisingly, food companies began to label their food as “healthy”
18 and “nutritious,” carrying out their own research – but more often, draw-
19 ing on other scientific work (Schleifer, 2013) – and creating a cacophony
20 of views about the right way to eat. The “field” came to be even more
21 complex and diffuse in the 1980s, as a result of innovations in advertising
22 and publishing – the development of numerical “lists” on covers and very
23 short pieces of copy.

25

27 **BETWIXT AND BETWEEN: NEOLIBERALISM, 28 SCIENCE, AND THE PLEASURE OF BODY DISCIPLINE**

29

30 In the 1980s, the number of health and fitness magazines published in the
31 US surged; in 1975, there were five of them, aside from bodybuilding maga-
32 zines, dominated by the Rodale Press’ *Prevention*. *Prevention* was formerly
33 a staid journal giving advice less to counterculturalists than to people inter-
34 ested in their health for religious reasons, for treating illnesses, or because
35 it was good for the land. With low circulation before 1970, the magazine
36 got a boost from the counterculture interest in alternative food. Yet by
37 1980, in *Prevention* (then and now the best-selling health magazine in the
38 US and the world) stories about neoliberal investment and ownership of
39 one’s body and health became prominent. Articles such as “Subtracting
additives multiplies your health account” (January 1981, p. 174) and

1 "Now's there's an owner's manual for the most valuable thing you own
[your body]" (June 1980, p. 101) were typical. This investment practice
3 came with a call for combinatorial and numericized nutrition: taking ideas,
commodities, and foods, and uniquely interpreting them. In "The surge
5 to self-care," (December 1982), editor Robert Rodale wrote an extensive
article on the need to seek out and apply a variety of different ideas in
7 order to achieve optimum health.

9 But books and magazines and other written sources are only the tip of the self-care
information iceberg. Other lay people are an important source of knowledge and sup-
port. It is important to realize that self-care, while it may sound at first like something
11 you only do yourself, is really a very social activity. (p. 22)

13 Rodale urged readers to frequent self-help groups and to produce and
distribute their own ideas about "self-care."

15 In 1982, *Prevention* and nearly every other health and nutrition maga-
zine in the US began to offer information in a new way: as numbered lists
17 and quizzes. Numericizing ideas, as Espeland and Stevens (1998) have
shown, has the effect of allowing ideas to be more easily transposable and
19 transferrable. Redacted from sources, they are portable and fungible.
Articles with titles such as "Best and worst diet ideas," (January 1985a),
21 "See if you need Vitamin C" (February 1985b), and "Eight reasons you
might be going bald" (March 1986) proliferated in the 1980s, calling on
23 readers continually to take bits and pieces of scientific claims via lists of
various kinds and to apply them to their own bodies and lives, authoring
25 their own bodily experiences and outcomes with the scientific commodities
delivered to them. Since the 1990s, the Internet has work synergistically
27 with this process, allowing new bits of information to be created and
circulated instantly.

AU:6

29 In the contemporary period, the major players in the field of human
nutrition are the federal government, food manufacturers and those who
31 supply their ingredients (seeds, fertilizers, commodities, etc.), nutrition
scientists employed by universities, and interlocutors who carry out what
33 we call meta-analysis of scientific research. The federal government creates
standards for human nutrition that directly shape what institutionalized
35 groups, such as children and prisoners eat, and it sets voluntary guidelines
for what Americans should eat (The Food Pyramid, for example). One of
37 its most important functions is as a gatekeeper for ingredients, limiting or
allowing additives, chemically modified forms of seeds, and limiting the
39 volume of imported foods, all strongly influenced by corporations
(Bittman, 2008; Nestle, 2007; Pollan, 2007, 2009). In general the field of

1 nutrition has become more fragmented, in part because the problems to be
2 solved morph quite quickly, as researchers redefine nutritional problems on
3 a regular basis, and collaborate across widely dispersed networks (Penders,
4 2010).

5 Arguably, among the most critical features of American nutrition are
6 industrial chemicals and processing. Increasingly convincing evidence is
7 linking illnesses to plastic additives like Bisphenol A and other endocrine
8 disruptors (Guthman, 2011), but these issues and the heavily industry-
9 influenced farm bill are hardly discussed publicly, even by stalwart critics of
10 the US food system like Marion Nestle (2007) and Michael Pollan (2007,
11 2009). The obfuscation of what foods are nutritious is not simply a function
12 of actions of food manufacturers who promise endless health benefits from
13 highly processed products at the same time they pursued chemicalized food
14 production. The voices of individual counterweights such as Nestle, Pollan,
15 and the *New York Times*-recipe-columnist-turned-critic-of-agriculture Mark
16 Bittmann (2008), arguably the three most influential civil society critics of
17 the US food system, tend to be lost among the noise of the many who profer
18 nutrition advice, because of the proliferation and rapid development of
19 highly visible diets promising health and wellness.

20 All three critics recognize this problem, but blame the government and
21 manufacturers rather than the very “field” itself has low barriers to entry,
22 rapid knowledge distribution, an orientation toward food as a health
23 product and nutrition as an investment, and in many cases, the offer of
24 alternative nutrition advice through charisma rather than sobriety and
25 rational discipline. It is difficult to see how it might be possible to occupy a
26 center position in the field of alternative nutrition, simply because there
27 are an enormous number of entrants, the materials they have to work with
28 (i.e., science-as-commodity, forms of affect, the Internet, calls for endless
29 investments in the self) are themselves destabilizing. Marion Nestle (2007)
30 comes closest to recognizing the problem through her relentless critiques of
31 the regular production of new federal guidelines for nutrition. Although
32 there is an embryonic alternative food movement in this country, it is too
33 heavily focused on the lifestyle issues of the middle class rather than the
34 reform of the system itself or the problems of the 49 million Americans who
35 are food insecure. Instead, their problems are frequently reduced to merely
36 problems of “food deserts,” rather than to what they actually are: money
37 deserts (Alkon et al., 2013).

38 If alternative nutrition is an objective field, as the logic of Bourdieusian
39 field analysis would insist, it should be possible to identify the centers of
40 power that set the rules of the game, the edges of the field, the contenders

1 for power, and common strategies of action. It would be difficult to do any
2 of that with regard to alternative nutrition in the US, save for identifying
3 logics. Institutionalism best captures the multiple motivations and interpretations,
4 creativity in using codes and rules, and wide variation in the stability of
5 logics of action around particular social objects. Rather than treating the
6 arenas of action under study as objective, already-structured, and heavily
7 coercive, this approach presumes that in most systems of meaning and power,
8 there are leaks, weaknesses, failures, and variations. Importantly, by
9 avoiding attention only to the dominant logics, it can help to see patterns
10 of variation and instability (Adams, Clemens & Orloff, 2010; Clemens, 1997;
11 DiMaggio, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Moore, 2008; Schneiberg, 2012).

AU:7

12 To illuminate the value of this approach for capturing the key qualities
13 of contemporary alternative nutrition provision and its variations, we
14 examine commonalities and differences in two popular alternative diets:
15 Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D., and the veganism presented by the *Skinny Bitch*
16 franchise. We examine the convergence of lifestyle, science, and neoliberalism
17 in them, and we show that “styles of living” including elements that are
18 not normally considered in studies that assume just one field logic, are
19 important in explaining what they offer. We also attend to the evidence
20 from web sites, because that technology helps produce the phenomenology
21 of self, scientific, and field instability.

22

23
24
25 *Andrew Weil, M.D.: Guru, Scientist, Investor*

26
27 Dr. Andrew Weil is a leading figure in the holistic health movement and a
28 major force behind the institutionalization of integrative medicine, which
29 promotes alternative therapies as complementary to conventional medicine.
30 Weil earned his A.B. and M.D. at Harvard University. As an undergraduate
31 in biology he was influenced by the work of the Harvard Psilocybin Project
32 conducted by Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (Lattin, 2010), and he wrote
33 his thesis on the psychoactive properties of nutmeg. After graduating from
34 Harvard Medical School, Weil interned at Mt. Zion Hospital in San Francisco
35 before spending a year at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
36 doing drug research. He quit the NIMH after a year, citing the political
37 climate at the time and the subsequent resistance to his marijuana research.
38 Frustrated with the biomedical establishment, Weil began to explore
39 shamanistic healing and started practicing yoga, vegetarianism, and meditation.
He was a fellow at the Institute of Current

1 World Affairs from 1971 to 1975, traveling the world exploring medicinal
plants and indigenous systems of disease treatment. He did similar work
3 while he served on the research staff of the Harvard Botanical Museum
from 1971 to 1984 (Lattin, 2010).

5 Weil's early work, such as *The Natural Mind: An Investigation of Drugs
and the Higher Consciousness* (1998[1972]), included criticisms of American
7 drug policy and explored the effects of drugs on human consciousness.
Not until the 1983 publication of *Health and Healing: Understanding
9 Conventional and Alternative Medicine* did Weil introduce himself to the
public as a health and healing guru. By this time he had already established
11 a general medical practice and was a part-time clinical faculty member at
the University of Arizona, College of Medicine. In 1994, Weil established
13 the Center for Integrative Medicine at the university, where he is still the
director, Professor of Medicine and Public Health, and the Jones-Lovell
15 Endowed Chair in Integrative Rheumatology. Weil has also played major
roles in two evidenced-based, peer-reviewed academic journals that explore
17 holistic health practices, including *The Journal of Complementary and
Alternative Medicine* and the *Quarterly Journal Integrative Medicine*.

19 Today, Weil has a vast media empire that includes CDs, DVDs, a com-
plex web site, television specials, and ten national best-selling books. His
21 most recent book is a cookbook, *True Food: Seasonal, Sustainable, Simple,
Pure* (2012), with recipes based on his "anti-inflammatory diet" developed
23 for his restaurant chain, True Food Kitchens ("globally inspired cuisine"),
with six locations in Arizona, California, and Colorado. In addition, Weil
25 has his own line of supplements and a proprietary "vitamin advising"
online tool to help individual consumers choose the best combination of
27 supplemental vitamins and oils. There is a "Weil by Dansk" line of kitchen
appliances, Dr. Andrew Weil Integrative Footwear, and Weil endorsements
29 of various products including granola bars, salmon sausage patties,
skincare products, and the complete line of products from Lucina Italian
31 Organics. Weil is also the Director of Integrative Health and Healing
at Miraval Resort, a luxury retreat and spa in Arizona, which hosts
33 the Andrew Weil, M.D. Integrative Wellness Program. The program
"incorporates the principles of integrative medicine, lifestyle diagnostic
35 tools, evidence-based methodologies and in-depth consultation to plot your
optimal lifestyle and wellness path" (Miraval Resorts, n.d.).

37 Weil's signature concept is *optimum health*, which takes into account
the interplay of spiritual, physical, and social well-being. Weil uses words
39 like wholeness, balance, and resilience to describe what health is. Helping
people to improve nutrition is thus only one goal of his work; he also

1 advocates cultivating psychological states, such as those in his book titles,
2 including “spontaneous happiness,” “spontaneous healing,” “emotional
3 well-being.” Like some versions of the alternative food movement of the
4 1970s, the interplay of eating and spiritual and psychological states is
5 important, but here the knowledge is for sale in a big way: Weil’s company,
6 Weil Lifestyle, LLC, oversees nearly a million dollars of revenue each year
7 and supports the non-profit Weil Foundation (Zoom Company
8 Information, 2014). Each month, his web site delivers more than fourteen-
9 million free email messages and receives more than eight-million page
10 views. His books have sold more than ten million copies, and his partner-
11 ships are part of his company’s goal to distribute “distinctive natural health
12 products and services selected and designed by Dr. Weil” (Weil, 2013a).

13 Dr. Weil’s major dietary focus is on minimizing inflammation because of
14 its relationship to disease. He has his own anti-inflammatory food pyramid
15 to provide guidance to those wanting to achieve optimum health. According
16 to Weil:

17
18 Following an anti-inflammatory diet can help counteract the chronic inflammation that
19 is a root cause of many serious diseases, including those that become more frequent as
20 people age. It is a way of selecting and preparing foods based on science that can help
21 people achieve and maintain optimum health over their lifetime. (Weil, 2013b)

22 Some of the diseases that Weil links to chronic inflammation include cardi-
23 ovascular disease, various cancers, and neurodegenerative diseases.

24 Weil’s food pyramid, loosely based on the Mediterranean diet, empha-
25 sizes fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes and whole grains, and eliminating
26 processed and refined foods. Weil’s food pyramid also differs from most
27 food pyramid conceptualizations by including independent categories for
28 fish and seafood, healthy fats (olive oil, nuts, seeds), whole soy foods,
29 cooked Asian mushrooms (“unlimited amounts”), healthy herbs and spices
30 (“unlimited amounts”), tea, supplements, red wine, and healthy sweets. He
31 promotes eating a wide variety of foods in order to cover one’s nutritional
32 bases and ensure that one is not getting too much of anything harmful
33 (Weil, 2013b). Such omnivorousness, however, also helps sales among alter-
34 native nutrition followers, just as health magazines’ encouragement to “eat
35 this, not that,” emphasizes ongoing learning and consumption of value-
36 added products (Zinczenko & Goulding, 2012).

37 Weil’s claims to authority are based in part on his medical background,
38 although he does not draw directly on his own research. Each day he
39 answers a different question, offering his opinion using a combination of
40 his own views and sorting through the medical research. Weil, like many

1 other alternative diet purveyors, uses a special kind of charisma to convey
 2 special knowledge and capacities to sort the scientific wheat from the chaff
 3 so to speak. Rarely is the information delivered on the basis of purely
 4 scientific reasoning; in many cases, he uses his personal experience to justify
 5 his answer. For example, in answer to whether black pepper is poisonous,
 6 Weil intersperses scientific evidence and his own eating habits:

7

8 I generally don't let waiters grind their pepper mills over my food at restaurants until I
 9 taste it first. For a hot spice, I prefer red pepper, which comes from a different plant
 10 (*Capsicum spp.*), doesn't have any natural carcinogenic activity, has a long history of
 11 medicinal use, and provides healthful carotenoids. It can help lower cholesterol and sti-
 12 mulate circulation, and can actually help heal the lining of the stomach. (Weil, 2006)

13 The relationship between himself as an entrepreneur, a guru, and a bio-
 14 medical researcher is so entwined in his site's design, the products for sale,
 15 and in the messages that are sent out daily that it is difficult to specifically
 16 identify the main source of his authority or which logics are operating at
 17 any given moment. He moves easily among entrepreneur, spiritual guru and
 18 personal guide, and biomedical scientist in ways that undermine the idea of
 19 the scientist as sober and distant from their own body and of science as slow
 20 and conservative. He does use the logics of science, but the daily web
 21 updates and email messages are akin to advertisements that are seen on
 22 practically every site on the internet, enticing us to regularly rethink our
 23 future (Zukin, 2008) by updating some aspect of our style of living. (The
 24 message-a-day is now ubiquitous; the USDA's Food and Nutrition
 25 Information Center issues an email each day, providing diverse bits of infor-
 26 mation ranging from nutrition research, changes in law, conferences, and
 27 policies (fnic.nal.usda.gov). There is no rest for the neoliberal citizen (who
 28 has a computer or a smartphone): updating is not optional, but it can be
 29 made more palatable with spiritual direction and the right products.

31

Skinny, Bitchy, and Vegan

33

34 In striking contrast to Dr. Weil, whose approach combines a guru-like
 35 cheery optimism with scientific credentials and offers something for every-
 36 one, the *Skinny Bitch* franchise offers its nutritional, exercise, and lifestyle
 37 advice with a tone that is caustic, often demeaning, and vulgar. For exam-
 38 ple, founders Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin believe that caffeine
 39 addiction is "pathetic" and taunt readers who may want to include dairy
 products in the diet. To them, the formula is simple: "Healthy = skinny.

1 Unhealthy=fat.” Not only is the desire for meat and dairy products
2 worthy of shame, so too is being fat, regardless of diet. Using the caustic
3 language of humiliation, they refer to being fat as “bloated fat-pig syn-
4 drome” (Freedman & Barnouin, 2005, p. 72). Courage and discipline are
5 necessary to participate in their style of living, with high costs for those
6 who are too weak to follow through (and the primary reason for failure to
7 follow through is weakness). This moral call is emblematic of one broader
8 trend in diet and health advice: the return to discipline and toughness as
9 the basis of success. Exercise “boot camps,” humili-tainment programs
10 such as *The Biggest Loser* that make contestants run through military-style
11 training regimes (their web site, www.biggestloser.com, urges viewers to
12 lose weight through a series of “personal,” “daily,” and “team” challenges),
13 and the advice of celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow, who exercises for two
14 hours each day and urges her followers not to “be lazy,” use similar tropes
15 (Dorment, n.d.). Emotional brutality is a poor motivator unless people
16 have options (Rejali, 2009), but paired with “opportunities” for redemption
17 and salvation, it is more powerful (Moore, 2013). By following the *Skinny*
18 *Bitch* style of living, women can acquire sassiness, confidence, a sense of
19 rebelliousness, and ultimately, the admiration of others but especially of
20 other women. Like other forms of neoliberal advertising that pair economic
21 risk taking with images of happy people, *Skinny Bitch* offers the prospect
22 of being a winner in the competition for health and social admiration. And
23 indeed, they do not offer this as a system in which everyone wins. They
24 draw on a particular form of neoliberal economic logic: winner-take-all,
25 and social shame for the losers (Moore, 2013).

Like Dr. Weil, Barnouin makes claims about her formal credentials. The
27 book jacket notes that she has a “Masters of Science in Holistic Nutrition”
28 (from the non-accredited and now-closed Clayton College of Natural
29 Health). Freedman complements Barnouin by characterizing herself as “a
30 self-taught know-it-all,” emphasizing her status, like Weil, as an outsider to
31 the establishment, and placing value on personalism. Although all their
32 scientific claims are presented with citations, the sources are typically
33 articles that come from a news source such as the *New York Times* or from
34 a vegetarian or vegan advocacy organization such as NotMilk.com. Other
35 nutritional claims are traced back to John Robbins’ *Diet for a New*
36 *America* (1987), Harvey and Marilyn Diamond’s *Fit for Life* (1985), articles
37 produced by Andrew Weil and associates and by the Center for Science in
38 the Public Interest. The authors are twice-removed from the scientific
39 claims they put forth; that is, their collective scientific credentials are weak,
and they rarely cite scientific research directly. Similarly, the basis of their

1 self-help advice draws not on citations to psychology research directly, but
2 on the works of popularizers such as Dr. Wayne Dyer (Ed.D.) and
3 Anthony Robbins (who lacks formal scientific credentials).

4 In making scientific claims, Freedman and Barnouin's method is to
5 emphasize the chemical properties of food, chemical additives, and chemi-
6 cal reactions that may occur in the body during consumption. They then
7 link these chemicals to a litany of diseases and disorders. For example, they
8 compile a partial list of chemicals that can be found in meat and dairy pro-
9 ducts, including benzene hexachloride (BHC), chlordane, dichlorodiphenyl-
10 trichloroethane (DDT), dieldrin, dioxin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene
11 (HCB), and lindane. In the next sentence they claim: "Perhaps that is why
12 eating 'meat' has been linked to obesity; cancer; liver, kidney, lung, and
13 reproductive disorders; birth defects; miscarriages; and nervous system dis-
14 orders" (p. 110). Similarly, returning to the example of coffee, Freedman
15 and Barnouin claim that human bodies produce fat cells "in order to keep
16 the acid away from your organs." Therefore, "coffee equals fat cells"
17 (p. 113; here, the authors cite the research of another Clayton College of
18 Natural Health alumni, Robert O. Young). To bolster their claims, they
19 sometimes list the research institutions where these studies were conducted,
20 particularly if they are Ivy League institutions.

21 In the tradition of Robert Owen (1771–1858) and like contemporaries
22 Anna Lappé (*Diet for a Hot Planet*) and Marion Nestle, Freedman and
23 Barnouin link changes in one's diet to broader social critique. They dedi-
24 cate a chapter, "Have No Faith: Governmental Agencies Don't Give a Shit
25 about Your Health," to documenting failures of governmental agencies in
26 regulating the food industry. The chapter uses a familiar trope among food
27 activists: the revolving door between industry and the federal agencies that
28 regulate them, specifically, the USDA, the FDA, and the EPA. They mix
29 together metascientific and social justice analysis in other chapters such as
30 "The Dead, Rotting, Decomposing Flesh Diet," "The Dairy Disaster," and
31 "You Are What You Eat." These chapters provide evidence from animal
32 rights and advocacy groups and on the unsanitary and cruel conditions of
33 meat and dairy production and the effects of these foods of health. They
34 also use scientific research to support their claim that animals are "intelli-
35 gent, emotional, social creatures" (p. 151). The animal victims are thus not
36 accountable for their own state, unlike the presumably fat and unhealthy
37 humans who eat them and their byproducts. In contrast to Weil's
38 approach, Freedman and Barnouin use the political logic of many social
39 movements, which is to gain adherents by making appeals to victimhood
40 with possibility of rebirth through action (Polletta, 2009).

1 The title *Skinny Bitch* targets women readers; in contrast, *Skinny*
2 *Bastard: A Kick in the Ass for Real Men Who Want to Stop Being Fat and*
3 *Start Being Buff* (2009) is an effort to make their diet appeal to presumed
4 male vanity and values. The scientific and moral claims are nearly identical
5 to the sister book, and the rhetoric similarly includes vulgar insults as moti-
6 vation. In the introduction, Freedman and Barnouin draw on a gendered
7 logic to argue that men do not want to be skinny, but they want to be
8 “buff,” – the cheeky popular referent for a fit physique, rather than the
9 older “muscular” or “lean.” But they emphasize that this is for “real men”
10 and include one original chapter, titled “No Girls Allowed.” This chapter
11 focuses heart disease, erectile dysfunction, and having “the right amount”
12 of testosterone. If male readers are not convinced to adopt a vegan diet,
13 the authors then appeal to men’s sports prowess with claims of a vegan diet
14 as the ultimate diet for “athletes,” complete with a list of Olympic and pro-
15 fessional athletes who ate vegetarian and vegan diets (p. 18). But appeals to
16 “performance” aside, by focusing on being “buff,” they call attention to a
17 central goal of their enterprise – making oneself worthy of others’ gaze
18 and gaining admiration for that.

19 The entrepreneurial logic of this approach is evident in a chapter near
20 the end of both *Skinny* books. These chapters are intended to help the
21 reader get motivated and begin setting goals. It covers the “chemical addic-
22 tions” many have to processed foods and cheese and how to manipulate
23 hormone levels to speed up your metabolism. The authors then list all of
24 the vitamins and supplements that are important to consider in a diet, such
25 as calcium, folic acid, iron, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids, potassium, B
26 vitamins, vitamins C, D, and E, and zinc. Followed by the chapter “Let’s
27 Eat,” readers are provided lists of processed organic, vegan foods, orga-
28 nized according to meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and alphabetically by
29 the manufacturer’s brand name. Many of these brands are chosen based on
30 the authors’ testimonies of the items they liked, and are paralleled by simi-
31 lar endorsements peppered throughout the books, including nods to Frey
32 Vineyards organic wine, Eddie’s Spaghetti, and Westbrae’s organic beans
33 and whole grain pastas.

35

37 **DISCUSSION: INSTITUTIONAL NEOLIBERALISM**

39 A Venn diagram of the field logics on which the *Skinny* authors and
Dr. Weil draw would include (moral and material) economy, biosciences,

1 and personal experience. That Freedman and Bartounin also draw on
logics of gender to make their case, however, fits uneasily into theories of
3 “field” logics. It is worth noting, for example, that a leading field theorists
Doug McAdam and Neil Fligstein’s (2012) analysis of race is about the
5 field of racial politics, not about how racial factors shape action in different
fields. In our analysis, the sort of competitiveness (with other women and
7 men) that Bartounin and Freedman advocate could be reduced simply to
capitalist logics, yet that misses the power of its gender specificity. The
9 “skinny bitch” is competing against other women for the admiration of
other women; the skinny bastard is in competition with other men.

11 Institutional analysis, particularly when combined with critical race
and feminist theory, is an easier fit for how sets of action and value such as
13 gender (or race or disability) can be taken into account in analyses of con-
testation over valued goods. Clemens (1997), for example, does just this, in
15 analysis of the simultaneous emergence of interest groups politics as a form
of political action and of how American women came to exercise formal
17 political power. She argues that the usual treatments of political innovation
start with those at the center of power; in her study, that would have been
19 those in control of US political parties in the late nineteenth century. Such
a strategy would be familiar to field theorists attempting to understand a
21 similar process.

Clemens, however, started from the “outside,” by looking at three groups
23 (farmers, labor, women) who were all trying to break the party system in
some way or another. She began by analyzing how their social identities and
25 particular forms of organization gave them particular advantages and dis-
advantages in democratizing American politics. Many of the organizations
27 that she studied, but particularly the women’s organizations, advocated
greater access to political decision making for Americans other than
29 women, not all of whom could be counted on to act as women’s allies.
Reducing Clemens’ analysis to either a story of the emergence of a new poli-
31 tical form or as a story of women’s emancipation, misses the co-constitution
of these actions, and of the ways that women’s gendered interactions with
33 each other and other political actors shaped outcomes. Moreover, Clemens’
analysis explains the puzzling fact that as they were organizing, women
35 cared little about leading their organizations per se; when those organiza-
tions collapsed, women formed other organizations and did not, as Max
37 Weber would have predicted, maintain the organizations in order to main-
tain power for its own sake (i.e., a process of goal displacement).

39 To return to the two diet examples, gender is certainly a strategic tool
for Freedman and Barnouin, for it is used implicitly and sometimes

1 explicitly to gain adherents. But at the same time it is not reducible to a
2 strategic tool used to dominate a “diet field”; it is part of the cultural logics
3 from which they work. Barnouin and Freedman come from the highly
4 gendered modeling industry. Gender is constitutive of the ways of seeing
5 the world – including the body, health, animals, and the like – and shapes
6 the capacity of actors to make claims in particular ways. Again, field
7 analysts are likely to insist that gender, or anything else, can be fit into the
8 framework, but without attending to the specific content of social group-
9 ings like gender; for example, competition is but one logic of action. A
10 more robust analysis would take into account how social groupings like
11 gender provide tendencies and logics – not fixed interests – that can be
12 valuable in understanding not only the constitution of particular games
13 and contests but how they play out. Because most versions of institutional
14 theory rely on a social psychology of phenomenology rather than rational
15 choice or interest theory, they can capture how and when gender or other
16 logics play out even without self-conscious and deliberate efforts.

17 A second advantage of institutionalist theory for studying social con-
18 testations, such as which diets shall prevail (in the market and in cultural
19 recognition), is that it emphasizes multi-level analysis of successful and
20 failed efforts at social transformations. It also attends to experimentation
21 and learning, deliberate and inadvertent reconstructions of interests, the
22 flexibility of rules and regulations, geographic contexts, and processes of
23 democratization (Adams, Clemens, & Orloff, 2009; Ansell & Vogel, 2006;
24 Leschziner & Green, 2013; Moore, 2008; Schneiberg, 2012; Thelan, 2010).
25 The diet models that are described here are having their heyday. It is not
26 clear, however, whether any one of them is currently victorious or will be
27 in the future; indeed, one can find an enormous range of criticism of all of
28 the diet plans, and of the individuals who advocate for them. Perhaps what
29 is most critical to understand about them is that at this moment, the form
30 that they take draws on multiple and shifting logics, and that this can easily
31 be captured in institutional analysis as a centrally important issue rather
32 than a sideline of the “real” action around diet that occurs at the USDA or
33 Congress.

34 These alternative diet programs are not simply businesses in which their
35 founders happened to invest; they are representations of entrepreneurial
36 action on the part of founders, action that is defined by mixing logics from
37 biomedicine, American self-reform traditions, neoliberal entrepreneurialism
38 at the level of the founders themselves and of their offerings. To place them
39 in a particular field is of course analytically possible, and we have framed
40 their work in terms of “alternative nutrition.” Yet if their own testimony is

1 to be believed, they have mixed logics that have been traditionally separated, through at least two different pathways: a successful medical career
3 promoting alternative health, successful modeling and modeling business careers.

5 The cases that we investigate are exemplary of the same kinds of mixing that can be observed in the hundreds of alternative diets that are offered
7 every year, offerings that ask users to do something other than regulate the intake of elements of the typical American diet, as traditional nutrition
9 advice does. The sheer number of these diets that are offered at any given time, the frequent updating of the advice by virtue of web technologies, the
11 marketing of various products associated with the diet, and the emotional emphases on diet modification are complex mixtures: on one hand, they are
13 signs of a field that has already formed in the sense of actors who share a common orientation toward an object of action and comprehend the same
15 set of possibilities over which they struggle, and on the other hand, they are also indicators of a weakening field. If we take neoliberal culture seriously,
17 instability is constitutive of the field of action, such that possibilities for action include ongoing disruptions of logics and knowledge stability.
19 That such logics come to be part of embodiment through consumption (consuming ideas and information, purchasing products, and bodily
21 ingestion) makes them all the more powerful.

Attending to the centers of the scientific field and the battles that are
23 waged there have proven valuable to understanding the exclusion of new logics of action, actors, and subjects of attention in science, especially when
25 contestations are overt and explicit (Albert et al., 2008; Hess, 2014). Yet in other cases, the contestation over knowledge claims and who has the
27 capacity to be granted the ability to speak authoritatively have less to do with contention among actors for position in a field, than the historical
29 conjunction of particular kinds of ideologies, technologies, and actors. At a minimum, our cases, or the hundreds of others we might have chosen,
31 represent entrepreneurial efforts to get others to be entrepreneurial, but not, it seems, purely for monetary gain or for status in a field of other
33 purveyors of alternative diets.

It is not clear that the actors in this field are all struggling for power
35 against each other, nor do their logics of action seem identical, despite common orientations to nutrition reform. Institutional theory, however,
37 does not require that actors compete directly with each other, and instead it permits them to be uncertain, to muddle through, to find activities that
39 fit what they know how to do whether they are winning or not, and to take seriously the idea that social movements can provide possibilities for

1 changing conventions and rules for action in quite indirect ways, as in
2 the case of the food counterculture and the rise of professionals influenced
3 by the values of social movements. Institutions are not objective things
4 in Institutional theory, yet actors can be conscious of the rules and
5 under particular circumstances can make concerted attempts to change
6 them.

7 Given that science and technology have profound effects on the distri-
8 bution of material and cultural goods and bads, it is not so much the exclu-
9 sion of others from the easy-to-enter and loosely knit field of alternative
10 nutrition that produces inequality. Inequalities are produced in this system
11 by normalizing the updating of the body and emotional self, and via the
12 translation of scientific ideas into commodities that are not expected to be
13 lasting and satisfying, but require more purchases. Neoliberal entrepre-
14 neurialism, abetted by internet technologies that change the speed of
15 this kind of updating, normalize the instabilities that neoliberal economic
16 policies have instantiated, particularly through the notion of risk self-
17 management and the opportunity and information seeking that it requires.
18 That the field through which this kind of activity is encouraged is ill defined
19 may be precisely its power: as analysts of social networks have long
20 understood, being at the intersections, rather than the center, can be very
21 powerful indeed.

22 Yet the consequences for science more generally are significant, precisely
23 because the flow of knowledge-as-commodity, its rapid production and
24 distribution and its endless “updating” destabilizes traditional forms of
25 authority in science. As the web – if not field – of alternatives to main-
26 stream nutrition ideas proliferate, science itself is a weaker tool for battles
27 over political and ethical questions about what to eat. This situation is not
28 the result of explicit battles to weaken science, nor of battles for the center;
29 the comingling of neoliberal economic logics of the enterprising self
30 (Binkley, 2006, 2009) with metascientific analysis via charismatic authority,
31 and the logic of American perfectionist impulses presents us with a situation
32 in which fieldness itself is constantly being redrawn.

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