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Broadcast Media, Mediated Noise, and Discursive Violence - High Decibel TV Debates and the Interrupted Public Sphere

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Abstract: In exploring the role of mediated noise in socio-political discourse, this paper discusses how noise as an element of the communication model with interruption as its fixed meaning needs reconsideration. Against the backdrop of criticism by the media critics and analysts about high decibel debates in broadcast media, this paper critically analyses the centrality of mediated noise in the political and public discourse in India. Noise, it argues, has emerged as a political device and a discursive weapon employed by the dominant stakeholders, capable of steering discourse and manipulating the public opinion that diverts attention from the pressing issues and emphasizes the political wrangling between the stakeholders while disrupting the discursive process. It underscores how dominant groups produce, manage, and mediate noise as a part of their discursive strategy that simulates constructed sincerity and its unquestionable existence. It is shown that meticulously crafted and stage-managed debate panels in broadcast media are aimed at creating a visual spectacle and are driven by commercial and political interests rather than the concern for informed discourse and debate. Noise, in this sense, is a sound that persuasively refers to its significance, as it creates a realm of discursive ambiguity and undermines a discursive process and its subsequent knowledge. Thus, noise is argued to be a form of discursive violence that manifests in the form of voices that distort the facts, dismiss, or deride a narrative, suppress opposing viewpoints, negate the possibility of discussion, and sabotage opportunities for discourse by creating an atmosphere of fear and violence.

Keywords: Noise, public sphere, Indian media, discursive violence, mediated noise, news debates

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Introduction

One of the most inescapable and prominent features of Indian news channels, in the recent past, has been the rise of high-decibel news debates and discussions. Alongside this, the criticism of mediated noise has also become evident in the reports and commentaries of media critics and analysts (Datar, 2014; Sekhri, 2015; Siddiqui, 2013). So how should communication research make sense of it? In much of the communication studies, noise, and its forms, such as syntactical, cultural, semantic, and psychological, have only received passing attention, where noise has been regarded as a barrier to reception and transmission of communication (McQuail, 2000; O'Sullivan et al., 1994; Rothwell, 2004; Hybels & Weaver, 1986). But does its presence extend beyond its literal meaning and forms—a sound that interrupts and is evident in various forms, ranging from high decibels to phonological and verbal inaccuracies, syntactical errors, and psychological barriers, impeding meaningful conversation and comprehension. Despite the all-pervasive nature of noise, the contemporary communication research has yet to pay attention to noise and its manifestations, its presence in the media, politics, and its socio-political implications. For example, is media discourse noisy, and what are its implications for public opinion and the public sphere? How do political actors use noise to push their agendas? Could noise be used as a political weapon? What happens when a multiplicity of voices emanating simultaneously attempts to contribute or mimics contributing to debates and discussion, impeding meaning and comprehension? Will that be called noise, too? Can noise be a deliberate act of undermining a debate? Can it be used as a political device to reinforce one's position and undermine the other's? These are some of the questions with which this paper aims to grapple, if not answer conclusively.

In the age of 24/7 media, multiplicity of public spheres, and emotionally charged politics and political debates, deliberate use of noise as a political device for manipulating dialogue to strategically undermine and regulate the dialogic and discursive experience is a curious area of academic analysis. Conventional understanding of noise may be one with a fixed meaning and fixed role, a sound that interrupts, but a fresh analytical approach to noise can offer insight into the multiplicity of its meanings and functions that extend far beyond conventional understanding to give insight into noise as a device that is both a structure in itself and part of a larger discursive structure. Noise, this paper argues, is not a sound with its fixed meaning but a sound understood in both multiplicities of its meanings—applications and experience, verbal and non-verbal—which has the power to influence discourse.

Several studies point towards the fact that media no longer portrays real-life events, but events are designed to draw the media's attention or are simply staged for the media (*cf.* Butler, 1997; Hoffman & Ocasio, 2001; Koopmans, 2004, Oliver & Maney, 2000). High octane political discussions, verbal slugfests, and rabble-rousing debates on television with an outpour of emotions, anger, sentiments, and verbal confrontations presented on the camera blur the line between camera covering the debate or debate being staged for the camera, akin to the reality TV shows like Big Brother, which thrive on concealing the difference between fact and fiction. Politics is staged for the television cameras, and assertive, repetitive, aggressive, provocative expressions (Hubbs & Lind, 2013) in TV debates, are employed to make the event appear more legitimate (*cf.* Oliver & Maney 2000). Therefore, is noise merely a device used to grab audience attention? Or is it strategically used to shape the dynamics of the public sphere? In other words, is noise only used for raking in Television Rating Points (TRP), which is discussed in a latter part of this paper, or is it employed for steering political discourse with its implications for the fundamental tenets of democratic discourse, such as participatory dialogue, formulation of public opinion, alternative viewpoints, and freedom of speech and expression?

Defining Noise and the relative literature

While many communication academics would admit to the presence of noise in political and media discourses, given its complexity and relative subjective approaches, it has been barely discussed, if at all, in communication studies. Nevertheless, it has been an area of interest for social sciences scholars in the fields of art, music, politics, psychology, and more recently in anti-terrorism studies (Attali, 1985; Bijsterveld, 2008; Blesser, 2007; Nechvatal, 2011; Weimann & Von Knop, 2008).

In communication studies, noise as an element of the communication model is regarded as a "major barrier to communication" (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 7). Shannon and Weaver, who were primarily concerned with mechanical noise causing distortion on the telephone and of the television signal resulting in poor reception, first introduced this in communication theory in the 1940s. Noise, according to DeVito (1986), is "anything that distorts the message intended by the source, anything that interferes with the receiver's receiving the message as the source intended the message to be received" (p. 209) and can broadly be identified as physical, psychological, and semantic noise. While in many communication studies, noise has only received passing attention; more detailed investigations into its presence and effects can be found in other areas of studies.

Attali's (1985) analysis of noise and its relationship to music and politics is a good starting point. Attali, through his description of noise, draws a relationship between music, politics, and economics. He holds that noise is a "weapon" that is channeled through music for the "creation of social control and political integration" (p. 26), while music "… *primordially, is the formation, domestication, and ritualization of that weapon as a simulacrum of ritual murder" (*italics in original, p. 24). Noise, for Attali, is "violence"; as he notes "to make noise is to interrupt a transmission, to disconnect, to kill. It is a simulacrum of murder" (1985, p. 26). But as a "simulacrum of murder," does noise have any consequences? If yes, which is more likely? And what are its consequences, and how is it employed and exercised in a given cultural and socio-political setting? Attali draws the relationship between music and noise in arguing that "*music is a channelization of noise,"* and hence of violence; "a simulacrum of the sacrifice" that aids the "creation of social order and political integration" (italics in original,1985, p. 26). As he notes, "listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political" (1985, p. 6). In this sense, noise can be regarded as an instrument that has political and social significance for the purpose of integration, control, manipulation, and subjugation. To define noise further, Attali (1985) notes:

> A noise is a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission. A resonance is a set of simultaneous, pure sounds of determined frequency and differing intensity. Noise, then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed: emitter, transmitter, receiver. (p. 27)

This description of noise given by Attali helps to raise questions about what is this "system" in which noise is "inscribed" and how noise operates in it? How does it sustain noise? Who inscribes noise in a system? Can it be a political system with a political inscription of noise? What is its relevance/significance here, and what can it tell us about the socio-political apparatus in which the system exists? While he underscores that noise is a "resonance that interferes with the message," what remains to be explored are the consequences of that interference, especially if such interference is deliberate with potential for socio-political effects in a society. In the context of this paper, a more precise question could be: Does noise

interfere with the public sphere and functioning of democracy in a society? Attali's (1985) notion of noise as a form of "violence," a "simulacrum of murder," a "weapon" for the "creation of social control and political integration" offers the possibility of assessing its presence and effect on public debate, opinion formulation, public sphere, and its various tenets.

Nechvatal's (2011) discussion on cultural noise is another notable example of noise and its presence in media. In his book entitled *Immersion into Noise,* he explores the idea of "noise in art" by reflecting on "noise's overwhelming sensations and qualities of excess" (p. 19). Drawing a relation between noise and media, Nechvatal (2011, p. 14) notes that noise takes place in a media culture of "massive electronic deluge" formed of "free-floating (ineffable) signifiers." His concern, however, does not remain limited to the presence of noise in media, as, according to him, noise is not solely limited to media space. It is found in different forms and extends to various spaces that often overlap and intersect. He equates *art* with *culture* in arguing that *art of noise* can be referred to as *cultural noise.* The *art of noise*, according to him, can be regarded as a "…realm of antisocial cultural purpose directed toward the revolutionary transformation of an irrational social reality that insists on calling itself rational" (Nechvatal, 2011, p.14).

Through the concept of the *art of noise*, Nechvatal underscores the state of non-communication that manifests itself as a result of high signal-to-noise value—a technical term defined as the ratio of a signal power to the noise power corrupting the signal—resulting in a manifestation of "noncommunicating art of noise." Anti-social interruption, resistance, damage, and frustration as sources of psychic pleasure, according to Nechvatal, are examples of relations between signal-to-noise and art resulting in art noise, an art that "distorts" and "disturbs" crisp signals of cultural communications (Nechvatal, 2011, p. 15). While Nechvatal's primary concern is art, around which he weaves most of his arguments, his thesis on "cultural noise," "noise culture" and "art (culture) of noise" can help with analyzing the state of democratic discourses and the relative presence of noise in it. Protest and dissent, for example, are democratic rights, but when and how can they be classified under the "culture of noise" thesis, and how can one make sense of the presence of noise in protests or protest as noise in discourse, wherein noise is the vehicle for protest, or noise is a key component of protest? In the recent past, the term protest, an important feature of democratic society, has emerged as a political weapon in the Indian public sphere. Several recent examples can be cited to underscore how protests, led by low-cadre party workers (or *karyakartas*) affiliated with various political parties, independent protest organizers, student wings of political parties, special interest groups, and pressure groups, have used noise, if not violence, for intimidation, suppression, and forced retraction of views and opinions, steering the public discourse and channeling the fear into the public sphere (*cf.* Vijapurkar, 2015). In some cases, violent protests are also organized at the behest of political parties. In August 2016, a *Cauvery* river water dispute between Karnataka and Tamilnadu saw violent protests on both sides. The issue that dates back to 1892, since then, has manifested more as a political tussle between the powerful stakeholders while leaving the genuine stakeholders behind. According to Menon (2016):

> The fact is that those who engaged in recent violence are not genuine stakeholders but goons let loose by politicians and their fringe organisations. The Centre and states must not let them operate with impunity but put them down with a heavy hand. Simultaneously, they must also evolve mechanisms to involve genuine stakeholders in the process of finding an amicable solution. The people whose interests are most involved are the farmers of Cauvery Basin. They must be educated and encouraged to evolve a formula

> for sharing distress in water-deficient years, find a common ground and empathise with each other's problems.

According to a report in *The Times of India* (2016, Sep 19) and several other dailies, a woman later arrested in relation to the protests allegedly torched 42 busses for Rs. 100 ($1.5 approx.) and a portion of *biryani*. Another report in *Hindustan Times* by Nagaraj (2016), titled "Nagaraj, man behind Cauvery protests in Karnataka, has 'staged' 10,000 protests," gives a peek into the murky world of staged protests. As Nagaraj (2016) notes:

> When 67-year-old Vatal Nagaraj takes to the streets, he turns every conceivable item — donkeys, commodes, vegetables, fire lamps, cattle, vehicles, footwear — into political expression…By his own estimate, he plans 200-250 protests every year and has called 2,000 successful state-wide *bandhs.*

Noise is just another ever-present element of these protests to make them more dramatic and camera-friendly for the media, among other things. This highlights other functions of noise too that does not necessarily reinforce its literal meaning of interruption, among other functions, such as intimidation, seeking attention, media worthiness, or suppression or appropriation of meanings and opinions. To underscore the relationship between protests, politics, and the media, Oliver and Maney (2000) use the term "routinization of the protests," which implies that protests are organized by the organizers, keeping the media priorities in view, such as availability of the reporter, dramatics, deadlines, and newsworthiness of the protests (p. 467).

Another text exploring noise in media is Don DeLillo's (1985) *White Noise*. White noise, according to DeLillo, is media noise, the techno-static of a consumer culture that penetrates our homes and our minds (and our serious novels) with ceaseless trinities of brand-name items ("Dacron, Orion, Lycra Spandex") and fragments of TV and radio talk shows ("I hate my face," a woman said. "This is an ongoing problem with me for years.") (DeLillo, 1985, p. 263). DeLillo's idea of White Noise, according to Eid (2008, p.2), is "a world of spectacles and images, a TV-saturated, information-based world, a world that seems to be controlled by television which is the main source of news, drama, and knowledge about postmodern culture."

Employing DeLillo's description of white noise, it can be argued that primetime news debates on Indian TV amount to hypernoise akin to Baudrillard's (1994) concept of "hyperreality," which underscores postmodern media-saturated society in which simulated reality surpasses the real to appear more real and is yet free from all references to the real. In a similar sense, debates and dialectics with a display and an outpour of emotions akin to reality shows in high decibels, signifying a heightened sense of seriousness, amount to an abyss of hypernoise that annihilates the issue being debated. The state of hypernoise, therefore, is a precise simulation of discourse in high definition, both on and off screen, laden with emotional outpour, passion, drama, and theatrics, almost creating a spectacle that's deeply animated and mimetic, almost a banal display of sincerity that secretively hinders, suppresses, and/or obliterates the discussion while appearing to be contributing to it. As discussed in the ensuing sections of this paper, hypernoise is the micromanaged noise, carefully worked out to legitimize and routinize the simulacrum of noise, whether in TV debates, parliament proceedings, protests, or social media.

For Blesser (2007), noise performs many functions, as he elaborates on the pleasurable and destructive appeals of loud music/sounds. While he primarily focuses on the effects of exposure to loud music on mind and body, he presents some noteworthy observations about the functions of noise while using noise, loud sounds, and loud music

synonymously. Loudness, he notes, is a "space transporter," as it renders the listeners functionally deaf to the immediate environment by suppressing the internal space of daydreams and overpowering the space of self-generated sounds and pictures" (p 3). Loud sound, Blesser holds, "overpowers the sense and cognitive judgment," has been a "weapon of torture," is associated with fear, and is used to "get our attention" (p. 5, 3). He further notes that "religious and political leaders have used loud music to stimulate strong emotions and to suppress rational thinking" (p. 5). Blesser (2007) categorically, using various examples, underscores the ability of noise and loud sounds to distort, disrupt, and destruct much of the environment to which they are exposed.

According to Weimann and Van Knop (2008), for example, noise is "no longer a merely undesirable element" or a "negative" element, as it has been treated traditionally in communication studies. They present a methodical case for noise to be used as a part of the strategic framework for "counter-terror measures," as they note (2008, p. 891):

> When it comes to the terrorist (or any other illegal, harming, and dangerous) communication, one may question the instrumentality of creating noise that may reduce the communicator's efficiency and success…one can use noises to harm the flow, the decoding, the communicator's credibility and reputation, the signal's clarity, the channel's reach, the receivers' trust, and so on. Creating and using semantic, psychological, cultural, and physical noises may describe a rich variety of countermeasures and organize them in a strategic framework. Thus, noise could become a key conceptual and theoretical foundation in the strategy of countering terrorism online.

Thus, noise is a strategic tool with various applications and purpose, including distraction, manipulation of message, communication, discourse, and comprehension. Loud debates on TV about a contemporary national issue, for example, may imply that the editorial is extremely serious about the issue; the composition of the debate panel, strategically composed of at least four to 12 politically active members signifying the "representation of common people" that support and oppose the issue, may imply that opinions are sharply divided on the issue and thus the public opinion; loud and angry retorts, recurrent interruptions from the members of the debating panel and the anchor, threats to the panel members of being thrown out of the debate, ad hominem attacks, allegations of being disrespectful to panel members, offensive comments, and derogatory remarks could imply that emotions are running high among the panel members, and thus the public. This, coupled with constant claims (Malhotra, 2016) of being the "most watched" news channel in India, explains how noise is managed and commodified for Television Rating Points (TRPs) and commercial gains. But through this seemingly "serious" and "democratic exercise," is media informing or representing public opinion? A survey by The Media Studies Group India (MSGI), a media think-tank, found that opinions are "manufactured" rather than informed. The report that examined the media reporting from 1975 to 2011 notes that opinion formulated by media is in "one direction" with "negligible" space for an "alternative view on any issue and policy matter" (Siddiqui, 2013).

Debate panels and Noise

The process of "manufacturing" the opinion, however, is both art and science, if seen through the composition of primetime debate panels—the presumed voice of the people, the "supposed experts' of subjects, the media-appointed representatives of public opinion, and alternative perspectives—crucial elements of democratic exercise and the public sphere. For

the guests on primetime debate panels, television channels rely on in-house or external guest coordinators who "maintain a huge databank of potential guests—each one would have more than 2,000 phone numbers" (Datar, 2014). The guest coordinators are responsible for ensuring the "best" faces—faces that are popular and with which the viewers can identify—are arranged for the panel. This process, however, involves complex backstage work that remains hidden from the audience. According to Sekhri (2015), the guests who are not spokespersons of any political party or group charge "anything from Rs 2,000 ($31) to Rs 30,000 ($450) per appearance," in addition to their professional and personal motivations to appear on these debates. Sekhri notes that, while celebrities/socialites could get up to Rs 20,000 ($300) per appearance, others, such as "newly-retired men in uniform or security/defense experts, can get up to Rs 30,000 ($450) for a single appearance." The debate topics are explained to the guests; their stand on the issue is confirmed before the guest coordinators finalize their names for the panel. However, there are "situations" when panelists agree to "toe a particular line to get on TV" and change their stance when live on camera. As one of the guest coordinators speaking to Sekhri notes; "We have to put together a panel with both sides of an argument or issue. We do our best, but some guests do a 180 degree and change their position when on air. Then we get screwed."

Sekhri further quotes a guest coordinator, saying that there are some *"besharam"* (shameless) people or "breed of image builders," such as young politicians, activists, lawyers, or "socialites" who sit outside the TV studios during primetime shows and request the guest coordinator to be invited to the show. The growing demand to be on the debate panels is driven by aspirational desires, coupled with "(s)ocial climbing or political climbing in a world connected by screens rather than personal relations." While it can be argued that management of debates panels and news agendas are in the media's commercial interest, the issue, however, is foregrounded in the authentic display of the constructed sincerity and its unquestionable existence.

One report by the Media Studies Group India (MSGI), which argued that public opinion is "manufactured," conducted a study of 15 TV debates on corruption in defense deals on six mainstream English and Hindi language broadcast channels, including NDTV India, IBN 7, Zee News, NDTV 24X7, CNN-IBN, and Times Now, found that, of the 54 people who participated in studio discussions, five were women and 17 were former defense personnel, of which seven personnel went to 24 programs. A total of 17 representatives of five political parties participated, but Congress and BJP representatives together eclipsed 82% of the representation. Primetime news debates are subject to meticulous micro-management that underscores how noise is stage managed to create a mediated social spectacle.

While this highlights the auditory effects of noise, a quick focus on the emission and channelization of noise can provide further insights into its nature and effects. As James (2014) notes, "noise is *internal* to every signal—the product of production, transmission, broadcast, and reception. Health requires the elimination of noise—or rather, the recycling of noise into signal" (p. 141). The manipulations and alterations of its notes can alter its effects and perhaps can change its purpose altogether. The production and channelization of noise in slogan-raising protests, rabble-rousing debates, interruptive parliamentary proceedings, post-election firework displays to mark the victory, and strength of a political party highlight the auditory value of noise, its strategic conversion from interruption to a signal employed either to disrupt and destruct discursive dynamics or to emphasize or legitimize gratification or grievance. The use of slogans, its articulation (often in the form of rhymes), and its decibel levels, use of microphones, loudspeakers, and drums can influence how a signal is produced and channelized in consolidating a message. A fragment of noise may be interruptive, but "statistically and probabilistically deregulating the 'conditions'" of dialectics (*music for*

Attali), politics, and economics could result in a "healthy," resilient body capable of not just weathering, but profiting from noisy interruptions" (Attali, 1985, as cited in James, 2014, p. 142). Thus, hypernoise, as briefly discussed elsewhere in this paper, does not refer to the noise of unbearably high decibels, but rather its micromanagement—strategic implementation that yields in political and commercial advantages for the stakeholders who control it. Noise, thus, is managed and mediated effectively to create a realm of discursive uncertainty with intent to undermine a discursive process and its subsequent knowledge. It is forced into a discursive space to create a "perfect" simulacrum of discourse, laden with possibilities of "informed opinion," for the purpose of the "collective good."

Mediated Noise and the public sphere

A healthy public sphere is imperative for a successful democratic process, and politically motivated use of noise can interfere with the formulation of public opinion by crushing participation, negating criticism, and hindering freedom of speech and expression. The public sphere, as explained by Habermas (Habermas et al. 1974), is a "realm of social life," where public opinion is formed, access is "guaranteed" to all citizens, and media plays a central role in formulating and mobilizing public opinion. Habermas' idea of public sphere aptly captures its origin and experiences in the West but has been contrasted with that of the non-West, which Freitag (1989 p. 19) calls public arenas, "a world of ritual, theater, and symbol." Public arena, according to Freitag (1989), is a "universe that sometimes reinforces hierarchy, providing roles for those occupying various positions within society, and at other times expresses conflict among unequals; it may even do both simultaneously" (p. 19). Media is as central to the public arena as it is to the public sphere, and public opinion, as Freitag notes, serves as a "functional similarity" between the two. Fraser (1990), in her criticism of the public sphere, notes that Habermasian's "ideal" public sphere does not take "power differentials" into consideration but more so in stratified societies, where "…discursive relations among differentially empowered publics are as likely to take the form of contestation as that of deliberation" (Fraser, 1990, p. 68). And in case of societies with social inequality, the spaces of deliberative processes "operate to the advantage of dominant groups…" (p. 66) and are "mediated, contained, and presided over by the dominant" (Gournelos, 2010). The Indian public sphere or public arena, "being defined and dominated by majoritarian values and norms" (Ali, 2001, p. 2419), has resulted in marginalization of voices, exclusion of minority groups, and lack of representation of cultural plurality in the media (*cf*. Neyazi, 2014). This, coupled with a narrow range of voices cherry-picked on the prime-time debates with media as a participant rather than a moderator, points towards the problematic nature of media in the public arena, while public opinion becomes a contested territory of the powerful stakeholders. The nature and norms of discursive engagement and public dialectics differ from society to society, and elements such as the use of premeditated language, slogans, degree of discursive aggression, physical scuffle, and noise, inter alia can shape the very nature of public discourse and their outcome. If discursive aggression and violence, discussed in the ensuing section, becomes an integral element of TV debates and discussions, then reasonable questions do arise about the role of media in the public arena and opinion formulation.

Noise and discursive violence

Discursive violence, in many studies, has been described as an attempt to sabotage discourse or a discursive practice deemed important for the collective and has been used in reference to hate speech (Leezenberg, 2015), discrimination and licensing of physical violence (Hubbs & Lind, 2013), violation of free speech and victim bashing and blaming (Jiwani, 2009; Schiff, 2015), and right-wing aggression (Sze, 2010). The term has been further defined as "violence constituted by or enacted through discursive behaviors" in the form of "speech acts" (Hubbs & Lind, 2013, p. 157), words and expressions "communicated with the intention of destroying human worth" (Sze, 2010, p. 82) that would "ordinarily constitute social or psychological damage to the targeted person, as well as through speech acts that generate permission for physical damage, including assault and death" (Hubbs & Lind, 2013, p.157).

Free and fair discourse is an essential element of the public sphere; however, political application of noise makes it an element of violence in the public sphere, which, according to Gournelos (2010), is "a shifting terrain of desires, interests, needs, oppression, power, and expression that is *always* and *a priori* in a state of conflict and change" (p. 153). The public sphere, therefore, can be a territory that sustains violence and aggression at the behest of the powerful few.

As an element of discursive violence, noise is employed to "injure or abuse, and the varieties of harms it causes are as multiplicitous as the functions of speech" (Hubbs & Lind, 2013, p.157) and could manifest in the form of voices that distort the facts, are abusive in nature, threaten the stakeholders, dismiss or deride a narrative, suppress opposing viewpoints, negate possibility of discussion, and sabotage opportunities and scope of discourse by creating an atmosphere of fear and violence. Manufacturing of debate panels on news channels in itself is a form of discursive violence against the process of public opinion and the public sphere, as it is a mechanical management of content, ideas, opinions, and conclusion that is manipulative, riddled with biases, and trivializes discourse while simulating honesty, sincerity, and seriousness. Noise as discursive violence is the "verbalized expression of epistemic violence," as it "…destroys one's rational argument by "playing with discourse" and by appealing to irrational passion so as to "intimidate and disconcert" (Sze, 2010, p. 83).

Presence of noise in media by default is the presence of noise in the public arena, and the integral relationship between media and its responsibility towards the public sphere makes it a subject of scrutiny. Much concern has been raised by the media and in the media by eminent thinkers and journalists about the diminishing distinction between noise and news, inasmuch as some English language TV channels have rebranded themselves with taglines highlighting the presence of noise in the news. CNN IBN's tagline, for example, "news over noise" and NDTV's "you don't have to shout to be heard" highlight how noise has become the centerpiece of the battle between broadcast media outlets. Such views have been widely echoed in print media. Siddiqui (2013), for example, notes:

> Try to recall the last time you saw a debate on a TV news channel that wasn't shrill or hysterical? Whether it was the military stand-off with China in Laddakh or Sarbjit Singh's murder in a Pakistani jail or the Italian marines, prime time debates are often rabble-rousing.

Rajdeep Sardesai of CNN IBN News held a similar view in one of his tweets, as he noted, "I guess we are truly in an era where sense must battle sensationalism, news versus noise…" (as cited in Siddiqui, 2013). From much of the media criticism leveled against the noisy rabble-

rousing debates in broadcast media, Times Now has received much attention. Ashraf (2016), for example, in his article titled "Arnab Goswami-style journalism is killing the essence of debates," slams Arnab Goswami, *The Newshour* anchor on Times Now TV, for "running media trials" and who, according to the article, gives certificates of nationalism and anti-nationalism to those who agree or disagree with him, respectively. A similar article by Daniyal (2016), titled "Arnab Goswami must realise that journalism is about questioning, not blind acceptance," echoes similar concerns. The article notes:

> The rabble-rousing tendencies of Times Now anchor Arnab Goswami have been written about copiously. As is obvious to even casual viewers, Goswami's prime time show often descends to the level of a kangaroo court, as the anchor condemns and harangues his targets in a tone that betrays near-hysteria.

Daniyal (2016), with direct reference to the principle of public sphere, to which media's role is of immense importance, notes that:

> This is a sad illustration of the state of the Indian media. Goswami and other sections of the media are giving currency to the notion that opposing the Indian government is immoral. By doing so, they are actually undermining Indian democracy. As the scientist Albert Einstein once noted, 'Blind belief in authority is the greatest enemy of truth'.

Central to this media deficit is the issue of public opinion and freedom of speech and expression. Public opinion seems to be more informed by those who take a jingoistic approach to national issues; the ones arguing against jingoistic and hyper-nationalistic approach are labeled as pseudo-liberals, presstitutes.[1] pseudo-intellectuals, five-star activists, and poseurs. The current public discourse in both mainstream and social media is divided between binaries of nationalism and anti-nationalism. While much criticism can be witnessed among the audience and the media for the Times Now's approach to TV debates, it is also found to be one with the highest Television Rating Points (TRPs) among English language news channels in the successive reports of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), India (Bhushan, 2015; Malhotra, 2016).

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of small yet sound literature coupled with media reports, this paper highlights how a narrow view of noise as a mere interruption or a meager element of the communication model can be an idea of the bygone era. Amid the information bombardment that defines much of contemporary life, noise has multiplied in its role and presence.

Noise, as this paper argues, has emerged as a discursive weapon used for the purpose of suppression of views and opinions, intimidation, simulation of seriousness, anger, and of public opinion. It has also identified important ways in which noise has manifested and continues to manifest in the Indian broadcast media, particularly in TV debates, while shaping the discursive process, and that has led to mounting criticism among the media critics. Noise, thus, is communication in itself, which is micro-managed and stage-managed

[1] A prejorative used to refer to journalists who are critical of the state policies. See *'Stop calling us Presstitutes: A message to my friends and other Modi supporters'*, Scroll.com, Pandita, R. (Dec 16, 2015) http://scroll.in/article/774643/stop-calling-us-presstitutes-a-message-to-my-friends-and-other-modi-supporters

towards political and commercial gains. Therefore, it is not a sound with its fixed meaning but a sound understood in multiplicity of its meanings, applications, and experience —verbal and non-verbal— which has power to influence discourse. From being a mere interruption, noise has emerged as a content of the message in itself, strategically employed for manipulating discursive engagements while evading accountability. Its strategic use by the dominant stakeholders renders it to hypernoise that underscores simulation of discourse in high definition, carefully worked out to legitimize and routinize the simulacrum of noise, whether in TV debates, parliament proceedings, protests, or social media.

Presence of noise in media by default is the presence of noise in the public sphere, and the theatrical debates on TV are rooted in the authentic display of the unquestionable constructed sincerity. The implications of mediated noise on the public sphere are problematic, more so in the stratified societies where the spaces of deliberative processes operate to the advantage of the dominant group, and are mediated, contained, and presided over by the dominant. The mediated noise in the discursive practices that are central to the public sphere and the democratic processes facilitate the rise of discursive violence and marginalization of groups and are shaped to the advantage of the majoritarian values and norms. The rise of right-wing factions, in the backdrop of jingoistic discourses, is less grounded in informed discussions and arguments and more rooted in discursive violence, coercion, and intimidation. Noise, thus, is a device of discursive violence in a public sphere that manifests in the form of voices that distort the facts, are abusive in nature, threaten the stakeholders, dismiss or deride a narrative, suppress opposing viewpoints, negate possibility of discussion, and sabotage opportunities and scope of discourse by creating an atmosphere of fear and violence.

Further discussion on noise can provide a better understanding of how discursive practices in the public realm have been transforming, especially in the Indian subcontinent and its rampant use by political actors and right-wing groups. While this paper is limited in its scope and methodological techniques, it, however, endeavors to fill an evident research gap and set a propaedeutic base for further research in noise studies, especially in mass communications. Also, this paper primarily focuses on English broadcast media and relative commentary by the media critics and has not been able to capture the presence of noise in Hindi and regional broadcast media, where similar trends of employing noise are evidently visible. Using a wide variety of operationalization techniques and alternative sources, further research can assess the presence of noise and its implications for TV news, public opinion, and the public sphere.

While the paper underscores how noise disrupts healthy discursive practices, public opinion, and the public sphere, it does not, by any means, attempt to argue for control and regulation of discourse in the media. Rather, it supports a free market media that engages in self-regulation and evolution that operates without an external control mechanism while keeping the interest of the public sphere and democracy at the heart of discursive practices. A free and fair discourse can only nurture in free market media that operates without the concerns of fear or favor. Nonetheless, it is equally important to mark the emerging trends and turning points in the ever-evolving media sphere.

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The African Writer at Digital Cross-Roads: A Preliminary Interrogation of Literary Production in Nigeria/the Global South within 21st Century Media Convergence

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Abstract: The 21st century convergence of media through technological, industry and market conflations has altered the traditional work environment of the creative writer in Africa and the Global South due principally to problems/issues of digital divide/negotiation or migration which have altered modes/technologies for the creation, production, distribution, and consumption of letters. The global visibility of the African writer, like many academics in African universities, is challenged by digital migration, digital illiteracy or aliteracy. This study problematizes this digital exclusion from the contemporary digital world on account of the multiple dimensions of digital divide; and social and intellectual denial of access to the global literary forum. This preliminary study re-articulates the Nigerian writer's creative environment, production process and distribution of the literary product; using interviews, ethnographic interactions, and observations, to assess the writers' (n: 62) digital literacy, competence, and issues of digital migration. Findings which were analyzed descriptively preliminarily point to the fact that media digitization actually challenges the Nigerian writer in ways that have impacted on his/her competence for literary creation/production,access and distribution within the 'global literary forum'; a situation that may probably be seen as a common 'disempowering' experience for many creative writers in developing Global South.

Keywords: Media Globalization, Digital Humanities, Cultural Production, Digital/Electronic Divide, Nigeria, Global South.

> Whether in literature, psychoanalysis or philosophy, twentieth century thought is irrevocably hooked up to developments in technology and telecommunications. Contemporary literature faces new kinds of challenge in terms of how to represent, assimilate or think the increasing ghostliness of culture.
>
> (Bennett and Royle 1999: 138)

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Introduction: Media Digitization, ICTs and Convergence

The 21st Century has witnessed the convergence of media through the conflation of media technologies, industry and markets; due principally to digitization. While the technical exactitude of these terms may not be relevant here, the humanistic dimension of this phenomenon is privileged in this discourse; as convergence has among other multiple consequences, altered the traditional work environment of the creative writer, the modes/technologies for the creation, production, distribution, and consumption of literature. While convergence has a robust technological side, for us, in media studies, it has much more to do with a "change in the way that entertainment is produced, marketed, and consumed" (Johnson, 2010:15). Similarly, while "digital" connotes a computerized process, Jeffrey Cole, Director of University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication, Centre for Digital Future, also concedes that "digital is about how we work, how we play, how we communicate, and probably its most important long-term impact will be how we learn" (Johnson, 2010: 202). How have these developments, digitization, and media convergence particularly challenged the traditional literary production process of the African writer in the 21st century in the face of national developmental problems and issues of digital divide and negotiation or migration or survival? All these development issues are common to most developing economies of the Global South.

There are also issues about the African writer's global visibility and return-on-talent; like many African universities where he/she is often domiciled or works, the creative writer is hampered by problems associated with digitization, digital illiteracy, and aliteracy. This study problematizes this threat of digital exclusion of the African writer from our contemporary digital world and literary creativity on account of the multiple dimensions of the digital divide in an era of disruptive and unequal globalization; and *ipso facto*, the social and intellectual denial of access to the assumed democratic global literary forum. This problem arises from the African writer/researcher's poor access to/or unwillingness to use digital and online media resources (cf. Harle, 2012); most especially by writers working from within the humanities' faculties of African universities; which are becoming increasingly commercialized as Donald Dingwell implies when he advises that the "universities be becoming more enterprising and, like enterprises, they are well-advised to analyze the impact of their research output" (SciVerse-Scopus, 2007:3). This situation becomes acuter when viewed against the background of the diminishing digital visibility of many African universities and scholarship in annual World Rankings (cf. www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings)); coupled with the marginalization and invisibility of African media studies scholarship on global digital spaces (Jedlowski, 2016).[1] A preliminary overview of this problem had earlier been articulated by this writer in a theoretical exploration of 'digitalization and the challenges for Nigerian media industries' (Akoh & Inegbe, 2013: 404-418). The ubiquity of this phenomenon in the Global South has also been signposted by Ignacio Lopez-Calvo's (2018:15) interrogation of the criteria for "worldliness in a literary text," especially in contemporary Asian-American literature. He asks whether this "globalist" or "worldliness" that endows global canonity to a literary text is "inseparable from globalization, global circulation, translation into English, and unequal power relations between Western cores and non-Western peripheries?"(ibid: 15) Even though it is not directly bordering on digital exclusivity, Lopez-Calvo argues that the accidents of geography, global economics and hegemonies should not exclude the so-called "peripheral" Asian-American literature from the canonical status of world literature, as well as proposing that what should give world status to literature should be, "writing and reading practices that move beyond the framework of the national and of Eurocentrism, being molded instead by a critical, planetary consciousness. World literature would then become a decolonial literature beyond Eurocentric models" (ibid:15). He finally proposes a new model which is a "re-

conceptualization of Asian-Latin American cultural production and, by extension, other 'minor' literature as an alternative type of Weltliteratur" (ibid:15). Similar arguments on such mainstream or imperial media exclusivism of peripheries (Kuang, 2018) and Euro-American biases about authors/writing from the Global South have been severally raised by Günther & Domahidi (2017); and Coleman & Freelon (2015) who identify this important nexus between media digitization and politics when they state that "it makes sense to think of 'digital politics' less as an account of how technology serves predetermined political ends than as a complex, ongoing tension between replication and transformation in the social organization of power" (2). While these observed prejudices, biases and discriminatory tendencies may not be unconnected with politics and problems related to the digital divide, they also suggest the pandemic dimension among writers in the developing/peripheral economies of the Global South.

For the African creative writers, some of the reasons suspected for this diminishing visibility, beyond regional infrastructural deficiencies, is their inability to fully migrate to the digital platform; or the failure/inability to have their scholarship/creative works published in digital format or media; coupled with the intimidating presence of corporatizing publishing organizations, which publish for a digitized readership. The African writer in the 21st century is therefore faced with a real challenge of managing digitization and media convergence, which have deep running implications for the creation, production and distribution of African literature in an increasingly globalizing and digitizing world.

The convergence of telecommunications, computing, satellite technology, fibre optics and lazers has created the network of networks: the Internet, leading to industry convergence which has also caused structural changes in the industry. Part of this rupturing change is market convergence which has produced newer hybrid markets that have evolved from the traditional media functions of entertainment, information and education; but with new rules of engagement (Dunn, 2005: 350). Media history also shows that a change in one technology affects other media as we for instance see how Guttenberg's invention of printing technology created impacts on the Renaissance and the Reformation in the same way the Digital Revolution has brought on Convergence. Grant's Umbrella Model of communication technology also shows that the individual media user is influenced by the social system, media's organizational structure and the hard/software of the media in question. As implied by Media System Dependency Theory, the above prevalent factors are also inter-dependent and each can exert some differential enabling, motivating, limiting or inhibiting influence on the user (Grant, 2002: 3-4).

Even though some African countries like South Africa and Rwanda have achieved relatively high Internet connectivity, one exemplary country in the South that has undertaken a proactive articulation of change occasioned by media convergence is Australia through her Australian Communication & Media Authority (ACMA). This nation's well-thought-out policy through her Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) articulates media convergence as

> the interlinking of computing and ICTs communication networks, and media content that has occurred with the development and popularization of the Internet, and the convergent products, services and activities that have emerged in the digital media space [where all aspects of social life and institutional activities] are increasingly conducted in this interactive media environment, across a plethora of networked ICT devices (*Report 118*, 2002).

The dimensions of convergence are therefore technological, industrial, social and textual; with the latter referring to the "re-use and re-mixing of media, into what has been termed a trans-media model where stories and media content…are dispersed across multiple media platforms" (ALRC Report 118, 2002). The Report notes that all "techno-economic

paradigms" have historically caused real shifts in society, as perceivable in the different Ages: Industrial Revolution (1780s-1830s), Steam & Railways (1840s-1870s), Steel, Electricity & Heavy Engineering (1880s-1920s), Oil, Automobile & Mass Production (1930s-1980s); and, the present Age of Information and Telecommunications (1990s to date). Significantly, the Report reiterates that the ascendancy of any of these techno-economic paradigms is "invariably disruptive…as it generates losers as well as winners" (ALRC 118). Frederick Williams had earlier tracked this trajectory when he noted that "the revolution in communications technologies […] is what antiquated the monopolistic structure of the telecommunications business" (1983:60). One of these disruptive tendencies is media digitization.

It suffices here to understand that "with the advent of the computer, the Internet, and other information technologies, we have [entered] the digital age', where 'activities, including research and development…are increasingly done in the digital environment" (Chu, 2007:14). Understood in binary terms, "digital" is the expression of a signal in positive and negative (on/off) values as opposed to traditional analogue linear system. This digitized "binary language allows for easy generation, processing, and transmission of signals with the assistance of microprocessors" (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004:494) thereby enabling data to be manipulable by computers. The gains that digitization has added to media production, distribution and consumption include greater digital compression-ability, increased volume of digital signals that run on less power requirements, production of digital copies that are exact copies of the original, and media interactivity and transportation, etc. Therefore, information representation/encoding, storage and retrieval have been significantly enhanced. Digital, new or convergent media are therefore computer-mediated within a network-enabled system. In the same way that deadlines had been set for digital migration in broadcasting, media production, which includes creative writing, production and distribution are also globally shifting towards the digital format. Microsoft Corporation's Bill Gates, observed with prescience the transcendence of this "digital lifestyle" when he said back in 2001, that "the PC [Personal Computer] is going to be …the center of control…But it won't just be the PC, it will be all these things connected to the PC, both in wired and wireless fashion" (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004:426).

But we need not forget that media convergence or new media forms have continued to inter-negotiate with old traditional media through hybridization; but like Burton notes, "convergence does not simply generate new media. It opens up new possibilities for old media" (2010:211) in a "transgressive" manner as Quail (2010) would put it. We now have new hybrid formats like *edutainment, infotainment* and *infotorial* media products; as well as telethons and radiothon programmes enabled by telecommunications; while the notions of "audienceship" and "authorship" have mutated towards "producer-user", modes, etc. This inter-negotiation has long sign-posted the antiquation of some media or communication industries as we see with global posts and telegraph services. We also perceive these media inter-marriages in the persistence of traditional voice media and folklore (as perceived in tribal accents as ethnic markers in broadcasting, storytelling and the novel/narrative and e-books); text and video (as seen in painting, photography, film/video, multi-media and first language transliterations); and, sound & movement (where Internet communication has in some ways signaled the death of traditional transportation systems). Traditional communicative symbols have also persisted in writing, semiotics, advertizing/subliminal codes (Malik, 1986: 151-68). The prevalence of a vibrant citizen-media expressed through citizen journalism, social media and blogging are products of convergence; which has seen an ascendance of an irrepressible public sphere/will over political/corporate hegemonies that have dominated old media for many decades (cf. Ivanyi, 2017). Beyond what Coleman & Freelon (2015) have identified as the creation of a digital civic and political space, and the emergence of the "Fifth Estate of pluralistic accountability", digital media has also engendered class inequality.

The emergence of online books and libraries has also become a present day reality as a "universal library" system with continual access for writers and researchers. Many Nigerian universities like many others in the Global South, have collaborated with virtual book organizations like SciVerse's ScienceDirect, (cf. www.sciverse.com), the Nigerian Research and Education (NgREN) to secure access to EBSCOHOST e-content at one time or the other (cf: http://search.ebscohost.com); apart from many other free access sites and services (e.g, www.pdfdrive.net). It's impossible to separate what is commonly referred to as "scientific or scholarship" research from creative writing. This is because apart from the fact that many African creative writers work within the universities, and much of scholarship from the humanities draws from critical interpretation of the creative artists' works, a tradition that dates back to Greek drama and its criticism, or for instance, the relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis with Sophocles' Oedipal Complex, digital literacy levels are inextricably linked with low literacy levels. UNESCO (2010:2) had long noted this holistic bind when it observed that "failure to address inequalities, stigmatization and discrimination linked to wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, location and disability is holding back progress towards Education for all". Regrettably, inasmuch as creative writers, researchers and universities in many parts of the Global South try to migrate to new global media platforms and connectedness, they are also continually bedeviled by poor national infrastructural or developmental issues, which sometimes are not unconnected with the capitalist monopoly contracts of media organizations, dependent national policies and their slavish relationship with the World Trade Organization which also controls the global trade in cultural goods and services (cf. Dunn, 2005: 354).

Enrique Bustamante articulates a more comprehensive notion of "digital divide" as being more complex and wide-ranging than mere inaccessibility to digital technology. These digital divides as experienced in much of the Global South include gaps in purchasing power, possession of strategic knowledge by developed nations that exploit others' cultures, increased regional industrialization and concentration of global capital. Other dimensions include evolution of new global marketing/management principles like vertical and horizontal integration and pursuit of multiple revenue streams; encouraged by organizations (like WTO, World Bank, IMF and other oligopolies) which have made it possible for a "complete conversion of the cultural industries into institutions defined by finance" (2004: 804); as well as increasing organizational convergence driven by corporate mergers. To these, Burton adds the "electronic divide" between media that can be transformed into, or distributed in electronic form and those that can only be materially managed (2010: 206). This electronic divide is significant especially for books or texts which can or cannot be electronically distributed within the production industry between perceived global "imperial centres" and the "peripheries" by corporate organizations and hegemonies.

From the perspective of the humanities, digital imbalance and the increasing corporatizing nature of the book publishing industry also make it more difficult for creative writers and critics in the third world to have their creative works or research published where most of the digital denizens read (cf. Harle, 2012; Betiang, 2013). This bleak situation does not only confront academic institutions and governments in Africa or the Global South, but also challenge the individual creative writer working in or out of universities. To complicate matters, many African writers within the continent are traditionally self-funded and self-motivated even when they work in/outside the humanities faculties of poorly-funded and largely digitally-invisible universities. So how does this creative writer cope with or negotiate the issues and problems of poor infrastructure, near-absent electricity power supply, poor Internet connectivity and de-motivating work environment, coupled with the larger techno-authoritarian issues of digital migration via corporatized publishing companies? Is it possible for such a writer's work to gain global attention and recognition without access to the global *agora* which corporate publishers and networks provide? It's becoming obvious that many

aspects of man's social existence today are continually invaded by "digital determinism" (www.digitalhumanities.org/companion) whereby many "digital aliens" are excluded from participation in the public sphere. Can the humanities and the African writer in the Global South afford to be hermetically sealed from these relentless exclusivist phenomena?

One is inclined to agree with Pierre Macherey's theorization of Literary Production that "the knowledge of the conditions of a process, is the true programme of a theoretical investigation- the demonstration that change and simultaneity […] are not incompatible, but are in a necessary alliance" (1978:10). This is not arguing that "digital determinism", "techno-determinism" or "economic-determinism" would necessarily determine the course of culture in a manner that we sometimes would link the Arab Spring to authoritarian regimes, depressive socio-economic conditions and the facilitating role of social media; but one can see a clear linkage between the march of technology (in this case digitization and media convergence) with the increasing yawning chasm between the richer North of the world and the poorer South. Yekinni links technology to social change when he rightly asserts that "technological development is basically an outcome of the efforts to make things better in human societies" because development in "reality applies to political, social and technological progress" (Yahaya, 2008:248). Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have also brought about deep running changes "in the way individuals and organizations interact, in terms of time, cost and distance" (Yahaya, 2008:250). These derive from the very nature of ICTs which are characteristically pervasive and cross-cutting, possessing network creation-ability, being disseminators of information and knowledge, with minimal marginal cost of operation/access, and efficiency gains in terms of information processing, storage, retrieval and sharing; as well as having potentials for innovative business models and creation of new businesses (Yekinni, 2008). These characteristics give ICTs their inherent ability for intermediation and global inter-connectedness, which derive from their inherent operative principles and unique architecture, embodying such *connector* concepts like the Web, Intranet, Extranet, E-mails and List-services; and *Infrastructure* like the Internet, Ethernet, WLL, Bluetooth and Mobile networks. ICTs also have connection devices with such many appliances like personal computers, laptops, palms, mobile phones and multi-media devices; and, *enabling software tools* for browsing, publishing, chatting, collaborating, messaging and conferencing. All these material and immaterial characteristics have positively pre-disposed ICTs to serve as catalyst for development in diverse spheres including decision making process, marketing outlook, improvement of rural communities, interventions among marginalized groups, as well as employment creation (Odiaka, 2011: 373-383).

Digital technologies have also made it possible for a "reduction in the cost of content creation and services, which might permit the initial hope of a democratization and expansion of creativity and expression" (Bustamante, 2004: 806), including the "technique and marketing" of the creative products. This has potentially opened up access into the creative industry to many and probably will significantly, internationalize markets and reduce prices for publications; but the potentiality for "cloning" and piracy have also increased, thereby violating "the fundamental right of *creators and communicators to make a living from their work"* (Bustamante, 2004:812, emphasis added).

Beyond ICTs, media convergence has also encouraged the ascendance of Social Media with its capabilities for high connectivity and interactivity. Even though these social media have been accused of shifting society from a "participatory culture to a culture of connectivity" (Dijck, 2013:155), they have also liberated cultural content, its creation, ownership, distribution as well as the nature/volume of reward to artistic talent. The production of artworks including texts are "no longer be[ing] limited to professionals, as the tools for creative production [have been] yielded to amateurs and citizens" (Dijck, 2013:161). Beyond this, Djick adds that "content has been freed of cultural constraints…forms and formats…economic restrictions" as

well as free distribution (2013:161). Through vertical integration and inter-operability, Dijck argues, many search-engines and platforms for social media have "branched out into practically every type of platform, catching virtually every kind of social, informational, creative, and commercial niche" (2013: 163). These kinds of business moves have also begun to lead to the "gradual development of a few major platform chains –microsystems vertically integrated by means of ownership, shareholder, and partnership constructions– that are now dominating the ecosystem of connective media" (Dijck, 2013:163). Such corporatizing media include Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon, which may also be signposting the gradual triumph of global corporatization as we witnessed with the ascendance of traditional media corporations in the last two or three decades.

Another positive dimension to digitization is the deployment of multimedia for learning and pedagogy. According to Allessi & Trollip, the advent of the World Wide Web and the Internet in the 1990s has been transformed from a network that was predominantly used by academics and governments "for the exchange of textual materials, into a worldwide resource" such that "today, hundreds of millions of people use the Internet to pursue activities as diverse as shopping, dating, researching, forming associations, exchanging textual, graphic, and video information, and of course learning"; concluding that, "the Internet has and will continue to transform everything we do" (2001:4).

Specifically articulating how ICTs have empowered the African youth, Etieyibo enumerates inter alia the multiple benefits of ICTs beyond the making and re-making of youth identities/cultures to include "reading, writing and literacy; citizenship and participation; media production and formation; marketing and commerce"; without losing sight of the downside of ICTs like "media-fostered violence, anonymity and the development of dual personalities, individualization, internet addiction, psychological and financial stress, hate group membership, bullying and harassment" (2015: 144). He hastens to advise that in spite of these downsides, young Africans must not lose sight of how these digital media "implicates (*sic*) them in aspects of global citizenship and identity formation" (2015:145); and urging that in a world that is increasingly being globalized by ICTs', it becomes "imperative that young people in Africa find ways of appropriating and re-negotiating both the benefits and challenges that ICTs offers (*sic*)" (147). Marton Ivanyi's position that "given some particular cases in the context of self-categorization via digital media, the optimistic notion of the public sphere or public sphericules might be closer to reality than the pessimistic vision" (2017:8), suggests the possibility of engaging digital authoritarianism to local and specific needs.

Considering the hegemonic impact of creative writing as part of the media that shape impressionable minds and emerging global cultures, the Nigerian or African writer in the Global South cannot but be involved in the conscious shaping of these "digital futures". The African writer cannot therefore be immune to these techno-economic conditions in terms of his/her "private" process of literary creativity and the "public" production, distribution and consumption of the literary work. This is because, like Macherey puts it, the development of literature, like the "history of critical doctrines can only be understood when we have determined the complex question which is the condition of that history" (1978:11). Articulating these technological cross-roads where the African writer finds him/herself, Ugor (2015) further notes with significant insight that,

> the lopsidedness of economic and technological globalization is impeding robust academic cultures in Africa, especially in the humanities. Undoubtedly, the very nature of the African literary scene has changed. Part of that change comes from the fact that the new generation of African writers lives and writes in the context of the globalization of culture and the economy... which has huge implications for the themes, narrative styles and linguistic forms that they deploy in their works (*Personal Communication,* Oct. 23rd)[2].

This preliminary investigation therefore takes a closer, more critical ethnographic look at the challenges, dilemmas and complications the contemporary African creative writer in the Global South of the world is facing in the process of creating/producing the literary product in an environment that has increasingly become digitized and globalized, with production (writing and publishing) and distribution processes that are basically electronic and controlled by the forces of media conglomerates; and probably addressing a younger readership that is increasingly digital or audio-visual in orientation.

A divergent arguable second position may be ventured here: is it possible that the African writer can ignore this so-called techno-authoritarianism of media digitization, ICTs or convergence and still make his/her way in today's globalizing jungle? Global business strategist, Mike W. Peng posits that "in this age of globalization, one side of the debate argues that there's a great deal of convergence, especially towards more 'modern' Western values such as individualism and consumerism" (2009:74). This side of the argument insists that Westernization in consumption patterns does not necessarily mean adoption of western values. A middle position termed "cross-vergence" acknowledges the validity of both positions. Cross-vergence adopts a more "global" approach [reading: "uniform content and image"] when dealing with the younger population; and adopting a "local adaptation" of the global for more tradition-bound older population. Jedlowski and Oloko have also noted that the 21st century has also brought about "global mobility", whereby "inter-textuality, inter-genericity, quotation and remix" are on the increase in global cultural production; stressing that the "recent exponential increase in the use of digital media has modified the geography and economy of African cultural production in significant ways" (2015:4).

Understanding that due to cultural mobility and convergence, where most media work is collaboration and "inter-remediation" within a socio-economic system, can these positions and developments remain valid for literary production and distribution, including the choice of language of literary expression/markets in the manner Ngugi wa Thiong'o for instance, would ideologically profess? Studies show that English Language drives ICTs; while a "configuration of language (English Language), computer and MDGs…drive the development of a virile human capital for national and global needs" (Amanze & Bamah, 2012:142; also, Teilanyo, Olise in Osakwe, 2012). Within this complex, the big question also arises about the intended readership of the African writer in contemporary digital times where convergent media is being dominated by young digital citizens who tend to patronize it more because of its audio-visual appeal. The assumption following a UNESCO (2010) Report that 95% of books published in Africa are textbooks and not creative works; and that writing in an aboriginal language might make for wider readership is not founded in reality. In Nigeria specifically, the basic language of tutelage is English with slight combinations with local languages in elementary schools. But these local languages have an orthography which is mostly (except Arabic) based on the English alphabet. There is also a predominant use of pidginized or creolized versions of the "imperial languages" even in rural areas. Our experience shows that even when creative books are written in the local language, English, French of their pidgin forms, the basic English alphabets of their orthography plays a big part in their comprehension or otherwise. This situation has been further entrenched by the "hegemonization" of English as the language of the computer. The African writer writes for his audience wherever it is, hence the fact that literary translations and adaptations hardly change the essence of a literary product for global readers; because "global sensitivity", a sense of "placelessness" and "trans-cultural comparison" are part of the aesthetics and common attributes of "world literature" (Lopez-Calvo: 2018:18). The readership of authentic literature is therefore not necessarily "local" in a world that has become increasingly "de-nationalized" and virtual.

Methods

This study was based on a combination of Self-Reflexivity and Survey of other creative writers, personal observations, interviews and a structured questionnaire. The self-reflexive dimension involved some kind of "self-positioning" and probably a projection of our personal experience in creative writing in relation to other writers concerning the problem being investigated. This may be considered as being "self-confessional" going by Douglas E. Foley's four-category classification of self-reflexive ethnography as being: "confessional, theoretical, textual, and deconstructive" (2002:469); since it incorporates auto-biographical experience and an objectification of self. This is because, "narrating the self, telling the stories of our identity, or autobiographies, are as much personal as they are visionary and spiritual as well as political acts" (Kremer, 2003:6). These writers' "being" or "positionality" here therefore becomes part of the instrument of research, hence our personal experience, assumptions, biases and choices have probably impacted on the study (cf. Paulus *et al*, 2013). The validity of ethnographic reflexivity or using "self" and "being" as part of the subject of research is in the post-modern time increasingly becoming part of the solution for the ethical issues that have often gone with "using others" as subjects of research; and for a subjective enterprise like creative writing, it hopes to foster respect for subjectivities for self and "the other" and encourage co-learning while preserving difference (Rawlins, 1998: 361); as well as constantly reminding us of the role of social constructs in making meaning of human communication.

As part of this preliminary survey of other writers, about 70 published and unpublished young authors were interviewed using a questionnaire on the problematic issue of digitization, literary production, and distribution within our local Nigerian context. Most of the respondents were attending a conference of the Association of Nigerian Authors in Abuja, Nigeria in 2016. Eight of these were invalidated and isolated leaving a valid number of sixty-two. The formal questionnaire consisted of 20 structured/clustered questions dwelling on the author's volume of creative output, publishing options, the method of manuscript processing, online publications, visibility and concerns about piracy, marketing of creative works, digitization and creativity, awards and incentives, publishers and choice of language of expression and more. It is noteworthy that the sampled authors were dominantly the younger crop of writers often found in many authors' or writing conferences.

Findings & Discussion

The research problem is articulated here along significant clusters of the authors' creative experience, literary production or publishing, distribution or marketing; and, rewards and return-on-talent; and the language of expression, all within contemporary digital dispensation. This discussion freely combines quantitative data with qualitative responses and their interpretation is expectedly colored by these writers/authors' self-reflexivity and experience; hence the difficulty of separating the discourse.

The responses from this preliminary sample show that more writers tend to express themselves through Prose (45/62); followed by Poetry (31/), and then drama (18/62). While the structure of this output may not be central to the study, it could be understood that while the genres of prose and poetry are often individual and personal creations that can also be consumed individually and privately; the dramatic genre requires collaboration with others within a production environment to realize its full potentials. Dramatic writing, therefore, becomes a more restricted genre practiced mainly by trained or active practitioners. The ideal situation is the existence of in-house drama producers in broadcasting houses and dramaturgs in professional Theatre and Film production outfits, who usually will re-write to fit the specific

requirements of dimensional formats. It is unfortunate that when the word 'drama' is mentioned, it is considered only in terms of stage, ignoring the whole volume of dramatic writing that goes on in broadcasting and film industries; which also has led to industry fragmentations like broadcast and screenwriters' guilds. Beyond this, publishing dramatic works is hardly the primary objective of any dramatic author; instead, its final production on stage, screen or broadcast media often amounts to publication. Fractionalization and compartmentalization of writers of other literary genres are hardly noticeable among writers of poetry and prose.

Most writers (45/62) admit that they process their manuscripts with a computer; while some others (18/62) do not. However, asked what word processor they use, 30 out of 62 had an idea of a word processor while 29 had no idea or any word processing skills. Therefore the claim above that they process their manuscripts becomes questionable. As to whether the computer or word processor encumbers the writer's creativity, a dominant 38 (62) declined, while 15 (62) admitted. A significant 11 (62) did not respond. A clearer picture probably emerges when we tie the above scenario to the online visibility of the writers. Out of the total sampled, 18/62 admitted to having online publications, while 39 (62) did not have any online publications, with 6 (62) declining any comment. Put differently, 20 (62) admitted having titles online with 37 (62) admitting non-online visibility.

Even though these online titles were not verified by the researchers, some of these online publishers/distributors cited include Konga, Amazon, Portridge Apina, Word Rhyme & Rhythm (wrr.ng), Igede.org, d2d, Poem Hunter & Poetfreak, Bannes & Nobles, E-zines, E-book Africa.com, Xlibris, Booktopia, Kokobooks, E-Bay, lulu.com, and Partridge Africa Publisher. Some cited social media and Facebook. Significantly, only 16 (62) of the sample had named online distributor while 45 (62) presumably hadn't because they gave no response. We may probably link this to the large number of writers (43/62) who admitted having fears about piracy in online publication, as against the 19 (62) who had no fears. The question arises as to what qualifies a writer to belong to or partake of or work in an online literary production community. The qualifications may not exclude the negotiation of the multiple constrictions of systemic digital divide, personal digital literacy and often the author's personal option of "aliteracy", and, probably the hegemonic imposition of the regime of English as the language of the computer/Internet.

The *Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication* defines publishing as "the activity of mass producing and disseminating information via the medium of print, or electronically on the Internet" (Chandler & Munday, 2011:345). The electronic dimension of book publishing may still be suspect to many creative writers even though this "new" dimension has the potentiality for wider dissemination. One of the more popular options for publishing for many writers is "self-publishing"; a term that is being confused with "vanity publishing". For instance, Author House is said to be "the leading provider of supported self-publishing services for authors in the United Kingdom and around the globe, with over 70,000 titles released" (www.authorhouse.co.uk/packages). It distributes books to a worldwide audience with a big bouquet of author services and packages with books distributed through hard and digital platforms. Author House's self-publishing interpretation gives the author a "creative control" of the book from editing, cover-design, page layout through royalties and distribution to marketing and publicity; which is not the tradition with traditional publishing which takes absolute control of the publishing and distribution process but at no cost to the author.

Jo Herbert, veteran editor and writing trainer, notes that traditional publishers "only take on work they believe is worth investing their own money in, confident it will make a return when the book hits the shelves" (www.writersandartists.co.uk/writers/advice). Herbert cites the selling potential of the book as one major reason why it's difficult for new authors to get published. On the other hand, he explains that "vanity publishers" are only interested in the

author's money. "They take your manuscript, take your money and print several (usually poor quality) copies [….] they won't consult you and…won't offer any help marketing or distributing your book". These publishers neither stock your book nor have any relationship with bookshops, real or virtual; and most of these types of publishers wrongfully refer to themselves also as "self-publishers"; concluding that "there is a vast difference between the way they operate and the way a reputable self-publisher operates". It's interesting to note that Self- publishing dates far back to its earliest patrons like Virginia Woolf, Mark Twain, James Joyce and William Blake, and in fact, Jane Austen's first book. Self-publishing "is considered to be a perfectly respectable way to get your book into the marketplace", as it shows that the author is "ambitious, organized and serious". Alison Baverstock, former publisher and writer, also notes that "times have changed from when self-publishing meant vanity publishing"; revealing that in the US alone in 2016, more titles (240,000) were self-published than (the 230,000) traditionally published (www. writersandartists.co.uk).

This survey shows that most writers (43/62) prefer self-publishing; with many not even being able to get published yet (12/62). Reasons given for these writers' preference for self-publishing include: "non access to renowned publishing companies, lack of willing publishers, and rejection from major publishers for the reason that the author is not known, dearth of publishing companies in Nigeria, the belief that self-publishing is faster; and the fact that often writers have to borrow to publish." Other reasons include: absence of trusted publishers, while others believe it's becoming trendy to self-publish; many think traditional publishing is so frustrating because many publishers are reluctant to read new narratives from young "nameless" authors. Many others opt for self-publishing because royalties from established publishers hardly come. The others who write and have not been published finger reasons like: lack of funds or financial support, absence of publishing platforms, and the high cost of self-publishing. A few of those who prefer traditional publishing say it's less stressful and it promotes academic and artistic excellence.

From the foregoing reasons, one is inclined to believe that many authors do not really understand the difference between traditional, self and vanity publishing. This is because from experience, traditional publishing is free; while self-publishing is not that expensive as the books are sometimes based on print-on-demand. One strongly suspects that when authors blame cost as reason for failure to publish, their prospective publishers of choice are actually vanity publishers who make one-off monetary demands that many authors can hardly afford. In addition, the names of "publishers" our sample patronizes here show very few credible publishers. A writer's first publisher signals the author's "point of attack" into the publishing industry. It's also significant who and where this publisher is; and what determines the writer's choice of publisher. There are about 42 (62) named, and 17 "unnamed" first publishers in our sample. Note also that the majority of them are local and digitally "invisible".[3]

The writers justify their choices of publishers to include the publisher's creativity, proven credibility, quality print, affordability, editorial and production quality, proximity and effectiveness. Other reasons include the writer's finances, publisher's experience and accessibility, availability and cheaper printing cost, honesty and expertise, convenience and access to mentoring services, popularity, excellence and professionalism; and marketing reach as well as commitment to paying royalties, etc. While about 43 (62) writers gave reasons for their choice of publisher, some (18) had no reason whatsoever.

On the real issue of creative writers' capability to make a living from their literature, 49 (62) declined with only a paltry 13 (62) accepting that their creative craft gives them subsistence. About 40 (62) of these writers admit having made sales that range from 50 to 50,000(?) copies of their books from a single publication; while 21 (62) have made no sales at all from any single publication. This is further clarified with 19 (62) claiming they have received some "royalty" ranging from 50 – 3 million Naira; with 43 (62) who have never

received anything like royalty. Most (35/62) of these writers market or distribute their books personally, as against the 22 (62) who do not engage in personal sales, even though a majority (35/62) would prefer to be marketed by their publishers, as against the 27 (62) who prefer self marketing.

The questions of writing, distribution and making a living from one's writing remain fundamental to the creative industry; even though this is also tied to what the primary motivation for literary or artistic creativity is. Does the writer write to live or does so to fulfill a creative urge or some social responsibility? Answers to these questions also touch on basic reasons why authors choose to publish with which publishers: for money, fame or the fulfillment of a "teaching" role? The didactic role of the writer has engaged many a mind since the time of Horace, through Carl Jung, communist writers, Sigmund Freud, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, etc.; all of whose writings or theories have represented the artist as a "compulsive" voice with a mission to "engineer" human souls in the society. Many a writer has died in penury, with fame or prestige coming thereafter. Many since Sophocles have also reaped pecuniary rewards through sales and prizes.

But none of the above has proffered any answer to basic questions as to the writer's primary motivation. Does catering for a local audience/readership amount to global consciousness and socio-cultural engineering through local action? What is the real value of a writer within local/global contexts: Is the significance of a writer measured by global recognition or local significance in a globalizing world, considering the place of radical fundamentalism in postmodern local/global inter-negotiation? Larger questions also arise about the future of the creative industry in the relentless postmodern commoditization of culture and its products in contemporary era of human and material flows (cf. Jedlowski, 2015). The issue of return-on-talent has also been complicated by the challenge of copyright control in the digital age where "copies of copies of originals" can be replicated, multiplied without losing value and being possibly transmitted/distributed electronically; a real fear that has dissuaded writers and even some publishers from venturing into online publishing.

This leads us naturally to the question of whether media digitization has affected the writer's work. A dominant 42(62) admits that digitization has enhanced their literary creation, publishing and distribution output, with 11(62) refusing any "affect" while 10 (62) remain unsure of any influence. While understanding that the way digitization can "affect" a creative writer can be multi-dimensional, but if the above scenario holds, what again therefore is the possible reward for the writer in the Nigerian or African setting? As interrogated above: is it increased inflow of revenue, awards of recognition or fame? The responses to the question have not stated in precise ways what this "affect" is but a holistic reading of the investigation gives us some idea of the nature of influence.

While fame cannot be quantified, and many writers also hardly bother to submit their works for literary competitions, how many of our sampled writers have received any prize or award for any of their works? A tiny proportion (12/62) agrees to having received some prize, a dominant (51/62) number have received none. Even though these prizes and awards were not verified, they include the Samuel Goldwyn Creative Writers Award, South African Children Literature Award, and New Nigeria Award for Indigenous Languages, Rivers ANA (Association of Nigerian Authors) Poetry Prize, Kenabe-ANA Benue Award for Poetry, Radio Nigeria Ambassadorial Award, Chief of Army Staff Commendation Award, and ANA Bayelsa Prose & Drama Prizes. Others include, ANA-Ken Saro Wiwa Literary Award, Writers in Focus, etc. Incidentally, many of these prizes carry just a little cash component except major ones like the NLNG Prize for Literature ($100,000) instituted since 2004, or the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature ($20,000), and the low-cash prized privately sponsored range of ANA (Association of Nigerian Authors) Prizes; which number about 14, with the "least cash prize being 50,000 Naira and the highest being 2500 dollars" (www.ana-nigeria.com/prizes).

Many major regional or "global" awards give the writer a little financial lift. Some of these include the Nobel Prize for Literature (having been won only by Wole Soyinka in Nigeria), Man Booker International Prize (#60,000), the Man Booker Prize (#50,000) , the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award (E85000), The Folio Prize (#40,000), David Cohen Prize (#40,000), Costa Book Award- Book of the Year (#35,000), The Women Prize for Fiction (#30,000), The Dylan Thomas Prize (#30,000), and Sunday Times EFG Bank Short Story Award (#30,000),etc. (cf. www.telegraph.co.uk/top-literary-prizes). While most of the above prizes are European or UK-based, many are international or Euro-American in origin. Like the Chair of Booker Prize Foundation, Jonathan Taylor explains, "we are embracing the freedom of English in its versatility, in its vigour, in its vitality, and in its glory wherever it may be" (*The Telegraph*). As expected with grants and fellowships, there are always restrictive rules of engagement for prizes and awards, mostly available to "globally/digitally" visible writers and publishers, and above all, in "English" as the language of expression. So how does a typical locally situated Nigerian writer in the Global South, digitally invisible with little access to the global literary community access these spaces and markers of literary recognition? Inevitably, the local writer goes home without the much needed subsistent cash, fame or recognition; even as we insist that literary recognition should also be local and culturally contextual.

On the problematic issue of the African writer's choice of language of expression which in contemporary commoditized world has become the shibboleth to global digital culture, this survey shows that 41 (62) prefer a global language for creative expression; while 8 chose to write in their mother-tongue; and, with an insignificant 9 writing in both global and mother-tongue; and about 8 having no specific preference for any language. In the manner Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2013), likens the imperial mother-tongue in the post-colonies to patriarchal repression of women in African cultures, competency in English Language becomes the digital password to access the resources of post-industrial digital age. But what is the implication of the narrowing choices of language in the digital age where the English Language has become more privileged over others; particularly when we remember that "languages are also one of the essential sources of the vital force that animates human communities" (Hagege, 2009:4)? Like UNESCO (2006) puts it, "the acquisition of literacy is complicated not only by the challenges of particular scripts, but also by the common necessity to master a number of different scripts." So how does a writer whose mother-tongue is dying from atrophy capture the reality around him through the conceptual lenses of another linguistic culture without losing voice and authenticity in an increasingly homogenizing world? This appears to be the dilemma of the African writer from the Global South caught between mother-tongue and "master-tongue".

Conclusion

This preliminary study (initially designed with a Pan-African/Global South scope) interrogated the cultural shift brought about by digitization of media and their subsequent convergence in the last decade of the 20th century, which have significantly altered many aspects of human existence, and how these have impacted explicitly on the Nigerian creative writer's creativity, production and distribution of the creative cultural product. With creative writing merging with media studies in the communication world of contemporary 21st century, new "cultural hybrids and cultural trends" continue to emerge, creating "not only new audiences but also new awareness of the relationship between writer and reader" (Henderson & Hancock, 2010: xix) in the same way changes in communications technologies have over time altered modes of cultural production, participation, and consumption.

Using a combination of auto-ethnography and survey to re-examine this problematic; we found that there are indeed various impacts and challenges on the Nigerian creative writer regarding creativity, processing, publishing, and distribution of the creative product. There's also limited access and participation in the global digital literary culture and its reward system for home-based Nigerian/African writers publishing from home. Other impacts and problems arise in part from socio-economic issues of government's negligence of necessary infrastructure that enable digital competence; as well as the writers' lack of access to publishers with digital infrastructure for promotion and distribution; and the reward system. There is also writers' inability or unwillingness to migrate towards digital literacy and competence.

While the study raises more questions than answers because of its preliminary disposition, problematic issues like determining or distinguishing between popular and literary writing (commercial success and literary value); and what constitutes the creative author's return-on-talent come up even as many authors understand that the creative writer's work revolves around cultural intangibles like being the social conscience, creating communal identities and voicing for the voiceless. However, how do all of these translate to literary professionalism for a Nigerian writer living in the Global South?

The study suggested some remedial action for some of the problematic issues raised. Embracing and institutionalizing the culture of digital humanities and libraries in Universities and Colleges will help to build an impact digital media competency or application as part of media literacy orientation. This becomes imperative as e-books/libraries continually strengthen their unique advantages of accessibility, flexibility, search-ability, and convenience (SciVerse 2009:6). The new generation of young writers that often emerge from these departments will not have to contest with issues of digital migration, themselves being digital denizens and no longer immigrants. A global academic study on the value of content and online books by Elsevier & SMS shows that researchers will use e-books if they have access to them; reminding writers of Darwin's evolution thesis that "it's not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change" (SciVerse, 2009:2).

However, one must understand that developing digital humanities will also involve hardware/software that requires regular power supply, functional computers, big data and local/wide area networking; even as digital media scholars and critics have also begun to bother about digital waste in the ecosystem, and how to manage the impact of this "material output of our digital lives" which spans the whole gamut of "extraction, processing, assembly, distribution, consumption and disposal" (Aslinger & Huntemann, 2014:11; also, <www.digitalhumanities.org>); without excluding the human impact on the teachers/writers who will either have to re-train, upgrade or lose their jobs within ill-funded education systems.

Creative writers on their part must exorcise the morbid suspicion of new media technology, and move from the acquisition of ordinary media literacy to media competence, to become diverse and active gardeners in the digital ecosystem as Dijck would put it (2013:176). This will empower creative writers to not only understand the digital *langue* but also master the intricacies of its passageways and inter-negotiation with the mega-community where the local action would make a global impact with appropriate rewards. Local chapters of Writers' guilds should actively meet and organize writing workshops and critique sessions to upgrade members' writing and critical skills. This might also be another way of encouraging reading culture and discouraging media 'aliteracy' in the Global South; even as writers themselves must recognize the convergence of media and the necessity for digital migration, even if only to access the stream of global literary culture.

Whereas digitization impacts on the creative industry in a technological manner, local writers' guilds and policymakers for creative culture should strive to balance the notion of "indigenizing" literature towards local developmental needs since media "content must be appropriate to the audience [without which] development will not occur" (Rogers in Williams,

1987:210); and making it easier for writers to access travel grants to writing workshops to enable local writers occasionally connect with the global literary community outside virtual connectivity. The cultural content of localizing literary products may not necessarily take away the notion of a "national literature" or "world literature" as feared (Eghagha, 2004:51) because literature must have local/humanistic relevance to thrive in any economic sense.

Furthermore, local captains of industry and political elite should imbibe the global culture of investing in the development of literary culture by going beyond quick-returns investment in advertising media and popular actuality programmes. They can also establish research and writing grants, juicy endowments and literary awards, all of which will encourage the evolution of local benchmarks for artistic excellence which will in time also begin to influence other entrenched national artistic benchmarks that have tended to exclude the "other" writers especially from Africa and the Global South. In an era of hyper-capitalism, where intangible cultural goods are receiving more attention than old modernist notions of gross material wealth and acquisitions, it will benefit Nigerian capitalists and political-money moguls to join the global shift towards investment in post-industrial culture which Jeremy Rifkin describes as the "age of access"; wherein, "the struggle between culture and commerce is a struggle between intrinsic and utility values"; and remembering that it's "only by making a local culture a coherent, self-aware political force will we be able to establish its critical role in the scheme of human society" (2000:257). This will also give voice to local creative participants to contribute to the regional/global emergence of "innovative policies that encourage creativity through deliberative cultural politics that are inclusive and emancipatory" (Singh, 2011:146). The choices we make today in different capacities as cultural creators/writers, producers, consumers, teachers or policymakers, especially for global literary culture, may determine our common future and survival of our national/global culture, because the latter is fast becoming the indisputable "crude oil" of our global post-industrial, neo-liberal economy.

Notes

[1]This work partly inspired by Jean & John Comaroff's *Theory from the South: or, how Euro-America is evolving Toward Africa;* also examines the disruption of traditional geographies, cores and peripheries; and stresses the need to relocate southwards and eastwards in order to understand other productive modes as a way of making sense of contemporary global transformations.

[2]In a personal communication, Paul Ugor's comments in part about the initial pan-African design of this project which, according to him, "calls our attention to this generational change [which] has something to do with larger/global technological and scientific shifts linked to the ever-growing forces of ruthless financial capitalism that continue to heap material resources on one part of the world, the north, leaving the so-called developing south in chronic economic, cultural, and … intellectual decline. [This study…] throws up important questions about what digitization might mean for intellectual work in Africa, a topic rarely broached in the ongoing debates about media globalization in Africa" (October 23rd, 2015).

[3]Some of these publishers and their operational locations include: Minson, Port-Harcourt; McMillan, London; Words, Rhyme & Rhythm, Online; New Nigeria Press Supplement; Treasure Books, Yenagoa; Sienne Books, Uyo; Sevhage Publishers, Makurdi; Chapuga Publishers, Benue; Gossamer Publishers, Makurdi; NPS, Ibadan; Imlag Publishers, Kwara;

Oscar Publishing Co. & Izu Prints; Kunlaj Publishers, Ibadan; Divine Publishers, Benue; Roselight Publishers; Euneeks & Associates, Kaduna; Kraft Books, Ibadan; Isis Communication & Windmill Book Company, Lagos; Stone Touch Communications; NDA Kaduna Press; Okson; Cape Publishers, Owerri; JAS Publishers, Anyigba; Noble Publishers, Onitsha; and, Classic Books, Minna. Others are Blissbay Publishers, Lagos; Liberty Press, Bauchi; Innerock, Ebonyi; Nnamndi Press, Imo; Xlibris, USA?; Cel-Bez Publisher; Minarib Accord Ltd, Abuja; Pacific, Obosi; Mareshah Ltd, Lagos; Caltop Publishing, Ibadan; Dignity Publishing Ltd, Owerri; Cheery Brain, Owerri; and, ROM Publishers, Lagos. Not many of them are publishers in the real sense of the word.

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Hospital Tweets on H1N1 and Death Panels: Text Mining the Situational Crisis Communication Response to Health Crises and Controversies

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Abstract: This thematic and text mining analysis interrogates hospital tweets about H1N1 flu and healthcare reform in 2009 using the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) and manufactured controversies, or casting doubt on scientific and medical consensus to delay or thwart public policy. Hospitals minimally responded to both issues and situated themselves as neutral, ambivalent agents separate from the government and skeptics. Tweets that recycled links to news sources inherited limitations that plagued media coverage in their incapacity for quick response. To handle controversies, an adapted SCCT might require more direct and dialogic strategies, as well as defensive and offensive tactics, such as increasing hosted events, outreach, and statements of expert opinion.

Keywords: social media, crisis communication, Twitter, controversies, health communication

Introduction

This thematic and text mining analysis of recent history in health communication examines hospital responses to two simultaneously emerging medical issues during the summer of 2009 in the United States—the H1N1 outbreak and public concerns about death panels in healthcare reform legislation—in the context of two models of crisis communication: the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), a framework for how organizations should respond as crises emerge, and manufactured controversies where actors initiate or sustain suspicion and fear about scientific consensus when it is in their interest to do so.

Controversies have the potential to shape public behavior and organizational action. They are at the crux of many contemporary debates over public and environmental health such as suspicions about vaccines causing autism despite experts proclaiming otherwise, skepticism about climate change and global warming, scandals about abortion clinics selling fetus parts, and a host of other issues facing contemporary society. Hospitals can play a vital role in negotiating both crises and controversies, because they provide health services to the public, and they set standards of healthcare and outreach. An analysis of the H1N1 crisis and healthcare reform controversy in recent history is warranted because it is a high-profile example of an emerging and very pervasive rhetorical phenomena in health and science communication—namely, manufactured controversies. This study sought to characterize

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organizational responses to the healthcare reform controversy by comparing it to the response to a crisis that developed in tandem, through the lens of a common response model —the situational crisis communication theory.

The following research article presents a literature review of Twitter use in healthcare settings and of the theories that inform the analysis. Next, the methods section describes how the sample was gathered and analyzed. The results section shares the main findings—namely, that the overall sentiment communicated in the tweets was typically positive, but tentative rather than certain. Furthermore, only a few hospitals used Twitter to promote offline events and answered community-specific questions. Hospitals also retweeted and reshared pre-existing media coverage of events rather than disseminated original content or opinions about emerging events in their communities. Overall, they only minimally used tactics outlined in the situational crisis communication theory. Finally, the article offers recommendations for organizational communication in crisis and controversy scenarios.

Ultimately, the paper finds that hospitals employ a more robust set of situational crisis strategies for communicating about the flu crisis than resolving questions and worries about insurance reform controversy. Furthermore, the situational crisis communication model may require adaptations and additions of emerging strategies used, such as demonstrating present effort and relying on others' expertise.

Literature Review

Twitter has become a preferred medium of responsiveness in crisis communication. Organizations use it for its capacity for immediate, timely response (Yin, et al. 2012; Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011; Xu & Wu, 2015). They post general advice, time-sensitive info, and organizational response efforts—both theirs and others (Bowdon, 2014). They use Twitter to discover public fears and trending topics and to provide timely information in response to these concerns, such timely responses to help build community trust in organizational competency (Brengarth & Mujkic, 2016; Lachlan, Spence, & Lin, 2014; Wendling, Radisch, & Jacobzone, 2013). To engage the public, they typically tweet original posts and hyperlinks (Park, Reber, & Chon, 2015). Relevant information on Twitter dwindles the more protracted the crisis; therefore, immediate responses are important to handle with best practices (Spence, Lachlan, Lin, & del Greco, 2015).

Organizations and the public use Twitter during crises to post time-specific storm advice, to share and re-tweet response efforts of organizations, and to provide post-storm updates; however, misspellings, inconsistent terminology, and word ordering have been known to prevent the public and organizations from coalescing around consistent hashtags during recent crises such as New Zealand earthquakes (Bowdon, 2014; Potts, Seitzinger, Jones, & Harrison, 2011). Organizations and the public favor traditional over social media during crises, but the participatory nature of social media can augment and complement traditional interactions (Takahashi, Tandoc, & Carmichael, 2015). Combinations of data streams, analytical tools, bots, and dashboards can help trace and respond to evolving events (Tegtmeyer, Potts, & Hart- Davidson, 2012).

Twitter also tends to proliferate rumors and misinformation. Crowdsourcing potentially serves as a filter that can correct and contain misinformation (Mendoza, Poblete, & Castillo, 2011). But misinformation propagates at a rate too wide and fast for effective filtering (Hill, 2012; Starbird, Maddock, Orand, Achterman, & Mason, 2014). Rumors and lies can spread as fast as facts on Twitter (Jin et al., 2014). Therefore, organizations who do not both provide facts and address rumors may damage their credibility and invite suspicion (Dalrymple, Young, & Tully, 2016).

Social media can serve as an interstitial space between official and unofficial modes of communication for accomplishing important communicative work such as catalyzing conversations and cultivating relationships with a broader audience (McNely, 2011). They can help organizations shape self-consciousness, self-reflection, and public perception through sharing timely content that humanizes the organization with employee narratives, that interacts with comments, and that orients the public with pictures of organizational landmarks and artifacts (McNely, 2012). In turn, social media might help shape perceptions of events as they emerge (Roundtree, Dorsten, & Reif, 2011). However, in order to make an impact, organizations can use more dialogical approaches to engage the public, who may be reluctant and less engaged with the organization online than organizations expect or hope; more interaction and attending to the public's expectations and patterns of social media use are required (Roundtree 2018, Roundtree 2016).

Thus far, studies on the online response to H1N1 (a.k.a., swine) flu pandemic of 2009 have described factors impacting public messaging on the event. Organizations tended to use traditional rather than social media to address public emotions about H1N1 (Liu & Kim, 2011). Media coverage sensationalized reports of H1N1-related deaths and embedded overtones of skepticism when reporting prevention methods (Goodall, Sabo, Cline, & Egbert, 2012). In the U.S., the general public used Delicious, an online bookmarking system, to check the CDC website (Freberg, Palenchar, & Veil, 2013). Independent media and whistleblowers in China used unofficial and extra-institutional risk communication venues such as alternative newspapers to end-run government censorship of information (Ding, 2009). Internet coverage in China tended to fixate on travelers as carriers whose personal mistakes put them at risk (Ding, 2013). Online news outlets used headlines to shape public opinion about the flu; coverage shifted from replacing the use of the term "swine flu" to using the term H1N1 and framing the disease as a medical concern, a battle, a disaster, a visitor, a war, and a victimizer (Angeli, 2012).

Similarly, studies on the online response to healthcare reform legislation have evaluated the quality of coverage. The White House website published community discussions on healthcare reform, including comments about changes to healthcare payment, insurance coverage, and quality of care (Abroms & Craig Lefebvre, 2009). Official messaging from the government and policy makers was similar (Kiousis, Park, Kim, & Go, 2013). Newspaper coverage of the 2009 reforms improved over coverage of the Clinton Era proposal by providing equal numbers of articles for and against reform (S. Adams & Cozma, 2011). But, the media was slow to moderate the disagreements between conservatives and progressives, and they failed to challenge overstatements such as the reforms being "socialist" (Skinner, 2012). Misinformation was a major tactic used against both Clinton's and Obama's proposed reforms (Nyhan, 2010). Finally, the public tended to use hashtags for connecting to trusted sources, thereby sharing information through and between otherwise disconnected networks (Jones, 2014).

Defining Crises

Crises are defined as a threat or hazard that can have negative ramifications if not handled properly (Coombs, 2007a). Crises are risk manifested (Heath & O'Hair, 2010). Risk is the likelihood of a hazard, and a crisis is the expression and experience of the hazard. Negative ramifications can include threats to financial profit and public safety and loss of organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007b; Dilenschneider, 2000). For organizations, crises

can allow for corrections and revisions to public perception of their brand (Bechler, 2004; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003).

Risk is the likelihood that a harmful, painful or otherwise bad outcome will occur in a certain period of time (Deakin, Alexander, & Kerridge, 2009; Kaplan & Garrick, 1981). Risk is a newer and different concept than hazard; hazards are the harmful circumstances that emerge, and risks involve making systematic calculations that measure and express those hazards (Beck, 1992). Advances in science and technology spawn new hazards and tools such as computers and high-end statistics to calculate their risk (J. Adams, 1999; Bernstein & Bernstein, 1996).

Subjective factors influence risk. The public tends to view risk with fear and anxiety about loss of control (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003). Socio-demographic factors such as age, race, education and culture or political views can affect how people perceive risk as it pertains to their lives (Slimak & Dietz, 2006; Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1980). Different people perceive the same hazard differently (Slovic, 2016). Therefore, risk is a social construct, not only because societal advancements breed new hazards and new methods for assessing them, but also because personal and psychological factors influence risk calculations.

Timing is also an important feature of crises. Typically, crises happen suddenly, call for a sudden response, and affect an organization's' performance and reputation (Heath, 2004). Crises will happen at unpredictable times and inopportune moments (Coombs, 2014). Also, how and when they are managed makes a difference in whether events evolve into a crisis and how long crises endure (Cohn, 2000; Coombs, 2014). If crisis messaging is timed properly and if organizations give objective information about the crisis, it may reduce the need for restoring reputation with apologies (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012; Palen, Vieweg, Liu, & Hughes, 2009). Small changes in message timing can make a difference in stabilizing the situation versus causing more confusion and chaos around the crisis (Seeger, 2002). Fast timing can also help garner media coverage given their interest in news scoops (Arpan & Pompper, 2003).

Defining Controversies

By comparison, manufactured controversies also involve assessments of crises and risks. Per Leah Ceccarelli, manufactured controversies occur when, for political and ideological reasons, organizations and other agents use appeals to fairness to open debates in the public arena about findings with large consensuses in the scientific community (Ceccarelli, 2011, 2013; Fuller, 2013). Ceccarelli cites three cases —HIV-AIDS skeptics in Africa, global warming deniers and intelligent design advocates in the US—to explain controversies.

In controversies, stakeholders cast suspicion on consensus assessments of risk. Political parties, industry lobbyists, and other partisans have vested interests in the depiction of scientific findings, so they capitalize on postmodern rhetorical strategies and position themselves as actors marginalized by an establishment who excludes their ideas to maintain power and status. Controversy manufacturers denigrate peer and grant application review as mechanisms by which the scientific orthodoxy protects itself from legitimate challenges and paradigm shifts. Furthermore, they inflate or deflate their calculations of risks and harm in order to debunk the opposition's claims or emphasize their own.

Steven Fuller agrees that entities use rhetorical maneuvering to manufacture controversies, but he interprets these efforts—even allegedly craven, self-interested ones—as natural extensions of scientific inquiry (Fuller, 2013). "If science is ultimately about following the truth wherever it may lead, then one should expect inquirers to diverge in their

paths, as they extend the same knowledge base in various directions, only some of which will bear substantial fruit, sway colleagues, and have other positive outcomes" (p. 754). According to Fuller, both manufactured controversies and scientific consensus are achieved for political, personal and subjective motivations: "[T]here is no reason to presume either that consensus is normal in science or that whatever consensus exists in science is anything more than an institutionally sanctioned opinion about theories whose ultimate prospects are still up for grabs" (p. 754). For Fuller, "manufactured controversy" is a redundant term—any controversy involves manufacturing, as does scientific consensus, too.

For Cecarrelli and Fuller, actual hazards and risks are at stake. Genuine concerns about the serious consequences and penalties of delayed adoption of scientific consensus underpin this debate. However, for those who oppose the consensus position, seemingly unfounded skepticism, fear and risk assessments also count as immediate hazards. Per Fuller, orthodox positions are themselves steeped in subjectivity—namely, "American 'liberal' sensibility that recoils at the thought of HIV-AIDS denial, global warming skepticism, and antievolution" (p. 754). The debate tests science's disciplinary capacity for establishing truth. In public debates, scientific consensus should outweigh pseudo-science and special interest funded counter studies, but it often does not. Whether scientific consensus should be re-litigated in the court of public opinion, it often is. For practical purposes, then, it usually falls on social media and communication managers to help uphold the value of scientific consensus when controversies are being manufactured.

I argue that manufactured controversies are merely a phase of crisis development and risk assessment where estimations of risks and hazards might have achieved scientific unanimity, but not wide public consensus. In this stage, risks and hazards are subjected to contention and debate, particularly when they seemingly threaten political, personal, cultural and similar closely-held stakes. The more polar the estimations of risk and harm, the greater the controversy. Advances in science enable manufactured controversies. The methods for predicting and making an assertion of scientific and medical fact about the efficacy of drugs, the inevitability of climate action, and the integrity of science curriculum sans intelligent design are themselves prospective and calculated with modest degrees of uncertainty (Roundtree, 2013).

Timing plays an important role in manufactured controversies, as in crises. With crises, organizations cannot necessarily control the timing of crises events. However, people can initiate controversies by painting the details of an event in dramatic and frightening ways, and they can influence the pace of crises by regulating and standardizing their messaging about how harmful the repercussions of the event are. Timely response is crucial to managing manufactured controversies because time and subjectivity influence them, as they do risk.

Manufactured controversies are imagined, or prospective threats or hazards stoked by entities with subjective stakes in calculating risk. If risk is the likelihood of harm, then manufacturing controversy is a process by which risks are evaluated and misevaluated. Manufacturing controversies involves early, frequent calculation and recalculation of risk-based often on bias or emotion, not evidence. Crises can emerge when, through the process of raising questions and stoking controversy, the experts and the public fail to effectively negotiate the terms of risk upon which to base decision making and policy writing. Therefore, timing is important to engaging the public during the period when controversies are manufactured.

Controversy studies have found that the traditional practices of scientific hedging (e.g., understating the epistemological status of scientific claims) enable alternative interpretations of scientific findings otherwise accepted by scientific consensus (Kolodziejski, 2014). Some events such as the Food and Drug Administration's fraught bid

to regulate ephedra, a dietary supplement, are not controversies because the burden of proof within the scientific community had not been established (Paroske, 2012). The current study extends this research by examining controversies from official and organizational responses to them, rather than from the rhetorical perspective of the scientific community or the general public.

Responding to Crises and Controversies: The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Ceccarelli catalogs the failings of the scientific community's responses to intelligent design advocates and AIDS and global warming skeptics. They ignore the counterarguments lobbed at them by the controversy manufacturers. Scientists consider manufactured counterarguments so incredulous that they do not respond to them point by point, even when the public sides with the controversy manufacturers. Scientists also come across as closed-minded or defensive by reverting to appeals to the authority and credibility of scientific findings rather than contextualizing and historicizing those findings as legitimate products of scientific debate and, ultimately, consensus. Furthermore, based on the two additional strategies for manufacturing crises—stoking suspicions and shifting the focus away from risk—rebuttals to counter-arguments should also refocus the discourse on direct risks and demonstrate the fallacies, overstatements, and comparable value of indirect risks.

Ceccarelli prescribes response strategies very similar to those outlined in the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). The SCCT is a popular model of best practices for organizational response to a crisis (Coombs 2007a). The SCCT outlines both a model for understanding a crisis from an organization's perspective, as well as strategies to protect their reputation from blame or negative attribution when a crisis emerges.

The way that a crisis is framed can affect how people assess the cause of a crisis and how they attribute blame. Crisis response in the SCCT model includes primary denial strategies (such as attacking the accuser, scapegoating, justifying the organization's position, compensating and apologizing) and secondary counteracting strategies (such as reminding people about past good works, focusing on past praise, praising stakeholders, or showing the organization's own vulnerabilities or victimization in the crisis) (Coombs 2007a). In the case of manufactured controversies, stakeholders who want to perpetuate a crisis might use the same self-protective strategies—i.e., attacking opponents, justifying their position, focusing on past praise or publications, etc.—to initiate or sustain a crisis. However, per Ceccarelli, some of the tactics outlined by the SCCT would be ineffective for tamping down or unraveling manufactured controversies if you are part of the establishment or the orthodoxy; denying and scapegoating in specific would only make an organization look further defensive and, therefore, guilty as charged by the crisis manufacturers.

Research Questions

Two practical questions grounded in prior research underpin the current study:

(1) What were the similarities and differences between how hospitals communicated about a health crisis such as H1N1 versus a controversy of alleged "death panels" authorized by the healthcare reform bill?

(2) Can the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) address controversies?

Methods

I conducted an inductive and deductive thematic analysis to identify SCCT strategies employed in hospitals' tweets during that summer. The process was modeled after guidelines from Lindlof and Taylor (2010) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). Common threads of analytical framework throughout these guidelines include reading the data, noting common themes and dimensions of these themes. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane also allow for developing codes from a theoretical framework through which to read the data.

The dataset included 5138 tweets from 50 hospitals (one from each state in the U.S.) purposively chosen from the Social Media Healthcare List currently kept by the Mayo Clinic. The list represents hospitals interested in sharing social media best practices. Data collection was restricted to publicly available Twitter posts for the time period between May 2009 and April 2010. Twitter Advanced Search was used to collect these tweets. I limited the investigation to the months when new coverage began and peaked for both topics, then when the legislation and pandemic passed (Hopkins, 2013; Meirick & Bessarabova, 2016).

Text mining software identified frequencies of main terms used. Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), a natural language processor, calculated percentages of words that reflect different emotions and tones using a group of dictionaries tested and validated by linguistic research for psychologically-relevant categories (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

From the larger set of tweets, I identified those pertaining to healthcare reform and the flu. I used keyword search in Excel, Twitter Advanced Search, and Adobe Acrobat to isolate tweets with the following keywords and root words: flu, H1N1, vaccine, insurance, reform, death panel and Obamacare, healthcare, health care, bill, and law. In total, 523 tweets discussed these topics—361 tweets regarding the flu and 162 regarding healthcare reform.

I performed a second stage of coding on the 523 tweets pertaining to H1N1 and healthcare reform. NVivo, Microsoft Word and Excel (a qualitative data analysis software) were used to systematize the coding process. The tweets were open coded by the author to broad themes and patterns of activity pertaining to healthcare reform and the H1N1 using inductive reasoning, first by reading and re-reading all tweets to identify recurring content topics (Aronson, 1995). I used deductive coding to apply SCCT strategies to themes from open coding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). I used a template analytic technique, wherein I developed code definitions and a coding template from key readings on the SCCT, used to read and re-read the tweets for their relevance to the SCCT. I labeled tweets as either an attempt at denying or counteracting, as well as the particular applicable maneuver (attacking the accuser, scapegoating, justifying the organization's position, compensating and apologizing, reminding people about past good works, focusing on past praise, praising stakeholders, or showing the organization's own vulnerability or victimization). Each qualitatively coded tweet could reflect several topics, so the frequencies of codes do not correspond to the number of tweets.

To explore and organize the case background, I used rhetorical situation theory, comprised of an exigence (or the social problem or circumstances surrounding the rhetorical act or response), an audience (or the people to whom the response is directed), and constraints (or pressures from the audience or circumstances that limit the response) (Biesecker, 1989; Bitzer, 1968; Vatz, 1973). The framework facilitates triangulation of data to capture and represent with more rich, layered data the circumstances and stakes of the case (Meyer 2001).

About the Case

The two healthcare issues that emerged during the summer of 2009 — the HINI epidemic and "socialist" healthcare reforms that would yield government-sponsored death panels — demonstrate similarities and differences between a traditional crisis and a manufactured controversy. Both involved external pressures pertaining to financial cost and public safety.

Exigence

In June 2009, the World Health Organization declared that an outbreak of a new strain of the flu—H1N1 or swine flu—first diagnosed in Mexico had spread globally and become a pandemic (WHO, 2009). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency in response to the outbreak. By June, there were over 17,000 cases of H1N1 in the United States and the pandemic had affected over 70 countries (CDC, 2010; Flu.gov, 2014; WHO, 2010). During the first two weeks of the crisis, over 60 articles in the U.S. news media covered the pandemic (Liu & Kim, 2011). HINI had emerged as an external threat to public safety and financial profit. Millions were lost by the pork and travel industry, and millions were spent by the U.S. government to respond to the pandemic (Johnson, 2009).

That same summer, the U.S. was engaged in a debate over healthcare reform. The number of uninsured had only exacerbated an already weak economy; 46.3 million Americans went uninsured in 2009 (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010). Providing health services to the uninsured in the U.S. costs an estimated $86 billion, only $30 billion of which the uninsured pay out of pocket (Institute of Medicine, 2009). About $1,100 a year of insured families' healthcare premiums went to paying the difference (Harbage & Furnas, 2009). In June 2009, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi released a discussion draft of the legislation. The draft evolved into House Bill 3200, the Affordable Health Choice Act (AHCA) of 2009, introduced on July 14, 2009.

For both issues, public safety and financial stakes were high. Cases of H1N1 were on the rise and travel and hog industry profits were on the decline. Also, the uninsured were unable to afford preventative care, which financially cost governmental agencies and increased insurance premiums (KFF, 2009; NCSL, 2011).

Audience

The general public and the providers who would administer their healthcare were both very interested in events surrounding H1N1 and healthcare reform. Cultural differences played a part in how different countries responded to H1N1 and how much info they needed—the more vulnerable the population, the more they needed information (Galarce, Minsky, & Viswanath, 2011; Wong & Sam, 2010). Demographics influenced the venues where vulnerable populations seek information—older populations on TV and younger, on social media (Galarce, Minsky, & Viswanath, 2011). The public sought information on Twitter when the crisis affects them personally; they seek out time- and location-sensitive information to address their needs (Yun et al., 2016). Providers wanted timely information from national and international agencies and by email or short message services (SMS), depending on their age, and the information that agencies provided information tailored for technical audiences (Lagassé et al., 2011; Revere, Painter, Oberle, & Baseman, 2014). There

were no major arguments about H1N1 hazards. Audiences primarily sought information to make decisions.

In contrast, the general public and healthcare providers held different suspicions about healthcare reform policies, particularly those around end-of-life coverage. Legislators on session break hosted raucous town hall meetings in several states that became shouting matches over the proposed changes. Persistent rumors about death panels and "government-sponsored euthanasia" emerged as early as July when Rush Limbaugh and other conservative pundits repeated the suspicions of former lieutenant governor of New York and opponent of federal healthcare legislation Betsy McCaughey that the AHCA would require Medicare patients to have counseling to "tell them how to end their life sooner" (Richert, 2009). By August 1, Michele Bachman, John Boehner and other politicians were repeating claims about "government sponsored euthanasia" in press releases and on the floor of the House of Representatives (Nyhan, 2010). The "death panels" idea originated as a misreading or exaggeration of a particular provision of the AHCA that would reimburse health consumers for optional counseling about end-of-life decisions—a provision that was ultimately removed from the bill in mid-August. These ideas percolated and intensified over social media such as Twitter and Facebook, particularly when people in positions of authority such as Sarah Palin used social media to renounce the veracity of mainstream coverage (Lawrence & Schafer, 2012; Veenstra, Hong, & Liu, 2010). Other debatable characterizations of the AHCA emerged during this summer of heated town hall meetings—including notions that the AHCA as tyranny and a rationing of healthcare services.

To be clear, the AHCA inspired legitimate fears about prospective hazards. For example, in 2009 several companies, trade associations and other organizations—including the American Wind Energy Association, Comcast, Yahoo, the Gap, the National Rifle Association, the Knights of Columbus, the office of the governor of Indiana, 1-800 Contacts and Hormel Foods, among others—lobbied that the bill not be written in a way that puts an onerous burden on employers for healthcare coverage (Beckel, 2010). In June 2009, the American Medical Association opposed creating any government-sponsored insurance plan that would permit "government control of healthcare decisions or mandatory physician participation in any insurance plan" (Pear, 2009). A smaller group, Physicians for a National Health Program, supported the idea of a single-payer program for the U.S. (Remsen, 2009). Critics from across the political spectrum asked lingering questions about controlling medical costs. However, suspicions about "socialist" healthcare reforms that would institute government-sanctioned death panels were based on speculation, not evidence.

Constraints

Both events were constrained by the timing and the timeline of emerging evidence and events. Because the events surrounding the H1N1 event were familiar, given the perennial nature of flu season, the terms of hazard and potential harm associated with H1N1 were more established and enjoyed more consensus of belief than did the terms of the AHCA legislation in general, and the fears about death panels in specific. Organizations and media outlets shared ample information, often to the point of overwhelming, and media outlets change the metaphors they used to describe the pandemic—from H1N1 as a scientific and medical concern, to a battle, to a natural disaster and ultimately a visitor from foreign lands—in response and reflection to public concerns and anxieties (Angeli, 2012; Locatelli, LaVela, Hogan, Kerr, & Weaver, 2012). Furthermore, the consequences of H1N1 (i.e., illness and potential death) were evident in cases reported around the country. Regarding the AHCA legislation, the hazards were more prospective or future-oriented than H1N1.

Several confirmed cases of H1N1 were diagnosed, but the AHCA legislation had yet to be finalized or take effect. Public outcry over the AHCA stoked high before any actual policies were enacted. Even fears about death panels were unfounded in the summer of 2009, because the provision that inspired those fears had been eliminated from drafts of the legislation. Furthermore, suspicions concerning death panels were political and emotional and, therefore, more difficult to assuage with evidence or appeals to logic such as the removal of the so-called "death panel" clause (Nyhan, 2010). Distrust of the government, lack of expertise to understand the complicated legislation, and unfamiliarity about end-of-life terminology in the general public propelled death panel suspicions (Frankford, 2015). Therefore, any presentation of the facts would have to accommodate this wide range of concerns. Furthermore, organizations would have to respond to misperceptions covered in some politicized media outlets. These misperceptions were opinions, but were being treated as equal to the fact that the legislation no longer included end-of-life provisions (Lawrence & Schafer, 2012; Meirick & Bessarabova, 2016).

Perceived financial and health ramifications were at stake in both the H1N1 crisis and the debate over death panels. However, audiences of the H1N1 outbreak were global and were witnessing real-time updates about diagnosed cases in their communities. Hospitals were the first line of response in the case of H1N1. For example, when the vaccine took slower than expected to produce and distribute, and the delay raised public fear and suspicion, hospitals had info from official sources to share with the public. In contrast, hospitals were learning about details of the healthcare reform legislation in tandem with the public. The terms of reform were changing, and stakeholders (i.e., legislators, healthcare consumers, healthcare providers, etc.) shared no consensus. In the case of the flu crisis, the antagonist—H1N1 virus—was clear. But several antagonists presented themselves in the reform controversy (i.e., rising costs, the government, lack of single-payer care, a broken employer-based system, etc.)

Results

Overall, the hospitals published 5138 tweets between May 2009 and April 2010. LIWC analysis revealed that the overall tone remained positive during the time frame in question. See Figure 1. Tweets overall were less tentative as events progresses. Overall, they used few hedges and qualifications or other indications of uncertainty and tentativeness. See Figure 2.

Only 523 of the 5138 total tweets (10.18%) specifically mentioned flu or H1N1 (n=162, 3.15%) or healthcare reform (n=361, 7.03%). No tweets mentioned “death panels” in specific. Hospitals tweeted over two times more about the flu than healthcare reform.

The positive sentiment for flu tweets crested and remained relatively consistent between July 2009 and February 2010. The negative sentiment of flu tweets was consistently lower throughout. In contrast, the tweets about reform achieved higher but more inconsistent and in flux positivity throughout. Negative tweets about reform were consistently lower than positive tweets, but were equally inconsistent and in flux. Flu and reform tweets were mostly present-oriented. Reform posts were more past-orientated in late 2009, then more future-focused in 2010. See Figures 3, 4 and 5.

Events as Exigence Response

To respond to emerging events, hospitals used Twitter to promote their own **events** (all n=81, 16.8%; flu 77, 21.3%; reform n=4, 2.4%) where they engage the public. Hospitals made more efforts to engage the public in events about HINI than healthcare reform. For example, hospitals hosted call-in and tweet-in **radio** events (all n=9, 1.7%; flu n=4, 1.1%; reform n=5, 3.1%) for interacting with the public: "Radio on health reform! Call 507-282-1234 for next 25 mins or tweet questions to #mayoradio." Hospitals invited local health professional to assist them in flu response and outreach through **volunteerism** (all n=2, 0.4%). For example, Alaska DHSS attempted to recruit public and provider volunteers in vaccination efforts: "Alaska healthcare providers & facilities that intend to receive and give novel H1N1 vaccinations can pre-register at http://tiny.cc/K4RAt."

Figure 1. Overall Sentiment of 50 Hospital Tweets

Figure 2. Overall Certainty of 50 Hospital Tweets

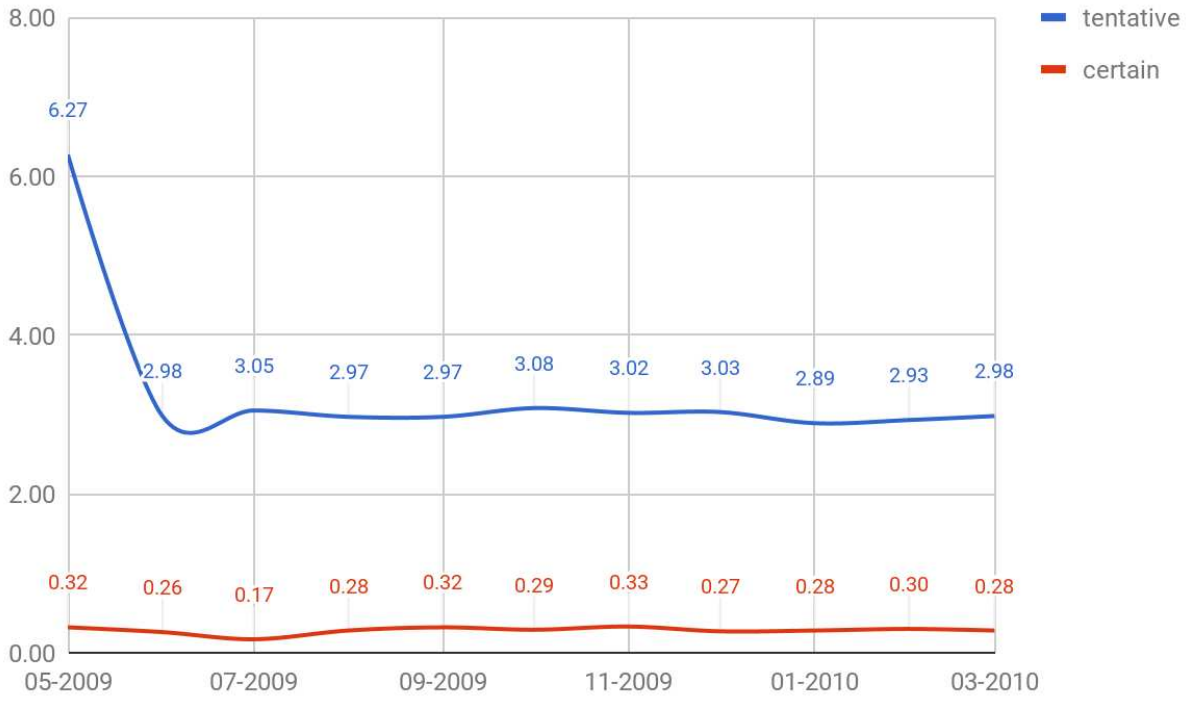


Figure 3. Sentiment of Flu Crisis and Reform Controversy Tweets

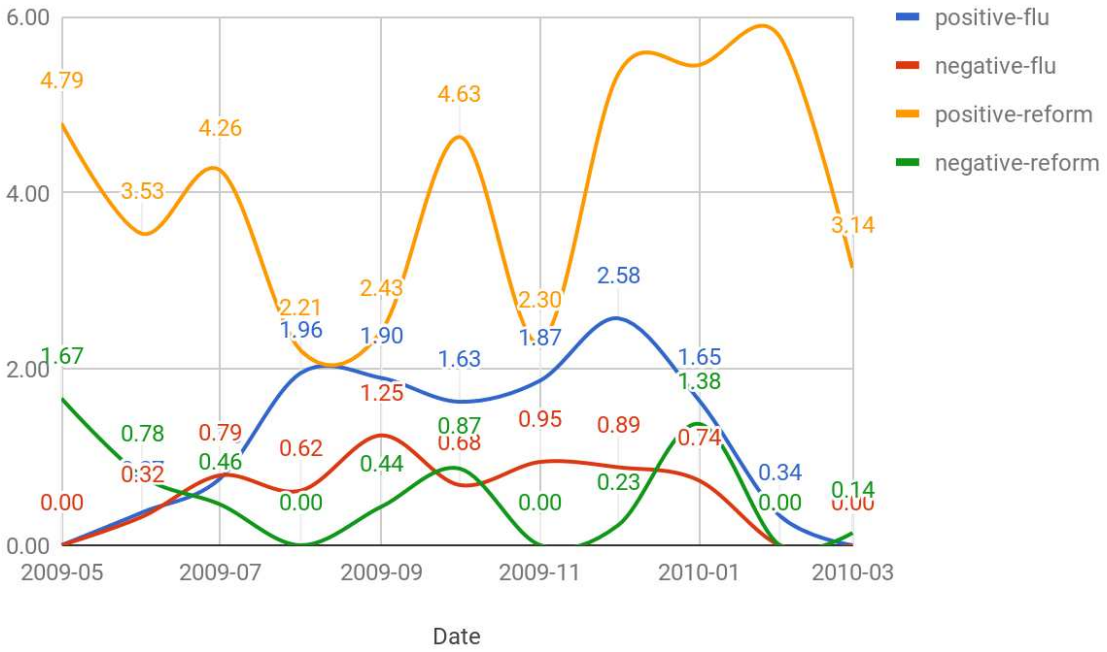


Figure 4. Certainty of Flu Crisis and Reform Controversy Tweets

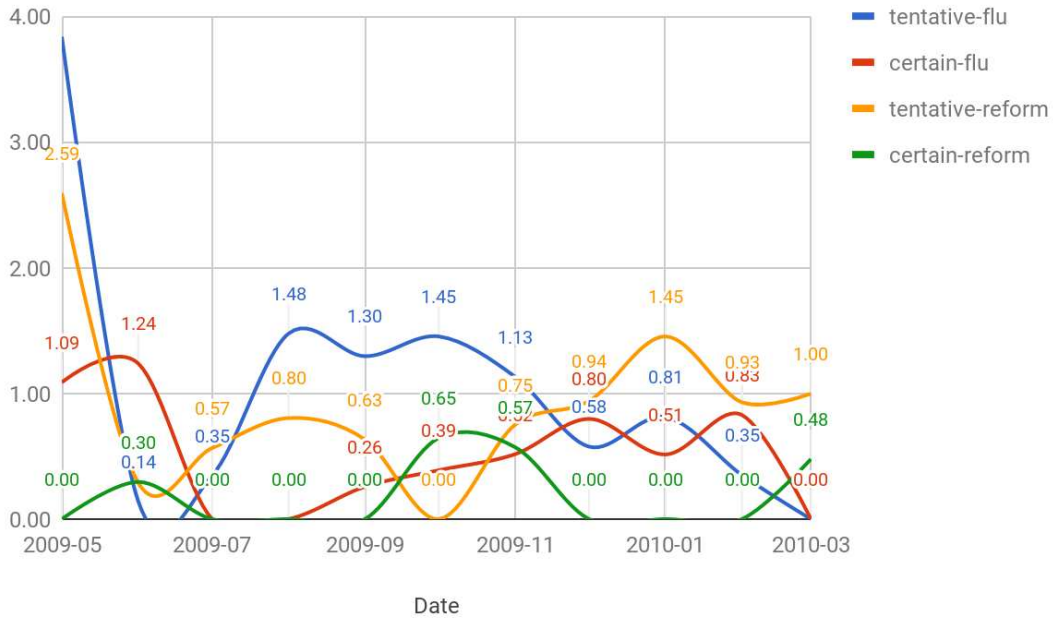
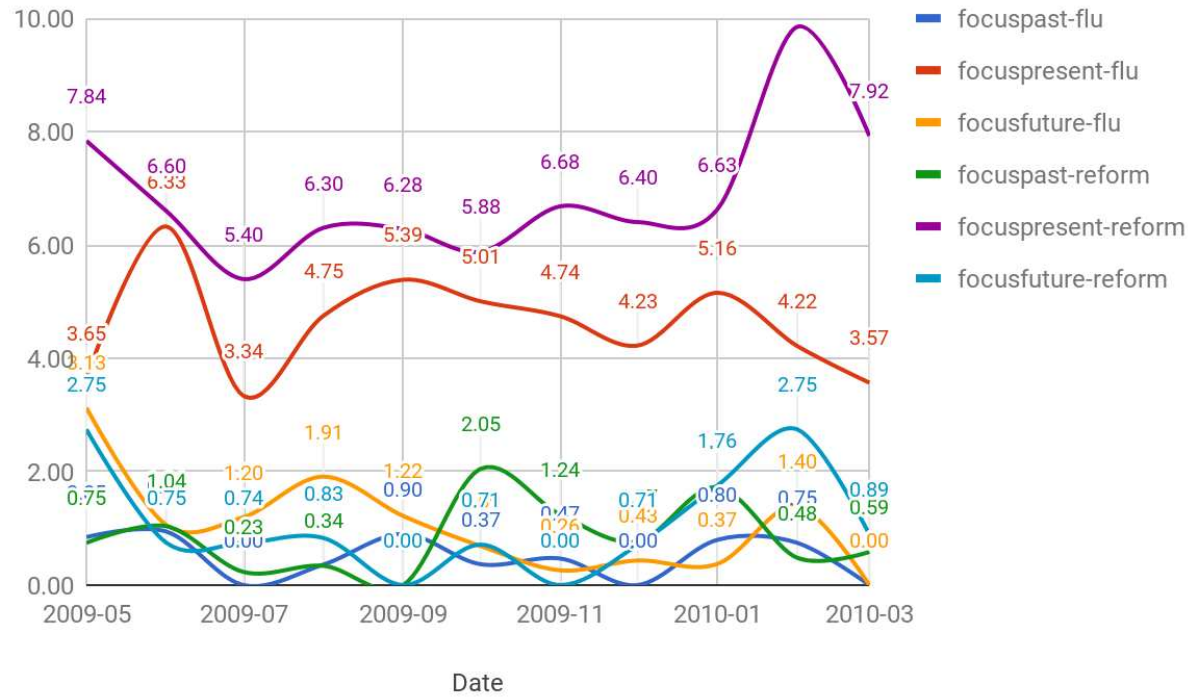


Figure 5. Tense of Flu Crisis and Reform Controversy Tweets



Hospitals also drew attention to national public health **campaigns** (all n=16, 3.1%; flu n=15, 4.2%; reform n=1, 0.6%) for public involvement. For example, Veteran's Health drew attention to an event for H1N1 awareness: "August is National Immunization Month. Read up on H1N1 flu and what you can do to prevent it."

Hospitals also offered **clinics** (all n=29, 5.50%; flu n=28, 7.80%; reform n=1, 0.60%), **discussions** (all n=11, 2.10%; reform n=11, 6.80%) and **summits** (all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%). However, they were less frequent and often pre-recorded or one-directional. For example, Swedish Health provided a link to their CEO discussing the topic over the weekend: "Swedish CEO Dr Rod Hochman took part in good discussion on health-care costs, reform on KUOW Radio's Weekday program." On the other hand, hospitals provided interactive events and opportunities for the community to get involved in efforts to combat H1N1. Hospitals offered events and activities to address the crisis and the controversy, but events around the H1N1 crisis were more interactive and proactive.

Community Focus as Audience Response

To respond to their audience, hospitals attempted to answer the public's **questions** (all n=47, 9.0%; flu n=31, 8.6%; reform n=16, 9.9%). Mayo Clinic's radio and podcast events to answer questions from the public are a good example, here, too. They gathered tweets and emails from the public about healthcare reform to direct the discussion for the regular radio program that they hosted. Mayo Clinic tried to give information and respond to public questions. Pen Bay Medical arranged for experts to answer flu questions at live events: "Special Flu Expert Panel Discussion - Bring your flu questions & concerns to the PBH Health Fair." In contrast, healthcare reform queries often assumed the form of rhetorical questions used as catchy leads to news stories about the legislation: "Want to know how health care reform will ACTUALLY affect you this year? http://bit.ly/b0hegM #HCR." These links lead to pre-scripted lists of answers to frequently asked questions, rather than to live event information. Some hospitals collected questions through **social** media (all n=26, 5.00%; flu n=21, 5.80%; reform n=5, 3.10%) such as Twitter. CHI Health requested "Let's Chat About the Flu: Our docs answer your questions tomorrow. Submit your questions today. (tag with #flualegent) http://bit.ly/3tXI2s."

Hospitals also emphasized the importance of the **local** angle (all n=120, 22.9%; flu=97, 26.9%; reform n=23, 14.2%) in hospital response. Community tweets included messages demonstrating how important the hospitals' state or city community were to them. For example, Alegent Health assured their community how the hospital was keeping the state's public health interests in mind: "For Omaha schools, H1N1 prevention is top priority." Hospitals tried to put the public first and open lines of communication. They stressed their resources and efforts at the community, local level. Hospitals covered H1N1 from a local angle, such as Alegent Health contextualizing flu deaths in the state: "Alegent Health Clinic doc puts the first Nebraska death from swine flu into perspective." Alaska DHSS also reported local efforts to prepare for H1N1: "Municipality of Anchorage health officials discuss with KTVA Channel 11 plans for the city's H1N1 preparations." However, fewer hospitals offered a local spin on reform matters.

Furthermore, hospitals attempted to assuage public fears by reporting on their current services provided such as ongoing community **actions** (all n=25, 4.80%; reform n=25, 15.40%) and **involvement** (all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%). Alegent Health shared how it was already using electronic medical records successfully, a stipulation of the new healthcare reforms: "Nebraska electronic medical records a success! The first statewide system to share medical information among hospitals. "They also foreshadowed how technology would enable many changes proposed by healthcare reform: "New IT is transforming healthcare in America." Hospitals attempted to show their technological preparedness mostly for the reform

controversy. They focused on the community to demonstrate how much the hospitals prioritized public safety, health and good.

Information as Constraints Response

Hospitals made some attempts to frame the conversation and address limitations of time and evidence regarding the controversy and crisis by curating and recirculating pre-existing sources of information.

For H1N1, hospitals provided more **education** (all n=88, 16.80%; flu n=76, 21.10%; reform n=12, 7.40%), **tips** (all n=30, 5.70%; flu n=30, 8.30%) and **info** (all n=14, 2.70%; reform n=14, 8.60%) about the emerging crises (such as epidemiological statistics and clarifications about emerging issues) than events and overall more than for reform. Pen Bay Med. Center shared an NPR story on H1N1: "NPR talks about the Swine Flu vs. Seasonal Flu vaccination situation. Please take note." Similarly, Alaska DHSS provided 60 similar, regular updates about the prevalence of H1N1 in the state: "Total now 57 confirmed cases of H1N1 (Swine) flu in Alaska, including 37 in Anchorage\Mat-Su." Health education tweets invited the public to gain information and tips offered by the hospitals. Henry Ford promoted an article where doctors answer questions about H1N1: "H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Experts." Hospitals posted more education and tips about flu than reform. They posted info such as news updates and public announcements about healthcare reform. For example, Baton Rouge General referred to a news feature about the reforms: "John Stossel--an interesting perspective on the debate about healthcare reform." Hospitals shared external and internal information sources with the public as the information and events emerged. They attempted to keep the public abreast of changing events and dynamics of the controversy and crisis.

Tweets included **citations** (all n=28, 5.40%; flu n=16, 4.40%; reform n=12, 7.40%), **news** (all n=94, 18.00%; flu n=60, 16.60%; reform n=34, 21.00%), **research** (all n=9, 1.70%; flu n=7, 1.90%; reform n=2, 1.20%) and **statistics** (all n=43, 8.20%; flu n=39, 10.80%; reform n=4, 2.50%) from secondary sources. They used the news more heavily to cover reform than the flu. Hospitals embedded links to news coverage of the event, including tweets publicizing hospital experts who were interviewed by the media regarding the crises ("Mayo Clinic CEO Denis Cortese, MD, talked health reform with @charlierose this week") and tweets sharing reports from official health organizations about the crises ("@WHO says H1N1 is 'spreading with unprecedented speed.' Get answers to protect your family here"). Hospitals demonstrated expertise by not only employing experts, but also sharing expert sources.

Hospitals also published **resources** (all n=49, 9.40%; flu n=39, 10.80%; reform n=10, 6.20%) such as blog postings about proposed healthcare reforms in order to provide their perspective on the reforms: "Mayo Clinic Health Policy Blog: Mayo's perspective on current health reform efforts http://bit.ly/3laIEJ." Furthermore, hospitals shared links to websites that served as resources St. Jude kept a website with up -to-date information about swine flu: "St. Jude is closely monitoring the H1N1 pandemic http://kl.am/1Z0x." They did this almost twice as much for the flu than reform. Hospital tweets directed the public to other online and multimedia resources where they posted links to original resources, but also links to external sources worth highlighting. Unfortunately, recirculating media coverage meant that those tweets were subject to the limitations of the media outlets that created the content.

Finally, hospitals offered **opinions** (all n= 23, 4.40%; reform n=23, 14.20%) and **statements** (all n=10, 1.90%; reform n=10, 6.20%) of organizational perspectives on the

emerging controversy. Alegent Health tweeted axioms and words of wisdom aimed at tempering and refocusing the debate, but that could be interpreted different ways. "Providers, consumers are key to reform," they said, which could be construed as a progressive position meant to challenge the pharmaceutical and health insurance company hyper-vigilance and involvement in crafting the language of the law. On the other hand, it could also be seen as an affirmation of conservative ambitions to protect the sanctity of the patient-provider relationship from governmental overreach. Furthermore, reform law supporters might read another quotation—"If we want to reform healthcare, we need to drive personal and individual responsibility"—as justification for the proposed law assessing a tax fee on those who would not buy health insurance once the reform law lowered if not eliminated barriers to coverage. However, the same language about "personal responsibility" could be perceived as a nod to conservative principles that rejected the proposed law on the grounds that it extended the "nanny state" that would require insurance coverage and, thereby, infringe on individual rights to handle healthcare in one's own way.

The Mayo Clinic, on the other hand, left more direct opinions. For example, they write a blog post touting what they see as the virtues of the healthcare reform law draft: "Mayo Clinic sees potential in IMAC health reform proposal http://bit.ly/QeXRo." IMAC stands for the Independent Medicare Advisory Panel, a group of legislators specifically tasked by the President to find savings in the Medicare system without jeopardizing coverage or benefits. They also publish a letter to lawmakers about the need for reform and their ideas about the core principles essential for reform: "Mayo Clinic's Open Letter to US Congress on Healthcare Reform http://bit.ly/6Rbmq." In this case, Mayo Clinic distances itself from the lawmakers by writing a letter of appeal to them, requesting that they proceed with reforms and put quality of care over quantity of medical procedures.

Hospitals offered statements from representatives of the hospital and area leaders on reform such as **experts** (all n=50, 9.60%; flu n=30, 8.30%; reform n=20, 12.30%) and **physicians** (all=59, 11.30%; flu n=40, 11.10%; reform n=19, 11.70%). Mercy Cedar Rapids posted recordings of their local forum: "Mercy President and CEO, Tim Charles, participates in a forum on healthcare reform with area leaders." Such tweets demonstrate the hospitals' community focus.

Hospitals Use SCCT Sparingly and With a Difference

Table 2 lists the SCCT strategies that hospitals used and revised as they addressed the flu crisis and reform controversy. Please also note that the percentages exceed 100% when the code totals exceed the tweet numbers. The code numbers exceed tweet numbers because one tweet could encompass several different codes.

Regarding primary **denial** strategies (all n=487, 93.14%; flu n=313, 86.66%; reform=174, >100.00%), no tweets mentioned death panels or socialized medicine directly. They did, however, address vaccine shortages and delays (all n=69, 13.2%; flu n=69, 19.1%; reform n=0, 0%). No hospitals attacked accusers.

They also used primary denial strategies slightly different than traditional SCCT outlines. For example, rather than blame scapegoats, they **externalized** the issues (all n=292, 55.9%; flu n=203, 56.2%; reform n=89, 55.0%). When providing an explanation of events and their response, they cited **government** involvement (all n=115, 22.00%; flu n=83, 23.00%; reform n=32, 19.80%) and external **guidance** (all n=24, 4.60%; flu n=24, 6.60%) such as

regulations and practical standards that bore upon hospital decision making. For example, Pen Bay Medical Center retweeted governmental recommendations about how they were required to administer the very scarce H1N1 vaccine: "@FluGov: ACIP Provisional Recommendations for the Use of Influenza Vaccines. http://bit.ly/9IaCq5 #H1N1." Furthermore, CHI Health tweeted a call to put politics aside when dealing with reform: "The importance of setting politics aside in order to pass meaningful health reform - a provider's perspective." In these cases, the government and guidance on hospital action are portrayed as hemming in or impacting the hospital's power or control over the crises and controversy.

They also externalized information shared. They tweeted and retweeted crisis and controversy updates from outside sources such as **news** outlets (all n=94, 18.00%; flu n=60, 16.60%; reform n=34, 21.00%), **media** (all n=10, 1.90%; flu n=7, 1.90%; reform n=3, 1.90%) outlets, **TV** (all n=12, 2.30%; flu n=6, 1.70%; reform n=6, 3.70%), **research** (all n=9, 1.70%; flu n=7, 1.90%; reform n=2, 1.20%) and other external **citations** (all n=28, 5.40%; flu n=16, 4.40%; reform n=12, 7.40%). For example, Henry Ford posted a link to an article discussing the reasons for healthcare system problems that plague hospitals and patients alike: "BusinessWeek: Healthcare in Crisis: How We Got into This Mess." Hospitals externalized information and facts about the crisis and controversy as they unfolded, merely recirculating what external sources reported much more than creating their own statements and news stories.

The hospitals did offer **opinions** (all n=23, 4.40%; reform n=23, 14.20%), **statements** (all n=10, 1.90%; reform n=10, 6.20%), **letters** (all n=2, 0.40%; flu n=1, 0.30%; reform n=1, 0.60%), **speeches** (all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%), and **testimonies** (all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%) to explain and justify their position. However, to justify the organizations' position, they often also **externalized their opinions** (all n=109, 20.8%; flu n=70, 19.4%; reform n=39, 24.1%) by couching them as the opinions of **experts** (all n=50, 9.60%; flu n=30, 8.30%; reform n=20, 12.30%) and **physicians** (all n=59, 11.30%; flu n=40, 11.10%; reform n=19, 11.70%) who work for the hospital organizations. For example, a Henry Ford physician stated his opinion about preserving the progress they are making on reform: "Dr. Mark Kelley on Healthcare Reform: Keep our best features." Also, Aurora Health offered its chief operating officer to answer the public's questions about healthcare reform: "Sue Ela, chief operating officer, discusses Aurora's 'reform in action'." Hospitals positioned themselves as perpetual champions of the public, but through the individual perspectives of employees from whom they could easily disclaim alliance.

Resources (all n=49, 9.4%; flu n=39, 10.8%; reform n=10, 6.2%) served as compensation for hospitals' inability to control the circumstances of the crisis and controversy. For example, Alegent Health could not stop either threat, but it promised to stay on top of the latest news: "You can now follow breaking health news."

Secondary **counteracting** strategies (all n=515,98.5%; flu n=380, >100%; reform n=135, 83.4%) also included sharing information to alleviate worries and confusion about the crises. Traditionally, the SCCT frames counteracting strategies in past tense, such as organizations sharing past good works and past praise. However, in the case of the flu crisis and reform controversy, hospitals shared **current good works** (all n=155,29.6%; flu n=120, 33.2%; reform n=35, 21.6%) such as **events** (all n=81, 15.50%; flu n=77, 21.30%; reform n=4, 2.50%), **clinics** (all n=29, 5.50%; flu n=28, 7.80%; reform n=1, 0.60%), community **action** (all n=25, 4.80%; reform n=25, 15.40%), **campaigns** (all n=16, 3.10%; flu n=15, 4.20%; reform n=1, 0.60%), **summits** (all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%) and other community **involvement**

(all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%) as good works the hospital currently performed for the community.

They also shared **current praise** about their high rankings on national list comparing **quality** (all n=6, 1.10%; reform n=6, 3.70%) of care and other external acknowledgements that the hospitals were considered **models** (all n=6, 1.10%; reform n=6, 3.70%) among peer institutions. For example, Roper St. Francis tweeted an update on their status on a list of top hospitals in the country: "Modern Healthcare Announces Nation's Top 100 Health Networks http://ow.ly/16q2CM." Furthermore, Mayo Clinic and other hospitals, including this tweet from Intermountain Health, touted how they were recognized as being a model for healthcare reform: "Deseret News article on Obama's speech Wednesday where he pointed out #Intermountain as a national model - http://tinyurl.com/q6346a."

Rather than praise stakeholders, as is traditionally prescribed by the SCCT, hospitals **engaged stakeholders** a bit by answering their **questions** (all n=47, 9.00%; flu n=31, 8.60%; reform n=16, 9.90%), hosting **chats** (all n=5, 1.00%; flu n=4, 1.10%; reform n=1, 0.60%) and **discussions** (all n=11, 2.10%; reform n=11, 6.80%) about the issues with them, invited them onto **social** media to engage (all n=26, 5.00%; flu n=21, 5.80%; reform n=5, 3.10%), and framed and presented stories from a **local** angle (all n=120, 22.90%; flu n=97, 26.90%; reform n=23, 14.20%). For example, Alegent Health provided a news alert about a swine flu death in the state. However, they framed the news as an opportunity to explain its significance from a public health perspective and, thereby, to diminish the fear that the news might inspire: "Alegent Health Clinic doc puts the first Nebraska death from swine flu into perspective: http://bit.ly/2OTwou." Furthermore, Alegent Health covered efforts in school districts to teach about the flu: "Schools teach ABCs of swine flu." Hospitals tried to act to neutralize the crisis and controversy by enlisting their experts and highlighting work-in-progress.

In some ways, hospitals gestured toward showing their vulnerability—namely, they describe **government** (all n=115, 22.00%; flu n=83, 23.00%; reform n=32, 19.80%) action (and inaction) as well as national **guidance** (all n=24, 4.60%; flu n=24, 6.60%) and guidelines that informed and constrained their agency and authority in the crisis and controversy. For example, Henry Ford raised suspicion about marketing drugs and insurance plans to consumers: "Direct-to-consumer marketing: A sore subject for physicians." They also very infrequently discussed the general **risks** (all n=2, 0.40%; reform n=2, 1.20%) associated with the problems, thereby demonstrating both their and the public's vulnerability to harm, for example, this ominous tweet from LRGHealthcare about potential problems with reform: "Your Healthcare at Risk! http://www.lrgh.org/news.aspx?id=2064." In these ways, hospitals depicted themselves in a similar, vulnerable boat as the public in managing both issues.

Overall, hospitals used denial strategies more for the reform controversy than the flu crisis. They used counteracting strategies more for the flu crisis than the reform controversy. They used externalized justification more than direct, organizational justifications. They also reported external factors that made them vulnerable more so for the flu crisis than the reform controversy. Furthermore, they focused on present compensation and praise rather than past, and they offered services, resources and dialogue rather than explicit apologies or praise.

Discussion

Compared to overall tweets, hospitals made modest efforts on Twitter to respond the crisis and controversy. The messaging about the flu crisis and reform controversy amounted to only 10.17% of total tweets posted during the timeframe under consideration. Twitter could have enabled hospitals to provide immediate redress regarding death panels, but the hospitals did not use it accordingly. Hospitals are often slow to change and adopt new or emerging communication methods and technologies, and they tend to use traditional media more (Lammers & Barbour, 2006; Rice & Katz, 2000; Schein, Wilson, & Keelan, 2010). These tendencies could explain the findings. During the summer of 2009, using social media for health communication and crisis communication was in its infancy (Veil et al., 2011), so hospitals themselves many not have been not fully in command of Twitter's capacity for responding to fast-moving events.

Most of the tweets were counteracting measures such as answering questions about healthcare reform in general rather than addressing the controversy of death panels particularly. These practices are relatively conservative compared to the normative and prospective best practices for using social media in crisis communication that the literature suggests, such as mobilizing local volunteers and surveying and monitoring the discourse to provide situation awareness and response (Schein et al., 2010; Wendling et al., 2013). Furthermore, when tweets simply recycled emerging links to television and print news sources, the response may have inherited the limitations of accuracy and sensitivity that plagued the media coverage. Wading in early and aggressively into the emerging controversies might have helped elevate the discourse or temper the fears and anger around the subject matter. Controversies might require more rigorous vetting and curating of media coverage prior to distribution on organizational social media accounts. They might also call for the creation of original content tailored to the specific fears, concerns and needs of the communities that the hospital serves.

Hospitals situated themselves as neutral or tertiary agents in the mix. They did not align themselves with official government representatives and messaging on the matter, nor did they explicitly side with more radical factions of skeptics spreading fear and stoking emotions about death panels. For example, Alegent Health published ambiguous messages about healthcare reform from which audiences could have derived double meanings. On the other hand, Mayo Clinic provided a letter of petition to Congress, thereby distancing themselves from the political volley over the subject matter. Still, Mayo Clinic system was cited by the President and legislators drafting the reform bill as being a model for the reforms they would propose (MacGillis & Stein, 2009). This difference suggests that political pressures may have contributed to hospitals' muted response to the emerging crises, insofar as hospitals chose not state opinion at all, do so in an ambivalent way, or weigh in forcefully only as a defensive mechanism to avoid the government or the public framing them and their reputation in a negative light.

The lack of stronger messaging on healthcare reform might have permitted if not stoked the crisis. In manufactured controversies, key stakeholders can be asked to respond early and often to misinformation and mischaracterizations intentionally planted by those who would benefit from prolonged crises. The hospitals minimally participated in the fray, perhaps to avoid pushing the debate one way or the other. Mayo Clinic had more skin in the game, having been mentioned as the model for the reform law. But their letter distanced the organization from the government's proposal. Similarly, Alegent Health responded with open-ended ambivalent opinions about core principles necessary for healthcare reform. The distance that hospitals

achieved from the subject matter might have opened more space for public fears to heighten and those interested in stoking the controversy to stir confusion.

No hospital used denial. Furthermore, tweets about the crisis and controversy were generally more tentative than the tone of the overall tweets. Only occasionally did they convey more certainty than tentativeness. Hospitals might be reluctant to deny or state claims definitively, because the public might perceive those strategies as hostile or antagonistic. However, in the case of emerging controversies such as fears about death panels inspired by a section removed from legislation, strong strategies such as outright denial may be in order to help quell suspicion. Instead, hospitals used compensation. Tweets offered opinions that positioned them as vulnerable rather than responsible in terms of making healthcare reform changes. They used precedent and pointed to past best practices (such as instituting electronic health records and preventing illness by washing hands) to establish credibility. They even shared vaccine status updates. However, they did not use these measures to address the death panel controversy. Hospitals were capable of addressing such emerging issues, as they did by addressing the vaccine shortages and distribution delays. It could be the case that reluctance to wade into politics or uncertainty about their own positions during the emerging controversy may have delayed them.

Therefore, a situational *controversy* communication theory may require a dialogic approach, or an assessment of not only the crisis and the organization itself, but also other entities with stakes in the controversy (Anderson & Cissna, 2012; Buber, 1970; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Marwick & Boyd, 2011). As a corrective, hospitals' responses could include an assessment of not only public perception of an organization's responsibility for threat and their role in response, but also the reputation and role of external entities with counterclaims and counterarguments. Responding to controversy may require dialogical strategies between several stakeholders who do not share a consensus on estimations of harm, including both defensive and offensive tactics. Given these findings, possible offensive tactics could include more direct and frequent engagement with the public such as events, education and outreach efforts, and more statements of opinion.

Hospitals used events, a local focus, and third-party information rather than offering proactive answers, apologies or justifications. Hospitals also remained positive and present-focused about the reform controversy, even more so than in response to the flu crisis. These strategies may have only minimally tamped down fears and suspicions about healthcare reform. Comparing crisis to controversy, flu crisis response included more tweets that drew attention to externalized factors; reform controversy tweets included more tweets that drew upon external information from secondary sources. Hospitals did spend more time justifying their position about healthcare reform than the flu; however, they also were more likely to frame those positions as opinions from physicians and experts, than an official statement from the hospital system itself. They engaged stakeholders less often on the reform controversy than the flu crisis, but they also framed the flu crisis in terms of external factors more so than the reform controversy. These findings suggest that hospitals themselves may have been making up their minds and coming to conclusions about the reform controversy in the middle of the action, because they were more inclined to offer others' information and opinions in aggregate as an emerging representation of their own positions.

A *controversy* communication strategy might also require more sensitivity to the parameters of time and public reception or penetration. Attitudes about risk evolve as controversies are created and sustained. Therefore, communication strategies could be more

responsive and resilient in volatile rhetorical situations. For example, in this case, hospitals and other credible organizations could have offered immediate counter-evidence as suspicions about death panels festered on social media—a highly contentious controversy may require a more immediate and strong response.

Limitations of this study include the fact that only 50 of several thousand hospitals were included in the sample and only Twitter was examined, rather than other social media. It may be the case that more activity and response were offered in different venues. Also, this content analysis only reports the themes that emerged; an interview study or survey of social media content managers could better explain motivations and explanations of why the strategies were chosen or modified. Nevertheless, the limitations do not diminish the value of the current findings in better understanding the similarities and differences between crisis versus controversy response, and in helping expand the situational crisis communication model with revised strategies.

Conclusion

In comparison, hospitals handled the flu crisis and reform controversies by tweeting overall positive and present-oriented tweets. In contrast, there were fewer events to engage the public about the reform controversy than the flu crisis, and more ambiguous and third-party statements. Hospitals describe their current, local impact to discuss both the flu crisis and reform controversy, but they often externalized the information they shared with their community. Rather than offer original content, they tweeted and retweeted info from news outlets and opinions on reform from the perspective of experts and physicians more so than from the organization or hospital system overall. Regarding the situational crisis communication theory, the hospitals focused on the present rather than the past, offered services rather than apologies or compensation, and used secondary sources more so than their own statements of justification.

These findings also suggest that timing did not encourage hospitals to take a more aggressive approach to handling the crisis and controversies on Twitter. The immediate nature of communication on Twitter did not inspire quick response to rising public concerns about death panels and other related healthcare conspiracies. They also suggest that the SCCT could be expanded to include a spectrum of more conservative approaches to crisis and controversy response, as well as more guidance regarding the timing, precision and accuracy of deployment of the approaches.

The main contribution of this study to the academic field is to serve as an object lesson for using social media to address crises and controversies. Hospitals could improve their handling of emerging controversies by modeling their more forward and consistent handling of crises. Furthermore, this study extends the field by illustrating additional strategies to consider for expanding the SCCT. Finally, the study helps extend the scholarly characterizations of controversies by offering a definition by example—namely the case of the healthcare reform controversy—and an insight that controversies are the risk assessment phase of crises.

Revisions to the SCCT framework might be necessary to address manufactured controversies, given how precarious that time and subjectivity make them. These findings can also help social media managers and communicators embroiled in manufactured controversies respond more effectively. This study was limited to a relatively small, but representative sample

size and a summer's worth of hospitals' messaging and interaction online for the sake of characterizing their immediate response to crisis and controversy. Future studies should include longitudinal analyses of tweets over a longer period of time responding to several manufactured controversies in order to identify additional rhetorical strategies and topics used. Furthermore, a future survey study of practitioners might also reveal additional parameters of manufactured controversies that can help researchers develop a model for best practices during such events.

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Table 1. All Code Totals

Topic	all (523)	all %	flu (361)	flu %	reform (162)	reform %
local	120	22.9%	97	26.9%	23	14.2%
government	115	22.0%	83	23.0%	32	19.8%
news	94	18.0%	60	16.6%	34	21.0%
education	88	16.8%	76	21.1%	12	7.4%
event	81	15.5%	77	21.3%	4	2.5%
vaccine	69	13.2%	69	19.1%	0	0%
physician	59	11.3%	40	11.1%	19	11.7%
expert	50	9.6%	30	8.3%	20	12.3%
resource	49	9.4%	39	10.8%	10	6.2%
question	47	9.0%	31	8.6%	16	9.9%
stats	43	8.2%	39	10.8%	4	2.5%
tips	30	5.7%	30	8.3%	0	0.0%
clinic	29	5.5%	28	7.8%	1	0.6%
cite	28	5.4%	16	4.4%	12	7.4%
social media	26	5.0%	21	5.8%	5	3.1%
action	25	4.8%	0	0.0%	25	15.4%
guidance	24	4.6%	24	6.6%	0	0.0%
opinion	23	4.4%	0	0.0%	23	14.2%
campaign	16	3.1%	15	4.2%	1	0.6%
video	15	2.9%	8	2.2%	7	4.3%
information	14	2.7%	0	0.0%	14	8.6%
TV	12	2.3%	6	1.7%	6	3.7%
discussion	11	2.1%	0	0.0%	11	6.8%
media	10	1.9%	7	1.9%	3	1.9%
statement	10	1.9%	0	0.0%	10	6.2%
radio	9	1.7%	4	1.1%	5	3.1%
research	9	1.7%	7	1.9%	2	1.2%
model	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	6	3.7%
quality	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	6	3.7%
chat	5	1.0%	4	1.1%	1	0.6%
involvement	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
letter	2	0.4%	1	0.3%	1	0.6%
org	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
risk	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
speech	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
summit	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
testimony	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
volunteer	2	0.4%	2	0.6%	0	0.0%

Table 2. SCCT Strategy Totals

SCCT Category	SCCT Strategy	Hospital Strategy	Code	all (523)	all %	flu (361)	flu %	reform (162)	reform %
denial	**attack the accuser**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	scapegoating	**externalizing factors**	government	115	22.00%	83	23.00%	32	19.80%
			guidance	24	4.60%	24	6.60%	0	0.00%
			subtotal	**139**	**26.60%**	**107**	**29.60%**	**32**	**19.80%**
		externalized info	news	94	18.0%	60	16.6%	34	21.0%
			media	10	1.9%	7	1.9%	3	1.9%
			TV	12	2.3%	6	1.7%	6	3.7%
			research	9	1.7%	7	1.9%	2	1.2%
			citations	28	5.4%	16	4.4%	12	7.4%
			subtotal	**153**	**29.3%**	**96**	**26.6%**	**57**	**35.2%**
	justify position	**justifying position**	opinions	23	4.4%	0	0.0%	23	14.2%
			statements	10	1.9%	0	0.0%	10	6.2%
			letters	2	0.4%	1	0.3%	1	0.6%
			speeches	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
			subtotal	**37**	**7.1%**	**1**	**0.3%**	**36**	**22.2%**
		externalized opinions	physician	59	11.3%	40	11.1%	19	11.7%
			expert	50	9.6%	30	8.3%	20	12.3%
			subtotal	**109**	**20.8%**	**70**	**19.4%**	**39**	**24.1%**
	compensate, apologize	**offering resources**	**resources**	**49**	**9.4%**	**39**	**10.8%**	**10**	**6.2%**
			total	**487**	**93.14%**	**313**	**86.66%**	**174**	**107.45%**
counteracting	**past good works**	**current good works**	events	81	15.5%	77	21.3%	4	2.5%
			clinics	29	5.5%	28	7.8%	1	0.6%
			action	25	4.8%	0	0.0%	25	15.4%
			campaigns	16	3.1%	15	4.2%	1	0.6%
			summits	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
			involvement	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%
			subtotal	**155**	**29.6%**	**120**	**33.2%**	**35**	**21.6%**
	past praise	**current praise**	quality	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	6	3.7%
			models	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	6	3.7%
			subtotal	**12**	**2.3%**	**0**	**0.0%**	**12**	**7.4%**
	praise stakeholders	**engage stakeholders**	questions	47	9.0%	31	8.6%	16	9.9%
			chats	5	1.0%	4	1.1%	1	0.6%
			discussions	11	2.1%	0	0.0%	11	6.8%
			social media	26	5.0%	21	5.8%	5	3.1%
			local	120	22.9%	97	26.9%	23	14.2%
			subtotal	**209**	**40.0%**	**153**	**42.4%**	**56**	**34.6%**
	vulnerability	**externalizing factors**	government	115	22.00%	83	23.00%	32	19.80%

			guidance	24	4.60%	24	6.60%	0	0.00%
			subtotal	**139**	**26.60%**	**107**	**29.60%**	**32**	**19.80%**
		discussing risk	**risk**	**2**	**0.4%**	**0**	**0.0%**	**2**	**1.2%**
			total	**517**	**98.9%**	**380**	**105.2%**	**137**	**84.6%**

NOTE: The percentages exceed 100% when the code totals exceed the tweet numbers. The code numbers exceed tweet numbers because one tweet could encompass several different codes.

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Blunting the Cutting Edge? Analogue Memorabilia and Digitised Memory

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Abstract: What happens to disintermediated, flattened, plural and resistive popular culture when classic rock is corporatized and the audience is middle aged white men? This article is provoked by Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge*, the expensive reissuing of his albums from 1965 and 1966 in 2015, to offer a theorization of digital recording and sharing of analogue unboxing cultures. My interest particularly focuses on the audience of this affluent product and the odd cultural responses from the male audience. How do scholars of popular culture understand this shared enthusiasm for unpackaging consumerist items? The solution posed in this article is the deployment of Jean Baudrillard's theories to understand and manage the cascading simulacrum.

Keywords: Bob Dylan, Jean Baudrillard, The Cutting Edge, disintermediation, reintermediation, popular culture, popular memory

„The greatest gig of all time. Stop Music."
Fan responding to the Stone Roses gig in Warrington, UK (Meadows 2013)

Introduction

When the Stone Roses reformed in 2012, the ageing facades of Mani, Reni, Ian and Jon could not mask or marginalise the enthusiasm from their similarly ageing fans. Before the Heaton Park gigs in Manchester, a free show was organised in Warrington Parr Hall, located – appropriately – between Manchester and Liverpool. At the conclusion of the concert, fan reactions were recorded for the documentary *Made of Stone* (Stone Roses 2012). One fan's response commences this article.

The problem, challenge and gift of popular culture and popular memory is that they cannot be stopped. Analogue events begin and end, returning and looping oddly and unexpectedly through digital recordings. In response to these textualised memories, fan clocks slow, rewind, jump and repeat because the memories scratched from popular music are delicate, intricate and iterative. When fashion and fame subside, analogue pop objects bubble in the present, but are often tossed into Greil Marcus's *Dustbin of History* (1995). If this analogue debris survives obsolescence, then these products are fetishised, rebranded, repackaged and resold. The Beatles' albums and singles have been reshaped repetitively, with every possible

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repackaged, corporatised drop squeezed from the (still living) fab two. Bob Dylan – as always – has been resolutely engaged in his disengagement with commercialised culture, with the Bootleg series now highly polished and sold in elite, expensive and exclusive limited collections.

The question is how popular music scholars reshape and study the unsteady and unsettling dance between analogue and digital, public culture and private experiences, popular culture and popular memory. The digitisation of analogue memory, whether through CD reissues, YouTube uploads, Instagram photographs or Facebook posts, offers the archetype of what Lawrence Grossberg (1988, p. 5) described as 'authentic inauthenticity'. My article takes Grossberg's phrase as a starting point to explore the passage of analogue memorabilia into digitisation and social media. These memories are not real, truthful or authentic. They reconfigure, reimagine and re-place. The transformation of collectors and collecting - from high-priced reissues through to the free Facebook sharing of images and Twitter 'following' by fans - is the key focus of my research.

Particularly, I explore how popular memory is punctuated by corporate products. Are there spaces for political resistance and social change in the use of these repackaged inauthentically authentic goods? To answer this question, one resonant example is summoned: *The Cutting Edge*, Dylan's 2015 reissue of a complete edition of his recordings from 1965 and 1966. *The Collector's Edition*, with (only) 5,000 products distributed worldwide, generated odd (re)actions from fans. There was a masculine, digitised, shared response. The (overwhelmingly) white, male collectors switched on their cameras to capture themselves opening the boxed set. They then uploaded these videos to YouTube, where they nested with other fan uploads around the world, who also shared their individual responses and excitement relating to this highly priced product. Further, the irony of this collection is clear: 45 RPM vinyl singles were part of this digitised package.

How are popular music scholars to understand and interpret the relish with which this authentically inauthentic past is digitised and reborn in the present? Further, and to recycle one of my monograph titles, is this *Thinking Popular Culture* or merely relishing the re-issues? To answer these questions, my research in this article probes the excesses of corporate rock in a time of deeply disintermediated critique of the industry, to understand the power of pop memory. This is a distinct project from Jez Collins's analysis of online sites of popular music heritage (2012). My work intentionally problematizes the binaries of on and offline, analogue and digital. Further, I do not render popular music memorabilia distinctive or special. Instead, it is situated into the wider movements and theorizations of popular cultural studies.

High popular culture

Thinking Popular Culture (Brabazon 2008) as a phrase, refers to the pop text that reflects on the process and practice of its creation. Often wilfully incomplete, disruptive and difficult, these popular cultural texts, sites and sources demand that they are completed, discussed, explored and probed by fans (and scholars).

Perhaps a more accurate description for this mode of textual and contextual organisation is high popular culture (Redhead and Brabazon 2015a). Through the determination of 'cultural value' that defines popular culture, layers, levels and textures reveal themselves. Within the binary opposition of high and low culture – and following on from Homi Bhabha's third space (1990) – new divisions, fissures and separations are created. Difficult popular cultures – like Bob Dylan, *Doctor Who* and *Breaking Bad* – require intellectual, social and emotional resources from fans. Such texts summon popular experts, probing, theorising and extemporising textual material into diverse socio-economic-cultural realities. They render

incomplete, textured and undulating popular culture into a finished product by virtue of their additions, corrections and contextualisation. Nearly thirty years ago, this was described as textual poaching by Henry Jenkins (1992). Yet this model of textual and contextual movement does not capture the radical shifts in both popular culture and the theorising of it. This is not a question of bricolage (Hebdige 1979). This is not a question of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984). This is not a question of spreadable media (Jenkins *et al*. 2013). While Penley's (1992) outstanding research on slash fiction provided the benchmark for edgy, exploratory and complex research into fandom, the subsequent fandom studies are celebratory, simple, undertheorised and overgeneralised. The gap between the quality of textualised fandom and the research into these formations is stark. The online environment has enabled a range of innovative collections of videos on YouTube, photographs on Instagram and fan fiction on burgeoning community sites like Archive of Our Own (2018).

Theories of fandom have snaked through the changes in media platforms. As interfaces have transformed, a proliferation of opportunities for scholarship and fandom have emerged. Digitisation has provided new metaphors and tropes that are – summoning Ang – *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (1991). As Mark Duffett (2014, p. 147) realised:

> Previous vocabularies of fan theory have used words that painted research subjects, variously, as intoxicated children, social isolates, pathological out-patients, dreamers, creative rebels, textual poachers, neo-religious cultists and psychological ideal types. Each new wave of deductive vocabulary ascribed a very different motive and degree of agency to fans.

This article takes on this next challenge. What happens when old white men – the phantom enemy of the patriarchy, postcolonialism and youth cultures – are the dominant sociological grouping in a fan community? They capture and perform the hyper-consumerism of post-crash neoliberalism. Masking the collapse of the financial system, they not only continue their extravagant purchases, but then (over)share their excess with a social media-satiated audience.

It does not have to be this way. As shown by Archive of Our Own, the fan and scholarly digital archive for user generated content, researchers find that digitisation, disintermediation and deterritorialisation have radically transformed the accelerated movement of popular culture (Brabazon 2014). Fan enthusiasms and textualizations of their commitments are paired with a refereed academic journal also housed in the site. Communities can share, create, comment and engage. They bounce and agitated between categories of knowledge, writing and community. The movement of popular culture through space – beyond national and regional borders – creates a post-geographical pop. In close to real time, American, Malaysian and New Zealand *Doctor Who* fans can watch a programme. Not sharing a time zone does not mean they cannot share a text, albeit with the caveat #spoileralert.

This horizontal movement of popular culture through space is also matched by a cascading, vertical movement of texts and retextualisation through time. This is Baudrillard on acid, a cascading simulacrum. In other words, reality is re-presented and then re-re-presented in the simulacrum (Baudrillard 1995). But the simulacrum is rapidly repurposed for a new, textualised reality. So a reality television star like Donald Trump then cascades to become president of the United States. But this re-re-presentation continues, with Alec Baldwin's simulacrum Trump on *Saturday Night Live* being confused for the 'real' president of the United States. Trump and Baldwin's Trump slosh into other textual sites to create an undulating, radically unstable popular culture, such as *The President's Show* (2017). This cascading simulacrum is post-poststructuralism. The flattened, post-value cultural landscape develops leaks, ruptures, fissures and instabilities. The textures of popular culture heighten, undulate and thicken. Even Bob Dylan gained a Nobel Prize for literature (Miller 2017). Through the

cascading simulacra – where re-representations not only mask a reality but are a reality – new modes, categories and labels of popular culture emerge (Brabazon and Redhead 2013). This thinking pop or high popular culture, agitates the categories of cultural value while also sanitising the excesses of capitalism.

Middle-aged, white, heterosexual men as a popular cultural audience

In such a popular cultural context – where *Breaking Bad*'s Walter White moves from hero to villain and *Fifty Shades of Grey* presents troubling conceptualisations of violence and consent – what do middle-aged white men do with their fandom? Post-feminism and post-postcolonialism, what spaces remain for old white men? Surprisingly, or perhaps not, digitisation provides plenty of spaces and opportunities to express their views, their cultures and their purchases. As Deborah Withers (2010, p. 4) realised, 'Much of the writing and media about [Kate] Bush, certainly within popular culture, is produced or written by (now middle aged) heterosexual white men'. Their subjectivity - and their voice, avenue and channels to express it - is enhanced through the read write web.

The long tail of popular music was meant to encourage a wide diversity of musical tastes and audiences. That has not been the case. The reintermediation of popular music by Amazon and Apple in particular has ensured a marketised focus on already popular names, brands and the 'greatest hits'. Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, the Beatles, Elvis Presley and the Rolling Stones still dominate sales. When Led Zeppelin released their albums onto iTunes for the first time, *Led Zeppelin 4* rocketed up the charts and 'Stairway to Heaven' rose to the top of the singles, seemingly out of time and place. Digitised music is not outside of capitalism. It is part of capitalism. The assumption that digitisation would reduce the power of white men – particularly emergent through Howard Rheingold's school of internet empowerment (2000) – was a ruse.

Digitisation has enabled the proliferation of new music. This has been described by Chris Anderson as *The Long Tail* (2007). However, while there has never been more publically-available music than in the present, Oscar Celma (2010, p. vii) has realised that 'some of the traditional ways of finding music have diminished'. Particularly, the capacity to find 'new music' is constricted by iTunes banners and recycled covers of reality television programming. With the cancellation of the *X Factor*, these avenues for new artists – if not new material – are also retracting. Therefore, as Celma (2010, p. 4) has confirmed, 'music consumption based on sales is biased towards a few popular artists'. Balancing familiarity, novelty and relevance through increasingly corporatised digital music means that old artists repackage old music in new ways. The relationship between sound and vision, listening to music and the visual performance of that auditory culture (Hallam and Creech 2010), has changed through many social media sites, such as Twitter and Pinterest. However, it is YouTube that has been the most transformative. It is capturing and sharing the social practices encircling music.

Financial capitalism intensified the power held by the powerful. The Global Financial Crisis, the greatest failure of neoliberalism as an ideology, resulted in increasing power and profits for the banks as the state (re)funded and subsidised their excesses. The music industry was impacted through disintermediation. Digital files could move freely between non-paying 'customers' with ease. This is still the case. However, the models of payment that have been created through streaming and downloading services have returned profit to the music industries. But a key analogue strategy in this digital time was to create excessive, expensive packaging to be purchased by a popular music consumer. They may be able to download songs, but what about photographs, handwritten lyrics, film cells, specialist vinyl pressings and glossy booklets? That segment of the market is analogue and affluent. While compact discs and digital

downloads may be part of the package, the extravagant presentation is tactile, visible, large and hyper-personal. Digital downloads are shared. Analogue box sets are owned.

The desire for sharing, however, does not disappear. Indeed, the sharing becomes a way to show (off) the analogue purchases. The sharing is not of files, but of experiences, fandom, knowledge and the money required to purchase these items. Digitisation, particularly when accompanied by deterritorialisation and disintermediation, has flattened the access to information and the creation of new materials. This means that fans becomes producers of content, either creating original material through discussions of their fandom, or bricolaged combinations of re-used and re-configured media such as re-edited YouTube videos. Consumers become producers, but most importantly fan communities are built and created through customising, commodifying and sharing these textual creations through communities.

Roy Shuker (2010) remains the key scholar in understanding 'vinyl treasures'. He probed the relationship between 'capitalism and consumerism' (Shuker 2010, p. 3). He recognised that while most collectors are women, the public attention is placed on the men (Shuker 2010, p. 5). The reason music collections matter for men is that this is 'one of the few socially sanctioned opportunities for men to be expressive, while at the same time being aggressive and competitive' (Shuker 2010, p. 5). With the *High Fidelity* record shops closing, the available analogue sites for the performance of knowledge, collection and credibility has also been reduced. As Lewis Tennant (2016, p. 1) confirmed, 'the internet has altered notions of space and place'. New renderings of musical communities and the (over)sharing of fan-based expertise are emerging. Particular performers are worthy of attention in this digitised, post-*High Fidelity* landscape.

Unboxing Cultures

If *High Fidelity* was written for the post-iPod age – and indeed the post-record shop age – then the elite, elitist music snobs / connoisseurs would be filmed unboxing extravagant relics from the golden age of rock (that never actually existed). The spaces for male fans to espouse and perform their knowledge for less committed followers have only increased through digitization. Social media are disintermediated media. Fans can record their interests on their terms and upload it to portal to be viewed (or not) by a deterritorialized audience. YouTube is the archive, home and gated community for this proliferation of fan content. What made this *Cutting Edge* collection and the response to it so distinct was the desire of purchasers/fans to confirm their purchase by filming the 'unboxing' of the product for sharing on YouTube.

The unboxing of products is a small but visible genre of YouTube videos. They include women opening packages, including elite goods such as Hermes bags, the excited arrival of new Apple products, and children opening toys and games. These unboxing videos have a trace of a Proppian folk tale about them. They have a shape, trajectory and predictable content. But significantly, they perform authenticity (Smith 2017), and inauthentic authenticity, through fandom and consumerism. As James Grimmelmann has confirmed, on Facebook and YouTube, "the line between advocacy and parody is undefined" (2018). Commodities are the engine for this unpacking culture, accompanied by the commodification of the self (Raun 2018). Part of this is a DIY, participatory media fandom (Hayashi 2018). Part of this culture is also a Veblen-style conspicuous consumption, particularly fetishizing Internet of Things Devices.

However the sub-genre of unpacking cultures most relevant to Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge* summons authentic inauthenticity and what Margree, MacFarlane, Price and Robinson describe as "serious leisure" (2014). This is not carnivalesque performance. This is earnest, performative record collecting and the (over)sharing of information. It is a peer-to-peer sharing

of experiences and knowledge. But class, power, expertise and money remain integral to this very specific modality of unboxing. Authenticity and inauthenticity, authority and sharing, duel for ascendency, and an audience.

Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge*.

We live in bizarrely nostalgic times when recordings made over fifty years ago are labelled 'cutting edge'. November 2015 signalled the release of volume twelve of Dylan's Bootleg Series: *The Cutting Edge, 1965–1966*. Released by Legacy Records, it captured all the unreleased material from three of Dylan's albums: *Bringing it all back home* (1965), *Highway 61 revisited* (1965) and *Blonde on blonde* (1966). What made this bootleg collection unusual is that the product was differentiated. Three different releases were created: a two-disc *Best of* selection, a deluxe six-disc box set and a collector's edition. The latter was only available through ordering via Dylan's website and included 18 compact discs and every note Dylan recorded during that year. Many fan characteristics are noted in response to this collection: completism, elitism, nostalgia for the 1960s and the use of digitisation to confirm analogue expertise.[1] This collection continues the 'long shadow' of the decade (Heilbronner 2016).

As with all of Dylan's work, it is difficult to ascertain whether the irony was intentional. *The Cutting Edge* may have been – well – cutting edge in 1966. Its capacity to make that claim, generations after its release is more difficult to prove. However, what could not be delivered through content could be conveyed through form. Each of these purchases and fandoms encircling the three different products were performed differently and disseminated through social media. Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge Collector's Edition* is the example of how a commodified, deterritorialised, disintermediated community can be formed that enhances the credibility of fans.

When searching for 'Unboxing Bob Dylan Cutting Edge YouTube' (2017) 17,300 videos were returned. These digitised community outputs were split into three, shadowing the three modes of release: two CDs, six CDs and 18 CDs. To provide examples, Paul Sinclair (2015) reviewed the two CD – and three LP – editions, discussing the artwork and presentation. The connoisseur collection unboxing is the elite and rarest of these videos because the product was a limited release. However, they are also the longest videos.

There are distinctive characteristics of all the videos. The key – and odd – driver is the pedestrian nature of opening of the product. It is a literal unboxing, slow and ritualistic. That means that the fans follow the instructions and series of products as supplied by Legacy Records. The second characteristic is that the artwork – particularly the photography – is discussed. Thirdly, a meta-commentary about the value of the music – the cultural value – is affirmed. Their personal views are meshed into corporate structures. This is not textual poaching or resistive readership. This is a presentation of a musical package that could be an advertorial.

This movement to and through box sets, which commenced with the re-issue of all the Beatles CDs in the Deluxe Box Set of 15 albums on 16 CDs in 1988, confirmed that the past is a digital database for contemporary commodification. Other extravagant boxed sets include performers such as The Byrds, David Crosby and Richard Thompson. These performers from

[1] For a discussion of 'completism' in fan behaviour, please refer to Geraghty's *Cult Collectors*, (2014), Hills' *Fan Cultures* (2002), Klinger's *Beyond the multiplex: cinema, new technologies, and the home* (2006), and Shuker's *Wax trash and vinyl treasures: record collecting as a social practice* (2013).

the 1960s had male and female fans, yet the female fans were ridiculed as the screamers of Beatlemania. The serious fans were – and still are – male.

As this fandom has aged, the popular music texts have digitised and the commercialisation has increased. This movement is not about disempowered communities resisting the reality of their lives through popular culture. This movement is about affluent white men from North America and Europe, alongside a few earnest fans prepared to pay postage to the Antipodes, sharing their purchases with another group of affluent white men. The question is: why should anyone care?

For Bob Dylan fandom – completist and obsessive – the Bootleg series has been the focus of fandom. This fixation on the past, particularly while Dylan moves through his less-than-successful Sinatra trilogy of albums, has proved incredibly popular. Keith Swanwick (1999) stated that, 'all music arises in a social context'. Such a statement is easy to make, but much more complex to understand and apply in popular cultural research. Baby boomers are a very particular audience of and for popular music. Why this generation still matters is they were the first youth culture to be tethered to and framed by a style of music. An age was linked with a musical genre. As they have aged, they have taken their music with them, so that the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Who and Bob Dylan have remained talisman and shaman. Joseph Kotarba (2013 p. 2) makes the point that:

> Many professionals and lay observers have noted in recent years the way that the baby boomers' generation uses relationships, occupations, investments, religion, hobbies – and medicine – to accomplish one task: to forestall, master, and/or enhance the aging process.

Authenticity is an ideology. It is useful to build and enable credibility, exclusivity, literacy and power. Music, because it is the marinade of ageing, offers a specific role in summoning authenticity. The mediations of popular culture create multiple mechanisms for inauthentic authenticity.

Authenticity as a concept and trope has many long-term disciplinary resonances, particularly in tourism (Franklin and Urry 2001) and education (Taylor 1994). Taylor confirms that authenticity with regard to origins of the text is less relevant or important than how the text is used in distinct contexts. To affirm inauthentic authenticity is to offer a bright, inverted, quirky and affirmative (denial) of singular readings, interpretations and definitive origins and endpoints for learning and meaning. Authenticity – like inauthentic authenticity – remains as Nematullah Shomoossi and Saeed Ketabi define it: "a situational construct" (2007, 150). This is a powerful moment of conceptual transformation. Authenticity is only authentic in particular situations. Therefore, some environments, such as the playful spaces of social media, are available for inauthentic authentic re-presentations.

The question is how relationships are formed and meaning created through such spaces and products. Music fandom shares both similarities and distinctions from other modes of popular cultural fandom. Daniel Cavicchi (1998), in his study of Bruce Springsteen fandom, explored the nature of participation and how fandom is changing through the platform migration and transformations of the music industry. While he did not discuss interface management, there is no doubt that 'the reorganization of public performance by capitalism and technology' (Cavicchi 1998, p. 6) has had a role.

The Banality of Fandom

Cultural studies remains the interdisciplinary paradigm that has the most impact on the changing status and understanding of fandom. The Birmingham Centre's work – in its many

foundational studies and engagements with structuralism in particular – offered a considered dialogue between semiotics and sociology. This was best captured in the heavily cited piece by Stuart Hall (1999) – 'Encoding and decoding'. This study then developed into Fiske's model of dominant, subordinate and resistive readers, and Henry Jenkins' textual poachers. These models were in place and being applied in both textual and contextual studies by the early 1990s. However, this model of readership became both simplistic and glib through the latter stages of the 1990s, as digitisation increased in its influence. Through the read write web's impact – best shown through the arrival of blogs in 1999 – it became clear that fans were writing back, re-configuring, being active, being stroppy, being controversial and radically engaging with textual materials.

The problem was that the theorising did not match the revelatory mechanism through which the media was transforming. The media's iterative changes moved ahead of cultural and media studies' theorising of it. Fandom studies became the refuge of blokes talking through their *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* or Beatles collection. The complex ways in which fan fiction has transformed, being captured through such websites as Archive of our Own (2018) and remarkable re-imaging of popular culture through both YouTube and Twitter, made it clear that very complex, intricate and delicate reconfigurations of capitalism and commodification were taking place. Significantly, the domestic nature of fandom was often invisible. It was generally women reading romance fiction, dancing around the house, obsessively watching and re-watching particular episodes or scenes of television or film programmes. Yet through YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in particular, 'invisible' fandoms are rendered visible and textualised.

Fred Vermorel has always managed the uncomfortable, difficult and deviant nature of fandom with relish. He recognised that, 'I took my role as a Kate Bush fan seriously. I therefore stalked her' (Vermorel 2014, p. 89). There is an honesty – a gritty disturbance – in such realisations. The obsessive, embarrassing, difficult nature of fandom that transgresses heteronormative, procreative sexualities, is rarely revealed in acceptable public discourse. Fandom is an often unpopular connection with popular culture.

Through this morass of banality, certain outstanding scholars like Philip Tagg remain pivotal to the next iteration of fan theory. He argues that while certain types of music are visible or invisible, some music is rendered visible through academic attention (Tagg 2011). Often termed artist fandoms, these studies focus on the audience for a particular performer or band. The white, male academic is a particular guide to move this movement from trivial pop to scholarly credibility. When the focus is women, youth, black and indigenous communities and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender fans, issues of quality and importance are subsumed in favour of fetishising the different. Joli Jensen (2014, p. 208), in probing the relationship between an academic and a fan, believes that this division is sustained by 'two academically suspect areas: popular culture and emotional response'. The way that these 'suspect areas' are managed is by segmenting and differentially valuing popular culture – creating high and low pop – and by cooling the emotions through hyper-capitalism.

Older white men are the unmarked sign. That means the power, authority, knowledge and credibility that they hold is maintained without question or critique. They avoid scrutiny. They maintain power because they always have. The agencies and institutions of power – such as politics, education and the law – perpetuate their authority by framing and limiting the capacity for hegemonic negotiations. Therefore, the Bob Dylan *The Cutting Edge* release – and the textualisation of that fandom via YouTube – remains fascinating in its presence, behaviour, confidence and depth.

What happens when we look at older white men as fans – the dominant and empowered group in the culture – and how they render themselves complex and different? Bob Dylan's relationship with commercialisation has always been diffident. Throughout his career, he has

been signed to a major record label. He never sold out, but he did buy in. Similarly, his fans remain both loyal and affluent, ageing with him. Scholars such as Roy Shuker have presented histories of record collecting, emerging through record fairs, independent record shops, specialist reissue labels and reconfigurations of the back catalogue. The key question is, when collectors acquire music – particularly music that they already own in multiple forms – what are they actually buying? (Shuker 2014) Are they purchasing a commodification of their personal experiences? Certainly, in an accelerated, digital age, a fetishisation of the analogue and the physical object renders memory corporeal (Baker 2015). The digital file is ephemeral and may, as David Hajdu (2016, p. 71) confirmed, 'diminish the value of digitized music in the public consciousness'. These expensive boxed collections return size, importance and visibility to popular music fandom. Such authentic inauthenticity reconfigures and reimagines a past that never existed for a deterritorialised community of fans that wish to perform expertise in a post-expertise age.

Analogue endings

A final digital moment concludes this article, a re-re-presentation of *The Cutting Edge* unboxing. This digital moment also lashes an analogue tail. I was married to a Bob Dylan fan, who also happened to be a popular cultural researcher. Steve Redhead was the first – and may remain the only – professor of law and popular culture in the world. Redhead built and contributed to an array of interdisciplinary fields, including socio-legal studies, popular cultural studies, leisure studies and football studies. Perhaps his most influential book remains *Unpopular cultures* (1995) that – like much of this article – works the seam between past and present, popular and unpopular, art and trash. He was also a fan of Bob Dylan, crossing the borders between academic and fan through journalism (2006) and theorizing 'late style' and 'modernist' Bob Dylan for his book *We have never been postmodern* (2011).

When we noticed the scale and scope of the 'unboxing' videos, the author of this article and her Dylan fan husband recorded their own video (Redhead and Brabazon 2015b). I was the off-camera voice and film maker, who intervened with both feminist commentary about the banality and excesses of the collection. This final example of textualised fandom demonstrates both the authentic inauthenticity and inauthentic authenticity that tracks digitised, capitalist music. It may be a meta-commentary, but like Baudrillard's cascading simulacrum, this video became one more real - and imagined - Dylan fan expressing love, expertise and purchasing power.

Steve Redhead died on March 8, 2018. He died a Professor of Cultural Studies at Flinders University, and a Bob Dylan fan. Yet the YouTube video of his unboxing of *The Cutting Edge* has outlived his analogue body and analogue fandom. Such authentic inauthenticity – such zombie fandom – demonstrates that digitization has transformed fan studies and the way in which it is studied. Scholars now have many more sources of affect, commitment, love and devotion to popular culture. New strategies are required through unobtrusive research methods to study this un/popular fandom and un/popular culture.

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The Cyborgian Limit? Opening Sequences as Cultural Analyses

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Abstract: With the advent of digitalisation, digital soft-wares enable the creation of extraordinary opening sequences, one such being the animated opening credits of Mamoru Oshii's 1995 *Ghost in the Shell*, recently reproduced in Rupert Sander's 2017 live-action film. This paper rethinks psychoanalysis and explores this analytic approach to film in and through its opening sequence by way of the following inquiries. What is the relevance of Lacanian psychoanalysis to the question of gender in the twenty-first century if gender is supposedly one of the defining ontological facets of human beings? Given the recent attention to the place of feminist politics, can we say that Haraway's cyberfeminist take still has challenging potential in contemporary postgendered reality when Haraway herself has called her brand of politics a postgendered one? What if that which necessitates an address is not so much the place but also the temporal event that "animates" an individual's consciousness, especially if perception is somehow tied to how we remember our past? Investigating how one's imagination is "animated" in one's encounter with an aesthetic object, this paper will elaborate the epistemological import of Lacanian psychoanalysis with critical analyses of the opening scenes of Tim Burton's 2014 *Big Eyes*, and the aforementioned versions of *Ghost in the Shell*.

Keywords: Opening Sequences; Lacanian psychoanalysis; Film and Animation; Popular Culture; *Big Eyes*; *Ghost in the Shell*

> *But, once adopted into the production process of capital, the means of labour passes through different metamorphoses, whose culmination is the machine, or rather, an automatic system of machinery (system of machinery, the automatic one is merely its most complete, most adequate, and alone transforms machinery into system), set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself; this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages. In the machine, and even in machinery as an automatic system, the use value, i.e. the material quality of the means of labour, is transformed into an existence adequate to fixed capital and to capital as such.*
>
> (Marx, Grundrisse, 692)

> *You are more than just a weapon. You have a soul… a ghost. When we see our uniqueness as a virtue, only then will we find peace.*
>
> (Daisuke Aramaki, Ghost in the Shell)

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Introduction

This paper is written due to the fact that filmic openers, besides the website, *Art of the Title*, have not been given its due attention as works of art. *Art of the Title* focuses primarily on the fonts of titles, text types that are appreciative of the filmic cast and crew, a laudable endeavour that I shall take on further by directing attention to its visual dimension. For those interested in openers of film or television series, the *Art of the Title* also historically contextualises title sequences created by Patrick Clair, Saul Bass, Kyle Cooper and Thierry Kuntzel. The latter, considered the first creator of titles by Thomas Elsaesser, is a video and installation artist, who directed the openings of Fritz Lang's films *M* (1931) and the *Most Dangerous Game* (1932). As a film theorist, Kuntzel's creative premise is to give "an overview and a formal analysis" of how a title sequence can be a dynamic process of analysis, the opener as a "mini-film" working in a post-filmic manner (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2005). More importantly, Kuntzel's concern with the profound *(sub)liminal effects* of the iconic, the visual impacts of both word and image, aptly described in MoMa's memoriam to his passing as "*what happens beneath the surface of representation beyond a narrative storyline*" (emphasis mine), is crucial not only to this paper on the aesthetics, the function and the purpose of opening sequences; it indicates how the audience achieves semantic denouement through the viewing process, narrative or otherwise. The above emphasis is also a pointer to how the deep-diving cybernetic figure of Rupert Sanders 2017 *Ghost in the Shell* is an apt symbol of how one textual layer, the denotative, dialogically interacts with another layer, the connotative, so as to arrive at film analysis. Theoretically framed by poststructuralist thought, and thereby predominantly psychoanalytic, this paper reconsiders the opener as a liminal space, at once addressing neither an absolute narrative nor a complete theoretical frame, that simultaneously demarcates and adjoins the viewer and the viewed, explaining not only the various aspects of the opener but also its location of being neither completely on the inside nor the outside.

Opening sequences can be suggestive means of access into the film: some are designed as aesthetic commentaries of the films; others indicate thematic concerns whereas some provide inscriptive backstory of the film of which the titles of Ridley Scott's 1982 and 2017 *Blade Runner* series are exemplary. The title opener to *Blade Runner 2049*, clearly a tribute to Scott's 1982 *Blade Runner*, indexically functions as if it is a visual establishing shot, narratively setting the filmic backdrop, working in a manner dissimilar to contemporary opening sequences, which are more disjunctive and thereby surrealistic. Notwithstanding the fact that most dystopian narratives, contemporarily classified under "speculative fictions", have rather simple fictional arcs, it is the post-human characteristics that make mysterious the cybernetic personas of the *Blade Runner* series, corresponding to the often theorised "uncanny valley" of digital animations, uncanny because these cybernetic figures are just too familiar to us. This enigma is depicted atmospherically in Scott's use of colour and music, which are cryptically dark and starkly sonorous, itself a cinematic allegory of the psychoanalytic knot of the real, symbolic and the imaginary that gestures, at the same time, to how interpretatively opaque some openers can be to some audience.

As a precursor to many science-fictional films, *Blade Runner* can be argued as having comparable traits to Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, both stylistically or thematically. This paper works with cultural analysis, which explains the poststructuralist as well as post-Marxian analyses that includes Donna Haraway's socialist feminist take, in order to philosophically address the manner in which filmic interpreters work with title openers to gain entry into the film. More significantly, this paper, in line with its political proclivity of being attentive to

the repressed, reworks the previously semiotic emphasis on the signifier in order to redress the postmodern conceptualisation of the materiality of the denotative, and, by extension, the connotative signifier in its reflective slant, a mirroring that explains how the science-fictional cybernetic has been, from time immemorial, more about man than machine. The mirror concept indicates as well how the various theoretical strands interweave: the Lacanian mirror stage that enables the formation of the *I* function can be analysed in relation to the subjectivity of the *I* in the feminist standpoint theory, the precursor of which is Haraway's cyberfeminism. Moreover, the mirror stage is a liminal stage wherein the infant's ego is constructed, the spectral ego accorded by the wholesome refection s/he sees that becomes the social ego in and through Symbolic processes of socialisation and naturalisation, a transition that, in Lacan's psychoanalytic triad, dramatises a downward move from the imaginary to the symbolic on the side of that which is true: the wholesome selves we apparently experience are limited by the social structures and strictures we inhabit.

Phillip K. Dick, although not in the know of psychoanalysis, seems to have arrived at the same philosophical conclusions with "Do Androids Dream OF Electric Sheep?" Rachael, the ethereal female protagonist in *Blade Runner*, may have unsettled the audience of the nineteen eighties with the unfortunate discovery of her android status, the prophetic stuff of dystopic science-fiction. but it is the ambiguity of the ontological identity of Rick Deckard, the replicant hunter of the Nexus 6 insurgents, which makes Scott's 1982 science-fictional adaptation of Dick's "Androids" philosophically iconic – oddly invoking Mamuro Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* a tentative response to a question man will never be able to answer absolutely – thereby qualifying this address on the visually adapted versions of Dick's story given that the stylistic impact of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* could be felt throughout the decades that follow, a source code that proliferates to the differentiated visual codes of other speculative fictional films.

Scott's titular blade runner whose job is to hunt and put down robots, which in the opener is called "retirement", was assumed human initially by viewers whose frames of mind have been deeply ingrained by dichotomous socio-political underpinnings. Its strong cybernetic undercurrents, however, visually signals the rise of what has come to be known in the twenty-first century as the "post-human", a term that supposedly encompasses humanoids, androids, robots and cyborgs, although it mimetically points to *homo sapiens* rather than the humanoid by virtue of the fact that we are traced by the "inhumanness" of language, as indicated by Jacques Lacan's infamous "the unconsciousness is structured like a language". This is also the reason for including an analysis of Burton's *Big Eyes* whereby the female protagonist finds self-redemption in full expression, bringing to the fore the linguistic grammatisation upon which consciousness is founded. *Blade Runner 2049* paratextually confirms the humanoid nature of the hunters, belatedly exposing the sameness that underpins both the filmic opponents. Despite this, I have to remark upon a slight difference detected in Scott's 1982 and 2017 title sequences: the constructive appearance of a tree, perhaps the tree of life, and thereby knowledge, that follows the total blackout that initiates the 1982 version.

This paper reworks Gerard Genette's concept of the paratext to understand the function of "opening sequence" rather than "title sequence" because it does not address specifically the alphabetic. It concentrates on the visual imagery used in what is commonly known as "title sequence" in order to analyse how screen images symbolically or stylistically evoke the viewers' mental processes. The interstitial location of openers indicate that they are not only aesthetic entrances into film; they provide cultural analyses of potential overlaps

– what some would call the "mirror" effect – between the imaginary world of the film and the real world by virtue of the mimetic quality of moving pictures, both elaborated by films adapted from a graphic novel as well as a biographical film, visual depictions of varying degrees of realism that also question the very nature of reality. This correspond to what Clive Myer designates as the diegetic and non-diegetic spaces of the "not-yet-film, film and not-film" in "Theoretical Practice, Diegesis is not a Code of Cinema" to which I shall respond by adding terms such as "pro-filmic, filmic and post-filmic", categories that are aligned to the discursive classifications of "film" as the material production itself, "cinema" as the corresponding discussions on film, analytical or narrative, and "movie" as an indicator to the economic and financial aspects of the film industry. The term, "filmic", refers to the diegetic space of the movie while "pro-filmic" gestures to the so-called extra-diegetic elements that have effects on the filmic diegesis and "post-filmic" points to the activities that come after the film, including reviews, commentaries and critiques. These terms are attended to here because they bring to the fore Genette's detailed analysis of the literary diegesis which has been appropriated by film theorists in their discursive analyses of film. Myer's chapter in *Critical Cinema* accounts lengthily the historical development of cinematic diegesis, including a brief mention of Genette's conceptualisation but not the etymological significance of the paratextual: the word-forming "para" signals both the "beyond", "contrary" or "altered" and "defense" or "make ready", definitions complicating the very concept of the filmic opener.

This rethinking of the opening scene, with the concomitant terms mentioned, already implies a "network" structure, an intertextual homage to the (post)structuralists' analyses, that permit communicative flows that are de-centralised passages, given that this cinematic epoch can be described as one of sequels, anthologies or series and remakes, a chain of links which I shall elaborate here with the paratextuality of the opener, discursively bringing to the fore what Genette in his footnote calls the slave to the master of the main literary or filmic text. And yet the aforementioned films can be viewed individually because they are feature-length films that are framed with individual plots. Thematic or intertextual connections are not always made by the viewers, especially those not looking for these allusions.

This analysis, predicated on paratextual images, correlates to my attention on the socially underprivileged, "the second sex" of Simone de Beauvoir or the ones on the lower social rungs, and focuses on Genette's concept of the "peritext", a paratextual category that encompasses titles, epigraphs and prefaces, because opening sequences are visual correlatives of these accompanying texts, figurative doors opening onto inscriptive passages other than the filmic wherein the inscribed letters can be posted. Without discursive endeavours, we will not have the Derridean "supplement", a signifying term he uses in his focus on textual "dissemination" or the Lacanian "objet petit a", an object that allows imaginary projections, a "jacking in" described in *High Tech Orientalism*. This is a process made by the viewers as they mentally gain access into the screen, psychoanalytic bridges that allow different types of interpretative traversals, sense-making sojourns that paradoxically make obvious *the question of the hermeneutic*, the Derridean outside of nothingness that Scott's 1982 opener inadvertently allegorised.

Elsaesser, too, speaks of thresholds and paths that lead the film from and to the commercial machinery of film production, distribution and exhibition, which can be used to speak of the potential ramifications of too tight a capitalistic hold on film productions. As indices to the temporal underpinnings of Genette's intertextual analysis, gestations on

"spatium", the space of time instead of an actual place, are prompted wherein both the "space" of liberation and the "place" of security can be thought. The screen as door encourages processes of identification and projection, connotative processes that arguably incite psychoanalytic attempts to diagnose the patient's "symptoms".

Here, I shall use this method to diagnose the "symptoms" of the dream-works of films because most opening sequences actually make manifest how dreams flow: a manner not unlike the Joycean stream of consciousness. While most critics think that "context" provides semantic stability, it is "context", whether historical or cultural, that makes obvious the yet-to-be-semantic slippage of the signifier. Buttressed by retrospective and anticipatory moving images, with multiple inward and outward brooks of immersive viewing experiences, the viewing process, further reinforced by classical Hollywood continuity filming, permits the imaginary insertion of the viewer making the audience lost in their illusory submersion. The viewers feel empowered by the visual immediacy of a cybernetic projectile leaping off a corporate office building, identifying with the cybernetic protagonist. Driven, of course, by a potent narrative on how anyone can be a superhuman being with the right technological enhancement, the multiple versions of Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell* affirm even as they point to the dangers of a world overwhelmed by technology.

The continuity-editing technique of Hollywood, a process that emulates the signifying linearity of human consciousness, also indicates how human consciousness can be commercially manipulated, an unpalatable underside represented by the ubiquitous holographic images of cyber-enhancement implants that advance our cerebral faculty and sensorial capacity in the 2029 dystopian world of *Ghost in the Shell.* This paper rethinks how our psychanalytic approach to film can be addressed with its opening sequence by way of the following inquiries. What is the relevance of Lacanian psychoanalysis to the question of gender in the twenty-first century if gender is supposedly one of the defining ontological facets of human beings? Given the recent attention to the place of feminist politics, which can be counter-argued with Jacques Derrida's calling to question the place of women in his 1982 interview, "Choreographies", can we say that Haraway's cyberfeminist take still has the same challenging potential in contemporary postgendered reality when Haraway herself has called her brand of politics a postgendered one? What if that which necessitates an address is not so much the place but the time of the event that "animates" an individual's psychic process, especially when perception is somehow tied to how we remember our past? In other words, what can one deduce about popular imagination when human agency is empowered by that which can be described as "phantasmatic"? What can the stake be in a revolutionary actualisation motivated by fiction? These inquiries signal the rise of the *postgendered non-binary* and the propagation of divides beyond that of the conventional oppositions between the virtual and real, the apparitional and the substantial, by virtue of the advent of digital media. While Haraway's socialist-feminist discourse has been used to support post-filmic analyses of *Ghost in the Shell* such as Natasha Miner's 2014 essay "Technology, Psychology, Identity: *Ghost in the Shell* and *.hack//Sign*" and Marie Deanne Theresa O Correa's review "*Ghost in the Shell*: A Cyborg-Feminist Review of Mamoru Oshii's Animated Film", I shall suggest that a close reading of Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* subtly subverts Haraway's celebratory cyberfeminist rhetoric when the central cybernetic character *self-consciously questions what it means to live as a man-machine hybrid*, noting that the hyphenated identity here initiates already a shared existence. More importantly, the fact that Motoko Kusanagi poses questions already signals her self-aware sentience.

Of ontological significance to this analysis is the "mirroring" mentioned in the introduction of *Techno-Orientalism* by David S. Roh's, Betsy Huang's and Greta A. Niu's as a citation from Toshiya Ueno, "the mirror of cultural conceit" (2015, 3) or explicated in "High-Tech Orientalist" as multiple reversals – distortions attesting to this thesis that the depicted cyborgian is in actual fact science-fictional commentaries of *homo sapien*. The inversion of the denotative mirroring of the imaginary by the symbolic after the connotative mirroring of the imaginary are intuitive manoeuvres provoked by sense-making processes, sensibly premised on the non-sense of unfiltered noise. Besides the human-android confusion is the discursive hegemony implicated by the power relays between the West and the East, an issue of labelling that Techno-Orientalism addresses by shifting focus to how the culturally dominated empire strikes back. Wester Wagenaar's "Wacky Japan" briefly chronicles how first-wave Orientalism, the postcolonial creed of Edward Said, moves to the second-wave of Techno-Orientalism, which critiques the self-constitutional dominance of the Western othering gaze, that deviates to the self-orientalising third-wave of the Eastern idiosyncratic, a self-fashioning that hides so as to captivate. The fact that the imagistic opener contradictorily strips the cyborgian protagonist with a visual representation of its construction expresses rather crucially the "nothingness" of the textual outside. In other words, s/he, when denuded of her facial features and cybernetic covering, is not anything but a technologically wrought anatomy, a metallic mirror of organic bones.

Suture in and through the Screen: The Post-Filmic within the Filmic

Contemporary Hollywood is known now for its appropriation of the self-aware techniques of art-house productions, arguably the filmic niche that poses visual critiques of cultural commodification and massification, politics of cinema that points to how the extra-diegesis of the post-filmic can be found within the filmic, even as Hollywood retains and intensifies its own norms. This sees a discerning film director such as Tim Burton paying homage as well as subtly undermining popular culture by making a biographical film on Margaret Keane who was psychologically overwhelmed by her big-eyed waif paintings. His film bears witness to how hyper-industrialisation in real-life, the RL of techno-orientalism, exacerbates psychological alienation, while a creative Oshii converts Shirow's manga, *Mobile Armoured Riot Police,* to a thrilling, action-packed filmic virtualisation that can be re-projected to real-life instances of "industry". These films signal a shift to post-classical styles, one surprisingly complying with the standardised norms of narrative construction, albeit still retaining some of the filmmaker's surrealist tendency, whereas the other obviously challenging it by making an animated film quite unlike Disney animations, although, historically, the larger-than-life female eyes of popular Japanese anime are adopted from Disney's productions.

This paper investigates how opening sequence bridges the audience and the film, a comment that paradoxically points to a gap between the viewers and the viewed, a manoeuvre that sees this "mini-film" as an aesthetic review of what Lacan calls the "objet petit *a*" or Derrida's "supplement", the *a* of his *differance* signifying the etymologically archaic "idiotic" appendices, etymologically deriving the psychically idiosyncratic, the significance of which is made pronounced by what the blogger of le0pard13.com describes as "methinks" in his brief reading of Sander's and Oshii's openings to *Ghost in the Shell*. However, a word of caution to those unfamiliar with poststructuralist theories, these two concepts are distinct in their gendered senses. In fact, the only similarity they share is the role of a connective support when placed in a communicative context, a linking device, here

refigured as the "screen", that actually points to communicative gaps rather than the seamless reality of which the technophiles dream.

By virtue of the fact that this analysis predicates itself on how the cinematic frame activates human emotions *at a meta-level*, it addresses the manner of transcending divides rather than the postmodern blurring of divides, a manoeuvre that can be called "frameless framing", with an aerial view that qualifies the comparability amongst the discussed opening sequences. Thus the titular use of "cyborgian" here, just like the opening scene to the film, can be inferred as an overriding of albeit via an implied acknowledgement of these limits. More importantly, it reconsiders how the (in)voluntary "subjective" submergence of the audience can lead to action in real-life, making a transition from the secondary level of connotation to the primary, denotative plane. It can be described as a "passing" from virtual reality to actual reality, a passing, which, in psychoanalytic theory, is animated with *pathos* rather than *logos* because it involves the desirous processes of fetishisation and reification. As a prolegomenon and an addendum, the opening scene, due to the way it is designed, not only serves as an introduction to the cinematic event; as an almost "eternalised" entity, it also reflects the aesthetic strategies, narrative devices and thematic concerns of the film. This "points of entry" into the film can be used to subvert the "frame by frame" linear convention that most practitioners use in describing film production because it can either engage a viewer with its drawing potential or, not unlike "the breaking of the fourth wall" technique, intervenes the viewing experience, leading to an inscriptive disengagement that may not be pleasurable to those finding escape at the cinema.

With film entering the digital age, the opening sequence, with its position at the filmic edge, turns *the window as frame to a door as threshold*, which Elsaesser, following Genette's cue on the peritext, states in his introduction to film theory. First, the motif of the door is crucial to contemporary exegesis because it leads to the analytical dimension of cultural discourses, indicating how the encrypted information received has contradictory fissures that require analytical stitches, and, second, this hermeneutic plane leads, at the film's conclusion, to "nothing other than the original void", an originary absence that will be elaborated by way of Jean Pierre Oudart's Lacanian concept of "suture" because it primarily focuses on cinematic workings, theoretically explaining how the immersive process of film narrative works.

I shall rework Oudart's explanation in order to articulate something about "subjective" cinema, human individuals becoming subjects only by being subjected ideologically, which, in the psychoanalytic sense, means that it is an absence at the textual core that gives space to the substantiating presences of narrative voices composing the filmic texture, which George Butte's "Suture and the Narration of Subjectivity in Film" addresses by redirecting Oudart's filmic suture to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's figure of the chiasmus as an interweaving of narrative presences, a structure not unlike the hyperlinked configuration of the internet. Butte's paper is significant because of his allusion to what he calls an "evasion of the experience of lack" with a viewing process that, as the continuity editing of Hollywood indicates, is constructed in a way that encourages vicarious enjoyment. His theoretical engagement with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reading of the psychology of film centres on the "nested frames of consciousness responding to consciousness in narrative that [he calls] 'deep intersubjectivity'" (Butte, 2008), which brings to mind the appearance of harmonious communication among different characters and viewers, implied or actual. However, he does not highlight the fact that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to film clearly underscores that this new psychology is one founded upon

"cinematographic illusion", which recalls Myer's theoretical concern of the turn from imaginary performance to social performance, a filmic to post-filmic move. The presences to which the former refers are not presences as traditionally understood; they are constructed presences just as identity, gender or otherwise, can be considered a social construction.

The Cyborg Insurgency: A Workers' Revolution?

The epigraph from Karl Marx's *Grundrisse* informs this section because I shall address the socialist side of Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" before I go on to discuss how its revolutionary potential goes beyond contemporary feminism. Cyberfeminism, although still an approbate for the repressed third-world females, albeit those privileged enough to know that there are alternative realities to the oppressive one within which they find themselves, may not be that valid for the twenty-first century urbanised centres. If one has to deal with the question of the feminine, I would rather follow the Derridean lead by not repeating the phallocentric move in turning gynocentric because *the zero of the female requires the one of the male in order to acquire the propriety of sense*, aptly aligned to the contemporary uses of computerised code encryption called "bits". Thus not only do we have to think of how to approach the question of the feminine that surpasses the issues of anatomy and biology, we would also have to find legitimate ways to counter acts of domination. Perhaps one should think in terms of a type of empowerment that grants not just agency to any oppressed individual, male or female; it is an avowal of the human individual's natural rights as universally declared.

This is in line with Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui's insistent political calling for "the principles of equality and human dignity" (2016, 7) that female "substantive representation" accords. In other words, a woman's formal rights to participation and political representation encompass her rights to be a part of the society within which she lives as well as the right to be different (2016, 5). Fogiel-Bijaoul's borrowed Ulrich Beck's concept of cosmopolitanisation which she explains: "cosmopolitanisation as *lived experience* often implies some individual or collective change, which is itself often unintended. Encounters with alterity may not be a sheer pleasure but people must develop a habitual readiness to cope with them. So, clearly experience of diversity fosters the ability to alter life scripts pre-written by any community – of faith, tradition, religion or culture – and *to draw selectively on a variety of different cultural repertoires*" (2016, 2, emphasis mine). In other words, we have to be discerning not only in our lifestyle choices; we should exercise our judgements in what we (re)produce, thereby invoking the right to be recognised for our labour and not be coerced into becoming anonymous reproductive surrogates for others.

The aforementioned pertains to hyper-industrialisation wherein the technological process of controls the entire production. What occurs is the appropriation of living labour, a phenomenon that leads to the objectification of living labour: "the transformation of the means of labour into machinery" and of "living labour into *a mere living accessory* of this machinery" (Marx, 1973, author's emphasis). Living labour normally provides supervision to the production process. However, according to Marx, industrialisation means that the machine moves the unity of the production process, overtaking the static unity of the product itself and becoming "living machinery" (Marx, 1973). It controls the structures of production that, in turn, influences the economic organisation of society, leading to the instrumentalisation and dehumanisation of living labour. What Marx does not anticipate is the radical industrialisation that has occurred from the beginning of the 20th century onwards

whereby such objectification of "living labour" does not only affect the industrial and manufacturing sectors; it has apparently permeated all the organisational structures of capital. The Marxist critique of industrial alienation stems from the fact that the proletariat does not have a share in the production profits, a tenuous existential state worsened by the lack of recognition for their contributions. They are perceived as mere cogs in an industrial wheel, each playing a role in the mass production of commercial goods.

With a global move from industrialisation to information technology, which occurred sometime around the middle of the twentieth century, alienated work can extend to those employed in the information sector. The films discussed here are cinematic commentaries on the incessant demands of service, resources and labour by global modernity. This also includes technologised militarism, (wo)man turned into weaponry for the destruction of the state's enemies, an idea visually represented by the construction of a female cyborg warrior in the opening sequence of *Ghost in the Shell*. While Marx wrote in the late nineteenth century to contest the inherent economic exploitation of labourers by the capitalists, the Frankfurt School, in the middle of the twentieth century, discursively intervened the capitalistic control of culture. Qualifying that Theodore Adorno's and Max Hockheimer's critique is not against popular culture per se, I shall gesture to their political rhetoric as challenges not only against the ideological hold of the extensive production of popular culture or the use of mass communicative technologies for propaganda but also the proliferating uses of art or science for commercial or economic purposes.

The Frankfurt scholars exposed the inherent irrationality behind the Nazi instrumentalisation of reason, an irrationality that now concerns post-industrialised societies in the form of information flows via communicative networks: in other words, the technological uses of mass communicative objects such as the radio and the television for ideological control, an issue made evident by the widely disseminated telecasts of propaganda speeches in the past and the seductive television commercials in the present. In an era of the "politics of lifestyle", wherein the lifestyle one chooses is reflected in how one accessorises, the relevance of "Culture Industry: Mass Deception as Enlightenment" can be found in its critique of the commercialisation and standardisation of capitalistic activities, the apogee of which is the advertising of commercial products found on billboards, magazine advertisements and television commercials et cetera, and how these marketing strategies hone in on the ideological instilling of false needs in order to promote commercial consumption. Notwithstanding my sometimes consensual commercial participation, myself admittedly affirmative of the move to digitisation, it is important to educate the young in exercising judgement whenever they access the internet, go into the city, drive along the highways or turn on our audio-visual equipment at home. In other words, we cannot simply ignore the ubiquity of commercial advertisements, although one can actively resist these public temptations at every turn, uncluttering our minds.

What then comes to the fore is the Enlightenment advocacy of treating living individuals as ends in themselves and not means, a maxim substantiated by the latent text of Burton's *Big Eyes* wherein Margaret Keane is coerced into working sixteen hours a day in order to upkeep her spouse's lifestyle. Having noted Burton's unbiased attitude towards Margaret Keane's paintings, an indisputable democratic premise that underpins popular culture, Burton's amusing but acerbic portrayal of Walter Keane, a genius in marketing, satirises the unthinking reception of popular culture. And yet implicit in Burton's film is the recognition of the ineluctable economic aspect of any artistic endeavour; it appears that capital will always win when the question of survival is broached.

When asked about the subjects of these paintings, Keane responds that he is inspired by the orphaned in post-war Europe. His answer is clearly an unmistakeable selling tactic, attestating to capital's triumph. Where Margaret Keane is concerned, there is only the enigmatic "the eyes are windows to the soul". Perhaps a psychoanalytic reading will shed some light on her vulnerability in the chauvinistic cultural environment of the mid-twentieth century, visual portrayals symbolic of the artistic and domestic repressions she has felt living at the end of an era that was defined predominantly by the professional invisibility of women. Set in the nineteen-sixties artistic niche of San Francisco, the film also wryly explores the rise of the postmodernist American culture, giving us alternating aesthetic appreciations from the elitist art critics such as *The New York Times* John Canaday, who sneered at Keane's "infinity of kitsch", and the opportunistic local newspaper writer, Dick Nolan, who uses the mass allure of Margaret's painting as a newsworthy angle. Burton's neutral attitude towards artistic "kitsch" is evident with the fact that he starts the opening scene with Andy Warhol's commemoratory statement on how Margaret Keane's paintings must be artistically successful because the masses adore them, signalling the postmodern emphasis on repetition, given the modern availability of mechanical reproduction enabled by copiers, cameras and computers.

Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" espouses technological advancements because these provided changed conditions to reproduction, revolutionarily meeting the political demands of aesthetics even as his Marxian reference indicates an ambivalent attitude towards the progress made by mechanical reproduction. According to Benjamin, "Marx directed his efforts in such a way as to give them prognostic value. He went back to the basic conditions underlying capitalistic production and through his presentation showed what could be expected of capitalism in the future. The result was that one could expect it not only to exploit the proletariat with increasing intensity, but ultimately to create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself" (Benjamin, 1969). These changed conditions also slowly transformed the socio-political superstructure the effects of which are "manifested in all areas of culture" (ibid). The cultural impact of mechanical reproducibility can be felt in his comment: "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in space and time, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (ibid), covertly reinforcing the notion of artistic authenticity. His subtle critique of the technological reproducibility of works of art can be detected when he informs us that "[t]he presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (ibid), inadvertently putting to question the mechanistic dissemination of prized artworks, previously valued for their authentic artistic techniques and material embodiment of creative ideas, with the discursive use of the word "depreciated". To Benjamin, the Marxian critique of the political economy of capitalism inherently predicts a proletarianised future of even works of art. Whereas the rest of Benjamin's text on mechanical reproducibility appears to argue for its democratising potential, the possibility of which is found in its ability to visually simulate and make accessible that which was previously available only to the upper classes: "One might generalise by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" (ibid), I sense a critical undercurrent that gestures to the problematic within the representational aspect of visual arts, one exacerbated by mechanical reproducibility, which is of import to artistic appreciation. First, the discourse indicates the possibility of misappropriating these artworks for commercial purposes and, second, it is this simulative dimension that provides the conditions for financial manoeuvrings.

Citing extensively Benjamin's introductory sections on authenticity has something to do with this intuition of another level of connotation when it comes to technological reproducibility. By emulating our natural instinct to reproduce, the conditions given by this possibility of multiple copies could also be the cause for identity displacement, an ontological issue made obvious in the artistic supplanting of Margaret Keane by a marketing-savvy Walter Keane and the extra-diegetic character shift from Major Motoko Kusanagi of the 1995 filmic original to Major Mira Killian who finds out that her real identity is Motoko Kusanagi in the 2017 live-action remake. Such displacing acts, which paradoxically destabilises filmic identity, is a process that also changes the term "frame-by-frame" to the "frame-to-frame" denotative narratological process in order to bring about the *appearance* of seamless story-telling. On a connotative level, this "frame-to-frame" process enables a shift from mere story-telling to the theoretical act of narratological analyses that take the filmic to the post-filmic plane of reviews, commentaries and journal article.

Burton's *Big Eyes* opens with a visual metaphor of the capitalistic manipulation of artworks, whereby a painting of a child with exaggerated, teary eyes is subjected to mechanical reproduction. This *mise en scene* of Margaret's painting being reproduced into cheap posters on a massive scale is an ironic illustration not that dissimilar to Benjamin's discussion on the mechanical reproducibility of artworks, a visual vignette of incessant technical replication occurring for capitalistic gains. It corresponds to Benjamin's description of how the masses desire to "get closer" to works of art they find appealing, an idea that Walter Keane himself uses to justify his actions, "People don't care if it is a copy. They just want art that touches them". How can art as rote repetition touch us emotively when we can see exact copies hanging on the walls of every contemporary bourgeois? Technological reproducibility provides the conditions for the economic abuse of Margaret Keane's paintings; it is means to extract some kind of sameness even from that which is artistically unique, an analogous treatment that corresponds to the exploitation of Margaret Keane herself, who becomes a metaphor for the living machine, an accessory that churns out paintings after paintings.

With the ability of endless multiplying, technological reproducibility "substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualises that which is reproduced" (ibid). To give Benjamin credit, he attempts a reinterpretation of mechanical reproducibility by pointing to how modes of perception are activated when viewers look at the artistic copies, allowing and actualising new perceptual structuration. Whether this new organisation of perception materialises a remarkable piece of art is another matter. If there is any theoretical affirmation of mechanical reproducibility at all, it is Benjamin applauding the accessibility of visual pleasure given by technological advancement even as his writing evinces an ambivalent attitude toward the possibility of reproducing countless copies, implicitly acknowledging the fact that the mechanical reproduction of artworks erodes its aura and thereby its authentic value.

Margaret's initial acquiescence to her husband's commercial machinations can be attributed to the financial concerns she has. She is later bullied into locking herself in a room so that she produces hundreds of paintings for which Walter Keane takes credit. This relationship subsequently turns sour because of the falsehoods that underscore their business partnership. The hallucinatory episode she experiences at the supermarket indicates her repressed psychic condition after years of living a lie, not having any authentic, meaningful social contact. The edutainment value of the aforementioned filmic works of art can be found

in their provocation of a social awareness of how domination, male or otherwise, found in the demands for mindless reproduction can lead to estranged labour, thereby having negative effects on the psychic state of urbanites living in the twenty-first-century cities.
The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of socialist feminism in a brand of cyberfeminism introduced by Haraway and other feminist standpoint theorists such as Hilary Rose and Sandra Harding, leading to the post-cyberfeminism of the twenty-first century. Post-cyberfeminism does not depart from Haraway's original premise. Instead it radicalises her theoretical emphasis on cyberspace as a site of essential emancipation. Their theories are premised on the relations between the production of knowledge and the practices of power. These feminist theorists challenged patriarchal power relations by focusing on socially situated knowledge out of which a standpoint can be made, advocating a political activism that liberates women from the concomitant patriarchal underpinnings of Western Enlightenment. Due to the theoretical attention given to Oshii's and Sander's opening versions of *Ghost in the Shell*, Haraway's socialist cyberfeminist discourse in "A Cyborg Manifesto" struck a resonance in an era when the place of many women was still in the domestic arena. Having said that, a recent reading of this text has found some of Haraway's writing dynamic and inspiring, a metaphorical writing that attempts to go beyond gender, race or class restrictions and, more importantly, alienated labour: "*The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation*.… The cyborg is a creature of the post-gendered world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (Haraway, 1991, emphasis mine). My emphasis in this citation from Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" explains not only the significance of the Lacanian "suture", a reparative stitch of the Imaginary and the Symbolic but also the ultimate upending of Haraway's affirmative discourse, already intuited in Oshii's dystopian world. This psychoanalytic notion will demonstrate how a subject's imagination and the surrounding material reality, in Haraway's vocabulary, can be connected in and through a filmic imaginary, explicated with the filmic concept of diegesis. Thus the frame is in place for a de-framing performativity; this "raking of the frame" gives to a reading in the form of *a cinematic enonce*, according to Oudart, whether in the form of a filmic narrative or a cultural aesthetics. Suture, a theoretical conception first introduced by Jacques-Alain Miller was appropriated later by Oudart for describing the process of film viewing, which when reinforced by the diegetic filmic notion, points to a bridging by the *objet petit a*, a communicative connection in lieu of a gap found right at the edge of the *mise en scene*, what the poststructuralists call the radical boundary, radical because it simultaneously permits the divergence and convergence of the inside and the outside.

This psychoanalytic absence at the limit is not the categorical separation that we understand normatively; it is a consequence of the symbolic residing within the imaginary and the imaginary within the real, evincing an empty locus because of multiple erasures, the primordial lack, denoted by Scott's 1982 opener, functioning as provocation to filmic reading, which at the perceptual level, can be theoretically called the film narrative. This level of narrativising can be brought to a different level motivated by the film critic's desire for analysis. This paradoxical motif of absence at the edges can be explained by the filmic gaps which the opening sequence allegorises in the manner which it is designed, a manner that gestures to the Freudian dream-work with its concepts of condensation, displacement, and secondary revision, a dream sequence that is made evident by the surrealist superimposition of images, directly reminiscent of Rene Magritte's and Salvador Dali's paintings, in the opening sequence to the latest Dick's short-fictional inspired anthology,

Electric Dreams, an opening quite distinct from Scott's not only in terms of atmosphere; its staccato visual insertions and imagistic uses of the "eye" note the visual aspect of the viewer's gaze and its subsequent narrative appropriation. Moreover, the multiple appearance of this "eye" motif implies a returning gaze coming from within the screen, an anonymous other gazing at the viewer's gaze, heightened by a chromatic, laser-lit shot that viscerally draws the gazing into the screen.

Because of its artistically seductive array of imagery, our perceptual consciousness is pushed to the next level in an interpretative attempt, a metafictional level that analyses the visual language with focus given to the different intensities and textures of filmic signification. Thus Myer's "contextual imaginary" is located along the axial line connecting the Symbolic and the Imaginary in Lacan's psychoanalytic triangulation. This discussion notes that the Symbolic is alternatively called the Law-of-the-Father and the Imaginary is aligned with the maternal, which in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, is symbolised by the psychic union between the feminised Major and the masculinised Puppet-Master – despite the much commented transgender traits of the latter – embodied in a young female at the conclusion of the film.

Haraway's cyberfeminism holds in tension the two perceptions underpinning the possibility for identity formation in cyberspace: she recognises that this male-dominated site also provides female users immense potential in undermining gender inequality and space for identity recreation. Following O Correa's citation of Catherine Belsey in her review, it is not anatomical or biological equality that women seek but the commensurateness in power. This remark is critical to an analysis of the visually dynamic illustration of the physical prowess of Kusanagi in the opening scene of Oshii's 1995 adaptation of Shirow's manga of the same title, realistically fleshed out by the biomechanical construction of Major in Sander's 2017 *Ghost in the Shell*, a female protagonist with a human brain encapsulated in a synthetic shell. A critical inquiry into the physiological appearance of the female protagonist and the number of images of Kusanagi's nakedness are shown in the animated film proper disavows any feminist potential of *A Ghost in the Shell*. These depictions of female nudity appear not only to reinforce the biological inequality between man and woman; they actually confirm that rousing desire is key to commerce. Sander's version, on the other hand, ensures that Major's mechanised body appears enclosed in an artificial shell. It is disappointing that the latter omits the scene wherein the animated (wo)man-machine figure twirls in a foetal position before emerging from her aqueous womb. In fact, Sander's version visually and atmospherically evoke the opener to Jonathon Nolan's and Lisa Joy's 2016 *Westworld*, an adult theme park which is, in essence, a world rather than a theme park, to paraphrase one of its creators. This not only indicates the importance of worldliness given by the painterly of digitisation but also how the robots are similarly flayed anatomically even as their synthetic construction gradually unfolds in the title sequence, which is remarked in the seventh episode title of its second season, "Les Ecorches", meaning "flayed".

Created by a representative from Hanka Robotics, a government-funded corporation involved in the experimental hybridisation of the synthetic and the organic to produce technologically augmented soldiers, Major joins an anti-terrorist unit, known as section 9, to fight cybercrimes. In order to do this, the cyborg-crime fighters have cable ports installed at the back of their necks so that they can "plug in" for a cybernetic deep dive into the synthetic minds of their enemies for information retrieval. It is the diving into a geisha's robotic brain that her psyche is hacked by her nemesis, the Puppet-Master, thereby allowing the latter to gain the upper hand, prompting her to rediscover her past. Sander's version makes

pronounced Major's ontological estrangement, brainwashed and unknowingly suffering from a stolen identity, her organic brain has been fed memorious details that are not her own. Without a past that she possesses, memories that make her who she is, Major becomes psychically disturbed, at various filmic moments, by her resemblance to the synthetics she fights. Becoming an instrument of combat, she is easily manipulated by Dr Ouelet, the robotics specialist answering to Hanka Robotics, who advises her that memories do not define her, it is her actions that do.

Human consciousness is informed by memories which, in turn, affect perception and behaviour. This means that our perception will also influence our actions. Our sense of self is determined by both thoughts and actions, not just one or the other. According to the standpoint feminists, we should take a political stance even if one can be informed only in a socially situated manner, *standing for and by what we believe in*. Butte, in his historical contextualising of the Lacanian suture, refers to Kaja Silverman's and Danial Dajan's apparently irrelevant discursive takes on the concept, which delve into the Althusserian dimension of the filmic suture. I shall suggest that if we are speaking of how film narratives incite action, then this belief in a cause, political or otherwise, is that which makes us ideologically subjected and thereby a subject in our subsequent performativity. This means that the notion of ideology cannot be ignored when discussing agency and action, the very vocabulary of "subjectivity".

Standpoint feminism propounds a polemic stance due to its attention to power relations. This theoretical assertion is laudatory, given that, in general, political activism means acting or speaking against the dominant ideology without complete knowledge, forgetting that there is always a taint in the mirror of politics. Major's negative response to Dr Ouelet's encouragement that she is the first of her kind and the future of humankind implies a disconcerted psychic state. Neither completely synthetic nor fully organic, Major feels isolated despite the many reminders that she has a "ghost". In the cyber-universe of *Ghost in the Shell*, an individual with a "ghost" means that she, unlike the other robotic entities, has consciousness and concomitantly a soul. This testifies to the significance of having a mind, an inner space and a viscerous voice of one's own, to reiterate with a difference Virginia Woolf's "a room of one's own". With hindsight, the surreal images of opening sequences reiterate visually Joyce's and Woolf's poetic technique of stream of consciousness.

Sander's remake of *Ghost in the Shell* has been criticised for not rendering the philosophical leanings of Oshii's version well. But the opening sequence is an aesthetically astute rendition that demonstrates how Major's human brain can be connected artificially to the rest of her synthetic shell. It is via an advanced functioning neural network that sends physiological stimuli to the brain, which then disseminate brainwaves to the rest of the physical body. Physiologically, this does undermine the Cartesian duality because it demonstrates how our bodily pulsations affect the brain and vice versa. But how far can this physiological premise go when the title itself and the multiple references to Major's "ghost" indicate that human consciousness is the defining attribute of individual identity. Thus the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" becomes validated rather than negated, further confirmed by Major's ironic reply to Ouelet's remark which implies that the replicative production on a massive scale her successful prototype makes her feel abandoned rather than treasured.

The Psychoanalytic Suture in Popular Culture

Myer's theoretical thesis has as its fundamental the division between the filmic world and the real world. Conventionally, the opening sequence is designed to provide filmic hints to the viewers and it is through this filmic imaginary, expanded to a hierarchy of narrative levels, that plot and thematic connections can be made between the filmic world and the actual one. This transposing process means that cinematic intelligibility becomes enhanced by the film's illusory presence, a movement of the image to word as we tease out an interpretation from the writerly text so that we can get a readerly one. This description will be reiterated later albeit in a psychoanalytic manner. Myer's historical tracing from Plato's concept that unifies mimesis and diegesis to Genette's various definitions of diegesis, including the intra- and extra-diegeses, provides a comprehensive account of this literary and filmic term. It is, however, Paul Ricoeur's advice against the superimposition of mimesis and diegesis that is of interest here. This analytical concept not only explains the reason for the use of this phrase "the suspension of disbelief" in our viewing of film fictions, attesting to the imaginary as Plato's cave; it has ontological implications when referring to the filmic or realistic worlds. Intermingling the filmic mimetic and its counterpart, the diegetic, does explain the immersive experience of character identification and narrative projection. However, if we take as true the conventional view of films serving as "mirrors" to reality, then what follows will be Myer's "ideological black hole" that sucks in what is normatively known as reality as well, which the opener to the 1982 *Blade Runner* indicates.

In fact, one can say that this science-fictional opener may be prescient by virtue of the fact that the visual immediacy accorded by this unprecedented flow of information via communicative technologies has made RL almost indistinguishable from VR, an issue that Jean Baudrillard forewarns in his tirade against the hyper-simulation, making the endless, repetitive copying valueless, reinforcing Benjamin's concept of the aura and my argument that authentic self-consciousness is crucial to our existence in this contemporary, cosmopolitan world. One of the dangers of this visual proliferation making the spectacular the opiate of the masses is deception, making e-vices the prompters to cyber-security, which, judging from the notifications of improving changes in online security and privacy from Jstor and other commercial or non-commercial webpages, is the current topic of concern.
While Myer does not include the revolutionary possibility given by digitisation, Haraway's theorising is the obverse. This ability to simulate reality to a level that makes the virtual more real than the real can be affirmative in provoking effective political activism, which Sander's version, criticised for its diluted, accessible adaptation of Oshii's filmic original, undeniably proposes. This digital transition, supported by Lev Manovich's theoretical elaboration in "What is Digital Cinema?", is reworked here by the discursive idea of "cinema", Myer's oxymoronic concept of "contextual imaginary", so as to indicate the gendered dimension of the Lacanian terms, something that Myer's chapter does not address. Manovich's thesis argues that the digital process of filmmaking takes cinema away from its photographic origin; the nature of its operation brings it closer to painterly techniques. The opening sequence of Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* illustrates this painterly technique, with an imagistic making of the cybernetic body, what fans call "The Shelling Sequence", available online. Sander's version is comparably similar, another shelling that sequentially gives flesh to Oshii's version. Musically similar to the latter's iconic soundtrack of classical Japanese folk music imbued with a Hungarian flavour, Kenji Kawai, the original composer, is ushered in to recreate the score for the live-action remake, a haunting accompaniment to the divine iconicity in a cyborgian creation, sentient because of the organic brain installed in the humanlike carapace. The 2017 opening sequence differs from the 1995 sequence in these

ways. The first has to do with the visual atmosphere. Oshii's version is more detailed, neon-coloured, and anatomically precise. Sander's version, darkened and therefore more cryptic in style, starts the visual depiction with the rising and merging of neural filaments, creating the cyborgian body's network significant to its physiological functioning. Both versions show a female figure rising to be enveloped in synthetic skin, which is followed by its metamorphosing to the almost complete human appearance. According to one of the fan websites, Oshii's version makes Major more doll-like than the female protagonist in the manga version. Sander's opening sequence takes a step further this doll-likeness, visually attesting to a sequence of scenes in Oshii's animated film where images of Motoko Kusanagi are juxtaposed with that of bare mannequins on a display window, ideologically implying that the synthetic shell which, by the way, belongs to Megatech, the animated film equivalent of Hanka Robotics in Sander's version, is that which leads to the objectification of an individual: Kusanagi as a female object of desire, Kusanagi as an instrumentalised cyborgian crimefighter, Kusanagi as the object of the psychoanalytic gaze. Thus the aforementioned film analysis demonstrates how cinematic movements can arise from the framed filmic shots, with the use of the word "cinematic" here indicating the discursive dimension of film studies.

Instead of photographic realism as its source, Manovich's article suggests to me that digital cinema, with a painterly origin, encourages the creation of diverse realities, making available realities other than the one we know and inhabit, a crucial statement attesting to the psychoanalytic concept of the imaginary, arguably a feminine notion. The filmic concept of diegesis, as explicated by Myer, examines how the exteriority of cinema affects the film's interiority or otherwise. This theorising of filmic covertness bears testament to this reading of the opening sequence as an aesthetic allegory of Myer's "contextual imaginary" that can contribute to a psychoanalytic rethinking of human consciousness, which the aforementioned films assiduously represent.

Despite Myer's detailed elaboration of how the filmic diegetic can be used to link imaginary action and social actions, it is not precise enough a critical address of what agency, autonomy and action mean, especially when the psychoanalytic concept of the imaginary is given its due attention. Strangely, Myer does not use the Lacanian-Miller psychoanalytic term, "suture", in his address of how film is crucial to this transference of imaginary action to social action. This term suggests that it is psychic triggers that motivate action – how signifiers attach themselves to our psyche – leading to consequences in our manner of being. This is something that commercial advertisers know and manipulate in designing their commercials. It is a tactic similar to the one used in propaganda wherein repetitive telecasts will ensure successful psychological instillation and manipulation. When alluding to cinematic projections, which the opening sequence is one instance, the process of suture, as expressed by Oudart, is activated by virtue of a doubling movement between two fields, the visual field of the imaginary, conventionally known as the diegetic space of the film, and an absent field which echoes the imaginary field, the extra-diegetic location of a symbolic field. This absent field, to the audience, is a subjective site that permits any viewer narrative structuration, an idea that Benjamin mentions in his essay on mechanical reproducibility but, in cinematic analysis, it is more a location of objectivity than subjectivity because this is where discursive linearity occurs. This momentary space is the place where the retroactively semantic is activated with the filmic signified presiding over a signifying exchange between the viewer and the viewed, a metonymic movement the crux of which is the exchange value of the iconic for the linguistic articulation of its message. Oudart states that "Thus what we are here calling the suture is primarily the representative of that which, under the same heading, is now used to designate 'the relationship of the subject to the chain of its

discourse'", a chainlike process that takes the imagistic over to the linguistic. It can function in an intra-diegetic manner as in the climactic scene of *Big Eyes*, wherein the courtroom drama not only presents to us a female victim filing a lawsuit against her husband for labour exploitation; it designates a shift from a visual text to a linguistic one and then back to the visual, a movement also reflected her performance, painting the waif paintings, during the first half of the film that moves to her verbal contestation at the law court followed by a returning visual performance in front of the judge and jury, a form of bearing witness to her abusive marriage.

The suturing operation, in psychoanalytic identification, stitches the viewer on the edge of the filmic exterior into the filmic interior so that the viewer, who is moved by the onscreen narrative of the female protagonist, becomes psychologically entangled with the filmic persona. For those who have suffered under patriarchal control, they will identify with Margaret Keane's initial anguish and applaud her later defiance of Walter Keane's hysterical domination. Comparably, most individuals who have experienced oppression will find psychic resonances in Major's characterisation and feel reinvigorated by her decision to fight bureaucratic control in a bid to regain her sense of self. The concept of suture, by way of its functioning, demonstrates the manner in which an engaged viewer can be turned into a subject. In terms of cinematic projection, it testifies to the allegorical nature of opening sequences so that the filmic experience can also be a profound, meaningful one. Whereas Myer's use of the word "imaginary" indicates the power of filmic narratives in provoking social action, the descriptive word "contextual" that comes before it implies thought, attesting to my earlier assertion that analysing and conceptualising human consciousness, which is of pertinence to personal or communal identity, can be a complex and intricate undertaking, an endeavour that proves that the cyberfeminists may be right in equating our brain functions to that of computation only because we are the ones who created computation in order to enable faster data analysis.

Digitalisation transforms our relationship with reality, a change symbolised by the "digital rain" found in Oshii's opening scene. This endless rows of encrypted codes that began as zeroes and ones, appropriated and made iconic by the Wachowski brothers in the *Matrix* trilogy, affirms the existence of different worlds, alternative realities no longer referential in the analogue sense. In coining the term, "differ-petit-ance", Myer's theoretical tribute to Derrida's "differance", another name for his "supplement" and Lacan's "objet petit a" does not attend to the feminine, explaining the significance of my attention to the imaginary here. If Oshii's shot of the digital rain signifies a cyborg's direct access to the cyber-net, then Derrida's "differance", a repetition-in-difference, is the word to note, a choral net-working, evanescently evoked by Kawai's music, that is more communal than individual, given his use of the word "chiasmus" in his "inter-view" with Christie McDonald, entitled "Choreographies". This concept is comparable to Butte's concept of "deep intersubjectivity". The imaginary does not subscribe to normative gender distinctions because it is psychically feminine in an artistic sense, in a way releasing anatomical difference, analogous to the transitional nature of the opening scene. These scenes not only reinforce the idea of the filmic frame; they, more importantly, testify to a void fundamental to artistic interpretations. In other words, these scenes can invoke filmic intelligibility, albeit derived from an aesthetic sensibility, which takes us from the imaginary to the symbolic by way of our propensity for narrative coherence and discursive cohesion.

Conclusion

Instead of points of entry, the conclusion of this paper focuses on the opening scenes as points of exits, a critical move that attempts a beyond from that of imaginary identification or projections with attention given to the pleasures derived from cultural analyses. Most opening sequences are not designed in a linear fashion due to its brevity. The multiple functions of the title sequence stated earlier already imply that what the audience receive is thoughtful juxtaposition of images and words designed to create a signifying effect on the viewer. Thus opening sequences are cultural occurrences, imaginary sites re-turning as symbolic places, attesting to the Lacanian thesis that the psychoanalytic terms of the imaginary, symbolic and real are inextricably intertwined. These opening images can be received as mere flow of images to those who merely want entertainment, imagistic play to those attentive to them as visual creations or stylistic and thematic indicators to those whose intent is to analyse these images for commentaries. They provide, instead, hermeneutic satisfactions rather like the psychoanalytic processes of ego construction. The digital ability to transform frames to thresholds means that these enticing entries can also become signifying exits. This means that the screen as a framing device is tenable only as the Lacanian Mobius strip, a strip with a half-twist such that the inside becomes outside and the outside inside. The framing device is technically in place to enable both the narrative linking of filmic scenes at the denotative primary plane and the analytic exegesis from the connotative, secondary plane. In other words, the screen surface, although appearing contained, actually denotes a liminal situation, one indicating the proximity of narrative construction or the theoretical remoteness implied by film analysis, both a protective filter having intra-diegetic implications as well as the multiple discursive layering of extra-diegetic commentaries, an artistic impasse that is the very condition for an aesthetic passage.

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Academics must list all publications on their CV

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Abstract

The issue of "predatory" publishing continues in the post-Jeffrey Beall era, especially among open access (OA) journals and publishers. Even though the Beall blog was shut down in mid-January of 2017, there are members of academia and avid Beall fans who wish to see the continuation or resurrection of Beall's black lists. Although some argue that in this day and age of fake academia, there is a need for clearly vetted blacklists to better guide authors of potentially "predatory" journals or publishers, it can be stated that Beall's lists are not a solution, nor are the copy-cat sites that have cloned his lists. Others argue that blacklists should not be used at all for assessing the work of scholars. The post-Beall era has left a deep mark of stigmatization, i.e., those who have published in "predatory" OA journals or publishers, as determined by Beall, and now by others, and those who have not. One of the most prominent, well-funded and influential groups at the Center for Journalology at The Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, in Canada, led by David Moher, a highly cited researcher, has called for academics to clear their *curriculum vitae* (CV) of "predatory" papers if they have such publications. The Moher group advocates for academics to declare that their CV is free of such "predatory publications", i.e., papers published in OA journals or publishers blacklisted by Beall, while Mitchell S. Cappell argues in *The BMJ* that "predatory" papers should be included in a CV but in a separate category. We argue that the advice by both these factions is problematic and encourage academics to list all published work on their CVs, not to be boastful of numbers, but simply to make their CVs accurate and transparent.

Keywords: blacklists; open access; predatory behavior; unscholarly publishing

Jeffrey Beall has instilled a culture of stigmatization and division in academia

Whether academics like it or not, Jeffrey Beall continues to exert influence on global academia as a direct result of the creation of his blacklists of "predatory" open access (OA) journals or publishers, even though those lists were shut down in mid-January 2017, and

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even though they are outdated, erroneous, illegitimate and misleading (Teixeira da Silva, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b). Beall's blacklists suffer from a large type I error (Olivarez et al., 2018). A type I error is to include in the lists, OA publishers and journals that are not deceiving or "predatory". Olivarez et al., using an independent panel of experts in the field of library and information science, applied Beall's updated criteria and found that out of 81 well-regarded academic journals in these fields, OA and non-OA, that 45 would be classified as "predatory".

Furthermore, another troubling consequence of Beall's blacklists is how they have been used to discriminate "good" from "bad" academics, i.e., those who have published in so-called "predatory" OA journals or publishers, i.e., academics that have "predatory" papers, and those that have not. For example, Pyne (2017) claimed falsely that researchers at a small business school in Canada[1] were financially rewarded for their "predatory" publications (i.e., on Beall's unreliable lists of "predatory" OA journals or publishers), relative to those that did not have such publications. Pyne's results were presented in such a deceiving way that most academics and media bought blindly into this act of research spin (Chiu et al., 2017; Turrentine, 2017), naively accepting Pyne's results as factually true. Pyne, using manipulative language, managed to spin inconclusive findings by claiming that evidence of financial rewards exists when in fact his results related to the influence of "predatory" publications on salary were highly statistically insignificant. Moreover, one of the most important variables, predatory and unranked, was dropped from his preferred salary regression model.[2] That false claim may have caused reputational damage to the Canadian researchers who were negatively stigmatized by Pyne based on the venue where they published, rather than an appreciation or criticism of the work that they published.[3] We believe that Pyne should not remove this publication from his CV, despite its spin, or even place it in a separate category. As academics, we should be able to read and critique that manuscript which was published in the *Journal of Scholary Publishing*.

The Pyne case is not unique. In March 2018, a fierce battle raged between two competing academics in Uganda's Makerere University, with one researcher accusing the other of having "predatory" papers (classification based on Beall's erroneous blacklists) on his *curriculum vitae* (CV), giving him an unfair advantage based on "bad" research.[4] However, that case also highlights how Beall's blacklists continue to mislead academics and cause damage due to their erroneous use. Another case involves a public accusation in late 2017 that Dr. Alice Němcová Tejkalová at Charles University in the Czech Republic published four "fraudulent" papers (i.e., in Beall-listed "predatory" OA journals) in a bid to prevent the employment of Tejkalová as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences[5], an accusation and claim that was rejected by the Rector, Prof. Tomáš Zima.[6]

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[1] The name of the school and university where the sample was drawn from was intentionally revealed by Pyne post publication raising ethical and privacy concerns for the human subjects used in the study.

[2] Pyne stated in the abstract: "In terms of financial compensation, these publications [i.e., in predatory journals] produce greater rewards than many non-predatory journal publications" (p. 137). Manipulative language also appears in the title of the paper and elsewhere in the manuscript as well as in (social) media post publication.

[3] It is worth mentioning that Pyne acknowledged Jeffrey Beall for feedback on the manuscript. Beall either noticed the spin and did nothing to advice Pyne not to engage in such potential research misconduct or was ignorant of what is academic spin. However, Beall must have agreed with the findings given that he tweeted Pyne's interview with NYT. See: https://twitter.com/Jeffrey_Beall/status/925096120795066368

[4] http://observer.ug/news/headlines/57268-makerere-dons-in-promotion-fight.html (although Beall or his blacklists were not implicitly mentioned, it can be safely assumed that the duel involves journals or publishers on Beall's ists).

[5] https://reputationindanger.com/arguments-argumenty/

[6] https://www.cuni.cz/UKEN-379.html?news=5087&locale=en

Should "predatory" papers be listed on a CV?

The issue of whether "predatory" papers should be listed on a CV has been debated in one paper (Moher et al., 2017) and in one letter to the editor (Cappell, 2015). Moher et al. (2017) suggested that researchers should declare that their CVs are free of "predatory" publications: "When seeking promotion or funding, researchers should include a declaration that their CV is free of predatory publications" (p. 25). If scholars should declare that their CV is free of "predatory" publications, then by induction, researchers ought to also declare that the CV is free of "predatory" conferences (Teixeira da Silva et al., 2017). Beall (2013) was the first to use the term "predatory meetings" to describe such conferences when he critiqued OMICS for organizing conference meetings. Two years later, Beall (2015) stated in his blog: "There's a lot of money to be made in the scholarly-conference organizing business in Asia these days. These are not conferences organized by scholarly societies. Instead, they are conferences organized by revenue-seeking companies that want to exploit researchers' *need to build their vitas with conference presentations* and papers in the published proceedings or affiliated journals" (*italics added for emphasis*).

There are many issues with declaring that a CV is free of "predatory" publications and/or "predatory" conferences. First, declaring that a CV is free of "predatory" publishers and journals is impossible as there are no verifiable, accurate, complete, updated and public blacklists of "predatory" journals, publishers (OA and non-OA) and conferences to base such declarations. Beall's two now-defunct and inaccurate blacklists are useless because Beall classed them widely as "potential, possible, or probable predatory" OA publishers and journals. Beall was clearly aware of his lists suffering from a large type I error in that many OA journals of publishers may have been wrongly accused of "predatory" behavior, but ignored this fact. The presence of a large type I error exists because Beall's criteria and their application were opaque (Olivarez et al., 2018).

Regarding "predatory" conferences, there are no conference-based whitelists or blacklists available for international conferences except to make inappropriate inductions by linking these to Beall's blacklists, as has been done by some individuals. For example, Cobey et al. (2017) classified conferences as "predatory" based on email invitations as well as if the publisher was a "predatory" OA publisher that had been listed by Beall. In the conclusion, they stated: "Future research is needed to determine whether conferences associated with e-mails that we classified as being predatory, or similar invitations received by other scholars, actually relate to conferences that do take place" (p. 413).[7] This "fake" Beall reference, namely the website used by Cobey et al., is incorrect. This list was not created by Beall but by some anonymous person or group who archived a version of Beall's list and is claiming to be updating that list[8] without possibly knowing the precise criteria that were applied to each of the OA journals and publishers that were listed by Beall as "predatory". Since CVs are usually written similar to reference lists in journal articles, requiring truth, honesty and transparency, Cobey et al. as well as Moher et al. and others are not providing a good example of how to record accurate and transparent reference lists in CVs.

Second, if researchers are to declare CVs of being free of "predatory" publications and conferences, then why stop there? In such a case, as advised by Cobey et al. as well as Moher et al. and others, surely researchers should also declare – to hold high and standardized criteria – that their published work in so-called "legitimate" journals are free of publications of any journal where the author knowingly fabricated and falsified data and results such as

[7] In the Cobey et al. (2017) paper, this statement is linked to the following reference in their reference list: "Beall J: Beall's List: Potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open access publishers. http://beallslist.weebly.com/." See criticisms of Beall copy-cat sites such as this in Teixeira da Silva (2018b).

[8] https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-02921-2

spin, *p*-hacking, and HARKing, free of illusory truth effects, free of biases, free of ghost co-authors, fake emails, and other weaknesses or flaws, as identified by Ioannidis (2005), and reviewed by Wicherts (2017). These declarations cannot be made by academics for obvious reasons.[9] Thus, it is best to report all publications in a CV and then let experts in each field of study decide on the merit of each publication.

Third, many papers published in Beall-listed OA journals are not invalid or unscholarly as has been suggested by Moher et al., Pyne, and others. For example, Brembs (2018) published a valid and important scholarly work on the quality and reliability of prestigious science journals. Brembs' evidence suggests that "methodological" quality may decline as the rank of journal increases. That paper was published by Frontiers, a Beall-listed OA publisher. What right would Moher et al. have to suggest to Brembs and many other scholars, including the authors of this manuscript, that they should clear their CVs from important contributions to their field of science simply because they appeared in journals or by publishers on Beall's defunct blacklists?

It is odd that Moher et al. would make such a suggestion without considering its actual or potential implications. What signal do such declarations send to the receiver of the information that is in the CV? Simply because a CV is free of "predatory" publications or other misconduct does not imply that the researcher does not have such publications or research that is flawed. Moher et al. want academics to signal such information to receivers of CVs, but such a signal is not only meaningless, its validity would need to be independently verified. Academics should report all their achievements in a CV and let the experts in their field do the checking and verification of the validity and importance of the research being conducted, including reproducibility. Academics should also include on their CV papers that have been retracted. A retraction is not disputable while a publication in Beall's blacklists is.

In contrast to Moher et al. (2017), Cappell (2015) suggested the inclusion of "predatory" journal publications in a CV. However, according to Cappell, academics should segregate journal publications into a separate list, and place Beall-listed "predatory" publications separate from what he calls "genuine journals". Cappell wanted genuine publications not to be tainted and was very worried that his 240+ PubMed-indexed and peer-reviewed publications would be devalued and contaminated.[10] In fact, Cappell declared that his CV is completely free of "predatory" papers, i.e., the Moher et al. (2017) suggestion in action. Cappell was so troubled by "predatory" papers that he even believed that these publications by "pseudo-academics" (a term he assigned to scholars who have papers published in Beall-listed "predatory" OA journals) could hamper the progression of his own academic career. Furthermore, Cappell thought that his solution would allow promotion committees to heavily discount such publications by claiming that "the phenomenon may disappear, just like containment defeats pestilence." Cappell concluded that academics must "unite to defeat the enemy." However, if Cappell wished to be truly thorough, why then stop with only these two discriminatory Beall blacklists? Surely, Cappell would not agree to have also a separate section in a CV that lists articles that have spin (interactive bias), publication selection bias or any of the other weaknesses we list above? Would Cappell then consider listing his own opinion piece in *The BMJ*, a very high impact factor journal with a 2016 JIF of 20.785, as a case of "publication selection bias"?

[9] For example, if Pyne (2017) were to declare that his CV is free of research spin, he would surely then have to retract his journal publication and all the editorials and media attention it received otherwise the declaration is a falsification. Hence, rationality and self-interest is for him not to make such a declaration. The same applies to all academics who engaged in research misconduct while publishing in non-"predatory" (Beall-listed) journals.
[10] See also discussion in PubPeer: https://pubpeer.com/publications/BCD633B9ED1E8D276332197843B3F9

Conclusions

The influence by Beall lives on through his erroneous blacklists that continue to be used in a discriminatory and unscholarly manner. Moher et al. (2017) suggested that academics declare that their CV is free of "predatory" papers using Beall's now-defunct "potential, possible, or probable" blacklists to "clean" their CV. This suggestion is questionable for reasons we list above and thus we disagree with the suggestion by Moher et al., which has also been promoted in Canadian media.[11] Instead, researchers should declare all published work on their CVs. This would allow other academics to independently verify if that work is scientifically sound or not, just like Moher et al. detected issues with the papers they examined post publication. An academic CV needs to reflect verifiable, accurate, complete and updated information. It is these issues that are perhaps purposefully ignored by entities such as Harvey and Weinstein (2017) who prefer to continue to refer to and rely on Beall's blacklists to guide academics then to appreciate that the fundamental basis of the abuse of the academic record by academics wishing to pad their CVs lies way beyond the issue of "predatory" publishing.

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[11] http://thefulcrum.ca/news/international-predatory-journals-target-canadian-universities/

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