

Semiotics and Cartomancy: Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School Legacy

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Abstract: This paper aims to reconstruct the fortune of the semiotic analysis of cartomancy, considered as a proper semiotic system, focusing in particular on the point of view of Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics (TMS). TMS, founded by the renowned semiotician Yuri Lotman, offers one of the most interesting semiotic approaches to culture and communication yet is still partially ignored in the West with the exception, of course, of its founder.

Many TMS scholars approached cartomancy not only as an interesting cultural phenomenon but as a case study allowing them to test analytic tools that fit for many different forms of communication. Cartomancy is, at the same time, a quite simple semiotic system and a very sophisticated cultural phenomenon; this makes it a very useful object of study, allowing us to manipulate an entire (and rich) language while looking for the basic workings of all kinds of communication. The article will show how TMS analysis of cartomancy has already been quite productive and has had a few entails as well as how these analyses could help us to reach a better understanding of play, which is one of the biggest challenges that communication studies are facing today.

Keywords: Semiotics of Play, Semiotic Systems, Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics, Cartomancy, Fortune telling

“This process repeated itself more than a quarter of a century later with the founding of the Moscow-Tartu School of Semiotics. As if reproducing the structure of the first stage, the scholarly movement that sprang up formed at the intersection of two traditions: the Moscow Linguistic School and the Tartu Literary School, which was genetically linked to the Leningrad School of Formalism. The joint work of brilliant academics, such as the late M.I. Revzin and Ju.K. Lekomcev, and of an entire pleiade of scholars from Moscow, Tartu, and Leningrad (the circle later grew to include scholars from Erevan, Riga and other cities), as well as the work of philologists from abroad, determined the general contours of the scholarly movement. At first, their interest was focused on structure and on the language of the phenomena under investigation. During this period semiotic researchers went through a period of “spacial expansion.” One after another, the most wildly different aspects of human activity—art, games, everyday behaviour, and so on—were described as languages.”

Y. M. Lotman, *The unpredictable workings of Culture* p.51-52.

Introduction

Cartomancy has been a privileged object of study in Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School. Uspenskij and Lekomceva dedicate to it a speech (published in the proceedings in 1964) and an article (1965), and Egorov also wrote a paper on it (1965). Cartomancy, the form of divination exploiting playing cards, is a simple semiotic system that is highly schematized and relatively easy to reconstruct. For this reason, cartomancy has been considered not only a metaphor of natural language but also a similar modelling system of an inferior order of complexity. What started as almost a pretext – using cartomancy as a training object in order to pursue heuristic goals – later become the basis of several works fully dedicated to divination. Aphek and Tobin (1989) used this work as starting point for their fundamental book on semiotics of fortune telling that is still an unavoidable work of reference today. Also, Maria Corti (1973), in her semiotics analysis of Calvino's “Il Castello dei Destini Incrociati” (1969), retrieves a lot from the Tartu-Moscow works on cartomancy.

In this paper, we will illustrate the positions of the Tartu-Moscow scholars on cartomancy and show how their works have not only been useful in the past to other researches but can still provide solid tools of investigation to other branch of semiotics, in our case to *semiotics of play*.

Uspenskij and Lekomceva

In the Moscow Symposium of 1962, B. Uspenskij and M. I. Lekomceva presented together an analysis entitled *Cartomancy as a Semiotic System* in which they approached fortune telling through cards as a proper language. This work was hence further developed in an article published in 1965 with the title “Describing a Semiotic System with a Simple Syntax.”

The aim of Uspenskij and Lekomceva was to provide the description of a simple semiotic system in order to participate in the creation of a method of descriptive semiotics and to enhance the possibility of a comparison between natural languages and other semiotic systems. In the article, the authors implicitly admit that they have no true interest in the cultural phenomenon of cartomancy but that the semiotic analysis of cartomancy could have an heuristic value.

Uspenskij's and Lekomceva's approach to cartomancy is articulated in three steps, and to each step, they dedicate a paragraph: “Field data of cartomancy described in the metalanguage of linguistic terminology,” “A semiotic description of cartomancy,” and “The system of cartomancy compared to natural languages.”

The first step, then, is the attempt to describe cartomancy using the metalanguage of linguistics. According to the authors, linguistics owns the more elaborated among the metalanguages of semiotic disciplines, making it the more suitable choice for any description of a semiotic system. According to linguistic terminology, then, cartomancy is indeed a language and is composed of two elements: a mechanism for the distribution of the cards, which generates sentences, and a vocabulary that explains the meaning of each card or idiomatic combination of cards. The authors proceed with the description of a popular method of fortune telling in which card distribution is articulated in two phases and determines the formation of nine sentences composed by a group of up to four cards. In addition, the distribution also determines attributes that contextualize each sentence (e.g., “What will happen” or “What you do not expect”). Uspenskij and Lekomceva also propose a table reporting the meaning that each card assumes in the act of fortune telling and showing how cards of the same suite and/or denomination often share semantic links. The main part of the analysis, however, is focused on the semiotic description of cartomancy and, in particular, in its pragmatics, semantics, and syntax.

Fortune telling always involves two people of differing status. The first one (A) is the fortune teller, and the second one (B) is the person whose future is being told. For A, if the signs on the cards only pertain to a code, B replaces the variable signifiers with specific meaning issued from his personal situation. In order to make cartomancy work, therefore, the meanings of the cards have to cover every possible life situation. In other words, according to a Saussurean conception of signs, A only has access to the signifier and the signified, while the referent is only accessible to B.

The distribution of cards in fortune telling determines that some sentences will focus on the past and the present of B. This step is the more delicate for A because he has to prove his abilities in a sort of test; B also knows the rules of cartomancy, the meanings of the cards, and, of course, his own past and present. Uspenskij and Lekomceva compare this situation to a game for two passive opponents in which all the moves are personal. The distribution makes it a game of chance (or *alea*, according to Caillois 1967), and systems of fortune telling that exploit all cards correspond to a game with complete information. Winning this game is the only way to keep the fortune telling from being a failure, thus A has to be able to interpret the reactions of B and, if possible, gather some information on

him before the session. Winning the game, on the other hand, will also win B's confidence.

If telling the past and the present can be hard, according to the authors, telling the future is much simpler. B ignores his future as well, hence cartomancy becomes almost a self-generating system. The situation has already taken shape, and the fortune teller has much less freedom than before (he only needs to read the cards).

After the pragmatics, the authors analyse the semantics of cartomancy. Cards indicate both subjects (persons indicated by the faces) and predicates. The key planes used to interpret the meaning of the cards are simultaneously issued by the kind of situation manifested (usually marital or financial) and by the particular plane of each sentence ("What will happen," "What you do not expect," etc.).

Finally, the syntax of cartomancy is very simple because there is a high degree of freedom in the order of reading the signs, as often happens in simple languages with limited vocabulary. Even if it's not a rule, generally, the subjects are read first with the predicates read later.

The last paragraph of Uspenskij's and Lekomceva's article is devoted to comparing cartomancy to natural languages; the semiotic system of cartomancy can be considered a language with a finite number of states, limited semantics, and very simple syntax. Cartomancy share many features with natural languages; as in natural languages, preceding words and sentences influence the following. Additionally, different readings of the cards' meanings, which depend on the initially given situation, are analogous to variations of meaning depending on context in natural languages. Like natural languages, cartomantic systems are socially and ethnically conditioned.

Egorov

Boris Egorov's article on cartomancy was published in 1965 in the same issue of *Sign System Studies* than Uspenskij's and Lekomceva's, and is entitled *The Simplest Semiotic Systems and the Typology of Plots*. His approach, different from the previous, concentrates on cartomancy as a plot-generating mechanism.

The author acknowledges the work of Uspenskij and Lekomceva, but he's also critical. In particular, Egorov disagrees with the claim of the fortune teller (A) having a high degree of freedom while reading the cards. According to him, in professional fortune telling, A has an enormous advantage over his customer (B) that generally ignores the rules and meanings of cartomancy, and so A is granted an infinite amount of freedom. Cards, therefore, are pure fiction, and the game is played with the mind of B with his own expectations and reactions.

On the other hand, in honest fortune telling (as among friends) or when someone is telling their own fortune (A=B), the degree of freedom is very little if not non-existent. Honest fortune telling is the more interesting to Egorov because in that case, each card has an only meaning, which may vary only in strictly stipulated instances and which nuances are determined only in the context of the entire distribution.

In his article Egorov describes a different method of cartomancy which is similar, but different, from the one described by Uspenskij and Lekomceva. If the main features are still the same, both the distribution and the meaning of many cards are sensibly different. The most significant variation in the rules is a syntactical one: in this form of cartomancy the order of cards is fixed and meaningful and different sequences of the same cards have different meanings.

Egorov, in the same way than Uspenskij and Lekomceva, is not particularly interested in the cultural phenomenon of cartomancy, but he prefers to focus on the way cartomancy is effective for generating plots. According to him, every reading of a series of sentences creates a new plot and the number of possible combinations of the 36 cards – and thus the number of possible plots – is immense: countless combinations can spring from a very little number of signs. These signs are particularly interesting to him because, when the author was writing, plot theorists were looking exactly for the “primary elements” of plot: “Obviously such a system is elaborated during a centuries-long developmental process in which the most significant and diverse actions and consequences are selected, and in this form it attracts our attention as a system of plots.” (Egorov 1977: 77)

Egorov traces also a sort of history of plots, recalling that Vladimir Propp (1928) outlined thirty-one functions in fairy tales. Despite the possibility of reducing those functions in few smaller elements, not all their combinations would appear in fairy tales. Fairy tales are composed by functions that are, in fact, short plots: not every combination of the same elements fits. The increasing complexity of narrative through the centuries, however, brought to wider range of possible combinations of elements and thus to an increasing decomposition of these motifs in sub-motives. The number of elements increases proportionally to the number of ties between them, which in turn complicates the structure as a whole. It's impossible, therefore, to reduce all the different narrations to a small number of plots.

Even if cartomancy is extremely antique, contemporary cartomancy is a product of the modern era: the cards don't indicate short plots, but each one represents a single, indivisible element (a subject or a predicate). The method described by Egorov hosts twelve predicates, and the majority of them do not have a thematic value. Most of the predicates are identified by their value. When this happens, the suite introduces something qualitative, evaluative, or attributive to the meaning defined by it. Nonetheless, some of these elements still have an unspecified value depending on the context. Predicates such as “change” comprehend everything. These elements are not already part of the table of predicates, and their value is determined only by the context. Furthermore, Egorov also underlines that it is impossible to define a hierarchy of predicates by their meaningfulness, the latter depending on the interpretation given by the person whose future is being told (and thus varies according to the receiver and the context).

The author states that the sequence of subjects and predicates indicated by the cards can be easily represented with a formula (formed by the cards' conventional signs). Such a transcription of the plot would be objective and could be read by anybody. Unfortunately, according to Egorov, such a formula is still not possible with artistic works.

The article ends with a programmatic allegation from Egorov that a science of plots would be highly desirable. Such science, composed by a grammar, syntax, and history of plots, should create a complex table of all the possible elements pertaining to plots and investigate the ways they are interconnected. The analysis of cartomancy is then a model based on a simple system that should be applied with a higher degree of complexity to every form of narration.

Influences and Entails

The works of the Tartu-Moscow semioticians was, as we said, concentrated in using cartomancy as a model object of analysis in order to direct future academic efforts. However, these works have been among the basis of the monumental work from Edna Aphek and Yishai Tobin in *Semiotics of Fortune Telling*, published in 1989. Opposite to

Egorov, Uspenskij, and Lekomceva, the main interest of this book is to actually shed light on the cultural relevance of fortune telling. In the fifth chapter, entitled “The Visual and the Textual in Cartomancy,” Aphek and Tobin approach cartomancy as a complex, multilayer, semiotic system. It could be interesting quoting here the paragraphs in which they explain the differences of their approach from the previous works. The first paragraph underlines their divergences from Uspenskij and Lekomceva:

We, on the other hand, believe that cartomancy represents a complex semiotic system where the meaning part of the card symbol functioning as a sign is oftentimes an index of exhaustive graded sometimes polysemic and "reversible" meanings which are part of a larger relative dynamic thematic continuum. The meanings of the cards may be seen as exhaustively classifying a larger thematic continuum if we view the "divinatory" meanings attached to each card as representing most, if not all, the possible semantic, cultural and social attributes of an umbrella term or theme related to that particular card. (Aphek and Tobin 1989: 138.)

The second one, on the other hand, is related to Egorov's work:

We, on the other hand, have also included in our work, the notion of the separate and individual plot building of the members of the fortune-teller/client dyad and have extended the discourse plot to include both a visual semiotic system which revolves around the moment of reading: i.e. the line or direction followed by the eye in a particular spread, as well as a broader semiotic system of color, shape, form and number, since these elements of the various suits of the regular playing cards add to their meaning and interpretation. (Aphek and Tobin 1989: 138.)

As we can see, Aphek and Tobin don't completely reject the previous works, but they deepen and complicate their theories on the topic in the frame of a much wider study on all forms of fortune telling.

The work of Egorov Uspenskij and Lekomceva also influenced Maria Corti's “Le jeu comme génération du texte: Des tarots au récit,” published in 1973. In this article, the Italian semiotician focuses on Italo Calvino's novel *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, published in 1969. In this novel, a series of characters tell their own stories using tarots as support. The cards are distributed according to rules similar to cartomancy, and the signs that they display are exploited in order to develop the plot. Corti refers several times to both theories (from Uspenskij and Lekomceva and from Egorov) that she uses to carry out her analysis. In particular, she focuses on the way in which Calvino is able to exploit the cards and their distribution in order to tell well-known stories, such as the one of Roland. Additionally, she shows the great awareness that Calvino had of the mechanics of plot generation by using a specific set of complex signs and their disposition.

Corti's article is an interesting way of retrieving useful and general concepts from the previous works on cartomancy and using them to shed some light on Calvino's way of thinking and writing.

What is still missing, however, is a semiotic analysis of cartomancy that takes into account the irrational and transcendent aspects that this practice may entail. Even if many scholars have already approached prophecy and divination from a semiotic perspective that also takes in account its sacred and transcendental aspects (see, for example, Volli 2011), such an approach has not yet been used to analyse cartomancy. The heritage of the strongly linguistic perspective adopted by Tartu-Moskow scholars has probably heavily influenced later semiotic works on the subject. Nevertheless, an extension of the analysis beyond this horizon would be, in fact, a new and interesting asset for understanding the

phenomenon of cartomancy and its cultural relevance; therefore, in the author's opinion, it would be a desirable future addition to the theory.

Cartomancy and Playfulness

Even if Lotman did not write about cartomancy, in 1975, he wrote *The Theme of Cards and Games in Russian Literature of the 19th Century* (in Russian, *тема карт и карточной игры в русской литературе начала XIX века*, the translation I used was Lotman 1980), mainly focusing on *Dame of Spades* by Pushkin. In this work, Lotman stresses the fundamental duplicity of cards, being at the same time playful artefacts and instruments used for fortune telling. According to him, this duplicity becomes even more evident in literature, where games of cards often have the features of a struggle against destiny.

On the other hand, however, one can argue that the contrary is also true: every experience of cartomancy shows some feature that is properly game-like. As we have seen, Uspenskij and Lekomceva have compared fortune telling with a game between the fortune teller and his customer, a game in which the first player has to successfully interpret the reactions of his opponent in real time and act according to his interpretation, reconstructing the opponent's past and present life. However, the game-like features of cartomancy are not limited to the struggle between the people involved but run deeper in its mechanics.

The reflection of these mechanics can be seen, for example, in the order in which Lekomcheva and Uspenskij approach the three aspects of the semiotic system of cartomancy (pragmatics, semantics, and syntax). Natural languages are generally analysed in the opposite order: starting from syntax, going through semantics, and investigating the pragmatics only in the end. This epistemological reversal happens because, if natural languages are semiotic systems with a syntactical-semantical determination, cartomancy – this is what Uspenskij and Lekomceva appear to suggest – is a semiotic system that features a pragmatic determination. If this is true, it entails the subordination of the meaning and of the order of the signs to the rules that, in a very game-like way, regulate the disposition of the cards and the interactions between the people involved. Furthermore, considering cartomancy as a pragmatically determined semiotic system could also explain the relatively great amount of freedom and idiosyncrasy featured by cartomancy that is absent from less playful semiotic systems as natural languages.

Egorov, on the other hand, stresses the importance of fortune telling with cards as a way to create new plots through the recombination of a series of elements. Maria Corti echoes him, stating that tarots can be used to *joindre et disjoindre les elements constitutifs d'une intrigue pour les transformer en matrices poetiques et ideologiques*. [Join and separate the constituent parts of a plot, in order to transform them into poetic and ideological matrices.] (Corti 1973: 43)

This definition of cartomancy as a sort of matrix of plots and is very close to Ferri's definition of games that he considers an interactive matrix that actualizes the elements of the game's repertory into a single narration (or game-text) (Ferri 2007). Thus, games feature both a repertory and a set of rules that mixes and brings together the repertory's elements. These components are the same that Uspenskij and Lekomceva indicate as constituting cartomancy: a vocabulary and a system of distribution. Additionally, if cards change meaning according to the ones that form the same sentence in cartomancy, in many games, the value of the cards depends fully on the combinations they makes with the others.

However, while the interactive matrix of games is, by definition, interactive, the distribution of the cards is determined only by randomness and by the rules without any decision made by the players involved. The choice of the reading order, nevertheless, can be considered a part of a playful behaviour, and it works like a sort of puzzle that the fortune teller has to solve. A cartomancy session, from this perspective, is not very different from a *solitaire*: the player has to find a new order to randomly distributed cards.

Finally, we can say that cartomancy is characterized by rules, a certain amount of creativity and make believe, and even a dose of risk, which are all elements typical of games.

On the other hand, cartomancy is not always perceived as game-like because it can be taken very seriously. Lotman describes play as a twofold activity: the player is simultaneously following a conventional (thus fictional) behaviour and a practical one (Lotman 2011). The player acts as the world of play were real, and at the same time, he knows it is not. Also, Caillois (1967) states that one of the characteristics of play is that it has to be conscious of its own fictionality. It follows that, if the fortune teller does truly believe in what he's doing, he is not playing, thus cartomancy, for him, is no game. However, if the fortune teller's faith in his ability to tell the future it is not so strong or, more likely, if cartomancy is either a profession or a hobby for him, we could harmlessly define fortune telling with cards being a game. Either way, the relationship between games and cartomancy shouldn't be surprising. According to Lotman, play often models the randomness of our world (2011: 256). Henceforth, if we believe that the apparently random events of life are, in fact, already written and predetermined, play becomes a model of fate itself.

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Using Social Scientific Criteria to Evaluate Cultural Theories: Encoding/Decoding Evaluated

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Abstract: This article transcends the issue of conflicting theoretical schools of thought to formulate a method of social scientific style theory evaluation for cultural studies. It is suggested that positivist social scientific models of theory critique can be used to assess cultural models of communication to determine if they should be classified as theories. A set of evaluation criteria is formulated as a guide and applied to Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding to determine if it is a theory. Conclusions find the sharing of criteria between schools of thought is judicious, Encoding/Decoding fits the established criteria, and Encoding/Decoding should be referred to as a theory.

Keywords: Theory Evaluation, Criteria of Theory, Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall, Encoding/Decoding

Introduction

In *The End of Mass Communication?*, Chaffee and Metzger (2001) suggest that new media will change our notions of mass communication and, as a result, the theories used in communication research. In more recent years, these types of implications about the rise of new media technologies, their role in society, and their influence on existing structures and industries have become increasingly ubiquitous. In this same spirit of capitalizing on the changes occurring in our modern era to re-evaluate existing ideas, this article suggest that, in addition to changing our notions of the theories we use, it might also be prudent to reconsider the methods used to label cultural theories as theories. When answering the question “what is a theory?” each school of thought provides different answers. For example, scientific theories have goals of explanation, prediction and control and scientists suggest that ideas supported by empirical data become a set of “laws” or theory after being evaluated according to existing

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sets of criteria. (Reynolds 1971). Contrastingly, cultural theorists' goals are to reveal systems of oppression in social structures and examine their underlying values, attitudes and beliefs. They have no set of criteria to determine what ideas should be labeled as theories. Cultural theories do not become "laws," but they more simply provide an abstract understanding of some communication process (Miller 2002). Despite these contradictory assumptions, it would benefit all parties to share tools or methods that can move us forward towards achieving our collective goals of answering questions about how and why things work.

To demonstrate how the different approaches used by these schools of thought can be bridged and how concepts can be mutually beneficial despite different epistemological and ontological assumptions, one set of scientific criteria will be modified and used as a sample method of determining if a cultural theory should be called a "theory." The theory selected for this purpose is Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding. This theory was chosen for several reasons. First, Hall's ideas are the foundation for the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. Showing how this process can work with such an important theory will demonstrate the processes usefulness for other ideas. There has also been no consensus on how to label his concepts about the semiotics of meaning-making in media. Although I have just referred to Hall's work as a theory, his ideas have been referred to by many names including a "model," "theory," "process," "Hall's Theory," or simply "encoding/decoding." These multiple forms of reference are a result of a lack of clear criteria for defining cultural theories as "theories" and for this reason, no process to determine how Hall's ideas should be labeled. Finally, using a four-decade-old theory demonstrates how the method presented here can be used to evaluate a theory of any age. A brief evolution of media theories is first presented to situate the innovative variations in thought provided by Hall's ideas. A review of the concepts presented is followed by examples of how the approach has been put to use. Next, the criteria for evaluating a theory are provided, defined and put to use evaluating Hall's ideas. This assessment concludes that Encoding/Decoding fits the established criteria of a theory and should be referred to as such.

Evolution of Media Theories

This brief review provides a foundation of theoretical thoughts key to understanding what led up to Stuart Hall's development of Encoding/Decoding.

Arising during the late nineteenth century, early media theories developed in an historical context, often referred to as the era of mass society, when industrialization was on the rise and societies were transitioning from predominantly agrarian lifestyles to a more commercially centered industrialized structure based around the growth of large cities. The transformations of the industrial era were far more than economic, giving rise to changes in every aspect of daily life, including social structures and interpersonal interactions.

German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies described one result of this transformation, introducing the dichotomous concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. These concepts explained the breakdown in society where "people were bound together by personal, traditional, and communal ties which characterize social relations" (*Geimeinschaft*) into a society where "personal relations are anonymous, impersonal and isolated" (*Gesellschaft*) (Williams 2003: 25). This disconnect from traditional family structures and interpersonal relationships was believed to leave people "atomized and exposed to external influences, and especially to the pressure of mass propaganda of powerful leaders, the most effective agency of which was the mass media" (Morley 1992: 41). The rise of Adolf Hitler and Fascism occurred during a period of concern within German society about this transition from

Geimeinschaft to *Gesellschaft*. Hitler capitalized on the perceived vulnerability of the population through his use of propaganda to promote his messages and recruit followers.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, mass communication researchers such as Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, Denis McQuail and Michael Gurevich, building upon earlier research in the 1940s by Herta Herzog, developed an innovative type of active audience-based theory that they referred to as the “uses and gratifications” approach (Lull 1998). This approach operated on three basic assumptions; people are active users of media, people know why they use the media and can explain these reasons, and there are common patterns to media consumption among users (Williams 2003: 177). Stuart Hall and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham built upon several aspects of the uses and gratifications model such as focusing on audiences as active users and understanding how people experience media content in different ways. This focus on users by concentrating upon audience-based research was the antithesis of the top-down critical theory of Frankfurt School researchers that emphasized the imposition of cultural ideologies by the hegemonic media industries and positioned the audience as passive and vulnerable. Cultural studies found its audience-based niche as it highlighted how media audiences interpreted messages, focusing on the needs of the audience in relation to the messages and exploring the “openness” of audience members to receiving messages as well as their reasons for media use (Morley and Brunson 1999). This marked a significant paradigm shift from investigating how the media influenced people to how people used media.

Another major influence on Hall was the development of the structuralist school of thought, represented by the works of anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, whose application of semiological models developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (and the American semiotics of Charles S. Peirce) to an analysis of cultural phenomena such as kinship, ritual and religious life had a profound effect on continental thought across disciplines. Hall’s very use of semiotic concepts places his work squarely in the lineage of semiotics, influenced perhaps even more directly by the post-structuralist semiotic philosophies of Roland Barthes. Barthes significantly expanded the application of semiotic principles from the realm of language to encompass visual encoding of meaning as well; Barthes also married the seemingly oppositional approaches of semiotics-structuralism with the post-Marxist paradigms of the Frankfurt School concerning the way hegemonic ideologies become encoded into mass media. This marriage would also serve as the basis for Hall’s work, which became the foundation for the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. Drawing upon Barthes, whose work examined symbols and culture from a Marxist perspective, Hall sought to explain the relationship between the producers of messages, the messages themselves and audiences. Hall argued that “researchers should direct their attention toward (1) analysis of the social and political context in which content is produced (encoding), and (2) the consumption of media content (decoding)” (Baran and Davis 2012: 257). This led to the publication of his ideas about the semiotics of meaning-making in media, first elaborated in his 1973 article *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* but more widely known and studied as a subsequently published 1980 edited extract entitled *Encoding/Decoding*.

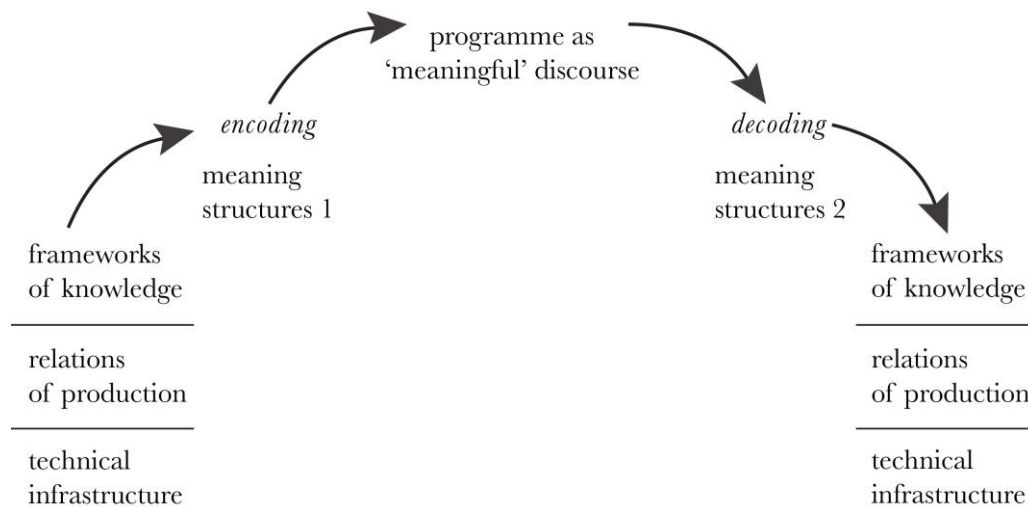
What is Encoding/Decoding?

In 1973, Hall was motivated to develop his model of encoding and decoding mediated messages as a “reaction against a tradition of Marxist film criticism found in the film journal *Screen*” (Baran and Davis 2012). He viewed *Screen*’s approach as cultural elitism by which movies were presented in support of the status quo of society. However, Hall believed that cases existed by which movies did the opposite and instead challenged the status quo; as a

result, audiences did not always interpret the messages in the ways intended by the producers. Hall viewed the communication process as more complex than the Shannon and Weaver transmission model centered on the idea of communication as a “transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control” and was defined by terms such as “imparting,” “sending,” “transmitting,” and “giving information to others” (Carey 1989: 15). To Hall, communication was a process of “linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction” (Hall 1980). Although each of these is a distinctive practice, together they form a “complex structure in dominance” (Hall 1980: 128). This describes “the relationship between the producer of the media text and the consumer” (Davis 2004: 60).

Message intent and dominance are important aspects of Hall’s ideas. Arguing from a Marxist perspective, he argued that through the media, the dominant and most powerful factions of society imposed their ideological values. Therefore, he believed “research should be concerned with the ‘ideological effects’ of the media; on how the media are used to promote or reinforce a particular set of dominant values and how successful they are in doing this” (Williams 2003: 195). In other words, the very process of media production involves encoding meanings and messages in every aspect of content that the audiences must necessarily interpret. Hall argued that existing media theories and models did not grant audience members with enough agency concerning this interpretive process, perceiving audiences as passive instead of active recipients of messages. Hall argued that scholars must acknowledge that there is activity at both levels if we are to understand the relationship between media producers and media receivers (Davis 2004). Producers communicate messages based on assumptions of shared understandings, while audiences decode the content according to their own norms. Media messages are symbols and symbolic vehicles that create meaning because “if no ‘meaning’ is taken, there can be no ‘consumption.’ If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect” (Hall 1980). These symbols (verbal, visual and other culturally specified codes) become the vehicles for passing meaning-loaded messages from sender to receiver at different moments in the process.

When applied to the medium of television, this model commences with the production process. This is where the messages, which later become content to be distributed, are created and encoded. The encoding, or reproduction of ideologies in the production process, is not necessarily overt and can be done at an unconscious level (Hall 1980). What this means is that the producers are not always consciously aware of every nuance they may be encoding, since the very nature of filmic communication captures meanings encoded into the *mise-en-scène* (the setting, the lighting, the choices of costumes and wardrobe, the casting, the body language and gestures and vocal intonation of the actors) as well as the cinematography (camera angles, movements, styles) and editing choices. The influences on what these messages say come from institutional constraints on the production process, professional codes and practices as well as the influence of those people in control attempting to promote their ideologies (Williams 2003). Although multiple meanings may be encoded within each text, Hall refers to the one dominant ideological message intended by the producers as the preferred meaning; this would be the interpretation shared by the majority of the audience. Since these messages are transmitted through symbols, the audience actively works to decode them. As Hall’s schematic (Fig 1.) describes, frameworks of knowledge, relations of production and technical infrastructure make up meaning structures that are encoded within television programs. These programs then act as sites of meaningful discourse; here, in the process of viewing and interpreting, the audience members decoded the previously encoded meaning structures into their own, new meaning structures. The decoder also utilizes their own personal and cultural frameworks of knowledge, relations of production and technical infrastructures to interpret meaning.

Figure 1: Message appropriation in (Hall 1980)

It is at this point that Hall's model presents its largest deviation in concepts from previous semiotics models of communication. Clearly influenced by Antonio Gramsci's theories of hegemony and resistance, Hall acknowledges the cultural politics of interpretation in his use of differentiated ways of "reading" a media text (using the literary metaphor of reading-as-interpretation borrowed from Barthes). Despite the fact that a preferred or hegemonic ideological meaning may be encoded in each text (in our example, a television program), Hall distinguishes between three distinct approaches to decoding the messages, which he labels as dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings. A dominant (i.e., preferred) reading would be an unconditional acceptance of the preferred meaning, through which process the product is interpreted as the producer intended and the viewer accepts the message at face value, with no critical analysis of the media in this type of content reading. However, Hall provides for two other approaches to interpreting meaning. An oppositional interpretation occurs when the individual viewer decodes the text according to his or her own cultural influences; in this case, the preferred ideological meaning may be understood but not accepted or agreed upon by the viewer. In fact, the viewer may interpret the message in a hostile or comical way, finding its very premise to be untenable. Hall's third approach is a negotiated reading, which is a hybrid of sorts: the audience member will understand and partially embrace the preferred meaning but may feel conflicted about some aspects of that interpretations; therefore, instead of completely rejecting it, the interpreter will find a way to negotiate or change its meaning to more closely suit his or her needs (Kropp 2011).

While Hall's model has face validity, making sense on the surface, it was only hypothetical, as he never provided any empirical evidence to support his claims. Fortunately, since Hall first introduced Encoding/Decoding, many studies of both the process of encoding and the process of decoding television have tested these ideas.

Use of Encoding/Decoding

Over the past four decades, many researchers have applied Encoding/Decoding concepts to an analysis of television, film, and other forms of cultural expression. The table located in the Appendix section identifies exemplars these studies. Listed chronologically, the table identifies the use, focus, method and findings of each study. This list represents a compilation

of well-known and often cited projects, smaller projects with unique findings, multiple methods (textual analysis, focus group discussions, observation, letters, questionnaires, interviews) and various areas of focus (gender, class, culture, age, race, religion).

The largest of these studies was David Morley's and Charlotte Brunsdon's 1978 textual analysis of the BBC evening news magazine program *Nationwide* and a later audience experiment completed by Morley. The researchers examined the program to uncover the preferred meaning presented by the show's producers, or what the researchers interpreted to be the encoded messages. *Nationwide* was chosen for this study "because an earlier analysis had identified it as a program that routinely offered status quo explanations for social issues" (Baran and Davis 2012: 258). For the experimental study, Morley recruited a group of individuals to watch the show. The viewing was followed by a group discussion through which the researcher sought to determine how each viewer decoded the show. Morley, a former student of Hall's, followed the path of thought that economic class was a major determinant in understanding how viewers would decode a program. His findings were mixed. Consistent with Hall's hypothesis that viewers are active and that different groups of people decode messages in different ways. Morley found that the viewers in his study could be placed into all three of Hall's categories -- dominant, negotiated and oppositional -- and that category placement correlated with socioeconomic class. Those with dominant readings were mostly upper class white-collar workers. Middle-class, blue-collar workers and university students performed negotiated readings, while black students and trade union activists decoded the show as oppositional readings. These findings were summarized by Morley (1981), who stated, "Members of a given sub-culture will tend to share a cultural orientation towards decoding messages in particular ways. Their individual 'readings' of messages will be framed by shared cultural formations and practices" (51).

Inconsistent with Hall's model, however, Morley also found that although class could anticipate decoding most of the time, it was not true all of the time and, for this reason, the relationship between the two variables was not causal. This showed that there were other variables that came into play including a person's ability or motivation to decode a message.

Morley's study had limitations. Researchers who deconstructed the *Nationwide* study like Justin Wren-Lewis (1983) and Sujeong Kim (2004) have raised issues with the study's methodologies, conceptualizations of the encoders, the reliance on cultural stereotypes and the lack of inclusion of other social factors beyond class to name a few. Kim also argues that Morley may have underestimated his findings on the importance of socio-economic class and its influence on the decoding process. Despite some criticisms of Morley's study, however, it is considered one of the most influential investigations of audience reception. It served as an important precedent for other researchers, showing how Hall's concepts of Encoding/Decoding might be applied to television programs and test for the relationship between reception and social factors. Several of the better-known studies since *Nationwide* include Dorothy Hobson's *Crossroads – The Drama of a Soap Opera* (1982), Tania Modleski's examination of soap operas in *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982), Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (1985), and Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis' *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream* (1992). These projects of varying size, depth, and focus apply the ideas presented in Encoding/Decoding to different television texts as they reinforce and expand upon Hall's concepts.

Another significant study that furthered Hall's concepts was when Katz and Liebes (1990) used Hall's Encoding/Decoding model to study the American television series *Dallas* from an international perspective to understand how a show produced and encoded in one country might be decoded differently in another country. Their study consisted of fifty-five small groups, located in both the United States and Israel, each of which viewed and discussed the

show. They discovered differences in how members of dissimilar cultures decoded the messages within the programs. One important aspect of this study is the linking of ideas such as cultural imperialism to the process of Encoding/Decoding. While Israeli groups found the show to be a reflection of America, the Russian participants believed the content was not simply a reflection but a manipulation; they decoded the messages about American life as propaganda about American values.

In another Encoding/Decoding study, Evan Cooper's analysis of *Will and Grace* (2003) focused on how heterosexual audience members received the show's gay humor, characters and themes. Cooper argues that the show is encoded with indicators of gay culture. These indicators occur in the show's "plot lines, pacing, stylistic conventions, character 'types', insular upper-middle class environs and, of course, gay sensibility" (Cooper 2003: 517). Although not expressly stated, Cooper argues that heterosexual viewers of this show will decode the content in a negotiated manner--viewers will enjoy the entertainment provided by some of the gay cultural indicators, such as the character Jack's humor, but they will fail to identify with him. Additionally, Cooper believes the viewers' gender will cause differences in decoding whereas the males will be more critical of gay characters alternative sexuality than female characters. The twenty-five college students used for this project watched a representative sample of the show, then participants were asked to complete questionnaires after viewing. Results indicated that viewers consumed the messages within the show in a negotiated manner, finding both consistencies and differences between hypothesized perceptions and results. Despite some criticisms in sampling and methodology utilized in this study, it serves as a good example of how researchers have put Hall's Encoding/Decoding to use.

In a final example, Susan Thomas's (2010) study addressed both encoding and decoding on the television show *What Not to Wear*. She focused on the encoded message of materialism and the message that consumption of products can improve the viewer's life and lead to increased happiness, which she found was the dominant message or preferred reading presented. Thomas found that viewers decoded this message in different ways due to their pre-existing attitudes and cultural constraints. Thomas found that while most participants in the study experienced negotiated readings, all types of decoding were possible. Despite the small size and limited nature of Thomas's study, it reinforces Buckingham's (1987) research, which found that messages were negotiated during viewing and that multiple ways of interpreting a television program could co-exist during a single viewing. Thomas notes, "What was particularly interesting about the viewing process was how many focus group members changed their perspective or role during the program" (Thomas 2010, para. 13). This is an important finding that warrants further investigation, because Hall's original work does not discuss the possibility of viewers shifting their interpretations throughout the viewing process but rather is limited to measuring outcome. Studying how this outcome is achieved and the steps that are taken to achieve it is a provocative question raised by this study.

From large studies in the 1970's like *Nationwide* to smaller ones like Susan Thomas's, the application of the Encoding/Decoding has been prevalent in communication literature. Researchers have tested the ideas, put them to use and critiqued each other's studies as well as the original process proposed by Hall. In the various articles and textbooks that discuss or utilize Hall's work, this approach to Encoding/Decoding has been referred to as a "process," a "model," and a "theory." Often, these terms are loosely used, but it is important to utilize the correct terminology while discussing this concept. So, I ask the question, is Hall's Encoding/Decoding a theory? To begin, we must first determine what a theory is and how a theory is evaluated.

Evaluating a Theory

A theory explains how and why things work; it is “a set of constructs that are linked together by relational statements that are internally consistent with each other” (Chaffee and Berger 1987: 101). A theory is also broad in scope and can be reduced to an overarching concept (Heath and Bryant 1992). This concept should accomplish the objectives of describing, explaining and predicting. This means a theory should conceptualize its constructs while explaining some aspects of the human experience and making predictions about future relationships while guiding speculation.

For example, Agenda Setting is a theory that describes the role of media in the social world. This theory explains the idea that the media’s influence on audiences is that they tell people what to think about, not what to think. The overarching concept here explains the link between audience’s exposure to media (television, radio, Internet) and how people perceive public issues. The constructs of television, audiences, exposure and effects in this example are internally consistent with one another. The theory acts as a “bridge” explaining the relationship between the independent variables like television exposure and dependent variables like influence because researchers can predict an impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable (Creswell 2005).

When speaking of impact, using the language of “influence” as opposed to “cause” is important. If causality is established as being necessary, then an extraordinarily high standard is being set since cause is often impossible to prove due to the influence of other factors. For example, if we observe a child who commits a violent act after watching TV, can it be proven that the cause of the child’s actions was the television viewing? Can it even be stated that there was a cause? Possibly, the television program was one part of the meaning structures that made up the child’s meaning structures including his/her frameworks of knowledge, relations of production and technical infrastructure that are also used to interpret meaning as laid out in the earlier schematic.

When evaluating a theory, it is important to first establish criteria that can be used for measurement. It is essential to note that we should not judge theories as being “good” or “bad.” Instead, a theory is judged by its’ usefulness. As such, there should be no divisions between theory and practice in the field. The theory should advance knowledge on a phenomenon and contribute to the field by proposing a new image of reality and helping us move forward. To assist in identifying these theories, Chaffee and Berger (1987) offer a list of attributes of a good theory. These criteria are used here because they are foundational concepts the authors identify as being similar to the list of attributes of a good theory that “most communication scientists – who are typically professors – outline for their beginning graduate students” (Chaffee and Berger 1987: 104). While Chaffee and Berger’s list of criteria may not be new, they transcend time, are specific, and easily understood. Although they are presented as being useful only for communication scientists, we will see how their usefulness extends beyond the scientific realm. Chaffee and Berger’s original attributes have been modified and expanded to create the following evaluative list that includes: explanatory power, predictive power, parsimony, testability, internal consistency, heuristic provocativeness, organizing power and boundary conditions.

Explanatory Power. Explanatory power is the most important aspect of any theory. If it does not explain anything, then it is not a theory. The greater the range of explanations provided and number of people affected, the more power a theory possesses. If the idea can be generalized and applied to a larger group, then it has greater explanatory power than if it is only applicable to one person.

Predictive Power. The ability to foretell future events determines the predictive power of an idea. The act of predicting events is sufficient. This criterion does not include the requirement of a prediction to be explained further.

Parsimony. Parsimony refers to how simply the theory can be explained. Simple theories are preferred over complex theories. Simpler ideas will correlate with more parsimonious theories and similarly, more complex ideas will be less parsimonious.

Testability. Chaffee and Berger (1987) utilize the concept of falsifiability or the capability of a theory to be proven false. Instead of provability, the criterion of testability is more useful. If a theory is not testable, we can then simply assess the empirical value of the constructs. This allows for more observational and descriptive methodological designs.

Internal Consistency. Internal consistency addresses the theories internal logic and seeks to understand if what is intended to be measured is being measured. This consistency is also known as validity. Beyond Chaffee and Berger's (1987) definition, the concept can be expanded to include seven questions of validity:

1. Content validity: Are the items representative of the field?
2. Criterion validity: can it be tied to an outside variable?
3. Face validity: does it make sense on the surface?
4. Construct validity: why does it operate?
5. Convergent validity: do the measures show agreement?
6. Discriminant validity: do the established scales agree with the hypothesis?
7. Nomological validity: do the basic entities fit together?

Heuristic Provocativeness. Heuristic Provocativeness seeks to understand if the theory is useful. A theory having high heuristic value will generate new research hypothesis and encourage thought beyond a concepts original boundaries.

Organizing Power. Organizing power explains the ability of the idea to make sense of existing knowledge. It describes attempts to understand how other theories may have been built around an idea and if it has guided speculation in the field.

Boundary Conditions. A theory should specify the extent of its generalizability and the phenomena it explains. It should be aware of the conditions that bound its existence and not attempt to explain conditions outside of its range.

Criteria analogous to these are most often applied to the evaluation of theories that fall within the four major categories of social scientific communications theory (Postpositivist, Hermeneutic, Critical, Normative). However, this process is equally useful when evaluating cultural theories. This is especially appropriate when the criteria are not used as a strict list of rules, but rather as a general guide; not all criteria are taken to be equally important in the evaluation process.

Cultural theories differ from social scientific theories in that they are heavily value-laden and admittedly less objective in their search for knowledge. Cultural theories, unlike social scientific theories, seek knowledge through dialectic, advancing knowledge through the formation of schools of thought in which there is consensus on validity and gaining power through the attraction of adherents defending against attacks from opponents (Baran and Davis 2012). But despite differences in epistemology and ontology, the primary goals of

explanation, description, and acquisition of new knowledge are compatible. Therefore, the complimentary objectives allow for the sharing of evaluation criteria.

Evaluating Encoding/Decoding as a Theory

References to Encoding/Decoding most often refer to the concepts as a model of communication. This is likely, in part, the result of two features in Hall's writing. First, he begins his article with a discussion of a linear model of communication. Using a model to lay the foundation for his discussion might lead some readers to assume his concepts should be classified in the same manner. Second, Hall provides a visual model of his concepts (as shown earlier in Fig 1.1) to help readers understand what he is describing. He uses the model as a tool, as a purposeful representation of reality. Yet the presence of a visual representation should not limit the classification of the information it explains.

A theory goes further than a model. It seeks not only to describe or represent, but to explain, and that is what Hall's ideas do. As Helen Davis states, "Hall's contribution to the research was to theorise(*sp*) what people actually do" (Davis 2004: 60). Instead of seeking solely to provide a new model, he proposed new hypothetical positions, new ways of explaining, understanding and organizing. For these efforts, Hall is recognized as a leading scholar and theorist of media, the "father" of the British Cultural Studies movement.

Coincidentally, one formal recognition of Hall's work was his being recognized with the Steven H. Chaffee Career Achievement Award in May 2014. That honor is bestowed annually to one scholar "for a sustained contribution to theoretical development or empirical research related to communication studies over an extended period. The selection committee favors research that is innovative, asks conceptually rich questions, and elaborates new theoretical possibilities and/or compelling directions for empirical investigation" (International Communication Association). It is this type of recognition that exemplifies the value of Hall's contributions and the necessary classification of work like Encoding/Decoding as more than a model.

To determine if Hall's Encoding/Decoding is indeed a theory, let us apply the modified Chaffee and Berger constructs of what a theory is.

What does it explain?

If a concept does not explain anything, then it is not a theory. Hall's Encoding/Decoding details the "determinant moments" that describe the production and reception of meanings and codes in televised communication (Hall 1980). It explains how television is a meaningful discourse and provides a greater understanding of both how media construct messages and how people make sense of what they see and hear. If the explanatory power of a theory is also measured by the range of phenomena and the number of people influenced from the intra-individual to the macroscopic societal level (Chaffee and Berger 1987: 107), Hall's concepts and their influence upon the entire field of cultural studies of media can be classified as having great explanatory power.

Is it easy to understand?

Encoding/Decoding has been called an "elaborated formula, which appears overly technical and abstract" (Davis 2004: 61). Despite the initial complexity, deeper analysis of Hall's

arguments and the application of those concepts to practical examples make the ideas more easily understandable. To help increase the degree of parsimony, Hall provides a visual model and explains each concept. So, while not simple, the ideas are explained in a reasonably straightforward manner.

Is it internally consistent?

Encoding/Decoding contains varying internal consistency. The idea has high face validity. To understand the concept that ideologies can be encoded in media content and that audiences decode these messages in varying ways based on varying factors makes sense. However, as noted in the *Nationwide* study, problems with validity may be perceived due to the reliance on qualitative and interpretive methods rather than quantitative methods. This is a disciplinary and methodological issue. While cultural studies heavily favors a qualitative method, interpretive approach, the inclusion of quantitative data in Encoding/Decoding studies might be perceived to be beneficial. This poor validity issue also places limits on how generalizable the findings may be beyond each circumstance. However, here lies the power of the concept. Each study may not be easily generalizable, but the concepts are easily testable.

Is it testable?

The concepts presented by Hall are easily testable, and the ubiquitous presence of studies that test Encoding/Decoding demonstrates the concepts testability. The studies listed in the Appendix are a representative sample of the many studies that have been performed since the late 1970's. There have been studies focusing on the processes of encoding, the process of decoding and both processes combined. These studies have been undertaken for a wide variety of programs, in different countries and have focused on different variables as being influential in the decoding process.

Is it heuristically provocative?

Encoding/Decoding has proven to be highly useful. It has high heuristic provocativeness and organizing power that guides speculation and research in the area of television audience studies. For example, building on Hall's ideas regarding encoding and decoding, communication researchers now incorporate the concept of feedback. Feedback is the activity in which viewers can participate after decoding a text as the meanings they make are communicated back to the encoder. One recent study on this process focused on a modern phenomenon called Social TV. Investigating the popular FOX show *Bones*, I found that audiences were transmitting their decoded meaning back to the show's writer's room, one site of encoding (Kropp 2014). In addition to applications in television studies research, the applicability of Hall's ideas has also extended into the study of other mediums such as magazines and books (Modleski 1984, Radway 1984). Additionally, the concepts can transcend mass media and applied to other forms of communication. For example, Keyan Tomaselli's work (2015) where he combines Hall's concepts with Peircean semiotics to analyze the use of a military dirty tricks campaign in South Africa.

Does it have organizing power?

Encoding/Decoding has proven to be a foundation for growth that has moved the area of audience reception studies forward. Challenging the prevailing beliefs in direct or limited media effects, Hall's concepts asked important questions, provided explanations and helped make sense of existing knowledge. As Hall states:

The encoding/decoding model wasn't a grand model...I don't think it has the theoretical rigour, the internal logic and conceptual consistency for that. If it's of any purchase, now and later, it's a model because of what it suggests. It suggests an approach; it opens up new questions. It maps the terrain. But it's a model which has to be worked with and developed and changed (quoted in Davis 2004: 66).

As Hall explains, the organizing power of his ideas lies with their ability to guide speculation in the field. By challenging prevailing beliefs, proposing new ideas and providing options for researchers to investigate, Hall first organized the ideas that audiences are empowered and have the ability to interpret messages.

Does it have boundary conditions?

The arguments presented in Encoding/Decoding create clear boundaries. In literary or television studies, the ideas can be classified as part of audience reception theory. The concepts have been generalized to other media beyond television and researchers have started to revisit the ideas and apply them more broadly, but the work itself does not attempt to explain conditions outside of its range.

For these reasons, I would classify Encoding/Decoding as a theory. It was not a grand theory but would be best classified as a paradigm variation. When introduced, it offered a variation of emphasis in the area of active audience research, integrating and extending existing theoretical paradigms from semiotics, structuralism, Marxism and cognitive communication studies. Hall's perspective has proven to be useful. It can be applied, and it is practical, synthesizing theory and its practice in the field. Hall's conceptual work advanced knowledge about the phenomena of audiences and made a large contribution to the field by creating a new paradigm that focused upon active audiences. With the introduction of his work on encoding and decoding in the early 1970s, Stuart Hall opened the door for textual content studies and provided the foundation for cultural media studies.

Conclusion

Despite being a smaller theory, Encoding/Decoding represented a breakthrough paradigm variation in audience reception studies. Among other theories, it moved discourses of media effects from foundational stimulus-response models based on human behavior and then beyond an individualized cognitive thought-based model making effects or influence dependent on interpretations by the viewers to a larger culturally-based theory rooted in a Marxist understanding of the mechanisms by which cultural power circulates through ideology and the many ways that individuals may actively resist or negotiate that ideological power.

One important factor of these interpretations is that this theory allows for differences in interpretation of and acceptance of (or complicity with) the dominant ideological meanings of a work of media. Hall's concepts encouraged subsequent audience research into two areas: investigation, first, into the content that media produces and, second, into the audience themselves to gain better understanding of how messages are decoded, why people decode message in certain ways, why different people can interpret different and often contradictory meanings from the same messages and how these people form communities or social groups around others with shared interpretations. This leads to debates about the level of autonomy audiences have to interpret messages or if they are constrained by situational factors such as pre-existing beliefs and behaviors or environmental factors.

Encoding/Decoding, and the decades of research which has built upon it, certainly does not provide all of the answers regarding audience research. Many questions have been rigorously debated as well as those that remain to be examined. Does the cultural studies approach provide viewers with too much agency? Can we assume that all viewers are always decoding meanings from every text they are presented? During the process of decoding, do viewpoints remain consistent or can interpretations change? How long do the influences of decoded meanings continue to last? Does the process work in the same manner for people all of the time? What is the best way to measure decoding? Are producers of media content always aware of what meanings they are encoding? What influences? Furthermore, as Osgood and Schramm's circular model of communication suggests, how might the receiver influence the encoding of the sender to complete the circular communication loop?

The lack of answers to many of these questions should not be seen as a limitation but as a benefit of the theory. Raising questions indicates the richness of the theory's contribution to sparking further research in the field. Although critique is necessary and useful, we must still move forward and take advantage of the heuristic value of the theory.

The current trend of textual analysis in media studies is positive for increasing the number of tests performed on this theory and its heuristic value. However, focusing on one type of methodology does limit the application of the theory. These studies are relatively easy to accomplish because content is readily available, especially today with playback options provided by DVRs and online services such as Netflix and Hulu. There is a need for studies to continue to expand all of the concepts contained in the theory as well the new questions arising from new research. For example, Buckingham (1987) and Thomas (2010) found that viewers could actively change their views during consumption. This idea of alternating decodings leads to many new questions about the decoding process. Is there a specific time of decoding? What other factors affect decoding? Dorothy Hobson's (1982) study found that housewives were often distracted during viewing. Today, we can ask questions about how new technologies like the Internet might contribute to audience distraction and influence decoding processes. The Internet, as mentioned earlier, also provides a method of feedback for viewers to communicate with the parties responsible for the creation and encoding of messages. This raises new questions about how new media can introduce challenges to existing theories and offer opportunities to reevaluate, extend or even replace them.

As Hall stated, he did not see Encoding/Decoding as a grand theory, but according to this method of theory evaluation, it does earn the label of being a "theory." Applying a modified version of social scientific criteria in this instance was efficient, effective, and demonstrates how differences between schools of thought can be bridged.

Therefore, divergent assumptions should not prevent the use of advantageous tools that can help achieve our goals, which are on a more profound level, collective. We should remember that theories can advance our knowledge and contribute to our fields while serendipitously proposing new images of reality. We are all bound by our search for answers and our desires

to understand. So now is as good a time as any to stir the conversations about the ways we evaluate theories.

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APPENDIX

Select Studies Utilizing Encoding/Decoding, Listed Chronologically

This table identifies exemplars of studies using Hall's Encoding/Decoding concepts. Listed chronologically, the table identifies the use, focus, method and findings of each study. This list is not meant to be comprehensive or include all of the most well-known studies. Instead, it represents a compilation of well-known and often cited projects, smaller projects with unique findings, multiple methods (textual analysis, focus group discussions, observation, letters, questionnaires, interviews) and various areas of focus (gender, class, culture, age, race, religion) to demonstrate a breath of research.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Author(s) and Title</u>	<u>Use</u>	<u>Focus</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Findings</u>
1978	David Morley and Charlotte Brunson: <i>Everyday Television: 'Nationwide'</i>	Decoding	Class	Textual Analysis	Identified the "preferred reading" of Nationwide.
1980	David Morley: <i>The 'Nationwide' Audience</i>	Decoding	Class	Focus Group Discussions	People from different socioeconomic classes decode meanings in different ways. Yet, social class does not determine how messages are interpreted. People from the same class can have different interpretations. Meaning is the outcome of the viewer's interaction with the text. Viewers are not passive. Researchers need to study content, viewer backgrounds and experiences.
1982	Dorothy Hobson: <i>Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera</i>	Decoding	Gender	Observation	Challenged 'preferred reading' concept. Emphasized the power of the audience to construct their own meanings from a text by combining the text, personal experiences and opinions.

1982	Tania Modlesky: <i>Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women</i>	Decoding	Gender	Textual Analysis	Identifies an oppositional 'female' aesthetic in viewing through identification with multiple characters, the use of camera techniques, and narrative structure.
1985	Ien Ang: <i>Watching "Dallas": Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination</i>	Decoding	Gender	Letters	The pleasure women viewers experience watching Soap Operas supports arguments for active viewing. Dominant Ideologies are circumvented when viewers are shaping their meaning making activities on emotion.
1985	David Barker: <i>Television Production Techniques as Communication</i>	Encoding	n/a	Textual Analysis	The degree to which an encoded text communicates its preferred decoding is a function of production techniques utilized in the creation of narrative.
1986	Herta Herzog Massing: <i>Decoding "Dallas"</i>	Decoding	Culture	Interviews	Viewers in different countries decode meanings of popular culture differently.
1987	David Buckingham: <i>Public Secrets: East Enders and Its Audience</i>	Encoding	Gender/ Age	Focus Group Discussions	Active viewing by children during viewing can shift from deep involvement in the dramatic story to critical detachment. Differences in decoding were noted between various ages and genders.
1990	Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes: <i>Interacting with "Dallas": Cross Cultural Readings of American TV</i>	Decoding	Culture	Focus Group Discussions	Differences between ethnic groups in how television is watched and interpreted.
1991	Andrea Press: <i>Women Watching Television</i>	Decoding	Class	Interviews	"Middle-class women watch television differently from working-class women in that they use a different set of criteria for evaluating programs and identifying with television characters" (Croteau and Hoynes 2014, 271-272).
1992	Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis: <i>Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, And The Myth Of The American Dream</i>	Decoding	Race / Class	Focus Group Discussions	Viewers become involved with shows and see content as reality. Televised images distort reality and results in viewers of different races and class as having different reactions to the same show.
1992	JoEllen Shivley: <i>Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films Among American Indians and Anglos</i>	Decoding	Culture	Focus Group Discussions	Different cultural groups can decode texts both consistently or oppositionally of dominant cultural myths.
1995	Marie Gillespie: <i>Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change</i>	Decoding	Culture	Ethnography	Television content can be used as a means of constructing new modes of identity. Viewers can decode the culture of characters and make comparisons with their own culture.

1997	Darnell Hunt: <i>Screening the Los Angeles "Riots": Race, Seeing and the Public Sphere</i>	Decoding	Race	Focus Group Discussions	Viewers constructed negotiated readings of television news. Racial differences played a significant role in decoding. Differences in social networks and sense of group solidarity influenced decoding, described as a social process.
2003	Evan Cooper: <i>Decoding Will and Grace: Mass Audience Reception of a Popular Network Situation Comedy</i>	Decoding	Gender	Questionnaires	Despite not being a group member, viewers from an "outsider group" who experience "culturally intimate humor" can decode texts in multiple ways.
2003	David W. Scott: <i>Mormon "Family Values" Versus Television: An Analysis of the Discourse of Mormon Couples Regarding Television and Popular Media culture</i>	Decoding	Religion	Interviews	Supports Encoding/Decoding idea that marginalized groups may at times offer resistant or negotiated readings of texts.
2006	Giselinde Kuipers: <i>Television and Taste Hierarchy: The Case of Dutch Television Comedy</i>	Decoding	Culture	Surveys / Interviews	Enjoyment of comedy programs is based on the ability to decode that is predicated on knowledge, which varies by social group. Age and Education were found to be two variables correlating with preference for comedy type.
2008	Nancy Worthington: <i>Encoding and Decoding Rape News: How Progressive Reporting Inverts Textual Orientations</i>	Encoding/Decoding	News	Interviews/Textual Analysis	Preferred readings do not always equate with dominant cultural discourses, they might maintain some dominant discourses while challenging others.
2010	Susan Thomas: <i>Makeover Television: Instruction and Re-Invention through the Mythology of Cinderella</i>	Decoding	Gender	Focus Group Discussions	Viewers can recognize hegemonic messages encoded in texts. If they are oppositional to the viewer's position, they can set aside the difference and continue to enjoy the program. Viewers can actively change their readings of texts during the viewing process.
2015	Keyan Tomaselli: <i>Encoding/decoding the transmission model and a court of law</i>	Encoding/Decoding	Disinformation	Media Analysis	Combines Hall's Encoding/Decoding with C.S. Pierce's theory of the interpreter and interpretant. This is said to strengthen Hall's theory.

Communicative Action and the Other of Justice

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Abstract: Communicative action is the coordination mechanism of social actions. However, being a social action itself, it needs coordination in case of obstruction. Such obstruction is especially frequent in late modern constellation burdened with the “individualization of life forms” (Beck) and the “dissolution of a mutual ground” (Lash). I call the mechanism capable of overcoming such obstruction the “coordination of action coordination.” In the following essay, this notion is elaborated. Firstly, on the level of formal pragmatics, situations that implicate action coordination are specified. Secondly, the coordinating mechanism of action coordination is elaborated in the frames of the Habermasian theory as the harmonization of different concepts of justice underlying action coordination. Thirdly, a paradoxical aspect of this solution is introduced, which originates from the strict linguistic-intentional character of Habermas’s theory. Fourthly, based on Levinas’s pre-intentional ethical phenomenology, an alternative description of the coordination of action coordination is elaborated. Finally, the broader theoretical consequences of the new solution are detailed.

Keywords: communicative action, Habermas, Levinas

Introduction

In one of his recent essays, Honneth evaluates the different postmodern philosophical projects from the perspective of the Habermasian discourse ethics (2007). He argues that the attempts of authors like Lyotard or Stephen K. White to overcome the limitedness of Kantian moral philosophy by leaving behind the questions of justice are unsuccessful. As these attempts can be reformulated within discourse ethics, which is a rephrasing of the Kantian ideas, they cannot reach their goal. However, other postmodern authors, like Levinas or Derrida, provide new perspectives beyond the horizon of Kantian moral philosophy. Their

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most important ethical notion, human care (*Fürsorge*), refers to an alternative source of morality, “the other” of the cognitive, universalistic notion of justice.

On the foundational level of the Habermasian communication theory and social philosophy lies the concept of discourse ethics. The key notion of Habermas’s thinking, communicative action, is supplemented by a theory of justice, as the willingness to pursue an undistorted discourse depends on the actors’ moral perspective. That is where Honneth’s idea becomes important: if an alternative concept of morality can be introduced based on the notion of care (instead of justice), it has consequences for all communication theories rooted in a moral philosophy based on the notion of justice. All of them – including the whole Habermasian theory – could be revised from the new moral perspective as questions arise: What is the relation of the two types of morality (complementary, ambiguous, or conflicting)? How and in what situations do they interfere?

In the following essay, an attempt will be made for such a revision by introducing a phenomenon wherein the two types of morality complement each other. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas elaborates a synthesis of a phenomenological and a system theoretic answer to the question of how social action is possible. While on the phenomenological level, the coordination of social action is explained with the harmonization of the actors’ meanings, on the system theoretic level, it is explained with the non-linguistic mediums. According to Habermas, mutual understanding is a phenomenological presupposition of social actions. It is basically guaranteed by a common lifeworld of the actors, which provides the same unreflected interpretation of a situation. In situations where this common horizon is not pre-given, an explicit effort is needed to create it. This effort is referred to as communicative action, a process of coming to an agreement concerning the interpretation of the situation. In this sense, communicative action is the mechanism of action coordination, complementary of the lifeworld. Simultaneously, communicative action is not just the coordinating mechanism of social actions; it is a social action on its own as well. Therefore, questions concerning its coordination mechanism may legitimately be posed. How can the situation be described when action coordination is obstructed? And how can the mechanism be described that may solve this disturbance?

In the late modern constellation, these questions are becoming especially important, as the life paths individualize (Beck 1992) and “difference” becomes the ground (Lash 1999). In this constellation, not only the mutual lifeworld dissolves but the frames of those communicative processes are also weakened, which is supposed to recreate a mutual horizon. Despite these diagnoses, Habermas himself did not pose questions concerning the obstruction of action coordination. Therefore, the following attempt will be made to fill this gap. I will argue that these questions lead to the fundamental problems of meaning formulation – to the problem of “coordinating action coordination” – and may be answered only by leaving the Habermasian concept of morality based solely on justice and stepping back to the alternative source of morality carefully analyzed by Levinas.

In what follows, firstly, the problem of coordinating action coordination will be elaborated by briefly evoking Habermas’s formal pragmatics. The problem will be introduced as the interruption of a series of speech acts constituting the communicative action and resulting from the discrepancies of the actors’ concepts of justice defining the order of speech acts. Secondly, a harmonization process will be shortly outlined solely within the Habermasian frames. To describe the mechanism that coordinates action coordination and to elaborate a linguistic-intentional solution, the dynamics of moral development (discussed in the discourse ethics) are recalled. Accordingly, the coordination of action coordination may be introduced as a harmonization of the underlying concepts of justice. Thirdly, the limits of the linguistic-intentional solution will be pointed out, and a new approach potentially transcending them will be outlined. At this point, Levinas’s ideas on the moral obligation

invoked by the experience of the Face of the Other will be applied in order to describe a mechanism capable of reestablishing the moral basis of speech acts. Finally, in the concluding remarks, the broader theoretical consequences of this solution will be outlined.¹

The problem of coordinating action coordination

The Theory of Communicative Action is grounded on the level of formal pragmatics, that is, on the level of a theory of mutual understanding. Habermas describes the conditions of mutual understanding by reconstructing the potential sequence of speech acts. The reconstruction results in a script, which might end either in the suspension of the communication or in the mutual acceptance of the validity claims of a speech act, that is mutual understanding.

Table 1: Undistorted sequence of speech acts

rounds/ speakers	speaker "A"	speaker "B"
1. round	formulates speech act "p" → raises validity claims (what she is saying is true and right and she is truthful)	
2. round		either accepts the validity claims of "p" → mutual understanding (successful ending of communication)
		or refuses one of the validity claims of "p" → formulates speech act "q"
3. round	either accepts the validity claims of "q" → revokes "p" → mutual understanding (successful ending of communication)	
	or refuses one of the validity claims of "q" → formulates speech act "r"	
4. round		either accepts the validity claims of "r" → revokes "q" → mutual understanding (successful ending of communication)
		or refuses one of the validity claims of "r" → formulates speech act "s"
5. round	etc.	

Table 1 shows such a script: every time a speech act is formulated, three validity claims are raised, which claims can be accepted (resulting in the new consensus) or refused (resulting in a new speech act that raises three validity claims that can be accepted or refused etc.). In case of undistorted communicative action this sequence is continued until a speech act is mutually accepted and a common interpretation of the situation is born. However, this sequence may be interrupted in at least two ways. Firstly, one of the speakers may willingly shift from the action oriented to mutual understanding to the strategic use of language. The latter may take the shape of open violence (threat) or hidden violence (manipulation, lie). In these cases

¹ The main argument of the article concerning the synthesis of Habermas' and Levinas' concepts has been elaborated in a socialization theoretical context in my book *A modernizáció ingája* (Sik 2012). This time however, the problem of coordinating action coordination is analyzed from a communication and social theoretical perspective.

action coordination is blocked due to reasons external to the communication (i.e. the intention of an actor) so the process may be restored by eliminating the external reason.

The second, less obvious case is connected to the limited rationality of the lifeworld, to dogmatic meanings. A meaning is called dogmatic if it is not open to critical evaluation, that is, if it is sustained without proper justification. Dogmatic meanings are originally acquired through distorted communicative processes and as such, they can not be justified with rational arguments.² At this point it is important to emphasize that according to Habermas' theory (and to the late Wittgenstein's heritage) meanings are not closed units of sense that can be either dogmatic or open to criticism *per se*. Instead they are born and exist only in interactions, therefore they are valid only for the actors and only during the given action situation. Furthermore, in addition to knowing the rules of its use, knowing a meaning includes knowing its justification as well.³ Accordingly in this theoretical setting dogmatism is neither the characteristic of the meaning itself (because meanings are embedded in situations) nor that of the actor (because meanings are created in interactions not by single subjects), but belongs to the interaction it is born in. Dogmatism is a characteristic of the process within which the meanings are formulated, i.e. it is a characteristic of the sequence of speech acts. It shows itself by causing a rupture in the sequence: it occurs when one of the speakers holds on to her speech act without being able to justify it with rational arguments. In this case the other speaker is hindered in continuing the series because neither was her speech act accepted, nor has she anything to accept or refuse.

Table 2: Full sequence of speech acts

rounds/ speakers	speaker "A"	speaker "B"
1. round	formulates speech act "p" → raises validity claims (what she is saying is true and right and she is truthful)	
2. round		either accepts the validity claims of "p" → mutual understanding (successful ending of communication)
		or refuses one of the validity claims of "p" → formulates speech act "q"
3. round	either accepts the validity claims of "q" → revokes "p" → mutual understanding (successful ending of communication)	
	or refuses one of the validity claims of "q" → formulates speech act "r"	
	or changes to open or hidden violence → willing interruption of communicative action → unsuccessful ending of	

² Communicative action is not only a mechanism of action coordination, but it is the mechanism of reproducing the different aspects of lifeworld as well (that is socialization, cultural reproduction and social integration). Hence the distortion of communicative action leaves its mark on these processes potentially causing psychopathologies, loss of meaning and anomie (Habermas 1987: 143). Habermas discusses the problem of dogmatic meanings extensively in his essay *Reflections on Communicative Pathology* (1998). There he argues that the occurrence of this phenomenon is most probable in families characterized by asymmetric power-structure, by the impossibility of open discussion of conflicts.

³ This is a key idea of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, because Habermas establishes his whole theory of rationality on the basis of an accountable actor capable and willing to justify her actions (1984: 22). Only an actor capable and willing to justify her motives can participate in the above sketched sequence of speech acts.

	communication	
	or refuses “q” without justifying “p” (i.e. without formulating speech act “r”) → unwilling interruption of communicative action	
4. round		???

Table 2 shows all possible variations of the sequence including the two types of distortion. As mentioned before, the willing interruption of communicative action may be corrected by eliminating its cause external to the communication (i.e. by changing the intention of the actor). However, in case of unintended interruption, the correction is far more complicated. In this case the cause of the interruption is not external to the communication. The speakers are probably willing to continue their action oriented to mutual understanding, when they face the unexpected disturbance of communication: a speech act whose validity claim is not accepted, and which is in the same time sustained but unjustified. It is important to see, that at this point of interruption the pragmatic order of communication is damaged: sustaining without justifying a speech act is a pragmatic paradox, a violation of the very rules of communication. This violation mirrors a dissent concerning the fundamental structure underlying the order of speech acts. It expresses that the speaker does not perceive the other as someone to whom she is obliged either to justify or to give up her validity claim. Consequently, it may be stated that in fact it is an attribute of the actors' relationship that is responsible for the interruption. As the relationship of the speakers is an inherent feature of the interaction, the cause of the interruption is internal to communication. As such, unlike in case of willing interruption of communicative action, the unintended interruption may be corrected only within the frames of communication, by special interactions. In this sense, unlike in the first case, the unintended interruption does not necessarily lead to the ending of the communication; it may be successfully treated within its frames.

To describe the exact nature of such a correcting mechanism, two questions have to be answered. Firstly the nature of the fundamental structure underlying the order of speech acts has to be specified. Secondly the mechanism capable of reestablishing communication has to be outlined. In the following section I will elaborate an answer to these questions, leaning on Habermas' early reception of psychoanalysis and later ideas on discourse ethics.

The coordination mechanism of action coordination

Even if he does not explicitly analyze the problem of coordinating action coordination, in his early major book, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, Habermas discusses a structurally analogous problem (1971). In this book, he attempts to differentiate the critical social theory from other social sciences by specifying its underlying interest, the “emancipatory interest.” To describe the emancipatory interest, Habermas carefully analyzes the interest underlying psychoanalytic therapy. In the therapeutic situation, the therapist and patient share the same goal of critically reflecting on the patient's meanings and reformulating the ones being born in distorted communication. Therefore, psychoanalytic therapy serves not only as a model of identifying the restrained elements of the lifeworld, the results of distorted communicative socialization, but also as a model of overcoming the dogmatism by a re-socialization process.⁴ This re-socialization process is basically an undistorted communicative action

⁴ This mixing of praxis and theory was criticized by many commentators. Thomas McCarthy mentions for example that the synthesis of the basically theoretical-epistemological ideas of Kant and Hegel and the mainly

-serving the purpose of reevaluating the meanings by the standards of communicative rationality. Those meanings that were originally formulated in distorted communication are disapproved; those that were formulated in undistorted communication are maintained.⁵

Albeit Habermas used psychoanalysis as an example of the praxis of critical social science, its application may be fruitful for our purposes as well. In my opinion, the problem of coordinating action coordination may be best approached in comparison with the psychoanalytic therapy. Therapy may be defined as a special social action situation wherein the de-dogmatization of certain meanings occurs. During therapy, the roles of the therapist and patient are mutually accepted, establishing a mutually accepted order of speech acts. The patient wants to overcome her dogmatic meanings, and to do so, she follows the instructions of the therapist. Accordingly, their relationship can be characterized as a legitimate authority (in the Weberian sense) that is a mutually recognized order. Based on her authority, the therapist can motivate the patient to face her meanings and judge them on the basis of their justifiability, even if it is difficult. At this point, the similarity and the difference between the therapy and the coordination of action coordination may be phrased. Both processes aim to open up the dogmatic lifeworld to criticism. In the first case, however, the frames of the emancipatory communication are well defined and mutually accepted, contrary to the second case in which these frames are absent. Therefore, the main question arising in processes of coordination of action coordination is as follows: How do we establish a legitimate order wherein the speaker has the mutually recognized right to motivate her partner either to resign or justify her speech acts?

Habermas discusses the question of the order underlying the speech acts in his essay *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990). Therein he reconstructs the link between the Kohlbergian concept of moral development, the social perspectives, and the types of action coordination. Kohlberg identifies six levels of moral development, each characterized by a more general concept of justice.⁶ The concepts of justice determine the moral obligations of the subject. Moral obligations define, among others, the perception of the other and hereby the order of the speech acts. They determine to whom the subject is supposed to be obliged to either justify or resign her validity claims. Accordingly, the key to the problem of coordinating action coordination lies on the level of moral development. As described above, situations that require coordination of action coordination can be defined by an actor who does not recognize the other as someone to whom she is obliged to justify or resign her validity claims. According to *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, it may be claimed that these ruptures of communication are moral in nature. They occur if an actor's concept of justice does not implicate the justification or the resignation of a validity claim in the given situation (i.e., in relation to her given partner). Thus, the dogmatic interruption of communicative action may be traced back to the narrowness of an actor's concept of justice. Therefore, it may be corrected by changing the actor's concept of justice.

practical ideas of Marx and Freud leads to the unfortunate illusion that Habermas tries to solve the problems of praxis and theory in the same time (1978: 96).

⁵ In his book *On the Logic of Social Sciences*, Habermas formulates a similar idea opposing Gadamer's position. There he argues that one's prejudice-structure may be critically evaluated according to the quality of the processes of its formation (1989)

⁶ On the pre-conventional level the concept of justice is either based on the complementarity of order and obedience, or the symmetry of compensation, the social perspective is egocentric and the interactions are motivated either by the authority or the self-interest. On the conventional level, the concept of justice can be characterized as a conformity to roles or system of norms, the social perspective is based on the primary group or the whole group, and accordingly the interactions are governed by the roles or the norms. On the post-conventional level the concept of justice is either based on general or procedural principles, the other is seen as a "goal in itself", and the interactions take the form of undistorted discourses (Habermas 1990: 166-167).

According to Kohlberg, moral development is a unilinear, cognitive learning process. This means that in the course of development, the individual has to gradually pass through all levels step by step. The transition to a higher level of moral development is motivated by frequent experience of the inadequacy of one's concept of justice. The transition itself is realized in the series of moral discourses (Kohlberg 1981). So the changing of an actor's concept of justice (the coordination of action coordination) may be described within these frames by characterizing these discourses.

In situations where the coordination of action coordination becomes necessary, it is not one's concept of justice in general but its narrowness that is responsible for the interruption. So this narrowness has to be altered, and the circle of people perceived as recognized communication partners (to whom the actor justifies or resigns her validity claims) has to be extended. Hence, in order to coordinate action coordination, the actor shall shift to a concept of a higher level of moral development. However, this level is not arbitrary; it has to be the proximate level because of the gradual nature of moral development. Furthermore, the shifting of a concept of justice, as any other mechanism of meaning formulation, is not a monological act but an interaction. This interaction may not take any shape; it has to be in accordance with the problematic actor's concept of justice because this concept determines the maximal rationality of her action coordination. It may be concluded that the coordination mechanism of action coordination is an attempt to shift the actor's problematic concept of justice to a higher level of moral development in the frames of an interaction according to her actual concept of justice. By repeating the original communicative action within the frames of a new, more general concept of justice, the cause of the former interruption may be eliminated, as the former unwillingness to either justify or resign a validity claim will presumably lose its ground in the new moral order.

To clarify the concept, let us review an example. Habermas describes the situation wherein construction workers discuss the details of their midmorning snack and there is a debate between an older worker and a newcomer concerning the person who should bring the beers (Habermas 1987: 121). My example of coordinating action coordination is a variation of this scene. Let us suppose that the older worker and the newcomer not only disagree about who should bring the beer but in addition to this, their concepts of justice differ in a way that their action coordination is endangered. The newcomer is on the second level of moral development, which means that he thinks he is obliged to justify his validity claims only if it is in his best interest. In the present situation, he sees no reason why it would serve his interest if he explained to the older person his reason to refuse bringing beer, so he is simply rejecting the elder's speech act without justifying the rejection, causing the interruption of communicative action. The older worker is on the third level of moral development, thinking that the roles define to whom one is obliged to justify his validity claims. So he tries to handle the situation by communicative means. To do so, he first has to establish the moral basis required for action coordination by attempting to change the newcomer's concept of justice within a discourse according to the newcomer's concept of justice. This means that the elder should prove to the newcomer that it is in his best interest to apply the symmetry of compensation to the more general level of roles (he may argue that it is worth more to compensate between roles than concrete persons, as it is a more stable, economic system). If the elder succeeds and the newcomer shifts to third level of moral development, the interrupted action coordination may be restarted (the newcomer now perceives the elder as a representative of a role to whom he is obliged to justify his validity claims) without the danger of being interrupted again.

The paradox of coordinating action coordination

In the conclusion of the previous section I described the coordination of action coordination as an attempt to shift to a more general concept of justice by a moral debate according to the original, narrow concept of justice. In my opinion this conclusion leads to a paradox in a short way. The paradox is caused by the double role played by the concepts of justice in moral debates, which has not been taken seriously enough either by Kohlberg or by Habermas. Concepts of justice underlie every action coordination process by defining the moral perspectives of the actors. This causes a certain difficulty in case of debates on the concepts themselves. Within these debates, the concept of justice appears on two levels: on the formal level of the frame of the action coordination (it defines the moral basis of the form of the debate) and on the substantive level of the communication (it is the topic of the debate). So whenever an attempt is made to change the concept of justice, a paradoxical situation is generated.

The action coordination process that aims to shift the underlying concept of justice to the higher level may never completely succeed because its actual, narrower underlying concept of justice inevitably leaves its mark on the new concept. Accordingly, within the frames of the purely cognitive-linguistic model, only an apparent moral transition may be grasped. To explain this statement the above mentioned features of meaning have to be evoked: knowing a meaning includes in addition to the knowledge of the rule of its use, the knowledge of its justification as well. Furthermore, the knowledge of justification depends on the original process of acquisition: the rationality of the original acquisitive action coordination determines the rationality of the justification (a meaning acquired in a distorted process cannot be rationally justified). Therefore a concept of justice that is acquired in action coordination according to a narrower concept of justice than itself can be justified only according to that narrower concept. However this implicates a paradoxical situation: the form of justification contradicts the justified proposition. In this sense if a speech act is expressed in order to justify a concept of justice acquired in action coordination according to a narrower concept of justice, a “performative contradiction”⁷ occurs: the way the speech act is expressed (in accordance with the narrow concept of justice) contradicts the expressed propositional content (the broader concept of justice).

The above described example may clarify this conclusion. In case of the newcomer and elder workers who are on the second and third moral level of moral development the problem takes the following shape. The elder persuades the newcomer in action coordination according to the second level (by saying that it is worth to shift) to accept the order of roles. So the newcomer acquires a concept of justice according to the third level of moral development, but he can justify it only according to the second level (by arguing that it is better worth it). This means that the justifying speech act implicates a performative contradiction: by saying that it is worth better to compensate between roles than particular individuals, two contradicting concepts of justice is expressed. The form of the argument is based on the egocentric perspective while the justified proposition concerns the role based perspective. As a matter of fact this justification attests that it is still the second level of moral development that determines the newcomer’s moral perspective not the third, as it implicates that in case it is not worth it anymore the role based concept loses its validity.

It is important to emphasize that the conventional concept of justice held for pre-conventional reasons does not simply express a “variant of conventional morality”. Instead, as it is grounded on a lower level of moral development, actually it expresses a pre-conventional

⁷ The notion has been elaborated by Apel and Habermas, it occurs when a “speech act k(p) rests on non-contingent presuppositions whose propositional content contradicts the asserted proposition p” (Habermas 1990: 80)

concept of justice. At the end, it is the reason used in the moral debates that matters: unlike in case of the truth based or aesthetic meanings, in case of moral issues, the way of arguing itself implies a concept of justice. This creates the chance of a contradiction between the logic of argumentation and the expressed concept of justice, which occurs between actors characterized by diverging level of moral development.

In my opinion, from this paradox follows a need for revising Habermas' theory.⁸ Since the transition between concepts of justice can not be grasped within its frames, its completion becomes necessary. In order to find out the direction of the completion, the nature of the paradox has to be further clarified. The paradox is basically caused by the limitation of the circle of possible meaning-formation processes. In Habermas' theory meanings are born and renewed in interactions motivated by the need to solve a dissent in social action situations. More precisely it could be said that he focuses only on these meanings and these meaning-formulation processes. However these processes have philosophically elaborated alternatives and some of these alternatives may be fruitfully used in order to resolve the paradox. The wanted alternative meaning-formulation process is required to have two important characteristics: first it has to express a mutually accepted equivalent of a high level concept of justice (that may serve as a possible basis for a linguistic formulation of the new concept of justice), secondly it has to be non-linguistic (to avoid the paradox).⁹ With other words, the wanted alternative is a moral meaning originating from a source that is different from cognitive-intentional justice. This is the point where the postmodern ethics could be connected to the cognitive theory of justice. In his phenomenological writings Levinas describes a meaning-formulation process that seems to satisfy these conditions. So in the following section his relevant ideas will be shortly introduced serving as a potential solution to the paradox.

The Face of the Other and elementary ethics

In his most important philosophical works Levinas aims to describe a special experience, the birth of a set of meanings, namely our elementary ethical meanings.¹⁰ In *Totality and Infinity* he approaches the problem by identifying two complementary sources of meaning, the domain of "the Same" and the domain of "the Other". The Same (or "the Being") has been the main object of philosophical investigation from the ancient Greek to Heidegger, and

⁸ Crossley also argues in many articles that the Habermasian theory needs further grounding by phenomenologies focusing on the bodily and affective phenomena. He argues that *The Theory of Communicative Action* lacks a theory of affections and a theory of the body, which parts could be elaborated according to the ideas of Merleau-Ponty (Crossley 1996, 1998). In the following section I also lean on an author, whose ideas are deeply connected with the late phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty.

⁹ In another context Habermas discusses the problem of the pre-linguistic basis of communicative action. He leans on Durkheim's ideas on the non-verbal ritual practices constituting the sacred roots of morality. In these rites the individual experiences the society itself that is they become a subject of a pre-linguistic meaning-formation process expressing a moral consensus (Habermas 1987: 52-53). However, Habermas discusses these ideas in a historical perspective, in order to identify the evolutionary step preceding the shift to linguistic foundation of moral consensus described by Mead. This is the reason why Durkheim's ideas can not be used to our purpose, namely that they represent a historically exceeded stage (the ritual practices of the tribes).

¹⁰ Levinas is often criticized – similarly to other post-structuralist French authors – that his writings are lacking clear argumentation, obscure and therefore unscientific. I think that this criticism misses the point. Levinas' purpose is to give a description of a rare, pre-intentional moral experience. That can be done – because of the pre-intentional nature of the experience – only in a metaphorical language, which is often closer to poetry than to strict philosophical argumentation. However, this does not mean of course that it is lacking any logical structure. In this article my aim is not to critically evaluate Levinas' thoughts, but to use them as a description of a rare moral experience, which helps me to solve the Habermasian paradox.

accordingly ontology has been the first philosophy. Levinas' goal is to analyze the alternative source of meaning, the Other, and to establish the frames of a new phenomenology whose main concern is not the world, but the Other, and whose starting point is not ontology but ethics.

In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas reconstructs two different kinds of attachment to the world, the enjoyment ("living from...") and the economy (possession, habitation and labor). Our original attachment to the world is pre-intentional: we live from it, that is, we are enjoying the elements of life (the food, the warm weather etc.). This attachment is completed by the intentional economy that is motivated by the urge to gain control over the enjoyable elements by producing them. Enjoyment and labor share the same feature of expressing the mastery of subject over the elements of life. Even if the subject depends on the elements of life as they potentially suffer from their absence, she is master to them as she gives sense to the elements by placing them into her meaning-structure. The identification of this feature enables Levinas to introduce the alternative of the elements of life. He describes a special experience that refuses to be contained, that is, to be placed in a meaning-structure. The source of this experience is the Face of the Other.

The Face resists any attempt to be identified, as it identifies itself, overwrites the meanings tried to be attached to it.¹¹ In this sense the Face expresses a meaning from the moment it is perceived as a Face. This meaning is a warning that signifies the limits of one's power, expressing that it can not be extended on the Other the same way as on the elements of life.¹² It is an imperative that raises an unavoidable decision: the meaning expressed in the experience of the Face may be neglected or may be taken seriously. According to Levinas this decision is the root of every ethics as the choosing of the recognition of the Other implicates an absolute responsibility, an imperative of turning to the other.¹³ This responsibility effects the subject's attachment to the elements of life as well. The two earlier options – instant consumption or accumulation – are competed by a third option, namely the sharing of the elements of life (in literal sense and in the sense of sharing the meanings). In this sense the elementary ethics provides a concept different from the ethics of justice. While justice – since Kant's categorical imperative – is organized around the principle of universality, elementary responsibility is based on particularity. It expresses a devotion to some particular other, which devotion includes even self-sacrifice if necessary.

At this point it is a central question under what circumstances the Face may be perceived and how this process may be described. Levinas examines these questions in detail in his second major book *Otherwise than Being or beyond Essence* (1998). Unlike in his first book, here he plays down the discussion of the relation of the Other and the elements of life. He focuses instead on the description of the constitution of elementary responsibility. Accordingly here his main distinction refers not to "the Same and the Other", but to the two aspects of language use, "the said and the saying".¹⁴ The said expresses the Being, and the saying expresses what is beyond this domain. In this sense the saying is the source of different meanings, which are expressed in the act of saying itself. The saying unlike the said can not be characterized as an emission of signs. Instead, in the saying the subjects expose, denude themselves to the Other. However, the exposure is not an action of the subject as actions implicate interests, that is,

¹¹ As Levinas emphasizes it, the Face is not a phenomenon but an enigma (Peperzak 1998: 116).

¹² Levinas uses the word "murder" to express the weight of the rejection of the experience of the Face: to treat the Other as an element of life is to kill her, as killing is only possible if the Other is treated as an object (Levinas: 1969: 232-233).

¹³ This responsibility has been called by some philosophers – according to the sense Merleau-Ponty used the expression "wild" – "wild responsibility" (Tengelyi 2004: 123).

¹⁴ With this step Levinas gives a completely new sense to the expression "phenomenological reduction", he means by it the "epoche of the said" (that leads to the analysis of the saying). For a detailed analysis of the distinction see Waldenfels' essay, "Levinas on the Saying and the Said" (2005)

they concern the domain of Being. The exposure of the subject is the result of her passivity, as passivity allows the absolute offering of oneself to the Other, the “substitution”, the “pledge of taking the pain of the Other”. In this sense only passivity allows pure proximity, wherein the experience of the Face is possible and the elementary responsibility may be born.¹⁵

Accordingly elementary responsibility is not the result of a process of intentional meaning-formation (either monological or interactive), but the result of passive, unintentional meaning-expression, the result of the proximity of two subjects. The responsibility expressed in proximity is absolute (that is, it implicates the complete subordination of oneself for the Other). Therefore it has to be limited in the very moment when a third subject appears. The appearance of “the third” leads from the elementary ethics to the domain of society and politics. The limitation of the absolute responsibility takes the shape of cognitive concepts of justice. Accordingly every elaborated theory of justice (political or moral philosophy) can be treated as the limited, cognitive explication of the elementary ethics.

The inevitable limitation of elementary responsibility explains why the experience of the Face is so rare in everyday life.¹⁶ It occurs only in those unique situations, wherein subjects expose themselves to each other in the proximity of their passivity. Levinas’ examples are different intimate relations such as the mother and the child or two lovers. However, it is important to emphasize that he uses the expression proximity not only in metaphorical, but literal sense as well. He refers to caress or embrace as the *par excellence* characteristics of proximity, that is, he considers the expression of elementary responsibility depending on circumstances of the subject’s bodily connection (Levinas 1998: 80, 82, 90). In this sense caress and embrace are tools of slashing the drape of the socially determined order of bodies, that is, a chance of conjuring the elementary responsibility in the place of the cognitive concepts of justice.¹⁷

Coordinating action coordination and the Face of the Other

After outlining the most important ideas of Levinas, we can return to the original line of thought and try to answer the question how the transition between different concepts of justice is possible. Although Levinas and Habermas are two major figures in continental philosophy, only a few attempts have been made to combine their ideas.¹⁸ Probably the difference of their theoretical goals and their terminology is responsible for this lack. To

¹⁵ In passivity the psyche of the subject is expressed, more precisely it is born in this exposition. Accordingly Bergho describes the *Otherwise than Being* as a “psyche-analysis” emphasizing the parallel of the Freudian and Levinasian ideas (2005: 122).

¹⁶ Even if in everyday situations it is usually a cognitive concept of justice that determines the relation of two subjects, it is crucial to return to the experience of elementary responsibility from time to time, because without it, the former becomes empty as well. Accordingly there is a continuous oscillation between the two levels (Simmons 1999: 84).

¹⁷ The evoking of elementary responsibility seems even more difficult if we think about Foucault’s analysis, which inform us about the penetration of the power/knowledge into the domain of the elementary, intimate relations (1990).

¹⁸ However, in the recent past more and more effort has been made to fill this gap. In the first place the works of Hendley have to be mentioned, who has made many important contributions to synthesize the Habermasian and Levinasian ideas from a moral philosophical perspective. He argues that as Habermas and Levinas grasp the two sides of the same coin (the problem of moral significance of language), their ideas complete each other in many ways (Hendley 1996, 2000). In addition to Hendley’s work a few other contributions might be mentioned: Vetlesen elaborates a comparison of the two moral philosophical concepts (1997), Smith analyses the role of the Levinasian ideas played in the “philosophical discourse of modernity” (2008).

overcome these difficulties and to prepare the fusion of the two concepts, first their different and similar aspects have to be clearly formulated.

Levinas is interested in the foundation of an ethical phenomenology, while Habermas' main concern is a critical social theory grounded on the level of formal pragmatics. In these different theoretical settings they both touch upon the problem of the concepts of justice. However they approach it from different directions, with different purposes in mind: Levinas is interested in the fundamental level underlying the concepts of justice, while Habermas is interested in the role of the concepts of justice played in speech acts. In Habermas' theory the concepts of justice are the final grounds of speech acts as they determine the order of justification (that is, in what situations/relations is a subject ready to justify her validity claims), which means they serve as *explanans*. For Levinas the concepts of justice are not the final grounds, but the cognitive limitations of the elementary ethical meaning, the absolute responsibility, which means that they are only derived meanings serving as *explanandum*.

In this sense the two theories are complementary: Levinas discusses the origins of those concepts of justice that Habermas leans on, and conversely Habermas elaborates how the concepts of justice contribute directly to the order of speech acts (and indirectly to the reproduction of the lifeworld) that Levinas ignores.¹⁹ The two complementary theories are based on two different models of meaning-formation. For Habermas meaning-formation is an intentional linguistic interaction. For Levinas it is imperative to escape the frames of intentionality as it prevents the perception of the Face in its pure form, independent from socially influenced meanings.²⁰ So Levinas describes a pre-intentional alternative of meaning-formation, which is not based on activity (interaction), but on the passivity of subjects and the proximity constituted by this passivity.

I concluded the section of the paradox of coordinating action coordination in the hope that a pre-intentional process producing moral meanings of alternative source but equivalent capacity may solve the paradox. Now that the introduction of such a mechanism and the preparations of the synthesis have been done, the details of the solution may be elaborated. As described above, the paradox raises at the point where an attempt is made to describe the action coordination process within which a higher level concept of justice is formulated. This meaning-formation process is necessarily in accordance with the original, narrower concept of justice, and because of this the new, broader concept can be justified only according to the narrow one, which causes a performative contradiction. To evade this dead-end the phase of a pre-intentional meaning-formation process (expressing a concept of justice according to a high level of moral development) has to be built into the process of transition.

Interpreting this problem in the Levinasian frames may offer a solution. If the actors trying to coordinate their action coordination evoke the circumstances wherein the elementary responsibility may be expressed (that is, if they enter into proximity), a high level, consensual morality becomes accessible. The elementary responsibility is an "original impression" ("Urimpression"), and as such, if conjured, it overwrites the validity of any other cognitive concepts of justice. However, as elementary responsibility is absolute, it needs to be limited.

¹⁹ Hendley arrives to a similar conclusion on a different way (2004). His starting point is Taylor's critique of the discourse ethics, because of its incapability to answer the question "why to be good?" (1991). Hendley treats Levinas' ideas as answers to this question: "The position I have been arguing for is (...) implying only that a fully intelligible appropriation of the procedural demands of communicative action would be impossible for someone not capable of this [Levinasian] form of sensibility" (Hendley 2004: 169). In accordance with Hendley's point of view it may be added, that the complementarity is mutual, as Habermas answers questions in return that Levinas ignores.

²⁰ In order to explain the origins of morality Levinas had to find an empirical source of ethical meanings, which is independent from the intentional, socially constructed ethical meanings. And it was exactly the introduction of an alternative, pre-intentional process of meaning-formation that allowed Levinas to reconstruct the frames of a universal, "original impression", "Urimpression" in the Husserlian terminology (MacAvoy 2005: 109-118).

Therefore the elementary responsibility implicates its transformation into a cognitive concept of justice. Furthermore elementary responsibility is equivalent of the concept of justice according to the highest level of moral development, and as such, it provides the basis for the most rational action coordination process, the undistorted communicative action.²¹ To conclude, it may be useful to summarize these features of elementary responsibility: firstly, expressed in proximity, as an alternative concept of justice it may establish the frames of a process of action coordination; secondly, because of its absoluteness, elementary responsibility includes the urge to be transformed into a cognitive concept of justice; thirdly, as it is expressed through pre-intentional processes and as it expresses a concept of justice according to the highest level of moral development, it is not encumbered with the paradox of the cognitive-linguistic model.

Therefore, by building the phase of evoking the elementary responsibility into the description of the coordination of action coordination, its paradox may be dissolved and an expanded model of action coordination may be outlined.

Table 3: Expanded sequence of speech acts

rounds/ speakers	speaker "A"	speaker "B"
1-3. rounds: the same as in Table 2	...	
	or refuses "q" without justifying "p" (i.e. formulating speech act "r") → unwilling interruption of communicative action	
4. round		either resigns from communication
		or changes to open or hidden violence → willing interruption of communicative action → unsuccessful ending of communication
		or makes an attempt to coordinate action coordination
		either uses only cognitive argumentation → paradox shifting to broader concept of justice
		or evokes elementary responsibility → successful shifting to broader concept of justice → returning to communicative action

Table 3 shows this expanded model of action coordination that includes the variations of coordinating action coordination as well. If a situation occurs in which an actor faces unwilling (dogmatic) interruption of communicative action, she has four options: either she treats the situation as hopeless and resigns from communication; or she changes to open or

²¹ The elementary responsibility implicates a maximal willingness to open oneself to the Other, which is a commitment to revalidate one's meaning-structure in the light of the Other's. As László Tengelyi argues the Levinasian elementary responsibility is in close connection with the Kantian categorical imperative as they are different sources of morality but none can be imagined without supposing the other (2004: 126). Furthermore Levin characterizes Levinas' concept as the "embodiment of categorical imperative" (2001). Hendley in his above mentioned articles shows the same thing in case of the undistorted debate of discourse ethics, which is not surprising as it is the reformulation of the moral law within the frames of formal pragmatics (2004: 159-160).

hidden violence; or she tries to establish a broader moral order within which the communication may be continued in a purely cognitive manner resulting in a paradox; or she attempts to establish the broader moral order in an action coordination whose moral basis is none other than the elementary responsibility resulting in a potential success. In this model the Levinasian and Habermasian elements constitute a coherent unity. The pre-intentional meaning-formation is needed to broaden the narrow scope of a theory working solely with a concept of cognitive meaning-formation. Conversely, the cognitive model of moral development is needed to explain the potential translations of the elementary responsibility into different concepts of justice. In this sense only the complementarity of the two levels of meaning-formation explains fully the problem of coordinating action coordination.²²

At this point it is useful to return one last time to the example of the older worker (third level of moral development) and the newcomer (second level of moral development). Their dissent may be solved if in the first step the elder worker – by a friendly gesture (for example a friendly tapping on the newcomer's shoulder) – tries to evoke proximity, and wake the elementary responsibility. If he succeeds, then the circumstances of a quality debate are ensured, enabling him to argue that it is not the interest, but the responsibility toward the other that justifies the recognition of roles. In this way the newcomer acquires the new, broader concept of justice in a dialogue whose concept of justice is broad; and by applying the new concept of justice, the original debate may be recast without the chance of interruption, that is, the action coordination becomes coordinated.

This conclusion is the answer to our starting question, how the elementary ethics and the cognitive concepts of justice may be connected? Their synthesis provides an opportunity to give a more complete description of action coordination mechanisms, and to expand the frames of the phenomenological concept of *The Theory of Communicative Action* into a direction fitting to late modern constellation.

Concluding remarks

In the concluding section, I would like to briefly indicate the stakes of the above line of thought and illuminate some of its broader consequences. Communicative action is the central notion of Habermas's theory, so its modification affects his whole system of thought. The relevance of coordinating action coordination for social integration has to be indicated. Habermas starts *Between Facts and Norms* with the observation that the late modern societies are burdened with the tendency of gradual pluralization of lifeworlds, which endangers the social integration of society. Therefore, he concludes that the need for legal social integration grows as well (Habermas 1996: 26-27). I think that this observation is hardly disputable, unlike the conclusion, which might have several alternatives. The coordination of action coordination is such an alternative, as it is also an answer to the challenge of the lifeworld pluralization, however not a legal theoretic but an action theoretic one. Accordingly, the integration problems being implied by lifeworld pluralization – common in multicultural societies – can be solved not just by legal social integration but by the coordination of action coordination as well.

Secondly, it has to be emphasized that the coordination of action coordination has consequences not just for social integration but for socialization as well. Communicative

²² Obviously at this point there are many empirical and theoretical questions, which require further analysis. As the elementary responsibility is the result of passivity, instead of intentional preconditions, those contextual factors need to be identified, which may ensure its emergence. Also those mechanisms need to be analyzed in further researches, which are responsible for translating the elementary experiences of responsibility into concepts of justice.

action is the complementary and, at the same time, reproduction mechanism of the lifeworld. It becomes necessary if the lifeworld does not ensure the horizon of mutual meanings. Then, it solves the problem in the particular action situation and, at the same time, reproduces the lifeworld by creating a new horizon. The connection between coordinating action coordination and action coordination is analogous with the connection between action coordination and the lifeworld. Coordinating action coordination becomes necessary if action coordination is not functioning, that is, if it cannot ensure the recreation of a new horizon of meaning. Then, the coordination of action coordination solves the problem in the particular situation and “reproduces” a new habit of action coordination at the same time by practicing it. As the obstruction of action coordination becomes a more and more frequent problem in the individualized, differentiated late modernity, the questions of coordinating action coordination become more and more important for a late modern theory of socialization. Only such a theory is capable of highlighting potential solutions for the new challenges arising because of the dissolution of a mutual lifeworld.

Thirdly, the consequences concerning Habermas’s normative basis have to be mentioned. The original normative basis in *The Theory of Communicative Action* is the undistorted series of speech acts (introduced in Table 1). However, this highly rational type of action coordination is itself a result of a socialization process, including a moral development that leans on the Levinasian proximity. Therefore, the pragmatic normative basis is indirectly dependent on the proximity, which means that lack of proximity could be rightfully criticized in the relevant situations. In this sense, Habermas’s formal pragmatic normative basis can be complemented on the level of socialization theory with the concept of proximity.

Finally, the theoretical consequence has to be mentioned, namely the one that concerns the historical conclusions and the diagnosis of time of *The Theory of Communicative Action*. As it is well known, Habermas describes three major trends of social evolution: the rationalization of lifeworld, the differentiation of the systems, and the uncoupling of the lifeworld and system. Furthermore, as a diagnosis of time, he describes the colonization of the lifeworld by the system introducing it as a pathological tendency. In the light of what has been told about the coordination of action coordination, these ideas may be revised as well. As the proximity is an essential prerequisite of coordinating action coordination, which is the prerequisite of the rationalization of the lifeworld, it becomes a crucial question regarding how proximity can be historically featured and how its historical dynamism affects the original Habermasian diagnosis of time.²³ Even if these questions require further research and may only be mentioned here, it is important to emphasize their relevance, as they are crucial elements of the diagnosis of our own times.

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²³ The works analyzing the historical transformation of intimacy – such as Luhmann’s *Love as passion: the codification of intimacy* or Foucault’s *History of sexuality* or Giddens’ *Transformation of intimacy* – may provide insight concerning the changes of proximity. In the future these results should be connected to the original Habermasian diagnosis.

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Erasing the Material Base of Occupy Wall Street: When Soft Means Fail

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Abstract: When Occupy Wall Street proved able to reach mass circulation in 2011, it registered as a threat to the status quo in the United States, where corporate entities with close relation to government normally control the flow of discourse. The Occupy encampments, therefore, were intolerable, not merely an annoyance that could be ignored or ridiculed. Once Occupy's anti-corporate rhetoric had spread widely, the mainstream media took steps to derail the mass appeal of Occupy's oppositional discourse through accusations of incoherence and indecency. However, such "soft" means of organizing consent from the public were very weak in 2011 because of the 2008 economic collapse which had been provoked by Wall Street. With instruments of soft persuasion weak, the dominant group turned to instruments of hard persuasion — arrests, harassments, beatings, random grabs, and finally the orchestrated assault carried out on November 15th, an operation that saw the media censored and sequestered, at night, in the dark, with no filmed images, and all subway stations and street access blocked.

Keywords: surveillance, information control, policing, citizen movements, Occupy Wall Street

Introduction

Norman Fairclough, a leading theorist of critical discourse analysis, states in his 2006 book *Language and Globalization* that discourse has only a limited ability to shape the "actual" world. The "real" processes of globalization, he argues, are too complex "to be fully controlled by any human intervention" (24). However, to the extent that real processes can be influenced, "various groups of people develop strategies to try to regulate, direct and control elements of these real processes" (2006: 24). In the U.S., financial elites control the corporate media (Bagdikian 2004; Croteau and Hoynes 1994) so pro-business discourses are usually the ones most able to inflect the trajectory of globalization. Opposition groups and individuals

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regularly offer alternatives to dominant pro-business narratives but mass circulation of those alternative narratives is rare. The question of mass circulation is a crucial one, because, as Fairclough points out, “The mere existence of alternative discourses means little. It is only those which pass through the mechanisms and processes of selection and retention that can contribute to social (re)construction” (2006: 24). In the U.S., oppositional rhetoric thrives in the margins, but it rarely reaches the level of circulation that would yield a meaningful contribution to social (re)construction.

However, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, after an unpopular trillion-dollar bailout of private banks with public taxes, pro-business narratives lost their capacity to persuasively explain events, which created an opportunity for radical critique of finance to gain legitimacy. In 2011, Occupy Wall Street used an illegal encampment in a Lower Manhattan park to exploit this opening, developing a functioning delivery system for mass circulation and mass appeal. Through Occupy’s improvised apparatus, mass anger at the vast power and wealth of Wall Street consolidated and circulated heavily in the mass media for several months.

Long-term, successful mass communications by an oppositional group in the United States interferes by definition with the monopoly on mass communications held by financial elites with close ties to government elites. This article, then, examines efforts to reassert control of mass representation and public discourse in the face of a non-violent movement’s challenge to the dominant media’s pro-business narratives. Fieldnotes from my participant-observation in Occupy Wall Street, as well as news reports and published meeting minutes, provide the raw data for my study, which describes the formidable repertoire of tools that elites turned to in order to shore up a public transcript that was severely tested from below.

Authorities in a constitutional republic (such as the U.S.) prefer to keep physical violence limited, but in this case, discursive tools alone proved incapable of keeping radical rhetoric from breaking through to mass audiences, requiring the use of paramilitary force in order to push radical critique of finance back to the margins. The turn to instruments of hard persuasion was most evident in the New York Police Department’s orchestrated assault on November 15th, 2011, an operation that saw the media censored and sequestered, at night, in the dark, with no filmed images, and all subway stations and street access blocked. Reporters with press passes were forced to leave Zuccotti Park and placed in a “free-press zone” (Gillham, Edwards, and Noakes 2013) where they were unable to witness or collect video on the confrontation.

If these writers had been able to witness the police attack, they would have seen that a massive force of police in riot gear descended on the encampment, unannounced after midnight, backed up by sanitation crews dumping the mountain of debris left in the wake of the police sweep. Police arrested over 200 people, including a few journalists. Officers in riot gear beat campers with batons, tore apart their built environment, littered the floor with their books, tents, medical supplies, food, religious artifacts, and personal property.

The operation started right after midnight, when police trucks took positions along Zuccotti Park’s perimeter. Officers set up a perimeter with a one-block radius in order to keep supporters away and they arrested 28 people who tried to bust through. At 1 a.m., police turned on the klieg lights and loudspeakers; officers spread leaflets ordering demonstrators to leave. Those who did not leave by 1:45 a.m. were dragged out. (Baker and Goldstein 2011)

Sanitation workers followed, picking up any belongings left behind. It took 150 sanitation workers from all five boroughs to haul out 26 truckloads of clothes, tents, musical instruments, books, sleeping bags, and electronics (Gregoran, Sutherland, and Fredericks 2011). At 3:30 a.m., the last group of demonstrators locked arms in the Occupy Kitchen, refusing to let go of the park. Two demonstrators chained themselves to trees. Police beat this

core group with batons in order to get them to delink, and then arrested them. By 4:15 a.m., the park was clear. (Baker and Goldstein 2011)

As I show in this article, authorities turned to paramilitary force only after soft, discursive tools proved ineffective. The first strategy for remarginalizing Occupy – ignoring the demonstrations – did not succeed, primarily because Occupy had leveraged its own communication systems to circulate its anti-corporate message to a wider and wider audience. The second strategy – tarring Occupy as unworthy of association – had only limited success because Occupy’s message had mass legitimacy after the financial collapse of 2008.

Figure 1: In the heart of New York's Financial District, a marginalized narrative reached thousands of daily visitors. All photographs by author.



Part 1: Occupy’s Challenge from Below

Before suddenly becoming a consequential movement, Occupy Wall Street started as just another odd instance of marginal opposition by fringy New York City activists. But, in less than sixty days, the 2011 movement drastically changed the terms of national political debate and propelled radical critiques of finance into mass circulation. Occupy erupted from the margins into the mainstream where loosely-allied movements delivered a heterodox message into the teeth of power, provoked a response, and accumulated large financial and material assets which required banking and warehouse services. As it gained material, financial, and political clout, Occupy assembled multiple unauthorized discourses against Wall Street financial firms recently impervious to criticism or opposition. As occupations spread to many towns and cities, and a protest camp in Zuccotti morphed daily into an all-purpose opposition center on illegally-seized land, Occupy developed into a consequential threat to elite rule.

How, then, did Occupy develop into a threat? What were the conditions that allowed Occupy's oppositional themes and utterances to gain wide circulation and high profiles? How did Occupy amplify the discontented voices of ordinary people?

Figure 2: At Zuccotti Park, tourists stopped to check out the many intriguing spectacles.



Physical Occupation of Meaningful Space

The first communications' strategy that I discuss, because I believe it is most important, is the physical placement of a protest encampment on the streets of Lower Manhattan without permission. Occupy gained mass circulation because it imposed on public space, public attention, and mass media a spectacle with a long enough life to attract attention and thus compete for the attention of American viewers. Camping out illegally on Wall Street amplified outraged voices of ordinary people by being long-term, not transient like a march or a rally.

On the 17th of September, several hundred activists associated with Occupy set out to occupy Chase Manhattan Plaza, one short block from the New York Stock Exchange, but the police had surrounded the plaza with barricades. Unsurprised, Occupy's Tactical Working Group (TWG) consulted their list of seven alternative spaces. These alternative spaces were a closely guarded secret in the lead-up to the 17th, but when Chase was ruled out, TWG spread the word that Zuccotti Park, a "privately-owned public park" three blocks from the Stock Exchange, was next on their list.

Demonstrators found Zuccotti free of barricades and moved in. To their surprise, police did not move against them, and they woke up the next day residents of the Park. Mitchell L. Moss, Professor of Urban Policy and Planning at New York University, explained the City's inaction: "The City had a policy for encouraging commercial developers to create open space in exchange for more height. But until now, no one has thought about the issue of what the rules are" (Foderaro 2011). The core activists of Occupy, by poking at the downtown

landscape, looking for fissures in the state-corporate entente, had found one they could pry open – a privately-owned public park with hazy rules and complex ownership.

Zuccotti Park's private-public arrangement was a vulnerability waiting to be exploited, but in 1996, when Brookfield Properties, Inc., took possession of the space, they could not have expected that a protest encampment would expose the legal contradictions. They were not prepared. John Zuccotti, the former Brookfield executive for whom the park is named, said, "We basically look to the police leadership and mayor to decide what to do" when complications arise at the park, while Mayor Bloomberg explained that the Occupiers weren't evicted because Brookfield hadn't requested it. In other words, when the Occupiers arrived on September 17th, both Brookfield Properties and New York City officials incorrectly assumed that the other would respond. Neither did. (Roberts 2011)

Occupy sought a spot in the immediate vicinity of Wall Street because they identified banks as the place where people could assemble and petition the elites who rule daily life. In the lead up to the occupation, the Anonymous hacking group issued several communiqués arguing that Wall Street was the place to gather because "the banksters" had cratered the national economy and then rewarded themselves with bonuses paid for with taxpayer bailouts. Anonymous addressed the criminals of Wall Street directly:

Perhaps you think you are at the eye of storm, luxuriating in tranquility while all around is ripped apart and made anew. But it is not so... You are at the center of the crosshairs!... You have crystallized this country into a monolithic tyranny and in doing so you made brittle the ties that bind people. We are here, gathered at the steps of your butcher block four years later, frenzied and furious. Your crimes have united this great melting pot into a white-hot alloy of rage. ("Anonymous Press Release for Occupy Wall Street Action," 2011)

In the parlance of urban youth, Anonymous and other Occupy participants "recognized"; they publicly acknowledged what is going on and who the central perpetrators are.

In a talk that I attended at Hunter University in late 2011, Cornell West expressed support for the choice of Wall Street as the right target for protests because dominant control of society is in the private hands of finance. To support his claim of Wall Street dominance, West pointed out that, before the deregulation of finance, business, and industry by government began 30 years ago, the financial sector took in no more than 16 percent of overall profits but in the last decade this sector has taken up to 41 percent. He connected the financialization of our economy to American society's "gangsterization" – putting profits before people.

In their open-air public space on the footsteps of Wall Street, Occupy participants asserted oppositional sentiments, radical social values, anti-market ideas, and even revenge fantasies which dared Wall Street financiers and the Mayor's Office to stop them. Thousands of out-of-town tourists walking past the park could view "Wanted!" signs portraying criminal bank executives like Angelo Mozillo, a six-foot wolf puppet holding a sign that read "The Wolves of Wall Street Give Wolves a Bad Name," and then take home with them newsletters devoted to reporting on "what the 1% don't want us to think about." Such egalitarian materials could not reach such a large audience before the occupation of Zuccotti created a mass disruption in the status quo. Writing from a public relations standpoint, in an October 6th *New York Times* op-ed, Richard Beales (2011) lauded Occupy for "picking a good spot," saying that the crowds and street theater made for good television, and also that, because camping in front of Wall Street could be very costly to the demonstrators, their daring had won them notoriety.

Figure 3: Sign in Zuccotti Park.



Figure 4: Protester holding sign in Zuccotti Park.



Figure 5: Tourists in Lower Manhattan frequently stopped to take pictures of the Zuccotti encampment.



Occupy posed a threat to the status quo because it performed alternative social relations as it critiqued existing ones. As weeks of occupation went by, the camp evolved to house hundreds of overnight campers, thousands of daily visitors, and an array of free services like meals, health care, clothing, phone calls, education, books, shelter, even cigarettes.

In addition to viewing the displayed alternatives, people walking past the park could clear up any doubts they had about Occupy and get answers about what confused them about the movement. One morning in early November, for instance, I witnessed an elderly couple stopped on the sidewalk to peer in at the interior of the park. Since they were within shouting distance of the west side Welcome Station, the guy working that station shouted out to them jovially, "Go ahead in! We're not crazy like the news says we are!" The woman in the couple said, "Well, I know that!" at which point the couple ambled into the park to get a closer look at things.

I also witnessed adults using the encampment as a learning opportunity for kids. The sight of children being escorted through the park by approving schoolteachers grew common by November. Occupy demonstrators worked to accommodate kids by adding a children's section in the Occupy Library, by discouraging each other from cursing when kids were around, by providing fascinating puppetry and pageantry on Halloween, and by improving walking lanes in the park. The attraction of kids to the park was yet another reason for authorities to feel threatened – Helaine Olen (2011) of *The New York Times* expressed amusement over a four-year old kid holding a sign promoting economic justice at Zuccotti Park, noting that four is "an age when girls are generally thought to be more interested in Disney characters than protest marches."

Figure 6: Students studying Occupy Wall Street at Zuccotti Park



Figure 7: Students studying Occupy Wall Street.



Figure 8: Students studying Occupy Wall Street.



Tourists wandering Lower Manhattan – or riding by in double-decker tourist buses – snapped countless photos of Zuccotti Park, its inhabitants, and signs on display. These tourists with their cameras augmented Occupy's ability to bypass the mainstream media to gain wider circulation.

Just in case they weren't planning to already, demonstrators asked tourists to upload their photos to Facebook. An Occupier from China, for example, had a sign hanging around his neck reading "Protect Humanity's Peace, Freedom, Democracy... A Long Way To Go." After tourists took his picture, he showed them a note on the back of his sign reading "please post to Facebook." Ideally, tourists from America's heartland or from overseas would circulate their photos of Occupy within their own social networks. The picture of a smiling, friendly Chinese man promoting a message with universal appeal might counter some of the negative images people had seen from the major media.

Figure 9: This demonstrator could be found at the edge of Zuccotti Park nearly every day that I visited.



Unsupervised Channels for Circulation of Unauthorized Discourse

As I describe in Part Two of this article, Occupy's relationship with major media was much more complex than their relationship with tourists passing by the park. Mainstream channels did not usually treat Occupy's message favorably, so Occupy wisely developed its own channels for circulating discourse. One of Occupy's most famous tools for circulation was the *Occupied Wall Street Journal (OWSJ)*, a hand-distributed print organ that riffed off *The Wall Street Journal* but disseminated news and opinion from the point of view of the protesters. The idea for the *OWSJ* came about because, according to editor Arun Gupta, "we didn't think there would be much in the way of coverage of the event, so we thought it was important that there be a media outlet that reflected what was under way" (Carr 2011). Besides hawkers distributing this alternate broadside at Zuccotti Park and at off-site rallies, its circulation occasionally copied that of the major dailies in New York City. For example, at the height of the movement, I was able to find stacks of *OWSJ* sitting alongside stacks of the *New York Post* and *New York Times* at a convenience store in the neighborhood where I live, 5 miles from Zuccotti Park.

Occupy developed online channels as well as print ones. Within Zuccotti Park, activists constructed a "Freedom Tower," composed of two modems and six radio antennas. The tower distributed wireless Internet access open to everyone who visited the park. The excellent wireless access in the park aided Occupy's Twitter campaign as they blasted out pro-Occupy and anti-Wall Street messages every minute of every day.

Figure 10: Freely accessible WiFi made Zuccotti Park a good place to broadcast Occupy discourse.



Awareness of Occupy escalated after the Occupy Media Working Group circulated videos of a disturbing incident during a September 24th march to Union Square. The videos showed several marchers who had been kettled into a netted sidewalk area and who were not trying to force their way out. Among them was an apparently non-violent young woman named Kaylee Dedrick. The videos, “made by several protesters at different vantagepoints” (Baker and Goldstein, 2011), show Dedrick being pepper-sprayed by NYPD Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna, causing her to collapse in shrieks as Occupy medics rush to help her. The sensational and troubling video went viral and aroused new sympathy for Occupy and hostility toward the NYPD from people outside the movement. According to a *New York Times* report on September 29th, the videos

have prompted a level of criticism of the police rarely seen outside of fatal police shootings of unarmed people. The independent city agency that investigates accusations of police abuse said that about 400 people had complained, many from out of state. (Baker and Goldstein 2011)

Through its own channels, Occupy was able to circulate the pepper-spray video and force into national attention what was going on in Lower Manhattan. The major media were not able to quarantine the wave of sympathy that this filmed incident provoked. People who been privately seething about the bailout of Wall Street after its greed had torpedoed the global economy in 2008 now became fans rooting for Occupy and following its adventures.

A Radical Critique of Finance Achieves Widespread, Sustained Circulation

In its earliest incarnation, Occupy was just one of many oppositional groups operating in the margins; during September 2011, Occupy news never occupied more than 2 percent of the nation's collective coverage, according to Pew's Research Center for Excellence in Journalism. In fact, Occupy did not even register on the Pew charts until the very end of September. (Holcomb, 2011)

However, in the first full week of October, coverage of Occupy jumped to 7 percent of the nation's collective news coverage (Holcomb 2011). An avalanche of unsupervised, horizontal communication online and onsite provoked the mainstream media to begin covering the movement more energetically. Occupy's share of the national news jumped to 10 percent in the second week of October before leveling out at around 5 percent. The news media had signaled, merely by the amount of coverage it was supplying, that Occupy was important, that it mattered, and that it had traction.

By early October, Occupy was internationally known and strong public support for the movement meant that the New York City officials could not preemptively remove the activists without seriously harming the credibility of the police and the Mayor. A Quinnipiac poll of New York City voters released in mid-October found that nearly three-quarters said that they understood the protesters' views at least fairly well and two-thirds said that they agreed with those views. Nationwide, the support was just a bit less, hovering around sixty percent. (Muskal 2011)

Part 2: Beating Back Occupy's Challenge

This section examines the dominant elite's efforts to reassert control of mass representation and public discourse in the face of a non-violent movement's challenge to the dominant media's pro-business narratives. Plan A – ignoring the demonstrations – proved ineffective because Occupy had leveraged its own communication systems to circulate its anti-corporate message to a wider and wider audience. Plan B – tarring Occupy as unworthy of association – had limited success because Occupy's message had mass legitimacy after the trillion-dollar bank bailouts in 2008. After these “soft means” for remarginalizing Occupy were found ineffective, authorities – with Mayor Mike Bloomberg leading the way – turned to police violence.

Plan A: Ignoring or Downplaying Occupy

Although Occupy's Lower Manhattan actions began in early September and the occupation of Zuccotti Park began on September 17th, news about Occupy never occupied more than 2 percent of the nation's collective coverage during the month of September (Holcomb, 2011). For most of September, Occupy coverage was too scant to even register in the Pew rankings (Holcomb 2011). In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott offers the following explanation for why dominant groups might downplay or ignore opposition: “When it suits them, the dominant may elect to ignore a symbolic challenge, pretend they did not hear it or see it, or perhaps define the challenger as deranged, thus depriving his act of the significance it would otherwise have” (1990: 205).

Those members of the mainstream media who did not ignore Occupy during its first few weeks often depicted the movement as incomprehensible or insignificant. In Gina

Bellafante's analysis piece on Occupy, "Every Action Produces an Overreaction," published in *The New York Times* on October 2nd, she argues that nothing remarkable was going on at Zuccotti. "The most threatening thing happening at this disorganized affair," she wrote, was that people were "reading Orwell."

After the online circulation of videos showing Deputy Inspector Bologna pepper-spraying Kaylee Dedrick, editors at *The New York Daily News* (NYDN) came to the aid of Police Commissioner Ray Kelly and Mayor Bloomberg in an October 7th editorial, suggesting that no one, in fact, had engaged in cruelty toward the demonstrators. NYDN editors used their platform to downplay violence committed by the police and dismiss the outrage expressed by Occupy participants and their supporters. The editorial, titled "Occupy Wall Street protesters need to start living in the real world," referred to "squirts" of pepper-spray and "less-than-bruising whacks of a nightstick on a backpack." The *Daily News* editors encouraged "the whiners" to do a Google search for "videos of Chicago Police outside the 1968 Democratic Convention." Viewing those videos would purportedly give demonstrators (and their supporters) a sense of how comparatively mild the police violence toward Occupy has been. One month later, in yet another editorial show of support for the NYPD, *Daily News* editors dismissed Occupy demonstrators as "tots throwing tantrums," thereby reinforcing what Bellafante and others had been circulating throughout October – that Occupy participants are merely "protesting for protest's sake."

Although leading factors in the media represented Occupy as insignificant and/or lacking a comprehensible message, one might say that Occupy was obvious in its critique of the great inequality of wealth and power in the United States. Activists had gathered to protest things that are quite meaningful to regular Americans: corporate influence in American politics, a federal response to the 2008 financial crisis that was heavily biased toward the rich, war profiteering, declining access to education, etc. Despite the widely-circulated "protesting for protest's sake" meme, there is evidence that members of the public were not having a difficult time deciphering Occupy's message. According to one poll released by Quinnipiac University on October 17th, 72% of New Yorkers understood the demonstrators' views "fairly well" or "very well" (Oresmus 2011).

Allowing Occupy to continue might have further mainstreamed their widely-shared feelings about economic inequality that elites preferred to keep repressed. Although the movement had been launched by a relatively small group of anarchists and other dissidents, it attracted and consolidated many forms of unauthorized discourses against the status quo.

Plan B: Undermining Opposition Once They've Reached Mass Circulation

By mid-October, with Occupy's discourse circulating heavily through mass media outlets, defining the movement merely as "unclear" or "insignificant" would not suffice. Re-marginalizing this robust opposition to Wall Street dominance required that Occupy be redefined in the public mind as dangerous fringe elements, or, in the words of *New York Post* columnist Steve Cuzo (2011), "anarchists, vagrants, and zanies" driven "by a nihilist impulse to disrupt life and commerce." Although planning for such a rhetorical offensive might be expected to occur behind the scenes, Congressman Peter King, who represents the 2nd District of New York, went public on October 7th with a plea for the media to undermine Occupy's credibility. "It's really important for us not to give any legitimacy to these people in the streets," King said on Laura Ingraham's right-wing radio show, adding, "I remember what happened in the 1960s when the left-wing took to the streets and somehow the media glorified them and it ended up shaping policy. We can't allow that to happen" (Miller 2011).

Figure 11: At Zuccotti Park, demonstrators displayed The New York Post's latest smears against them.



Rep. King’s proposal to undermine the legitimacy of Occupy resembles schemes that authorities often deploy, according to James Scott (1990), in order to keep opposition groups from gaining “the status in public discourse they seek” (206). In civilizations around the globe, Scott has found that, through control of mass communications, elites can “assimilate the opposition’s acts to a category that minimizes its political challenge to the state” (206). Scott points out, for example, that “there is little doubt that it often serves elites to label revolutionaries as bandits, dissidents as mentally deranged, opponents as traitors” (206). *The New York Post* circulated dozens of articles portraying Occupy as, at best, a drag on ordinary people’s quality of life. For instance, on October 16th, City Councilman Vincent Ignizio (2011) published an op-ed in *The Post* arguing that “we cannot keep footing the bill for these protests,” which he said cost the city millions of dollars in overtime for police officers and which might force cancellation of a new police-academy class scheduled for January. Ignizio’s commentary represented just a single shot at Occupy in a volley of discharges from *The Post*. On the day after Occupy was evicted from Zuccotti on November 15th, reporters for *The Post* admitted, “*The Post* has led the charge to shut down the Occupation – after exposing how a large number of the park’s OWS inhabitants were freeloaders and ex-cons who were not supporting the cause. The paper called on city leaders to return the space to its intended purpose” (Gregoran, Sutherland, and Fredericks 2011). Articles within *The Post* suggested, among other things, that demonstrators advocated bloody revolution (Saul 2011), that they were led by an anti-Semite (Goodman 2011), and that the park “smelled like an open sewer” (Cartwright and Fredericks 2011).

For Todd Gitlin (2011), a professor of journalism and sociology at Columbia, the expressions of disgust by commentators in *The New York Post* were to be expected. Gitlin wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed,

If some aspects of the Occupy Wall Street protest feel predictable — the drum circles, the signs, including “Tax Wall Street Transactions” and “End the FED” — so does the right-wing response. Is it any surprise that Fox News and its allied bloggers consider the protesters “deluded” and “dirty smelly hippies”?

Perhaps more surprising were the smears against Occupy that emerged from seemingly non-partisan news outlets. For example, a free newspaper called *Metro New York* ran a front page article on October 23rd which claimed incorrectly that core Occupy activists were hoarding hundreds of thousands of donations and using the money for luxuries like “gourmet dinners, down blankets, and flat-screen televisions” (Epstein 2011).

Plan C: Turning to Monopoly on Violence

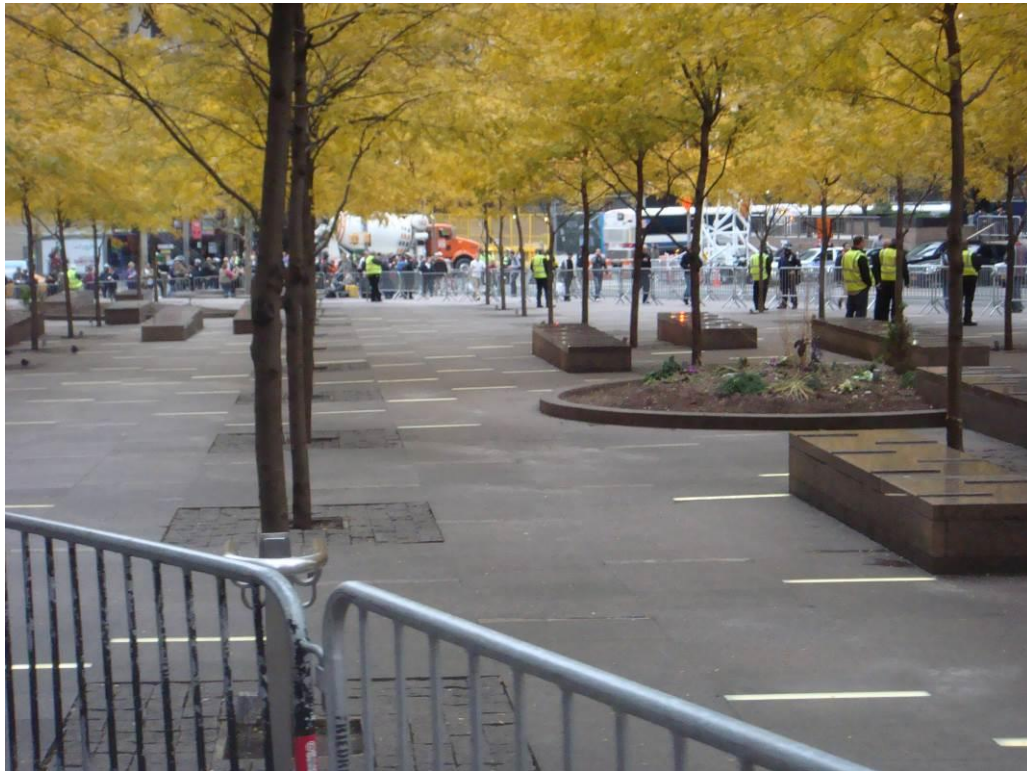
As I have shown, the mainstream media first tried to downplay the significance of Occupy by ignoring it or representing it as “protest for protest’s sake.” But that couldn’t keep Occupy’s message from gaining mass circulation, so members of the mass media tried a second technique – undermining Occupy’s legitimacy by depicting the group as unworthy of association. However, these tactics yielded limited success in remarginalizing Occupy because Occupy didn’t invent the anger at Wall Street. It only forced it onstage, acting against and for things which spoke to orientations that are widely felt but rarely acted on in public. Alexander Stille, Professor of International Journalism at Columbia, wrote, in a *New York Times* op-ed published on October 19th, 2011,

In an era in which money translates into political power, there is a growing feeling, on both left and right, that special interests have their way in Washington. There is growing anger, from the Tea Party to Occupy Wall Street, that the current system is stacked against ordinary citizens.

Polls support Stille’s contentions. In February 2011, for example, seven months before the occupation of Zuccotti Park, a Gallup poll found that 67% of Americans were dissatisfied with “the size and influence of major corporations in America today” (Saad). A *New York Times*/CBS poll taken in October 2011 found two-thirds of Americans want wealth to be distributed more equally while the same amount object to tax cuts for corporations (Zeleny and Thee-Brenan 2011).

Occupy’s ferocious circulation of anti-Wall Street discourse from its unauthorized staging area uniquely consolidated, propelled, and projected popular opposition to a financial and political system that was at its most vulnerable moment, a financial collapse revealing how the status quo socializes risk and privatizes profits, that leaves some bankers wealthy and many citizens indebted. Therefore, “soft,” discursive, means for remarginalizing OWS could not, on their own, push OWS discourse back to the margins.

Figure 12: The Zuccotti encampment was cleared by the NYPD on November 15th.



The City's first eviction attempt occurred on October 14th. Mayor Bloomberg had moved to clear the camp but the Mayor and the police had telegraphed their plans, allowing the opposition to prepare for what seemed like a daylight raid with journalists attending. The attempt failed, thwarted by 1) mass support for the camp expressed in many calls and emails to the Mayor from liberal politicians and others, 2) the onsite civil disobedience of Jesse Jackson who linked arms in the park with occupiers when a police attack was rumored, and 3) the many hundreds who came downtown to physically defend the encampment (Barbaro and Taylor 2011). In a *New York Times* report, Michael Barbaro and Kate Taylor wrote, "By 6 a.m., just before City Hall announced the cleanup was canceled, the crowd had grown to more than a thousand, their numbers swelled by Internet pleas for reinforcements." The idea of a violent battle between the police and 1000 Occupy participants didn't seem like a good idea to many powerful politicians in New York. Barbaro and Taylor elaborated,

Behind the scenes, interviews suggested, the change in course was fueled by an intensifying sense of alarm within city government, shared even among some of those who work for Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, that sending scores of police officers into the park would set off an ugly, public showdown that might damage the reputation of the city as well as its mayor.

Clearing Zuccotti Park required that the city win the image wars, and the October 14th attempt was not equipped to do so.

However, by the November 15th eviction, Mayor Bloomberg had learned his lesson well. The NYPD won the final battle of the images because City authorities destroyed the encampment with police power in the middle of the night, with all news media quarantined and no live coverage possible. Reporters in the park with press passes were forced to leave and placed in

a “free-press zone” (Gillham, Edwards, and Noakes 2013) where they were unable to witness or collect video on the confrontation.

According to police spokesman Paul Browne, the creation of the free-press zone was for the journalist’s own safety, comparing the perimeter for the press to perimeters created around crime scenes and calamitous events. Mayor Bloomberg said that the media was kept away “to prevent a situation from getting worse and to protect members of the press.” But several journalists and journalism groups spoke out against the police tactics.

- The New York Press Club said in a statement that “the brash manner in which officers ordered reporters off the streets and then made them back off until the actions of the police were almost invisible is outrageous.” (Stelter and Baker 2011)
- Andrew Katz, who was writing for *The Brooklyn Ink*, said that the police “wouldn’t let us get anywhere near Zuccotti.” Mr. Katz said that at the corner of Broadway and Fulton Street, three blocks from the park, some police officers told him to stand on the sidewalk while others told him to stand on the street. (Stelter and Baker 2011)
- The Managing Editor for DNAInfo.com, Michael Ventura, said that one of his journalists was “doing his job and was arrested for that.” (Stelter and Baker 2011)
- Lindsey Christ, a reporter for NY1, a local cable news channel, said that, as the police approached the park, they did not distinguish between protesters and members of the press. “Those 20 minutes were some of the scariest of my life,” she said, adding that police officers took a New York Post reporter standing near her and “threw him in a choke-hold.” (Stelter and Baker 2011)
- A writer for *The Village Voice* told a police officer, “I’m press!” to which the officer responded, “Not tonight.” (Stelter and Baker 2011)

As I described in the opening to this article, the police power of the state erased the material base of Occupy’s anti-corporate opposition, leaving the demonstrators with no physical center to develop and display alternatives to the market system. Demonstrators were forced to rally for a few hours and disperse or march a few blocks and disperse. These were very different material conditions in comparison to a self-evolving, self-recreating village camp. Without a fixed and charismatic operational base, they were forced to make their arguments with words unattached to an inchoate alternative camp. Because Occupy refused to offer itemized demands or an easily digestible agenda, their message was easily garbled and distorted by the mainstream media.

In the months after the eviction, the movement’s national profile declined steadily, as did material support from the public. By January 3rd, 2012, when the Occupy General Assembly finally achieved consensus around a specific demand – a Constitutional amendment to end corporate personhood – the public had largely stopped paying attention. By the one-year anniversary of the occupation, Occupy’s decision-making bodies had long since stopped meeting, their website was no longer interactive, and they had still had no central camp. Their focus on economic inequality smartly shifted to a focus on debt, whether it be student debt, consumer debt, or the debt that small nations owe to the World Bank. Off-stage now, activists still oppose economic inequality, but, without mass circulation of their discourse, they are no longer positioned in a way that would allow them to contribute to social reconstruction.

Conclusion

In the United States, the corporate mass media typically refuses to circulate information produced by dissenting groups, thus quarantining it from mass circulation and public perception. Without a doubt, individual critics have space to publish online or in print or hand out flyers on the street, or even yell on a street corner because the U.S. Constitution formally guarantees legal rights to dissent. Oppositional groups perform isolated demonstrations and rallies, even large ones, but elites are not threatened by those actions, which are neither long-term, nor amplified, nor widely circulated, nor received meaningfully by large audiences.

In contrast, Occupy's actions in late 2011 were long-term, amplified, widely circulated, and meaningfully received by large audiences. Occupy marched to the center of high finance, denounced the nation's financial elite, and encouraged others to do the same. This is what charismatic leadership does – it acts against and for things that speak to the orientations of masses of people who can't or won't act on those orientations publicly. As a movement, Occupy put into words and actions "the essence of thousands upon thousands of bitter jokes, resentments, and outrage accumulated around kitchen tables, in small groups of workers, in beer halls, and among close companions" (Scott 1990: 226). Occupy assumed a charismatic posture, perhaps even becoming national heroes not only because their tactics were bold and clever, but because they made the first public declaration of what so many had been saying offstage without the amplification of mass media or mass movements.

On the day after the Zuccotti encampment was destroyed, Mayor Mike Bloomberg issued an official statement stating that Occupy's encampment was "an intolerable situation" and declaring that "inaction was not an option" (Halbfinger and Barbaro 2011). Bloomberg's statements ostensibly referred to problems with safety and sanitation in the park, but my analysis suggests that Occupy was intolerable to the City primarily for reasons having nothing to do with public health: Occupy's oppositional discourse had reached mass circulation and mass legitimacy and the soft means for marginalizing the movement were very weak because of the 2008 bank bailouts which were heavily biased toward the rich.

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Cartooning Humor: How Arabs are Laughably Derided in Animations

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Abstract: Some animated movies use humor to capture the full attention of its audience. In so doing, the movie's messages have become a great concern for many theorists and critics by virtue of the idea that a movie can be a repository of ideologies meant to construct a certain type of easy-going and noncritical audience. This paper, therefore, takes the example of Max Fleischer's *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) and Robert Clampett's *Ali Baba Bound* (1941) as its case studies aiming at spotting the different manifestations of humor, taking Arabs as its subject-matter, becoming a leaked ideology and taming the discourse that is amplified, manipulated, and delivered to the Western public in unwarrantable ways compared to the imagery of Westerners.

Keywords: Passive/silent spectatorship, Humor, Anachronism, Ideology, Stereotypes

The bleak visions of quite a few novels of the period are couched in a bitterly irreverent humor that has the capacity to shock readers out of their apathy and self-pity; to produce an angry laughter that is hopefully more productive than despair; to disorient in order to reorient. (Al-Nowaihi 2005: 295)

It has often been remarked that part of the philosophy of humor is to draw unexpected results from unexpected situations. It can often be noticed in some novels or films that what should not be laughed at becomes, though, the butt of the joke. In a movie, for instance, one would notice that sometimes the oppressed or weak gets laughed at (which is contrary to what normally people should do: empathize with the weak) and is thus made to seem to deserve what happens to him or her and be the butt of the movie's joke. Readers or spectators, this way, are oriented to adhere to the ideologies of humor and are shocked out of their apathy.

Quite dexterous in many animated movies about Arabs is the way in which humor is utilized quick-wittedly with the purpose of leaking ideological messages to spectators.

In this respect, this article deals with the complicated and controversial issue of humor in relation to ideological manipulations. By drawing particularly on two Hollywood cartoons, Max Fleischer's *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) and Robert Clampett's *Ali Baba Bound* (1941), this mental enterprise is bent on analyzing how these short films construct a comically ideological view of Arab life. This is to say that such types of movies not only encourage spectators to totally drown in a state of reverie, and thus absorb all is transmitted without questioning, but also, through comical humor in animated films, cartoon producers tend to amplify the implementation of stereotypic, anachronistic, and anecdotal features of Arabs, which could also have long-term destructive consequences to both Arabs and Westerners.

Indeed, Media provide the possibilities, in various forms, for entertaining spectators, particularly through the genre of comical humor presented in animated films. Having engaged in such an entertaining enterprise, Media, in this regard, has provided an outlet for film producers to rally as big a number of audience as their films can entice so as to make significant profits. At this stage, profit has come to occupy the main interests of most film producers, and the attainment of such profits would require seeking attractive themes for their film production. Arabs would perfectly suit the moment by weaving romantic and stereotypical stories around them, exactly in conformity with the worn and torn fantasized imageries of *The Arabian Nights*. In so doing, some film producers have relied on film messages to manipulate the public and direct the course of actions in their countries to their advantage. There are, in fact, plenty of messages filtered through different media outlets that have helped best weave the schemes of movie producers in their quest to control the minds of the masses.

Such mind control, desired by movie producers, is conditioned to mesmerize spectators into believing every single idea and scene presented to them through TV screens. The idea is to let film ideologies flow, one after another, unnoticed and uncritical. The noticeable figure of spectators turns into devoted and almost uncritical admirers and applauders for all the movie's scenes or TV messages. They, accordingly, fail to realize when a scene can be ideological, becoming noncritical applauders who do not take the quest for content control against producers and, as a result, filmic ideologies have gone unnoticeable because of the overlaid humor. At this stage, we may find someone hysterically laughing at a character being comically beaten even though that same character is the oppressed and the one who should be commiserated. This is simply the case because it is widely believed that "for most of the audience, most of the time, the film is a form of escape" (Stevenson 2002: 88) from their habitual, dreary lives. In a nutshell, the film's audience "is rendered as virtual and univalent as the images which are being referred to" (Bignell 2000: 161). In such a context, the usage of humor in films becomes a hypnotizing tranquilizer serving the purpose of relieving people's problems. What matters more now is to laugh, not to think about the subject of the laughter. This is also a truism because, "these films seek no criticality from their audiences, there are no spaces invested by themselves for creative interpretation; instead these films seek a compliant investment of power from the individual" (Fuery & Fuery 2003: 3-4). These types of movies are in fact more than just entertaining ones in the sense that they have gone beyond their initial entertaining and humorous functions and have been permeated with political and ideological propensities while becoming technically more sophisticated and aesthetically more attractive.

In fact, reading the immense amount of discourse surrounding animated films, one might begin to think that some of those within the cartoon audience are forced into accepting and believing what they see on cable TV. They are now made to look like they are badly needing to be scolded into watching what is good for them (Curtis 1994). In view of that, “the [viewer] is ‘positioned’ ideologically; certain [cinematic] features ‘determine’ how the [viewer] will respond to the represented events or the depicted characters; viewers have no choice but to accept the ideological ‘demands’ of the narrative system” (Jenkins 1992: 64). This kind of disciplinary view of the movie has shaped an easy-going audience who only needed some so-called entertainment to absorb whatever ideology is in the air at any given period of time, (Curran & Donelan 2009: 143) for, in fact, it can be argued that many people have enjoyed animated films not only because of their comic-based nature but also for the free and instant vicarious travel they have guaranteed.

The standard line about animated films has been that they have made travel available to everyone. Cartoons have been continually celebrated for having made it possible to experience other fantasy places without actually having to travel. In this mode of experiencing, “the world is laid out on a table to be viewed and classified by the viewer who can now hope to attain the position of God by viewing that world as a picture” (Gere 2010: 154). Importantly, such rhetoric of animated films assumes that the more fantastical and funny things are, the more excited and interested the audience will become. The spectators, be they children or adults, find animated films appealing because they have made it accessible for them to experience some place (any place) different, thereby enabling them to leave their current monotonous conditions. Like all desires, this relies on the drives of fantasy and humor more than anything else. Here lies the cartoon’s appeal: it provides fantastical images molded humorously to fit the frame of culturally-determined exotic fantasies.

Clearly, the lure of the fantasy worlds being depicted comically is what brings spectators to cartoons. In such a context, different kinds of spectators have been shaped: the ones who enjoy the films thanks to the kinds of reverie they inspire, but not a spectator who watches in order to better educate him or herself. A cartoon film here, therefore, plays the role of transporting its viewers to the simulated world of televisual imagery, for it incessantly hypnotizes them into unquestionably absorbing the multitude of film images in a total state of reverie – for the notable theorist of reverie Gaston Bachelard (1969), reverie is “a flight from out of the real” (1969: 5). This situation has resulted in producing a passive/silent spectatorship cast into a state of reverie when they become part and parcel of the movie. What they see comes to constitute part of their daily lives. Their presence in the movie is elongated so that it can last as long as the movie is exhibited. This kind of motive has allowed spectators to happily daydream about different places and different ways of life. At this stage, the world as a whole “takes form in our reverie, and this world is ours. This dreamed world teaches us the possibilities for expanding our being within our universe” (1969: 8). In fact, one of a comic cartoon’s primary appeals has been to offer a space apart for contemplating other possible visions of dwelling in the world, a quiet space for speculation and laughter, even if this is brought about through stereotypical conventions.

It should be noted that this reserved space of daydreaming that the cartoon offers seeks to construct an experience of a comic and quiet life by washing over the viewer and shutting out critical rationalization instead encouraging a reverential mental transportation cloaked in a humorous fashion. This transportation always leads to fossilizing stereotypes and ready-made judgments in the mind of spectators, thereby creating new realities and worlds for them to enjoy. In support of this, many scholars have viewed cartoons as participating in the act of

producing reality instead of reflecting it. Following the same path, cartoons create new humorous realities and shape popular perceptions according to the society's structures of domination. According to this approach,

The control of point-of-view is the most powerful means of inducing a kind of imaginary response on the part of the spectator, "positioning" the spectator by addressing the viewer through visual devices such as the point-of-view shot and shot/reverse-shot cutting in order to fashion a very tight bond between spectator and text. In this way, the text may be said to "inter-pellate" the spectator into the fictional world so that its values, and its ideology, become one with the viewing subject. (Stam et al. quoted in Persson 2003: 145)

In a nutshell, films not only reflect the world but also produce reality and shape public perceptions. Thus, some cartoons often promote stereotypical attitudes about a people being represented or made the subject matter of humor. Worse yet, such stereotyping has not gone without its ensuing devastating results in the sense that it vilified a people and made their descendants a target of numerous heinous attacks, especially in many different Western countries. This is the case mainly because films have exerted much of their power on their audiences' minds and turned them into apathetic, non-questioning, noncritical audiences who absorb any televisual content whatsoever. To account for this latter claim, suffice it to contend with the idea that some film producers, more than ever before, have targeted younger generations to implant the seeds of hatred and thus keep the wheel of animosity between East and West, as binary antagonistic entities, rolling from one generation to another. This also explains the reason why animated audiences are readily open to influences in media content more than any other type of audience.

In fact, targeting younger generations through ideological messages in films have had many different negative effects both on Arab and Western children. Unfortunately, the objectives of many cartoon movies are not just to educate, but also to instill hazardous and discriminatory views in the mind of Western children about others. Basically, children and young adults are socialized by the media to identify Arabs by the use of Orientalist stereotypes. The continuous circulation of these stereotypes from one generation to another will allow such derogatory images of Arabs and Muslims to exist in discourse. As a result, by five years of age,

Many children have definite stereotypes about blacks, women, and other social groups. Children don't have a choice about accepting or rejecting these conceptions, since they're acquired well before they have their own cognitive abilities or experiences to form their own beliefs... they must compete with all the forces that would promote and perpetuate these stereotypes: peer pressure, mass media. (Paul 1998: 58)

While it seems easy for non-Arab children to learn and accept what they learn from Disney and Hollywood's negative stereotypes, it seems that things are more difficult for children from Arab descent to combat those stereotypes amongst some of their peers. Shaheen (2000) states, "Arab-American children have been subjected to physical and verbal harassment, and also have to endure stereotypes of the Arab and Islamic world that trickle down through children's books and cartoons;" worst still, "children have experienced humiliation and fear among their schoolmates and the climate of prejudice and hate only deepens the wound of discrimination" (Merskin 2004: 172).

Certainly the comic vilification of Arabs in some animated movies has had continuous negative effects on Arabs, especially those living in the West, since “propaganda standardizes current ideas, hardens prevailing stereotypes, and furnishes thought patterns in all areas. Thus it codifies social, political, and moral standards” (Ellul 1969: 163). In view of that, some cartoon films about Arabs have adopted and adapted to different modes of comic representations whereby they can be able to translate Arab locations and people in humorous veins by classifying and depicting them according to the codes of Orientalist¹ configurations. This kind of comic translation has allowed Arab locations and people to be apprehended by the cartoon viewers as frozen and raw materials liable to total conversion and imaginative transformation. Simply put, such comic translations constitute a way of perceiving the world that changes what the world is and what happens there to suit the tastes and agendas of the presenters. In support of this, one would argue that the worlds of animated cartoons transform territory and people, thereby making them fit the already existing Western views of the past, in which people and things are framed based upon funny and debased terms of exoticism.

As a case in point, *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) (Fleischer 1937) draws on both Arab folktales – including *The Arabian Nights* – as well as traditional Western notions about Arabs and the desert. This short animated movie features a host of common stereotypes of Arabs, including their portrayal as tricky schemers, avaricious villains and sorcerers, among many others. What is more intriguing about this animated cartoon is its usage of anecdotal features to represent the Arab people and land. The desert is pictured as barren and dangerous, and it is only populated with a bunch of stupid villains by the looks in their eyes and their always wide open mouths showing anecdotal features of missing teeth. This bunch of crazies is led by a sleazy bandit, Abu Hassan, and they can be found hanging around the Arab town continuously bent on terrorizing peaceful, funny looking hooked nose Arab civilians. Indeed, *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) draws an image of a desert that functions as a powerful symbol of a landscape existing outside of civilization (society/progress). The Arab land is populated with characters that best fit the imperial imagination of Europe. The clash between the Arab bandits and the Western heroes in the movie perfectly weaves an imperial scenario of two powers (evil vs. good), after which the good (apparently Western) ultimately triumphs and brings peace back to where it was.

Furthermore, *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) depicts the Arabian Sahara as an effectively, to use Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) catchphrase, “dematerialized landscape” (Lefebvre 1991) provided with anecdotal topographies. The movie features some scenes of a tiny group of lined-up camels, and sometimes horses, made to move, jump or even act like they are dancing in a foolish manner at hearing the bandits (mostly drawn as stocky riders) sing. These Arab Bedouins are heading for an impoverished Arab town with dark and dirty streets where all sort of nasty things take place. Back to their caves, the bandits sing to their victorious day and the mass of wealth they now have, and again the lined up horses move up and down to the rhythm of the music.

One more intriguing aspect of the comic depictions of Arab characters in the Saharan space is the manner in which the villains are punished by the western heroes. Popeye is made a savior of Arabia when he tries to restore order. He saves the Arab men, children, and women from

¹ By the concept Orientalist, I draw upon Edward Said’ (1978) designation of the term. For him, “anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.” (see Said 1978: 3)

Abu Hassan and his bandits' evil wrath. This is, indeed, a construction of a perfect scenario for a benevolent war between the good and evil, the hero and the villain, after which the good (a Western hero and an avenging angel) always triumphs over the evil (a funny and bloodthirsty fool). In exemplifying this Western habit of constructing triumphant Western heroes as opposed to vanquished Arab villains, Popeye has come from far to rescue the women and children of Arabia from the tyrannical grip of the bandit Abu Hassan and his forty thieves. The evil side in this movie's narrative is an embodiment of a bunch of coward bandits set on terrorizing civilians, mainly helpless women, and wreaking havoc everywhere they go. By contrast, the good side personifies Popeye's, a Western character, bravery and heroism: these values have made him bridge the distance and instantly answer the call of duty – the Western duty or the white man's burden – towards uncivilized nations.

The retribution of the Arab characters, in this regard, is presented even in comical vein, as in the scene in which Popeye punches the bandits, one after another, thereby systematically causing them to fly back to their barrels with wide open mouths and missing teeth. The bandits are defeated so easily. Such comic defeat of the Arab villain (as if telling a joke worth laughing at rather than feeling sorry about it) certainly falls within the theoretical frames of Sigmund Freud's theory of the joke or when laughter becomes a sort of aggression. In this sense, Freud writes that,

Mankind have not been content to enjoy the comic where they have come upon it in their experience; they have also sought to bring it about intentionally, and we can learn more about the nature of the comic if we study the means which serve to make things comic. (Harper 2002: 2)

Quite interestingly, the conception of laughter has always been a challenging area of study owing to its being one of most sophisticated emotional expression of human beings. In her essay, *Laughter and aggression: Desire and derision in a postcolonial context*, Virginia Richter (2005) builds upon Freud's theory of laughter as an act of aggression to put forward the idea that the greatest pleasure one can get is often felt after playing jokes on others. These sorts of jokes are called "obscene or tendentious jokes." In appropriating pleasure to aggression, Richter posits that when something (e.g., culture, religion or language) or somebody (e.g., a member of an ethnic group) is the object of a joke, these jokes can be "subversive". That is to say, the joke no longer retains its fun aspects, but it becomes humiliating and seeks to symbolically vanquish the object of the joke. Therefore, in trying to uncover the comic aspects of the object being laughed at, one is, indeed, exposing oneself to its ominous repressed drives (Richter 2005: 63). Therefore, "jokes are based on the release of repressed sexual or aggressive impulses" (ibid.). In this sense, jokes are also described as,

Manifestations of a symbolic victory over an enemy, a victory that is confirmed by the laughter of the third person (the audience). By laughing, the hitherto indifferent listener is transformed into someone who shares the hate and contempt of the narrator for the object of the joke. In this way, a 'coalition' is formed between the first person (who tells the joke) and the third person (who listens and laughs) at the expense of the second person (the butt of the joke). Freud makes it abundantly clear that the primary impulse of the joke is not 'funny' but hostile, intended to humiliate and vanquish the 'enemy' (Freud: 98). In this constellation, the role of the third person is quite crucial: the listener is the authority who confirms the defeat of the butt, the triumph of the teller, and, consequently, the establishment of a hierarchical power structure. (Richter 2005: 63)

It is by inflicting comic retributions upon the Arab villains that some animated movies further bond with their audience, thereby expressing their repressed contempt against their common Arab enemy. The laugh of the audience is proven to be a sign of the triumph of the movie producer over both the audience – for they have accepted to applaud to all that the animated movie presents them with – and the Arab villain – since some animated movies’ producers believe that in laughing at Arabs, they “touch but their vanity, and [they] attack their most vulnerable part” (Watt 2002: 65). It is their feeling of being humans that is touched. Therefore, “let them see that they can be laughed at, you will make them angry” (ibid.). Comedy in general and jokes in particular perform quite surprising functions. That is to say,

Jokes often function as neuralgic points, as points at which the conventionally censored or repressed find expression, they are performing a permissible, indeed institutionalized, function. Thus, comedy in general, and the comic in particular, become, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, the appropriate site for the inappropriate, the proper place for indecorum, the field in which the unlikely is likely to occur. (Neale & Krutnik 1990: 92)

Implicit in this quote is its stress on the unlikeliness of the comic. Jokes, for instance, perform inconsistent functions. For instance, in their dependence on comedy, some animated movies’ producers leak their ideologies to audiences in unexpected ways. One of the animated cartoons’ strange and intelligent forms of telling stories about Arabs in comic veins is their use of anachronistic humor. When unexpected events or artifacts happen to be placed in different epochs or settings than those where they are meant to exist, some animated movie producers intend to provoke the audience’s hilarious laughter. An example of this kind of humor might be the everyday observation of how unintended anachronisms in animated films about Arabs become amusing in the eyes of later generations.

In *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937), for example, it is easy to guess the historical epoch the movie intends to shoot, since it is so clearly disclosed by the clothing, the desert setting, the Arab trading gold currency or the use of camels, swords, and daggers, among many other features. When unexpected details are added to this historical epoch, some animated movie producers certainly intend (other than filling the desert land and thus laying hands over it) to provoke the audience’s laughter and make their movies more entertaining and unexpectedly unique in their own right.

As examples of these additions, the movie inserts technologies which belong to present time, such as Gas stations, electric radios, a tank, the traffic lights in the middle of the desert and a sophisticated plane that can also function as a ship. In short, the movie blends stories from the Arabian Nights with modern Western artifacts so as to create a new space in the desert land. This space is certainly a place where audiences enjoy visiting and discovering in non-conformist and new ways, and upon which they keep laughing hilariously ever so much and frolic to their hearts.

Quite noticeable is the fact that in some animated movies, “anachronistic humour rarely projects modern-day phenomena directly onto the past: it more often tends to disrupt the harmony of the epoch by introducing elements from other historical contexts” (Salmi 2011: 17). This disruption caused by the insertion of unintended artifacts in other historical contexts is what makes of anachronistic humor a success and further contributes to the wide reception of animated films. In this sense,

Anachronistic humour often relies on surprising juxtapositions. This comic impression has been explained by using a theory of degradation or psychological opposites, which argues that comic effect is produced by the appearance of something other than the expected result (for example, something small instead of massive or vice versa). The transgressing of boundaries between epochs can be seen as utilizing the idea of degradation: the filmmakers thwart expectations by bringing in unexpected historical elements, resulting in bathos for spectator amusement. (Salmi 2011: 19)

In fact, what makes anachronistic humor much of a success in animated movies is its ability to provoke different interpretations as to a certain scenic situation. The viewer tends to link the events seen on screen with those previously read or taught, and thereby come up with different interpretations of what the movie intends to transmit as messages. Importantly, the laughing element makes animated movies more interesting in that they try to render the whole scenes of a movie comic in tone so that audiences will not feel tired or bored while watching. More interestingly, anachronistic humor is more distinguishable in animated cartoons about Arabs than other movies about other races.

Consider, for instance, the animated movie of *Ali Baba Bound* (Clampett 1941) wherein its producer tries to insert some artifacts which do not belong to the desert land. For instance, the movie features different electric sign posts of Gas stations, the oasis and Soda Pop, among others. Taken to even a higher degree, the movie shoots camels as analogs of cars for rent, and they feed on gas fuel rather than grass. Camels are even holding sign posts that read, "Hump-mobile with 4 heels with gas/ Kiddy Kar. (ibid). In fact, introducing such modern features to a desert setting hints at the way the West has always thought about the East. More importantly, there is one very important feature adopted by the movie producer as regards Porky Pig. As is featured throughout the movie, this character is instilled with Western so-called ideals of defending the land and the weak (the example of coming to the rescue of baby dumping the camel). The humor based nature of anachronism here lies in its very adoption of a Western attitude of civilizing not only people but also animals.

Porky Pig is made a Western soldier defending the Western Fort in the desert. The very idea of using an animal as a replacement of a human character yields intriguing results. That is to say, dealing with the barbarity of Arabs residing in the desert entails the creation of a civilized animal that can better communicate with them since they are by nature thought to have animalistic features. The message here is that the West can tame and civilize animals that can possess later on human features whereas Arab humans of the desert can still be animals and act as ones. Therefore, we better use civilized animals when dealing with uncivilized Arab animals cloaked in human bodies. This is what anachronism intends to manifest in its adoption of using an animal character (Porky Pig) to further its dissemination of stereotypes about a people and their lands.

In fact, in both cartoons *Ali Baba Bound* (1941) and *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937) the desert setting is subject to the "mission civilisatrice" of the West, thereby the desert is changing to something more of a Western idea. That is to say, the movies are far removed from the imagery of belly-dancers inside tents or the notorious image of the Arab sheikh being fed on grapes and drinking wine. Instead, the whole setting is being transformed into a more or less modern Western camp. Such move towards modernization is described in Edward Said's (1978) wording as a mission in which "the modern Orientalist was, in his view, a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished" (1978: 121).

Importantly, in its rescuing of the Orient, some animated cartoons have found relief in using anachronisms, since anachronistic humor can mean more than it tends to make us see. Therefore, “one of the most distinguishing features of humor is the way in which it forces us to shift our initial expectations, and this is true whether the source of the humor is a joke’s punch-line or an unexpectedly comic situation” (Niebylski 2004: 12). Accordingly, shifting audience expectations is, in fact, a turning point wherein, at times, humor starts to be filtered through the lens of fear and, at other times, fear through humor. This situation results in confusion since audiences tend to reveal quite different reactions at separate moments during the watching of a movie: sometimes they laugh and other times they are scared. At this point, the boundaries between humor and fear become blurred. Stephen Hessel (2010) spells out this kind of audience oscillation between fear and laughter most clearly in his essay, *Horri-fying Quixote: The Thin Line between Fear and Laughter* Hessel (2010) argues that people tend to project their social fears, worries and experiences onto a movie. He explains that:

All of these very real anxieties are tied in literature to infernal forces (corporeal) and spirits (incorporeal) that assault the systems of reason and piety. The existence of these proto-horror stories employs frightful narrative tools and personalities, but they most obviously lay bare the cause of the preoccupation itself; typically a preoccupation that comes from an aspect of a society in crisis. (2010: 27)

Sometimes some film scenes can be reminiscent of spectators’ stories of fear that permeate their societies. This fear is a result of the many past atrocities and heinous crimes committed against innocent people on cyclical moments and in different parts of the world. There is also this fear that these crimes would continue for very long before it is noticed. Although both cartoon films analyzed here were produced in the very far past, still they both remind their audiences that there are moments tinged with fear that should never be forgotten, for fear that they may repeat themselves at any time, just like the myriad terrorist crimes we keep watching on everyday TV channels, and the blameworthy of which are always Arabs and Muslims. Therefore, people find relief in movies since they are sites upon which to contest their fears. Simply put, a movie about Arabs, for instance, projects them in threatening tones that perfectly fits the audience’s pre-conceived perceptions and anxieties about them. This Arab threat is diminished once Arab terrorists commit stupid faults that bring about their funny end and eventually the audience’s relief and serenity. A case in point is the cartoon of *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves* (1937).

In this animated movie, Arabs are so stupid and foolish that their silliness can be the cause of their own destruction. Such a view coincides with a scene in the movie where the Arab bandits try to attack Popeye all at once while crying out in a cacophonous noise. However, the bandits and their chief Abu Hassan are so easily defeated and made to drag a huge cart full of stolen gold and jewels. At this juncture, the movie becomes comic and provides relief to the audience from their anxieties. The message the movie transmits here is that though Arabs are the source of fear and danger, they will eventually destroy themselves and become transformed into the butt of jokes of every movie and, more than that, even in reality, thereby allowing spectators to laugh at them hilariously.

In fact, this kind of construing a silly and comic Arab life through the Orientalist gaze hides a wealth of assumptions about the relationship of the representation to the real world. Such Orientalist imaging offers two central and interrelated illusions: that the “Orient” is utterly distinct from Europe – unaffected by European civilization – and that this Orient is frozen in time, more or less the same as it had been for hundreds of years. Therefore, the Arab subject

who lives far away in the desert is funny, uncivilized, and is still living outside of history. Considerably, through using humor to appeal to many a spectator's cinematic tastes, animated cartoons about Arabs have indeed offered the Orientalist's eye a chance to penetrate the Arab geography and move along the streets to hysterically laugh and poke fun at the silly Arabs, drawing exotic images that appeal to the Western viewers.

Worse yet, by characterizing an entire region as barbaric and stupid, some animated movies cultivate an incredibly negative stereotype of Arab people that children will absorb and retain for generations. Still one very important point to keep in mind is the idea that this study draws its conclusion from the case study of two animated films produced in 1937 and 1941, without contemporary comparisons. The rationale underpinning such choice is that these films and their likes, produced around the same period of time, are a kind of reminder of spectators' stories of fear permeating their societies. This fear of something and anything is always there lurking in the dark behind walls or air jets awaiting for cowardly moments to make contemporary terroristic changes. Therefore, the idea here is not to draw a contemporary comparison, but rather to touch upon this idea of fear drawn from past experiences, and which may never have an end, at least in the film spectators' minds.

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An Exploration of Poverty in Central Appalachia: Questions of Culture, Industry, and Technology

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Abstract: By most government statistical definitions, Central Appalachia is one of the most impoverished regions in the United States. Many of the region's residents are low-income, dependent on government benefits, have high rates of obesity and diabetes, and low rates of college educational obtainment. Central Appalachia is historically tied to the coal mining and railroad industries. Many scholars believe this historical bond created an internal colony of company-dependent residents who have been unable to transition successfully from those industry's boom eras or escape the lingering effects of industry environmental, health and economic degradation. While coal mining stripped the land of Central Appalachia and often cheated its residents from access to economic well-being and opportunity by traditional American definitions, Central Appalachians have created a rich culture based on kinship, religion, fatalism and community pride. Today, significant questions arise regarding the impact of advanced communication technologies and the associated infiltration of a monolithic standard for American success; success defined by material gain idealized by middle-class suburban living. While advanced communication technologies are often praised for their capacity to advance education, employment and cross-cultural understanding, in regions such as Central Appalachia, they may undermine the foundation of culture the residents have built in order to survive decades of isolation and exploitation.

Keywords: poverty, Appalachian Studies, internal colonialism theory, digital inequality, ICT

Introduction

The relationship between technology, culture and poverty is complex. The advances of our new technological age lead some to proclaim that voices from all segments of global society are emancipated. In their eyes, the internet and its associated platforms creates a method for a globalized mixing bowl of cultural understanding and communication (Best and Kellner

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2001). Conversely, some proclaim that these same technologies are actually homogenizing society. Essentially, the internet acts as a hegemonic tool through which mainstream western culture is setting the accepted standard of discourse (Kellner 2003). Both viewpoints have merit. On one hand the internet provides users with information about anything within seconds and, concurrently, provides space for communication across the globe. On the other hand, those with the most power through website ownership mimic those with the most power in standard society (“State of the Blogosphere” 2010). Within the United States there is an important discussion as to whether the infiltration of the internet equals an empowerment of cultures while serving as a space to gain knowledge previously unattainable for large segments of society or is it a space where a monolithic, standardized culture is weeding out subcultures; thereby, changing self-perceptions of those traditional subcultures? This is especially important for those traditional subcultures which many believe have been victims of internal colonization.

One disenfranchised subculture within American society that has been referred to as an internal colony is that of Central Appalachia. Central Appalachia is one of the most impoverished regions in the United States. Residents of the region have lower educational rates, lower income and wealth, higher levels of obesity and disease and less access to long-term, stable middle class wages and jobs than the majority of American communities. Central Appalachia also has a distinct culture that differs largely from traditional, middle class American culture. The geographic segregation of the region due to its heavy mountain terrain, its economic ties to coal mining and the longstanding, developed family networks has created an isolated community rooted strongly in the values of familial kinship, Christian Protestantism, community pride and fatalism (Appalachian Culture, n.d.). The strong ties of the region’s residents to the coal mining occupation has had a substantial influence on Central Appalachian culture and its economic and social conditions. The long-standing reality for Central Appalachian residents has been one of great pride and great poverty. Geographic, cultural and social isolation have, however, always been a key component of that reality.

This paper explores Central Appalachia by contrasting the sobering statistics on resident health and quality of life with the region’s strong traditions and its maintenance of cultural values in the face of an ever-changing society. The paper reviews and assesses the role of culture and technology in combating and enhancing perceptions and realities of poverty for a newly, digitally, non-isolated subculture by exploring the relationship between technology and persons in poverty as well as the way in which social issues in the Central Appalachian region specifically are being discussed online.

Central Appalachia and Internal Colonialism

The internal colony theory is one rooted in the spread of capitalism, globalization, and nation-building. There are varying definitions of an internal colony and the process of internal colonization. Loosely, internal colonialism can be defined as, the exploitation of a minority by a majority within a country’s boundaries. Economic, social, and political power is suppressed to benefit the majority. The experiences of many minority groups have been studied utilizing the internal colony framework. These groups include African-Americans, Hispanics and Chinese immigrants in the United States; Inuits in Canada; and, indigenous groups across North America. Each of these groups experienced economic, territorial and institutional segregation, the denial of full citizenship rights and economic exploitation for the benefit of the majority. Scholars, notably Helen Lewis (1978) have also examined Central Appalachia through the theoretical lens of Internal Colonialism. It has been said that Central Appalachia is an internal colony because of the economic exploitation by the coal

mining industry of the region's residents, the violence of the coal mining industry on humans and the environment (leaving a vulnerable, unstable, isolated population), outside ownership of local land/minerals/resources and the dependency of the region on this singular, institutionalized, corporate sector including the political arena (dependent on coal industry donations). Central Appalachians were working the mines to power the electric grids across America at great personal risk (for the benefit of the greater society).

Caught up in the social complex of the new industrial communities, many mountaineers found themselves unable to escape their condition of powerlessness and dependency. By coming to a coal mining town, the miner had exchanged the in-dependence and somewhat precarious self-sufficiency of the family farm for subordination to the coal company and dependence upon a wage income. He lived in a company house; he worked in a company mine; and he purchased his groceries and other commodities from the company store. He sent his children to the company school and patronized the company doctor and the company church. The company deducted rent, school, medical and other fees from his monthly wage, and under the prevailing system of scrip, he occasionally ended the month without cash income. He had no voice in community affairs or working conditions, and he was dependent upon the benevolence of the employer to maintain his rate of pay. (Lewis 1978, p. 41)

Much has been written on the isolation of Central Appalachia. Its unique topography, rural populace, historical coal mining legacy and strong community culture have led many to identify the region as highly isolated. This isolation has contributed to the popular image of local residents as hillbillies; a negative image that serves as a central piece of cultural identity and contributes to a suspicion of outsiders. (Slocum 2012) Traditionally, "people raised in Appalachia were viewed as unfit for urban life, because it was assumed that their acculturation, values, education and training failed to prepare them to adapt to a rapidly changing, highly technological, urban America... Appalachians were often forced to choose between leaving their environments or risking lifelong poverty." (Sarnoff 2003, p.124) While many Central Appalachians have left the region in pursuit of a better economic future, many of Central Appalachia's people choose to stay.

Alternatively; David Walls (1978) – using the internal colony framework of van den Berghe (1957) – argues that Central Appalachia does not meet the rigorous standard as an internal colony. The region's residents are not a racial or ethnic minority, were not forced into settlements within territorial Central Appalachia and there is not a separate governmental agency or legal status for the region's residents. Walls does, however, see Central Appalachia as a region on the internal periphery. "...it seems reasonable to me to apply the term peripheral to such regions within advanced capitalist countries as Appalachia which share many of the characteristics of underdevelopment, poverty, and dependency found in the peripheral countries of the Third World." (Walls 1978, p. 13) The application of the periphery theory to Central Appalachia recognizes that the region's economic and social development lags behind the "core" of American society and that the region's residents are not directly benefiting from the greater prosperity of the nation. Both theoretical analyses (internal colony and internal periphery) discuss Central Appalachia's singular industrial dependence, cultural isolationism and entrenched poverty as key regional characteristics. While the internal periphery gives credence to the "otherized" nature of Appalachian residents, the internal colony theory really focuses on this otherization by identifying the residents as a distinct cultural group. In other words, the internal colony theory sees Central Appalachians as a distinct group akin to a colonized population not just victim of economic

exploitation – the defining feature of a population in the internal periphery (Mattox 2015). “A group of people is colonized if and only if they are socially subordinate to some culturally, socially, or politically distinct group that discursively marks the colonized as having some perceived or imaginary ethnic (cultural, social, bodily, and/or political) inferiority which makes them the target of such oppression.” (Mattox 2015, p. 7) The distinct nature and history of poverty and culture within Central Appalachia have created a stereotypical Central Appalachian caricature or image (hillbilly, missing teeth, no shoes, heavy accent, prevalence of incest etc.) – one even used by President Lyndon Johnson to sell his War on Poverty initiatives. Central Appalachians have been otherized by the mainstream. Coupled with the history of economic exploitation the internal colony theory provides an important theoretical framework for discussing the interplay between Central Appalachians and our increasingly globalized, digital society.

The Realities of Central Appalachia

Central Appalachia is one of five subregions within the Appalachian region of the United States. The Central Appalachia region encompasses 29,773 square miles comprised of 82 counties in four states – Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. The majority of the counties (53) are located in the state of Kentucky while the remaining are disbursed between the other three states (fifteen in Tennessee, seven in Virginia and seven in West Virginia). The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) designates Appalachian subregions based on geographic, economic and demographic factors for the purposes of research and analysis. These factors include unemployment rates, household poverty, employment type, and educational attainment¹.

Today, approximately two million people reside in Central Appalachia (Pollard and Jacobsen 2012). Central Appalachia has an older and whiter population than the United States at large. Central Appalachia is also poorer, less healthy and less educated than most other regions within the United States. As of Fiscal Year 2013 49 of Central Appalachia’s counties (60 percent) were officially designated as economically distressed: to be designated as economically distressed, a county must have a poverty and unemployment rate that is 150% of the national average (Appalachian Regional Commission 2007). Currently, the region’s poverty rate stands at 23 percent (as compared to 15 percent nationally). This rate is six percent higher than any of the other four Appalachian subregions. The unemployment rate is eight percent and the median income is \$32,887 per year (Pollard and Jacobsen 2012). The median income in 2012 was substantially below the national median of \$51,017 (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2013) and below each of the other Appalachian subregions by, at least, \$9,000. In addition, Central Appalachia still faces stark disparities in education and health as compared to the rest of nation. Twelve percent of Central Appalachian residents aged 25 and over have Bachelor’s degrees, compared to 27 percent nationwide (Pollard and Jacobsen, 2012). “Central Appalachia...has higher rates of heart disease, cancer, particularly breast cancer, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) compared to the United States as a whole (Halverson, Ma, and Harner 2004).” (Pugh 2014, p.1) Fifty percent of Central Appalachian counties have only one hospital and 20 percent have zero (Appalachian Community Fund, n.d.). These statistics, while sobering, have been a part of Central Appalachian life for decades and an image seared into the American mindset.

¹ Appalachian Regional Commission - Map of the Appalachian Subregions:
http://www.arc.gov/research/MapsofAppalachia.asp?MAP_ID=31

The realities of Central Appalachian poverty became part of the American mainstream psyche in the late 1950s and early 1960s when scholars and journalists started taking an interest in the striking poverty of the region. Books were written, documentaries released and campaigns waged to help the people within the area. Unfortunately, the region's residents were often used as the face of American poverty in policymaking and political arenas. The images of the poor mountain child with dirt on his face, messy hair, torn pants standing on a dilapidated house on a mountainside became the common image of a Central Appalachian resident. These images, while highlighting the inequities and inequalities faced by residents, further separated the Central Appalachian people from mainstream life. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was created to help develop the area, federal anti-poverty programs sent in service workers and religious organizations created mission projects to "save" local residents. Essentially, Central Appalachians had become an "other" needing to be rescued within American society.

Central Appalachia and Coal

While the mainstream image of Central Appalachia was one of extreme poverty and need, the Central Appalachian people had created a culture of resilience and determination rooted in deep religious faith after decades of work in coal mining and related industries. Coal mining to Central Appalachians is what lobster fishing is to Mainers or banking is to Manhattan. It has been the core of Central Appalachian economic development and, at the same time, hardship. The relationship has traditionally been long, complex, and violent (Gaventa, 1980). While coal mining historically provided the main source of employment in the region it also created communities built on corporate control. Miners were underpaid (and fought with their life for unionization), they often resided in company towns where everything from the stores to the schools were owned by the coal mining companies and, lastly, their occupation was inherently dangerous (and made more dangerous by lax safety standards and oversight). Unionization fights were notoriously bloody (see the Battle of Blair Mountain) as workers did not even have access to private space in which to organize. Company towns were owned exclusively by coal mining companies and non-company towns were run (through political and legal networks) by coal mining companies. Unionization did finally succeed in the region's mines but the almost singular dependence for economic development on coal companies continued. Still today, it is very difficult for individuals to own land in Central Appalachia. Due to the value of coal much of the land and mineral rights are owned by the industry (Gaventa 1980). Sixty percent of the land and eighty percent of the minerals in Central Appalachia are owned by outside coal interests (Burns 2007). The changing nature of the coal mining industry has created a community suffering the short and long-term effects of coal mining while receiving little benefit from its continued operation.

In 1932, the Appalachian coal mining industry employed 705,000 miners (Lewis 1978). Advances in modern technology and the coal mining industry are intertwined. While large portions of the Central Appalachian public came to directly and indirectly rely on coal for their economic well-being, the coal mining industry began to make technological advances to mechanize the industry. This mechanization transformed coal mining from a person-based, underground operation to a machine-based surface mining operation (the wage and safety gains made through unionization were lost through mechanization as a labor force was no longer needed). As a result, the region suffered significant job losses and, subsequently, losses in economic spending associated with an employed middle class labor base. "Coal employment has declined from approximately 475,000 jobs at the end of World War II to only around 38,000 today. From 1973 to 2003, the region lost 62 percent of its coal jobs."

(Coal and the Future, Para. 1) Moreover, the region has taken another hit with the increase in more profitable coal mining in the country's western states (e.g. Wyoming). In two years (2011-2013), Harlan County, Kentucky (one of the nation's poorest counties) went from 44 active mines to 22 (Maher 2013). The combined influence of mechanization and competition have left the region's residents with additional strains in an already economically distressed region.

Corresponding to an increase in surface mining practices, the number of mining jobs in Appalachia has declined by more than 50% between 1985 and 2008 (Freme, 2008). These declining economic opportunities place the population at greater risk for layoffs, job loss (with corresponding multiplier effects through local economies), and poverty. (Hendryx, 2011, p. 45)

Surface mining and its most destructive form, MTR (mountaintop removal) mining, cause many harmful environmental and human impacts in Central Appalachia. The blasting of the mountain peaks often causes local homes and buildings, many of which are old, to be rocked off of their foundations; thereby, further impacting one of the few community assets in the economically distressed local towns and cities. Mountaintop removal alone has blown off 1.4 million acres of mountain top since 1970 (Sierra Club, n.d.). The blasting and mining processes also create substantial health impacts in these communities. The coal dust settles on local buildings and in the lungs of residents. Asthma and cancer rates in Central Appalachia are among the highest in the nation. Further, local rivers and forests are being polluted and destroyed by coal sludge. The region's best asset, its natural landscape, has been used to feed big coal rather than to feed the economic needs of the residents (e.g. through tourism) (I Love Mountains [ILM] 2007; Clean Air Task Force 2002).

The industry that helped build the region and molded its resilient culture have left it with little else to rely on. It has been said that the previous reliance of the region on coal for employment, business development, economic well-being and infrastructure created an internal colony (Lewis 1978).

The Digital Society and Poverty

As with the mechanization of the coal mining industry, technological advances have been a mixed bag for many of America's poor and disenfranchised. Mechanization in particular has afforded companies with the capacity to continue producing at a high rate while reducing labor costs; therefore, many industries which had been the backbone of local communities reduced payroll and abandoned factories, mines and mills which resulted in economic devastation for cities across the nation. In an isolated region like Central Appalachia, which had been primarily dependent on coal mining, there is little to fall back on. Concurrent to industry mechanization, however, advances in computers and communication have created another reality for the disenfranchised. The vast wealth of knowledge on the internet coupled with its capacity to link individuals globally has opened up the globe and its innovations to individuals in isolated regions.

In a study titled, "Information Economy Report 2010: ICTs, Enterprises and Poverty Alleviation," the UN body [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development] said that on the back of the widening diffusion of information and communications technologies (ICTs)--especially mobile telephones--new micro-enterprises are mushrooming in developing countries, creating new livelihoods for the poor. (Amojelar 2010, Para. 2)

In addition to providing internet access and tools to the disenfranchised, internet technologies have, and have additional capacities to, change the face of poverty reduction strategies, community organizing and civic engagement. These innovations have changed the way in which individuals interact with their computers and one another. The internet has provided communities across the globe with mechanisms to foster empowerment among local residents, innovate techniques for business development (e.g. microfinance) and build community-based systems for governance and participation. Even with these exciting changes, however, big questions regarding access, online stratification and participation remain. Moreover, questions regarding the impact of these technologies on the loss of local cultures is of large concern (Bissell 2004; Postman 2011).

What Does Digital Inequality Mean?

Historically, concerns of access to the internet were a large focus of policymakers concerned about the equitable distribution of the internet. As concerns of access have diminished across the United States, many policymakers and advocates are now focused on a new set of internet concerns – those dealing with digital inequality. This new set of concerns centers largely on the differences between populations based on what they do online and how they do it not simply whether different populations have physical access to the online environment. Moreover, digital inequality looks at the political economy of internet usage and how it impacts relationships between populations and internet usage.

As the technology penetrates into every crevice of society, the pressing question will be *not* ‘who can find a network connection at home, work, or in a library or community center from which to log on?’, but instead, ‘what are people doing, and what are they *able* to do, when they go on-line.’ Second, we would recognize that the “Internet” itself is not a fixed object, but rather a protean family of technologies and services that is being rapidly reshaped through the interacting efforts of profit-seeking corporations, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Patterns of inequality will reflect not just differences in individual resources, but also the way in which economic and political factors make such differences matter. (DiMaggio & Hargittai 2001, p. 3-4)

Looking at these questions of digital inequalities creates the opportunity for meaningful examination into a potential effect of the legacy of economic and political decisions on a subpopulation (i.e. the legacy of internal colonialism in Central Appalachia) as evidenced by online activity.

The new poverty created from digital inequality reflects the structural social-economic dimensions of the rest of society. Ono and Zavodny (2007) found that this new poverty based on digital inequality was reflective across five different countries on three different continents. Norris (2001) characterized this new poverty as creating technological-based groups of haves and have-nots. The have and have-nots divide is evident in three areas – technology (type of equipment, capabilities of internet connection type), proficiency (skills-knowledge of available tools and how to use them online), and opportunity (outcomes of internet use – financial investment, employment opportunities, knowledge building) (Whitacre & Mills, 2007; Hargittai, 2007; Mossberger, Tolbert, & Stansbury, 2003). Hargittai and Hinnent (2008) suggest that there are clear distinctions between the types of activities in which users from middle and upper class backgrounds engage via internet versus those from lower class and impoverished backgrounds; specifically, what they call “capital-

enhancing” activities (employment opportunities, networking, financial advice, civic engagement) – those from middle and upper classroom backgrounds engage in more. These activities can potentially assist and improve the economic and educational opportunities for active users and, if that improvement is linked to the users original economic status, contribute to enhancing economic inequality through digital means (Hseih, Rei, & Keil, 2008). Thereby, if a subpopulation is starting from a foundation built on a history of internal colonialism, the internet can potentially serve to create a new form of poverty especially when society is increasingly reliant on digital technologies for job placement (e.g. LinkedIn), education (online courses), and civic engagement (e.g. Twitter, email, message boards, petitions).

Central Appalachia

Central Appalachia has faced significant barriers to internet participation from the onset. The topography of the region and its sparse population created obstacles for the introduction of internet (particularly broadband) in the region. Moreover, the poverty faced by the region’s residents resulted in concerns regarding digital inequality as seen in other rural areas. “[There is a] persistent gulf in technological diffusion to rural areas results in a decreased propensity to take advantage of the opportunities that information and communication technologies provide for aiding users in everyday activities.” (Stern, Adams, & Elsasser 2009, p. 413) Many individuals cannot afford the technology and as time went by, they fell further and further behind the learning curve due to the rapid rate of internet growth. Of particular note is the large number of seniors which reside in the region; a subpopulation which has had specific issues related to technological adaptation (LaRouge, Van Slyke, Seale & Wright 2014). As access concerns have been reduced, however, many Central Appalachians have begun to use the internet in traditional (e.g. research, gaming, social media, banking) and nontraditional ways.

The Central Appalachia Regional Network (CARN) has been a leader in utilizing online technologies to fight for broadband access and land ownership rights in the region. The Art of the Rural is utilizing community radio and internet streaming to showcase issues and culture in Central Appalachia. Finally, Appalshop is a nonprofit organization whose mission it is to highlight and preserve Central Appalachian culture through a variety of multimedia techniques including the vast array of internet options (e.g. photo cataloguing, internet storage and recording etc...). In addition, many organizations have used (and are using) internet technologies to organize. This is evident by the formation of websites with interactive tools such as Wikis, calendars, meetup groups etc... as well as Calls to Action posted via web technologies on websites and social media networks (e.g. Facebook).

Community organizing is a strategy employed across communities which focuses on bringing together residents in geographic locals and their allies to fight for or against a variety of issues affecting local well-being. The foundation of community organizing is empowerment and the role of community identity in mobilization. The internet has expanded traditional community organizing by opening up communication channels for the dissemination of information beyond the mass media and person-to-person based communication. This has been especially important for the organizations in Central Appalachia fighting against the coal industry and its harmful environmental practices.

While it is hard to dispute the role of the internet in community organizing, cultural preservation and advocacy, questions about the internet’s role in homogenizing culture remain. One key question is how does the internet shape perception of poverty for disenfranchised communities?

Cultural Hegemony

Studies show that, in the United States, success on the internet is closely tied to the same standards which define success in the non-virtual world. In online political forums, for example, using the right type of language (no ethnic dialects, for example) is a key component to gaining popularity and respect. Most successful internet blogs are those belonging to middle to upper-middle class white men. (McLeod 2008, Pole 2010). 'Hegemony' [according to Gramsci] in this case means the success of the dominant classes in presenting their definition of reality, their view of the world, in such a way that it is accepted by other classes as 'common sense'. (Goldberg, n.d., Para. 1) Hegemony is the consistent implementation of processes, norms, rules, laws and policies across cultural institutions to create and enforce a dominant ideology. Studies have found that the online activity is largely confined to websites promoting cultural hegemony. At the same time, members of the non-dominant group do visit and spend time on websites with counterhegemonic themes at higher rates (Dorsher 1999). In a study of Latino uses of the internet, Lillie (1998) found

Members of virtual communities do engage in types of social uses such as maintenance of a collective identity shared with other members of virtual communities. The survey results show that communication with other US Latinos for the purpose of sharing personal experiences and ideas about Latinos has been a valuable use of Internet technologies for most of the respondents (Section VI).

Findings indicate that members of minority groups can and do utilize online sources to discuss, maintain and strengthen culture but at the same time the internet structure itself is dominated by a few websites promoting a hegemony. While the ideal of the internet may be a tossed salad of diverse cultures the reality may mean a more globalized assimilation of cultures. This potential reality raises important questions for the maintenance of subcultures (particularly those within disenfranchised communities) and perceptions of wealth and poverty. As society moves more toward a digital reality do subcultures find a place to thrive or does language, image and value become a set standard across the globe?

The Central Appalachian Subculture and Perceptions of Poverty

The Central Appalachian subculture is rooted in familial kinship, Christian Protestantism, community pride and fatalism (Walls 1976; Welch 1999). Many families have a long history of residence in the region. The residential settlement patterns resulted in strong familial bonds as many settled together in areas known as hollers. These isolated areas between two mountains or hills created strong ties between residents due, largely, to the lack of immediate access to neighboring communities. Thus, community support and mutual reliance (familial and relational) is a key component of the subculture. This support and reliance is further enhanced by the relationship between the residents and the church. The majority of Central Appalachians are Protestant evangelicals ranging from the stereotypical snake handlers to Pentecostals to modern Methodists and Southern Baptists (Spiker 2014). Common characteristics of churches in the region include "...[an] independent church, strong emotionalism, the primacy of the Bible, and an uneducated ministry. Worship practices include conversionist preaching and rituals such as footwashing and baptism by immersion." (Rice, n.d., para. 7) Tied to this religious fundamentalism is the strong thread of fatalism

that exists in the Central Appalachian subculture. Traditionally, fatalism has been tied to religious fundamentalism (Quinney 1964). Central Appalachians accept life's good and bad and the conditions associated with its realities. "Fatalism and religious fundamentalism developed to deal with the harshness of the land, the consequences of poverty, and the physical isolation." (Elam 2002, p. 10) One area where this fatalism is most prevalent is in healthcare. "An equal barrier to controlling diabetes, Salyers [a former County Health Director in the region] says, is a deep-seated fatalism about both health and poverty. "They come in and say, 'It runs in the family. I've known I'm going to get it. Just give me a pill.'" (Browning 2012, para. 12) Lastly, dealing with these realities has also contributed to strong strains of community and civic pride among Central Appalachians. The region's cultural folk art and music are key components of the American tapestry. Across Central Appalachia, museums, antique shops and tourism stops have all been opened focused on the promotion of and education about these rich traditions.

Family, faith and fatalism have shaped the Central Appalachian subculture and helped the residents face the hardships associated with poverty. Inevitably these hardships also helped shape resident perception of poverty. Poverty has been found to create long-term disparities in health, education and employment; however, research has found that when individuals live in communities where people experience similar hardships, the self-perceptions of poverty are less stigmatized.

Those with concealable stigmas (students who indicated that they were gay, that they were bulimic, or that their family earned less than \$20,000 each year) reported lower self-esteem and more negative affect than both those whose stigmas were visible and those without stigmatizing characteristics. Only the presence of similar others lifted the self-esteem and mood of students with concealable stigmas... Thus, contact with similar others protects the psychological self from negative cultural messages. (Frible, Platt, and Hoey 1998, p. 909)

In the past, the isolation of Central Appalachia certainly contributed to less stigmatization of economic class differences. Historically, images of Central Appalachia were used to gain national support for the War on Poverty. The images of poor mountain white kids were utilized to counter the idea that War on Poverty programs were going to only help minorities. These images became internalized by many of the region's residents who, prior to the mainstreaming of Central Appalachian poverty, did not include "being poor" as a main cultural characteristic or identity. In the case of Central Appalachia, it is important to consider the transition of these cultural messages in the digital age where images and interaction are no longer severely limited to those in your immediate networks and neighborhoods. Rather than simply relying on those closest to you by physical proximity for interaction and communication, individuals create their own identities online through the autonomous sharing and transfer of information across networks chosen by the individual and this autonomy has transformed social relations and, by extension, cultural exchange. "What is clear is that without the Internet we would not have seen the large-scale development of networking as the fundamental mechanism of social structuring and social change in every domain of social life." (Castells 2013: p. 145).

The internet can be used a means to promote self-pride, access previously inaccessible information and/or create a new personal reality. All of these can have a positive impact on self-perceptions of poverty. While the internet (and media in general) seems to mainstream images of McMansions, Caribbean vacations, BMWs and Louis Vuitton as normal, those images can be easily counteracted by the characteristics of a subculture. The strong religious identity in Central Appalachia, for example, promotes the importance of living for the next stage of life and the idea that God only gives you what you can handle. This type of belief

system is echoed on social media sites across the internet. These mechanisms help the religious cope with hardship. For example, in his 2013 study, Knowles found that many religious organizations are now utilizing the internet effectively to promote traditional Christian beliefs including fatalism. Knowles examined the content of and moderation techniques of a popular Christian website, RaptureReady, and found that, “Internet is effectively utilized to strengthen religious authority.” Howard (2011) contends that new religious communities rooted in fatalism have been formed in the discursive space of the internet. Beyond explicit religious-based websites, however, scholars have found that the internet can weaken and/or strengthen fatalistic attitudes amongst persons with life-threatening or life-altering diseases based on the type of resources sought online (Lee, Neiderdeppe, & Freres 2012).

Central Appalachia residents have also used the internet to form associations for and against a variety of political causes, to organize cultural events and to foster civic pride based on the strong history of the region. For example, in West Virginia, where the majority of residents still identify as Democrats, residents were not happy with the direction President Barack Obama was taking the nation². In 2012, the residents utilized the internet to organize support for a federal inmate as a primary challenger to Obama in the presidential race. The inmate garnered 40 percent of the vote (Associated Press 2012). Many West Virginians viewed this as taking a stand. Conversely, outsiders mocked the vote and the residents for their backwards views. The cultural clash was evident. Needless to say, however, this was a case where a subculture organized and resisted in the face of dominant hegemony despite the cries of “stupid hillbilly” being flung around the public sphere. The self-perception of Central Appalachians was one of resistance and rebellion not of stupid, dumb and poor.

The fight over mountaintop removal is also being played out online. Residents are strongly divided over the issue as coal is seen both as a cultural identity/source of pride and as an evil industry continuing to destroy. The common theme of both groups, however, is that neither see themselves as victims. They are fighting for what they view as right and the “true” values of Central Appalachia. The internet has afforded Central Appalachians with a means to change the perception of the region to outsiders and to, concurrently, reflect on the role of poverty as an image and reality. The internet is a double-edged sword; a means to communicate one’s own message and to receive the strong messages of others. The influence of both has important implications for the Central Appalachian subculture. In addition, it is important to reflect on the legacy of internal colonialism on perpetuating digital inequality. Many of the activities in which Central Appalachians are engaged – mountaintop removal, community organizing – are rooted in needing to overcome the legacies of internal colonialism and economic exploitation. While these activities are potentially empowering, they also require time that those who are technological haves (versus have nots – see page 12) do not necessarily have to engage in. Central Appalachians are using the internet to empower through activities that give them rights already afforded to many technological haves – ecological safety, basic income, and positive cultural stereotypes. Finally, the geographic isolation, demographics (e.g. aging population) and socioeconomic realities of Central Appalachia create an environment wherein internet knowledge and internet tools lag behind other United States regions; thus, potentially creating a new Central Appalachian digitally-based poverty.

² President Obama’s approval rating in West Virginia in Sept. 2012 was 32 percent (Public Policy Polling 2012)

Conclusion

Central Appalachia is a region in the midst of change and resistance. The region remains one of the poorest in the United States. The health of the residents and the environment are continuously under pressure from the coal industry and the negative effects are growing. The link between internal colonialism and the coal industry remain. Concurrently, the internet has created new ways for residents to integrate into mainstream American culture while also promoting the subculture of the region. The internet also has the capacity to the persistence of poverty through the formation of digital inequality. Today, Central Appalachia and its residents are still seen by mainstream Americans as poor and, often, hillbillies but, to some extent, the moniker of the hillbilly is now a source of pride. The internet allows for images of subcultures to come from the subculture itself. This alone creates the capacity for subcultures to change their own image and the perceptions of that image to self and society. There is more to Central Appalachia than poverty and the residents are proving it. Residents and policymakers alike, however, have to be mindful of the impact on and relationship to societal structural inequities that internet technologies have created and the reasons behind those inequities. Questions regarding the Central Appalachian internet experience remain.

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The role of the anonymous voice in post-publication peer review versus traditional peer review

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Abstract: Traditional peer review (TPR) has several limitations and weaknesses. Post-publication peer review is one practical way to repair the ills of TPR and reinforce it. A literature that is marked by errors is unhealthy and should, if given the opportunity, be corrected or further improved. The anonymous voice is one source of critique and differs from the blind peer review in TPR in which the reviewer remains anonymous to the authors and/or vice versa, but the identity is known to the editor. If unregulated, the anonymous voice can pose a threat to established editorial norms in TPR, to one of the most important criteria of science publishing, i.e., transparency, and to worthwhile discussion. Yet, if the anonymous voice is not heard, then a vast and potentially valuable pool of untapped opinions may be lost, opinions that may provide valuable solutions to improving TPR.

Keywords: open peer review; traditional peer review; academic retribution, scientific vigilantism

“A person has an obligation to do the right thing if they can.” Helen Hill

Anonymity in peer-review and science discussion

The concept of anonymity is in fact not that alien to science, or to scientists (Neuroskeptic, 2013). As the back-bone of the vast majority of the traditional peer review (TPR) system, single-blind, or double-blind peer review have always embraced the concept of anonymity to try and ensure that peer review is as unbiased as possible, by concealing the identities of the

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reviewers and/or the authors for single and double-blind peer reviews, respectively. An early trial (McNutt et al., 1990) showed that the quality of peer reviews was higher if it was conducted blinded to the name of authors and their institutions. A trial conducted by van Rooyen et al. (2010) gave the possibility to reviewers of making their signed report publicly available (i.e., Open Peer Review or OPR) versus regular TPR. They found that neither model affected the quality of the peer reviews, although the OPR model saw a significant reduction in the number of reviewers who wanted to participate, indicating that they preferred an anonymous form of review to an open form. A more recent survey by Vinther et al. (2012) compared blind and open review systems and found that only 28% of reviewers and 37% of authors preferred the OPR system while 38% of reviewers and 43% of authors preferred double-blind review. Similar to the findings of van Rooyen et al. (2010), the quality of the reviews was not affected by the existence or absence of anonymity. However, Vinther et al. (2012) concluded that OPR may reduce the number of reviewers. Yet, these studies all focused on the importance of anonymity in TPR, and no formal study has yet emerged on the impact of the anonymous voice in post-publication peer review (PPPR), or quantified such an impact. To decrease potential bias during TPR, Molecular Cell recently attempted triple-blind peer review, in which the authors' names were unknown to the editor during the first round of assessment (<http://go.nature.com/cqkDcw>; Nature Plant editorial, 2015). The difference with anonymous commenting that one may observe at [PubPeer](#) – a PPPR web-site that allows named or anonymous commenting about published manuscripts – is that in TPR, the peers are contracted and their identities are known to the editors who vet them, i.e., their identity is confidential, whereas as PubPeer, they could be anyone. However, the apparent spike in retractions in recent years may be reflecting that not all is well with TPR, and that it is not only subject to bias and subjectivity, but it is also fallible and incomplete (Teixeira da Silva and Dobránszki, 2015). Despite these weaknesses, TPR may still in fact be the best system available, but could be reinforced by open peer review (OPR), or by PPPR.

A recent editorial by Prof. Michael R. Blatt (Blatt, 2015), the editor-in-chief of *Plant Physiology*, has caused ripples in the PPPR community. The editorial has, to some extent, defined the extremes of the conversation underlying the importance of the anonymous voice in PPPR. Referring to PubPeer, Blatt states the following: “The majority of posts on PubPeer are mounted anonymously. So, while there is no danger of public embarrassment for the commenter, likewise there is no opportunity to gain from a personal exchange with the author.” Blatt goes further by collectively labelling anonymous commentators, as indicated in the editorial's title, as vigilantes, claiming that their objective “often is to pillory, to do so publicly and without accountability.” A vigilante, however, by definition, “is a civilian or organization that undertakes law enforcement (or actions in the pursuit of self-perceived justice) that is without legal authority” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vigilante>), calling into question the label assigned to anonymous commentators by Blatt. Curiously, Odom (2015) criticizes the abuse of peer-review protection, claiming that it “results in outcomes very similar to those of internet trolls: harmful comments can be made without recourse.” Most likely referring both to TPR and PPPR, Odom further states about the anonymous voice: “everyone knows anonymity breeds contempt.”

Unlike PPPR, OPR serves its purpose at the opposite pole of the anonymity scale, in which peers are clearly identified. Yet, the potential conflicts of interest (COIs) between peers that could arise from OPR most likely prevent its wide-scale implementation, simply because the vast majority of scientists who are actively researching and publishing will be somewhat reticent to offer their opinions and criticism in person, thus avoiding professional COIs and possible negative retribution. In fields of research where the number of scientists is limited, this risk increases. Bastian (2015) defines this as “a status bias problem.” Yet, the very same individuals will find refuge in TPR, and would – almost ironically – be comfortable with

anonymity within the TPR framework, most likely because it is formalized and organized by editors and a publisher.

The functions of PPPR, and its potential benefits and dangers

TPR, OPR and PPPR are, in terms of anonymity and effectiveness, complementary concepts. PPPR appears to have established itself as one of the most robust tool to avoid COIs and serves as a mechanism to correct already published literature, as its primary function (Teixeira da Silva 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). PPPR also has other functions: expanding the scientific discussion, including analysis, commentary and criticism (Pontille and Torny, 2015). PPPR allows for the public discussion of the merits or issues related to errors in the literature, including negative instances of duplicate data, plagiarism, or image manipulation, by a pool of peers or experts that extends beyond the limited number of individuals in the TPR model assigned to complete the task of quality control. This publisher-independent peer pool is able to critically evaluate, with a set of potentially unbiased eyes, the published literature that was approved for publication by a limited number of individuals.

Despite this, PPPR has some inherent flaws and weaknesses. The broader concern is that anonymous commentators can hide their identities (Nature Plant editorial, 2015; Blatt, 2015). The problem then does not necessarily lie with the importance of the anonymous voice, but rather how it can or should be moderated or regulated (Blatt, 2015). Papers with serious errors are more likely to be retracted when they are discussed publicly as a direct function of PPPR (Van Noorden, 2014). Cases at PubPeer have shown that the anonymous voice has played its concrete part (e.g., sixth retraction that emerged for Olivier Voinnet as a result of mostly anonymous commenting at PubPeer; Keith, 2015).

Although Bastian (2014) correctly points out that science can only benefit from the implementation of PPPR, she fails to recognize that part of the success of PPPR has already depended on the anonymous voice. In a recent blog, Bastian gave full credit to the importance of the anonymous voice in TPR but still failed to openly concede its importance in PPPR (Bastian, 2015), even though her own paper was critically evaluated by anonymous voices on PubPeer (2015). Despite this form of denial, reticence (Nature Plants editorial, 2015), or fear (Blatt, 2015), greater recognition of the importance of the anonymous voice is now being formally given (Teixeira da Silva, 2015d). Many scientists would fear the repercussions of calling out errors in their peers' papers, and that concern or fear of professional retribution is perfectly valid in fields of science that have a narrow peer base, where the same peers review each other's papers. In the OPR setting, constant knowledge of knowing the identity of the reviewer would place an unprecedented stress on the authors, and also on the peer reviewer. This stress arises from the need to maintain civility, a tool used to mute criticism and differences of opinion (Bruenig, 2014). A different stress on authors emerges from sites like PubPeer where criticisms may be valid, or not, insignificant or large, and in the case of anonymous reviewers, there is concern about their lack of accountability (Neuroskeptic, 2013). For this reason, [PubMed Commons](#), another PPPR tool, does not permit anonymous comments.

Can anonymity in PPPR be effective?

To achieve effective PPPR, two important ingredients are required. The first is a base of scientists that is receptive to the notion that PPPR is now an integral part of the publishing landscape. The second is a structure in place by publishers that allows comments to be

received by editors, i.e., comments that are inputted from beyond their own controlled editor and peer pools. These comments would point out actual or perceived errors or problems.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)'s Code of Conduct (2011) states clearly that “Editors should have systems to ensure that peer reviewers’ identities are protected unless they use an open review system that is declared to authors and reviewers.” In TPR, the editor selects the reviewers (editors’ tasks include: “monitoring the performance of peer reviewers and taking steps to ensure this is of high standard” (COPE, 2011)) but in PPPR it is voluntary, and if anonymous, then unknown. Thus, a key question then emerges: who is suitable or qualified enough to be engaged in PPPR? This facet might not really be important because there are different levels of PPPR, i.e. novice or experienced readers might perceive errors in a published paper in different ways, or might detect a range of different problems. Consequently, scanning papers for errors such as duplicated figures, does not require a special set of skills, i.e., it does not require a peer *per se*. In contrast, in-depth analysis of the scientific content, methodology used, or conclusions drawn would require topic-specific and specialized peers (Teixeira da Silva and Dobránszki, 2015).

The ideal PPPR structure would accommodate anonymous comments, which would be sifted and moderated by a voluntary publicly regulated editor board. Whereas ORP and TRP are organized, PPPR is least organized, and this lack of centralized control can be anarchic, or cause damage if unregulated. However, without a pro-active base of scientists, and an equivalent receptive editor-journal-publisher triage, PPPR cannot function effectively. The lethargy with which publishers are adapting to PPPR – aptly termed “publication-pollution denialism” by Caplan (2015) – does not appear to be accompanying the speed at which the literature is being produced. The adoption of PPPR is limited by overburdened peers and editors. Moderation would then be the key to solving the importance of the anonymous voice in PPPR such as PubPeer since a criticism remains valid, independent of the voice pronouncing it (Neuroskeptic, 2013; Blatt, 2015). However, moderation is a tricky and prickly issue since issues such as false accusations, libelous claims and sock-puppetry need to be taken into account, i.e., a sensitive balance between commenting, civility, regulation and moderation (Yong et al., 2013). This issue, as well as the ethics of the anonymous voice, needs greater discussion.

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