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Don't Fear the Reaper? The Zombie University and Eating Braaaains

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Abstract: This article explores the role and function of neoliberalism in higher education, particularly in its manifestations after the Global Financial Crisis. Theories of managerialism are overlaid not only with questions about the purpose and role of higher education in the economy, but also the renegotiation of power and identity after 2008. Ulrich Beck's zombie concept is reactivated and applied to the university. The paper moves through a discussion of the zombie and Beck's zombie categories and concepts, and then concludes with a section applying these ideas to higher education.

Keywords: Higher education studies; zombie university; neoliberalism; zombie concept; zombie category; Ulrich Beck

> But let us accept that the grand narratives are indeed gone … The stakes are higher, the dangers are greater, duplicity more necessary than ever. An engaged critical and teaching practice must circumvent the deadening effect of contemporary institutions – market and bureaucratic – and the even more insidious forms that creep in on the back of these. Breaking the normative rules of the institution can never be a sufficient condition for creating value inside it, but in an ever-widening diversity of circumstances, it is often a necessary condition.
>
> Jonathan Dollimore (2011, p. 199)

Dead ideas. Concepts long disproven. Theories critiqued by generations of scholars. Economic systems that never worked - and still do not – suck oxygen from scholarship and time from career clocks. These dead ideas walk into lecture theatres and along corridors. They perch in emails. They whine through performance management reviews. They sing in strategic plans

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and moan through risk registers.

Universities have been taken over by the walking dead. Not scholars. Not teachers. Not researchers. Not writers. 'Managers' run meetings, confirm minutes, asterisk items, organize catering for away days, impose Key Performance Indicators, facilitate retreats, write vision statements and configure milestones.

Welcome to the Zombie University. This article explores the role and function of neoliberalism in higher education, particularly in its manifestations after the Global Financial Crisis. Theories of managerialism are overlaid not only with questions about the purpose and role of higher education in the economy, but also the renegotiation of power and identity after 2008. Ulrich Beck's zombie concept is reactivated and applied to the university. This is a theoretical paper and my overarching goal is expansive and ambitious. I diagnose the shambling sickness in our institutions to commence a reimagining. The resonance with Benedict Anderson's most famous book title (1983) is intentional. As with Anderson, I place attention on language and institutions, with the goal of realizing a different trajectory. The paper moves through a discussion of the zombie and Beck's zombie categories and concepts, and then concludes with a section applying these ideas to higher education.

Zombie Studies

> It's probably always been true that you have to find your way through or around formal education in the search for what really matters.
>
> Jonathan Dollimore (2011, p. 190)

Before moving to the zombie concept, it is important to pass through the antechamber of Zombie Studies. Zombies are a recent entrée in popular culture. Derived from the lowest of low culture – horror films, gaming and comic books – they are part of a suite of claustropolitan popular culture (Redhead and Brabazon, 2014) that proclaims the end of the world. Zombies are to horror what *Bold and the Beautiful* is to romance: tacky and excessive. Best captured by Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and updated successfully in comedic forms like *Shaun of the Dead* and in brutalist high popular cultural form via *The Walking Dead*, the white walkers also make key appearances in *Game of Thrones* and even in *Breaking Bad*. Gus continued to walk after flesh exploded off his bones. Such examples occupy the post-apocalyptic future, with the past walking through – and decaying in – the present. It summons a world where the dead live amongst us, and want to kill us.

Beyond its Haitian history of slavery and rebellion (Lauro, 2015), and at the level of metaphor, a zombie is more than a corpse enlivened through witchcraft. It can refer to a lifeless person after a night out or a cocktail – composed of rum, liqueur and fruit juice – consumed to excess on that night out. It describes a computer under the control of a remote user, legislation that returns to the legislature with no chance of passing, a non-vegetarian and – perhaps unkindly – a woman lacking intelligence that is dating a clever man and sucking out his brains.

Popular cultural texts have extended this range, through *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* and *Zombies from Outer Space*. As Shawn McIntosh confirmed,

> The unique balancing act that zombies represent between control and enslavement, strength and weakness, us and them, and group versus individual identify offers a window into better

> understanding why we enjoy the horror genre in particular and how we perceive ourselves and certain aspects of popular culture in general (2008, p. 1).

The death of a zombie is brutal, killed through brain trauma. From this violent attack on the already dead, the intimacy of a bite creates another zombie. Death is enacted through violence. The contagion is spread through intimacy. This simplicity – death and sex – means that the zombie trope activates understandings of politics and consumerism in unusual ways. Simon Orpana noted that "the zombie reproduces through consumption, not procreation" (Orpana, 2011, p. 153). Through such a mode of reproduction, particular attributes have been lost: language, logic, reasoning and an integrated response to sensory experiences.

When Ulrich Beck mentioned the zombie concept in a 2000 interview (Rutherford, 2000), it was prescient if under-formed. Zombies were filmic. The camera was drawn to the flesh eaters. The authors were drawn to vampires, Frankenstein's monster and mummies. *The Night of the Living Dead* is important in creating the narrative and iconography of zombies. Released in 1968, that year of incomplete revolutions, assassinations and the White Album, it was ambivalently anti-establishment. For Romero's zombies, they carried the 1960s fears as they walked. But the zombies continued to travel beyond this decade through low pop via music videos like Michael Jackson's "Thriller," zombie porn (Jones, 2011) and video games. The zombie walk, which began in Toronto and has spread to other cities, involves a large group of people splattering blood on their bodies, ripping frocks and trousers and shuffling along urban streets. The only literary sojourn was the oddly unsuccessful mashup, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which – when returning to film rather than literature – increased its profile and success (Grahame-Smith, 2009). Popular culture, at its best, is andragogical and can lead the theory (Brabazon, 2013). Often it is high popular culture – *Breaking Bad*, *Twin Peaks* and *True Detective* – that triggers academic writing. Occasionally, a philosopher like Zizek writes about low pop, including *Kung Fu Panda* (2013). In my article, zombies are not a trendy or quirky example. The zombie forms, embodies and concretizes the theory.

Zombie narratives have two endings: all zombies are killed or all humans are killed. These binaries are punctuated by a perpetual displacement of this ending. Every post-apocalypse signals a rebirth (Sorensen, 2014). Zombie time is cyclical, not linear. *28 Days later* was followed by the sequel *28 months later*. There is also the question of power. The zombies – the dead – hold the living to ransom and perpetual fear. This necropower reflects on the meaninglessness of contemporary life, medicated through online shopping, nutribullet advertisements and Kim Kardashian's Instagram account. Toni Negri and Felix Guattari stated that, "politics today is nothing more than the expression of the domination of dead structures over the entire range of living production" (1990, p. 30). Zombie structures compress our flesh.

While travelling to this apocalyptic endpoint, *The Walking Dead* occupies this liminality. An ever shrinking band of humans defend themselves from walkers who can only be killed through decapitation. Corpses have life through their desire to feed on the living. It is clear that – via asking questions about life and death - philosophers would be drawn to the walkers. With the increasing philosophical interest in zombies, such as Wayne Yuen's edited collection *The Walking Dead and Philosophy: Zombie Apocalypse Now* (2013), they offer scholars key information about post-work beyond the global financial crisis. As Si Sheppard revealed, "what can zombies tell us about what we really need to know: how to get by after the total collapse of modern post-industrial civilization?" (2013, p. 208) In my article, I align Sheppard's question to the post-industrial university and ask what has happened to brains in these theoretical times.

Zombies have not remained satiated in low popular culture. They are on the move through metaphors and tropes, discovered in politics, high theory and economics. The zombie turn may be justified or explained – casually rather than causally – by the war on terror, the global

financial crisis or Fox-news fuelled fear of a pandemic (Creed, 1993). Zombies have a function in popular culture, and this function also spills into cultural theory and philosophy (Greene and Silem Mohammad, 2006). In disciplinary terms, cinema studies, popular cultural studies, videogame studies, philosophy, literature sociology, men's studies and women's studies are all interrogating the undead. Together a tentative, shambling but fascinating Zombie Studies is emerging. The undead enable thought experiments about bodies, consciousness and identity.

Culturally, the role of zombies in our present is complex to track and difficult to categorize. When formulating periodization, dates and eras for this discussion, I apply Eric Hobsbawm's categorization of the 20th century (1994). He argued that the short twentieth century spanned from 1914-1991, from the start of the First World War to the whimpering conclusion of the cold war. Noting accelerated modernity, I suggest that the short twenty first century spanned from 2001-2008. The year 2000 was not a gestalt moment. September 11, 2001 signalled an end to the long twentieth century and the start of a distinctive xenophobia, a war on an emotional state (terror) and the removal of shoes at airports. It was 2008 that signalled an end to the illusion of American power, growth, security, real estate capitalism and finance capitalism. The film *28 Days Later* showed how systems – like medicine, the military and money – collapse at speed when questioned and threatened (Carroll, 2012). This particular year – 2008 – signalled the start of the zombie apocalypse as a metaphor, metonymy, trope and description for the collapse of economic, social, cultural and political order. The only possible escapes were and are consumption of goods and consumption of intimacy (Luque-Castillo and Ortega-Ruiz, 2011). We rapaciously consume goods, emotions and people, experiencing micro moments of pleasure, and then flick or scroll to the next micro moment where we can feast on the love, loss or embarrassment of others. In Zombie Studies, death is gamified, but so is life. Families are transitory and unstable. Wifi is hunted as if it is oxygen. Therefore, the next stage of this article transforms zombie from a noun and into an adjective, to explore Ulrich Beck's zombie concept.

Zombie Categories and Concepts

> The intellectual and the professional sides of our being are in conflict. And if they are not they should be.
>
> Jonathan Dollimore (2011, p. 199)

Ulrich Beck's critique of society and culture welcomes cosmopolitanism rather than claustropolitanism. The zombie concept emerged from this cosmopolitanism project. It first appeared in interviews with Beck in 2000, often used interchangeably with zombie categories in this early period. The earliest reference I have found is in a Beck interview with the scholar of masculinity, Jonathan Rutherford, in 2000 though his book *The Art of Life: on living, love and death* (2000). At this point, "zombie categories" were present rather than "zombie concepts." Rutherford described this term as a combination of "sociology and horror" (2000, p. 37). This was an evocative and prescient description that extended beyond Beck's application at this time. In this originating interview, Rutherford offered a clear definition of the term.

> There is a paradox. Changes are occurring faster in people's consciousness than in their behaviour and social conditions. This mixture of new consciousness and old conditions

> has created what he [Beck] describes as Zombies categories – social forms such as class, family or neighbourhood, which are dead, yet alive (2000, p. 37).

This was a clearer definition than Beck offered. But he did list the key zombie categories: "family, class, neighbourhood" (2000, p. 37).

> JR: Zombies are the living dead. Do you mean that these institutions are simply husks that people have abandoned?
>
> UB: I think people are more aware of the new realities than the institutions are. But at the same time, if you look at the findings of empirical research, family is still extremely valued in a very classical sense. Sure there are huge problems in family life, but each person thinks that he or she will solve all those problems that their parents didn't get right (2000, p. 38).

Beck is situating 'family' in his cosmopolitan sociology project. Zombie concepts were merely a by-product of that wider cosmopolitanism world view. Cosmopolitanism was a way for Beck to overcome what he termed "methodological nationalism" (2002a, p. 18), which referred to "internal globalization, globalization from within the national societies" (2002a, p. 17). For Beck, the nation creates a "monologic imagination" that excludes otherness, while the "cosmopolitan perspective" includes "the otherness of the other" (2002a, p. 18).

As the concept was used by other scholars, the nation state within globalization became the key example. Again, and particularly considering the Global Financial Crisis and the treatment of Greece by the globalizing forces of capital, Greece's nationalism is more than a zombie concept. However, my focus in this paper is not dwelling on the disappointments and inconsistencies in the concepts of family or nation in cosmopolitan sociology, but shifting the interpretation to consider the zombie university in claustropolitan sociology. What I do recognize and apply from Beck is how these zombie categories moved from the 19th century and continue to live in our present. More importantly, they mask the changing context (Cremin, 2012, p. 50). Although these zombie concepts have lost their social purpose, 'we' gain from their perpetuation. They are terms of safety, understanding and compliance.

From this foundational interview, through 2001 and 2002, Beck's concept developed. The concept seems to have emerged from his work on "reflexive modernity" as he stressed the plurality of poststructuralism (Beck, 2001, p. 261). He described "a multiplication and pluralization of modernities in the making" (2001, p. 262). Beck argued that from these modernities is emerging, "a new kind of capitalism, a new kind of labour, a new kind of everyday life, and a new kind of state are in the making" (2001, p. 262). Such an interpretation does not carry negativity or critique. When Beck moves from this separation of modernities into the zombie categories, there is no inflection or concern for this change.

> I think we are living in a society, in a world, where our basic sociological concepts are becoming what I call 'zombie categories.' Zombie categories are 'living dead' categories which govern our thinking but are not really able to capture the contemporary milieu. In this situation I don't think it's very helpful only to criticize normal sociology, and to deconstruct it. What we really need is to redefine, reconstruct, restructure our concepts and our view of society (2001, p. 262).

Beck is disconnecting a version of modernity from the nation state, but also Westernization and Europeanization. While such a critique was offered by Edward Said decades earlier (1978), Beck has revealed the heuristic power and propulsion of periodization.

These are evocative if ambiguous phrases, tropes, theories and argument. The role of risk – from terrorists or bankers – in these unintended consequences has also been probed by Beck (2002b). Developing his concept in the aftermath of September 11, he probed the relationship

between risk and control, noting the unevenness of global risks (2002b, p. 42). He also offers a slither of commentary on neoliberalism. He states, "in times of crises, neoliberalism has no solutions to offer" (2002b, p. 48). Further, he offered a warning that "human dignity, cultural identity and otherness must be taken more seriously in the future" (2002b, p. 48). Such statements may have had intent, urgency and bite in 2002. However, this prediction was not delivered. Human dignity has been denied from those from whom capital can be extracted, denied or ignored.

Beck recognized globalizing change. His analytical error was to enfold this realization into cosmopolitan sociology. He did not see that cosmopolitan sociology was in itself a zombie category, eaten alive by claustropolitanism. Beck located the scale of change, but not how to correct or manage it. He logged that "the development of new concepts and the redefinition of sociology is for me a matter of political importance" (Boyne, 2001, p. 53). He was correct in such an imperative, but he used such a realization to reinforce cosmopolitan sociology. He missed the paradigm shift.

> Sociologists are using zombie categories. Not only do they obscure the emergence and potential of cosmopolitanism, but also blind us to the new global risk regime we are living in (Boyne, 2001, 56).

Beck deployed the concepts of 'household' and 'family' to make his case. He was right. Those categories are tired, overworked, colonized by conservative political forces and so ideological that they are rendered difficult for scholars to use in a way that is relevant and useful. Liotta and Shearer argued that Beck determined a concept to be in a zombie state if it "emphasize[s] the state and thereby fail[s] to engage the multiple and interdependent processes of change we now face" (2008, p. 9). This is an important realization, and the affirmation of cosmopolitanism in Beck's work starts to be revealed. The zombie concept, for Beck, is tethered to 'the state' and therefore is rigid, dominating and a problem. Cosmopolitan sociology has a tendency towards anti-statism, through its commitment to community, multiculturalism and organic and authentic connections between groups. But this rendering of the state is narrow and can bleed into a critique of public health, public education, regulation and governance. This mode of anti-statism created the political space for neo-liberalism. Once the state was removed from regulation and management of public good, the flow and mobility so welcomed by the cosmopolitan sociologists such as Ulrich Beck, John Urry, Scott Lash and Anthony Giddens was used to move capital without regulation but block the movement of people by twisting the labelling from 'refugees' to 'asylum seekers.' These theorists have produced remarkable theorizations of both modernity and globalization, but the problem is that they were wrong theoretically and politically. They missed the changes to global capital caused through a lack of regulation and therefore had no intellectual resources to understand the Global Financial Crisis.

While the zombie concept could have been a Beck throwaway, it continued to bubble through the academic literature. It has been used in an array of disciplines and contexts, including health (Neville, 2013). It started to be applied to the theorizing of production and consumption. (Antonio 2015) But something odd happened on the way to and through the Global Financial Crisis. The zombie exploded as a trope, theory, concept and metaphor. The following table captures the mentions of zombie, the zombie category and the zombie concept in Google Scholar for each year spanning from 2000-2014. [see Table 1]

Table 1: No. of mentions of "zombie", "zombie category" and "zombie concept" in Google Scholar, 2000-2014

	2000	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
Zombie	785	932	1120	1080	1560	1710	1890	2620	2600	3820	4210	4720	5260	6650	6750
Zombie category	248	250	306	365	475	466	588	744	789	1050	1240	1370	1400	1730	1920
Zombie concept	375	424	560	644	858	905	971	1260	1370	1700	1910	2320	2370	3050	3260

Beck's zombie categories and concepts started to gain an intellectual traction through the discipline of sociology. Yet his critique of the state in that project was lost. Paul Chan configured a strong definition of the term that cut away the cosmopolitan project. He stated that, "like zombies, there are social concepts that are dead and yet kept alive in their use by scholars to describe the growing fiction of traditional social institutions" (2013, p. 1059). This definition confirms that some concepts are 'dead,' yet Chan suggests that scholars are the perpetrators of the zombie behaviour. In other words the concepts would have remained dead, but academics are still using terms as if they have meaning. The perpetuation of old ideas in a dangerous and contagious form by researchers is the innovative interpretation implemented by Chan. Activating Chan's analysis, in the third section of this paper, I apply Beck's work to one traditional social institution: the university. Zombie habits are the basic functions – the mechanics – of being a human. Humanity is built on the zombie behaviours. If applied to a university, the meetings, the agendas, the performance management processes are zombie behaviours. Higher learning and teaching must transcend them. The key question is, can they be freed from the horde or are they crushed in the zombie embrace?

How was the zombie concept applied and transformed after the GFC? Beck described it as a form that is familiar, taken for granted, naturalized and assumed, but within that form is weird, odd, irrational, unpredictable and toxic content. Beck particularly applied the zombie concept to class. This seemed appropriate in the early 2000s, as postfordism, underemployment and digitization transformed the role and place of labour power (Berry, 2008). But it has since been applied to race, capitalism and universities. It is based on the sociological separation of the first and second modernity. When reading Johannes Williams' *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*, published in 2004, Beck used digitization as a proxy for a wider social model. He stated that, "we occupy a world of transportation and communication networks in which social and physical space have diverged" (Beck and Williams, 2004, p. 23). This moment of digitization, often described as deterritorialization, has been reconfigured through disintermediation, reintermediation (Brabazon, 2014) and the re-emergence of analogue places via geosocial networking.

One danger in the zombie(d) society is to language: citizens and scholars think they/we know what is going on when particular words are used. We return to underlying assumptions and assume a shared history and consensual agreement. Yet these assumptions mean that a zombie concept is used in neoliberalism – or other discursive systems – and is able to infiltrate a broader and wider discussion before there is interpretative dissonance and recognition that the term has been twisted, warped and infiltrated. This has been seen in and through the word 'public,' particularly when attached to 'health,' 'education' and 'services.'

Therefore Beck's throwaway phrase that the nation is a 'zombie concept' has been mobilized in the understanding of an array of social systems that he did not predict. The reduction in national sovereignty through the rise of neoliberalism means that corporations

have enacted what Rob Nixon referred to as "evasive geopolitics" (2009, p. 444). Assumptions about the rationality of economics and the logic of markets mean that the analytical tool kit is lacking for understanding the shape and texture of either events or social structures. John Quiggin realized that, "the zombie ideas that brought the global financial system to the brink of meltdown, and have already caused thousands of firms to fail and cost millions of workers their jobs, still walk among us" (2010, p. 2). The assumption of growth and rationality in capitalism is an ideology of reality that widens both inequality and injustice. Colin Cremin's work has, like Quiggin, taken on the acidic corrosiveness of zombie categories and concepts circulating in daily life. Directly critiquing Beck, Cremin stated that "we are not in liquid modernity, reflexive modernity, a new economy or risk society" (2011, p. 3). He believed that "the financial crash was predictable" (2011, p. 25). Perhaps he is correct. Importantly the neglect, disrespect and marginalization of regulation and governance provided a context for a financial collapse to emerge. What Fred Botting called "zombie debt" was a sign of morbid consumption patterns (2013). For Botting, these toxic debts killed the economy. He did not believe that vampires were sucking the life out of society. Instead, it was zombies that had ingested toxic debt and yet kept walking as if industrial models of production and consumption were in place. This collective of Global Financial Crisis theorists critiqued austerity policies (Blyth, 2013) and used a gothic lexicon to make their point. Austerity has become a word that – after the Global Financial Crisis – has signalled the next stage of neo-liberalism, anti-statism and political amnesia to blame those who were blameless (Jones, 2013). For Kerry-Anne Mendoza, austerity was both a strategy to "demolish" the welfare state that led to a rise in the "zombie economy" (2015). She argued that the GFC not only signalled the failure of neoliberalism but served to accelerate it. Austerity remains – as Mark Blyth described it – "a dangerous idea" (2013). The focus on austerity meant that the reasons for the Global Financial Crisis were not diagnosed, discussed or analysed. Instead, austerity became the band aid for a gaping wound caused by the automated weaponry of neoliberal finance capitalism. It neither covered nor salved the situation.

Zombie University

> We have the potential to be intellectuals – or, if that sounds too pretentious for our empirical tradition, then free-thinkers committed to the activity of a critical intelligence. Jonathan Dollimore (2011, p. 199)

The key application of Beck's concept that I summon in this paper is the zombie university. When the word 'university' is used, it still carries familiarity – like the zombie's body – yet when investigating the contents, they are not only surprising, but toxic, dangerous and contagious. Researchers and teachers recognize the form. The buildings and websites are captioned Sydney University, Manchester University or the University of British Columbia. The assumptions about the institution, some from Cardinal Newman, C.S. Lewis or an array of university-based films like *Good Will Hunting*, flood our meaning system. But this form has been taken over, destroyed, killed and reinhabited by deadly content. The institution has been transformed in the last twenty years by non-researchers and non-teachers. The ideologies of

vocationalism and digitization have carried scholars and students to the zombie university. We think we know what we mean by universities. We cling to this belief. But it is already dead. It is a zombie category and it is still walking.

Zombies are poststructuralist in intent. They fragment and crush binarized models of thought. They challenge the parameters of life and living. Most importantly, they play with the clock. Linear time is no longer a guide through the zombie apocalypse. The past, present and future all live, breathe, walk, eat and kill. There is always a zombie moment where the non-zombie has to choose to kill the mother, father, husband, wife or child that has become infected, or join them in zombieland. Death and love twist, recoil and recalibrate. This is the decision we must make in a university. We sit through the meetings. We nod. We allow phrases like "efficiency dividends" to wash over us. Yet when sitting through these meetings, are we becoming zombies, infected by the bite of banality, mediocrity and compliance? The managerialism in universities is part of the wider institutional bureaucratization. The minutia of processes and procedures are meant to be alienating for the workforce. David Graeber realized that the impact of bureaucratization is not simply banality but,

> Given a choice between a course of action that will make capitalism seem like the only possible economic system, and one that will make capitalism actually be a more viable long-term economic system, neoliberalism has meant always choosing the former (2015, p. 129).

This execution of a choice through masking choice means that "technical rationality" (Olivier, 2014, p. 15) such as skills, vocationalism and a list of graduate outcomes are the tracked attributes from students, rather than learning and knowledge. This is a zombie university. It eats brains. It works from the assumption that the valuable is measurable.

For within these zombie university, those of us who are not the undead, who have not been transformed into drooling walkers looking for brains to eat, have a choice. Therefore, it seems appropriate to return to Jonathan Rutherford for a diagnosis of the context in which this choice is made. Rutherford explored the relationship between economic growth and wellbeing, with particular attention to education.

> Education plays a central role in producing the new modes of consumption and production. Schools, colleges and universities have been subjected to continuous organizational change in an attempt to gear them to the labour market and knowledge economy. Universities, schools, healthcare and welfare have been turned into quasi- or proximarkets. Targets are used to replicate the incentives of price and competition, performance management stands in for the incentive of profit. The ethic of professionalism and trust is degraded and replaced by 'accountability' to the market based criteria of efficiency, 'value for money' and productivity" (2008, p. 8-9).

Deindustrialization, alongside casualized and temporary jobs that were later enfolded into the term precariat (Standing, 2013), resulted in cultures of bullying, humiliation and vulnerability with (higher) education the only panacea. Rutherford makes the point that the greater the inequality, the greater the violence, because "people are deprived of the markers of status and so are more vulnerable to the anxieties of being judged by others" (2008, p. 11). In universities, this change has been rapid. Stanley Aronowitz wrote *The Knowledge Factory* in the year 2000. His argument was that a management class, group, tier or stream had emerged in universities. These were the men and women who had failed or underperformed in teaching and research and entered management, ruling over those who had success in the spheres in which they had failed. Through the subsequent 16 years since this book was published, and built on his sociology of higher education, the university is now a zombie concept. Strange 'realities' are

accepted as normal. This under-performing, anti-intellectual group has introduced terms, phrases and practices like key performance indicators, strategic plans and performance management. In other words, this is a zombie university. A higher education establishment has been infected and replaced with processes and practices that operate in a bank or corporation. This knowledge factory enabled the Zombie University, seemingly without uproar, protest or critique. Imagine the following scenario.

Women make up 64% of Pro Vice Chancellors, 65% of Deputy Vice Chancellors and 77% of Vice Chancellors in Australian universities.

The above scenario was invented. Actually – inverted. Yet there is no outcry or questioning. This is normal. Men run universities.

Men make up 64% of Pro Vice Chancellors, 65% of Deputy Vice Chancellors and 77% of Vice Chancellors in Australian universities.

The Zombie University has naturalized a mode of institutional organization. From a university history that validates the white, the colonizer, the heterosexual, the procreative and the male, the contextualized critique from postcolonialism, feminism, men's studies and queer studies has not marked or transformed our institutions. Indeed, the scale of the injustice through its denial and displacement is stark.

Marina Warner has written some high profile critiques of the modern university (2014). The problem with this critique is that only in the 2010s did the toxic conditions of higher education emerge in an institution like Essex. The traditional universities have lived in a bubble while the post-1992 universities, in the case of England and Wales, and the former colleges of advanced education in Australia have been managing the disrespect, marginalization, ridicule and arbitrary rules for decades. The Zombie horde attacked the lowest and most vulnerable universities first, only recently needing fresh meat at the elite edge of the sector.

For example, the Vice Chancellor at the elite University of Adelaide has killed lectures (Dodd, 2015). For Vice Chancellor Bebbington, lectures are "obsolete." With "everything" online, students do not and he argues will not attend lectures. His replacement is "small group discovery experiences." *The Financial Review* described it as a "learning revolution" (2015). This is a post-expertise zombie university. Small group discovery experiences already exist. They are called tutorials. They used to be intertwined with care and respect with lectures, each fulfilling a different function in the learning. The Vice Chancellor is even looking to abolish academic's Office Hours, replacing them with a roster system where any academic can offer assistance to any student, regardless of the subject. The problem – if there ever was one - has never been lectures. The problem has been ill-prepared and incompetent lecturers. Great lectures are incredibly difficult to develop. They are founded on outstanding appointments by internationally leading scholars who are committed to the next generation of learners. If universities were to casualize their staff, then it would be very difficult for an underqualified, under motivated and underpaid person to wield the expertise of an outstanding scholar. But in this post-expertise zombie university, digitization (once more) will supposedly rescue universities from academics who insist on reading, writing and maintaining standards of excellence. Students can receive 'content' online and learn from each other in "small group discovery experiences."

This is an act of risk displacement, moving the responsibility for learning from the collective – and the university – and to the individual. This is a desire to displace responsibility. Andrew Bowman et al. stated that,

> Corporate business is about … passing risk, while avoiding social responsibility and the obligation to provide reasonable quality, sustainable, everyday economic services at accessible prices (2014, p. 28).

The university has a far greater array of stakeholders and accountabilities, beyond shareholders and profit. Risks are differently constituted. The risk is not a loss of the brand, but poor quality learning and teaching for generations of students. The "financialization" (Sotiropoulos, Milios and Lapatsioras, 2013) of the university, means that the social risks are undercut by economic risks. Individualizing learning also individualizes failure and displaces blame from a managerial system that casualized undergraduate higher education.

This is a university of mediocrity, compliance and conformity. It sucks the excellence, the challenge, the awkwardness and the alternatives out of learning. Form (modality) is irrelevant and content (knowledge) is uploaded by educational designers into pre-existing applications. Academics with their content – which in some discourse may be called knowledge – is dangerous. It is much safer – and cheaper – to employ educational designers to load content, often developed by casual staff, into online templates like Blackboard or Moodle.

Zombie teaching and learning has been with us since the late 1990s when digital technology and casualization of educators entered a deathly embrace. Such a system is founded on and perpetuated by the managerialism predicted and described by Stanley Aronowitz in *The Knowledge Factory*. With the men and women who could not manage research or teaching now leading those who can, the only way such a system can operate is if 'managers' pretend that a university is the same as any other 'business.' It does not matter that they have failed or underperformed as an academic. A leader in content expertise - knowledge - is not required because they are academic managers. They are like bank managers, but instead of counting money, they are counting students.

Certainly, there were profound problems with the patronage structures in the older universities. But the solution to those problems is increased regulation and transparent governance, rather than neoliberal ideologies of deregulation and anti-statism that have been proven – time and again – to fail. Let me provide an example. I will not name the university, but monitor the appointment of a Zombie Dean. No advertisement for this post ever appeared. There was no interview or public lecture to evaluate their performance, or transparent process to make appointment. Simply, one morning, a Zombie Dean appeared in an Australian University. Here is the transcript of the announcement, with redactions on the identifiers. It was released on June 29, 2015, for a July 1, 2015 commencement.

Subject: Appointment of Executive Dean

Message: I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Professor XXXX to the role of Executive Dean.

Professor XXXX has been a valued academic staff member at XXXX since XXXX when she joined the University on a secondment from XXXX.

Professor XXXX holds a Graduate Diploma and a Masters in XXXX, both from the University of XXXX. She has recently submitted her PhD at XXXX.

> Professor XXXX has acted in the role of Executive Dean on several occasions … Her experience in the role and the Faculty have been important contributing factors to the substantive appointment.
>
> Please join me in congratulating XXXX on her appointment.

This appointee was not a professor before this announcement. So not only were the processes usurped for a Deanship, but for a professorship. Because she had 'acted' in the role, that was the qualification to grant this post. This is a zombie employment process. The notion that experience of other universities, research or teaching excellence would be valuable to an executive dean is not considered. Excellence and achievement are zombie concepts.

The irrationality of neoliberalism is clearly revealed in such cases. The excuse to not hire women, indigenous scholars, scholars of colour and researchers and teachers with impairments during the patronage mode of the university was that they were lacking the qualifications and experience. Now that these groups have gained this experience and expertise, through widening participation and availability of higher education, the institutions have to summon new excuses – beyond merit - to continue to hire men and the occasional woman that believe in their political perspective. Intriguingly, to enhance and enable this ideology, they have to remove competition and the market from the selection process. So the proliferation of executive search firms, pretending universities are hiring a CEO, direct appointments to posts without any tethered advertisement, process, transparency or procedure have proliferated. Universities have always been institutions of patronage. White men hired other white men who went to Cambridge or Yale or Sydney or British Columbia. But this mode of patronage has changed. There is intent and will in the hiring of underqualified people with experiences so far outside of high level scholarship that there is no connection between their professional lives and teaching and learning in a university. Such appointments are justified because they are 'about' management, and management supposedly requires no expertise in content and context.

I will provide one example of my argument. I realized there was 'a zombie problem' when reviewing the RMIT (RMIT University) website and seeing a Vice Chancellor described as Mr Bean. I thought it was an unkind joke. Upon further research, I discovered he was a Mr Bean, Mr Martin Bean. He was not Dr Bean. He does not hold a doctorate and has never been a professor in any university in the world. Indeed – without a doctorate, I was expecting to see a MBA. Instead, Mr Bean holds a Bachelor of Education from the Sydney University of Technology. He was the Vice Chancellor of the Open University, which is also rather surprising, and he was described as "the first non academic" to hold the role. His previous work experience includes Microsoft and MOOC development.

How is this appointment possible? Why – when a university needs to innovate (which often means introducing untested technology to reduce costs) – is an academic dismissed as irrelevant and untested and a former worker at Microsoft valued and appointed? This appointment embodies anti-intellectualism, anti-standards and anti-scholarship. How did it happen? RMIT – like many of our universities – decided to appoint a businessman to the often ceremonial role of chancellor. This role is not ceremonial when appointing Vice Chancellors. Even the *Financial Review* reported the oddity of this Vice Chancellor appointment.

> RMIT chancellor Ziggy Switkowski says that when he and his fellow members of the university council selected Bean for the top job last year "we didn't set out to be different for the sake of being different".
>
> But neither were they "discomforted by the fact that he was not a conventional or traditional appointment".

> One thing that impressed Switkowski – a former CEO of both Telstra and Optus – was Bean's business experience. "I find he speaks a language I speak," he says (Dodd, 2015).

Academics in all disciplines deploy specialist vocabulary. Yet this language of scholarship was not relevant in this case. Switkowski simply appointed someone who "speaks a language" he speaks.

Mr Bean justifies his lack of qualifications as helping him understand the students enrolled in RMIT.

> As it happens, RMIT is a university full of people who are like Bean's younger self. And he thinks his academic background, or lack of it, gives him an understanding of what higher education is like for the more than a quarter of RMIT's 82,000 students who are part-timers.
>
> "I've lived it myself; it very much shaped my impression of what it's like to be part of a university when you're not a traditional student," Bean says. Not many of his vice-chancellor colleagues could say the same.
>
> And he thinks that, in the long run, it may be cheaper for universities. "My instinct is that, like every other sector where technology is disruptive, it's likely that it becomes more cost-effective over time, but I do not have the evidence to back that up yet," he says. "In any sector where you can provide a better product or service at a lower cost, you're on a winner and I suspect that's what we've got here" (Dodd, 2015).

The notions that universities have the right and the responsibility to be institutions of higher learning, sites of aspiration where the best minds of one generation instruct the next, have been lost here. This is what Guy Standing described as "the spectre of teacherless universities backed by panopticon techniques" (2013, p. 159). Within such a system, the completion of a basic undergraduate degree many decades ago has been rewarded because contemporary students completing an undergraduate degree will have a relationship with their Vice Chancellor. He holds "an understanding of what higher education is like." This is the equivalent of stating that a patient – after seeing a general practitioner – has "an understanding" of the health system and is ready to lead a hospital. The future of this diminished university is 'disruptive technology,' filled with what David Harvey described as "pseudo busy-work" (2014, p. 279).

There will be a cost for the loss of standards, excellence, aspiration and achievement in higher education. Guy Standing, after diagnosing the relationship between globalization and finance capitalism, revealed the consequences on schools, further and higher education.

> This commodification of education is a societal sickness. There is a price to pay. If education is sold as an investment good, if there is an unlimited supply of certificates and if these do not yield the promised return, in terms of access to good jobs and high income with which to pay off debts incurred because they were nudged to buy more of the commodity, more entering the precariat will be angry and bitter (2013, p. 72).

Cost and value have been confused. This is a profoundly anti-intellectual movement. The people who have been successful in scholarship are dismissed by this management culture *because* they have been successful in scholarship and therefore will not understand contemporary students. Mediocrity in qualifications is the credential to manage. This is the zombie university. It is a denial of the flesh, blood and bone of academics and administrators.

I finish with the final fight in the final scene in the Zombie Apocalypse movie. Yes, universities have shown interest in the zombie apocalypse. On October 1, 2009, the University of Florida's Academic Technology Support Services Website published "Zombie Attack: disaster preparedness simulation exercise #5." A profound critique of management practices,

it applied processes and procedures to an irrational situation: the zombie apocalypse. (Boluk and Lenz, 2011) They assessed how neo-liberal management would handle this catastrophe. It involved a lot of meetings, strategic plans and vision statements. I experienced something very similar. I had organized an accessibility workshop for event management and tourism to be held at Charles Sturt University (Brabazon, 2015). The NSW Premier and Cabinet sent a staff member and a colleague to provide training in our regional location: Bathurst. Months of planning went into the session and representatives attended from the Bathurst business community, local government, early childhood services and the University of the Third Age. It was an attempt to integrate gown and town, university and regional city, so as to improve the accessibility for our institutions and events.

The university chose this day to run a pandemic scenario to test the institution's readiness to manage a contagion. From staff, this exercise very quickly became renamed as preparing for the zombie apocalypse. My task was to manage an array of visitors to the university, many in wheelchairs. Maybe it is just me, but probably the zombies will have enough to occupy them in Sydney, rather than shambling over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst. It was the invention of a crisis, to test for a contagion that did not exist (Mirowski, 2013). Following on from Tony Judt, it is clear that "our disability is discursive: we simply do not know how to talk about things anymore" (2010, p. 34).

As we back away from the Zombies crawling over Mount Victoria, we recogize that it is time to intervene. If we do not, then these zombie deans and vice chancellors will form a zombie horde of management in higher education. They will swarm and kill us. Perhaps they already have. They have filled our brains with nonsensical phrases like "beyond world leading" and "risk management". Qualifications are now optional, blocking the execution of a clean neoliberal policy without thought or consequences. Why the qualifications matter is not on their own terms. Qualifications confirm that a person has been externally checked and verified that they have reached a standard of scholarship. Refereeing occupies a similar role in the rest of our academic careers. The major question to ask of these zombie university managers is why they have prioritized ideology over institutions. The answer is that brains – intelligence – is frightening. It signifies a victory of evidence over agendas and information over ideology.

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Connecting and Reconnecting: Outfitting the Figure of the Cyborg for Transnational Coalition-building

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Abstract: This work attempts to rehabilitate Donna Haraway's (1991) figure of the cyborg to increase the possibilities of alliances between transnational feminism and cyborg or technoscience feminism. Haraway's cyborg offers little impetus for political investment and coalition building. This work develops an optional prosthesis of response-ability for the cyborg figuration, one that enables the cyborg to invest locally. This ethic of response-ability is developed via the work of Mary Strine (1989), Adrienne Rich (1984) and Aimee Carillo Rowe (2005). This supplementary ethic grafts a "collectivist conscience" onto the permeable being of the cyborg, encouraging alliance- and coalition-building.

Keywords: cyborg, Haraway, transnational feminism, response-ability, coalition-building, feminist theory

> At a certain point, a woman writing this poem, has had to reckon the power of poetry as distinct from the power of the nuclear bomb, of the radioactive lessons of her planet, the power of poverty to reduce people to spectators of distantly conjured events. She can't remain a spectator.
> Adrienne Rich, *What is Found There*, p. 89

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Introduction

This essay is an exploration of the possibilities for an ethic of coalition building found in the figure of the cyborg in poststructuralist feminist theory. Poststructuralist figurations such as Donna Haraway's (1991) cyborg or Rosi Braidotti's (1994) nomad offer alternative ways of understanding the self and its relation to the world – ways that do not encourage or demand the erasure of difference. However, such figurations' rejection of indebtedness and obligation can encourage the development of seductively singular and individually focused platforms of (in)action; that is, these figures offer little impetus or direction for coalition- or alliance-building with other individuals or groups, and insufficiently encourage political investment. The development of "transnational technoscience studies" (Haraway, 1999, p.357) coupled with the figure of the cyborg has limited potential to engage with both feminists of the Global South and in transnational feminist alliances.

There remains an often-lamented gap between theory and action in contemporary feminisms; while many feminist theorists might live a politically engaged life, such engagement is not necessitated or encouraged by the theory itself. Evidence of this is clear in poststructuralist figures such as the cyborg. In this essay, I offer a supplementary ethic for the cyborg, grafting a means to access a "collectivist conscience" onto the permeable being of the cyborg. This ethic remains an optional prosthesis for the cyborg, maintaining the cyborg's rejection of organic wholeness while furthering its potential for meaningful coalition and collaboration.

This essay will locate the cyborg figuration as an exemplar of poststructuralist attempts to initiate alternative knowledge forms. I briefly explore the discursive and epistemic possibilities encouraged by Haraway's (1991) cyborg, with particular attention given to the ways in which Haraway denies the cyborg as beholden, obligated or indebted. This constructs the cyborg as a figure that is seductive in its singularity and its individualism. In hopes of encouraging use of the cyborg figure as a means for building transnational feminist alliances in our contemporary technologically-driven culture, I develop an ethic of response-ability via the work of Strine (1989), Rich (1984) and Rowe (2005).

The essay then draws connections between transnational feminism and the ethic of response-ability. Transnational feminism draws on postcolonial discourses, and meshes in effective and nuanced ways with poststructuralist theories while maintaining the importance and force of embodied experience and political efficacy, particularly through the concepts of the local and the complexities of mobility and globalization. This contrasts with the figure of the cyborg, which is notably "placeless" and "ahistorical"; i.e. it does not have its own "local." Finally, the essay closes with a brief discussion of why feminist theorists might desire the attachment and engagement demanded by an ethic of response-ability and how this ethic may further the theoretical potential and political efficacy of the cyborg figure.

Rejecting structuralism and essentialism

Theorists enact poststructuralism in as many forms as feminism itself and poststructuralist feminisms are similarly varied; however, a key principle is theorizing subjectivity. Chris Weedon (1997) calls poststructuralist feminism a form of "knowledge production" (p. 40), or a way to attend to the multiple forces of power and to identify and develop alternatives to extant (or historical) practices. Poststructuralists struggle to understand the subject as neither a simple reflection of outside forces, nor as an autonomous liberal subject devoid of exterior influence, but rather as "precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being constituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32).

This process is happening in light of what Braidotti terms the "crisis and decline of the classical system of representation of the subject, in the political, epistemological, and ethical sense of the term" (1994, p. 96). Many poststructuralist feminists see the rejection of essentialism and the upset of hegemonic narratives as a positive trend full of potentialities rather than a 'crisis.' Certainly Braidotti casts the challenges to the classical system of representation as creating new spaces for "alternative values to be postulated" (1994, p. 96). The poststructuralist project, similar to the project of feminist theory, is about re-envisioning what counts as knowledge and how knowledge is produced, consumed and circulated (see Hicks, 1990). If knowledge is partial and situated, as theorists such as Haraway (2008, 1995, 1991) argue, interrogating the production of those situated knowledges is a key element of the "theoretical genealogy … and feminist intellectual tradition" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 276). It is a proactive project rather than reactive critique, and subjectivity is a central node of that intellectual endeavor.

Poststructuralist theorists have taken up the question of subjectivity in various ways: Foucault's (1972, 1980) works emphasize the power relations of language and discourse; Butler (1990) has raised questions of performativity in relation to subjectivity and Braidotti's (1994) "nomad ethics" emphasize the processes of becoming in relation to the subject. All these "alternative" forms of subjectivity acknowledge the multiple forces, identities, locations and objects that affect our lived experience. Many feminist poststructuralists attempt to navigate the complex iterations of the self-world (inter)relationship in ways that preserve differences among individuals, build coalitions and challenge (patriarchal) norms.

Poststructuralist figurations

Often these theorists develop what Braidotti (1994) calls figurations through which to interrogate the incredibly complex (inter)relationships of individuals, groups, knowledge and power, and to highlight the possibilities of alternatives.[1] In her introduction to *Nomadic Subjects*, Braidotti writes, "a figuration is a politically informed account of an alternative subjectivity. I feel a real urgency to elaborate alternative accounts, to learn to think differently about the subject, to invent new frameworks, new images, new modes of thought" (1994, p. 1). While Braidotti credits Gilles Deleuze with the development of the figuration of the rhizome and its impact on her own figuration of the nomad, Haraway (2008) specifically cites figures as a way to "grapple" with the tensions between the material and story, narrative and myth:

> Figures help me grapple inside the flesh of mortal world-making entanglements that I call contact zones… Figures collect the people through their invitation to inhabit the corporeal story told in their lineaments. Figures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another. For me, figures have always been where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all of the force of lived reality (p. 15).

[1] N. Katharine Hayles (1999) offers the idea of "constellations" rather than figurations. Constellations are more clearly historically located, but also connote the nuanced and complex myriad of relationships at stake in any exploration of the self-world relationship and attendant concepts. Hayles' concept of constellations also preserves the dynamism of such ways of thinking about the world. As she writes, the formation of a constellation "marks the beginning of a period; its disassembly and reconstruction signal the transitioning to a different period... Rarely is a constellation discarded wholesale. Rather, some of the ideas composing it are discarded, others are modified, and new ones are introduced. Like the attributes composing and artifact, the ideas in a constellation change in a patchwork pattern of old and new" (p. 15).

This is especially significant given the commitment to materiality of Haraway's figure of the cyborg, as we examine later. Haraway's emphasis on the corporeality of the story lends credence to the cyborg as an organizing figure for alliances with transnational and postcolonial feminists. Haraway's insistence on the figure as having a physical and material reality parallels with the actualities of the postindustrial, globalized world—i.e., that there are hegemonic and colonial narratives, myths and stories that have very real physical and material consequences.

Braidotti intimates that poststructural figurations offer alternatives to specific current/contemporary concepts – such as the autonomous liberal subject. That is, figurations are tied to a specific historical moment with its attendant social and political issues and therefore do not express some totalizing or universal Truth, but rather engage with a particular project in a particular way. Thus, a project like Haraway's cyborg is neither "timeless" nor "universally applicable" – it needs "updating" and "outfitting" to address a new moment with its own social and political issues.

Why update and outfit the cyborg, in particular? Are there not many such figures and figurations, constellations of concepts to further the feminist intellectual tradition? Haraway developed the figure of the cyborg in 1991, in the days of the nascent Internet, as a figure to challenge some feminist theorists' efforts to unify feminism in a way Haraway found damaging to the preservation of specificity and difference. Haraway also wanted to rescue/liberate/steal the cyborg—that human-machine entity borne of the military-industrial complex—from sole patriarchal proprietorship. In doing so, Haraway constructed a figure confounding and challenging boundaries, one that represents the multiple tensions of technology in a way that remains relevant today. While our technologies have changed, the information society become more pronounced and the world increasingly globalized, the fundamental tensions represented in the figure of the cyborg persist. If anything, the realities of living in a highly technical, global, post-industrial capitalist society lend themselves more readily to the cyborg than the gloried, Utopian days of the early Internet and the .com boom times.

Haraway's cyborg has much to offer feminist theorists today; it remains a potent figure for alliance-building with transnational and postcolonial feminists in light of the transition of the "white capitalist patriarchy…into the domination by information technology" which has "cannibalized" women and pushed them from "the field of visible social agents" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 104). While the potential relationships between cyborg technofeminisms and transnational feminisms will be explored in more detail later, both share the goal of "shifting the focus of feminist critique [to offer] us a new set of lenses with a better chance of rendering the hitherto-invisible visible" (Yeoh, 2005, p. 62).

The cyborg

Haraway (1991) begins her (in)famous essay on the cyborg with an irreverent expression of her own desires in relation to the project at hand. She formulates her position as "blasphemous," which guards against moral compulsion, while still preserving the need for community – for Haraway, blasphemy is "not apostasy" (p. 149). In other words, Haraway is interested in constructing a figure that offers an alternative not only to a "traditional" understanding of the self-world relationship, but an "ironic political myth" (p. 149) that challenges from within the frameworks of feminism, socialism and materialism as well. A primary irony of the cyborg is its existence as a product of the military-industrial complex: its tightly woven history with violence, capitalism and informatics.

For Haraway, then, her first and boldest move with the cyborg is one of disassociation. That is, Haraway positions the cyborg as already extant as myth and reality and then proceeds to sever the figure from its socio-historical ties. Historically, the line between organic and

manufactured has been marked as impermeable and hierarchical – with that which is constructed privileged over the organic. Haraway (1991) argues "for pleasure in the confusion of [such] boundaries and for responsibility in their construction" (p. 150, emphasis in original). Haraway develops the cyborg figure as a means to debunk the narrative of technology as progressive, androcentric, and tied to the military-industrial complex. Simultaneously, Haraway's cyborg is an attempt to side step the historical baggage and contemporary debate surrounding sexual difference without abandoning materialism. The cyborg has no interest in "seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (p. 150). This is one of the tenets of the cyborg as a construct: a dedication to unfinished-ness. While the cyborg can seek new connections, new technologies, new parts to be configured resulting in various degrees of success, it is never complete. To be complete is to be fixed, named, united and unified; to be complete is to capitulate to the very arguments for organic wholeness Haraway tapped the cyborg to confound.

To debunk this narrative of technology and side step the debate of sexual difference, Haraway rejects a long "laundry list" of theoretical "debts." For instance, she says the cyborg has no origin story because an origin story depends on original unity and identification with nature, which she denies the cyborg. This itself can raise objection, since theorists such as N. Katharine Hayles (1999) view science as highly imbued with a "grand narrative" of progress (see Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 1989), which posits or necessitates an origin and conceivably also an end point. We must also question whether Haraway's attempts to sever the cyborg from its origin story are successful, and if they are, what problems the success causes. If the cyborg's radical break from its own lineage is complete, then theorists employing the cyborg need not acknowledge the cyborg's patriarchal, capitalistic roots. Maintaining awareness of those roots, questioning what assumptions and meanings the cyborg packs, is key to producing intellectually honest theory. We cannot attempt theoretical coalitions between technofeminisms and transnational feminisms without acknowledging the uneven application of technology, its patriarchal and capitalist roots, and its exploitive realities. Yet, Haraway's initial efforts to sever the cyborg are not without value.

In a sweeping paragraph, Haraway positions the cyborg as existing beyond the desire for wholeness, and as standing outside all dualisms. She denies the cyborg's lineage, marking the figure as often "unfaithful" to both militarism and patriarchal capitalism. In this, she repositions the cyborg as not belonging necessarily to that lineage. This allows the cyborg to take up new causes and head in new directions; it frees the cyborg to be a potential vehicle for feminist theory and work. Haraway locates the cyborg as a figure "resolutely committed to partiality" while simultaneously "needy for connection" (p. 151). Haraway argues the figure's "wariness" of holism and traditional (organic) models of community does not negate the figure's desire for or ability to connect. This allows for the possibility of political engagement and collaboration, though does not necessitate or even encourage it.

Haraway's opening arguments are necessary for the figure of the cyborg to inhabit the space of an alternative poststructuralist narrative (see Weedon, 1999). These moves are simultaneously the strength of the cyborg figure in technofeminism and a question of its usefulness as a feminist poststructuralist figuration. That is, despite Haraway's repeated insistence on the cyborg's political potential for engagement, the moves required to create the figuration of the cyborg limit its viability in terms of political efficacy.

Haraway's overview of the "fracturing" of feminism via the rise of identity politics again articulates her desire to reject what she terms the "natural matrix of unity." She offers a stinging, though oversimplified, review of Catherine MacKinnon's version of radical feminism, which Haraway calls "totalizing in the extreme" (p. 159). Though her rejection of this basis for political efficacy rightly preserves the differences between and among women, the rest of her construction never seems to recover from this radical rejection of indebtedness,

history and community. Haraway arrives at an unnecessarily harsh conclusion: we should embrace the cyborg for its partiality, and (most) coalition-building feminisms overcome the fracturing of feminism through the erasure of difference and we should consider them warily, if at all. This drastically reduces the possible ways to build coalitions among feminists or other progressives. Though Haraway attempts to move beyond the cyborg's radical commitment to partiality, she cannot seem to get the purchase required for "reconstructing socialist-feminist politics" (p. 163).

Haraway parallels the cyborg's radical partiality and permeability with feminist thought of the Global South; however, her insistence on the "informatics of domination" does not sufficiently alleviate her erasure of transnational feminism's ties to the local and experiences of fractured mobilities. That is, though Haraway acknowledges the exploitation of women by/through a "world system of production/reproduction and communication" (p. 163), she does not seem to address the massive gap in technological access, the material and lived conditions in the Global South. The cyborg's placelessness fails to recognize the complexities of mobility and affective ties in the globalized world. Mobilities "no longer take the form of permanent ruptures, uprooting, and settlement, but are more likely to be transient and complex, ridden with disruptions, detours, multi-destinations, and founded in interconnections and multiple chains of movement" (Yeoh, 2005, p. 60). Haraway's desire to radically sever the cyborg from its history and present it as something neither human nor machine is not wholly successful. As Jasbir Puar argues, "Haraway's cyborgs are meant to undermine binaries—of humans and animals, of humans and machines, and of the organic and inorganic—a cyborg actually inhabits the intersection of body and technology" (p. 56). This line of reasoning, Puar continues, serves to reify both distinct categories—human and machine—rather than blur the boundaries between them.

However, the cyborg does press us to contemplate and complicate the boundary between human and machine, if not succeeding in its efforts to erase the categories. In this, the cyborg parallels the uneasy, dense positionality of those implicated in a globalized economy through and by technology. Just as "identities are multicausal, multidirectional, liminal" (Puar, 2012, p. 59) so are technologies, traditional flows of labor and culture become complicated by and through these technologies. If Haraway's figure of the cyborg attempts to sever itself from its origins in a way that may discount the complexities of that origin, how should transnational feminists ally themselves and their experiences to that of the cyborg? How can we build alliances if the cyborg figure radically disassociates with history and place (and the materiality of the local), both of which are important to transnational feminists?

The limits of cyborg coalitions

Feminist authors, including Haraway herself, have answered this question variously. If one contemplates her later writings on the cyborg (1995, 1999), it becomes clear that Haraway never envisaged the cyborg as lacking in opportunities for alliances and political efficacy. Indeed, she views her cyborg "story" as a "kind of truth [that] is situated and accountable, and therefore able to be in power-sensitive engagement with other versions and materializations of the world" (Haraway, 1995, p. xix). Thus, for Haraway the cyborg figure allows one to ally ones' self with (potentially) politically invested and efficacious O/others in a way that constitutes and reconstitutes "articulations of critical differences within and without each figure" (Haraway, 1999, p. 357). The cyborg's ahistorical and homeless mode of being, in this scenario, preserves differences but allows for alliances.

It is true that Haraway's cyborg figure does not preclude "power sensitive engagement." However, it is fair to say the cyborg figure's disassociation does not encourage such

engagement. As Jenny Wolmark (1999) discusses, cyborg politics are based "on the possibility that new and strategic alliances can be forged between unexpected groups, no matter how partial or contradictory those alliances may be" (p. 4).

The problem with such partial or contradictory alliances is a lack of accountability, or affective investment over time to a specific place, community, group or individual. In fact, some theorists argue investment and affection by humans over time to a specific geographical entity creates 'place' (see Hay, 2006). If the cyborg figure's alliances are "new kinds of local, often temporary and shifting alliances" (Wolmark, 1999, p. 4), the cyborg figure operates in a different arena than its counterparts in such alliances. The cyborg, as a temporary figure, is able to engage in a way that may not recognize the stakes and realities for those entities. Likewise, because the figure is not required or encouraged to root itself and become affectively invested in communities, groups, places or causes, we cannot guarantee the outcome of such temporary alliances. That is, organizing the world and envisioning new subjectivities via the cyborg figure may enact a bankrupt subjectivity. If, in a cyborg world, we are not required to align our interests and desires with those we seek alliance with, and if we are not accountable for the consequences of our alliances then how desirable is the figure of the cyborg as a poststructuralist feminist figuration?

Jenny Sunden (2001) accurately notes that Haraway's attempts to maintain politically efficacious transnational coalitions in relation to the cyborg figure fail to acknowledge the realities of the technologies:

> For Haraway, the telling of stories about technology has in itself a political potency and a capability to produce material changes... But to who are these textual tools of a cyborg feminist discourse accessible outside the inner circle of white, Western, middle-class cyborg feminists?...[Asking these questions] is a way to show that there might be a weak link between the feminist cyborg and the reality where women who use the new technology find themselves. (p. 217).

Sunden recognizes the shortcomings of the cyborg in terms of building coalitions, yet does not attempt to rehabilitate or re-work the figure to befit such coalition building. Sunden argues, "the politics of cyborgs are not to be found in collective, social movements, but are inextricably linked to their constantly moving borderland bodies" (p. 219). Sunden finds the cyborg best suited for other theoretical endeavors, accepting the theory/activism divide and placing the cyborg firmly in the realm of theory.

Unlike Sunden, Chela Sandoval (1995, 2000) refuses to accept the cyborg's limitations as a transnational coalition-building figure. Sandoval does much to rehabilitate the figure of the cyborg from many of Haraway's initial moves. Sandoval bases the cyborg's political efficacy on what she believes is understated yet potential in Haraway's figuration. Sandoval argues that a cyborg consciousness is merely another manifestation of the colonized consciousness. This advocated consciousness has not arrived with the advent of technology, but has existed in various forms in the colonized as a skill set "requisite for survival" (1995, p. 408).

Though Sandoval's (2000) text is somewhat over-eager, *Methodology of the Oppressed* offers constructs and critiques of interest to the project of rehabilitating the cyborg. First, Sandoval offers a well-developed analysis of the links among various horizontal metaphors of power. She marks the contemporary phenomenon of postmodern forms of power as a "globalized, flattened but mobile, grid-like terrain" (p. 74). This parallels Haraway's own description of a (possible) cyborg world as the "final imposition of a grid of control on the planet" (Haraway, 1991, p. 154). However, Sandoval's "grid" is mobile and responsive, demanding an increased vigilance on the part of the theorist. The "horizontalizing" of power can lead to the same fractures and tensions in feminism that Haraway discusses. Sandoval's answer is to explicitly "advance the possibility of connection, of a 'coalitional consciousness'

in cultural studies across racialized, sexualized, genderized theoretical domains...[which] requires a trespassing operation" (p. 79). Such a connection would open a space to practice what she terms a methodology of the oppressed.

Secondly, Sandoval's methodology of the oppressed deeply intertwines with an ethic and belief in "love as social movement" (p. 184). Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of desire, Sandoval describes love as a "hermeneutic, a set of practices and procedures that can transit all citizen-subjects, regardless of social class, toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement" (p. 140). Sandoval's insistence on desire and affect as a deeply moving force for action and coalition addresses an element that is lacking in Haraway's figure of the cyborg. Indeed, such a concept of desire emphasizes the cyborg's ability to engage while preserving difference.

Aimee Carillo Rowe (2005) emphasizes the role that desire, love and "affective investment" have in power relations. Rowe draws on Sandoval's methodology for the oppressed as a way to construct the concept of "differential belonging," which she encourages as a "tactical maneuvering across resistive communities" (p. 15). Again, the cyborg figure is capable of enacting "differential belonging," is built in such a way that its only means of belonging is differential. The cyborg is well able to engage in this way; however, there seems to be a lack of impetus for the figure to do so.

The cyborg as a figure offers substantial opportunity for poststructuralist feminists to re-vision the world. Its commitment to partiality and its flexibility make it capable of enacting widely varied connections. Such connections preserve the differences of those involved; the cyborg need not appeal to holisms, origins or essentialized likenesses for such connections. As Wolmark (1999) summarizes, cyborg politics are "necessarily based on the possibility that new and strategic alliances can be forged between unexpected groups, no matter how partial or contradictory those alliances may be" (p. 4). Yet how can we avoid feeble alliances, tenuously and temporarily built? In other words, how can the cyborg figure engage ethically in transnational coalitions with feminists invested in the material realities of specific times and places? If we are to use the cyborg as a figure through which to understand self-technology relationships, and in turn our relationships with knowledge production and power, we should encourage the cyborg figure to invest emotionally and intellectually in connections, and to desire such connections be beneficial at the local level. The connections do not require permanence, but rather an ethic, a guiding morality that recognizes that though unfettered, theorists should deploy the figure of the cyborg with the same level of care and self-reflection most feminist methodologies require.

An ethic of response-ability

One way to accomplish these goals is to envision an ethical "prosthesis" for the figure of the cyborg, something to "outfit" the cyborg figure for such connections. Imagining such a prosthesis as an optional attachment for the cyborg figure enables the cyborg to have an attachment for attachment, a means for engaging in connections ethically and responsibly. It serves to enhance the humanity of the cyborg through technology, rather than the diminishing or erasing humanity and human affect.

Returning to the work of Rowe (2005) and Sandoval (2000), we find affective desire as playing a central role in the construction of the self-world relationship. Rowe develops what she calls a "politics of relation," a play on Rich's 1984 "politics of location." Rowe argues that our affective ties are a source of power; those things that we choose to care about become stronger through our affect. A politics of location emphasizes the situatedness and specificity

of individuals and positions. Yet a politics of relation recognizes that the specificity of the individual is not the primary motivation in politics, but rather our affective ties.

Mary Strine (1989) discusses the "complex interconnections between voice and value" (p. 4) in Adrienne Rich's poetry, and terms Rich's later work an exercise in personal "response-ability" (p. 33). The term seems a particularly apt one for preserving the impetus toward political efficacy while maintaining the importance of accountability. Strine argues that:

> [P]ersonal response-ability replaces systematic analysis as the unifying strategy of poetic self-enactment. Two self-directed questions frame the exploratory process now: "With whom do you believe your lot is cast?/From where does your strength come?"...More importantly, they signal a shift in emphasis from the problems of the feminine self-identity per se to constructive dialogic engagement with the social and historical circumstances from which that self-identity emerges (p. 33, italicized lines from Rich, as quoted by Strine).

The guiding questions, "With whom do you believe your lot is cast? / From where does your strength come?" are the foundations of the ethic of response-ability. The question "With whom do you believe your lot is cast?" can be updated for the here and now, demanding that one acknowledge the realities of globalization and the flow of capital, labor, information and people; that is, one must acknowledge the lives and stakes of previously disparate peoples and places as now intersecting in new and multiplying ways. The question "From where does your strength come?" stresses a personal accounting of attachments, an awareness of our own biases, alliances and history. Even a cyborg, as removed from history and without debt as Haraway constructs it, is still – by definition – a hybrid of human and machine. Thus, its human elements (and our own, should we use the cyborg figure as a means to envision alternate forms of knowledge production and subjectivity) are never devoid of some bias, some history. To pretend otherwise is to enter into dangerous territory indeed.

These two questions create an intersubjective and iterative process of experience, one of self-reaching-out and the other of self-made-available to the world. Though Strine terms the phrase "response-ability," and quotes the two lines from Rich's poetry, she does not discuss response-ability as a process of repeating these two questions. The ethic of response-ability takes the local as its starting point, for it is in the local that we respond to the world, that we live our sphere of ability. Any entity engages with the world from someplace, and while our technological reach may be global, we still inhabit the local.

Take, for instance, our contemporary communication technologies like the Internet. Those of us with material and knowledge abilities can access a global network, we can connect with others across the world, and we can participate in transnational flows of information, money and labor. Yet we access these technologies with our bodies, situated materially in a location. In such a location, we have experiences and interactions aside from those we have in the global network. The hardware we use to access the Internet is produced in a place, and needs to be physically available to us. It may be seductive to think of ourselves as entering into a non-material space, but such an idea "draws on an abstract, disembodied concept of the individual that is far removed from the concrete day-to-day practices which make individuality and forms of togetherness possible in the first place" (Kelemen and Smith, 2001, p. 377).

Thus, an ethic of response-ability foregrounds the role of the local, demanding an account from within, from the sphere of ability. Likewise, the ethic's outward-focused element, 'with whom do you believe your lot is cast?', emphasizes the material indebtedness and interconnectedness of individuals and groups. Even if we adopt the solitary-minded cyborg as a figure through which to envision new forms of knowledge production, any alternate forms of understanding the world must address the differential needs and experiences of various groups and individuals, and recognize the impact of globalization as non-uniform (see Hegde, 1998;

Shome and Hegde, 2002). An ethic of response-ability offers an ongoing process that may produce and maintain productive feminist alliances.

Choosing to connect

The cyborg is essentially permeable. Haraway constructs the figure as blurring the boundaries between organic and inorganic, a figure that is partial and unfinished, constantly changing and adjusting. Incorporating an ethic of response-ability in such a figure is, I believe, consistent with the aims and purposes of the cyborg as Haraway originally understood it. Such an ethic updates the cyborg for more productive coalition building in our increasingly complex global environment. It furthers Sandoval's rehabilitation of Haraway's cyborg, and encourages the cyborg to engage in an ethical, iterative process of connection.

It is important to note that the ethic of responsibility is an optional attachment for the figure of the cyborg. Necessitating such a prosthesis negates the cyborg's careful commitment to partiality, as well as undermining the feminist goal of promoting individual choice. As noted earlier, even the choice to use the prosthesis does not "complete" the cyborg as a construct; there remains room to change, grow, become and connect in new ways. Why would a theorist interested in the cyborg figure make the choice to use the prosthesis?

The most important reason for a theorist to "outfit" the cyborg with an ethic of response-ability is that it multiplies the cyborg figuration's possibilities for political efficacy. If we align and ally the cyborg and its associated technofeminisms with transnational feminisms, we can build global coalitions that have a greater ability to respond to our contemporary context. With such an ethic of response-ability, we can better understand and shape the material realities of growing technology use to benefit women and further poststructuralist feminist goals of inclusion. The precarious, shifting and globalized world is deeply resonant in the rapid, ever-changing actualities of technology. Technofeminism has much to gain from adopting an ethic of response-ability, and deepening its affective ties.

Future scholarship should investigate the potential repercussions of incorporating cyborg scholarship into transnational alliances. For instance, once transnational feminists ally with poststructuralist feminists who are using the cyborg as a figuration, what material effects might there be on the lived experiences of those in the Global North and the Global South? In particular, future research should investigate the ways in which such alliances may bridge the gap between theory and activism. Though the optional attachment of the ethic of response-ability outfits the cyborg for careful coalition building, the fruitfulness of such alliances remains an unanswered question.

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Original Article

Seeking, Negotiating, and Generating Common Ground. Microanalyses of Communication Dynamics with a View to Emergent Cooperation

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Abstract: The paper presents a field study that looked at teaching contexts as instances of joint knowledge construction. The study was part of a larger enterprise in the vein of grounded theory, exploring qualitative connections between communication dynamics and evolving cooperation patterns, aiming to provide feedback to theories on the overall relationship between communication and cooperation. This study also involved looking at the joint problem definition and planning in groups of adults with different socio-cultural backgrounds. In the kinds of settings selected, participants are likely to start with diverging strategies and axioms used in articulating knowledge. Comparative analyses of formal and extracurricular teaching situations are presented in the paper, and their implications are explained in the conceptual framework of common ground, private experience, and public knowledge products. The focus is on the communicative context, the role that verbal contributions and interpersonal strategies play in jointly framing a problem: how different dimensions of communication complement or interfere with each other to serve the purposes of local and long-term coordination and knowledge production, and meanwhile shape the community. In the preliminary theoretical considerations governing the study, I aimed to develop a perspective that enables the exploration of the types of situations selected, and this has been refined to give meaningful analysis of such situations. I am presenting strategies that simultaneously shape cooperative potential and construct the means that enable joint action and limit its form, involving the creative mobilization of private worlds.

Keywords: verbal and non-verbal interaction, common ground, communication, teaching, coordination, private and public

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Introduction

Aim of the study, theoretic background

The study presented in the paper was motivated by my interest in exploring joint planning, community action, and the generation of common knowledge in situations where participants come from different sociocultural backgrounds and represent diverging, even incompatible schemes for defining problems and organizing knowledge. Due to these characteristics, such situations represent high levels of uncertainty for the success and prospects of cooperation. The fieldwork results analyzed in this paper are part of a larger study conducted in a process that is in line with the method of grounded theory (Glaser 1965).The specific contexts chosen are also connected to cross-cultural sensitivities and enduring social problems which are left intact or are reproduced by macro-scale processes of change, and the situations analyzed are events where handling such enduring problems is one important aspect of the activities in question. The paper presents a systematic comparison of formal (regular) and extracurricular teaching situations, which were part of a bigger study that comprised fieldwork conducted in teaching situations, as well as in situations aimed at joint project planning and generating informal supportive networks. I focused on ways in which communicative factors at the interpersonal level affected the emergence of a newly shared framework of knowledge and cooperation. At a most general level, I sought to describe and explain instances where more complex problem definitions and bases of cooperation are not found but emerge, not as fixed frameworks (not, e.g., by the selection of a dominant individual's preferred framework), but as defined in social interaction.

The overall goal of the larger study was to provide feedback from fieldwork to theorizing about cooperation and various qualitative aspects of its relationship to communication. Therefore, the questions and hypotheses governing the study are articulated against an interdisciplinary background, drawing on and developing specific theories of communication, joint action, cooperation, trust, and change. I was interested in whether, and to what extent, permanent or stable changes in knowledge structures can launch based on interpersonal dynamics, as bottom-up processes, and what role such processes can play in the emergence of innovations in a coordination system, or in the emergence of new coordination systems. All of the theories I rely on provide important insights to my explanations, but none of them could fully account for the emergence of joint problem definitions in an interpersonal setting. The school study has been a first step towards formulating an extension of these approaches that better accounts for emergence and transformation in situations involving a higher degree of uncertainty. While the traditional conception of formal education as knowledge transfer lends itself to being grasped by the conception of communication as information transfer, here I am taking a different perspective that is in line with the constructivist view and looks at teaching situations as instances of generating common knowledge. While the dynamics explored by the study could be relevant in any teaching situation, schools with mostly disadvantaged students were chosen because a higher degree of uncertainty might be expected in these situations due to the sociocultural gap.

Cooperation has been at the heart of communication theories since Grice (1975), and there has been a shift from explaining it as a maxim or rule towards more compelling arguments that see it as an inherent assumption in cognitive processes triggered by communication (Sperber and Wilson 1986) or as the motive of uniquely human communication (Tomasello 2008). Relying on Grice's initial conceptualization as a presumed or desirable attitude by the speaker, a set of rules that support efficient communication, Sperber and Wilson (1986) offer a theory in the cognitivist vein, assuming the presence of specialized cognitive processes in human communication. They draw on the principle of cooperation, but stress the importance of

inferences, the reading of intention, and a mutually available cognitive context. Their account rests on the notion that cognitive processes are geared at enhancing knowledge about the world. Clark and Brennan (1991) point out the importance of common ground and describe the processes involved in finding it in interpersonal situations. Their explanations take common ground for granted, available, and only to be agreed on in a given communicative act. In addition to some logical difficulties that this assumption stumbles on (as explained by Sperber and Wilson 1986), I am also arguing that common ground may not be available in any given situation and for any given content, and this is especially relevant in the situations I am dealing with. Sperber and Wilson offer a complex account with the ambition of universal scope. They operate with the concept of cognitive context, which is more the product of the interaction and more flexible. According to this explanation, when perceiving a situation as communicative, an automatism is triggered and this determines the receiver's cognitive processes at a profound level. The receiver will assume cooperation on behalf of the speaker, and her own cooperative stance involves the reading of intentions (especially the intention to inform), inferences, and interpreting the utterance within the communicative context mutually available to the participants. The assumption of such deterministic processes may raise a number of questions: whether there is always a single best context emerging for the cognitive processes; what happens if no context is found to be in line with the aim of extending knowledge; and whether the choice of context and the effort put into processing solely depends on the automatic processes the authors assume to be triggered by communication.

Tomasello's conception of human communication rests on an argument that is, in a sense, the inverse of the above: here, cooperation is the end, the motivation of uniquely human communication (Tomasello 2008). He stresses the importance of certain cognitive capacities, like understanding joint intentions; the ability to represent complementary actions, roles and goal hierarchies leading to a common goal; and the ability to take alternate roles during the process of attaining a goal. The underlying mechanisms that motivate humans for engaging in these special interactions with others, and are present in infants, include monitoring the activity of the other and reacting in an alternating manner (social contingency), as well as mirroring and sharing emotional states in diverse ways (Tomasello 2005).

While the approaches summed up here have provided some important aspects for grasping and analyzing the processes I observed as instances of emergent cooperation and knowledge construction, the assumptions questioned here do not seem to account for all aspects of the kinds of events I chose to study: ones where the basis for common knowledge might be a matter of choice, be questioned or contested, or an element of uncertainty or indefiniteness is involved. One might need an alternative view, in which the nature of the cognitive processes can depend on other factors in the communicative situation, such as perceived cooperative potential.

Taking into consideration the above approaches and some additional perspectives that I sum up in the next paragraphs, the conception of communication that I found useful in analyzing my observations is in line with Horányi's (2009) conceptualization of the communicative as geared at integrating individuals into some community. This general framework supports a flexible view of cooperation principles and intentions, which is desirable for grasping the phenomena of change and uncertainty that we can count on in this setting. It does not presume a coherence of common knowledge and frames. Whatever is publicly presented in a scene of communication may be fitted in a shared meshwork of meanings, and adaptation to a coherent meshwork may be a matter of constitutive processes, while weak alignments and contradictions might also be sustained. On the other hand, coherence or the presence of common horizons for knowledge does not automatically entail a matching of more general cooperation principles.

On the other side, explanations of human cooperative action offered by game theoretic approaches base their explanations on the momentum of taking decisions about cooperating,

and on the kinds of problems with relation to which cooperative decisions are taken (e.g., Gintis 2009). Norms and other coordination systems are explained as a way of reducing the amount of computation necessary for taking everyday decisions in this paradigm (Simon 1982, cited by several authors, e.g., Gintis 2009, Good 1988). On the other hand, evolutionary explanations focus on the fact that these coordination systems are specific to groups of people (Kurzban & Neuberg 2005; Haselton et al. 2005). However, all these accounts handle frameworks of strategic decisions that are fixed, and do not account for cases when decisions to change the framework are taken, or for how problems can be seen as malleable in processes involving social action. Decisions to take cooperative action are taken to be in close relationship with trust, and are in fact often taken to be identical with it in experimental paradigms (Gintis 2009). In this approach, decisions about cooperation are seen as made in a solitary mind, and experimental studies in this paradigm are often conducted in anonymity, without the partners communicating with each other. Studies where communication is allowed reveal connections between cooperative decisions and a limited, though widening range of factors, like the ability to make verbal agreements and promises or the richness of the medium of communication (Sally 1995, cited by Gintis 2009, Balliet 2010). The present study represents a perspective that points towards a different grasp of this relationship, involving profound changes at the level of semantics.

Several authors have explored the way trust is entwined with the social context and the way levels of trust are dependent on it (Fukuyama 1995; Tilly 2005; Luhmann 1988). These accounts also operate with a stable social context, while explanations of social change speak about dramatic processes or turns (Turner 1974; Cosmides and Tooby 1992), rather than slower paced small scale processes. The situations I am dealing with are often also laden with conflict, but also imply different problematics and possibilities, raising the question of how (or whether) permanent and stable change in cooperation systems can emerge in such circumstances. I owe some aspects of my analyses to Victor Turner's (1969) explanations of the dynamics of stability and change, and the sense in which I am using the term *connectivity* in this paper draws on his concept of *communitas*. Specific anthropological analyses, such as one explaining the ways symbolic systems foster connection and change and mediate between the private and the public worlds (Obeyesekere 1981), as well as a decision-theoretic account of how public representations and awareness of joint perception affects decisions (Chwe 2001), have also inspired the study, although these works explain a different scope of events, and the dynamics are different in many respects.

In addressing the question of coordination, the game theoretic approach operates with a definition of common knowledge formulated by Lewis (1969). This conception of common knowledge has a strict propositional form: it is expressed as mutual beliefs of facts and beliefs about the beliefs of other actors about the same facts. In this sense, common knowledge drives mutual expectations about the behaviors of others, and is the basis of conventions that ensure the coordination of actions in certain cases to serve the mutual benefit of the actors in cases where several alternative actions may lead to mutually favorable solutions. Lewis identifies the sources of such expectations as agreements, salience or precedent. As I pointed out earlier, the game theoretic explanations mobilize this definition in models where the problem is seen as pre-existing the act of coordination, that is, in a model that is applicable to stabilized social environments. As several authors point out, the emergent aspect of social coordination, remain unexplained in this framework (Gintis 2009; Binmore 1994). Therefore, the study of teaching contexts – among other situations – as instances of knowledge generation can be expected to add insights for exploring this question and extending the existing theories with this aspect.

By a critical treatment of these theories, I was looking for a framework in which it is possible to grasp, describe, and reflect on situations where cooperation is sought and joint activity persists when no jointly agreed problem definition pre-exists. As an initial hypothesis, I

proposed a view of interpersonal communication in which the shaping of social connections and the sizing up of cooperative potential are just as important as cognitive gain (as defined by Sperber and Wilson 1986), and these two aspects are interdependent, rather than one being reducible to the other. I was working towards a view according to which communication punctuates the flow of private and joint experiences, with points of joint reference emerging, to a certain degree, on a trial and error basis, and diverse factors in the communicative event affect joint choices. I assumed that every communicative situation could involve an element of testing the degree of community or cooperative potential and experimenting with tried or potential coordination tools.

Importantly also, activities involving communication can be seen as instances of mediating between private experience and the public domain, as well as setting and eliminating social relations and boundaries, and enabling the arrangement of social space in a finely tuned manner. The private and the public are seen as intertwined: learning *from*, *with* and *about* others, as well as *aside from* and *for* community is taking place at the same time. Generating cooperative potential is considered to be an important drive, and possible cooperative frameworks are inseparable from the structuring of portable common knowledge.

Knowledge patterns can be specific to certain groups or persons, without the users necessarily reflecting on this, and these patterns may build on axioms that are potentially incommensurable with axioms of other systems. Thus, in processes of major change or consensus-seeking, structures and familiar frames of interpretation or joint reference may be disrupted, and I assumed that supportive strategies would involve offering and seeking continuity, stable points that can serve as links between private experience and its community setting, while the overall structures are in formation. For the purposes of the present argument, I have defined common ground in a very broad sense: as any aspect of the communicative context, either pre-existing or locally found, that might emerge as a basis for a sense of community (or *connectivity*) for the participants: any aspect of the situation that participants can use as a common starting point to build on in generating common knowledge or joint problem definitions.

By asking questions based on the above outlines, I expected to be able to characterize meaningful structural differences between formal and extracurricular teaching situations, and give explanations for emerging difficulties, conflict or halting in both the former and the latter. I hypothesized that formal and extracurricular settings would show differences in the ways content for common knowledge is offered, approved and incorporated, and in the ways the teaching events are (or become) embedded in wider cooperation contexts and systems. The expectation was that adjustment of the theories would be justified if this framework could provide useful insight into the dynamics behind the observed events, and if the structural differences explored would account for differences in the patterns of conflict, halting or crisis in the two types of situations.

Field study in the school settings

The context

The greater part of the school study took place during a two-year period and comprised the observation of formal and extracurricular teaching events. Formal teaching events were observed in a public school in Budapest, educating students of ages 6 to 14, in an area with a high proportion of Roma residents. The majority of the classroom observations was made in two classes with students aged 10-16, with several different subject teachers. The extracurricular teaching events were art workshops that took place with groups of Roma

children at two locations and were all held by the same artist and her variable crew. The two locations were another public school and a neighboring community center in the same area, where the workshops involved mostly Roma students from the public school. The context outside the actual teaching situations was also extensively studied and is taken into account in the analyses to the degree that seems relevant to the subject.

As I pointed out in the introduction, an important characteristic of both types of settings chosen is the sustained uncertainty and a kind of extended transitional state the community lives in. It is not evident that the teaching content or even this form of teaching is continuous with the children's experiences and expectations, or seems consistent with prevailing or successful life strategies in their environment. Taking a joint framework for granted without reflecting on it can (and often does) preserve incompatible perspectives and leads to stalling or conflict. These general points are equally true and relevant in both the formal and the extracurricular teaching contexts in the Roma communities.

The school and the wider context support the sustenance and reinforcement of cooperative attitudes and a sense of community at many different levels outside the classroom. The sustenance of community at these levels involves a set of rules, regulations, incentives, and sanctions complemented with mostly social caring functions. In the meantime, while dropping out before finishing the first eight grades of education (without obtaining the lowest level "elementary school" qualification) had been very common with the previous generations, parents themselves now often report changes and confirm that there are more positive attitudes to education and its role in their life strategies. This shift is also observed in the school where the formal teaching events were observed – nearly all children are admitted to a trade or vocational secondary school at the end of the 8th grade.

There are two important differences between the two types of settings, which are clear at the outset. The first has to do with the conditions of participation in the teaching events: while both situations are embedded in the social context that generates an overall sense of community around formal education (as described above), this will affect the basics of cooperation in the two types of settings differently. The formal teaching situations are part of compulsory education, while the workshops are optional, and do not lead to obtaining any kind of certificate. Therefore, children's motivations and pressures to participate and stay involved differ in the two settings. The other major difference has to do with the kind of common knowledge expected to evolve because of the teaching process. In the formal education setting, the knowledge structure and elements owned and manifested by the teacher are expected to dominate and be preserved: common knowledge should eventually be manifested by the children with restricted criteria. The extracurricular activities represent greater freedom: they enable a high degree of flexibility and will also support the evolution of different dynamics. In the former case, the task is more that of facilitating connection with institutionalized knowledge while preserving and reproducing its form, and the latter types of situations have a greater potential for the generation of knowledge and the shaping of social space with its own roles and norms at the same time. Both of these differences entail further structural differences, which have been characterized in the framework outlined in the introduction.

Methods and aspects of observation

Data in the extracurricular teaching setting was collected with participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and regular targeted conversations with the lead artist. I visited the weekly art workshops for one semester, paid follow-up visits later on, and made follow-up interviews with the lead artist of the instructor crew. The extracurricular setting was flexible enough to allow me to engage in much interaction with the children during instruction as well

as outside the workshops, and even facilitate the workshops when it seemed adequate. As participation in the workshops was optional, students fluctuated, with the same 6-10 children of ages 10-14 participating each time. During the semester when I followed the workshops closely, they took place in a classroom in the public school, and later they moved to the neighboring community center, still recruiting students from the same school. Other locations within the school and in the neighborhood were sometimes chosen for shooting videos and taking photos.

Data in the formal setting were collected during three consecutive semesters: a focused study of teaching situations with participant observation began after a preparatory phase, in the second half of the second semester. A total number of 23 teaching classes were observed, 45 minutes each, taught to groups of 8-10 children by a subject teacher supported by one assistant teacher. The subjects taught were mathematics, literature, history, English, (comprehensive) natural science, and drawing. The classroom observations were complemented by interviews with the school staff (one program manager and one program coordinator) about the school's program and their own methods and views; a questionnaire filled by volunteering members of the teaching staff; and ongoing informal conversations with the children as well as the subject teachers and assistant teachers, centered around different aspects of what I had observed in the classroom and during the extracurricular activities, and also in a free flow about topics that concerned them with relationship to the school context. In addition to the formal teaching events, I spent a day with one of the classes in a "forest school" event and participated with them in extracurricular events and morning "discussion circles" held by the assistant teacher responsible for the class, focusing on daily matters.

Apart from observations at the teaching sites, I conducted an extensive exploration of the wider context of the two settings during the two-year period. I met with the families of some of the children participating in the extracurricular workshops as well as other families living in the area (10 families altogether), made interviews with a social worker responsible for the area and obtained information from other community activists, and accompanied the social worker on several visits to families in the neighborhood.

During the observations and the interviews, I used handwritten notes because I aimed at the minimum degree of interference with the events. While the data collected in the wider context provided an important backdrop for the study results, the main focus was on interpersonal communication in the classroom and the extracurricular activities. The analyses of these local interactions are the ones that are relevant to answering the questions raised in the study.

The aim was to collect qualitative data in the teaching situations, based on the focal question of the study: the establishment of common ground and the construction of common knowledge in interpersonal communication. My overall guideline was to look for the general strategies used by teachers as well as students for establishing community, finding common ground, and building common knowledge, with attention to both the verbal and non-verbal aspects and their interplay. As the other side of this dynamic, I also looked at the ways boundaries might be set, attitudes shaped and coordination (along with commitment, community, and cooperation) accepted, neglected or refused. The more specific questions asked at the outset were: how are points of joint reference made mutually available and taken as common ground; who are they manifested by, and how are they accepted (or why are they rejected or neglected) by participants; what sources is the emerging common knowledge, joint problem definition or art product based on: how is a consensual public representation built from the contributions of different participants; [this part is to be rephrased as the sense is unclear] what verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication are brought into play in the process; how does all this shape the structure of community and knowledge: joint, complementary and discrepant perspectives; whether in these situations there is always need for translating and exploring the other's background, or shortcuts can be generated to community and connectivity on the spot; how

coordination tools emerge as local or portable; what determines whether certain norms, values, frames of reference, etc. are flexible, malleable or rigid; and how consensus is sought and achieved throughout.

Results: Systematic differences between the subject teaching settings and the art workshops

Some systematic differences of communication observed between the two types of settings are closely related to the overall differences between the settings as outlined above: the desirable kind of common knowledge to be achieved and the conditions of participation. In this section, I first describe and explain the most systematic differences in the sources of knowledge content, the ways it is structured, and the ways connection is made with the children's private worlds, and, more generally, how common ground is sought. Then I go on to more detailed analyses of some situations that are telling as to the difficulties, obstacles and crises arising, and explain these in the framework I proposed in the introduction.

The different conditions of participation in the two settings entail certain structural differences between them. The formal teaching situations are compulsory, and also embedded in a wider institutional framework of cooperation, fulfilling a functional role. As I have pointed out, a great deal of effort is invested by social agents and school staff into reinforcing the pursuit of qualifications as a relevant strategy for Roma families. This is done at different levels, including practical and symbolic aspects of the daily life of students in the school. Short-term objectives are set and regularly reinforced, and a lot of effort is put into maintaining the classroom order. Teachers most often use frontal instruction paired with a theatrical style. Although the extracurricular workshops held in the school setting are also supported to some degree by the same contextual reinforcement, the fact that they are optional also exempts them from it. They are not seen as integral to the same long-term strategy, classroom order is not taken so strictly, and the style of teaching is more casual. These factors turn out to influence the way participants put effort into seeking common ground: offering it and dealing with what is offered. Systematic differences were also found in the types of difficulties, haltings, conflicts, and crises arising in the two types of situations.

Seeking common ground

One way of finding common ground, starting points for constructing common knowledge is by establishing links between the private worlds of the children and the knowledge product, and this strategy is used in both types of settings. However, the ways it is done in each case differ significantly. In the formal setting, where a well-defined knowledge product is an expectation, finding organic match or basis for common ground requires a greater effort, and there are limitations to how it can be done adequately. The effort is often taken on by teachers, who employ different tools to adjust private experience to knowledge when looking for links between them. They tend to pick and offer what seems appropriate to them, and this is often done by default – they prefer tools that, as they assume, respond to children's experience and beliefs. Such strategies were not typical in the extracurricular workshops, where there are much less restrictions on the desired end result. Exerting content from the children directly is much more common here: instructors offer open and flexible frameworks, and ask for accounts of children's experiences, beliefs, preferences, ideas, while they rarely come up with attributed content. This, in part, also has to do with the subjects taught in each case. However, in comparison with art-related classes in the formal setting, such differences are still marked. As opposed to the formal context, a wide variety of content is often approved in the workshops,

and children's suggestions rarely meet with rejection or criticism. Such differences may not necessarily characterize all teaching situations in these two types of settings; however, in the observed cases, the ways that difficulties, instability, conflict, halting or crisis arose were different, and had to do with these strategies combined with the nature of uncertainties and indefiniteness in the cooperation system.

Based on the above general differences and strategies by which content is sourced and arranged, ordered and aligned in these two contexts, we might observe that the extracurricular context represents a generative strategy of arriving at common knowledge, with a less elaborate and less restrictive initial frame and the molding of new content sourced from private worlds, and the formal context lends itself better to the conceptualization of common knowledge as filling information gaps within an existing and fixed framework. However, the success of finding connection and adjustment often required the disruption of the fixed framework, and not just the import, if only temporarily, of private knowledge elements in the latter context too.

Difficulty, halting, conflict, and crisis

In the formal teaching situations, the most typical conflicts or obstacles to success had a local focus, and had to do with the effort needed to keep children engaged: find organic links and sustain willingness and ability to participate in the given situation. Difficulties mostly had to do with either the desirability or the (perceived) feasibility of cooperating and finding meaningful connections locally. In the extracurricular teaching context, instructors put a great emphasis on finding and sustaining links, even loose ones, between children's private worlds and imported knowledge, and connecting was made easy. Technical learning and practice seemed more like a by-product, while great efforts were put into continuously learning about the children and incorporating their content into the products. The result was a wide platform available for finding common ground. The teachers enabled participants to create a pool of shared representations, but that was less structured: the relations, functions, ends, and sometimes even the meanings of these representations (e.g., artworks) remained, to some extent, undefined. Minor local difficulties did arise, but they were casually overcome here, while some major crises and difficulties to proceed with the project as a whole arose due to the undefined nature of the wider cooperative framework: the roles, ends, and potential on the larger scale, beyond the level of the workshops.

In the following sections, I provide more detailed descriptions and some examples for techniques of connecting and the ensuing dynamics, and some cases that demonstrate the different ways in which these lead to halting, conflict or crises and how these are overcome (or not) in the two types of settings respectively.

Analyses: Strategies in the formal setting

Seeking connection, problems with common ground

Attributions by teachers

In general, children's private experiences and preliminary assumptions are treated as a basis for the articulated knowledge in the formal setting, as long as they are considered to be in line with its approved, well-formed manifestation. In most cases, however, this is only true in the phase of learning. Knowledge, as it is expected to be finally manifested by the children, will no longer include the personal elements. The relevant and portable part of the teaching content has to be left intact from personal experience.

When children's experiences are used as links between material and private world, they are most often attributed rather than exerted in this setting: that is, they are based on the general assumptions of the teacher about children of this age. We could also say that the teacher maintains control over the form of knowledge and relevant ways of connecting and adjusting it to private worlds. This, in turn, affects the kinds of challenges that arise with this strategy.

Many of the subject teachers have little first-hand knowledge of the children's private worlds: they do not interact with them informally as much as assistant teachers, family contact persons, and other support staff. When they resort to examples, they might take certain experiences for granted without checking whether the children actually have them. Being familiar with motorway signs, measurement routines, buying a TV, taking a loan, an experience of oppression or poverty have been imported as examples for a demonstration in explanations of math or history. Some of these experiences the children may be familiar with, others they may not. I have often faced the fact that few of these children ever move out of the district, so many of them are unlikely to ever travel by motorway or be familiar with the zero kilometer stone, which is located in another area of the city.

Difficulties with attributed experiences

Attributed experiences incorporated into the discussion of certain topics as familiar examples may or may not facilitate engagement, depending on other factors. When the students' perspective is successfully taken or attended to during discourse, relying on attributed experience is a powerful tool for engagement. However, when the teacher is mistaken about children's familiarity with the given experiences or examples are cited without attention to the relevant perspectives, or the perspective is not matched with the appropriate nonverbal style, communication gets cumbersome, and its flow is disrupted. On one occasion, a math teacher cited a mix of examples to make his point, including knowledge that had been a great revelation to him sometime in the past (e.g., the physics of the light bulb). This was accompanied by non-verbal gestures and intonation that would be used with novel and intriguing facts. In fact, this did not seem to correspond to the children's perspective and led to fuzzy orientation and loss of connection with them. In other cases, general enthusiasm on the side of the teacher paired with personalized attentive communication, independent of content, could successfully support creating connectivity at a more general level, which then served as a good basis to build on.

The flow of communication seemed to be supported when nonverbal styles matched the perspectives implied, provided that participants easily adapted to or accepted these perspectives. When importing stories, verbal elements (e.g., the use of personal pronouns, role-play, "as if" stories) and non-verbal gestures and styles (make-believe, expressions of wonder, attitudes, and emotions) could create or imply an invisible social space, in which children, as well as the teacher, were situated. This, however, was more easily achieved when children's actual experiences were also used as links.

Children's own private experiences – a marginal role

Explicitly exerting children's own accounts of their experiences has been surprisingly rare in the formal teaching situations. Only in one observed case was the children's private experience directly addressed and linked to the teaching content: a history teacher enquired children about their own stories about religion and linked the discourse to the subject in question (Reformation). By this, she effectively complemented her generally suggestive style and narrative that also relied on emotions and attitudes attributed to the children, which in itself helped them to go with her flow of stories. In general, however, much private experience was shared informally, but mostly with the support staff, as I shall explain later.

Responding to children's personal requests for content was also rare: an arbitrary request to learn about tattoo motives was fulfilled in an art class, and some content related requests were taken into account in a literature class. This increased children's initial motivation and generated an air in which they were at ease, but it did not in itself secure smooth flow of the related activity throughout. When voluntary accounts of or references to private experiences offered by the children were used as links, they were usually rephrased and adjusted to the desired knowledge frames by the teacher.

Sharing private experiences or extra knowledge for their own sake during class with subject teachers was not frequently initiated on either side. When children were given time for activities that were not an integral part of teaching, the need for engaging with them was often also suspended, or such opportunities were not taken. This happened when a math teacher proposed to share extra subject related skills – to teach one of the more interested students to play MahJong – in the computer lab at the end of instruction: he met with a lack of interest. In the meantime, the children watched YouTube videos of their relatives – musicians, and only the assistant teacher was familiar with or interested in this aspect of their lives. Generally speaking, although subject teachers did mobilize personalized knowledge that they had of the students, institutionalized common knowledge and less formal community were generated at different levels in the school setting, and no continuity was sought or realized between them: the "caring" and the "knowing" functions were separated to a certain degree. This, of course, left a much narrower ground for connecting within the classroom.

Voluntary contributions by children – difficulties and successful strategies

A typical reason for halting or even conflict was when links were not found between children's contributions and the material. Remarks that can disrupt the flow may be and have been interpreted as willingness to contribute content or just join in or as unwillingness or even hostility, or just difficulty in participating. While attitude reading was frequent and could be more or less successful, a different strategy seemed to be applicable to a number of such cases and has been successful in every instance it was observed. Here are a few examples that demonstrate the dynamics of both strategies.

Some of the teachers attended sensitively to verbal contributions by the children, rephrased and elaborated them, and sometimes even interpreted why some of them would not fit the structure of the knowledge they manifested. However, children's irrelevant contributions were sometimes just interpreted as signs of willingness or unwillingness to get involved. One of the boys with an especially disadvantaged background demonstrated an eagerness for participating and learning. I observed him drop in irrelevant answers on two occasions with two different teachers, who responded to that differently. The first teacher took the student's repeated irrelevant contributions to the history class ("Bastille" and later on "Slovakia" to several different questions in a line) as eagerness to be involved and put more effort into helping him grasp the framework. The other teacher in a literature class interpreted a contribution of 'empty content' ("Something!") as reluctance to collaborate, and reacted to it accordingly. In the latter case, the assistant teacher and I agreed that this interjection was also a sign of willingness. Similar to his remarks in the history class, the interjection could be easily interpreted either as reluctance or as sincere willingness: the boy's style was abrupt and slightly impatient, which could be explained as an intention to contribute paired with helplessness, or as a sign of irritation and a hostile attitude. The teacher explicitly verbalized his own interpretation (that this was a sign of negative attitude – "Because you don't want to [cooperate]"), upon which the boy protested, claiming that his remark might have been taken as a valid answer. In fact, it could actually be seen as an act of offering a wide platform for sharing content, a kind of empty, but common, ground. At the same time, however, it also invited the teacher to take on the

greater part of the effort. The episode disrupted the flow of the teaching situation and opened up a minor conflict. The conflict was not explicitly clarified on the spot, but a more balanced basis of cooperation was set between the teacher and this student as well as the others later during the class, and I observed a shift in the teacher's strategy towards more exploratory communication and much rephrasing and interpretation of children's contributions in the next semester. He would welcome spontaneous remarks and contributions without immediately reacting to them. This brought into play experiences and links that would probably not have come up as relevant otherwise, such as the notion of the hero as known to children from popular culture, or their free associations on temporality that came up when the theme was the symbolism of seasons. Not all of these were explicitly linked to the content, but they were left "up in the air" nevertheless, and the teacher selected points of reference from them. In fact the restrictions of the adequate form of knowledge and looking for connectivity are forces that produce opposing effects, and they extinguished each other in the case of the boy in the literature class. By letting content stay in an undefined status rather than structuring knowledge at every step. Later on, the teacher helped the generation of space and resources for common ground. This can be seen as an instance of temporarily disrupting the existing knowledge frame, rather than the simple filling of some information gap within the existing framework. As the example of the conflict above demonstrates, such gap filling may sometimes be impossible due to the incompatibility of the existing mutual knowledge frames of the students and the teachers.

A similar strategy was used by a young art teacher during a class of 'initiation': her first time with a group of students, in a rather hostile environment. She patiently and steadily neglected rude provocations, while using other contributions from students to establish common ground and build on it. By neither going with the negative current nor reacting to it, she managed to even out some of the tension, and this helped her to maintain her control of the joint activity. However, this required some initial consensus built on a joint decision about the content to be taught.

Overall, letting free way to children's contributions without immediately adjusting them to some shared structure and using them only as potential sources of common ground was a general strategy that has promoted the flow of communication in several cases. This sometimes involved deselecting certain contributions by just neglecting or adjusting them, as exemplified by the history class.

Connection not sought

The above examples demonstrate that finding common ground locally requires special strategies and efforts within the structured cooperation framework of formal education. Situations of instruction differ from each other in the ways instruction is done, but there are also cases when common ground is not sought at all or is even rejected when offered, and these situations constitute enduring halting of the knowledge generation process. When some of the students persistently refused to "step on" common ground, to engage with the content by any means, this was invariably attributed by the staff to the low appeal of education and incompatible cooperative commitment: those children came from families that made a living from (sometimes illegal) activities that required no qualification, and they adapted to that life strategy. Such students would not attend classes regularly, and even when they did, they were apparently non-cooperative. One of them felt free to stand up and walk out of the classroom when a minor conflict emerged between him and the teacher during class, and he would never return later during that day. These students would consent to no platform of cooperation either locally or at a more general level, and staff members saw this as an issue that probably remains unresolved as long as they are of school age.

A language class illustrated a case where it was the teacher who did not clearly initiate or even accept cooperation and community, even though it seemed highly desirable for the children. The teacher apparently represented a role model to the girls in the class in certain respects, especially in her appearance, as a beauty ideal. They kept praising her long, shiny hair, and sought several informal channels of contact, using a very kind tone. In their eyes, her appearance represented a high prestige competence. She either spectacularly neglected the remarks, or just told the children to mind their work. The desks and chairs were arranged in a circular fashion, but no element of the interactions implied joint attention or connectivity. While assigning tasks to pairs of children, the teacher pointed and referred to books and dictionaries, but did not engage in an eye contact or look at the text jointly with them. She was contained and confident, walked around with an upright posture, staying outside the circle of chairs and looking on the students more like an outside observer. She dropped occasional remarks on them to the assistant teacher, disapproving their manners and the way they handled the books ("They do not deserve it"), but not addressing children directly and not even offering a platform for negotiation indirectly (like, for example, saying these things loud enough so the children could protest). Her whole nonverbal style had a character of dignity, confidence, and she kept them at a distance. Probably because her appearance represented high prestige and high desirability of community to the children, they were inclined to adapt to a certain extent: they were much calmer and more controlled than they were in other classes, where teachers initiated community more actively. In a way, their rhythm and behavioral patterns converged on hers, even if this was not really invited. They tuned into her to a certain degree, while she did not tune into them at all. No level of common ground seemed to be acknowledged by her, not even as a potentiality. Content was practically not shared at all; the children were expected to work on their own the whole time. What enabled some level of connectivity was probably the fact that the children put excessive efforts into finding common ground, while she put a lot of effort into avoiding merger (assimilation to any degree on her side), and keeping her world contained. In the meantime, the children showed no sign that they read this as an attitude of rejection. They were helpless with the exercises and frustrated by this, but not by the limited connection. In comparison, open rejection rather than a contained attitude tended to evoke those children's hostility towards other teachers and groups.

The case presents a serendipitous match between values and non-subject skills, and, at the same time, a mismatch between perceptions of the social space, its structure or possible structure, and the desired degree of community. When I discussed this teacher's strategy with the school coordinator, she commented that this was one of the teachers she considered successful because of the way she could get the children to behave. This was a level of success in itself, and the coordinator seemed to have no information about children's subject performance. This limited local connection created by non-verbal tuning might have the potential to support connecting at the level of content, but that did not happen here.

Long-term failure in connecting tends to be related to discrepancies in cooperation systems on a wider scale rather than the lack of common ground locally, and these can be in connection with desirable career goals on both the children's and the teachers' side. For some teachers, working in this school constitutes a challenge, while it certainly does not have a high prestige, and is, therefore, unappealing to others, as it turns out from the questionnaires and conversations with the staff.

Analyses: Strategies in the workshops

Seeking connection

Framework and content

The workshops represent a very different attitude to children's private experiences and their incorporation in the task at hand, which is part of a methodology developed consciously by the instructors to some degree. Private experiences are seen as a desirable resource and an integral part of both the activity and the outcomes. They are not eliminated from the resulting products, but they become a portable and presentable ingredient of common knowledge manifestations. The larger part of the process is the joint activity with the intense involvement of all participants, and usually only certain sub-tasks are done individually. The social space created is a focal element of the activities and is treated more or less reflexively by the teachers, and the final product itself is sometimes a kind of map that also represents the result of the process of shaping the social relations.

The frames available for creating this joint social space are set to some degree by the way the instructors define the tasks. There is usually an artwork produced jointly: a short animated work on video, posters, a comic strip using photos of the children themselves and their artworks, a video piece with the children acting in it. The extent to which this framework is suitable for establishing common ground on the spot varies. Children sometimes take the general definition "work of art" or the more specific genres for granted, and treat them as a kind of sacred entity. At other times they are more inquisitive, even provoke and question the set goal, and sometimes they turn helpless and reluctant. In any case, this overall framework is kept stable throughout the process: once it is agreed on, the instructors never modify it. One might say that it provides the unchanging link with the worlds of the instructors, though the genre is sometimes also the result of a consensus between the instructors and the children. In any case, the framework serves as a kind of structured blank page or empty space that is offered as a most generic common ground – one without content, which the children are free to fill up.

Children can import as much private experience as they wish and can use whatever kind of experience they like, as long as they can adapt to certain expectations of the genre. Continuity with their perspectives is secured by this imported private content. An important fact that shapes the end result is that while teachers bring the framework and the professional skills, children fill it up with a story: matching is facilitated, but teachers' private histories or perspectives are not incorporated into the content. Instructors tend to give tips, suggestions for structural elements. They provide the necessary props, and then facilitate their use. They rarely contribute content of any kind themselves.

The issue of the content adaptability is weighed solely by children, and what they bring in is very rarely rejected. The frameworks are the only normative aspect presented by the teachers. Children are allowed to fill the constructs offered by the instructors very freely, no aesthetic judgement is forced or right ways of doing things are taught as long as the process is working without this. Students fill the frameworks and adapt their experiences and ideas to them, and despite their relatively frequent expressions of helplessness, the events seem to have an even flow and casual atmosphere. In the meantime, when reflecting on these situations, the lead artist reports great difficulties in making them work and a high demand for efforts (preparations, strategizing, coming up with creative ideas and, especially, ways to connect), and she is not always satisfied with the results they achieve. This is partly why she chooses the strategy of continuously extending common ground and improving the potential for common ground: exerting content for its own sake, and keeping up the process while learning about the children. The products become a way of sustaining the process, and the stress put on the end result is decreased with time. The products are not specifically designed for any purpose outside the events themselves.

Relations and style

Participants freely use their own nonverbal styles. Discipline is rarely an issue, except for outright expressions of aggression. The instructors behave casually, hardly adapting their style and rhythm to the children's: the latter is mostly done only when they face reluctance and try to get someone to perform a task or come up with an idea, or when praising children's products. This convergence of style involves modifying their tone of voice, manner of speaking and body movements to a slight degree, or in a playfully theatrical way, complementing vocabulary borrowed from the children. Aside from these episodic cases of convergence, the general sense of community sometimes seems to be missing for greater involvement and enthusiasm, but the instructors seek other ways to connect: lots of negotiation, occasional teasing, beside the lots of jointly created products. They do not stress their dominant role and authority, but rather they tend not to import and merge their own private worlds either (only their professional expertise).

The flow of communication can be kept up during an average workshop in this manner. The wide space for common ground provides many opportunities to connect, and the task framework is specific enough to provide a joint focus locally. More serious problems tend to arise in the long run, and they take the form of crises, halting for the whole project, rather than conflicts in communication between a teacher and one child on minor issues. If finding matching content for the framework is difficult locally, it is easy to look for alternative ways to proceed, as there are many alternatives for common ground.

Wider perspectives – problems and crises

The crises that emerged did not happen during the semester in which I observed the workshops in the school setting, but during the time, they were separated in all respects from the system of formal education and were held in the community center. The cases I present here are based on extensive interviews with the lead artist.

Repeated crises emerged because of the uncertainty or misfits in the long-term framework of cooperation. As the workshops are not an integral part of the education system, they are not necessary for obtaining a qualification and do not give formal credits. There is no large-scale institutionalized cooperation system into which they fit, but the possibilities for conceiving or constructing one are wide-ranging. Until this work is done, however, and the consensus is reached and somehow consolidated, there is a high degree of uncertainty in this dimension, and this tended to create ambivalent attitudes to participation, and even distrust or conflict. A very wide common ground was created as a result of long-term interaction, but if it was to become a social context of cooperation potentials at multiple levels, the need to continue jointly structuring knowledge while reflecting on and adjusting perspectives and relations with reference to wider cooperation schemes proved just as important as its availability.

Cases of crisis, halting, and conflict in this setting were due to the lack of long-term perspectives, or the incompatibility of short-term goals, products or the conditions of participation with potential goals and products on the long term or in a wider context. One such case was when one of the participants contributed fictitious content that she claimed to be factual, and a long-term production in the documentary genre was based on it and even launched. Although the fake story could just as well have been used as fictitious content by changing the framework of the product, this was not what happened when the false ground was no longer sustainable. Instead, the girl became reluctant and started to back out from participation on different pretexts. The flow of joint activity was halted because perspectives could not be adjusted to extend the common ground: that would have led to revealing the lie.

A lasting, difficult issue and source of recurring conflict was related to the use of the products beyond the workshops. This issue came up in different forms, highlighting several discrepancies between the perceptions of the participants and the artists of the wider context into which the events and products fit. On one occasion discrepancy of views surfaced relating

to the criteria by which participants and the artist judged if a product was adequate for presentation: judging by aesthetic criteria, the artist found it inadequate when the participants were willing to present it. At other times general distrust and (mistaken) assumptions about unfavorable ways the products (especially films) could be used by the artists or third parties surfaced, and there was an occasion when a conflict flared up on discrepant views of what aspect of the products constituted value – the work and technical skills invested or the images of the people. Usually, however, it was not necessary to develop tight frameworks of consensus. Demonstrating good intention, showing and proving willingness to participate with symmetrical criteria (even, for example, at the price of discontinuing the photo shoots), or reaching consensus on the overall local aims of the activities (other than presenting the products) and stating their desirability was sometimes enough to proceed.

To sum up the above, efforts by the instructors were invested in extending common ground locally in this setting, and so major conflicts and failure did not arise in this respect: all of the major crises represent perspectives of a wider context. Setting joint goals on a larger scale or even adjusting perspectives to a single unified system was not necessary for consolidating the joint activity, though. Eliminating conflict involved some clarification of perspectives, but connectivity was enough motivation in itself for proceeding. In general, however, if questions are asked about the wider context of cooperation and these are explored, coordination and change can step to a different level, in ways it is not possible in the formal teaching context. This may extend possibilities of common ground to larger structural scales, even if only as a potentiality.

Implications and directions for further study

The most important findings of the study have revealed major differences between the formal and extracurricular teaching situations. These, as well as difficulties, conflicts, and crises that emerged in both contexts could be explained along the lines proposed at the outset, while some aspects of processes, dynamics that were not expected at the outset were also highlighted.

One of the main implications of the proposed framework in view of the characteristics of the situations, namely, that restrictions on the desirable content and structure of common knowledge narrow down the scope of easily accessible common ground, is almost trivial, and relates to experiences that might be familiar to many. It may not cause grave problems in other contexts, but the study has shown that it does if there is little overlapping between the initial knowledge and general types of experiences of the teachers and the students. Staff members regularly complain that very little of the “transferred knowledge” “goes through” to the children, and they cannot really set high expectations, while this breaks down to minor but frequent difficulties perceived locally on a daily basis, causing conflict and halting the flow of teaching communication in the formal settings. On the other extreme, when the ends of cooperation and knowledge sharing are less defined and there are no significant restrictions on content, a wider space is available for finding common ground, even if little is available initially. This was the case in the extracurricular teaching situations, where major crises emerged on the long run, when there seemed to be a need to define the conditions of participation and potential wider cooperative frames. With regard to the concept of common knowledge, we could say that even in the regulated context of formal education, existing knowledge patterns had to be at least temporarily disrupted in order for connections to be made between private worlds and the presented knowledge forms.

In the analyses of the two types of situations, I have found it useful to introduce the notions of “connectivity” and “structuring” to grasp two aspects of the process of building common knowledge. Connectivity would imply extended potential for common ground, and reflecting

on and adjusting perspectives and relations would belong to structuring. One of the less explicit initial assumptions of the study has been that these two aspects should be balanced and have equal emphasis on long-term joint activities to work. The findings in the extracurricular context seem to contradict this, and imply that starting with little common ground and wide space for generating knowledge with loose structures, long term joint action can be sustained. The need to define wider perspectives and consolidate trust in some way tended to arise from time to time in the form of crises, but there was no need to settle for a complex cooperation framework or very specific long-term goals and wider perspectives for the process to go on. Though the latter had to be reflected on to some degree, the learning activity attentive to private worlds had enough appeal in itself.

While shaping the community of participants, as it was hypothesized, did seem to be part of manifesting knowledge in both settings, and perspectives had to be adjusted to some degree, both the formal and the extracurricular situations attested that no fixed structure was necessary for smooth joint activities. It did seem to be important though that without attention to different perspectives, the import of experiences as common ground was not possible. When this was attempted, disorientation or misorientation disrupted connectivity and caused helplessness, as demonstrated by examples from a math class in the formal setting, and the unclarified fictitious story in the extracurricular setting.

It has been found that where no adequate common ground was available, different efforts to generate and increase it could be successful. Widening common ground for its own sake was an emphatic pursuit in the extracurricular settings, while some specific strategies were better than others in overcoming difficulties that arose if common ground was not available in the formal settings. What these strategies had in common was that teachers allowed for the temporary presence of different contributions and perspectives from children without immediately interpreting them or relating them to knowledge, and selected the ones that seemed to support the flow of communication and the building of knowledge in some way. In general, each of the two settings put more emphasis on one of the aspects of connectivity and structuring. If the joint process was halted as a result of this bias, paying more attention, if only temporarily, to structuring in the extracurricular setting and to connectivity in the formal setting proved to be ways of promoting the flow. Keeping contributions in a suspended status, “up in the air” in the social space seems to require special effort, as attested by the reported difficulties that the artist-teacher continuously faced, while continuous structuring may render participants helpless with the complexity of perspectives or narrow down the possibilities of common ground to an impossible degree.

Possible continuations of the study include exploring the variety of means used for creating connectivity and for structuring in different settings; the ways these two aspects of joint knowledge creation are employed and interact in successful strategies; some general ways they relate to each other; and ways of reflective planning in practice based on the results. The study also has implications for pedagogy, teaching methodologies, and it can be a basis for comparison with studies of the same or similar social contexts conducted with different methods.

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Campaigning on the Internet: 2008 Presidential General Election Candidate Webpages

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Abstract: The Internet is becoming an increasingly important component of political campaigns. This study employed content analysis to apply Functional Theory and Issue Ownership Theory to Obama's and McCain's presidential candidate webpages in the 2008 campaign. Acclaims (92%) were more common than attacks (98%); defenses did not occur in this sample. Policy (82%) was addressed more than character (18%). When discussing policy, these candidates addressed future plans most frequently, followed by general goals and then past deeds; on character, candidates discussed ideals, then personal qualities, and then leadership ability. This study shows that as candidates use the Internet to reach voters, their webpages conform to theoretical expectations.

Keywords: 2008, president, candidate webpage, Functional Theory, functions, topics

Introduction

The 2008 American presidential campaign was unusual in that neither major party candidate was a sitting president or vice president; the last time this happened was in 1952. President George W. Bush was term-limited and his vice president, Dick Cheney, decided not to run for president. John McCain represented the incumbent (Republican) party, but neither major party candidate had experience in the Oval Office to serve as a basis for their campaigns. Indeed, politicians continue to find new and interesting ways to reach voters. The Internet has proven to be a tool that has several benefits for candidates and citizens alike. Candidate webpages cost

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far less (than TV spots) to disseminate the candidate's message. Unlike debates, which occur on just a few days (usually four: three presidential and one vice presidential) during the general election campaign, webpages are available throughout the campaign and can be updated as necessary. Voters can access candidate webpages whenever it is convenient and they can choose what content they want to view (unlike TV spots, speeches, or debates). The ability to utilize this medium and the growing reliance of our society on the Internet for information make candidate webpages a viable campaigning tool. In 2008, Obama and McCain used this medium to share information regarding their candidacy and in an attempt to attract voters. In the 2016 Republican presidential primary, Donald Trump rewrote the "rules" of presidential campaigns. He routinely made remarks considered outrageous by many, which guaranteed continuous attention from the news media. Trump also relied far more on Twitter – and less on traditional media, such as television spots – than the other Republican candidates, and surprised many observers when he secured the Republican presidential nomination.

The purpose of this study is to provide a backdrop to help understand contemporary campaign webpages by analyzing the 2008 general election webpages of Obama and McCain according to the Functional Theory of Campaign Discourse (Benoit, 2007). This study will add to our understanding of presidential candidates' use of the Internet.

Literature Review

Research assessing Internet campaigning has increased tremendously in the last decade, examining a variety of levels of office. Recognizing the potential of the Internet, several scholars have investigated the Internet as a campaign medium; see, e.g., Bimber and Davis (2003), Chadwick (2006), Davis (1999), Gainous and Wagner (2011, 2014), Hendricks and Schill (2015), Katz, Barris, and Jain (2013), Klotz (2004), or Owen and Davis (2008). Studies on the Internet since 1996 have studied statewide elections, specifically congressional elections (Dulio, Goff, & Thurber, 1999; Klotz, 1997, 1998; Klotz & Broome, 1998) and state offices (Benoit, 2000). Considerable attention has also been given to Presidential elections (e.g., Benoit, 2007). This medium can duplicate other traditional media, providing, essentially, a multi-media smorgasbord of all other campaign messages (e.g., press releases, advertisements; biographies, issue positions; in print, audio, or video) was not always been touted as progress. In fact, when the Internet was first used for campaigns in 1996, some scholars were wary of the impact of this medium on the party system and the increased investment of large corporations (Margolis, Resnick, & Tu, 1997). Websites during the 1996 campaign session were similar in most respects to other election messages (Klinenberg & Perrin, 2000).

By 2000 candidate webpages have been used by more candidates and became larger (displaying more information) and more sophisticated. They began to include information on fund-raising and volunteering (Harbert, 2000; Schneider, 2000). For example, McCain in 2000 used the Internet to organize volunteers in different states (Tomlinson, 2003). Dimitrova (2015) observed that "by the time of the 2000 presidential election, candidate sites were widely accepted as a common campaign tool" (p. 15). Yet, despite these advances, and perhaps the perceived limited use of voters, websites were not regularly updated daily (Schneider, 2000), and were not consistent in the visual content that they provided (Wicks, Souley, & Verser, 2003). The interactivity of the website also influenced the perceived learning and liking of a candidate (Ahem, Stromer-Galley, & Neuman, 2000). Research has also found that perceptions of candidates changed after visiting websites (Hanson & Benoit, 2005). Comparisons between Internet uses and non-Internet users, in terms of campaign gathering information also demonstrated differences in knowledge of issue stances (Johnson, Braima, & Sothirajah, 1999). Benoit et al. (2013) applied Functional Theory to presidential candidates' webpages in the

primary campaign. Acclaims (85%) were more common than attacks (15%); defenses were quite rare (0.4%). These messages discussed policy more often than character (81% to 19%). More information on the nature of candidate web-pages would be useful to our understanding of this medium.

Functional Theory

This study used content analysis to investigate 2008 presidential candidate general election webpages. Functional Theory (Benoit, 2007, 2014a, 2014c) posits several axioms about political campaign messages. Each of these assumptions will be explained separately in this section.

Axiom 1. Voting is a comparative act.

Casting a vote requires that a citizen choose between two (or more, particularly in the primary phase) competing candidates. As such, vote choice it clearly entails a comparative judgment. Candidates are human beings so we cannot reasonably expect any candidate to be perfect; no matter how much one candidate or supporters revile an opponent, no candidate is utterly without redeeming qualities. Therefore, a citizen's vote choice represents a comparative judgment that one candidate appears to be preferable to the other candidate(s) on whatever basis is most important to each individual voter. Voters' candidate choices are best understood as based perceptions that citizens form of the candidates for office on the basis of their attitudes and the information that appears relevant to them when they consider their vote choice. This means that to win an election, a candidate must succeed at persuading enough voters to believe that he or she is a better candidate choice than others in the race.

Axiom 2. Candidates must distinguish themselves from opponents.

The assumption that voting is a comparative act leads directly to the second assumption of Functional Theory: Candidates must appear different from one another. Voters have no reason to prefer one candidate over another if the candidates appear to be the same. Candidates often adopt some similar policy positions (who would oppose, e.g., creating jobs or and protecting the U.S. from terrorism?). However, if the candidates agree on every issue (and project identical character), voters would have no reason to prefer one over another. Therefore, political candidates must articulate some distinctions between themselves and their opponent(s).

Axiom 3. Political campaign messages allow candidates to distinguish themselves.

It is necessary but not sufficient for candidates to possess some differences from their opponents; they must convey that information to voters. Campaign messages, such as television spots, debates, speeches, or candidate webpages are the means by which candidates reach voters to distinguish themselves from opponents. These message reach voters directly as well as indirectly via the press and other sources.

Axiom 4. Candidates establish preferability through acclaiming, attacking, and defending.

Furthermore, it is necessary for candidates to express their differences with opponents, but again that is not in and of itself sufficient for obtaining votes. A candidate must appear to be different from his or her opponents in ways that voters favor. For instance, a candidate who declared that "I am the only candidate who will slash all government services" would surely stand apart from opponents – and might appeal to a few voters -- but be unlikely to persuade enough voters to win the election. So, a candidate must appear to be both different from and better than his or her opponent (and candidates, of course, can characterize the opponent as different and worse). Consistent with this assumption, Popkin (1994) explained that "Somehow, candidates manage to get a large proportion of the citizenry sorted into opposing camps, each of which is convinced that the positions and interests of the other side add up to a less desirable package of benefits" (p. 8). Only three kinds of statements or functions of discourse are capable of making a candidate appear preferable to opponents: acclaims (touting one's strengths), attacks (exposing an opponent's weaknesses), and defenses (responses to, or refutations of, attacks).

Political candidates and their campaign advisors also recognize the fundamental principle that campaign discourse performs multiple functions. For example, H. R. Haldeman offered this advice on the 1972 reelection campaign to President Richard M. Nixon: "Getting one of those 20 [percent] who is an undecided type to vote for you on the basis of your positive points is much less likely than getting them to vote against McGovern by scaring them to death about McGovern" (Popkin et al., 1976, p. 794n). Thus, Haldeman recognized that Nixon could win the election by praising himself – acclaiming Nixon's "positive points" – or by attacking his opponent – "scaring them to death about McGovern" – or both. Similarly, Vincent Breglio, part of Ronald Reagan's successful 1980 presidential campaign, acknowledged that "It has become vital in campaigns today that you not only present all the reasons why people ought to vote for you, but you also have an obligation to present the reasons why they should not vote for the opponent" (1987, p. 34). So, political campaign advisors, like political communication scholars, recognize that candidates must praise themselves and attack their opponents.

These three functions can be fruitfully understood as an informal form of cost-benefit analysis. Acclaims stress a candidate's benefits. Attacks reveal an opponent's costs. Defenses refute alleged costs. Consistent with this explanation, Kelley and Mirer (1974), using survey data from the 1952-1968 presidential elections, found that 82-87% of citizens voted for the candidate for whom they reported the largest number of reasons for liking that candidate and the smallest number of reasons for disliking that candidate (in other words, benefits and costs). This figure is not 100% because some citizens are single-issue voters. However, characterizing vote choice as similar to cost-benefit analysis does not mean that every voter takes a rational approach to voting, gathering, weighing, and integrating as much information as possible to guarantee that they make the most rational decision possible. As Zaller (1992) rightly observed, "citizens vary in their habitual attention to politics and hence in their exposure to political information and argumentation in the media" (p. 1). Nor do they engage in mathematical calculations (i.e., adding or averaging) to make a vote choice. The three functions work to make one candidate appear preferable to another.

Functional Theory predicts that these three functions are likely to occur with different frequencies. Acclaims, if persuasive (if accepted by the audience) can increase a candidate's apparent preferability and have no inherent drawbacks (although it does not mean that acclaims are always persuasive or, when they are persuasive, will influence all voters). This means that ordinarily acclaims should be the most common campaign discourse function. Attacks, in contrast, risk alienating some voters who detest mudslinging as noted above (Merritt, 1984; Stewart, 1975) so the risk of backlash may encourage candidates to moderate their attacks.

Accordingly, Functional Theory expects attacks to be less common than acclaims. Note that Functional Theory does not declare that all candidates must acclaim more than they attack; only that candidates have a reason to do so. Defenses, if they are accepted by a voter, can help restore a candidate's lost preferability. However, defenses have three drawbacks: They are likely to take a candidate off-message (because attacks are likely to concern the target candidate's weaknesses), they risk informing or reminding voters of a potential weakness (a candidate must identify an attack to refute it), and defenses could create the impression that the candidate is reactive (defensive) rather than proactive. Thus, Functional Theory makes this prediction about the functions of political campaign discourse:

> H1. Candidates will use acclaims more frequently than attacks and attacks more often than defenses.

Axiom 5. Campaign discourse occurs on two topics: policy and character.

Functional Theory posits that political discourse can occur on two broad topics: policy (issues) and character (image). Rountree (1995), for example, contrasts actus (behavior, action) and status (nature) in political discourse. Policy utterances concern governmental action (past, current, or future) and problems amenable to governmental action; in contrast, character utterances address characteristics, traits, abilities, or attributes of the candidates. This means that political candidates attempt to persuade voters of their preferability on policy and character. Consistent with this assumption, Pomper (1975) noted that many voters "change their partisan choice from one election to the next, and these changes are most closely related to their positions on the issues and their assessment of the abilities of the candidates" (p. 10; Functional Theory also subdivides policy and character utterances into finer categories, as discussed later).

Functional Theory predicts that, particularly in presidential campaigns, policy will be a more frequent topic of campaign messages than character. We elect presidents to run our government, or to implement policy. Although some voters believe that they elect positive role models – and surely we all hope our elected leaders are positive role models – the primary duty of our elected officials is to administer policy. Hofstetter (1976) explains that "issue preferences are key elements in the preferences of most, if not all, voters" (p. 77). Public opinion poll data from every campaign from 1976 to 2004 establish that the majority of voters believe that policy is more important than character in their vote for president (Benoit, 2003). Character does matter, of course. We must trust candidates to work to achieve their campaign promises, and we must trust them to implement suitable policies in unexpected situations on which they did not take policy stands during the campaign. Still, because most voters consider policy to be more important than character, Functional Theory holds that candidates are likely to respond to these preferences so that policy will be discussed more frequently in presidential campaign messages than character. This leads to the second prediction:

> H2. Policy comments will be more frequent than character comments in presidential campaign discourse.

Again, Functional Theory does not declare that all candidates must address policy more than character; it explains that they have reasons to emphasize policy.

Axiom 6. A candidate must win a majority (or a plurality) of the votes cast in an election.

In the United States presidential elections are decided by the Electoral College rather than the popular vote. This is important because candidates need not persuade everyone to vote for him or her. This is a good thing because so many issues are controversial, so it is impossible to persuade every voter that your issue stands are the proper ones. A candidate only needs to persuade enough of those who are voting in enough states to win 270 electoral votes. This encourages presidential candidates to campaign more vigorously in some states than others. The 2000 presidential election underscored the importance of the electoral vote. As voting returns came in on Tuesday night Florida was "given" to Gore, taken back, given to Bush, and then taken back again. Then the recounts in Florida made the nation wait for the winner to be determined as the outcome of the election hinged on whether Florida's 25 electoral votes belonged to Bush or Gore. The U.S. Supreme Court (in a 5 to 4 vote) ultimately decided to halt recounts in Florida, giving the Electoral College majority to Bush. Eventually we learned that Al Gore won the popular balloting by a margin of half a million votes, but because Bush won Florida by 537 votes, he won all of its Electoral College votes and the presidency (New York Times, 2001). Thus, a candidate only needs to win a majority of votes in enough states to amass 270 electoral votes to win the presidency.

Research on the 2000 general election campaign webpages found that candidates used this medium to acclaim more than to attack (98% to 2%) and used no defenses (Benoit et al., 2003). The 2004 candidate general webpages (Benoit et al., 2007) also acclaimed more than they attacked (87%, 13%) and offered no defenses. The 2008 Democratic and Republican presidential primary webpages also stressed acclaims (85%) over attacks (15%) with virtually no defenses (0.4%; Benoit et al. 2013). Acceptance addresses (Benoit, 2014b), TV spots (Benoit & Glantz, 2012), and debates (Benoit & Rill, 2013) showed the same basic pattern of more acclaims than attacks and few defenses. The predicted ordering of functions occurred in each message form in these campaigns. However, we do not yet have data on the functions of general election webpages of 2008.

The candidate general election campaign webpages created by candidates in 2000 discussed policy (90%) more than character (10%; Benoit et al., 2004). In 2004, candidates again emphasized policy more than character in general election webpages (75% to 25%; Benoit et al. 2007). Candidate primary webpages in 2008 once again stressed policy (81%) over character (19%; Benoit et al 2013). Acceptance addresses (Benoit, 2014b), TV spots (Benoit & Rill, 2013), and debates (Benoit & Glantz, 2012) in the 2008 general election talked more about policy. Every one of these message forms in these campaigns privileged policy over character. Again, we have no data from 2008 general election webpages on the topics of these messages. Functional Theory divides policy statements into three forms: past deeds (record in office), future plans (means to improve the state of affairs), and general goals (ends sought in public policy). It also divides character into three forms: personal qualities (character traits), leadership ability (experience in office), and ideals (principles and values). Examples of acclaims and attacks on the three forms of policy and of character are available in several sources (e.g., Benoit, 2007; Benoit et al., 2005; Benoit et al., 2007; Benoit et al., 2013). Our research question investigates the distribution of these utterances:

> RQ1. What is the relative frequency of the three forms of policy and three forms of character?

In 2000, Bush and Gore used their general election webpages to discuss past deeds (64%), future plans (19%), and general goals (17%; Benoit et al., 2003). In 2004 (Benoit et al., 2007), the general candidate webpages discussed past deeds (32%), future plans (19%), and general goals (49%). Benoit et al. (2013) found that the primary webpages in 2008 discussed past deeds

(33%), future plans (21%), and general goals (46%). Acceptances from 2008 (Benoit, 2014) talked about past deeds, future plans, and general goals (32%, 5%, 63%). The television spots in that campaign also stressed general goals (51%) over past deeds (35%) or future plans (14%). The general election debates of 2008 had roughly similar proportions (31% past deeds, 15% future plans, 54% general goals. Most of these message forms stressed general goals (only the 2000 general election webpages relied most heavily on past deeds). We do not yet know about the allocation of the forms of policy in general election webpages from 2008.

During the 2000 general campaign (Benoit et al., 2003), candidate webpages discussed personal qualities (24%), leadership ability (11%), and ideals (64%). In the 2004 general election, candidates discussed personal qualities (33%), leadership ability (36%), and ideals (31%) on their webpages (Benoit et al., 2007). Acceptance addresses (Benoit, 2014b) discussed the forms of character in these proportions: personal qualities 44%, leadership ability 14%, and ideals 41%. Television advertising in the 2008 general election campaign also stressed personal qualities (60%) over leadership ability (20%) or ideals (20%; Benoit & Glantz, 2012). The debates that year (Benoit & Rill, 2013) also emphasized personal qualities (54%), leadership ability (26%), and ideals (20%). No clear pattern emerged for allocation of forms of policy in general campaign webpages, but in the general election all three message forms emphasized personal qualities. Again, we do not know how the forms of character were allocated in 2008 general webpages.

Functional theory anticipates that it is easier to acclaim than to attack general goals (who opposes creating jobs?) or ideals (who can oppose freedom)? This leads to two additional predictions:

> H3. The 2008 general election webpages will acclaim more than they attack on general goals.

This pattern held in general election webpages from Bush and Gore in 2000 (99% to 1%; Benoit et al., 2003) and in webpages from Bush and Kerry in 2004 (95%, 5%; Benoit et al., 2007). It was also confirmed in 2008 acceptances (Benoit, 2014b), TV spots (Benoit & Glantz, 2012), and debates (Benoit & Rill, 2013). This prediction was supported consistently in these studies. We have yet to see if this pattern holds in 2008 general election candidate webpages.

> H4. The 2008 general election webpages will acclaim more than they attack on ideals.

In general election candidate webpages in 2000, Bush and Gore followed this pattern (99% to 1%; Benoit et al., 2003) as did Bush and Kerry in 2004 (95%, 5%; Benoit et al., 2007) the candidates acclaimed more than they attacked on ideals. This prediction was confirmed in Acceptances (Benoit, 2014b), TV spots (Benoit & Glantz, 2012), and debates (Benoit & Rill, 2013). We do not know if this prediction would be upheld in 2008 general webpages. Testing these hypotheses and answering these research questions will add to our understanding of political candidates' use of webpages.

Methods

Transcripts of candidate webpages (homepage, issues sections, and biographies) were downloaded from the Internet just before election day in 2008 and then unitized into themes, or utterances that address a coherent idea. Berelson (1952) defined a theme as "an assertion about a subject" (p. 18). Similarly, Holsti (1969) stipulated that a theme is "a single assertion about some subject" (p. 116). Basically, a theme in this study is a claim or an argument

(argument 1; see O'Keefe, 1977) about the candidates. Because rhetoric is enthymematic (i.e. audiences can "fill in" arguments that are sketched in discourse), themes vary in length from a phrase to several sentences. For instance, if a candidate said, "I will protect Medicare, reduce crime, and create jobs," that sentence would be considered to have three themes because it has three subjects: Medicare, crime, and jobs. On the other hand, a single theme can spread across several sentences. For example, a candidate could declare that "Jobs are important to the economy. I promise to increase job creation. We cannot have too many jobs." A single theme (a general goal of job creation) spans these three sentences.

First, each theme was classified by function (as an acclaim, attack, or defense) according to these rules:

- Acclaims are themes that portray the candidate favorably.
- Attacks are themes that portray the opposing candidate unfavorably.
- Defenses are themes that refute attacks against the candidate.
- Only utterances that performed the functions of acclaiming, attacking, or defending (which were in fact virtually all of themes in these webpages) were analyzed in this research.

Second, each theme was classified by topic, as addressing policy or character, according to these rules:

- Policy themes concern governmental action (past, current, or future) and problems amenable to governmental action.
- Character themes concern the characteristics, traits, abilities, or attributes of the candidates.

Third, each policy theme was coded into one of the three forms of policy (past deeds, future plans, general goals); each character theme was classified into one of the three forms of character (personal qualities, leadership ability, ideals).

Inter-coder reliabilities for these variables were good. Multiple coders analyzed these transcripts: Cohen's kappa (1960) for function ranged from .91-.94, for topic it ranged from .84-.87, for form of policy it varied from .88-.91, and for form of character it ranged from .85-.89. Landis and Koch (1977) explain that values of kappa between 0.81 and 1.0 reflect "almost perfect" inter-coder reliabilities (p. 165). These values give confidence in the coding of these messages.

Results

Functions of 2008 Candidate General Election Webpages

The first hypothesis addressed the functions of the 2008 presidential candidate webpages in the general election. Overall, the candidates were extremely positive in their messages, with 92% percent of statements being acclaims and 8% attacks. No defenses occurred on these webpages. A chi-square goodness of fit test confirms that acclaims did not occur with the same frequency as attacks ($df = 1$, 1162.78 $p < .0001$); defenses were too infrequent to include in the analysis. These data are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. *Functions of 2008 Candidate General Election Webpages*

	Acclaims	Attacks	Defenses
Obama	634 (92%)	58 (8%)	0
McCain	902 (92%)	82 (8%)	0
Total	1536 (92%)	151 (8%)	0

Topics of 2008 General Election Candidate Webpages

Hypothesis two addressed the topics of these Internet sites. Candidates devoted the majority of their statements to policy statements (82%) and fewer comments to character (18%). A chi-square goodness of fit test confirmed that this difference was significant ($df = 1$, 698.52, $p < .0001$). See Table 2 for these data.

Table 2. *Topics of 2008 General Election Candidate Webpages*

	Policy	Character
Obama	640 (92%)	52 (8%)
McCain	739 (75%)	245 (25%)
Total	1379 (82%)	297 (18%)

Forms of Policy and Character in 2008 General Election Candidate Webpages

The research question investigated the relative frequency of the three forms of policy and of the three forms of character. Obama and McCain discussed past deeds (22%) future plans (47%), and general goals (31%). These candidates' webpages discussed personal qualities (38%), leadership ability (17%), and ideals (44%). These data are reported in Tables 3 and 4. General goals and personal qualities were discussed frequently here, but not as much as in other cases reviewed earlier.

Table 3. *Forms of Policy in 2008 Candidate General Election Webpages*

	Past Deeds		Future Plans		General Goals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
Obama	62	30	513	21	13	0
McCain	171	43	89	6	409	21
Total	233	73	602	27	422	21
	308 (22%)		629 (47%)		442 (31%)	

Table 4. *Forms of Character in 2008 Candidate General Election Webpages*

	Personal Qualities		**Leadership Ability**		**Ideals**	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
Obama	2	0	0	24	19	2
McCain	104	6	6	21	108	1
Total	106	5	6	45	127	3
	112 (38%)		51 (17%)		130 (49%)	

Functions of General Goals and Ideals

H3 predicted that candidates would acclaim more than they attacked when discussing general goals. This hypothesis was confirmed in these data (95% acclaims, 5% attacks). A chi-square goodness of fit test confirmed that this difference was significant ($df = 1, 362.98, p < .0001$). The fourth hypothesis predicted that the functions of ideals would show a similar pattern, which they did: 98% of ideals were acclaims while 2% were attacks. A chi-square goodness of fit test confirmed that this difference was significant ($df = 1, 118.28, p < .0001$).

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to assess the content of 2008 Presidential general election candidate webpages by Obama and McCain using Functional Theory. Previous research on candidate webpages has demonstrate the potential to influence voters on variable such as learning (Johnson, et al., 1999), perceptions of candidates (Hansen, 2002), and candidate liking (Ahem et al., 2008). The results of the analysis presented here – more acclaims than attacks and few defenses; more policy than character; more acclaims than attacks on general goals and on ideals – are consistent with past research on general election webpages from 2000 and 2004: Previous analyses of candidate webpage content found that candidates focus on policy more than character and are more positive in their utterances (Benoit et. al., 2003; 2007). These patterns occurred in other messages forms in 2008 (acceptance addresses: Benoit, 2014b; TV spots: Benoit & Glantz, 2012, and debates: Benoit & Rill, 2013).

Results of this analysis indicate that both parties were extremely positive in statements on the Internet and focused predominantly on policy. Specifically, both Democrats and Republicans were over 80% positive in their statements. Of the forms of policy, both parties focused more on past deeds. Candidates of both parties also attacked the status quo more often than other candidates or the current administration. This research provides evidence that the predictions of Functional Theory are pertinent to candidate messages on the Internet. In 2016, Donald Trump is widely perceived as a particularly negative candidate. It would be very interesting to see whether content analysis supports this perception.

Conclusion

This study extended our understanding of the content of presidential candidate webpages to the 2008 general election. Results confirm the predictions of Functional Theory: acclaims were more common than attacks and defenses were rare. Acclaims were more common – and attacks less common – in webpages than acceptance addresses (Benoit, 2014b), television spots (Benoit & Glantz, 2012), or debates (Benoit & Rill, 2013) from the 2008 campaign. The

candidate webpages stressed policy even more (and character less) than acceptances (Benoit, 2014b), TV spots (Benoit & Glantz, 2012), or debates (Benoit & Rill, 2013) from the same campaign. It would be helpful to extend this line of research to include presidential candidate webpages from 2012 and 2016 as well as to extend it to other media, such as Twitter or Facebook.

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The Role of Silence at the Retreats of a Buddhist Community

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to establish that the definition of silence as simply an absence of something or as the background of communication proves to be inadequate in a number of communicative instances. The interpretation of silence is culturally determined, and the underappreciation of its role is typical in low-context Western cultures; this is also evinced by the neglect of the topic in the literature. The present study will describe the communicative functions of silence through the findings of field work conducted at the retreats of a Buddhist community in Hungary, providing empirical input for the relevant theoretical constructs. The research findings show that silence is accorded a central role in essentially every component of the retreat (meditations, relaxation, ceremonies, teachings, small-group sharings, meals and rest); and while each event at the retreat focuses primarily on a different specific function of communication, the entire retreat does involve the linkage, affecting, revelational and – to a certain extent – activating functions (to follow the five-element typology of J. Vernon Jensen), as well as – to a lesser extent – the judgmental function. The research also shows that it requires time for individuals in a low-context culture to recognize the "point" of silence – something that the retreats provide the right opportunity for. In fact, the insights the individuals arrived at through these occasions could be put to use in their daily lives, helping their problem-solving and social relationships and in general improving their quality of life.

Keywords: silence, communicative functions, high- and low-context cultures, Buddhism, retreats

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Theoretical Background – The Underappreciated Nature and Communicative Functions of Silence

Anyone seeking books or studies about silence will encounter several such pieces of writing, with the majority of them examining the subject in a religious or linguistic context. Certainly, the discussion of the religious context will surprise no one who has ever participated in a religious ceremony or gathering – or has even read about such events anywhere, including in news reports. The linguistic approach is similarly unsurprising. But if one wishes to read specifically about the communicative function of silence, the discussion of this aspect of silence is inadequate and fails to go into sufficient depth. Nonetheless, studies and book chapters have been published in English on the subject; these appear either in works dealing with the theory of communication or deal with silence as it pertains to their specific area of study (business communication, the communication between a doctor and their patient, etc.). At the same time, very few extensive publications have examined silence specifically – Adam Jaworski's book entitled *The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives* is one such example, along with *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, also edited by him, as well as the book entitled *Perspectives on Silence* edited by Deborah Tannen and Muriel Saville-Troike. The strength of all three books lies in their interdisciplinary and intercultural approach, their significant use of the literature, as well as the inclusion of various areas (education, politics, the arts, everyday communication and ritualistic communication, gender roles, etc.) in their analysis. This discussion of a broad range of communication phenomena, on the one hand, makes possible the recognition that defining silence as simply an absence of speech (or noise or sound) proves to be inadequate in the majority of cases and represents an unnecessary simplification, and on the other hand, situational and intercultural comparison makes it possible to more easily analyze the various – highly culture-specific – meanings and functions of silence in various situations. This article endeavors to contribute to this discussion – and while the point of departure here is also a (quasi-)religious context, we ultimately arrive at applications in communicative situations in everyday life.

Defining silence as simply an absence of something or a background of communication is an approach that is oftentimes proved incorrect even in informal, everyday conversations; this holds true, however, especially in instances of communication such as a court hearing, a business negotiation, a police interrogation, the exchange between a student and a teacher in a classroom, a political speech or some religious practice. Silence, in these situations, often carries a special meaning or function, regardless of whether or not it is used consciously by the parties communicating. The fact that silence nonetheless remains "underappreciated" in the literature may be due in part to the typically Western approach connected with it, which suggests that speech is the norm, and silence represents a departure from the norm. Ron Scollon, for instance, in *The machine stops: silence in the metaphor of malfunction*, criticizes this attitude, claiming that in modern, industrialized society (including mainstream American society), humans are conceptualized in a metaphorical sense as machines; and because in the case of a machine it is a constant hum that indicates that all is working properly, in the case of humans, it is speech which is the same kind of indicator. "Smooth talk is taken as the natural state of the smoothly running cognitive and interactional [human] machine" (Scollon 1985: 26). Jaworski, on the other hand, suggests this represents a somewhat oversimplified approach, because even Western cultures tolerate a certain – culturally variable – degree of silence, even if it is perceived more negatively than speech (Jaworski 1993). In general, however, it may be concluded that in mainstream Western cultures, a faster pace of speech, shorter pauses and more frequent turn-taking in conversations are seen more positively than a slower pace, longer pauses and lengthier comments.

If we accept, hypothetically, that silence also possesses a communicative function, it is worth referencing Vernon Jensen's typology. He differentiates among five communicative functions of silence, attaching positive and negative values to each. These functions are the following:

1. *A linkage function:* silence can bind together people and deepen their relationship; it can also sever relationships. It is also possible to use silence to purposely isolate ourselves from others, protecting ourselves by a wall of silence. Silence, however, can also build community, just as speech also is able to both build and destroy a community. Silence can forge bonds between husband and wife and among friends; it can serve remembrance; and for religiously oriented individuals silence is frequently the specific vehicle for linking them to God.

2. *An affecting function:* silence affects us; it can heal and it can wound. In difficult moments silence can be an important tool to prevent aggravating the situation; in other cases, silence may cut more deeply than speech. Silence can communicate understanding, respect, acceptance, kindness – as well as indifference, animosity, coolness, defensiveness and ruthlessness.

3. *A revelational function:* silence can facilitate understanding, but it can also hide information. It can suggest that one of the parties communicating is not in possession of the necessary knowledge. Psychotherapists often learn more about their patient by their silence than through the information they provide. Silence can actually reveal things – for instance about ourselves and our "true" inner being. For that reason, many are afraid of silence and are afraid of being left alone with their thoughts and feelings.

4. *A judgmental function:* silence can indicate assent or support, but it can also be employed to register disagreement. Silence on the part of the auditor frequently suggests agreement, but at the same time, in the case of obvious injustice, silence can mean the opposite – disagreement, hostility or anger.

5. *An activating function:* silence can refer to both deep thoughtfulness as well as an absence of mental activity. A public speaker who pauses for a moment may give the impression of thoughtfulness – we often assume, in fact, that the silent person is engaged in thought while the talking person is not. At the same time, we also believe that remaining silent without performing some kind of physical activity means that the individual is not doing anything meaningful (Jensen 1973).

Subsequently in the study, I will attempt to demonstrate how these functions appear at a Buddhist retreat. Before, however, it is necessary to take a look at the cultural determinism of interpretations, while at the same time providing additional considerations for the positive and negative meanings described in Jensen's typology of silence.

Theoretical Background – Cultural Determinism

Different ways of managing speech and silence can easily lead to intercultural misunderstandings. "For a stranger entering an alien society, a knowledge of when not to speak may be as basic to the production of culturally acceptable behavior as a knowledge of what to say." (Basso 1972, as cited in Enninger 1991: 8). It is not enough, however, to learn what to say and when to say it in a given culture: one must also learn to interpret silence appropriately. In many cases, this is far more difficult than interpreting spoken words – it begins by having to recognize whether or not the silence in that particular situation even carries any unique

meaning, or if it is simply a pause – without meaning – in the conversation. In addition to an intercultural comparison of the various cultures, small communities with unique cultures existing within the majority society may provide a suitable venue for investigating this; often, these smaller communities are in fact religious communities. Examples of these include Amish communities in the United States and Canada (see, for example, Enninger 1991) or the Quakers of Great Britain.

A study by Sandra Bell and Peter Collins, examining the Quakers of Great Britain and Theravāda Buddhists (Bell and Collins 2014), provides an excellent example of intercultural comparisons related to the communicative function of silence. In the study, the authors link silence to stillness and to non-activity as a means of evoking a sacred presence; they emphasize the aesthetic and ethical value, and the ontological and moral significance of silence as far as these communities are concerned. According to Bell and Collins, neglecting to examine silence substantially hinders not only the understanding of these specific communities, but also the understanding of religious communities in general: even though their cultural contexts may be different, silence – in the form of prayer, worship, meditation and contemplation – is clearly linked to the ineffable. Silence, here, represents a state of receptivity to religious truths that lies beyond conditioned reality which is only partially accessible through words. Silence and the state of repose associated with it create ideal conditions for spiritual attainment (Bell and Collins 2014). Because the observations of Bell and Collins among British Theravāda Buddhists are closely in line with my own observations, I will be returning to their conclusions tangentially later.

In order to understand the culturally determined role and functions of silence, the distinction between high- and low-context cultures (the concept is associated with Edward T. Hall) provides a useful point of departure. In high-context cultures, as a result of closer human relationships and due to more broadly shared social and cultural knowledge, verbal communication plays a lesser role; at the same time, members are expected to decode precisely nonverbal acts of communication. In these cultures, communication serves more to establish contact than to relay information. In low-context cultures, on the other hand, verbality plays a more prominent role, and communication is aimed primarily at transmitting information. The theory of cultural value orientations by Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck places cultures in a matrix where low-context cultures are characterized, with respect to the "activity" orientation,[1] as "doing"-oriented. Mixed cultures are characterized by "becoming," and high-context cultures by "being." As far as the perception of silence is concerned, there is a distinction between "doing" and "being-in-becoming" cultures: "...persons from identifiably doing-oriented societies tend to regard silence as an absence of words, a waste of time, a period when »nothing is doing«. For those who can be characterized as of the being or being-in-becoming mode, silence in conversations has positive meaning: It is essential to self-fulfillment and to an awareness of here and now" (Condon and Yousef 1975: 137, as cited in Enninger 1991: 13).

When an individual belonging to a low-context culture (a culture of "doing") has to integrate into a high-context cultural (a culture of "being") setting, and has to adapt to its rules, a different

[1] According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, humankind is faced with five major problems that are common to all and that all societies have sought answers to at all times: "How a group is predisposed to understand, give meaning to, and solve these common problems is an outward manifestation of its innermost values, its window on the world: its value orientation." These problems are summed up in the questions below:
"– What is the temporal focus of life? (*Time* orientation)
– What is the modality of human activity? (*Activity* orientation)
– What is the modality of a person's relationship to others in the group? (*Relations* orientation)
– What is the relationship of people to nature? (*Person-nature* orientation)
– What is the character of innate human nature? (*Human nature* orientation)" (Gallagher [2001])
High-context, mixed and low-context cultures provide different answers to these questions.

management of time and activities, and the consequences of this, may present difficulties to them – for instance, their propensity to follow rules may decrease as a result of boredom and impatience (in the case of communication and in general in terms of rules of behavior). At the same time, the situation is somewhat different when a person has to adapt individually to new and different expectations and rules in a foreign cultural setting, than when an entire community has to do the same in their own surroundings. An example of the latter occurrence is when a community following an Eastern religion or philosophy is established within a Western society.

In North America and Europe, a number of such communities have been established in the last century; the majority of these do not function "purely" but do so in some kind of syncretic and adapted way. This is clearly obvious in the case of Buddhist groups, beginning with the fact that in the West, the Buddhist way has been transferred almost entirely from monasteries to settings of everyday life. Although a number of different forms and schools exist in North America and Europe, these all tend to adapt (because they must adapt in order to subsist) to their local environment (groups which specifically serve the needs of immigrants from the countries of origin must be treated separately and will not be discussed here). Despite this adaptation, Western Buddhist communities must acquire an entirely different system of communicating – one in which silence occupies a central position.

When conducting field work for my dissertation at retreats of a Hungarian Buddhist community, one of the most striking experiences was silence and listening in the community. The novelty of this lay not in the silence itself, but in the communal *experiencing* of this silence. This was my first experience with a situation when quiet periods were governed by an entirely different set of principles than what I had been used to. In terms of the function and rules of silence and listening, Hungarian society belongs – with certain differences in emphasis – among modern Western societies: one must remain silent at certain events, ceremonies, at the movies or in the theater, at school, at presentations, etc. At such times, silence is often of a passive nature: it serves simply to avoid disturbing the event, the presenter or other participants, and it is something that is typically prescribed (explicitly or implicitly) by social rules. Accordingly, Hungarian literature – apart from specifically linguistic discussions – only deals sporadically with the communicative role of silence; the topic is mentioned briefly only in works dealing with general theories of communication.[2] Thus, an examination of the field offers plenty of opportunity for further discussion.

Theoretical Background – Buddhism

In recent years and decades, retreats of various types have enjoyed increasing popularity in the Western world. This is clearly the result of the noise around us, and the levels of stimuli and stress affecting each person on a daily basis. As Thich Nhat Hanh, the Zen master of Vietnamese origin living in France, writes in his book entitled *Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise*:

[2] In one Hungarian-language statement, Katalin Kukorelli describes one of her smaller-scale studies conducted among her students. Her motivation for the study was the recognition, during the teaching of one session of her practical subjects, "that a significant number of the students are unable to follow the communication going on and the train of thought of their peers. They are unaccustomed to paying attention to one another and to communicating verbally in one shared space. They are also unaccustomed to decoding hidden messages, noting the way how something is said and not only to listening to what is said. Kukorelli conducted a survey, using questionnaires, among her students, asking them if we are saying anything when we are silent. By her own admission, the single objective of the survey was "to examine whether or not it is worthwhile to study the role and functions of silence and listening in communication." (Kukorelli 2011: 133–4)

> Unless you live alone in the mountains without electricity, chances are you're absorbing a constant stream of noise and information all day long, without interruption. Even if no one is speaking to you and you're not listening to the radio or some other sound system, there are billboards, telephone calls, text messages, social media, computer screens, bills, flyers, and many other ways that words and sounds reach us. It sometimes can be impossible to find a corner of an airport boarding area without a television blaring. Many people's morning commute is spent absorbing tweets, texts, news, games, and updates on their phones. Even in those rare moments when there is no sound, text, or other information coming in from outside, our heads are filled with a constant loop of thoughts. How many minutes each day, if any, do you spend in true quiet? (Hanh 2015: 20)

For precisely this reason, those seeking relaxation, quiet recreation, or answers to questions they may have, have been able to choose from among a broad range of retreats. There are Christian and Buddhist retreats, yoga and silent camps, etc.; but we may also mention the various pilgrimages. What is common to all of these is that they provide an opportunity to break free from the routine and noise of everyday life, to deepen one's self-knowledge and to engage in a kind of mental rest. An additional common feature is that they replace verbality with observation and experiencing. The most radical form of this is the kind of silent retreat where both verbal communication as well as nonverbal communication (e.g., looking at one another) are forbidden for the entire duration (up to ten days). In these cases, silence has no discernable communicative function – apart from the individual's internal dialogue with themselves – and it is rather self-knowledge attainable through isolation that is emphasized. In the Buddhist retreats I visited, on the other hand, silence did carry several communicative functions, as will be described below.

In Buddhism, silence and listening traditionally play an important role. Buddha himself chose silence as far as several significant metaphysical and existential questions are concerned, opening up avenues for various interpretations and speculation by doing so. These questions included the following: the world is eternal or not; the world is finite or infinite; the soul is the same as the body or soul is one thing and the body is another; and after death a Tathāgata [historical Buddha himself] exists or does not exist or both of them exist and do not exist (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2001: 533).

According to the teaching, it is only through a quieting of one's mind that one can arrive at true insights; if there is noise (external noise and the noise of one's thoughts), one cannot see the true nature of things. Therefore the main forum for acquiring such insights is quiet meditation. From a historical perspective, however, this did not always occupy such a priority position, for instance, in the Zen school. Steven Heine (2013) writes that during the Tang dynasty, Zen masters were above all else skilled speakers; he quotes text parts which demonstrate that meditation was less important (or was less organized/regulated) than individual, private teachings which motivated students could acquire from the abbot. Heine says that if we examine the role of language in Zen Buddhism, we immediately come across a predicament to be resolved. Because this school emphasizes the transmission of teachings not through sacred texts (i.e., not through words or letters), in Zen temples one would expect to encounter eloquent silence as opposed to teachings conveyed through the spoken word – perhaps soft murmurs, the rustling of leaves, etc. (which are considered to evoke the voice of Buddha), non-verbal noises made by the monks (the sounds of them going about their daily lives), the sound of the bell, recitation and the chanting of Sūtras (and perhaps explanations attached to them). At the same time, historical studies suggest that in Zen – through verse and prose, for instance, through the explanations of the kōans – verbal communication has always played an important role. Heine therefore asks whether this discrepancy – emphasizing language use while at the same time oppressing its transcendence – can be ascribed to a fundamental contradiction in the tradition, or if it means that we must reconsider just how exact

our knowledge is of what constitutes Zen transmission as far as rhetorical discourse is concerned. According to Heine, we may believe that mystics are violating their sacred principles; or we may conclude that the role of language in Zen – by incorporating several texts which serve the religious practice of liberating the mind from fixation and attachment – would be to find the middle path between ineffability that abandons words and the view that verbal expression and speech play a central role in the quest for enlightenment. In this sense, Zen is known primarily not so much for denying speech (which is an extreme viewpoint), but for inventing a creative, new style of linguistic expression, and for its unusual and novel use of the language as manifested in the kōans. Additionally, Zen has always emphasized silence, although there has always been a debate over whether it is to be considered the goal that language serves as a means to attain, or just the opposite, whether silence is the means and creative language use is the goal (Heine 2013).

I will not go into the various positions related to this question here, as the subject would digress from the present study; but if we look to the Pāli texts for guidance, we see that silence is valuable for Buddhism in itself, as, for instance, the passage below from the Sandaka Sūtra shows:

> Now on that occasion the wanderer Sandaka was seated with a large assembly of wanderers who were making an uproar, loudly and noisily talking many kinds of pointless talk, such as talk of kings, robbers, ministers, armies, dangers, battles, food, drink, clothing, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries, women, heroes, streets, wells, the dead, trifles, the origin of the world, the origin of the sea, whether things are so or are not so. Then the wanderer Sandaka saw the venerable Ānanda coming in the distance. Seeing him, he quieted his own assembly thus: 'Sirs, be quiet; sirs, make no noise. Here comes the recluse Ānanda, a disciple of the recluse Gotama, one of the recluse Gotama's disciples staying in Kosambī. These venerable ones like quiet; they are disciplined in quiet; they commend quiet. Perhaps if he finds our assembly a quiet one, he will think to join us.' Then the wanderers became silent. (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 2001: 618)

Thus, in Buddhism, silence is a quality per se: in Pāli canonical texts, the term *appasaddakāma* is often used to describe Buddha and his followers, meaning "lovers of quietness." This also featured in the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh.

Thich Nhat Hanh's Western Buddhism and Noble Silence at the Retreats

Engaged Buddhism, the Western Buddhism represented by Thich Nhat Hanh, relies on the various schools of Buddhism, being primarily based on Vietnamese Zen (thiền) and Theravāda traditions. Teachings are formulated in a way so as to make them applicable for Western individuals in their daily lives, relying on everyday situations. Thich Nhat Hanh deals with internal transformation, whose aim is to better the individual and society – this includes both monks' "traditional" contemplation in a monastery as well as the active representation of important social questions (rejection of violence, forgiveness and helping the suffering). He has written over one hundred books which lay out his teachings in simple language that is easy to understand and focuses on practice. In Plum Village, his community of monks, retreats – organized for lay participants – follow the same general direction, extending meditation to the most routine, everyday tasks (turning washing the dishes or gardening, etc. into opportunities for meditation). Participants of the retreats in France (held in English and French) come from various countries. The field work serving as the foundations for the present study was conducted at the retreats of a Hungarian community following the spirit of the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, held in English (with Hungarian interpretation) by Dutch and Vietnamese

teachers from the Netherlands. The schedules of the longer (six-day-long) retreats held in Hungary largely match those of the retreats in Plum Village.[3]

Seeking the middle way, mentioned above, and emphasizing that followers should refrain from meaningless chatter, is also a feature of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings. The more verbal program elements of the retreats also support this more reserved approach. Because, according to the teachings, the usual activities in one's everyday life may also serve as occasions for meditation (which receives special emphasis in Western Buddhism, and more closely matches the Western lifestyle), what is important at such occasions is for the practicing Buddhist to perform the given activities with mindfulness, focusing on the task at hand. This is also supported by silence, especially in the case of beginners. Thich Nhat Hanh describes the relationship between silence and mindfulness in the following way:

> For those who are just beginning to practice, it is best to maintain a spirit of silence throughout the day. That doesn't mean that on the day of mindfulness, you shouldn't speak at all. You can talk, you can even go ahead and sing, but if you talk or sing, do it in complete mindfulness of what you are saying or singing, and keep talking and singing to a minimum. Naturally, it is possible to sing and practice mindfulness at the same time, just as long as one is conscious of the fact that one is singing and aware of what one is singing. But be warned that it is much easier, when singing or talking, to stray from mindfulness if your meditation strength is still weak. (Hanh 1987: 29)

In other words, the point of the retreat for followers of Thich Nhat Hanh is not for participants to remain completely silent. Silence here represents – in addition to being, as we have seen, a quality per se for Buddhists – the means to quieting the mind, to acquiring insights and to coming to understand the true nature of things (and of oneself).

If we consider it to be a means to acquiring insights, in this fundamental function, silence does not necessarily appear to be communicative in nature (although we may detect what Jensen refers to as the revelational function) – but it is clear that it cannot be defined as simply an absence (the absence of speech or noise). From an epistemological perspective, it carries special significance: listening is a method of acquiring understanding. Szczypiorski mentions an example which highlights that silence – embedded in its epistemological function– may be considered a unique communicative experience. The elements of this example closely resemble the experiences the individual may encounter during meditation (in fact, the experience described may be considered an actual instance of meditation):

> Today, during the walk, when I was pretty exhausted, I sat down on the hammock of an easy hill and leaned against a pine trunk. There was some huge silence around. No breeze, no rustling of the branches, no bird. Silence and nothing else. This was very nice. But, unfortunately there was also myself. And after a while unusual shouting rose in myself. This shouting probably swirls always, but I don't hear it because I'm very busy with many everyday activities, reading, or simply walking. And in silence which fell when I sat down, I suddenly heard all of my inner voices, chattering and furious, as if they were finally able to shout out to me all the latent themes. … Very stupid questions. What next? Why did it happen? What is the way out of this? What should be done? What did I need that for? And there is only one answer all the time: I don't know. (Szczypiorski 1989, as cited in Jaworski 1993: 19)

Buddhist retreats, however, involve not just silence as such, but "noble silence." If we look to investigate the roots of noble silence, it is worthwhile to turn to the texts of the Pāli canon: (Saṃyutta Nikāya – the third major collection in the Sutta Piṭaka). In the text entitled

[3] http://plumvillage.org/retreats/visiting-us/sample-schedule/

Bhikkhusaṃyutta *(Connected Discourses with Bhikkhus)*, Mahāmoggallāna contemplates noble silence:

> "Here, friends, while I was alone in seclusion, a reflection arose in my mind thus: 'It is said, "noble silence, noble silence." What now is noble silence?'
> "Then, friends, it occurred to me: 'Here, with the subsiding of thought and examination, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the second jhāna, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. This is called noble silence.'
> "Then, friends, with the subsiding of thought and examination, I entered and dwelt in the second jhāna, which … has rapture and happiness born of concentration. While I dwelt therein, perception and attention accompanied by thought assailed me.
> "Then, friends, the Blessed One came to me by means of spiritual power and said this: 'Moggallāna, Moggallāna, do not be negligent regarding noble silence, brahmin. Steady your mind in noble silence, unify your mind in noble silence, concentrate your mind in noble silence.' Then, friends, on a later occasion, with the subsiding of thought and examination, I entered and dwelt in the second jhāna, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration.
> "If, friends, one speaking rightly could say of anyone: 'He is a disciple who attained to greatness of direct knowledge with the assistance of the Teacher,' it is of me that one could rightly say this." (Bodhi 2000: 713–4)

The disciple then is dwelling in the second *jhāna* here, in a deeply euphoric state where the stream of thoughts comes to a standstill. They are able to reach this state of joy through concentration *(samādhi)*. Through concentration, we are able to obtain answers to questions such as the following: Who am I? What do we want to do with our life? Why are we here? Who are we, each of us individually? What do we want to do with our life? Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes that these are not simply philosophical questions, but questions which must be answered for a person to find joy and peace in their life. And if we have enough time and concentration, we may find some surprising answers. Concentration requires silence in order for us to break free of the stream of our thoughts and to hear the call of our hearts (Hanh, 2015: 13–4).

To an outside observer, it is difficult to distinguish between silence during meditation and simply refraining from speaking; participants, however, understand the difference. When someone begins meditating, their first recognition generally pertains to the constant nature of internal dialogue – this is why meditation is aimed precisely at silencing it. In group meditation, each meditating member does so in their own silence; my research has shown, however, that for many (but not for everyone), group meditation offers qualitatively different experiences than individual meditation. Reinforcing and supporting by the community, and experiencing silence together, are important for them. (Bell and Collins make a similar statement regarding the British Theravāda Buddhists in their study quoted already.) In these cases, group meditation carries a connecting function, and it is aimed at ending the individual's isolation (in addition to making it easier to practice). For people belonging to low-context cultures, this connecting communicative function of meditation is exposed only over time, through experience. Several of the individuals I spoke with during my field work described how strange it was initially to have a group of people sitting together in silence in the same room. "It was as though we were doing nothing" (see Jensen, above, on the activating function).

To an outside observer, walking meditation, which is also done in silence, may appear to be similarly peculiar. At first glance, these may appear to be events where individuals not communicating with one another are walking somewhere at a very slow pace. This kind of meditation is different from sitting meditation in that it is directed more externally, more

towards the outside world. It provides an opportunity to connect with members of the organic world, and to meditate about their true nature. ("Breathing and walking in mindfulness puts us in touch with the miracles of life all around us, and our compulsive thinking will dissipate very naturally" [Hanh 2015: 59]). It remains true for this kind of meditation that practicing it in a group setting may provide a different experience than a solitary walk. Experiencing silence together helps the individual connect with another. At the same time, walking meditation is a simple way of quieting the mind without setting the quieting of the mind as our specific goal. The individual meditating while walking is always focusing on their next step and (similarly to seated meditation) on breathing, resulting in joy, consciousness and ultimately in the self-healing of body and mind:

> In that short amount of time you can experience the bliss, the joy, the happiness of stopping. During that time of stopping, your body is able to heal itself. Your mind also has the capacity to heal itself. There is nothing and no one to prevent you from continuing the joy you've produced with a second step, a second breath. Your steps and your breath are always there to help you heal yourself. (Hanh 2015: 58)

Retreats, however, are about more than just activities defined specifically as meditation. Meditation is actually a key part of the ceremonies, including of ceremonial meals. Although the majority of the participants of retreats I visited did not identify themselves as religious, and do not interpret Buddhism as a religion, the ceremonies of a retreat are, by definition, religious events, where on the one hand participants pay respect in various ways (to Buddha, the bodhisattvas, ancestors of the participants and to the living creatures of the Earth) and on the other hand certain ceremonies (such as the Three Earth Touchings[4]) serve to restore the broken bonds between living creatures. (If we approach it from the perspective of cultural context, this ceremony involves a ritual form of the communicative function aimed at connecting that is typical of high-context cultures.) Silent meditation is always a part of these ceremonies: the meditation performed at the beginning of the ceremony prepares the individual for their full participation in the ceremony and for focusing on the ceremony. In the case of meals – which are introduced by the giving of thanks and then proceed in silence – silence serves to help make the individual partaking in the meal internally aware of the sacrifice and work that produced the food on their plate (thereby reinforcing their connection to the living creatures of the world); and through this *conscious* recognition, the individual may change their negative dietary habits, such as gluttony. In these cases, then, it would once again be difficult to consider silence as simply an absence of speech. The introductory silent meditation is an important part of the ceremony; if we wish to describe these as complex communicative events, we cannot bypass defining the function of silence. Certainly, this holds true not only in the case of Buddhist ceremonies, as various religious practices feature separate episodes of silence and noise, each with their own meaning. These meanings are, however, culturally defined, and the "silences" are also not identical: one may make a distinction between, for instance, internally motivated silence and silence stemming from social rules (these may also converge, as for example in the case of meditation). And, as Jaworski points out: „the quality and quantity of silence are subject to change, but what is also very important, the qualitative, and to some degree the quantitative, changes of silence depend on the subjective perception of the individual. Thus what may seem as an absolute and undifferentiated span of silence to one person (the observer) may consist of various, however subtle and inexpressible, silences charged with different overtones and meanings for another (the participant)" (Jaworski 1993: 43). And while silence itself is unspeakable, the experiences one acquires during a period of silence – at least on a certain level – may be communicated, as is sometimes done within communities.

[4] http://plumvillage.org/key-practice-texts/the-three-earth-touchings/

To what extent is the silence at the retreat something that comes from within, and to what extent does it stem from "social" rules? We may conclude that the community has its own rules for silent periods, but these rules generally match the needs of those participating in the retreat. Additionally, interviews with members of the community (as well as my own personal observations) have shown that individuals undergo significant change during their first retreat as far as their tolerance for silence is concerned. Initially, many of them found the silence to be strange, but within a couple of days, their initial reservations were replaced with an enjoyment of the silence. When asked the question, "How do you benefit from a retreat?" respondents typically said, "I benefit by experiencing silence, being present in the present and feeling happiness." The dynamics of daily life change in a silent environment, and participants find ways to connect with one another through means other than verbal communication. The field work also made it clear that silence actually represents an important attraction. In addition to the aforementioned benefits, it also serves to "equalize," in a way: it dampens the voice of opinion leaders and makes the setting more comfortable for more introverted individuals, who do not feel they are expected to "chit-chat" – two elements which are otherwise typical of a verbal environment. Furthermore, opinion-leader-type individuals (or persons who hold leadership positions in their fields) are also attracted by this opportunity to step outside their usual roles and remain in the background. Certainly, these effects cannot be ascribed exclusively to silence, but I believe silence does play an important role.

The dynamics at a retreat differ greatly from the dynamics of everyday life. This is facilitated, in addition to the periods of silence already described, by periods of night-time noble silence, which starts after the last activity of the evening (meditation or a ceremony) and goes until the end of breakfast the following morning. The function of silence during these periods is not only relaxation, but also to *make rest possible for other participants*. Thus, silence is the framework which helps others rest, and thereby helps the individual respect others (affecting function). Cultural determinism is quite apparent here – maintaining noble silence is something that is difficult for many (at night and during meals); this is due not to disrespect or an intentional disobeying of rules, but stems typically from everyday habits. Retreats, however, have their own dynamics in this respect: as the days go by, it becomes easier to abide by this rule. The reason for this, for instance in the case of those attending their first retreat, is that the "point" of maintaining silence is gradually *made clear* to participants. The passage below provides a short and very simple summary of this rule and its underlying rationale:

> The practice is easy. If we are talking, we are talking. But if we are doing something else – such as eating, walking, or working – then we do just these things. We aren't doing these things and also talking. So we do these things in joyful noble silence. In this way, we are free to hear the deepest call of our hearts. (Hanh 2015: 6)

In terms of differences compared to communicative habits of low-context cultures, however, the way small-group conversations (so-called family sharings[5]) are conducted is perhaps the most interesting. Apart from the fact that these conversations, too, typically begin with sitting in silence for several minutes, turn-passing and turn-taking are different, and in a way they are more regulated, but in other ways they take place in a manner that is more liberal. They are more regulated because one is expected to indicate their intention to speak by taking a slight bow (with hands in the lotus position), just as they are expected to do the same to signal that they have finished speaking. Cutting off the other is not permitted; there is no penalty for doing so: the discomfort the individual would feel in such an instance for breaking the rules proves

[5] At the beginning of the retreat, participants are assigned to smaller groups – "families" –; participants then spend certain activities of the retreat (meals, joyful work, sharings) in their own family. Each family has a head, who is generally someone who has belonged to the community for a longer time.

sufficient (occasionally, the "family elder" may also offer a gentle warning). On the other hand, it is also more liberal, because there is no expectation to respond to what anyone else said, and everyone can speak their mind regardless of the comments of the person speaking before them. It is, however, not allowed to qualify the comments of the person speaking before. In these cases, remaining silent serves to show respect to the other person and for the fact that they have opened up, as well as acceptance for their experiences, for their interpretations and of their conclusions (judgmental function). These sessions, of course, have themes: they are generally related to the teachings that day, but do not play out as debates or dialogue; they rather provide a forum for sharing individual observations, feelings, impressions and conclusions. On the whole, they facilitate learning to listen attentively, understanding the position of the other person, accepting the unique validity of their viewpoints, and placing greater emphasis on the emotional dimension over the functioning of the discursive mind. Thus, changing the "rules" of communication in this way makes it possible to, and facilitates, changing one's perspective, which is also manifested in the fact that the silence is often accompanied by nonverbal communicative acts of encouragement, support and compassion. We must, however, mention as far as the negative aspect (linkage function) is concerned that these rules also make it possible for the individual to wrap themselves in silence and to maintain their isolation – this is, however, often resolved over time during the retreat.

The interviews showed that all of the opportunities at experiencing laid out above have the potential to make deep enough impressions on participants that they would be able to actively apply the skills and insights acquired through them later in their personal lives and in their work. Especially in the case of individuals working in leadership positions, this may also result in them taking specific steps in their workplaces to change their established communicative and problem-solving habits. Interview subjects highlighted an improvement in their teamwork, a termination of unhelpful workplace competition, an increase in compassion and satisfaction and more sincere communication. Although the study, confined to one single community (albeit with different individuals and with varying numbers of participants), was not representative, the results were still fairly unequivocal, indicating it may be worthwhile to examine these questions in the case of other communities.

If we want to shed more light on just how retreat participants reached these results, we may turn to Nyanaponika Thera, the Sri-Lankan Theravāda monk, who specifically emphasized that for lay individuals, it is vipassanā (bare attention) meditation which is most appropriate; this approach is also sometimes referred to as insight meditation. Bare attention uncovers the variability and passing nature of things, as well as the false concept of self. Through seated meditation about dependent existence, we obtain insight: "by the simple device of slowing down, pausing and keeping still for bare attention, all three of the characteristics of existence – impermanence, suffering, and non-self – will open themselves to penetrative insight *(vipassana)*" (Nyanaponika 2001: 35). And insight involves a kind of knowledge, competency and confidence which results in better communication. "Insight is a means of self-transformation, making the meditator more receptive and sensitive to fellow human and other beings, and hence skilful (Pāli – *kusala*) in his dealings. Silence and stillness are therefore endowed with moral value" – according to Bell and Collins (2014: 12).

Thich Nhat Hanh says it requires silence for us to be able to return to ourselves. Because we are generally afraid of being alone with ourselves and our anxieties, we turn to various stimuli to hide our suffering. And if we do so – turn to such stimuli – temporarily, for instance during a difficult time in our lives, to help hide our suffering, then that can become an addiction. Stimuli in our surroundings have an effect on us: for instance, if we are surrounded by angry persons, then we ourselves become angry. Humans have four kinds of nourishment: edible food, sense impressions, volition and consciousness (both individual and collective). Conversations may be considered sense impressions, meaning also that during a conversation,

we take over our partner's energies. This may mean that at the end of a conversation, we feel worse, and not better. During silent meditation, we may make ourselves conscious of these things: of the reasons and manifest forms of our fears and anxieties; and through the insight acquired, we may be able to reduce the consumption of such harmful things, leading us to be happier. Insight and happiness – which includes being satisfied with one's own life – helps us relate to others; in other words, it advances empathy, attention and kindness in speech, thereby improving communication. Better communication, in turn, involves avoiding lies and gossip; listening to the other person and considering their perspective; kindness in words; and striving for consensus and resolutions (Hanh 2015).

Conclusion

The present study has examined the subject of silence. The point of departure for the study was that silence is undervalued in Western societies, a notion that is also reflected by its neglect in the literature. Nonetheless, there exist certain theoretical constructs which can well be used to examine the subject. For such a study, it is worthwhile to utilize the tool of intercultural comparison, as it helps reveal the various approaches to and perspectives on silence. Therefore, in addition to theoretical constructs derived from Western literature, we have also included the approach to silence of Buddhism, based in part on canonical texts and in part on contemporary writings. The results of the field work conducted for the present study have shown that, while a new environment whose rules pertaining to silence are different poses a difficulty for the Western individual, there is a demonstrated need for breaking away from noise, and that the majority of individuals, after a short period of time, are able to adapt to this situation, even if imperfectly. As we have seen, while retreats do not take place in complete silence, the entire retreat is generally characterized by a reserved approach to verbal communication. This reserved approach is not only quantitative, but also qualitative as well, and silence has several functions. In addition to the epistemological theory appropriate to Buddhism (or it is perhaps more precise to say as a part thereof), it is also aimed at changing communicative habits and, as a result, at improving the quality of human relationships and increasing one's awareness of the environment and living creatures. In terms of the communicative function of silence, activities at the retreat involve all five categories laid out by J. Vernon Jensen: the linkage, affecting, revelational, judgmental and activating functions. In the case of various silences experienced at the retreats, it is generally the more positive values which are present, although activities are of course not free of negative aspects either: for some, connecting with others may be difficult, and in their cases, silence may serve as a line of defense to help them maintain their isolation (linkage function); silence may also be a tool to express disagreement (judgmental function). It may also happen that someone is unable to identify with the perspective of the community, or the pace which is far slower than what they are used to in their everyday lives, to such an extent that they do not wish to attend activities of the community again (although the positive aspects of the activating and revelational functions of silence may nonetheless become apparent to them). At the same time, based on the interviews and on my observations, it is my opinion that for participants, it was generally the positive aspect of the communicative functions of silence that was made apparent. If we are looking to categorize the various events from this perspective, it is the judgmental function of silence that appears in family sharings and in informal dialogue; the positive values of the other four functions are present throughout the entire retreat (noting that the activating function is most clearly present at meditations and in relaxation, which in a certain sense may be considered similar). In the interviews, participants most frequently emphasized their experiences connected with the linkage, affecting and revelational functions.

Because the field work was performed at a Hungarian community following the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, it is also worth summarizing how these functions are linked to Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings. I believe the experiences of participants are in harmony with the teachings and with Jensen's categorization. The following very brief passage also references all of the functions mentioned by Jensen: "If we want to be more connected to others, we don't need to text them more; we need to listen to them more. Deep listening leads to understanding. Understanding leads to greater connection. The way to listen more deeply is not simply to try harder. Rather, it is to take time in practice that starts with silence – that is, with quieting our internal Radio Non-Stop Thinking" (Hanh 2015: 168). Practice thus begins with silence: this creates the mental state for gaining insight and understanding (*activating* function); additionally, as we have already seen in the description of walking meditation, slowing down in silence and concentrating on breathing instead of on speaking in itself carries the power of healing for the mind and body (*affecting* function). The appropriate mental state and silent concentration make understanding possible – above all, the understanding of ourselves (*revelational* function). This is necessary in order to develop our relationship to others: empathy, paying attention, speaking style and, ultimately, communication. And better communication results in better human relationships (*linkage* function), helps problem solving and conflict management (*judgmental* function) and in general leads to greater satisfaction. As far as communicative functions are concerned, the Buddhist retreat examined may thus well be described using these categories.

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Notes on the Narratological Approach to Board Games

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Abstract: Nowadays game studies are in the foreground of cultural and communication debates. Even if video games are strongly studied in semiotics, play is a wide field of study with many areas still unexplored. The area that this paper aims to explore concerns board games and it focuses on the relationship between game and narration and the role of a game's intertextual dimension from a semiotic point of view.
Semiotic tools that have been used include the Greimasian narrative sequence (a structuralist point of view that fits very well with the rigid, explicit grammaticalization of board games) and Génette's narratology, unavoidable for every reflection on intertextuality. Last, but not least, cultural semiotics, based on Jurij Lotman's works, offers a valuable asset for understanding the enveloping and organic structure that surrounds games.
The research proceeds to focus on some case studies of three ancient board games - chess, backgammon, and mancalas - underlining their common traits and differences. The paper shows that the structure of board games is very similar to the structure of the Greimasian narrative sequence, but they rather form a hybrid narration in which the player has a primary importance. Moreover, we see that games constantly retrieve sense from different kinds of other texts depending on the culture and society in which the game is played.
The aim of this research is not to propound a complete theory, but rather to indicate a possible path to follow, between many, that could be a valuable resource in the exploration and the understanding of play.

Keywords: Semiotics, Game, Narrative, Intertextuality.

Introduction

"Play can't be denied" stated Huizinga. Play is an activity that precedes culture, that even precedes man. Animals play: it is even necessary for their survival (Bateson 1956). Play is a major feature of human existence, essential for the childish learning and shaping many aspects of culture (Huizinga 1939). *"Man* is only *fully* a human being when he plays," stated Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794). Nowadays, the

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phenomenon of *gamification* – the introduction of elements proper of play in unrelated areas – is more and more increasing. The Homo Ludens described by Huizinga (1939) is now becoming a Homo Ludicos (Ortoleva 2012): a real play-obsessed. Play is no longer only a fundamental aspect of culture, but it is becoming the main one.

Speaking about play in general, anyway, is very difficult. Play has many forms, and it would be impossible, here, to develop an analysis on the whole of its practices. It could be useful, therefore, to concentrate on games.

In the next chapters, we will approach these games in a semiotic way in an attempt to understand their relationship with narration and intertextuality. The objective of this paper is to analyze the functioning of board games and the elements that compose them in a structural and systematical way, investigating their texture and studying the way they characterize themselves toward other kinds of texts.

A final note: while analyzing games, it is always important to point out what is the object of our study. A first definition and circumscription of game is needed in order to start the analysis. There is a small amount of semiotic analysis of video games, for example, that apply semiotic tools to the *practice* of play. Those analyses prove only that playing is an action and so it could be susceptible to be narrated. What we want to do is extremely different. In this paper, we want to analyze what happens *while* a player is playing, during his fruition of the game. Our aim is neither to analyze what it means "to play" nor to determine the characteristics of a "game played," but rather to study what it means to be "*playing games.*"

Methodology

No analysis of games could be done without reviewing the existing literature on play and games. On the one hand, Huizinga's work (Huizinga 1939) is still fundamental to understanding the primary importance of play for man and realizing how the play element is present in unexpected areas such as ritual and war. Bateson (1956), on the other hand, proposes some interesting considerations on the similarities between animal and human play from an ethological and psychological point of view. Roger Caillois built the first rigorous typology of play and tried to put some order to the eclectic and vague play-sphere (Caillois 1967). Last, but not least, we could mention Carse who has a valuable essay (Carse 1987) on the relationship between games and time. Even if all these analyses, with their strengths and weaknesses, are of primary importance in game studies, they all belong to other disciplines (sociology, ethology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy) opposed to the semiotic interpretation that we wish here to propose.

Actually, some semiotic works on games exist, even if mostly confined to video games and admittedly media-centric.[1] Some of the concepts developed by this approach can be successfully applied to our analysis too, but most of them are devoted to a kind of text extremely different from ours and focus on topics such as virtual reality, the status of code inside a text, and the fact of games being potentially infinite: all features that are typical of digital games only.

The semiotic tools that will support our analysis are mainly from two different traditions. First is the greimaisan structuralist approach. The structure, says Lotman (1984), has to be considered a heuristic benefit and not an ontological property of the text. Indeed the canonical narrative schema proposed by Greimas (1966) is still a powerful and important instrument of analysis to investigate the elements in narration, and, in our case, even in games. The sequence "contract, action, sanction" together with his modalities (having-to-do, wanting-to-do,

[1] See, for example, Compagno and Coppock (2008). Ferri and alii (2013) or Mäyrä (2008).

knowing-how-to-do, and being-able-to-do) will obviously pair with the actantial model, which requires a subject, an anti-subject, a value object, a sender, a receiver, helpers, and opponents.

On the other hand, the analysis of intertextual relationships of games will be based on Génette (1982). In particular, we will considerate an open form of intertextuality that concerns all kinds of texts and not only literature. For this purpose, it will be very important to bear in mind the concept of *semiosphere*, described by Jurij Lotman (Lotman 1984), which indicates the ensemble of all the signification processes of culture that coexist and mingle as a biological unity.[2]

Finally, it could be important to remember the concept of "pleasure of the text," defined by Barthes (1973) as the spur that makes a reader read. In our case, of course, we can define it as "pleasure of the game." This new concept fits perfectly with the categories of play described by Caillois (1967). In "les jeux et les hommes" he individuates four different kinds of play based on the sensations felt while playing. These categories – alea (chance), mimicry (imitation), ilinix (dizziness) and agon (competition) – seem to be exactly what promote the pleasure of the game.

Chess

The first step to analyze the actantial roles in this board game is to identify the subject. In chess there are two sets of pieces, Black and White, but it is impossible to consider one of them as "the subject." The action, especially the performance, is not done by them. The player is the one that moves, acts. So is he the subject we are looking for? No, or better, not only him. It is true that he chooses a strategy and moves the pieces, but some of its competences are imposed by the rules. The player could actually make forbidden moves, but he chooses not to, out of respect for the game's restrictions. Accepting the terms of the game, the player becomes a part of a *compound subject* with hybrid modalities. The know-how-to-do is the player's own, but the wanting-to-do and the having-to-do are determined by the rules. The being-able-to is played half by the player (for example, being able to understand his opponent's strategy) and half by rules (for example, being able to move two pieces at the first turn). The player's pieces are, actually, the subject's helpers. This actantial role is compound, too. In this case, the rules set out what a piece is able-to-do (the kind of movement available) and sometimes what it has-to-do (the king is forced to get out of check); the player will provide what the helper wants-to-do (moving or not and in which direction) and knows-how-to-do (for example how to avoid being taken). Reflective on these first two actantial roles, we find we have the anti-subject and the opponents. Everything we said about the subject and the helper is exactly the same for anti-subject and opponents, only on the other side. The object of value is the victory, or better, the opponent's defeat by a checkmate, and it is completely provided by the rules. Regarding the contract, the role of sender is played by the agonistic nature of the game; the receiver, on the other hand, is the compound subject itself: both the "color" and the players are subjects to the sanction. Employing the canonical narrative schema and identifying the actantial roles in the game of chess, we can see that narration would not exist without the contribution of the player. In order to play, the player has to immerse himself in the narration, provide competencies, and fulfill modalities to mingle in the game and become a part of it.

In Juul (2005), games are defined as "half-real." Rules are the real half of the game – the other one is fictional and assists the player in understanding the game and playing it. Intertextual links and connections will be present in both halves, even if more clearly in the second one. In the game of chess, intertextual connections are strongly present. The military

[2] For a Lotmanian approach to games, see also Thibault (2015).

metaphor is the driving force of the game, supported by the name of the pieces. Kings, queens, bishops, rooks, and knights today link us to the courtly medieval warfare and give sense to a game that without, it would just be the movement of some pieces of wood on a table. If the playing pieces had different names, the gameplay would be a rather different experience. If we take into consideration the diachronic evolution of the pieces, we will see that what we call the *queen* was once the *vizir* (and still is in many countries) and what we call the *bishop* was the *elephant*. In addition, in France, the bishop is the "*fou*" - the fool - and in Italy the "*alfiere*" is a soldier who brings the banner. Thus, what in Western Europe seemed a medieval contest was, in fact, the representation of a real battle of V century in Persia. The intertextual bond weaved centuries ago lasted until today, being transformed, traduced, and finally fixed into a "classical" model. The loss of one of the elements – in our case the elephant – in the cultural translation, brings the introduction of a new element that could be harmonic with the others and the receiving semiosphere. In some peculiar cases, maintaining the military metaphor, the pieces could be invested by quite different thematic roles. Various games of chess sets have been produced to reproduce ancient civilizations (as Romans vs. Egyptians) and even characters from films (The Lord of The Rings or Star Wars). The dimension of intertextuality in these last examples is even deeper, as we are not in presence of the retrieving of a thematic role, but of a complete character, or, at least, of his appearance.

The retrieving of thematic roles from other elements of the semiosphere causes chess to have meaning beyond the competition given by the rules. The pleasure of the game, therefore, doesn't come only from the *agon*, but also from the *mimicry*: the simulation of the battle on the chessboard. These two aspects coexist in the same game and are specific, respectively, of its real half and its fictional half. Therefore, half of the pleasure of the game is due to its intertextual connections.

Backgammon

The first ancestor of backgammon was created five millennia ago. The board game, born in Persia, had a remarkable diffusion and nowadays is one of the most played board games in the world. Thanks to its notoriety, there is no need to describe this game: we will begin the analysis of its narrative structure immediately.

The similarities with chess are many. The sender and the receiver are the same, as helpers and opponents. The first important difference concerns the performance, which is determined by a dice throw. Competencies and modalities − held by players and by rules − remain, but the being-able-to modality is provided by chance. Practically: for every move, the rules state that the subject has to move, the dice throw determines what kind of movement is "able-to-do," and the player makes the move thanks to his "know-how-to play." The subject, in this case, is treble and includes the uncontrollable and open component of alea, chance. The second important difference concerns the object of value. As it often happens in games of chance, sometimes backgammon is played for money. That way the object of value won't be only the victory, but the stakes include the points that will be converted into money. Money, however, is not a part of the play-sphere; it is a part of the "real" world. The object of value, therefore, won't be exclusively a part of the game, as in chess, but it becomes compound as the subject. Introducing gambling in backgammon makes the sanction more important for that part of the subject covered by the player because it has effects on the real life of the person himself.

Let's put the question of gambling on ice for now, and concentrate on the intertextual aspects of backgammon. Unlike chess, backgammon has only weak intertextual links. Neither the name of the game nor the name or shape of the pieces suggest anything else what they are in game. The only trace of links to other texts is the game's structure itself, that as the shape of an escape.

The possibility to hit your opponent's checkers and capture them on the bar seems coherent with this metaphor. Even if not in backgammon, we can find some connections with "escape" in related games. In Turkish Tavla, for example, there is a strategy called "taking the doors" and in the Egyptian game Senet one of the more ancient ancestors of backgammon, some hieroglyph indicates words as "exit" and "adversity". Compared with chess, anyway, these intertextual links are quite mild, their function is basically to help the player to understand the meaning of the game thanks to a metaphor.

Concerning the pleasure of the game, agon is without any doubt one of the mechanism of gratification of the player, as for chess. Mimicry is not present, due to the lack of strong intertextual links, but the strongest spur to play is given by gambling – by a sanction that relevantly affects the player – and the presence of alea, of chance, that creates an atmosphere of pathos and wait, of continuous climaxes.

Mancalas

Mancalas are a group of African games (also present in Southern Asia and Central America) that are based on the common principle of sowing. The first examples of mancalas are dated by archaeologists between the 6th and 7th century AD in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Even if in Europe they are less known than chess and backgammon, they still have a great diffusion in many areas of the planet. I thought it could be important to analyze also this kind of games to have a various and multicultural point of view on board games.

In the family of mancalas exist dozens of games, with important differences between them about rules and ways of play. In this paper, we will not analyze deeply all kinds of mancalas or propose a typology of these games, but only investigate the characteristics in which we are more interested: their narrative structure and intertextual links. It could be important to remind that the word "mancala" came probably from the Arab naquala or the Swahili mankelah, both meaning "moving." The names of the different kinds of mancalas usually mean "table," "game," "sowing" and similar.

Mancalas are played on a board with various holes, or pits, positioned in one or more rows. In some cases, there are bigger holes called "stores" or "granaries" in which are gathered pieces no more in game or captured. Players put pieces, usually seeds or beans, in the holes, following a variable disposition, not fully fixed by the rules. Generally, each player owns the rows on his side. The game consists of a series of sowing in which a player select a hole with seeds that will be sown around the board. This selection is often limited to holes on the current player's side of the board, as well as holes with a certain minimum number of seeds. In some games when relay sowing, if the last seed during sowing lands in an occupied hole, all the contents of that hole, including the last sown seed, are immediately resown from the hole. The process usually will continue until sowing ends in an empty hole. It is also possible to capture seeds, in different manners according to the kind of game that's being played. The evaluation of the consequences of a sowing is the primary test of the ability of a player. The game ends when a player has no more legal moves, when he have no more seeds (in this case we have a famine) or when deadlock is reached. In some mancalas, as the Wari, the most widespread of these board games, there exists the "feed" rule: it is not possible to let your opponent in a famine, but it is necessary letting him keep some of his seeds or sharing with him some of yours. This is, in brief, the functioning of mancalas, even if all kinds of mancalas are different from each other.

The compound narrative structure that we have described for the other board games is broadly working also for mancalas, but with some, significant differences. First, the pieces, (the seeds) do not belong to one player, but they are continuously exchanged and captured.

Thus, the seeds aren't only helpers or opponents of the subject, but also secondary value objects that have to be collected in order to gain the primary value object, the victory. On the other hand, seeds aren't simply a kind of scorekeeper, but they have a function and a usefulness in the game. Sowing make the seeds became helpers in order to gain other seeds and win the game. Of course, when the anti-subject is using them, they'll play the role of opponents. This double nature of either helpers/opponents and value objects could be summarized in the word "resources" borrowed by video games. Chance is not present in mancalas, even if, for a beginner, the sequences of multiple laps of sowing could seem unpredictable. It is up to the player's knowing-how-to-do the creation of a narrative program that allows him, thanks to an accurate calculation, to imagine the outcome of his move. This ever-changing narrative program – present also in the other board games – is what we call "strategy." The construction of a strategy, however, is influenced by the actions of the anti-subject, proposing his own narrative program that aims, of course, at his own victory.

The main theme of mancala is sowing, present in every level of the game. The words "granary," "famine" and "feed" are all linked with the sphere of agriculture, and so it's the disposition of the seeds in the holes. Using real seeds in the game opens a major intertextual relationship that involves every element of the game. It is impossible to say if it was the use of the seeds that shaped the game as an agricultural metaphor, but it cannot be excluded. The force of the meaning that permeates a seed in an agricultural society is enough to take with it a huge amount of sense connections that the game will inherit. Those connections will be so deep that in some case they can even reshape game's structure. The rules on "feeding" the opponent show precisely the strength of intertextual links in mancalas that come to a point where the victory conditions change in respect of the social rules of the real world. In this case, intertextuality affects both parts of the game strongly: the real one and the fictional one. Furthermore, the seeds aren't symbols, as the rook of chess, but they stand for themselves: they are objects proper to the real world, not to the play-sphere. The secondary object of value of mancalas, so, it is a compound object, like money for backgammon, even if, differently from money, the value of a seed is mainly due to a symbolic synecdoche. Thus, a positive or negative sanction to a player will not be determinant due to the value of the real object, but thanks to its symbolic strength.

As for chess, the pleasure of the game in mancalas is given by its elements of agon and mimicry. The imitation, in this case, is not the re-enactment of some heroic deed, but the introduction of strong connections with the exterior world and in particular with a fundamental area of the semiosphere of agricultural societies.

Conclusions

Concerning the narrative aspects of games, we observed that even if we could apply the canonical narrative schema of Greimas, games are not classical narrations, but rather are compound phenomena. The actantial role of the subject is played by multiple elements: rules, the ability and decisions of the player and, sometimes, chance. Also, some of the other actantial roles are characterized by the same compound nature. Video games scholars use the concept of "interactivity" as one of the primaries aspects of games, and they define video games as an Interactive Digital Narrative (Ferri, Haahr, Koenitz, & Sezen 2013). This could work for video games, but, in my opinion, the relationship between game and player goes beyond the interactivity, and it is not limited to dialogue: it realizes a sharing and a compenetration of both. When the player accepts the rules and starts playing, he doesn't call into question the rules anymore; they became a part of him, of what he's doing. In the same way, he accepts the result of a dice throw and makes it a part of him in his new self: the subject of the play. This originates a compound narration that could have many different forms: it can include chance, it can require strategic thinking or mathematical competencies, it can sanction the subject with hybrid

value objects that have different degrees of importance in the real world, and so on. These forms define not only the different kinds of games, but also the constant element stays the compound nature of the practice of playing a game. We shouldn't forget that in all the board games that we have analyzed two opposite players are present. The structure of these games is thus symmetrical: every subject is an anti-subject for the other; the opponents of one will be the helpers of the other. Every move made by a subject will influence the decisions of the other and interfere with his strategy. This relationship between subjects, and not between player and game, could appropriately be defined interactively.

Concerning the intertextual dimension of games, in all three board games, even if in different degrees, the intertextual connections have a primary importance, even if in some cases it's more evident than in others. For some games, intertextual links are part of the elements giving pleasure of the game, for others they are just a help to better understand the functioning of the rules and the objectives of the game. It is important to avoid the mistake of considering intertextuality as a characteristic that is applied to a game at a later time. The intertextual links actively participate in the creation of a game. A game is created within a semiosphere and is soaked through with the values and categories of its culture. Every intertextual link is a part of a system that can later be translated, retrieved, renewed, modified or strengthened. In some cases these connections could be deeper, in larger numbers or denser than in others and, depending on their nature, they can influence more or less the structure of the game.

Last, but not least, we had the occasion to do some considerations about the pleasure of the game. We saw that three out of four of the elements described by Caillois were present in the board games that we analyzed, as catalysts of the pleasure. More precisely we individuated agon, alea, and mimicry. Due to its physical nature, it is not surprising that ilinix has been excluded from this list: it fits within the definition of a board game with difficulty. In addition, we could notice that those elements were always present in the games in couples and that not every time one of them was predominant. Therefore, the work of Caillois, instead of drawing boundaries and typologies, has been very useful for outlining the mechanisms of gratification that we call “pleasure of the game.”

We also have to point out the limits of this paper. We can't generalize the results of the analysis to all the kind of play, or even of game. There exists a large quantity of games and it would be scientifically unacceptable to assume that this analysis fits perfectly to every one of them without further researches. This analysis has to be considered as a cue and it aims to be an heuristic hint, not a typology or an ontological description. It is more about how a board game work, than about what a game is.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, this work could be useful for underlining two aspects of the game that, regardless of its contingent expressions, could be a starting point for further considerations on games and play.

The first aspect is the compound narrative shape that games assume. Beyond the different and controversial interpretations of the concept of narration – that divide video games scholars – applying the canonical narrative schema and the system of actantial roles at games, it's useful for understanding better their functioning. The aim it isn't the ontological description of games (are they narration or not?), but to shed some light on the way games work in connection with the player. I think that Lotman's lesson is capital, here. Structuralism is only a tool of investigation, a heuristic convenience, not a description of the object's ontology. Our analysis doesn't look for actantial roles with the only purpose to define a structure, but it aims at underlining the fusion (and confusion) that involves game and player in the act of playing. A fusion that goes beyond (and maybe precedes) the identification that could involve a reader. A fusion that spurs the player to become something else, to leave the real world and enter the play-sphere. I think that this, regardless of the methods used to cause this union – gambling, interpretation, intertextual connections, etc. – is a fundamental point for understanding what

play means: not a simple interaction with rules or opponents, but the repositioning of an individual on another plane of reality, the reality of play, that needs him to transform into a hybrid, becoming something different.

The second aspect to underline is the essential belonging of a game to its semiosphere. A game could not be taken into consideration without the set of signification processes that surrounds it. It's not in order to make a philological reconstruction, but to analyze games as part of a system. Analyzing exhaustively the place that a game such as chess occupies in the semiosphere would be demanding work, and that is not our goal. What we tried to achieve is to show that in different games exist different ways to relate with their semiosphere. In the game of chess, there's the retrieving of some thematic roles from the historical/political discourse, roles that are then fixed in pieces to characterize and thematize the execution of the game, increasing its appeal and simplifying its comprehension. In backgammon, otherwise, there is only the presence of the theme of escape that directs the player and explains the game, but nothing else. In mancalas, the tangible connection with the sphere of agriculture shapes the game significantly in the course of time.

These two aspects of games, their compound nature and their relationship with the semiosphere, are just a little part of what a semiotic analysis of games could reveal. Many areas of research, points of view, and kinds of games are still to be taken into consideration. Our analysis, then, is just a starting point, a first step in a region of the wide territories of play that, after all, remain largely unexplored.

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Letter to the Editor

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Letter to the Editor: Evidence of Bias, Opacity and Lack of Reciprocity by Retraction Watch

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Dear *KOME* Editors,

Retraction Watch (http://retractionwatch.com) is a highly popular blog that claims to examine retractions, but is much more than this: it is a central hub that shames science and scientists under the guise of holding them to extremely high research or publishing standards. It primarily examines topics, scientists, editors and publishers in a highly critical light, seeking to accumulate evidence of science's overall failures and misconduct. Retraction Watch also covers other publishing-related topics of general interest but that fall out of its specific and stated scope of retractions. Even pure errors are often shed in a negative light by applying an only-perfection-is-tolerable approach. Being profiled at Retraction Watch, which involves an examination of the flaws or cracks in accountability, transparency, honesty and values in scientists, editors and publishers to build upon their blog stories, may result in psychological and professional damage to those who are profiled. The founders, Ivan Oransky and Adam Marcus, who are self-proclaimed and highly acclaimed editors and science/medical writers and/or journalists, seem to believe that they need not be held as accountable as the entities they publicly profile, even if these are their critics. As a result, a strongly biased, yet powerful, blog has now emerged that specializes in profiling and public shaming of science and scientists. Lack of accountability, transparency, honesty, scientific values, opacity and reciprocity – phenomena that are also beginning to be detected with this popular blog – are some of the reasons that underlie the loss in trust and respect in science and publishing, and these are topics worthy of scrutiny and a fair, frank and open discussion. Such a conversation should take place when the Retraction Watch moderators do not pose any conflicts of interest, or bias. If Retraction Watch purports to be aiding in the assistance of science and higher education through an understanding of retractions, but is unable to focus exclusively on retractions, and fails be independently moderated, or held accountable by scientists or other members of the public, also shows characteristics of opacity, and fails to hold itself to the same values as it holds its journalistic targets, then one must question the academic and educational merit of this

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blog. This letter to the editor serves to question the core *modus operandi* of the Oransky and Marcus blog, Retraction Watch, namely public shaming.

Dr. Oransky is the co-founder of Retraction Watch. The Center for Science Integrity (CSI; http://retractionwatch.com/the-center-for-scientific-integrity) is the stated parent organization of Retraction Watch, although no background information exists about the CSI on this page. The CSI is a registered charity, i.e., a non-profit (501(c)) organization. To date, the CSI has received generous funding from two foundations (MacArthur Foundation; https://www.macfound.org; Laura and John Arnold Foundation; http://www.arnoldfoundation.org) and one trust, The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (http://www.helmsleytrust.org), which have donated US$830,000. Very basic information about how this sizeable funding has been or is being used by the CSI and Retraction Watch was just released on November 29, 2016 (McCook 2016), but requests to Dr. Oransky, who is the stated President of the CSI, for details about some of the US$ amounts on that 2015 tax return[1] remain unanswered, although we have learned the following from that financial disclosure: a) CSI is operated from Dr. Oransky's apartment; b) The full name of the CSI is in fact Center for Science Integrity Inc. but the "Inc." part has been left off the name in all public sites that list or refer to the CSI; c) only just over $33,000 have been used exclusively for the development of the retraction database in this fiscal year; d) Adam Marcus is the CSI secretary. Such information is important because scientists and the public expect full openness and transparency from the Retraction Watch leadership, Oransky and Marcus, especially regarding a potential US$830,000 conflict of interest. This expectation is not unreasonable considering that Retraction Watch equally expects the scientific community to be open, honest and transparent about issues related to retractions. As it currently stands, there is an imbalance in opacity and transparency regarding the CSI and the financials of this charity. Is, for example, a goal of the CSI to use any of this funding to instill a culture of fear, *ad hominem* profiling and public shaming, which is strongly suggested by a recent blog post (Oransky and Marcus 2016) by these two science watchdogs? Prof. Susan T. Fiske, the former President of the American Psychological Society, has presented valid arguments and concerns about the culture of shaming in science (Fiske 2016). What then differentiates Retraction Watch from Fiske's concerns? The answer may lie in a constructive (positive criticism and a balanced perspective) versus a destructive (purely negative analysis and anti-science) ideology.

If Oransky and Marcus believe that public shaming is a valid form of argument, then they too, in a true spirit of accountability and reciprocity, must be publicly shamed when and where necessary, by scientists or by members of the public, for valid issues related to their blog, and their public statements and views, including those on Facebook posts, Tweets or other social media or interviews. In much the same way that scientists are held accountable by their peers and by their seniors in editorial positions, and also now by Retraction Watch and other science watchdogs (Teixeira da Silva 2016a), so too must Retraction Watch and its staff not be immune to criticism or humiliation, nor should they be exempt from fair and critical analysis that seeks greater transparency and that holds them more accountable. If Retraction Watch (i.e., Oransky, Marcus and its small fleet of writers) fails in its journalistic standards, if it abuses the publishing medium to modify information without formal public notice (e.g., Teixeira da Silva 2016b), uses intimidation or aggression, abuses the trust of their readership or public, or shows double standards that are incompatible with the standards that they hold scientists, editors and publishers to, then are these not all issues worthy of being explored, and exposed, when necessary? A first case has documented title and content manipulation, without appropriate (or insufficient) error correction (or retraction) by Retraction Watch (Teixeira da Silva 2016b).

[1] http://retractionwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2015-990.pdf (last accessed: December 2, 2016)

The CSI does not indicate anywhere on its web-page when it was created, any history about its creation, or its physical or postal address. In fact, the CSI does not have an independent web-page that one would expect for a perceived "Center", but is instead listed as a sub-menu item of the Retraction Watch web-page, even though the CSI is claimed to be Retraction Watch's "parent" organization. One would expect, at minimum, that such a prominent, well-funded and high profile ethical center to have its own web-page with full details about all aspects of the organization, including postal address, contact phone and fax numbers, etc., i.e., complete accountability. Sadly, this does not exist. There is no explanation about how, when and using what selective criteria the members of the board of directors[2] were appointed to this board. When I contacted the CSI directors, the only response I received was from Dr. Elizabeth Wager, the former (2009-2012) COPE (Committee of Publication Ethics) Chair, who claimed not to know the address, nor could she offer any explanation why there is no web-site for the CSI, or what criteria were used to select her to the CSI board of directors. The fact that a director of a board of directors of a self-acclaimed ethical organization is unable to offer any transparent response to such queries is of great concern. It is in fact these factual omissions that should raise scientists' and the public's concerns about the failure of Retraction Watch, its senior management and staff, and its board of directors to offer transparent responses about their charity, its functionality, and its *modus operandi*.

Another watchdog, Mr. Jeffrey Beall, an activist librarian with a perceived anti-science (or anti-open access) ideology, lists on his blog, which is regularly featured and promoted (possibly to increase inter-site traffic) by Retraction Watch, primarily on its weekly reads, the following criteria for predatory publishing practices[3]: "Demonstrates a lack of transparency in publishing operations; Has no policies or practices for digital preservation, meaning that if the journal ceases operations, all of the content disappears from the internet; provides insufficient information or hides information…; the publisher hides or does not reveal its location; The publisher lists insufficient contact information, including contact information that does not clearly state the headquarters location or misrepresents the headquarters location; the publisher uses names such as "Network," "Center," "Association," "Institute," and the like when it is only a solitary, proprietary operation". One may thus strongly argue that the opacity surrounding the CSI, its background, constitution, ethical guidelines, scope and *modus operandi*, responsibilities of directors, lack of contacts, physical address and independent web-site fits multiple criteria of the "predatory" concept that Beall alludes to. Should the honesty and lack of transparency (i.e., opacity) of the CSI and of those who have created it, not be called into question?

Finally, none of the Retraction Watch management or staff or CSI directors have any disclaimer or conflicts of interest (COI) listed under their names. Perceived COIs are essential aspects of ethics in science publishing. Such omissions accentuate the overall concern about the ethical basis of this organization. This letter provides evidence that accountability and transparency are not reciprocal concepts for Retraction Watch and its parent organization, the CSI. This ethical exceptionalism fortifies why the CSI needs to be very closely analyzed, scrutinized and monitored.

Higher education would merit from a greater understanding of the issues underlying problems with the literature. Problematic literature is used by students and faculty alike, and thus literature that has errors, has not been correctly vetted, or that is not corrected by editors when errors are known, poses a risk to the core fabric of education. Thus, science welcomes a positive, open, frank and balanced discussion of these issues, but only by an unbiased team of moderators. Blogs and web-sites that purportedly claim to be tools and voices for science and

[2] http://retractionwatch.com/the-center-for-scientific-integrity/board-of-directors (last accessed: December 2, 2016)

[3] https://scholarlyoa.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/criteria-2015.pdf (last accessed: December 2, 2016)

the education industry, but that lack opacity, such as the CSI / Retraction Watch, may represent more of a danger, and not less, to academic integrity simply because of their contradictory stances.

Science is in a crisis, but there are several issues that undermine the notion that Retraction Watch is being held accountable in a reciprocal manner by the public and by scientists. This false perception has been created by a massively powerful social media presence and the incredible charitable funding offered by three US-based philanthropic organizations. The opacity surrounding the CSI and its workings is a prime example that this perception is not true. In order for there to be mutual respect and exchange of information between Retraction Watch (including the CSI and its board of directors) and the public and/or scientists, with the objective of improving science through open debate and honest and unbiased communication, so too must there be reciprocal analysis, scrutiny, accountability and transparency. It is time to watch science watchdogs like Retraction Watch (Teixeira da Silva 2016a).

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