

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

On Social Networking and Psychosis

Joshua Gunn

Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas at Austin, One University Station, Mailcode: A1105, Austin, USA

In this article, I explain how psychoanalytic theory helps to make sense of the increasingly psychotic character of public discourse. Following an approach rooted in the theories of Jacques Lacan, psychosis is defined not as a private, individual pathology but rather as a symbolic or social structure that inheres in culture. This structure is characterized by a failure to recognize or internalize a sense of authority and limitation respectively. The primary examples concern social networking technologies and the social media that these enable.

Keywords: Lacan, Psychoanalysis, Psychosis, Social Networking, Symbolic Efficiency.

doi:10.1093/ct/qt002

The primary goal of this article is to explain how contemporary psychoanalytic theory helps communication scholars to identify psychical structures—that is, dispositions or strategies for being toward others—that undergird public discourse in general and social networking in particular (I should note at the outset that the identification of such structures in communication—in our case, the psychoses—is neither medical nor moral, but rather critical and cultural, and thus interpretive and descriptive in character). A secondary but related goal pursues a thesis: as a culture, North America is moving from a once dominant, characteristically neurotic mode of public discourse toward a psychotic one. Making the case will take some space, however, I wish to begin somewhat unconventionally with a series of examples, building inductively to better frame what I think is at stake: the general *coherence* of our contemporary, cultural conversations in a hyper-mediated world.

Example the first: student sexting. In our so-called screened life, many of us have become accustomed to a routine stream of salacious stories in news media. In both national and local news programs, an increasingly familiar narrative concerns youths snapping and circulating smartphone pics of their “junk.” The following lead-in for a recent *Nightline* episode previews what has become a fairly predictable “youth news” sub-genre:

Corresponding author: Joshua Gunn; e-mail: josh_gunn@austin.utexas.edu

[Tonight] a story involving nudity, technology, and adolescence. A small town in Colorado finds itself in the white-hot glare of the national media spotlight because of a so-called sexting scandal. Scores of students, some of them only in middle school, suspected of trading naked pictures on their phones using secret apps to hide it from their parents and teachers. Here's ABC's David Wright. (ABC News, 2015)

Such stories are typically packaged with evocative language (“white-hot glare”); blurred shots of young people walking or texting on a high school campus; interviews with outraged officials and parents; interviews of teens denouncing the activity; and more blurred shots of young people, many “suggestive” and consequentially journalistically perverse. In recent years, such stories also tend to call attention to overly harsh child-pornography laws that, in some states, can class a typical, concupiscent kid as a life-long sex-offender (Lewin, 2010).

In addition to dealing with fights, bullying, and all kinds of physically abusive behavior, then, our colleagues in secondary education now have to deal with the dreaded advent of “sexting,” a technological mainstay that news journalists will continue to hype (see Best & Bogle, 2014; Sabbah-Mani, 2015). Of course, such raunchy reportage rides atop a larger, Western fantasy of “youth in crisis” that bemoans the teenage libido run amok (Acland, 1995; Sloop & Gunn, 2010). For example: *don't text and drive*. Although the admonition that we should not text and drive is an important message with a lot of empirical evidence to support its prevalence and harm (Hayashi, Russo, & Wirth, 2015; Tucker, Pek, Morrish, & Ruf, 2015), the warning nevertheless has echoes of that familiar adolescent prohibition, “don't touch that or you will go blind” (“Masturbation” 2003)!

All too often, commentators and journalists are ready to indict the compulsions of young people—what with their undeveloped prefrontal lobes—however, it only takes a moment to recall any number of so-called adults who are or have been similarly compelled: surely readers (re)member former New York state representative Anthony Weiner's popping pectorals, which he tele-brandished as a “Carlos Danger” to a 22-year-old woman, thereby effectively ending his mayoral ambitions in 2013—but this only after an earlier, forced resignation from Congress for dispatching a “dick pic” to another person in 2011 (WypJewski, 2011; Zeiser, 2013). Whether sexting scandals concern younger or older people, they nevertheless presume the absence of a kind of symbolic authority or internalized limit.

Adults behaving badly bring us to a second example that hits, uncomfortably, closer to home. It is tempting to discuss the middle-school teacher who allegedly Snapchatted nudes to a student (Dicker, 2016), or to discuss the many teachers who have been fired for racist remarks (particularly against Muslims; Bateman, 2015). One of the earliest cases of socially networked outrage, however, concerned Christine Rubino, a fifth-grade teacher from Brooklyn who was fired some years ago because of insensitive comments she made on “The Facebook.” In June, 2010, a 12-year-old girl from Harlem drowned during a school trip to Long Beach, on

Long Island. Rubino posted the following status to her “wall”: “After today, I’m thinking the beach sounds like a wonderful idea for my 5th graders. I HATE THEIR GUTS! They are all the devil’s spawn!” She was, of course, eventually fired (Edelman, 2012). My point here is *not* to assess if such a post was morally wrong—it is, of course—but rather, to underscore the fact that this teacher believed that her remarks *were safe to say in public*.

Finally, example the third: presidential campaign rhetoric. Much has been said about how political rhetoric in our time appears to have devolved into the creation of “gotcha” moments and vulgar melees of bombastic braggadocio (Herbst, 2010; Mutz, 2015), particularly in the wake of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign (Beutler, 2016; Sullivan, 2016). Aside from a bemoaned change in tone, contemporary political rhetoric is also frequently critiqued for its inconsistencies with science, especially that concerning climate change. Consider, for example, an exchange between presidential hopeful Donald Trump and CNN reporter Jake Tapper:

Tapper: Um, back in 2012 you Tweeted, quote, “the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.”

Trump: Well, of course I’m being sarcastic. You know, I mean, I love—

Tapper: That’s not to be taken seriously?

Trump: No, it’s a little bit serious, there’s a little bit of serious there. Look, we are restricting our factories much more than China. (...) I’m not a huge believer in the global warming phenomenon.

Tapper: But the overwhelming majority of scientists say it’s real, it’s man-made, and things are happening—

Trump:—that could be, there can be some man-made too, I mean, I’m not saying [unclear word] zero, but not nearly to the extent. [*sic*] When Obama gets up and says it’s the number one problem of our country, and if it is, why is it that we have to do our [*sic*], and clean up our factories now, and China doesn’t have to do it for another 30 or 35 years (...) ? (Cable News Network, 2015).

Trump’s competitor for the Republican ticket, Senator Marco Rubio, similarly dismissed global warming in a number of primary debates (Holthaus, 2015), echoing what appears to be a progressively unpopular public sentiment: that global warming is not an established, scientific fact (“Acceptance,” 2015), but rather, a conspiracy fabricated to impede free market capitalism (e.g., Paugh, 2012). Long before becoming the U.S. President, Trump and his followers have repeatedly asserted ‘there are no such things as facts’ (Fallows, 2016) in one way or another, impugning the authority of respected experts, scholars, researchers, and scientists.

These three introductory examples of discourse may not initially seem related: the advent of sexting and the publicity of hateful feelings toward children—both technologically catalyzed libidinal compulsions—and the well-known and discredited

claim that global warming is a myth. As I hinted, their relationship has to do with *authority*, and more specifically, with the *perception of an absence of authority*. In each example the texter, writer, or speaker appears to operate under the assumption, conscious or unconscious, that there is no oversight, that there are no anchoring facts, or that there is no almighty Truth. This culturally pervasive perception of an absence of authority is termed the “demise of symbolic efficiency” by the psychoanalytic theorist and critic Slavoj Žižek, and insightfully elaborated by political philosopher Jodi Dean (Dean, 2010, pp. 5–9; Žižek, 1999, pp. 322–334). In what follows I endeavor to explain the relationship between social networking and the decline of symbolic efficiency, working toward the conclusion that such a decline can be described as psychotic in character. Along the way it will be helpful to, first, define key concepts; second, rehearse how and why psychoanalysis was taken up in critical scholarship; and finally, distinguish between psychosis as a clinical diagnosis and psychosis as a psychical structure coordinating public discourse.

Social networking and the Third Thing

At the outset I should note by “social network” I mean to reference a broader “system of social interactions and relationships” or plexus of “people bound by similar interests” (Holton, 2012, p. 280; “Social Network,” 2009), not simply or only interfaces such as Facebook or Twitter (or whatever “new media” research higher education administrators seem interested in funding at the moment), but also emergent circuits that we do not yet know. The term “social networking” is frequently conflated with “social media” in both scholarly and popular discussion, however, for the purposes of this article social networking connotes relational connections and structures, while social media references modes of publicity and distribution that may or may not have networking characteristics (e.g., Altheide, 2013). Put alternately, social media consist of various representations that we can analyze to discern networking infrastructures: a YouTube video or a story from Buzzfeed are objects of social media, however, the interaction among people in the comments section, or discussion about a video or story on Facebook, indexes a social network.

Of course, social networking is typically associated with “social networking sites,” which include “web-based services that allow individuals” (boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 11) to create profiles and share information, or micro-blogging services like Tumblr or Sina Weibo, but the parade of new interfaces and “apps” is only going to change in ways that are hard to predict. Although scholars are limited to analyzing the dominant social networking interfaces of the moment, I side with those who reference social networking somewhat more loosely and abstractly as a *social structure*, appealing to the theories pioneered by Georg Simmel, Friedrich Kittler, and others who might describe social networks as clusters, “nodes,” or congeries or social affiliations enabled and constrained by communication technologies (Armitage, 2006; Kittler, 1992; Silver & Lee, 2012). At one time, for example, a

perceived dominant social network might have been a social club—like the Freemasons or Kiwanis—while today it is a snapshot that someone shares with friends on a smartphone before it disappears in 10 seconds (e.g., Snapchat; Bayer, Ellison, Schoenebeck, & Falk, 2016). Such a perspective on social networks has some common cause with Jacques Lacan’s perspective on communication, which implies a network of relations (Lacan, 1993, pp. 37–38; Lundberg, 2012, pp. 44–72).

My interest is in the discernment of psychical structures that animate or enable forms of public address, even though these forms may masquerade as private or semi-public communications. I say “masquerade” because, for Lacan, the individual psyche is an expression of structural positions that are part of a larger communicative network; the implication, as Christian Lundberg notes, “is that the primary site where the subject is articulated is not in relation to the family but in relation to the whole economy of discourse that determines *even the character of the family*” (emphasis added; Lundberg, 2012, p. 130). So, although news media (both on the Internet and television), Facebook, and Twitter may provide the dominant examples for discerning psychical structures in 2017, I also mean to refer to other modes of publicity or being in public that encourage or discourage relationships within a larger, communicative network. Rather than ground social networking in branded interfaces, then, I propose to locate the structure of social networking dialectically between communication technologies and subjectivity. It is not simply that the human psyche—individual or collective—is the ground of social networking, but also that networking technology in some sense is productive of the psyche as well. There is, in other words, no “first” or “ground” because the chicken and the egg are mutually constitutive. Pragmatically, however, we must posit a place to begin thinking, and I do so with the chicken of psychical structure because networking technologies change so quickly. In short: let’s start with Freud before we get to Facebook and see where that gets us.

I have already suggested that the three examples with which I opened—sexting, hateful posts, and the myth of global warming—concern the perception of the lack of authority. Such a perception is more easily grasped as formal: there is the disappearance, erasure, or erosion of a *Third Thing*. In each case we can imagine a paradigm person or “subject” set in relationship to a meaningful object, which I will designate as “discourse” (see Figure 1): a student is set into a relation with

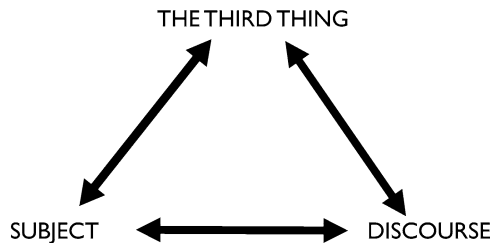


Figure 1 The Third Thing.

revealing photographs; a teacher is set in relation to their Facebook status updates; and a politician is set in relation to climate science. In a world in which sending nude photos of yourself or speaking ill of children is wrong, that Third Thing might be something like morality, a government official, or even God. In a world of scientific belief, that Third Thing would be natural law or the expertise of trained scientists. Yet in each case, this Third Thing is perceived to be absent or inconsequential: State authorities are merely kids with experience and power; God is a fiction; and scientists are merely pundits in disguise.

Žižek describes the disappearance or erosion of the Third Thing as the demise or decline of “symbolic efficiency” (1999, pp. 322–334), which is a term modified from the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (Dean, 2002, p. 130; Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Symbolic efficiency refers to the ways in which a given community can communicate quickly and effectively with reference to something most members hold as true, certain, or likely. As Dean puts it, symbolic efficiency is a consequence of “what everybody knows” (Dean, 2009, p. 63). At the most basic level, symbolic efficiency is made possible by sharing a language, and in speaking or writing a community references a shared semantic and affective Rosetta Stone—a Third Thing—to traffic in meaning and coordinate behavior.

For Dean, Žižek, and others who employ the concept (e.g., Andrejevic, 2013), however, symbolic efficiency means much more than a shared language because it also connotes a shared (sense of) authority. For these thinkers, symbolic efficiency also references a kind of deference to something larger—a sort of humility toward something or someone greater than ourselves. This larger, outside something is first experienced in childhood, of course, as the disciplining parent.

Abstracted to a more formal level, the Third Thing that enables symbolic efficiency is described as the “big Other” by Jacques Lacan (an English port of the French *Autre*), but is perhaps more familiar to us in public discourse as an iteration of “the Master,” such as in the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel (see Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, pp. 1–20), or in certain religious or spiritual traditions in which the Master doubles as a teacher and kind of internalized authority (see Figure 2).

For Lacan, however, the Master is just one figural proxy for the big Other, which is also the symbolic register of human experience in general (Lacan, 1988,

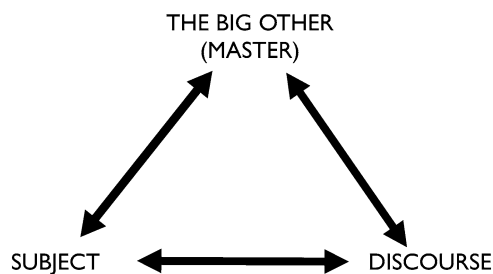


Figure 2 The big Other.

pp. 235–247). This is to say that the big Other refers primarily to the symbolic order, but we tend to reckon with it as an external authority that or who establishes limits for our enjoyments. The big Other is the Third Thing that we often mistake as a person (or leader or Deity) with the power to punish, or more to the point, an authority with the power to say “No!” The decline of symbolic efficiency is thus an erosion or disappearance of the big Other, which is perhaps most easily recognized as an inability to distinguish between facts and opinions, or “a mistrust of what is said in favor of what can be detected” (Andrejevic, 2009, para. 3). Dean elaborates:

The decline in symbolic efficiency refers (...) to a fundamental uncertainty in our relation to the world. We aren't sure what will happen, we can only speak about probabilities, about how good or bad our chances are. Likewise, we aren't sure whom to rely on, who has the best data or the most impressive credentials. Arguments or authorities persuasive in one context can have no weight in another one. (...) Most people in wired cultures experience this uncanny excess and lack of meaning with ever-increasing frequency: we get conflicting information from nonstop multiple media (...) we don't know what to believe, whom to trust, or what criteria with which to decide questions of trust and belief. (2002, p. 132)

Such a decline is not total—yet. But the argument here is that as the big Other continues to erode, people clamor for authority in smaller contexts—enclaves, perhaps fashioning a temporary mini-Master in a community of political allegiance or in the assemblage of a social movement (Žižek, 1999, p. 334).

Rather than experience the demise of the big Other as liberating, people find it paradoxically overwhelming and “unbearable” (Dean, 2010, p. 7) and are consigned to a kind of perpetual adolescence, even tantrums and meanness, which is so aptly characterized by J.M. Barrie's insolent preteen, Peter Pan (Barrie, 2011; Žižek, 1999, p. 334). In other words, it is tempting to think that this erosion of the big Other might herald a new era of freedom and democratization, a “second modernity” or Enlightenment in which people are more reflexive and have “the right to choose one's way of life instead of accepting it as imposed by tradition” (Žižek, 1999, p. 360), however, Žižek warns that the dynamic fragility of an increasingly inefficient symbolic appears to encourage a kind of narcissism in which the sense of external authority is foreclosed, inspiring “proto-psychotic” behavior (Sharpe & Boucher, 2010, p. 148): sexting; hate speech; conspiracy theories. As we shall see, foreclosure, or the dismissal of an authorizing element that “grounds or anchors the symbolic order as a whole” (Fink, 1997, p. 79), is the hallmark of a psychotic structure (Lacan, 2006, p. 470).

Understanding the psychoanalytic perspective

So far I have argued that popular public discourse enabled and constrained by networking technologies is demonstrative of a decline in symbolic efficiency. At this

junction, however, I recognize that the idea of the Third Thing or big Other might still be a bit abstract to some readers, especially those new to psychoanalysis, which is a rare perspective for *Communication Theory* (for an exception, see Penney, 2007). To provide a more invitational on-ramp, then, let me back up a bit and describe how psychoanalysis traveled from the clinic to the critical enterprise and the resistance it has met there.

By many accounts, psychoanalytic perspectives entered the humanities through the criticism of the (supposedly) best aesthetic expression a given culture had to offer: literature. Freud himself was fond of literary examples in his own work, however, psychoanalytic criticism first got its start with critical readings of Henry James' masterfully convoluted ghost story, *The Turn of the Screw* (1999 [1898]). Although Freud-ish readings of the novel appeared as early as 1924 (Kenton), Edmund Wilson is credited with popularizing psychoanalytic criticism in his 1934 essay, "The Ambiguity of Henry James" (Felman, 1999 [1898], p. 199). Wilson dared to suggest that the protagonist of James' story was neurotic and that the ghosts she experienced were in fact stirrings of the unconscious. While controversy over Wilson's Freud-filled interpretation has raged for decades, the essay's publication marked the moment when psychoanalysis emerged as a perspective or way of "reading culture" in the academic humanities.

So why was psychoanalysis taken up at all? The motive has something to do with Freud's reading protocols, which he introduced in his massive, continuously revised dreambook first published in 1900. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud argued that dreams were akin to a rebus or picture puzzle that should be analyzed as a kind of evasion, or more specifically, dreams were code for condensations and displacements of wishes in disguise (Freud, 1999a, pp. 211–329). In waking life such wishes are repressed, but in dreams they find temporary expression in oblique representations unique to a dreamer's culture and experiences. Freud argued that the dream encyclopedias and dictionaries popular in his time and ours—that perennial pulp on "sale" tables in bookstore chains—are compendiums of misleading correspondences that fail to take into account the role of the dynamic unconscious (Freud, 1999a, p. 9); only sustained and time-consuming analyses of one's dreams with an analyst can begin to reveal the contours of unconscious wishes. What is at stake in Freud's analytical protocol is actually not the dream itself, but how one describes and re-describes it; Freud is after what a description of a dream—or art, or other kinds of imagery—says about one's unconscious investments. This analytic protocol is consequently doubtful and cautious, participating in what philosopher Paul Ricoeur termed a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (1977).

Ever since Wilson published his suspicions about James' ghost story, many scholars in the humanities have found Freud's method of analysis useful for reading culture. Many principles and concepts from psychoanalysis have subsequently been taken up in the humanities, but perhaps none more deeply than suspicious reading, especially in cultural, literary, media, and rhetorical criticism. For example, few of us are free from cultural commentators or artists (e.g., Quentin Tarantino)

who claim we should not be worried about violence in Hollywood films: after all, it's just entertainment! Freud had a profound effect on the academy if only because those of us who study popular culture begin with the commonplace of suspicion: no, it's *never* just entertainment. We don't care what Freud once said, a cigar is *never* just a cigar! If all structural, formal, or affective characteristics of a "text," be it a dream or a film or Tweet, were wholly conscious, there would be no role for criticism.

Still, as with any figure who has inspired powerful protocols of interpretation—from Kenneth Burke to B.F. Skinner—psychoanalysis has taken on the trappings of a cult for many (Crews, 1990; MacDonald, 1996). No doubt the perception of a Freudian or Lacanian cultism is partly to blame for the dismissal of psychoanalysis, however, there are other common arguments:

- Psychoanalysis is fundamentally Freudian and Freud has been discredited by the scientific community; because his ideas have been disproven, psychoanalytic criticism is without value.
- Freud was a sexist, and therefore, psychoanalytic criticism is sexist.
- Criticism is a political endeavor, and psychoanalysis is apolitical.
- Psychoanalysis is practiced with individuals in a clinical setting, but criticism is a cultural endeavor. Psychoanalysis fails to address the social or the group.

There are, of course, other arguments against the use of psychoanalysis in criticism; in good humor I confess that the above have come, more or less, from blind reviews of psychoanalytically themed essays I have tried to publish. I suspect most readers are familiar with these objections and can anticipate responses, so I won't belabor them except for the last. I think that the last objection, that psychoanalysis is keyed to the individual psyche while cultural criticism is keyed to the social or the group, presents one of the highest hurdles for psychoanalytic perspectives of culture.

Not surprisingly, Freud recognized this problem too, which is why he published his study *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* in 1922 (1990), and subsequently, a number of speculative studies, such *The Future of an Illusion* in 1927 (1989) and *Civilization and its Discontents* in 1930 (2005). In the 1920s, Freud gradually turned his thinking toward what I would term "cultural studies," suggesting that one could analyze the group and social trends much as one would an individual. In the growing shadow of mounting Nazism, by the 1930s Freud would have argued that individuals could function as cultural superegos, temporarily suspending inhibitions with the will of a Master (Edmundson, 2006). It is difficult to engage Freud's later writings and conclude that the psychoanalytic enterprise is apolitical.

Nevertheless, my point here is that psychoanalysis did hit something of a snag among cultural critics, especially in the field of communication, because many could not envision how the clinical experience of an individual in therapy

translates to social movements and cultural events. How do the dynamics of individual therapy translate to the group—to auditors or readers or audiences? And the question is profitably asked the other way too: how does the individual psyche reckon with the political? It is at the juncture of these kinds of questions that the thought of Jacques Lacan was taken up in the academic humanities.

Enter the dragon: Lacan and psychosis

Jacques Lacan was both a student of psychology and philosophy, and his writing and teaching weds both. Powerfully influenced by the complex theories of structuralism in anthropology and linguistics, as well as Alexandre Kojève's readings of Hegel (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991), Lacan's work is deliberately and notoriously difficult. Largely as a result of English translations, Lacan's theories began to be read, discussed, and debated in the English-speaking humanities, especially among film scholars and feminist thinkers who read Lacan as a corrective to Freud's perceived patriarchy (Mitchell, 1982; Rose, 1982).

Lacan's appeal is critical in many senses. Academics started reading his work in the 1970s because the theoretical humanities had folded philosophy and psychology into its own reading protocols. Lacan's theories translate well to critical approaches to culture in part because the distinction between philosophy and psychology was already blurred in the French intellectual scene (Birksted-Breen & Flanders, 2010, p. 2). Lacan's theories also translate well because of his views on language and meaning; because of his interest in the arts and culture; and because of his novel approach to the relationship between speech and feelings. Whatever utility Lacan's theories have for the clinical setting (see Fink, 1997), there's no denying that Lacan was a keen cultural critic; analyses of literature and art figure prominently in his work (e.g., see his reading of Poe; Lacan, 2006, pp. 6–48).

Although there is lot to say about Lacan's appeal to North American academics, we have drifted a bit from the opening examples, so let me confine the rehearsal of Lacan's relevance with a return to the thesis that North American public discourse is veering toward psychosis. With this claim I do not mean to reference the popular understanding of psychosis as insanity, but rather, Lacan's many elaborations of psychosis, which are at once both social and individual.

In North America and especially in the U.S., our psychological healthcare system is bound, for good or ill, to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), currently in its fifth edition (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Diagnosis is behaviorally based on *symptoms*, and the DSM locates the symptoms of psychosis on a "schizophrenia spectrum" with a host of definitions that are continuously debated. It is difficult to assert a general definition of psychosis, but the DSM does note the spectrum includes "delusions, hallucinations, disorganized thinking (speech), grossly disorganized or abnormal motor behavior (...) and negative symptoms" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 87).

Lacan thinks about psychosis differently: all symptoms of so-called psychological disturbance can be better described in reference to *psychical structures* or “*structural positions* that indicate particular ways of moving about in the languaged world with others” (Swales, 2012, p. xiii; also see Fink, pp. 75–78). For Lacan, people evince one of three psychical structures: neurosis, psychosis, or perversion. Everyone can exhibit symptoms of all three in our behavior or discourse. However, for Lacan, one tends to be structurally disposed as a neurotic, psychotic, or pervert, independent of observable symptoms. Symptoms do not make the structure, they can only gesture toward where a structure might be.

Lacan’s refinements and elaborations of his nosology are many and complicated; for brevity we should note a Lacanian perspective does not truck in biology, but rather with the domain of language, meaning, and representation. This is to say that a Lacanian approach to psychical phenomena is concerned with labels and the underlying patterns or structures these betoken, which can be culturally relative. Of course, one should not discount biological causation when reckoning with psychological disturbances (e.g., chemical imbalances and so on); a Lacanian perspective, however, is concerned with how a presumably physiological “disorder,” whatever it may be, is delivered to meaning in a culture’s given language games. Lacan is fairly strict in drawing a boundary between biology and psychoanalysis at the horizon of meaning and psychical structures, which are cultural.

So, the Lacanian nosological narrative goes something like this: most people become self-conscious subjects as neurotics, or put alternatively, the paradigm person in the West is neurotic, which is the consequence of what Freud termed the Oedipus Complex (Freud, 1999b, pp. 225–228). This is to say, neurosis is the default subject position of the symbolic network. We come into this world in a primary dyad or relation between self and other, typically in terms of infant and mother. At this primary stage of identity, the infant does not realize it is not the same being as its mother; they are, as it were, one unit of plenitude. Now, as Freud tells the story, the father comes into this Edenic scene and says, “No! You cannot have the mother all to yourself, you have to share!” In this way the proverbial Daddy-O comes into the scene, thereby triangulating the relationship. With Freud, of course, the introduction of the father is not only with the declarative, “No!” but also with the threat of castration if one does not comply. It is the assumed authority of this threat that leads to the establishment of social order (e.g., the rule of law).

Freud’s theory of developmental identity has received sharp critiques for its hetero-sexist assumptions and masculine (or phallogentric) biases (see Irigaray, 1985; Mitchell, 2000). Part of the appeal of Lacanian theory is thus his insistence that we are not to read Freud’s Oedipal scheme literally, but figuratively (Shepherdson, 2000, pp. 115–151). It is not that we actually have a father forbid a relationship with our mother under the threat of castration (which, of course, excludes those without a penis), but rather, that the introduction of a *second parent* encourages the realization of two things: first, that there is a limit to our enjoyment, that there is something called “No!” that curbs any delusions of omnipotence; and second, that the arrival or “insertion” of

a second parent means that there are more objects in the outside world to love in addition to the primary parent (or mother). In other words, with the introduction of a third figure—a Third Thing—we become social animals.

This third figure, which Lacan dubs the “paternal metaphor” (Lacan, 2006, p. 464), is the nascent Third Thing with which I began; it introduces the subject to the *idea* of the other and hence the world of others, as well as the notion that there is some external authority that places limits on what is possible to enjoy or know (see Figure 3). For Lacan, the arrival of the paternal metaphor heralds a substitution or exchange: *we give up a primary and primal relation to the material in exchange for the symbolic; we relinquish an original plenitude in exchange for meaning*. Or, to put this deliciously and admittedly sloppily: rhetoric is a substitute for your mother.

It is in this structural sense that we can now approach the Lacanian understanding of psychosis as a subjective disposition or orientation: the psychotic is the subject who has never endured the “cut” of the Third Thing, or to put it somewhat allegorically, the psychotic is the one who neither heard nor accepted the “No!” from the second parent and thus lacks the sense of an authority that anchors meaning. Instead of undergoing a triangulation of the first dyad, the psychotic gets an anti-social flatline to the maternal bosom. In this respect, the contemporary crisis of paternity—the much discussed popular discourse of the “absent father” (Ames, 2014; Razzano, 2014)—registers a tacit fear of psychosis.

The psychotic is the person who “acts out” or is prone to aggression, who does not understand limit and who fails to internalize or recognize boundaries because of a “foreclosure” of the symbolic as law, broadly construed. Consequently, psychosis is the position of someone set adrift in the sea of discourse, and for this reason, the psychotic has an unusual relationship to language that is “thrust into the foreground, that speaks all by itself, out loud, in its noise and furor” (Lacan, 1993, p. 250), but in a way that seems to him or her as objective and certain. Most of us are moored in language, but the psychotic “is inhabited, possessed, by language” (Lacan, 1993, p. 250) in ways that seem somewhat counterintuitive: the psychotic asserts absolutes, parading truths with a righteous certitude. “*Certainty is characteristic of psychosis, where doubt is not,*” explains Bruce Fink, because the:

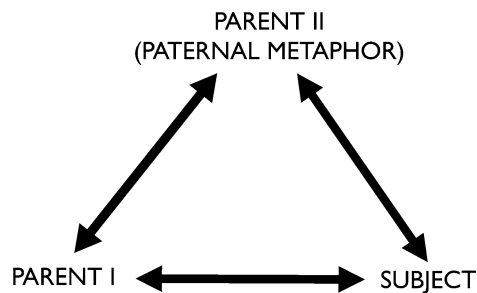


Figure 3 The Oedipal triangle.

(...) psychotic is convinced not of the “reality” of what he or she sees or hears, but of the fact that it means something, and that this meaning involves him or her. While the psychotic may agree that what he or she heard or saw was not audible or visible to others (...) in other words, that it was not part of socially shared reality—this may make it all the more special to him or her: he or she has been *chosen* among all others to hear or see it, or it concerns only him or her. (1997, p. 84)

Most people are neurotic and so do not evince a psychotic structure. Reckoning with the decline of symbolic efficiency, neurotics do not know who or what to believe; we doubt. The neurotic accepts uncertainty as a part of life because we have internalized the “No!” in childhood, a variation of the truth that we are limited in what we can do or comprehend. The psychotic, however, never heard the “No!” to begin with, so there is no prohibition with which to comply. Consequently, the psychotic’s response to the demise of symbolic efficiency is to cling with certainty to even the most patent absurdities—conspiracy theories, religious fanaticism, political extremism—as this is a way to anchor social being.

Of course, the Lacanian understanding of the psychotic structure does not square with our more commonplace or established definitions of psychosis. To be fair, Lacan would make a distinction between *psychotic beliefs and behaviors*—which *do* overlap with commonly understood symptoms—from a person who exhibits a psychotic structure, which is, again, very rare. That said, used as an adjective for *behavior*, and more narrowly for speech, I want to suggest popular, public discourse has started to exhibit its own psychotic structure, akin to a genre, discernable in public refusals or failures to acknowledge doubt and a symbolic authority that or who establishes and polices limits. Žižek explains this emergent, psychotic discourse advances its own figure or paradigm person in postmodernity: “the typical subject today is one who, while displaying cynical distrust of any public ideology, indulges without restraint in paranoid fantasies about conspiracies, threats, and excessive forms of enjoyment of the Other” (1999, p. 362). For the psychotic, this Other who enjoys is not the big Other of the symbolic, but rather an “Other to the Other,” some “all powerful agent” who is external to the order of the symbolic, an agent that “actually ‘pulls the strings’ and runs the show (...) an obscene, invisible power structure” (1999, p. 362). Psychotic discourse often advances a kind of “compensatory delusion” for the eroded symbolic, sometimes “a world conspiracy” or a “new messiah or alien invasion” (Sharpe & Boucher, 2010, p. 149), but it also issues righteous, narcissistic assertions of prophecy—cultural, political, and religious.

Social networking as psychotic rigging

Like Dean and Žižek, I have been arguing that contemporary, public discourse evinces the decline of symbolic efficiency, which leads to increasingly psychotic discourse. Because this is a psychoanalytic thesis, I have described how psychoanalytic

perspectives entered into academic scholarship in the humanities, especially “suspicious” modes of reading objects of culture. I also explained how the appeal of Lacan’s theories is in part his formalization and de-personalization, if you will, of Freud’s Oedipal Complex and nosology in general, which has helped scholars respond to the critiques of psychoanalytic theory as individually focused and apolitical. Lacan’s preference for structures over symptoms led him to specify three basic subject positions—neurosis, psychosis, and perversion—which concern whether and how a subject reckons with the big Other vis-à-vis the paternal metaphor. Psychosis is characterized by a refusal to acknowledge a more commonly accepted big Other of social consensus in favor of absolute, even righteous, certitudes about the illusory and absurd.

To characterize discourse as psychotic is not, of course, to diagnose any one person as exhibiting an individual, psychotic structure—which cannot and should not be done without extensive training and in the context of the clinic. Even so, from a critical perspective a focus on the individual is somewhat beside the point. As communication critics, we are more concerned with making sense of public discourse by locating and naming the structures productive of it—in this case, networked communication marked by the perception of an absence of authority and righteously aggressive, violent, or otherwise inappropriate speech that is palpably narcissistic. The absence of this Third Thing with which I began bespeaks a failure of the symbolic, first represented by the (allegorical) absence of a second parent but, by extension, the foreclosure of a symbolic authority that or who guarantees truth and reminds one of fallibility and a dependency on others.

Of course, we could specify any number of social network *platforms* that do not lend themselves to psychotic discourse (e.g., moderated discussion venues), and insofar as social networking writ large consists of dynamic and emergent structures, we would do well to stop short of a totalizing account (perhaps one project for future research is to analyze and promote social networking platforms that push toward neurosis in a qualified, Lacanian sense). Nevertheless, the kinds of discourse we are increasingly experiencing on our most dominant, networked screens—in the news, on Twitter, and on Facebook especially—seem to be trending toward the collapse of traditional, symbolic authority. Perhaps because of its speed of proliferation and an overreliance on imagery and affect, many social networking platforms—particularly those devoid of moderation, in both senses—seem especially suited the “psychotic” label: we can say whatever we want; we can be whatever we want; if we tweet something offensive, we can (re)cover by tweeting something else; we can “catfish” a cellular lover and perhaps get “busted” on national television, becoming a celebrity—and all of this in five minutes (dubbed “whatever being” by [Dean, 2010](#), pp. 61–90). Because social networking consists of multiple computers, screens, and people, its infrastructure is homologous to the psychotic structure particular to individual persons: a horizontalization of interpersonal relations without any seeming oversight.

This apparent lack of oversight—or rather, the widespread perception of its decline—is perhaps no more starkly demonstrated than by the recent and swift

deterioration of U.S. political discourse during and after the 2016 presidential election. The Trump campaign and cabinet alike have been routinely criticized for deliberately perpetuating falsehoods on Twitter and television, such as the now infamous “alternative fact” that those attending Trump’s inaugural comprised “the largest audience to witness an inauguration—period—in person and around the globe” (Graham, 2017, para. 7). As I argue in a companion essay (Gunn, 2018), that the 45th President of the United States apparently says false things on purpose (Dale, 2017) is a signature of the perverse structure; that possibly millions of people actually believe them, however, smells like psychosis.

Even if readers agree that Lacan’s notion of psychosis helps to characterize and make sense of some of the public discourse that circulates in social networks, this begs the question whether our ever-expanding, networked frontier contributes to a shift from the paradigm or default subject-structure of neurosis toward psychosis. I opened with a few examples suggestive of a “yes”—sexting, online hate speech, and climate change conspiracy—but since I first started composing this article two years ago, the examples have become increasingly extreme. At the moment of my writing, political discourse is the most conspicuous, but I want to stress that alarming, individual psychotic behavior is demonstrative of the cultural locus of the psychotic structure. For example, in April, 2016, an 18-year-old Ohio teen pleaded guilty to charges of kidnapping, rape, and the distribution of child pornography because of her use of a Twitter “app” named “Periscope”: Marina Lonina filmed and “live streamed” the raping of her 17-year-old friend (Holley, 2016; Shahani, 2015). Lonina claimed that she live-streamed the assault in an attempt to help the victim, however, analysis of the video by authorities reveals Lonina giggles throughout while the victim pleads for the rapist to stop. The prosecutor argued Lonina enjoyed the attention and that “[s]he got caught up in the ‘likes,’” or the expressed approval of the stream from online onlookers (Holley, 2016, para. 13). Whether or not Lonina understood the consequences of her alarming behavior might suggest that her disposition is psychotic (she did not understand) or perverse (she understood and did it anyway), but such a conclusion is not one for the critic to make. As a form of quasi-public discourse, at least in the moment, such *behavior* is psychotic and certainly bespeaks an erosion of the big Other, a failure to acknowledge the social and moral codes to which *most* people assent.

What these kinds of examples demonstrate is that what we used to count on as a governing authority no longer anchors a widely shared (rule of) law or meaning. From a Lacanian perspective, we might say such examples represent a society and culture that no longer experiences an efficient symbolic of hypotaxic arrangement; we seem, increasingly, returning to a parataxic and clunky symbolic, a public set adrift in the sea of discourse—of imagery, of status updates, of live streams and “BREAKING NEWS!” News stories or events are valued, not for their truth, but for their affective inducements and feelings in the ever-present now of the “live.” In our political discourse, especially, we find ourselves immersed in the melee between those who argue for truth and those who insist “there’s no such thing (...)

as facts” (Greenwood, 2016). If this and similar arguments have purchase, however, the increasing frenzy of fact-checking in news media is itself a kind of fetishization or mystification, obscuring the crisis of power it confronts: the decline of symbolic efficiency and the growing instability of shared authority. From a descriptive standpoint, fact-checking seems increasingly irrelevant in the dominant domains of public exchange.

I think that describing public discourse as exhibiting psychical structures homologous to those of individuals helps us to explain the increasing regularity of psychotic rhetoric as an emergent *genre* of discourse vying for hegemony. I am suggesting that the constant and relentless parade of immediacy so characteristic of social networking seems to be producing the kind of discourse of someone who is constantly speaking certitudes, *in-the-moment*, like a switchboard for the communication pulsating in a charged and mediated sea of speakers and screens. I also think that cultural critics will continue having trouble contending with psychotic discourse because criticism is by default a neurotic disposition, especially in its more suspicious modes. How we analyze and understand the discourse of social networking, currently scrambling the coordinates of public communication, must shift toward thinking about the demise of the Third Thing or big Other. If Žižek and Dean are right about the demise of symbolic efficiency, then Michael Calvin McGee’s (1990) thesis about the fragmentation of “the text” in our time takes on a new character: the critic of contemporary, public discourse is now consigned to ceaselessly and unrelentingly constituting the context.

Acknowledgments

I am thankful for the assistance and patience of Andrea Alden, the blind reviewers, and the editor. Variations on a theme in this article were presented to the departments of communication and English at the University of Arkansas, Arizona State University, Baylor University, Indiana University, the Louisiana State University, the University of Minnesota, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Texas at Austin. I am grateful for the feedback and suggestions of those attending these talks, which made the article better.

References

- ABC News (Producer). (2015, November 9). Colorado high school sexting scandal highlights challenges for schools, prosecutors [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/video/colorado-high-school-sexting-scandal-highlights-challenges-schools-35090862>
- Acceptance of global warming among Americans reaches highest level since 2008. (2015, October). *Issues in Energy and Environmental Policy* 25. Retrieved from <http://closup.umich.edu/files/ieep-nsee-2015-fall-climate-belief.pdf>
- Acland, C. R. (1995). *Youth, murder, spectacle: The cultural politics of youth in crisis*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Altheide, D. L. (2013). Media logic, social control, and fear. *Communication Theory*, **23**(3), 223–238. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/comt.12017>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Ames, M. (2014). Where have all the good men gone?: A psychoanalytic reading absent fathers and damaged dads on ABC's *Lost*. *Journal of Popular Culture*, **47**(3), 430–450.
- Andrejevic, M. (2009, October 2). The body, torture, and the decline of symbolic efficiency. *Politics and Culture 2007* (1). Retrieved from <https://politicsandculture.org/2009/10/02/mark-andrejevic-on-symbolic-efficiency/>
- Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How too much information is changing the way we think and know*. New York: Routledge.
- Armitage, J. (2006). From discourse networks to cultural mathematics: An interview with Friedrich A. Kittler. *Theory, Culture & Society*, **23**(7–8), 17–38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0263276406069880>
- Barrie, J. M. (2011). *The Annotated Peter Pan* (Centennial ed.) (M. Tatar, Ed.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Bateman, D. (2015, September 9). High school teacher fired after investigation into “racist” tweets. *TheStar.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2015/09/09/high-school-teacher-fired-after-investigation-into-racist-tweets.html>
- Bayer, J. B., Ellison, N. B., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Falk, E. B. (2016). Sharing small moments: Ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat. *Information, Communication & Society*, **19**(7), 956–977. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1084349>
- Best, J., & Bogle, K. A. (2014). *Kids Gone Wild: From Rainbow Parities to Sexting, Understanding the Hype Over Teen Sex*. New York: New York University Press.
- Beutler, B. (2016, May). Trump the disrupter. *The New Republic*, **247**(5), 38–41.
- Birksted-Breen, D., & Flanders, S. (2010). General introduction. In D. Birksted-Breen, S. Flanders, & A. Gibeault (Eds.), *Reading French Psychoanalysis* (pp. 1–51). New York: Routledge.
- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1991). *Lacan: The absolute master* (D. Brick, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social networking sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, **13**, 210–230.
- Cable News Network. (2015, June 28). *Donald Trump on trade, healthcare and more (CNN interview with Jake Tapper)*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/8fT7Np6PFao>
- Crews, F. (1990). *The memory wars: Freud's legacy in dispute*. New York: New York Review of Books.
- Dean, J. (2002). *Publicity's secret: How technoculture capitalizes on democracy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Dean, J. (2009). *Democracy and other neoliberal fantasies: Communicative capitalism and left politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Dean, J. (2010). *Blog theory: Feedback and capture in the circuits of drive*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Dale, D. (2017, February 7). The complete list of all 57 false things Donald Trump has said as president. *Star.com* (*Toronto Star*). Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/02/03/daniel-dales-donald-trump-fact-check-updates.html>

- Dicker, R. (2016, February 11). Teacher accused of sending racy photos to students is fired. *HuffingtonPost.com*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/teacher-accused-of-sending-racy-photos-to-students-is-fired_us_56bca297e4b0c3c550502cd0
- Edelman, S. (2012, February 5). "I hate their guts—they are all devil's spawn." *New York Post*. Retrieved from <http://nypost.com/2012/02/05/i-hate-their-guts-they-are-all-devils-spawn/>
- Edmundson, M. (2006, April 30). Freud and the Fundamentalist Urge. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/30/magazine/30wwln_lede.html?pagewanted=all&r=0
- Fallows, J. (2016, November 30). 'There's no such thing anymore, unfortunately, as facts.' *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2016/11/theres-no-such-thing-any-more-unfortunately-as-facts/509276/>
- Felman, S. (1999). Henry James: Madness and the risks of practice (turning the screw of interpretation). In D. Esch & J. Warren (Eds.), *The turn of the screw*, Norton Critical Edition, (2nd ed., pp. 196–228). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Fink, B. (1997). *A clinical introduction to Lacanian psychoanalysis: Theory and technique*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Freud, S. (1989). *The future of an illusion* (Strachey, J., Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Freud, S. (1990). *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego* (Strachey, J., Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Freud, S. (1999a). *The interpretation of dreams* (Crick, J., Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Freud, S. (1999b). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII (1901–1905)* (A. Strachey and A. Tyson, Trans.). London: The Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (2005). *Civilization and its discontents* (Strachey, J., Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Graham, D. A. (2017, January 22). "Alternative facts": The needless lies of the Trump administration. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/the-pointless-needless-lies-of-the-trump-administration/514061/>
- Greenwood, M. (2016, December 1). Trump's lies aren't lies because "there's no such thing" as facts anymore, his surrogate says. *Huffingtonpost.com*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-surrogate-claims-no-facts_us_58408f8ee4b0c68e047fd952
- Gunn, J. (2018). On political perversion. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 48, in press.
- Hayashi, Y., Russo, C. T., & Wirth, O. (2015). Texting while driving as impulsive choice: A behavioral economic analysis. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 83(Oct.), 182–189.
- Herbst, S. (2010). *Rude democracy: Civility and incivility in American politics*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Holley, P. (2016, April 19). "She got caught up in the likes": Teen accused of live-streaming friend's rape for attention. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/04/19/she-got-caught-up-in-the-likes-teen-accused-of-livestreaming-friends-rape-for-attention/>
- Holthaus, E. (2015, September 17). "America is not a planet": The only thing Marco Rubio got right on climate change. *Slate*. Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_

- [slatest/2015/09/17/gop_debate_marco_rubio_s_terrible_answer_on_climate_change.html](#)
- Holton, A. (2012). Negating nodes and liquid fragmentation: Extending conversations of diffusion, social networks, and fragmentation. *Communication Theory*, *22*, 279–298.
- Irigaray, L. (1985). *Speculum of the other woman* (G.C. Gill, Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- James, H. (1999[1898]). In D. Esch & J. Warren (Eds.), *The turn of the screw*, Norton Critical Edition, (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Kenton, E. (1924). Henry James to the ruminant reader: The turn of the screw. *The Arts*, *6*, 245–255.
- Kittler, F. A. (1992). *Discourse networks, 1800/1900*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lacan, J. (1988). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, book II: The ego in Freud's theory and the technique of psychoanalysis, 1954–1955* (Miller, J.-A., Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lacan, J. (1993). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, book III: The psychoses, 1955–1956* (Grigg, R., Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lacan, J. (2006). *Écrits* (B. Fink, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963). The effectiveness of symbols. In *Structural anthropology* (C. Jacobson & B. G. Schoepf, Trans.) (pp. 186–205). New York: Basic Books.
- Lewin, T. (2010, March 20). Rethinking sex offender laws for youth texting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/us/21sexting.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>
- Lundberg, C. O. (2012). *Lacan in public: Psychoanalysis and the science of rhetoric*. Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press.
- MacDonald, K. B. (1996). Freud's follies: Psychoanalysis as religion, cult, and political movement. *Skeptic*, *4*(3), 94–99.
- Planned Parenthood Federation of America (2003) Masturbation: From myth to sexual health. *Contemporary Sexuality*, *37*(3), i–vii.
- McGee, M. C. (1990). Text, context, and the fragmentation of contemporary culture. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *54*(3), 274–289.
- Mitchell, J. (1982). Introduction I. In J. Mitchell & J. Rose (Eds.), *Feminine sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne* (J. Rose, Trans.) (pp. 1–26). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Mitchell, J. (2000). *Psychoanalysis and feminism: A radical reassessment of Freudian psychoanalysis* (2nd, Rev. ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Mutz, D. C. (2015). *In-your-face politics: The consequences of uncivil media*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Paugh, I. J. (2012). *U.N. agenda 21: Environmental piracy*. (n.p.): Author. <https://www.amazon.com/U-N-Agenda-21-Environmental-Piracy/dp/0615716474>
- Penney, J. (2007). The failure of spectatorship. *Communication Theory*, *17*(1), 43–60. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00287.x>
- Razzano, K. A. (2014). “In light of this demonstration of crisis in our nation”: Paternity, responsibility, and welfare. *Cultural Studies*, *28*(5/6), 947–975.
- Ricœur, P. (1977). *Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rose, J. (1982). Introduction II. In J. Mitchell & J. Rose (Eds.), *Feminine sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne* (J. Rose, Trans.) (pp. 27–58). New York: W.W. Norton.

- Sabbah-Mani, J. (2015). Sexting education: An educational approach to solving media fueled sexting dilemma. *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, *24*(2), 529–560.
- Shahani, A. (2015, April 19). Live-streaming of alleged rape shows challenges of flagging video in real time. *Npr.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/04/19/474783485/live-streaming-of-alleged-rape-shows-challenges-of-flagging-video-in-real-time>
- Sharpe, M., & Boucher, G. M. (2010). *Žižek and politics: A critical introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Shepherdson, C. (2000). *Vital signs: Nature, culture, psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Silver, D., & Lee, M. (2012). Self-relations in social relations. *Sociological Theory*, *30*(4), 207–237.
- Social Network. (2009). In *Oxford English dictionary online* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.oed.com>
- Sloop, J., & Gunn, J. (2010). Status control: An admonition concerning the publicized privacy of social networking. *The Communication Review*, *13*(4), 289–308.
- Sullivan, A. (2016). America has never been so ripe for tyranny. *New York* (May 2). Retrieved from <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/04/america-tyranny-donald-trump.html>
- Swales, S. S. (2012). *Perversion: A Lacanian psychoanalytic approach to the subject*. New York: Routledge.
- Tucker, S., Pek, S., Morrish, J., & Ruf, M. (2015). Prevalence of texting while driving and other risky driving behaviors among young people in Ontario, Canada: Evidence from 2012 and 2014. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, *84*(Nov.), 144–152.
- Wilson, E. (1934). The ambiguity of Henry James. *Hound and Horn*, *7*, 385–406.
- WypIjewski, J. (2011, April 7). Weiner in a box. *The Nation*, *293*(1/2), 6–8.
- Zeiser, B. (2013). [Insert pun here]: On the trail with Weiner and Spitzer. *The American Spectator*, *46*(7), 38–40.
- Žižek, S. (1999). *The ticklish subject: The absent centre of political ontology*. New York: Verso.