Beyond Voice Poverty: 
New Economies of Voice and the Frontiers of Speech, Listening and Recognition

Poppy Lauren de Souza

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of 
Doctor of Philosophy

September 2015 
Centre for Cultural Partnerships 
Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts 
and the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music 
University of Melbourne

Produced on archival quality paper
ABSTRACT

The unsettling effects of neoliberal culture - with its shaking loose of the social connections that bind individuals to each other, instead placing them within increasingly competitive and entrepreneurial markets - together with the uncertainties that come with new configurations of technology, bring with them an urgent desire to reclaim a sense of agency over the structures and processes that shape daily life. As narratives of ‘democratisation’ and ‘decline’ emerge as the dominant tropes for thinking through these complex cultural shifts, voice has gained increasing currency as a frame and intervention into some of these impacts. Yet while both critical and popular accounts of voice are generally organised around these two divergent narratives, each is in no way distinct from the apparent paradox at the heart of advanced liberal democracies: specifically, that individual liberty and freedom of expression are contingent upon distributed structures of power and control that shape the contours of what is and is not ‘narratable’; who is heard and who listens; and designate which categories of voice are made to matter.

This thesis takes up an interdisciplinary frame to intervene in these debates and investigates the shifting meanings, practices and values of voice in the context of this contemporary landscape. It critiques prevailing notions of voice grounded in an intersubjective, relational ethics and unpacks some of the assumptions, values and norms that underpin both celebratory and crisis narratives. Part Two develops a framework for voice that accounts for new attachments and relationships between the categories of speech, listening and recognition as they take on new formations. I draw on several recent ‘limit cases’ that complicate existing notions of voice, and foreground emerging sites of struggle where neoliberal, informational and biopolitical forces intersect with modes of everyday cultural production and technosocial practice in distinctly provocative ways. These include: the Occupy Wall Street (OWS), digital storytelling (DST), free and open source software (F/OSS) and Quantified Self (QS) movements; the United States PRISM program; and the Right to be Forgotten.

Despite attempts to re-humanise voice through a persistent appeal to the ethics of social relations, it is my contention that any account of voice must also account for the ways that speech, listening and recognition are increasingly attached to objects of value that circulate within new economies of voice. As such, I present a provisional framework for thinking about voice beyond its historical arrangement, one that pushes beyond current notions of voice poverty, towards new frontiers of voice.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

i. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,

ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed

[Signature]
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many people. Firstly, I’d like to thank my principal supervisor Lachlan MacDowall, whose sustained commitment, enthusiasm and critical engagement helped shape and focus my research, and refine my ideas. My scholarship has also greatly benefited from his impeccable integrity and professionalism.

My co-supervisor James Oliver posed a question early on in my research: what does voice become? At the time I found this question somewhat elusive, but returned to it again and again, turning it over, as I tried to figure out what lay at the heart of my research. In many ways, this thesis is a working through of this central provocation.

I would like to thank staff from the VCA & MCM research office and the DLU who provided invaluable support, resources and facilities that made it possible to complete my PhD in a conducive and safe research environment. In particular, I’d like to thank Barbara Bolt for her compassion and advice at various stages; her genuine commitment to students’ success and wellbeing is extraordinary.

Thank you to friends and colleagues involved in the Culture and Community Researchers’ Network who provided an intellectually stimulating and collegial environment for me to test and develop some of my ideas early on, and the opportunity in 2012 to curate a program of presenters whose interdisciplinary work intersected with, and inspired, my own.

I was lucky to have places to write in solitude in the final stages of my thesis, thanks to the many generous people whose homes and animals I cared for while house sitting over the last six months. They were essential to completing my final manuscript.

To Melanie, Marissa, Elissa, Anna and Vanessa who have seen me through ups and downs over the last five years, thank you for standing with me. In particular, to Marnie Badham - ‘critical friend’ and constant reminder that curiosity and creativity aren’t the opposite of criticality!

Finally, and most importantly, to my family: to my cousin who was there in the tough times; to my sister, who is my biggest fan; and to my mother whose love, generosity and support gave me the resources and confidence needed to get over the finish line.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................. i  
Declaration ........................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................ iii  

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1  

**PART ONE: THE POLITICS OF VOICE**  
  Chapter One  The Historical Arrangement of Voice ........................................ 37  
  Chapter Two  Competing Claims to Voice ....................................................... 69  

**PART TWO: NEW ECONOMIES OF VOICE**  
  Chapter Three  New Economies of Speech ...................................................... 105  
  Chapter Four  New Economies of Listening .................................................... 137  
  Chapter Five  New Economies of Recognition .............................................. 159  
  Chapter Six  Beyond Voice Poverty ................................................................. 183  

List of References ............................................................................................. 201
INTRODUCTION

The distinctive feature of the stories told in our times is that they articulate individual lives in a way that excludes or suppresses (prevents from articulation) that possibility of tracking down the links concerning individual fate to the ways and means by which society as a whole operates (Bauman, 2001: 9).

On the one hand, [the] ‘democratization’ of media use signals a broadening of opportunities for individuals and grassroots communities to tell stories and access stories others are telling, to present arguments and listen to arguments made elsewhere, to share information and learn more about the world from a multitude of other perspectives. On the other hand, the media companies seek to extend their reach by merging, co-opting, converging and synergizing their brands and intellectual properties across all of these channels. In some ways, this has concentrated the power of traditional gatekeepers and agenda setters and in other ways, it has disintegrated their tight control over our culture (Jenkins and Deuze, 2008: 6).

THE STRUGGLE FOR VOICE

Contemporary discussions of voice are generally organised around two broad narrative themes: a techno-utopian celebration of the ‘democratisation of voice’ which claims the ubiquity of technology affords new possibilities for individual communication and freedom of expression; and the ‘decline of voice’, where cultural critiques of neoliberalism express concern over radical individualism, the marketisation of social life and yawning structural inequalities that intensify the gap between those whose voices matter and those whose voices do not. As narratives of ‘democratisation’ and ‘decline’ emerge as the dominant tropes for thinking through these cultural shifts, questions of ‘voice’ have gained increasing prominence as both a frame and intervention into these debates. Yet it would seem that both these tendencies are in no way distinct from the paradox at the heart of advanced liberal democracies themselves: specifically, that individual liberty and freedom of expression are contingent upon distributed structures of
power and control that shape the contours of what is and is not ‘narratable’ (Cavarero, 2000; Couldry, 2009; MacIntyre, 1984; Said, 1984); who is heard and who listens (Dreher, 2010; Dreher et al., 2008-9; Tacchi, 2010); and the very terms by which subjects can render their accounts intelligible (Butler, 2009; Butler and Athanasiou, 2013; Spivak, 1988). While the twin tendencies of democratisation and decline at first glance appear to be at odds with one another, I will argue this is more than a straightforward bifurcation between celebration and crisis: it is not simply - or at least not only - a question of the gap between “voice that matters” (Couldry, 2010: 3) on the one hand, and conditions of “voice poverty” (Oxfam Great Britain, 2005) on the other. The prevailing notion that the technosocial developments of the last few decades have led to the ‘democratisation of voice’ is not easily separable from the parallel political ascendency in the West of a neoliberal orthodoxy embedded in everyday aspects of social, political and cultural life. This apparent ‘paradox of voice’ forms the heart of my research. These questions are at the center and on the frontier of struggles over meaning, value and the relations of power in many advanced liberal democracies at present.

The opening quotes of this chapter foreground twin sets of tensions that, together, provide a broad context for the research. The first tension comes from sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s astute diagnosis on the atomising conditions of late modernity which raises concern over the rise of the individual as the predominant frame through which subjects give account of their lives, and a narrative disconnect these stories have from broader social structures that condition such accounts. While Bauman’s analysis - made over a decade and a half ago - does not make explicit reference to neoliberalism (in this quote at least), his description and broader critique do point to its unsettling effects. It hints at the perceived corrosive effects that radical individualism has on the terms and frames through which such accounts are rendered intelligible or given legitimacy. As such, his appraisal touches on one of the primary dissatisfactions cited in contemporary critiques of neoliberal culture, most persuasively put forward by media theorist Nick Couldry (2010: 11); namely, that neoliberalism operates as a “voice-denying rationality”. For now, it is sufficient to highlight the broader point that Couldry’s claim reveals, when considered in relation to the quote from Bauman: specifically, that ideas of ‘voice’ and ‘story’ are attached to a set of moral values that are themselves framed as antithetical to many of the values that structure modern society. In other words, the rationalities embedded in neoliberal culture are understood to reduce or “crowd out” (Sandel, 2012) alternative
Beyond Voice Poverty

storytelling futures and, as such, come to be thought of as necessarily damaging to the values implicitly housed within ideas of voice. In this way, ideas of voice come to occupy a singular place in the social imaginary, one that demands defending. And yet, it is not always clear as to what this defence might entail.

In the second quote, media theorist Henry Jenkins - who coined the term “convergence culture” (2006) - prefigures a critical ambivalence many scholars now hold in the ‘post-convergent’ present; specifically, over the extent to which this cultural configuration amplifies, dissolves or concentrates opportunities and platforms for ‘voice’. A simultaneous “democratisation of technologies discourse” (Burgess, 2006: 202) is met with a persistent counter-position that laments “digital divides” (Blanchard et al., 2008) and “participation gaps” (Warschauer, 2003). The democratisation discourse is best exemplified in recent years by the attention paid to the role of social media in the so-called ‘Twitter revolution’ in the Arab Spring and in the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement (Christensen, 2011; Penney and Dadas, 2014; Theocharis et al., 2015); while concern over disparities in access, inclusion and participation within globalised digital networks are most prominently highlighted in relation to those who experience socio-economic, geographic, political or cultural marginalisation (Chen, 2013; Newman et al., 2012; Willis and Tranter, 2006). Yet, as Jodi Dean (2005: 107) has pointed out, optimists and pessimists alike share the same “fantasy of abundance”: both viewpoints are characterised by the idea of “exponential expansions in opportunities”, be they in a positive or negative sense. Beneath these techno-utopian and techno-dystopian extremes lies a more complex circulation of power and site of struggle where the category of voice is put under pressure and pulled in different directions by competing and contradictory forces that interact, in often unexpected ways.

In order to think through some of these complexities and contradictions - and how the intermeshing of neoliberal culture with ubiquitous technologies complicates this further - I take up the notion of ‘voice’ as both an analytical tool to frame these questions, and as an object of inquiry. Over the course of this thesis, I consider this complex and shifting terrain using the frame of ‘voice’ to think through significant shifts in the landscape where expression, communication and exchange take place. More significantly, I suggest it is in the struggle over the terms, frames and meanings of voice itself. While notions of ‘voice’ lie at the heart of both celebrations and critiques, as outlined above - and raise a range of
important questions - I will argue that the underpinning logics behind each set of claims are based on a particular moral economy that privileges the singular, speaking subject and operates according to a historical arrangement of voice grounded in an intersubjective, relational ethics. This logic can be found in Nick Couldry’s (2009: 580) persuasive formulation of voice as “implicitly linked practices of speaking and listening, based in a practice of mutual recognition”. Over the course of this thesis, I refer to this relational model as the historical arrangement of voice (see Key Terms further on in this chapter). I argue that this formulation of voice, and its underpinning logics, inform the normative framework for thinking about the meaning and value of voice in contemporary culture and is therefore tied to a particular set of meanings and values. For instance, Tacchi (2006: 1) has taken a broad approach to the notion of voice - formulated in the context of human development - as “inclusion and participation in social, political and economic processes, meaning making, autonomy and expression”. Implicit in the work of both Couldry and Tacchi is an understanding of voice that is underpinned by an intersubjective and relational ethics. For Tacchi (2010: 7), the “process of giving an account of one’s life and its conditions” is positioned as necessary in securing any claims to voice, yet without addressing the terms or frames of giving account in the first place, such claims may not be met. I hope to show that the assumptions, connections and relationships that anchor this primarily relational formulation are neither fixed to a ‘stable’ idea of voice, nor can they always be ascribed to new economies of voice in any straightforward way. As I will argue, this formulation raises its own set of problems. I return to this point later.

As neoliberal culture begins to dissolve the boundaries between the economic, political, cultural and social domains and restructure everyday life in the image of the market, it is less clear how these changes might also co-opt and recuperate the practices of speaking, listening and recognition, fundamentally altering any account of voice built solely on the process of encounter and exchange with others. As touched on above and further described in Chapter Two, cultural critiques of neoliberalism lament the individualisation and marketisation of social life and organisation (Bauman, 2001; Couldry, 2010; Sandel,
Beyond Voice Poverty

2012), in part, precisely because market-driven logic is perceived to break apart a fundamental relatedness and connection that hold together members of society. Beyond such critiques, which express discomfort with non-relational values (such as market values, or neoliberal individualism), I propose that emerging economies of voice operate according to a different set of logics, which I elaborate on in Part two of the thesis. While bringing to the fore elements of voice that are necessary to any claim of giving account of one’s life, it is my key contention that a theory of voice based on this historical arrangement alone fails to account for the way categories of speech, listening and recognition are themselves transformed through the limiting and generative effects of neoliberal biopolitical power and new assemblages of technology.

I argue that market-driven imperatives produce new economies of speech, listening and recognition. These emerging economies of voice are connected to, but distinct from, the primarily relational, so-called ‘non-market’ economy in which voice has traditionally been located. Emerging market-driven models of voice complicate humanist accounts and shift voice from a sphere of social value and engagement to one based on transaction and information exchange. As such, claims to voice cannot be met simply by an appeal to a return to this historical arrangement of voice because it cannot alone account for how voice works under these emergent conditions. Even while the conditions of voice are not entirely immune from market relations, the conventional way that voice is framed often makes this distinction, as I will go on to describe in the following chapters. Market framings of voice can be used to regulate and condition whose voices count, and in what way; they also set the terms in which those voices are heard and in what form they are rendered intelligible. Under these conditions, certain forms of speech, strategies or tactics of listening and frames of recognition are untethered from their relational association and recuperated along market-driven, neoliberal and techno-utopian lines. However, I do not suggest this transformational restructuring necessarily leads to a contraction of voice. Rather, it alters the very meanings, categories and struggles over the terms of voice itself.

In the second part of this thesis, I propose that in this new economy, relational modes of expression and communication are practically loosened from their usual associations to instead circulate within a system of information exchange, transactional operations and data flows - where speech, listening and recognition are recuperated as objects of economic value. These new pathways of exchange and circuits of meaning are
attached to hierarchies of value that reorder voice according to its informational, data-driven and transactional components. According to the logic of this new moral economy, it is no longer sufficient to ‘speak up’ or ‘be heard’, as I elaborate in Chapter Three. Neither is it necessary to engage in personal encounters in order to ‘listen’ or listen in to the lives of others, as described in Chapter Four. Therefore, this practical shift demands a conceptual and analytical shift that accounts for such a transformation.

To be clear, my analysis is not intended to form a judgement as to whether this shift is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in terms of the conditions needed to register voice; rather my interest and focus lies in what voice becomes as the meanings, practices and values of voice are transformed by these new arrangements and relationships. Even from this preliminary sketch, it becomes clear that the notion of voice is both a slippery and “sticky” (Ahmed, 2004) object of inquiry: slippery because it is put to use in different ways to support competing claims; and sticky because the idea of voice is attached to highly charged ideas central to philosophical and political formulations of the contemporary Western subject. Yet any nuanced understanding of how voice works in the present moment must account for this complexity and push beyond speech-oriented, rights-based, liberal-democratic frameworks to account for the flexible and emergent forms of voice that arise.

While my work is strongly informed by the work of Nick Couldry, my analysis departs from him in several important ways (described further on), and resists casting new economies of voice in terms of the tensions set out in my opening paragraphs. While I examine these tensions in the following two chapters to unpack and critique existing notions of voice, I also want to show that the tensions themselves generate productive - and some instances confounding - accounts that also warrant analysis. This is where my theoretical contribution lies: I hope to think through this complexity by focussing on some of these new attachments and redeployments that new economies of voice throw up in a way that avoids both cultural pessimism and unbridled optimism and instead develops a new account of how voice works in light of these cultural shifts.
LOCATING THE RESEARCH

Interdisciplinarity

I adopt an interdisciplinary approach in this research for both theoretical and methodological reasons. Along with the general appeal of interdisciplinarity in making connections across disciplinary boundaries, many of my reasons for choosing such an approach emerge specifically in relation to the nature of my inquiry into voice; others provide a way of positioning the research. I briefly list them below, before elaborating on each in turn.

By framing my research as interdisciplinary, I hope to signal my clear intention to draw on scholars from a range of fields, but to do so in a systematic way that is led by the research problem. While acknowledging the limits of interdisciplinarity and the danger of appearing to lack a clear focus, I have made a strategic decision - what could be called a ‘politics of citation’ - to bring into conversation scholars from different fields and disciplinary traditions. I do much of this work in the opening chapter to mark out prevailing notions of voice. In early chapters, I draw primarily on scholars from political and moral philosophy, critical social theory, cultural studies, and history of media/media studies to conceptualise voice as a dynamic site of struggle where the social relations of power and questions of value (and values) are drawn into relief.

Theoretical justification:
1) There is no clear or singular disciplinary ‘field’ for voice;
2) The intellectual paradox at the heart of this research is well served by interdisciplinarity, which makes connections across disciplines;
3) Interdisciplinarity encourages “knowledge redistribution” (Whatmore, 2009) as a critical position; and
4) The focus on the limits/frontiers of voice demands an innovative approach for thinking beyond existing frameworks.

Methodological justification:
1) Interdisciplinarity can be used as a method of critique;
2) It provides a method to connect speaking, listening and recognition to theories of voice; and
Beyond Voice Poverty

3) It allows me to draw on a number of ‘limit cases’ that test the (conceptual and disciplinary) frontiers of voice.

First, my primary theoretical reason for an interdisciplinary approach is a “lack of any distinct area that examines conditions of voice” (Couldry, 2010: 16). While voice might not have a specific field of its own, the normative framework for thinking about voice (which I map in Chapter One) connects to several sub-fields of inquiry: specifically, the domains of speaking, listening and recognition. In this way, seemingly disparate lines of critique relevant to particular aspects or dynamics of voice are brought into view and held together by an overall conceptual structure. Such an approach is necessary to foreground and critique the connections between speaking, listening and recognition and to map their attachment to changing sets of values.

Second, I deliberately frame my research as an intellectual problem centred on the ‘paradox of voice’ as set out in my opening statements. As such, adopting interdisciplinarity as an approach is both appropriate and necessary. As Moran (2010: 1) suggests, interdisciplinarity is often useful when ways of thinking become inflexible, exclusionary or insufficient in understanding the complexity of certain problems. Crossing disciplinary boundaries allows for new connections to be made across fields of knowledge, as well as to draw on multiple disciplinary perspectives that are relevant to questions of voice and push beyond existing frameworks.

Third, more than simply a promise of “epistemological pluralism” (Miller et al., 2008) or the democratic embrace of a range of disciplines, interdisciplinarity can be understood as a form of critical “knowledge redistribution” (Whatmore, 2009). The increasing interest in interdisciplinarity in the last decade - both in academia and in areas of public policy (such as health or climate change) - reflects a desire for more collaborative and cooperative approaches to complex social and political problems of the twenty-first century (Manathunga et al., 2006). It also suggests a need to dismantle disciplinary ‘silos’ that can close off opportunities for communication across fields. The rise of interdisciplinary research hubs within tertiary institutions (such as the Centre for Cultural Partnerships where my PhD is based)\(^2\) encourages scholars in the humanities and social sciences in

\(^2\) The Centre for Cultural Partnerships at the University of Melbourne is an interdisciplinary research and teaching hub focused on innovative modes of enquiry connected to questions of culture, community and society.
particular to explore a range of disciplinary approaches and methodologies relevant to their particular object of study. For my own research, this approach helps me unpick the relationship between power, value, meaning and the production of knowledge bound up with related questions of voice. Critical knowledge redistribution also suggests a kind of ethics that is orientated towards unearthing the assumptions and values that underpin disciplinary approaches. To turn to Judith Butler (2005) - writing in a different context, but relevant to my point here: “becoming ethical now means becoming critical of norms under which we are asked to act but which we cannot fully choose”. Ethical practice for Butler is critical practice.

Fourth, an interdisciplinary approach helps me to forge links in unusual places and equally to break apart some of the binds that solidify particular entrenched positions. Further, I take up a number of spatial (frontiers, limits) and temporal (relations, connections, economies) concepts that allow me to reconstruct the meaning and value of voice in different ways.

Further to these theoretical justifications, interdisciplinarity also brings several methodological benefits. First, such a methodological orientation can be thought of as a deliberate form of critique. I borrow Bruno Latour’s (2004) notion of “matters of concern” as an orientation for my own research to draw upon a constellation of disciplines and practices centred on concerns for voice. In his attempt to rescue and resuscitate the practice of cultural critique from what he sees as a straining under its own weight, Latour persuasively proposes a reorientation from ‘matters of fact’ to ‘matters of concern’. He elaborates:

The mistake we made […] was to believe that there was no efficient way to criticize matters of fact except by moving away from them and directing one’s attention towards the conditions that made them possible. But this meant accepting much too uncritically what matters of fact were (231).

In other words, critique took for granted the self-evidence of ‘things’ as ‘things-in-themselves’ rather than uncover the foundational assumptions that construct them. This opens up a space for interdisciplinarity as a way of probing questions and problems, instead of seeking answers or a proposing a solution. It also connects back to the theoretical defence for interdisciplinarity emerging from the dearth of existing research specifically
concerned with questions of ‘voice’. Latour’s above stated concern further supports my own strategic move in this research to pay particular attention to sites of struggle where the meaning and value of voice is currently being contested, rather than taking a position that demands a verdict on the meaning and value of voice itself.

Beyond the conceptual appeal of such an approach, my justification for it is also supported by the specific nature of my research problem. I argue that the impulse and appeal to re-instate the relational ‘triad’ of voice to amend any perceived ‘crisis’ or address the effects of its differential distribution, neglects to question the self-evidence of the relational moral economy that underpins it. Thus, the most effective way of troubling this self-evidence of voice is to critically think through how new economies of voice emerge through new assemblages and attachments that confront deeply embedded norms. Such an argument is supported by a methodology that reflects this concern and embraces knowledge from across disciplinary boundaries. More significantly, it also allows me to register elements that might otherwise be overlooked, or not available if approached from a single-discipline vantage point. Further, with my tighter focus on how neoliberal culture and new configurations of technology begin to destabilise these relationships and permeate the everyday, an interdisciplinary approach for me also becomes a method of critique that draws from a range of sources to best understand the complexity of new configurations of voice.

Second, in mapping the existing literature to unpack prevailing notions of voice, and by systematically considering the shifting connections and relationships made between speaking, listening and recognition, the field necessarily ‘bleeds out’ beyond disciplinary boundaries. The nature of my research question demands and necessitates a methodological approach open to, and which invites, connection and dialogue between and across distinct fields. I draw on several disciplines in early chapters to identify and map out the problem space (marking out the historical arrangement of voice); and in later chapters to propose a provisional framework for thinking through the complexity that emerges (new economies of voice). Thinking through the politics of voice inevitably crosses any clear boundaries: any single disciplinary approach would not be able to deal with such an object of inquiry. This is not uncommon in humanities or the social sciences, and many of the scholars I draw upon also contribute to fields of inquiry outside of their own ‘home’ disciplines. Some of these scholars (each of whom are given different degrees of attention
and weight at various stages), including Judith Butler, Jasbir Puar and Sara Ahmed, for instance, take up theoretical positions (feminist, postcolonial, intersectional and queer theory for instance) that are themselves interdisciplinary and tactically intersectional in that their ‘matter of concern’ is often located at the conjunction or gaps between various disciplinary boundaries in approaching a problem.

I include scholars whose work engages with concepts of speaking, listening and recognition in particular, as well as scholars who critique the social impacts of neoliberal culture and the proliferation of global technological developments. In the following chapter I consider the work of a range of scholars whose disciplinary perspectives - in moral and political philosophy in particular - help me mark out the historical arrangement voice and locate it within a particular relational and intersubjective ethical world. Further, such an approach - in Chapter One especially - helps me trace the connections between the category of voice the centrality of individual speech (Mill, 2012), storytelling (Arendt, 1998; Jackson, 2002), narrative identity (MacIntyre, 1984) and giving account (Butler, 2005) in the formation of what it is to be human. I focus on these ideas in particular because they convey a sense of what constitutes the ‘story of you’ in Western culture. It also helps me in later chapters to draw out how these ideas themselves are coming under pressure: for instance, emerging techno-social practices forge new categories of speech, listening and recognition attached to personal metadata and bio-data that change the formation of contemporary subjectivity and identity.

Drawing on liberal-democratic traditions allows me to locate contemporary appeals to rights (Oxfam Great Britain, 2005) to situate it within broader histories of Western liberal and democratic ideals and notions of the individual in deciding whose voices ‘matter’. I draw on democratic theory - in particular the work of Susan Bickford (1996) and Gemma Fiumara (1990) - along with scholars from media and cultural studies - especially Nick Couldry (2009), Tanja Dreher (2009, 2010, 2012) and Kate Crawford (2009) - to excavate how attention to listening can serve as an intervention into the conditions of voice inequality. This work also foregrounds concerns over the gap between “speaking up” and “being heard” (Dreher, 2010). Further, I draw on critical social theory to interrogate the tensions in different theories of recognition (Fraser, 2003; Honneth, 2004), and think through the limits of intersubjective appeals to recognition put forward by Honneth in particular. Together, these critical perspectives from a range of disciplines help to frame
the relational model of voice in a particular way and help shape my argument. While acknowledging these traditions do have significant differences, my task is focused on how they intersect with particular moral claims at the core of Couldry’s claims to voice and, to such ends, are drawn into conversation. In later chapters I develop my own analysis that pushes beyond liberal, rights-based or single-discipline approaches.

My final methodological justification involves the analysis and drawing together of several limit cases that encompass a range of disparate social phenomena, bringing them into view through an interdisciplinary frame.

**Limit cases**

In Part Two of the thesis, I draw on several recent examples that complicate and confound existing formulations of voice where the frontier of voice is currently being remade in different ways. I describe these in more detail in my chapter breakdown in the final section of this chapter and in the introduction to Part Two, but briefly, they are centred on:

- digital storytelling (DST) (Chapter Three);
- free and open source software (F/OSS) coding (Chapter Three);
- the Quantified Self (QS) movement, and self-quantification practices more broadly (Chapters Three and Five);
- the United States PRISM program for civilian mass surveillance (Chapter Four); and
- the ‘Right to be Forgotten’ ruling in Europe (Chapter Five).

I also frame the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement as a limit case at the end of Chapter Two in order to set up some of the tensions that play out across the second half of the thesis. In addition to these particular sites of struggle, in Chapters Four and Five I supplement these examples by thinking through how listening and recognition in particular, are transformed when they are attached to therapeutic, liberal and neoliberal processes and framings.

By paying attention to these contested sites of struggle, I rethink the politics of voice to account for the complexity they present. These limit cases are indented to function not
as traditional case studies - they attract shorter analysis than a more in-depth case study might demand - but as micro-examples they build upon each other to illuminate how voice works at the edges and frontiers. They are each striking examples of the particular ways in which the category of voice is put to work in a way that exceeds and confounds simple analysis. I am interested in these instances for what they reveal about the meaning and value of voice as speaking, listening and recognition become attached to new objects of value. But also because the richness and complexity they offer demand a response that pushes beyond the limits of current notions of voice.

Further, by framing them as ‘limit cases’, my intention is to signal their position at this frontier of voice. My focus on this frontier - this limit or horizon of voice - connects back to a set of tensions at the heart of this thesis: the perceived gaps between ‘having a voice’ and having a ‘voice that matters’; the simultaneous contraction and expansion of voice; the disproportionate focus on ‘speaking up’ over ‘being heard’; and the changing conditions of voice poverty. These tensions are all, in one way or another, connected to questions concerning limits. In order to explore these limits and tease out what new economies of voice might look like, I focus my analysis on instances that complicate and deepen a straightforward reading of ‘voice’ beyond narratives of celebration or crisis.

As made clear in my introduction, they are not intended to be representative or generalisable in the sense of traditional case studies, but are rather used to think through specific instances where the category of voice is currently being made, unmade and remade in a variety of ways. Further, the limit cases highlight also the analytical value of voice as a framing device - one of my key contributions - that can be applied to other locations of struggle that might not conventionally be understood or described in terms of voice. The value of this dual approach is to be able to ask critical questions around the relationship between changing conditions of voice and its emergent forms and modes. These emerging economies of voice are connected to, but distinct from, the primarily relational, non-market economy that voice has traditionally been located in. This is not to suggest that the relational elements of voice have been erased entirely, but rather to argue that multiple economies of voice are held in tension and routinely negotiated in ordinary, everyday ways.

Limit cases were selected for a particular set of qualities, making them rich examples for critical analysis. While each case is distinct and unfolds across different domains of
social and cultural life, they are conceptually brought together by a loose set of inclusion criteria, as described below:

1. **New sites of struggle:** All the limit cases I have focused on are relatively recent social phenomena - either occurring in the last five years or so, or coming to prominence over that time. Philosopher and literary critic Umberto Eco once provided advice to prospective thesis writers never to choose a contemporary subject (Carrière and Eco, 2012: 56). The resulting account, he argued, will either be a thin description or lacking in authority. Yet, despite these obvious dangers, writing about questions of the present remains alluring not least because they present the scholar with an opportunity to engage deeply with pressing and prescient questions of her own time. Given this, each limit case is of particular interest for what it reveals about how struggles for voice are taking place. They also coalesce around a constellation of neoliberal, technosocial and biopolitical forces that intensify such struggles. A focus on the contemporary also provides occasion to contribute, in a rigorous and sustained way, to dialogue with a narrative still in the process of unfolding;

2. **On the frontier:** The frontier is more than simply a spatial or conceptual metaphor. It provides a way for me to locate the limit cases on the edge of existing frameworks for thinking about voice. As such, they mark out the frontiers of liberal, democratic and techno-utopian approaches to contemporary questions of voice - extending possibilities but also setting new limits. The examples I draw on offer unexpected or innovative instances where the very idea of ‘voice’ is challenged, in particular the foundational assumptions which underpin its historical arrangement – including the relationship between speaking up and being heard; the limits of democratic and liberal approaches to voice; a relational moral economy; and the detachments and recombination that pull voice in new directions;

3. **Complexity and dynamism:** Linked to the above criteria, the qualities of complexity and dynamism exhibited in each example invite particular forms of analysis and a position of critical ambivalence. Over the course of this thesis, I aim to hold this ambivalence in tension, eschewing the impulse towards narratives of either democratisation or decline. My aim in this is to intentionally trouble the binary notion of celebration or crisis to instead examine the productive capacities of power, regulation and control; and
4. **Convergence:** Central to the argument is the claim that the frontiers of voice are being made and remade in both unanticipated and innovative ways. One of these frontiers is located at the conjunction of neoliberal, technosocial and biopolitical forces, coalescing around new configurations of technology that are attached to values or objects of value that also intersect with market forces, and where voice begins to take on surprising - but still unfolding - new formations. As questions of voice cut across broad domains of everyday life, I have chosen several phenomena that are drawn from areas as seemingly disparate as co-creative media practice, new health and lifestyle technologies, emerging forms of social protest and action, and networked communications and tactical surveillance practices, for instance.

**Critical frames**

As briefly described in relation to interdisciplinarity, I draw on critical social theory to frame and orient my attention towards the social relations of power and the regularity forces that condition the possibilities and limits of voice. This leads me to a particular way of understanding power in relation to new economies of voice: specifically, as a productive, as well as constraining, force. This understanding - informed by a Foucauldian frame of analysis - helps me to push beyond the binary of celebration/crisis in relation to voice to instead focus on the techniques and practices of governance that subjects actively take up, occupy and redeploy in sophisticated ways. Further, it resists the cultural pessimism present in many accounts of the present by instead looking for instances that confound such viewpoints.

The work of French philosopher and critical theorist Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 2008) helps explain these contemporary forms of power and techniques of governance. Foucault’s genealogy of various forms of power - and his notions of governmentality, biopower and biopolitics in particular - informs my own analysis in later chapters and helps me think through how new economies of voice circulate through multiple fields of governance enmeshed in a dynamic set of relationships. As such, the account of voice I develop hopes to describe the nuanced ways that the social relations of power permeate the articulations and instances of voice.
Foucault (1979: 137) understands power not as a coercive or restraining force that simply acts on a subject, but rather a force that can be productive; something through which subject formation actively happens. He elaborates:

[Power] produces things [...] it creates knowledge, produces discourse; it needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.

Further, Foucault argues that an analysis of power should always begin with the “question of the body and the effects of power on it” (59). This point becomes particularly prescient when considering the Quantified Self movement (Chapters Three and Five), or thinking through the embodied and bodily forms of action and protest that can circumvent the flows and rhythms of power. Foucault understands modern power as distributed, dense and circulating through all aspects of one’s life and relationships: “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (94). In other words, Foucault does not locate power out there, external to the subject and imposed on them by institutions or those in power, but rather understands power as a more nuanced and complex phenomenon embodied and generated by subjects themselves, no matter what constraining conditions they find themselves in.

Related to Foucault’s conception of power are his notions of governmentality and biopolitics. Foucault’s inquiries into what he now famously called the “conduct of conduct” have spawned a whole field of research around these key ideas of governmentality, biopower and biopolitics in the last decade or so. The concept of governmentality is particularly useful in understanding the relationship between the state and rationalities and practices used to govern populations. But it is also useful in terms of the changing nature of what constitutes the population itself: as populations and subjects come to be defined informationally and technologically as well as biologically or biographically (Galloway, 2004).

Foucault developed the notion of governmentality to describe a rationality of governing that involves the deliberate moulding of private behaviour in accordance with specific norms and toward specific ends (Dean, 2009). Dean elaborates on this ‘art of government’ as:
Beyond Voice Poverty

[…] any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a
multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and
forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our
desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and
with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, and
outcomes (11).

Further, in recent years, various scholars trying to coming to terms with neoliberal
forms of power and how they manifest themselves in contemporary society have found
Foucault’s seminal 1978-79 lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics* fruitful to their analyses
(Flew, 2012). While *The Birth of Biopolitics* did not appear in English until 2008 (which goes
some way to explaining a renewed interest in, and proliferation of, the critical literature on
neoliberalism and its discontents since then), the lectures took place prior to the obvious
triggers like the rise of ‘Thatcherism’ in the UK and the Presidency of Reagan in the US,
making his analysis particularly insightful for its time.

Mapping the changing forms and strategies of biopower from the seventeenth
century to the mid-twentieth century, Foucault (1980) proposed that sovereign power,
whose characteristic was “the right to decide life and death”, came to be supplanted by
more diffuse techniques of power through “the administration of bodies and the calculated
management of life”. Foucault was interested in how institutionalised practices formalised
in systems of oppression and power like the prison, the asylum and the hospital, came to
be normalised and in turn created particular subjectivities based on certain “truth claims”
(Rabinow and Rose, 2006). Being informed by these Foucauldian frames is useful for two
reasons: firstly, it connects strongly with my theoretical frameworks as it relate to
neoliberalism and questions of voice; and secondly, in later chapters I draw on the work of
post-Foucauldian scholars Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (Rabinow and Rose, 2006; Rose,
1999; Rose, 2007) in particular to think through how new assemblages of technology and
neoliberal culture begin to expand the domain for the governing of ‘life’, having
consequences for a politics of voice. Further, it also helps me to map a shift in ideas of
‘giving account’, the ‘story of you’ and ‘narrative identity’ when the domain of the bio is
extended to include the bio-informational and data driven components of life.
Rabinow and Rose (2006) have taken up Foucault’s ideas of biopower and biopolitics to provide convincing accounts on its contemporary manifestation in the context of techno-scientific developments and the conditions of advanced liberal democracy. Their accounts provide a valuable angle on neoliberalism and technology that are key to elements of my own analysis. Extending Foucault’s genealogy of biopolitical power into the present, they make a distinction between biopower and biopolitics. They describe contemporary biopower as the attempt to intervene in human existence; whereas biopolitics for them includes the strategies over knowledge, authorities and practices of intervention that are desirable and legitimate. They identify three essential elements within contemporary biopower:

1. **Truth discourses** about the ‘vital’ character of living human beings, as well as authorities considered competent to speak that truth;
2. **Strategies for intervention** upon collective existence in the name of life (which may also be specified in terms of emergent biosocial collectives); and
3. **Modes of subjectification** through which individuals are brought to work on themselves (197).

Rose (2007: 54) in particular approaches Foucault’s notion of biopower as “more a perspective than a concept” and this is evident in the three elements of biopower outlined above. These elements of contemporary biopower also imprint themselves on the politics and practices of voice: market-driven and technological truth claims justify specific strategies of intervention and control that in turn shape individual subject formation. The significance of this taxonomy is that it unpacks the nested systems of value and meaning embedded in otherwise self-evident or mundane rationalities that work to regulate everyday desires, beliefs and values. This web of forces impinges on how people give account of themselves and the terms under which they are taken into account; it is also reconfigured by subjects as they struggle to do so.

The rhetoric of individual choice is invoked within neoliberal discourse where citizens are enjoined to take control of their own destinies. This rests on the liberal ideals of freedom, choice and individual autonomy, as laid out by John Stuart Mill (2012) in *On Liberty* (discussed further in Chapter One). Yet as development economist Amartya Sen (2009) reminds us, as long as choice is confined to a selection determined by others, it is not true freedom. Freedom in advanced liberal democracies is often framed in terms of
individual autonomy, agency and the power to choose (Rose, 1999). When freedom is invoked in the name of market competition and choice, it becomes clear that processes of neoliberalisation are not just tools for economic transformation: they are tools for social transformation. Further, even while the language of the market emphasises choice and freedom, freedom, as formulated by Foucault, is “something which is constantly produced” (Lemke, 2001: 64) through the “establishment of limitations, control, forms of coercion and obligations” (65). Following Foucault, Rose (1999: 67) refutes the popular rhetoric that freedom represents the absence of coercion or domination by the state, and instead emphasises that freedom has been a vital objective, instrument and means of government.

In Part Two of this study, I suggest that converging forces of power modify and modulate everyday struggles for voice by altering structures of address; modes of response; and the terms of recognition. But they also produce positive practices of resistance, redeployment and innovation. I discuss these in more detail in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Like other critical theorists whose perspectives inform this work, I bring forward these Foucauldian frames to position this work in a particular tradition of inquiry, but also to uncover the social relations of power at work in any claim to voice that increasingly emerge in the face of an increasingly deterritorialised, privatised, individualised and highly technical modes of intervention and surveillance.

By presenting and structuring this thesis in the way that I do, I hope to uncover connections and distinctions between prevailing theories of voice and sites where these formulations begin to break down. In offering a provisional framework for rethinking the conditions and formations of voice, I do not mean to dismiss or entirely refute value of the historical arrangement of voice I map in Part One: there is continuing value and practical use in the relational model, even if it is insufficient. What I hope to show is that the structure of the thesis - the deliberate framing and subsequent reframing of voice - is also a methodological choice as much as it is one of argument or style.
KEY TERMS

Historical arrangement of voice

I borrow the phrase “historical arrangement” from Alexander Galloway (2013: 26) who writes about mediation and new media in the context of a “particular transformation in the historical arrangement of media”. My primary intention in taking up this term in my work and applying it to voice is so as to distinguish between prevailing notions of voice based on a particular historical arrangement of speaking, listening and recognition - as epitomised in Couldry’s formulation - which place them in an interdependent relationship, and new economies of voice which operate according to a different set of logics and ethics. While I argue that these two arrangements of voice sometimes overlap and at other times are held in tension - my intention in invoking an historical arrangement of voice is at least twofold: to unpack these two systems of meaning and value; and to follow what happens under new arrangements and configurations of voice. An additional nod to Galloway is given for his call for the need to find new forms of analysis appropriate to the changing nature of the technosocial landscape.

In framing the historical arrangement as the prevailing normative framework for thinking about voice in Part One, and in offering an alternative model of voice in Part Two, I do not mean to suggest a particular hierarchy. Certainly I do not want to suggest that critiques of voice based on its historical arrangement are not productive, or that neoliberal culture and rapid technological change does not present real and pressing challenges to the contemporary politics of voice. Setting out the historical arrangement of voice is necessary in order to stage my argument. Further, I propose that through this strategy of framing and re-framing, I can put forward a more complex and dynamic analysis of how voice works in these contexts.

Voice poverty

In the following chapter I describe the notion of voice poverty - a concept first coined by the international development agency Oxfam Great Britain (2005) - which places voice in a rights-based framework to assert a “right to be heard” for some of the world’s most vulnerable populations. Voice poverty connects the category of voice to human rights frameworks and liberal democratic discourses of empowerment and participation, to advocate for the rights of people in positions of little social power to have a voice in
decisions that affect their lives (Oxfam Great Britain, 2005). I use this definition of voice poverty in the first instance to articulate a gap - practical and political - between giving account of one’s life and one’s conditions and being taken into account in those terms. Critical interest in the conditions of voice poverty was an initial impulse for the direction of my research and is strategically employed throughout as a prompt to think through specific questions of voice. As a concept, voice poverty does bring to the fore important questions around redistribution and representation in terms of voice; it also begins to uncover some of the relations of power that condition whose voices are heard and whose are made to matter. However, as I propose in this thesis, new economies of voice present a challenge to the very notion of speaking up and being heard. I strongly argue a development-oriented, rights-based approach to voice risks overlooking how the category of voice itself expands, contracts, circulates and is refashioned along neoliberal, biopolitical and technosocial lines. So while I retain its theoretical usefulness and potency as a concept, I ultimately look to push beyond conventional framings of voice poverty to interrogate the limits and possibilities of voice. I do, however, return to it throughout the thesis as a constant reminder of the shifting frontiers and conditions of voice. I describe the uses and limits of voice poverty in more detail in the following chapter.

Economy

I draw on the work of both Sara Ahmed and Arjun Appadurai to help frame the elements of voice - speech, listening and recognition - as operating in a particular kind of economy. Ahmed’s (2004: 120) work on the cultural politics of emotion sets out a way of framing certain emotions as particular “affective economies” to think through how emotions “circulate and are distributed across a social as well as psychic field”, while Appadurai (1986) also uses the economic to examine the cultural production of value, albeit in a different context. I discuss their work in more detail in my introduction to Part Two of the thesis. For now, it is sufficient to note that, in following their lead, the ‘economy’ becomes a useful conceptual framework for me to think through how voice works in contemporary society; where the elements of speech, listening and recognition become attached to the priorities of individual surveillance, regulation and biopolitical control and to be recast in new ways. It functions as an organising metaphor that directs attention to circuits, relationships and flows; at the same time it also evokes questions of political economy - systems of distribution and value, meaning making and exchange.
Thinking about voice as an economy in later chapters allows me to examine how new objects of value attached to speech, listening and recognition circulate to transform the very nature of voice itself.

Neoliberal culture

The recent cultural shifts that provide the context for this study can be broadly described as a confluence between neoliberal culture and new assemblages of technology. The political ascendancy of neoliberal orthodoxy over the last thirty years - in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia in particular - has become part of the organising agenda for governments of both conservative and small ‘l’ liberal persuasions. In this context I use the term “neoliberal culture” (Gilbert, 2013) - as distinct from economic or political neoliberalism (as discussed further in Chapter Two) - to focus my analysis on the way market language, values, rationalities and interventions restructure the wider social and cultural sphere to permeate aspects of everyday life. So ‘culture’ here is used its broad, anthropological sense, to refer to a ‘way of life’. Neoliberal culture in this sense, deliberately picks up on the increasing interest in aspects that have broad social effects or that impact aspects of everyday life: neoliberal structures and rationalities embed themselves within common social practices, values, discourse and forms of organisation to reshape norms and behaviours. In other words, neoliberal culture involves a transformation of the structures of power, hierarchies of value and decentralised mechanisms of control to dissolve the distinction between economic and social domains to instead transform broader cultural values and practices. I discuss cultural critiques of neoliberalism further in Chapter Two. I am less interested here in direct market mechanisms and the economic processes neoliberalism than I am in the more subtle aspects of market language, discourse, values and framings that have become part of the broader contemporary landscape. My attention is therefore focused on the “processes of neoliberalisation” (Brenner et al., 2010) that generate specific practices, produce new subjectivities and give rise to contemporary formations of voice that I elaborate on in the following chapters.
New assemblages of technologies

I use new assemblages of technology as an umbrella term throughout this thesis to describe a moment of post-convergence where big data, micro-technologies and everyday ‘social’ media practices coalesce around neoliberal structures of control and value to reshape the possibilities for voice in ever-changing ways. My intention in taking up this term is to uncover how neoliberal culture and new technologies of voice are enmeshed with technically mediated economies of expression, communication and exchange that, in turn, produce changing practices and categories of voice. While my argument is not contingent upon exclusive reference to this specific domain, it has emerged as vital for the context of the research. For instance, in Chapter Three I consider the alliance between mobile phone applications, i-health technologies and new forms of user-generated content to make connections between new categories of speech, market-driven practices and new forms of individual surveillance; while in Chapters Four and Five, algorithmic logics begin to reshape what might constitute the ‘story of you’.

Cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990: 297) coined the term “technoscape” over two decades ago to describe a particular arrangement of technology in the context of rapid globalisation. He described it as:

[…] the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries.

Appadurai’s fluid configurations of technology have intensified and reached higher points of saturation and complexity since he first coined the term over two decades ago, yet it still retains conceptual power as a way to think about how the flow, direction and intermeshing of technologically mediated forms of information exchange and knowledge production work to produce a cultural landscape that many of us inhabit and continually navigate. In many ways, the notion of technoscape anticipates and intersects with both Henry Jenkins’ (2006, 2013) notion of “convergence culture” and Zygmunt Bauman’s (2013) “liquid modernity”: each arises in the context of rapid technological and social change in the context of globalisation, and how they are increasingly imbricated with contemporary cultural politics. In each of their formulations, Appadurai, Jenkins and Bauman eschew
linear trajectories of progress and resist technological determinism to instead offer a more
dynamic and flexible model of understanding of contemporary techno-social landscape.
They provide a visceral, granular and dynamic vocabulary to think through these
intersecting domains of life. I use the term new assemblages of technology in light of these
traditions, not to refer to a particular technology or ‘thing’ but instead to look at the
practices, relationships and values as the category of voice takes on new meanings that
emerge within a broader technological ecology.

RESEARCH AIM AND SCOPE

This thesis presents an argument for the ongoing political importance and analytical
value of ‘voice’ in the context of its transformational restructuring by neoliberal culture and
new assemblages of technology. In accordance with my interdisciplinary approach, the
work is framed around a problem statement rather than a research question, specifically the
‘paradox of voice’ in advanced liberal democracies, as set out in my opening section.
Responding to this context, I aim to develop a critical framework that investigates
contemporary meanings, values and politics of voice in light of these recent cultural shifts
that pushes beyond prevailing relational, liberal-democratic and rights-based claims. In
doing so, I hope to account for emerging sites of struggle where the frontiers of speaking,
listening and recognition are currently being made, unmade and remade. Through a
critical account of the changing conditions of ‘voice’, I aim to investigate the relationship
between these transformations in the categories of speech, listening and recognition and
the production of new economies of voice.

While ‘voice’ is a broad and ubiquitous concept, one that permeates so many facets
of contemporary life, the scope of this study is more tightly focused around the working
through the ‘paradox of voice’ set out at the beginning of this chapter - on what voice becomes
at the edges, on the fringes and frontiers. What follows therefore is not an attempt to
detail every aspect of voice. Rather, it is centred on a series of inter-related tensions and
contradictions around the question of voice in contemporary culture. As such, I examine
how the category of voice is put under pressure and pulled in different directions by a
constellation of forces: competing tendencies, different regimes of values, complex
interplays of power and shifting configurations of social life. I explore some of these
tensions in Part One of my thesis. These include tensions inherent within broad traditions
of liberal thought such as the concepts of liberty and the individual; others are found in
democratic ideals of expression, participation and rights; still others are connected to the
different ways that voice attaches itself to practices of speech, listening and recognition.

In stranding out speaking, listening and recognition as components of voice, this
thesis necessarily covers a wide conceptual terrain. Certainly, there is a wealth of rich
material in each of these three elements, with enough depth to expand any one into a thesis
in itself. However, my analysis will focus on the changing relationship between these
elements and the ways that new attachments to value fundamentally alter what voice means
and what is at stake in these contested sites of struggle. Therefore, it is necessary to spend
time on each of these three elements. This strategic decision to consider separately each of
these components and their changing relationship was made in consideration of the
benefits and limits of such an approach. As a result, the thesis maps each component
through a series of shifting configurations and attachments. This approach supports the
conceptualisation of voice as an economy to open out from speech, listening and
recognition being the objects of study in themselves, to instead focus on their shifting
formations.

**RHETORICAL VOICE: A NOTE ON WRITING STYLE**

Feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist traditions that intentionally trouble ideas
of subjectivity and the speaking subject also influence some of the ideas I put forward in
this thesis. It is with this awareness that I address the use of ‘I’ and ‘we’ to clarify how it is
used in the course of presenting the argument that follows. Given this thesis is concerned
with questions of ‘voice’ and, in part, with different modes of address and forms of
expression, it is important to make clear how I use the first person singular (I) and - to a
lesser extent - first person plural (we) in this context. I make a distinction between the
subjective or normative use of these pronouns from their deployment and use as rhetorical
deVICES. My intention is to do the latter. When used a rhetorical device, ‘I’ does not signify
the subjective positioning of the author or signal a reflexive personal stance (as it might
within arts and creative disciplines), but rather functions as an authorial mode of direct
address. This is a subtle but important distinction. Similarly, ‘we’ is not intended to be
normative or assume an all-inclusive position of implied agreement, but instead also
registers at a rhetorical level. ‘We’ functions as a philosophical or abstract tool that is
personal in tone, but is not intended as a form of generalization. Therefore its use falls outside of the question: ‘who is we’? The choice of this rhetorical device is twofold: it creates an intimate tone that directly addresses the reader; at the same time, it presents a firm authorial voice. This mode of address has a long disciplinary history within the philosophical tradition (particularly the use of ‘we’) and is found in certain types of critical theory, but is perhaps less common within cultural studies or interdisciplinary fields of inquiry. While subjectivity and reflexivity are part of a critical researcher’s toolkit, the speaking (or writing) ‘I’ is not necessarily or automatically aligned with the rhetorical ‘I’ that presents the argument.

**SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION**

This research takes seriously, questions concerning broad structural transformations in the category of voice as well how these shifts alter the very meaning of the struggle of voice itself. It builds upon, and extends, existing research into questions of ‘voice’ and anticipates increasing relevance and interest in its changing formations as voice undergoes transformational restructuring. As such, the account I present aims to be a complex, yet incomplete and emergent picture of the relationship between contemporary architectures of voice and their unstable, contingent articulations. Importantly, my research builds on existing scholarship across a broad range of disciplines to bring into conversation multiple theoretical and critical perspectives. In particular, as briefly described, I draw insight and inspiration from critical theory, political philosophy, cultural studies and history of media to mark out my field of inquiry. In doing so, I am able to offer a provisional framework for reconstructing the meaning and value of voice through its connection with emerging economies speech, listening and recognition. In carving out a conceptual space for this re-theorisation, I also uncover some of the frontiers where speech, listening and recognition are currently being refashioned. Many of these are under-explored in relation to contemporary struggles for voice.

Significantly, my work departs from prevailing analyses that approach voice through largely relational frameworks or ties voice to a fixed moral economy. I hope to deepen existing critiques and celebration of voice and provide a more complex picture of how voice works in light of recent cultural shifts. This approach is particularly useful in unpacking assumptions around the implied and inherent value of voice as an
Beyond Voice Poverty

unambiguously ‘good’ thing and associated narratives of ‘democratisation’ or ‘decline’. I have chosen to make this sideways move as a deliberate strategy to open up an analytical space to intervene in current debates, without being pulled into the either/or binary or demanding that I come down on one side or the other. Instead, my focus is on the emerging sites of struggle where the meaning and value for voice are currently being contested.

The work of media scholar Nick Couldry, in particular his work Why Voice Matters, is an important point of reference throughout this thesis. Couldry’s work remains a touchstone for the ideas I develop and present in the following chapters and I discuss aspects of his work on voice and neoliberalism throughout. His comprehensive critique of neoliberal culture in terms of voice becomes the basis for what he proposes is an alternative, post-neoliberal politics. Yet my own aim in this thesis is necessarily more modest; it does not seek to offer solutions, rather probes questions and proposes alternative frames of analysis. It also departs from Couldry’s work in at least two significant ways: it deliberately troubles the relational model of voice and its implicit value to instead focus attention on new configurations of voice attached to emerging sites of struggle; and it seeks to eschew persuasive narratives of crisis. In doing this, I offer a provisional framework for rethinking voice in a way that accounts for some of the cultural shifts outlined above, without slipping into cultural pessimism. At the same time, while Couldry builds a strong moral case in support of voice through a persuasive appeal for a return to a particular set of values, I adopt a more dispassionate position, simply aiming to describe and account for some of the ways that the category of voice is being creatively redeployed in constraining conditions.

Further, I anticipate this research will make a strong theoretical contribution to an illusive and seductive focus of inquiry, one that continues to have ripple effects in the broader cultural sphere. My research offers a critical distance from the recent debates around the democratisation and decline of voice by unpacking the concept and situating it within broader traditions of liberal-democratic and Western thought. Existing critiques too easily take for granted the self-evident value of voice, or the set of moral values that conventionally construct the concept. At the same time, my approach deliberately pushes beyond existing frameworks to open up new routes of analysis that hopes to contribute to a robust critical engagement with the contemporary politics of voice. As such, this work
will be of interest to a community of cultural researchers and interdisciplinary scholars interested in the politics of voice and is written primarily with such a reader in mind.

The analytical value of voice

The figure of voice offers itself as a problem space in which to explore questions of power, knowledge, ethical relation and representation across many forms of social and political life. Critical attention to the category voice provides a fruitful way to investigate the social relations of power that permeate everyday struggles of people to give account of their lives, and the conditions which structure those accounts. As such, I use it to animate an understanding of the processes, conditions and structures that set the norms and terms by which people make themselves understood, with its attendant political or material effects.

As briefly described above, I deploy voice as both an analytical tool to probe the frontiers of voice, as well as it being my primary object of inquiry. I invoke the concept of voice in this double sense so that it becomes the framework for thinking through a range of connected concepts (speaking, listening and recognition), values (moral, relational, market, technical) and practices (through specific examples) as they are arranged into new assemblages to take on emerging forms and meanings. As a framing device, I use voice to thematise and draw into focus a range of concerns that have not traditionally been understood in terms of a politics of voice, but are connected to the new economies of voice I hope to theorise. As an object of inquiry, voice as a “matter of concern” (Latour, 2004), becomes a lightning rod that attracts and focuses attention. I put the concept to work as a productive analytical tool to probe the frontiers of new modes and forms of speech, listening and recognition as they are recast in unanticipated ways. In doing so, I will also articulate some of the anxieties and transformations mentioned above to consider how the category of voice itself is being restructured, with emergent and unanticipated consequences. This categorical messiness is part of the seductive and illusive quality of voice itself: it presents both an ideal to strive towards and tool for achieving that ideal, a focus of celebration, and a method of critique.
STRUCTURE OF THE DISCUSSION

The thesis is broadly conceptualised in two parts: Part One (Chapters One and Two) unpacks and critiques prevailing theories of voice, to establish the broad context and foreground existing tensions. These chapters provide a brief overview of the components of speaking, listening and recognition to set up the tensions, contradictions and complexities that arise from competing claims to voice based on their historical arrangement. In Part Two (Chapters Three, Four and Five) I link transformations in the category of voice to new economies of speech, listening and recognition as they emerge in response to the cultural shifts described in Part One. I draw on a series of ‘limit cases’ which exemplify these new economies and complicate prevailing accounts of voice that operate according to a particular moral economy. The final chapter (Chapter Six) functions as a discussion and conclusion chapter that draws together the main findings and themes.

Chapter One covers significant conceptual ground in order to introduce some of the key themes and ideas I develop over the course of the thesis. The main work of this chapter is to unpack Couldry’s relational model of voice - what I call the historical arrangement of voice. While the parameters of the term ‘voice’ are difficult to define fully due to its fugitive nature, I sketch out the broad domain in which the struggle for voice is conventionally understood to take place. Specifically, I systematically consider how speaking, listening and recognition are each connected to the category of voice through a constellation of relationships constituted through a relational and intersubjective ethics. By paying close attention to each separate component of voice, I set up the structure of later chapters in which I map their changing configuration and relationship. I spend a large portion of the chapter focusing on the category of speech, as it remains the predominant way of thinking about voice in the West. This also enables me to canvas the related ideas of narrative identity (MacIntyre, 1984), giving account (Butler, 2005) and the power of storytelling (Arendt, 1998; Jackson, 2002) as it relates to the politics of voice. I also identify some of the inherent tensions within liberal, democratic and Western traditions including freedom of speech, individual expression and the concept of rights. These tensions are further explored in the following chapter that details competing claims to voice.

I then introduce into the discussion the notion of “voice poverty” (Oxfam Great Britain, 2005) as an important framing concept that originates in the field of international
Beyond Voice Poverty

development, but which retains its usefulness in a broader context as a way of framing some of the structural imbalances between ‘speaking up’ and ‘being heard’. I consider the potential for a rights-based approach to voice in addressing the social relations of power that effect the differential distribution of voice. At the same time I foreshadow the limits of such an approach as ideas of voice become attached to new objects of value and dissolve current modes and forms of voice. More broadly, I also consider the limits of ‘rights talk’ in addressing such claims to voice and the value of the concept beyond its current framing.

Chapter Two identifies two broad trajectories in the literature around contemporary formations of voice and considers their relationship: first, persistent cultural narrative in the post-convergent West that celebrates a ‘democratisation of voice’; and second, a counter-narrative that emerges predominantly from cultural critiques of neoliberalism and a general pessimism regarding the contraction of social life to values of the market. As briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, celebrations of voice tend to connect a general trend in advanced liberal democracies that promote individual liberty and freedom of expression with the potential of technologically enabled, non-hierarchical and distributed forms of expression and communication that together claim to enlarge the domain of voice. The first part of this chapter considers this claim to reveal how it is underpinned by specific liberal formulations of voice that privilege a singular, speaking subject. In the second part of the chapter, I focus on cultural critiques of neoliberalism and their concern over the way in which market values come to impinge upon social life. I pay particular attention to the work of Nick Couldry (2010) who explicitly connects a “crisis of voice” to a “crisis of values” as extolled by neoliberal orthodoxy. I focus on some of the these values, rationalities and practices to think through how they might begin to pull the category of voice in different directions. In the final part of the chapter I turn my attention to the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement to begin to tease out how the category of voice might both expand and contract along democratic and neoliberal lines, but not in linear or necessarily predictable ways that can be categorised in neat binary terms of democratisation or decline. This example - my first limit case - sets the stage for Part Two.

Chapter Three builds on preceding chapters to link transformations in the category of voice to new economies of speech. I focus on three sites of ubiquitous cultural production: digital storytelling (DST), the free and open software (F/OSS) movement and
the Quantified Self (QS) movement. Framed as limit cases, these instances together indicate a rise in bio-informational and data-driven categories of speech: the ‘i-voice’, speech as code, and speech as biodata. While certain forms of speech have always carried more currency than others, this chapter thinks through some of the ways in which particular modes of address and forms of speech are produced, function and circulate within an economy of value increasingly informed by ideas and imperatives of the market, mediated by new configurations of technology. Here, speech takes on a new intensity and function, accumulating and attaching itself to value in different ways. It operates according to a new hierarchy that values first and foremost narratives of self-realisation, individual enterprise and stories of optimisation. The three modes of cultural production considered in this chapter each, in different ways, follow a techno-social trajectory that connects the value of speech to increasingly entrepreneurial and technical forms of expression, transaction and value exchange. By placing them in conversation, I hope to theorise what I see as two connected trends: the intensification of individualised forms of speech and the rise of the bio-informational. Together, they begin to reshape the ‘story of you’ and what it means to ‘give account’, and pose a challenge to the historical arrangement of voice.

In Chapter Four I begin to think through how a rights-based approach to voice might not fully account for the way that new modes of listening can alter the mode of address or work as a form of surveillance, extraction and social control. The main work of this chapter is to map a change in how listening is deployed as it gets caught up in a series of competing priorities, imperatives, strategies and rationalities to be subsequently transformed from a “mode of attention” (Crawford, 2009) to a “mode of attunement” (James, 2013). I propose this transformation from attention to attunement is not simply a shift in register (that is, different levels of listening); it also signals a shift in category (different kinds of listening entirely) that heralds a new economy of voice attached to practices of displacement and extraction.

The opening section of the chapter considers therapeutic listening in relation to neoliberal subject formation. In particular, it investigates modes of ‘tuning in’ to elements of discord or dissonance within designated segments of the population (such as Indigenous communities) to act as a regulating and limiting force. I then turn my attention to a limit case: the increasing technical sophistication and penetration of State-sanctioned mass surveillance, and the United States’ PRISM program. In particular, I build on Robin James’
Beyond Voice Poverty

(2013) idea of neoliberal listening to propose that second-order listening is a mode of extraction that operates within new economies of voice. This economy of voice is characterised by instability, precarity and a constant reworking in response to an exposure to multiple sites of monitoring and surveillance. In light of these transformations, this chapter argues that neoliberal listening, listening-as-extraction and second-order listening practices produce particular conditions that trouble the very notion of ‘speaking up’ and ‘being heard’; they also signal a particular kind of loss - a loss of control over how your personal data is increasingly used to reconstruct the story of you.

Chapter Five, like the previous two chapters, makes a distinction between historical and emerging economies of voice; at the same time it concedes this distinction is by no means clear nor is it fixed. This chapter critically rethinks a politics of recognition in the context of neoliberal structures of intelligibility, which can themselves be implicated in the uneven reproduction of power through what Judith Butler (2009: 7) describes as the “differential distribution of recognisability”. Increasingly, subjects deemed ‘worthy’ of recognition are those who demonstrate their value in terms of market productivity, bodily capacity, individual enterprise and the imperatives of personal governance. I pay attention to the ways that these uneven terms of recognition are embedded within everyday instances of voice.

In the later part of this chapter, I revisit the limit case of self-quantification technologies and practices to consider how neoliberal frames of recognition and subject formation also play a part in these technosocial formations, in particular values and attributes found in the “activated citizen” (Clarke, 2005) and “participatory biocitizen” (Swann, 2012). My final limit case comes from recent data protection legislation in Europe and the Right to be Forgotten. I argue this ‘technical’ frame of recognition emerges in an economy where personal forms of data are increasingly connected to the digital ‘story of you’ and registering voice increasingly becomes a question of “informational self-determination” (van Alsenoy et al, 2014).

Chapter Six This chapter revisits the research aims and the main points of my argument. It discusses the major themes and key findings that have emerged across the thesis, in light of the previous three chapters in particular. It also considers some of the caveats, and concludes with some implications and future directions for research.
Beyond Voice Poverty

I conclude by reiterating that any account of voice must appeal to its important relational and ethical quality while at the same time account for the ways that the processes and mechanisms of speaking, listening and recognition are increasingly attached to values and objects of value in a new economy of voice. As such, I propose this demands an analysis that both exceeds and precedes this social formulation, moving beyond current notions of voice poverty towards the emerging frontiers of voice. This is where new accounts and storytelling futures are made, unmade and remade.
PART ONE:

THE POLITCS OF VOICE
1.

THE HISTORICAL ARRANGEMENT OF VOICE

INTRODUCTION

The work of this chapter is to unpack Nick Couldry’s (2009: 580) statement that voice is conventionally understood as “implicitly linked practices of speaking and listening, based in a practice of mutual recognition”. This is a persuasive moral claim, which must be given serious consideration and weight, particularly because Couldry’s body of work over the last decade had made a significant contribution to debates around media ethics and power in the globalised digital age (2012; 2013), raising important questions at the heart of contemporary society. While his work is primarily focused on media theory and communications - including recent work on the rise of social media and algorithmic power (2015) - it is consistently grounded in an alternative politics aligned to community, public, and collective forms of social organisation. As such, his work champions emerging forms of media and social practice that reflect these political commitments; equally, it consistently critiques the structures (and values) of the digital media landscape - its affordances and limits. His work is influential for media and cultural studies scholar, social theorists and policy makers alike.

Given this considerable status, and the value of Couldry’s work more broadly, it necessary in unpacking Couldry’s central claims to voice, that I systematically consider the histories and traditions of speaking, listening and recognition by paying close attention to each. Couldry’s notion of voice places speaking and listening in inter-dependent relation, grounded in a process of mutuality and reciprocal ethics. This set of relationships makes a particular set of moral claims for voice: it asserts that voice holds intrinsic value; and it positions voice as central to human relationships. In order to consider these claims in detail and, in later chapters, develop an account of voice that pushes beyond such frameworks, it is first necessary to examine how conventional notions of voice are connected to a broad field of thinking around a cluster of related concepts and ethical
frameworks. I do this by mapping what I call the historical arrangement of voice (see key terms) to uncover a particular moral economy and normative framework beneath prevailing models of voice. In taking such an approach, this chapter necessarily covers significant conceptual ground; it also introduces some of the key themes and sets up the tensions I examine over the course of the thesis.

In the first part of the chapter I tease out some of the connections and relationships between speaking, listening and recognition put forward by Couldry. I place them in conversation to show how they circulate within a relational economy of voice. That is, in a system of ethical relationships embedded in intersubjective encounters with others. By paying close attention to each separate component of voice, I begin to map a particular trajectory through their changing configuration and relationship. In separately considering these elements, I frame my inquiry through a range of connected philosophical and political traditions that intersect with questions of voice. This approach also allows me to draw out the inherent tensions encountered in this particular formulation of voice, in particular those found in liberal, democratic and Western traditions including freedom of speech, individual expression and the concept of rights. These tensions become evident and are further explored in the following chapter.

“Voice poverty” (Oxfam Great Britain, 2005) is a central concern in this thesis and a major theme throughout the thesis. As it emerges from the rights-based framework of international development, I do not discuss it in depth until the final section of this chapter, focussed on voice and rights. This is not to downplay its importance or centrality in this work, but is rather a reflection of broader structure of my argument, which begins by unpacking the triad of speech, listening and recognition. After doing this, I turn my attention to rights in order to consider liberal traditions of individual rights and freedoms (Mill, 2012), as well describe the notion of voice poverty as an intervention into the uneven distribution of voice.

**VOICE AND SPEECH**

In the West, ideas of ‘voice’ have strong philosophical and political connections to the category of speech in distinct, but intersecting, ways. The category of speech continues to occupy a central place in the formation of post-Enlightenment, Western thought, along
with a privileging of the singular, speaking subject. These traditions stretch from the origins of Greek thought and Aristotle’s (1991) work on λόγος and the art of rhetoric, to nineteenth century liberal rights claims to freedom of speech and expression associated with modern conceptions of the singular, speaking subject (Mill, 2012), and an enduring emphasis on what Derrida (1976) describes as “phonocentrism”. This section picks up some of these histories and contextualises them in three ways: first, I map the way that speech is connected to ideas of narrative, storytelling and identity formation; second, I draw out some of the inherent tensions in the tendency to privilege speech over other aspects of voice (expanded on in later sections); and third, I briefly describe how the category of speech has been taken up as a transformational category of action through in a representational politics of voice.

The narrative imperative

In this section I examine the way that narrative and storytelling come to hold a central place in humanist traditions of thought that connect the desire to tell stories with what it means to be human. This move is strategically necessary precisely because it is in these accounts we find the origin of Couldry’s (2009; 2010) concern over an erosion of the inherent values of voice, and a feeling that these values must be protected against incursion from non-humanist values, including those extolled by the market. Such a humanist formulation holds voice as central to human self-understanding through the connection with others and the world. Anthropologist Michael Jackson (2002) refers to this as the “narrative imperative”.

The work of philosopher Hannah Arendt (1998) provides an entry point for thinking about the human impulse for storytelling, and how stories connect to broader meshworks of interdependent human actions and interactions. Writing on the human condition, Arendt locates storytelling and narrative as a “subjective in-between” which bridges multiple realms of private and public experience across a “web of human relationships” (182-183). Adriana Cavavero (2000: 25) - drawing on literary and philosophical traditions from the myths and fables of Homer, Plato and Sophocles to the philosophy of Hannah Arendt - also places narrative as central to the formation of the self. She writes: “individual stories… are constituted by their interlacing. They result from human actions”. Both these positions stress the importance of a private realm in which individuals carve out
Beyond Voice Poverty

a space of personal autonomy and self-determination, but place these within a larger public domain in which action and inter-action takes place. Following this logic, any struggle for voice occurs with a continual and dynamic oscillation within Arendt’s ‘in-between’ space; a space where structure and agency, power and freedom, speaking up and being heard are actively contested.

In his anthropological exploration of Arendt’s work on narrative and the human condition, Jackson (2002) takes up the subjective in-between as a starting point for his cross-cultural analysis of the role of story in contemporary contexts of conflict, dispossession, trauma and violence. In similar ways to Arendt, Jackson contends that narrative and storytelling function as a bridge across the divide between the world and the way we experience it, enabling us to “negotiate an existential balance between ourselves and… spheres of otherness” (23). That is, to balance the self and the not-self; to be and to come into being in relation to others. He echoes Arendt’s position when he writes that “storytelling is never simply a matter of creating either personal or social meanings” but is an intersubjective realm where a “multiplicity of private and public interests are always problematically in play” (11).

Jackson (2002: 15) extends Arendt’s conception of storytelling for his anthropological exploration of storytelling as a “vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances”. He writes:

Our lives are storied. Were it not for stories, our lives would be unimaginable. Stories make it possible for us to overcome our separateness, to find common ground and common cause […] A story enables us to fuse the world within and the world without. In this way we gain some purchase over events that confounded us, humbled us, and left us helpless. In telling a story we renew our faith that the world is within our grasp (15).

It is in this rendering of story that we find some of the moral claims embedded in Coudlry’s notion of voice. For Arendt and Jackson, storytelling is a connecting term that draws into relation aspects of private and public or self and other (or self and state), situating individual accounts of a life and its conditions (the narrative imperative) within broader social contexts.
The interlacing of the individual with the communal can also be found in what Alexander MacIntyre (1984) has termed “narrative identity”. MacIntyre’s notion of narrative identity situates the narrative imperative within an interconnected and interdependent web of relationships, both personal and institutional. He argues that humans - in our actions and practice - are fundamentally storytelling beings. For him, the narrated life is not solely the result of the self-determined acts of an autonomous person, but rather the product of a certain structure of narratability. This structure of narratability affords a way of thinking about narrative identity as nested in broader narratives of society and social life. For me, this intermeshing of one person’s story with the stories of others, makes it possible to answer the question “What am I to do?” only by first posing the prior question, “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?” (216). MacIntyre’s conception of the individual, based as it is on interdependence with the stories in which one finds oneself, starts to draw out some of the tensions that arise in the formation of a narrated life when set against the backdrop of broader narratives of society.

The notion of narrative identity forms the basis of a particular “ethical subjectivity” (Atkins, 2004) connected to set of responsibilities and obligations to others and necessary to identity and subject formation. MacIntyre (1984: 205) illustrates this ethical subjectivity with a concrete example:

We all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. I am someone’s son or daughter, someone’s cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my own life its moral particularity … the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity.

Of particular note, and in anticipation of the argument put forward in later chapters, is the idea that the ‘story of my life’ is socially located and part of a broader biographical and historical narrative. The unquestionable and self-evident logic here is one of the shifting
Beyond Voice Poverty

grounds I will go on to explore, where even the idea what constitutes story and identity undergoes a structural transformation.

His quote also goes begins to articulate the moral economy of voice that also constructs Couldry’s theory of voice - it is the ‘debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations’ that constitute the moral particularity of our storied lives. MacIntyre’s self is a situated self not detachable from its social roles, statuses and privileges. Fundamentally, MacIntyre establishes a relational understanding of the self not so much dependent on individual character as much as it is on encounters with others and the world. This is echoed by Paul Ricoeur (1992: 161) who writes “in our experience the life history of each of us is caught up in the histories of others”. Yet, even while narrative and story are deeply embedded within the personal and social, the process by which those realms are navigated and negotiated, and through which stories are constituted, are also intensely political.

In the following chapter I show how MacIntyre’s notion of narrative identity - based on a relational model of voice that fits neatly with Couldry’s formulation - is often cast as being at odds with some aspects of neoliberal culture, in particular neoliberal conceptions of the individual. MacIntyre was writing in the 1980s when the political rationality of neoliberalism was in ascendency under Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Regan in the United States. The political reconfiguration of the individual in relation to society at that time - illustrated by Thatcher’s now famous 1987 interview in which she declared “there is no such thing as society” - positioned the individual at the centre of social organisation. This approach extended some of the ideas of classical liberalism beyond the realm of economic and political life to the private lives of individuals. Under the auspices of 1970s Thatcherism, the so-called “neoliberal revolution” (Hall, 2011) reconfigured the relationship between the state and its citizens by persuading the public that the Welfare state was antithetical to individual freedom (Harvey, 2005). In terms of voice, a clear motivation for Thatcher’s ‘union busting’ strategies of privatisation, deregulation and cost cutting was to weaken, amongst other things, the collective voice of workers’ unions and thus diminish their power. But while Thatcher’s political ideology began as a way of reshaping British society in the shimmering image of the free market, aided by the values of global capital, it is now clear that these transfigurations were not just economic, they play out at the level of culture. Thirty years on, this neoliberal
configuration seems a self-evident reality. I return to cultural critiques of neoliberalism in the following chapter.

Both Jackson and MacIntyre, along with Arendt, understand subject formation as interdependent with the social world, locating narrative and story within a wider set of relationships between the self and others. Together, their work uncovers two narratives in relation to voice that continue to hold sway in contemporary culture: first, the centrality that narrative has in understanding the human condition; and second, the inherent power of storytelling. Certainly, stories function in complex and important ways fundamental to communities and cultures the world over, however this particular trope - that narrative is the predominant mode of navigating the world - has become a dominant narrative in itself. This is a significant point. I address some of the problems and consequences this throws up in later chapters. Notwithstanding these problems, the fact remains that narrative and story continue to hold both anthropological and moral power. In bringing these disciplinary perspectives together, it becomes easy to see how the historical arrangement of voice, built on a relational model of human society, comes to occupy such a primary position in the social imaginary.

**Giving account**

While storytelling is regularly held up as a the preeminent cultural form of our times, the work of philosopher Judith Butler is a reminder of an important distinction between telling a story and what she calls “giving account”. This distinction prizes open a charged space between the self and other in which she is able to animate the social relations of power involved in what it is to give account of oneself. Butler (2005: 11) calls upon Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals to illustrate: “I begin my story of myself only in the face of a ‘you’ who asks me to give an account”. For both Nietzsche and Butler, only in the face of such an inquiry do we become self-narrating beings or even begin to narrate ourselves. It is in this space of contestation that the struggle over the terms by which one is rendered visible in the eyes of another takes place. In Butler’s I-you relationship, the ‘you’ necessarily shapes the account of the ‘I’, both in the form of the question and in the shape of the answer: both the self (I) and the other (you) are mutually implicated in each other’s story. While Jackson (2002: 23) argues the stories we find ourselves a part of are “authored and authorized dialogically and collaboratively” - emphasising dialogue and
Beyond Voice Poverty

collaboration - Butler reminds us that “the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and others, are not of our making” (21), exposing the forces which condition the possibilities for voice itself.

While largely focusing on the dialogic and collaborative (that is, intersubjective) aspects of storytelling, Jackson (2002) does note the powers of authority and authorship in the constitution of stories, speaking to the power of others to designate whose voices are made to matter and in what terms. In Butler’s (2005: 12) view, the “refusal to narrate” can create a potential space for agency through the delimiting of the self in relation to the other and the norms that prescribe their relation. For her, the silence that comes with such a refusal can be a form of resistance, as it “calls into question the legitimacy of the authority” by attempting to circumscribe a “domain of autonomy” for the subject. Yet while this defiant act of self-relation asserts itself through a withdrawal from the relational framework set up by the questioner, it becomes necessary to ask whether and to what extent it is possible for the self to alter the terms of recognition in order to be rendered intelligible and of value to others? What if those terms of recognition are set?

Representational politics

While moral philosophy connects ideas of voice to the category of speech through narrative and story, feminist and postcolonial traditions take up the category of speech to instead challenge the self-evidence of voice and the hierarchies of power involved in ‘speaking for others’. In the 1980s, Gayatri Spivak, bell hooks, and Minh Ha Trinh among others pioneered an emancipatory feminist politics that questioned the ethics of how women from the global south and women of colour were represented (hooks, 1989; Spivak, 1988; Trinh, 1989). This first wave of scholarship cast an “oppositional gaze” (hooks, 2013) upon gendered, colonial and ethnic systems of power to privilege women’s experiences. The cultural and identity politics of 1970s and 1980s witnessed the emergence of a generation of influential postcolonial and feminist scholars who challenged the structures of Empire which, they argued, created an idealised, yet largely silent, colonial Subject in the face of the romantic ‘Orientalism’ of Western discourse. In these critiques, the very notion of ‘speaking for’ others is troubled; at the same time, it further solidifies the centrality of speech as a powerful political category of voice. Within this, foregrounding
women’s voice was seen as one way to recover “the authentic voice that speaks of material, historically subjugated experiences” (Jackson, 2003: 695).

Feminist, postcolonial and poststructural critiques of the Subject can be understood as deliberate “irruptions” (Jackson, 2003) of voice where the category of speech is tactically deployed as a critical as well as transformative category that ‘speaks back’ to the structures of power. These traditions have held voice as a central epistemological concern in their commitment to, and advocacy for, greater inclusion, participation, empowerment and representation of marginal and marginalised voices within dominant modes of academic and political discourse, research and practice (hooks, 1989; Said, 1978; Said, 1993; Spivak, 1988). The convergence of the women’s and civil rights movements in the 1960s, coupled with decolonisation, opened a space to critically question the systems of power that worked to deny women as Subjects from speaking in their own terms (Lewis and Mills, 2013). This further uncovers what is at stake giving account: we require others to make sense of our words but those others also provide the context in which we can make sense.

These traditions question the very self-evidence of voice by problematising the notion of a singular, cohesive subject as well as foregrounding the discursive and political limits of speech. Drawing attention to the power relations that constitute voice and the subject, these revisions reject the ideal of an “authentic voice” (Jackson, 2003) by focusing on the politics of representation and the relations of power that condition subject formation. Instead, these critical pedagogies offer a more nuanced and textured understanding of voice, one that is partial, unstable, contingent and fugitive. In later chapters I draw from the work of Judith Butler (2009; 2013), Sara Ahmed (2004; 2014) and Jasbir Puar (2010; 2011) who continue these traditions from their own particular disciplinary perspectives. In particular, their work helps me think through how possibilities of voice are framed and conditioned in particular ways.

Edward Said (1978) and Gayatari Spivak (1988) are two prominent intellectuals concerned with the structural refusal of voice. They employ the rhetoric of narrative and speaking to uncover the forces that operate to silence and oppress those on the social, political and cultural margins, positioning voice less as a problem space than problematising voice as a possibility at all. Both Said and Spivak employ the language of Western thought and its methods to critique the very academic discourse that represents
and constructs the Other (the Subaltern, the Oriental) in a way that maintains a Western object of inquiry: the Colonial Subject. I discuss Said’s work in more depth in relation to colonising narratives in the following chapter. Spivak posed the provocative question *Can the Subaltern Speak?* in her seminal work of the same name in which she censures both Foucault and Deleuze for being uncritically complicit with a Western project that “conserves the subject of the West” without acknowledging the historical formation of the intellectual (66). Spivak’s central claim is that for the subaltern to have a voice, they must speak within the dominant discourse to be understood. She argues that the only position for the subaltern becomes one of silence, concluding that the subaltern cannot speak, if it is limited to speaking in terms prescribed by dominant modes of discourse. In Chapter Three I return briefly to this question reframe Spivak’s question for a data-driven time when the category of speech begins to attach itself to informational data and code.

Within the humanities and social sciences, the “crisis of representation” (Fisher and Marcus, 1986) turned a critical eye inward onto some of the underpinning assumptions that held together entire disciplines, and attempted to adequately and ethically represent the social reality of ‘others’. While questions of voice and authenticity are at the heart of “claims to the ‘real’” in ethnography in particular (Lather, 2009: 20), the crisis of representation drew attention to the structural relations of power and practices of exclusion that worked to marginalise the voices of those who were being represented. As a result, the “reflexive turn” (Venkatesh, 2013) - which emerged in response to this crisis in the social sciences - conferred a high value on the voice of the subject. Reflexive strategies for representation claimed to ‘give voice’ to the subjects of research through first-person and narrative accounts, auto-ethnographies and lived experiences, but in doing so, assumed that some sort of ‘authentic’ voice could be recovered. In other words, in some ways, the crisis of representation and the reflexive turn that followed it further perpetuated and solidified a romanticised notion of the singular, speaking subject. The legacy of this tension continues to play out where interventions seek to address structural imbalances of voice³.

Feminist researcher Patty Lather (2009) works against the tendency to romanticise the idea of a cohesive, speaking subject or to sentimentalise the authentic voice by making

---

³ For instance, this tension is particularly prominent in community cultural development and community-based arts practice in Australia where arts-workers conventionally work with communities who are socially, politically or economically marginalised or excluded from mainstream society. For an interesting discussion on ‘story theft’ and the ethics of co-creative media practice, see Spurgeon, 2014.
Beyond Voice Poverty

a strong case against empathy. While this at first appears counterintuitive to finding methodologies that honour the voice of research participants, Lather maintains that empathy operates on a will to understand each other and is therefore constructed, in part, on identification and sameness. It is through this demand for totality that Lather contends empathy enacts a kind of violence that violates the other (19). As I will argue in later chapters, the affective surplus that empathy carries can work to dissolve the political effects of voice, while appearing to support claims to speak. This echoes Butler's (2005: 42-43) ethical formation of giving account of oneself in the face of another: the moment I say “I know who you are [...] I cease to address you”. Questioning the self-evidence of speech in a politics of voice brings with it a questioning of the ways and modes that condition the possibilities for voice, including a partial obscurity from others. While empathy and identification remain tempting pathways to follow, Lather warns that this is not always the best approach, and raises its own set of problems. I discuss some of these in Chapter Four in relation to listening in the context of therapeutic culture (Nolan, 1998) and emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2007).

VOICE AND LISTENING

While speech still dominates discussions of voice in the West, attention to listening has gained increasing currency as a response to the differential distribution of voice, as well as a critical route to rethink the claim that the ‘democratisation of voice’ has led to increased opportunities for people to speak, tell their story or be given voice. Recent theories of listening put forward by some political theorists and media scholars in particular attempt to address structural inequalities and power imbalances that preclude a plurality of voices from being heard or represented in a range of political and mediated contexts. This mode of attention also suggests a kind of directionality and intention in the act of listening. A focus on listening has also been strategically deployed to shift the emphasis from “speaking up” to “being heard” (Dreher, 2010) onto the forces that condition who can speak, who is heard, and to what effect. This has led to a rapid growth in scholarly and popular interest in the role of listening in pursuing democratic ideals (Bickford, 1996; Dobson, 2014; Lacey, 2013). As Kate Crawford (2009: 525) has argued: “as a metaphor, listening is useful” because it captures the characteristics of a mode of attention that involves receptivity and intersubjectivity.
Institutional practices of listening are increasingly incorporated into various mechanisms of redress for social injustice and as a strategy for participatory development and social inclusion. Most prominently, Truth and Reconciliation models and forms of restorative justice have developed formal strategies of listening to first-person testimonies and narrative accounts of people directly affected by some form of historical injustice. These models are based on a theory of justice underpinned, in part, by a belief in intersubjective engagement through listening to different parties. This is most prominently exampled in South Africa’s post-Apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up in 1995-6. It is also evident in World Bank’s Can anyone hear us? Report, produced as part of its Voices of the Poor research into poverty across 47 countries, drawing from testimonies and “experiences of over 60,000 poor women and men” (Narayan et al., 2001). The provocative question that frames the report acknowledges - at least in policy terms - the importance of listening to first hand accounts of poverty from those directly affected by it. In Australia, the 2013 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse followed a similar route. It incorporated a mechanism for members of the public to tell their story directly and confidentially to members of the Commission in private, face-to-face sessions, over the phone, or in writing. The Commission stated “having their voices heard” was an important part of the process, and was aimed to assist commissioners better understand the issues and respond appropriately in the future (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The Commission structure connects the process of ‘feeling heard’ to having their voices ‘matter’ insofar as their testimony is taken into account and informs a response that influences future outcomes. These brief examples point to a focus on listening as a remedy to past injustice, as well as an imperative towards inclusiveness, making it a tool for intervention and a mechanism for change. In Chapter Four I rethink this inclusive impulse within a politics of listening to see how it can also pull voice in the other direction.

Political listening

The work of Susan Bickford (1996) presents a compelling argument that foregrounds “political listening” (both individual and institutional) as central to developing a democratic theory of citizenship. Bickford maintains it is a “particular kind of listening” that involves both attention and attentiveness to others, marking out a space of engagement between citizens and activating a charge of responsibility and responsiveness (129). Her work gives considerable attention to the interdependence of both speaking and listening in the process.
Beyond Voice Poverty

of democratically resolving conflict and creating pathways for a plurality of voices in the public realm. She contends that oppression works, in part, by “taking seriously only certain kinds of speech and by undervaluing listening” (145). Corradi Fiumara (1990: 23) maintains the Western emphasis on speech is located in a cultural system of knowledge that ignores the process of listening:

[...] in spite of our having risen to high levels of cognitive awareness, we have little familiarity with what it means to listen; we are in fact imbued with a logocratic culture in which the bearers of the word are predominately involved in speaking, moulding, informing.

Perhaps because of this perceived imbalance, the politics of listening - and listening as an important foundation of democratic society - has emerged as a growing focus critical scholarship in social and political theory in recent years (Bickford, 1996; Dreher, 2010; Fiumara, 1990; Lacey, 2013; O’donnell et al., 2009). As Cultural studies scholar Tanja Dreher (2010) in particular has observed, attention to listening can bring into focus the conventions, hierarchies and discourses which shape not only what is and is not heard and valued but also who is and is not heard. Further, listening partially conditions the way in which others are able to speak.

The “dissonance” in the title of Bickford’s book The Dissonance of Democracy, for example, highlights the challenges of listening out for and across difference in a pluralistic society. Dissonance for Bickford is more than just a metaphor for democratic plurality; it becomes a fundamental component of a healthy and robust society. Kate Lacey (2013) asserts that plurality as a democratic virtue is “normally conceived of in terms of a plurality of voices guaranteed by the freedom of speech. But plurality also has to be guaranteed by the freedom of listening” (Lacey, 2013: 177). Like Bickford, Lacey formulates a politics of voice and recognition through a politics of listening: a “listening out for and listening in to voices in order to hear what they are saying” and a rethinking of one’s own position in relation to what one hears (Lacey, 2013: 177). Here, listening is evoked in a double sense: through a metaphor of attention (directed listening out for and in to) and in the recognition of the self in relation to another.

Like Butler’s important distinction between telling a story and giving account, Bickford (1996: 129) makes the subtle distinction between listening and hearing: “just as
speakers must reflect on how to speak (and what to say), listeners must be self-conscious about how they listen (and what they hear)”. This distinction suggests that active listening is a process that involves critical reflexivity on the part of the listener; it can therefore pose a challenge to comfortable hierarchies that maintain and reproduce uneven conditions of voice. The charge of responsibility to be attentive to how one listens and what one hears recognises that listening not only conditions what can be said or shapes the form of speech but typically invokes an obligation to the other. The nature and extent of the obligation is neither pre-determined nor fixed and is instead contingent on the specific dynamics of each exchange. Bickford (1996: 147) suggests that political listening requires “a willingness to construct certain relations of attention”. This understanding of listening fits neatly with the relational model of voice; a model underpinned by a particular moral economy. In this sense, listening involves a certain moral orientation towards another that connects speaker and listener in a mutual process of engagement. In this sense, this formulation of listening operates within a relational economy of voice; one which constitutes listening through its movement of attention between subjects and is attached to a quality of responsiveness or responsibility towards others. In Chapter Four I return to this idea to mark a shift from listening as a movement of attention to listening as a mode of attunement.

Bickford’s contribution is valuable for thinking about ways to approach ‘democratic’ or ‘political’ understandings of voice that move beyond the notion of freedom of expression or the capacity for people to ‘speak up’ (and to be heard) and instead shift the focus of attention to the practice of listening. Dissonance, difference and attunement become key conceptual metaphors for Bickford, Dreher and Lacey respectively in their development of their theories of listening. However, these ideas are not unambiguously good in themselves - as I discuss in Chapter Four - and instead take on a different meaning under new economies of voice, where institutional and neoliberal strategies of listening use second-order listening practices to tune in to the population and listen for discord or difference; disconnected from interdependent social relations conventionally ascribed to listening. The imperative to incorporate difference can also work in a different direction: to narrow the narrative space for voice. Further, dissonance can take on an unsettling character when listening out for dissonance becomes a form of surveillance and control. I explore both these imperatives in Chapter Four.
From speaking up to being heard

As the global community attempts to come to terms with the digital, online and networked environment and media saturated world we inhabit, and its potentials and challenges to ‘democratise’ voice, a parallel scholarship on the politics of listening has also emerged in the fields of media studies, cultural studies and participatory development communication. This scholarship is particularly interested in questions of representation, participation, inclusion and empowerment for marginal and marginalised voices within the mainstream media and community media interventions (Couldry, 2009; Dreher, 2009; O'donnell et al., 2009; Podkalicka, 2009; Tacchi, 2010). Australian research collaborations such as The Listening Project critique these questions of voice in light of a shift towards more “active possibilities for social inclusion and change based on recognition, dialogic engagement and acceptance” (Dreher et al., 2008-9). In the work of Dreher (2010) on multiculturalism, representation and the media, attention to the politics of listening opens the way for an important and necessary shift from “speaking up” to “being heard”. This framing does important work to refocus attention onto the structures and processes that condition voice beyond creating opportunities to speak. Scholars from both fields echo a general concern that the process of listening is often overlooked in a contemporary western culture that tends to privilege speech and neglects what is involved in the act of being heard.

Dreher (2009) extends Bickford’s conceptualisation of political listening to develop the concept of “listening across difference” which focuses on the transformative potential of listening. The importance in registering a plurality of voices in the public sphere via a politics of listening is, in part, a way of incorporating the imperatives of cultural diversity and identity politics into the broad rhetoric of democratisation. For Dreher (2010: 100), listening involves openness to the other and therefore poses both risk and possibility: an opportunity for connection and transformation, but also for “challenge, conflict, dissonance and persuasion”. With a focus on representation of multicultural voices within mainstream media in Australia, she draws on the example of the Australian public broadcaster SBS radio program Alchemy to argue it facilitates “cosmopolitan listening practices” (2009: 448) by inviting audiences to listen in new ways that potentially disrupt the “hierarchies of language and voice” (Bickford, 1996: 129). The SBS Charter includes a charge to “reflect multicultural Australia” which is achieved, in part, through multilingual and multi-ethnic programming across its radio and television networks.
Beyond Voice Poverty

Potentially, this kind of active listening also involves what Alecia Youngblood Jackson (2003: 698) calls “hard” listening: “an unlearning of privilege, authority, and knowledge, an openness to and acceptance of severe criticism, and a profound self-questioning and circumspection”. The transformative potential of these kinds of listening practices is housed in the space of engagement between speakers and listeners across different social, cultural or political spheres. Dreher’s analysis of the Alchemy program illustrates how, Jackson’s call for “hard listening” and Dreher’s (2009) related notion of “listening across difference”, transformative theories of listening involve risk and exposure to the needs of others but also invites an embrace of diversity. Implicit in these kinds of listening is a relational ethics based on prevailing notions of voice.

But while these participatory and emancipatory goals are valuable, as I will show in part two, as listening and recognition become attached to neoliberal objects of value, they no longer operate according to a relational ethics. Further, the liberal imperatives of inclusion and participation can deploy listening in regulatory ways that work to narrow the space for voice. For instance, in tracing the fallout for remote Aboriginal communities of the Commonwealth’s 2007 Intervention in the Northern Territory, Cate Thill (Thill, 2009: 538) examines the way listening functioned as a “central problematic in public discourse about the NT Intervention”, in particular the lack of “difficult” or “courageous” listening required to genuinely respond to and register the voices expressed in the 2007 Northern Territory government’s Little Children are Sacred report. In particular, she notes the ways that “selective” and “therapeutic” listening functioned to silence indigenous communities and reinforce hierarchies of oppression, rather than take into account their voiced concerns. I examine these tactics of listening further in Chapter Four.

In recent years, the promise of voice and listening as a pathway to inclusion has been connected to the rhetoric of choice and individual responsibility in accordance with neoliberal constructions of the ‘good’ subject. This can be seen in government policy, where aspirations to support voice are incorporated into the rhetoric of social inclusion. For instance, both the rhetoric of ‘New Labour’ in the United Kingdom (Lister, 1998), and the Social Inclusion Agenda of the former Rudd Labour government in Australia, each frame voice in terms of capability. The Social Inclusion Agenda envisioned “all Australians will have the resources, opportunities and capabilities to […] have a voice so that they can
influence decisions that affect them” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). This picks up on Sen’s (2009) capabilities approach to participatory development that takes note of “positive freedoms in a general sense (the freedom ‘to do this,’ or ‘to be that’) that a person has” (1985: 201). This commitment to ‘voice’ - at least in policy terms - affords the promise of a transformative politics that listens and responds to the concerns and ideas of its most vulnerable or disenfranchised citizens. Yet, as Dreher (2012: 158) pointed out at the time, while ‘voice’ had a prominent place in the policy, there was little detail as to exactly how people could influence decision-making or policy, or in what sense their voices would be heard. With a change of government, the Social Inclusion Unit was subsequently dismantled, closing off political space for these broad debates.

**VOICE AND RECOGNITION**

Can claims to voice be met by a political theory of recognition? Over the last thirty years, a critical literature has emerged in social and political theory around the politics of recognition as a route to social justice, most significantly the work of philosopher Charles Taylor (Taylor and Gutmann, 1992), and critical theorists Axel Honneth (1995, 2004) and Nancy Fraser (2000, 2003; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). For these writers, the language of recognition is used to reframe questions of (re)distribution, difference, democracy, wellbeing and respect, although each makes subtle and important analytical distinctions in how they put the concept of recognition to work. In this section I briefly sketch out some of these distinctions before considering in later chapters struggles over the terms and frames of recognition itself.

Both Honneth’s and Taylor’s theories of recognition begin from a Hegelian conception of recognition as an intersubjective process of social relations through which self-identity is formed in relation to another (Thompson and Phil, 2006), what Fraser (2000: 109) terms the “identity model” of recognition. Honneth (2004: 354) - influenced by Hegel’s theory on human intersubjectivity as the basis for self-identity - builds a theory of recognition that sits within a relational paradigm. He argues that the justice and wellbeing of a society is “measured according to the degree of its ability to secure the conditions of mutual recognition” between and amongst its members. In other words, wellbeing is created and sustained socially, not only between individual bodies but also between “bodies-in-society” (Manderson and Nile, 2005). As such, Honneth’s model of
recognition operates to create and sustain social relationships, and build strong community structures. This model of securing recognition fits comfortably with the historical arrangement of voice put forward by Couldry, where mutuality is central to registering voice. It suggests that through a mutual process of social recognition between subjects, claims to voice can be met. According to this model of recognition, subject formation and self-identity are formed, in part, through this intersubjective process.

Honneth identifies three modes of recognition, including respect and esteem. Respect is based on what Taylor might describe as a “politics of universalism” (Thompson and Phil, 2006: 45); that is, the right of all human beings to be recognised as such. Respect is a moral mode of recognition based on a principle of equal dignity and rights of citizens. Secondly, esteem is similar to Taylor’s description of a “politics of difference” (70); that is, a social mode of recognition to do with achievement based on the distinctiveness of individuals and groups of individuals. This connects back to Tanja Dreher’s (2009) concept of “listening across difference” described in the previous section, where to hear difference - rather than assimilate different voices into a narrative of sameness - is crucial to securing this type of recognition. Recognising this distinctiveness of individuals may also require Jackson’s (2009) “hard” listening, a task more difficult than hearing voices of consensus or affirmation. But, as already touched upon, the imperative to incorporate difference within the priorities of liberal values of tolerance and diversity, for example, can also limit recognition to a narrow frame because it insists upon a cultural politics of location and identification. That is, particular social categories and subject positions that rely on locating/identifying oneself in relation to the Other - positions which themselves can solidify hierarchical binaries (mainstream/margin, indigenous/settler, gay/straight etc.), but which must be taken up in order to be heard.

The identity model

In her conception of participatory parity, Fraser describes a shift in recent decades from class-based emancipatory politics to an identity-based recognition politics. She understands this as a shift in focus from concerns over power and wealth redistribution to claims over the recognition of difference. Fraser (2000) challenges Honneth’s “identity model” of recognition on the basis that it is both politically and theoretically problematic on two fronts: first, that it risks displacing questions of distributive injustice and struggles
Beyond Voice Poverty

for redistribution; and second, that it risks reifying identity when identity politics is transposed onto cultural or political domains (108). She strongly argues that this mode of recognition risks both psychological reductionism - or what she calls “psychologization” (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 31) - and can narrow claims to recognition to identity politics by “substituting identity-engineering for social change” (Fraser, 2000: 119). Fraser critiques the Hegelian basis for a politics of recognition, arguing that not only does it displace redistributive claims, it also misrecognises social-structural inequalities by equating misrecognition with “distorted identity” (111). I consider this problem further in Chapter Three when I examine the It Gets Better viral video project.

I agree with Fraser’s claim that the identity model of recognition seems politically problematic, particularly in contexts where the neoliberal tendency towards individual-as-enterprise further intensifies personalised, identity-based modes of subject formation, as I describe in later chapters. Yet while apprehensive of the identity model, Fraser (2000: 109) herself concedes both identity and class-based claims are important and interrelated:

Properly conceived, struggles for recognition can aid the redistribution of power and wealth and can promote interaction and cooperation across gulfs of difference. Everything depends on how recognition is approached.

At the same time, while Honneth’s (2004: 353) formulation emphasises “personal identity formation” and “individual self-realisation” as fundamental to his politics of recognition, the underpinning ideas of dignity and respect that he puts forward suggest a more expansive idea of the individual than Fraser credits him for. There seems to me to be a subtle distinction between Honneth’s formulation of personal identity formation - connected to dignity and autonomy - and how the idea has come to be associated with a culture of self-development, optimisation and the cult of the individual. Nevertheless, I retain huge sympathy for Fraser’s thinking on recognition, and her broad concern over the potential displacement of claims to distributive justice that an emphasis on identity politics can promote. Her concern that the Hegelian model of recognition rests too heavily on the idea of individual self-realisation seems well-grounded given the elevation of the individual-as-enterprise in today’s neoliberal orthodoxy, which I touch on in later chapters.
Beyond Voice Poverty

The terms of recognition

Beyond various claims to recognition grounded in intersubjective, identity-based or emancipatory politics, the terms of recognition itself also condition the possibilities for voice. Writing in the context of poverty reduction and participatory development, cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2004: 66) frames voice as a “cultural capacity” to make a connection between voice and the struggle over what he calls the “terms of recognition”:

[…] we must strengthen the capacity of the poor to exercise “voice”: to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life as they wish, not only because this is virtually a definition of inclusion and participation in any democracy. But there is a stronger reason for strengthening the capacity for voice ... It is the only way in which the poor might find locally plausible ways to alter what I am calling the terms of recognition in any particular cultural regime.

This struggle over the terms of recognition opens a way of thinking about voice beyond the interdependent relationship between speakers and listeners alone. It foregrounds the struggle for voice by situating it within a contested space of recognition: in the sphere of social relations and regulated by social norms, cultural regimes and entanglements of power.

For instance, in her work on the ethics of care, Nel Noddings (2002: 103) uses the term the “habitual self” to describe the self which emerges within certain types of structured encounters. She suggests that while these encounters may provide a source of recognition, they are so frequent that they become rule-bound. Such encounters may be everyday interactions where we exchange rehearsed and prescribed pleasantries, for example, but they may also be encounters where there is more at stake. While the notion of the habitual self necessarily poses the philosophical question about the nature (or existence) of a ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ self, it does help to shed light on the extent to which certain rule-bound encounters condition the possibility for voice by limiting social recognition to the terms of the habitual self. For instance, the habitual self is manifest in certain kinds of practiced narratives that are produced through the highly coded aesthetic and affective conventions of the digital story, as I describe in Chapter Three in relation to the It Gets Better viral video campaign. In such contexts, practiced narratives may be reproduced and intensified through network effects as to become the dominant narrative in that particular context. In this scenario then, a proliferation of voices may not result in diversity
and dissonance, but rather come into view through a frame of recognition that replicates a dominant narrative *ad infenitum*. Noddling’s point is that the habitual self is a self that is constrained, both in the modes of expression available to her and in the aspects of the self which can be included. In other words, frames of recognition and structures of intelligibility condition the ways in which one can give account of one’s life. In Chapter Five I return to this line of analysis in to think through the questions: what precedes recognition? And how are certain frames of recognition taken up and redeployed as a form of critique? I draw on the recent work of Judith Butler to do this in the context of emerging terms and frames of recognition.

**VOICE AND RIGHTS**

Having drawn on a range of disciplines and histories to systematically consider the connections between speaking, listening and recognition, I have mapped out a particular set of relationships and attachments bound up with a particular arrangement of voice. I now consider the ways that the category of voice is also attached to important liberal and democratic traditions that celebrate individual liberty, free speech and freedom of expression, grounded in a framework of rights, some of which the previous section touched upon. The language of rights can be a powerful way of challenging oppressive structures, practices or relationships. Rights-based approaches have been used to frame and argue for a whole suite of inequalities and injustices and form the basis for legislation, treaties and international agreements that enshrine the values and beliefs which inform them.

**The liberal tradition**

Within the liberal tradition of political thought, the category of voice is connected to the political touchstones of liberty and the primacy of the individual via the right to free speech. Nineteenth century political philosopher John Stuart Mill exemplifies this in his seminal treatise *On Liberty*, first published in 1859. The right to speak, express an idea or defend oneself is an important tenent of the liberal tradition, where freedom of expression tightly bound to the concept of individual liberty. Mill’s concept of liberty is intimately tied to ideas of rights and the modern, post-Enlightenment individual (Sen, 2009) - it carves out a large domain for individual private life and personal freedom; a response to what Mill
(2012: 34) saw as threats to the individual from the “tyranny of the majority” - that is, the people - under democratic rule. Unlike contemporary discussions that often place liberty and democracy neatly together, Mill was suspicious of democratic systems as being the epitome of freedom and was in fact concerned with democratic structures reducing the sphere of personal freedoms. Mill holds two aspects of liberty as central to the liberal tradition: the principle of individual sovereignty (over one’s mind and body) and freedom of individual expression. For Mill, freedom of expression is an act of seriousness, the product of thought and will. He argues these freedoms should be limited only when it infringes the rights of others or does them harm. In other words, the individual must be free to pursue his or her own good in their own way. But he also made room for a plurality of expression based on a principle that not all people must act in the same way in sympathy with one’s own preference, but that opinions are multiple and “as numerous as those which determine their wishes on any other subject”. Mill also makes a case for the rights of individual minorities against society (the majority), on the grounds of principle. This support for a plurality of voices in society - and the need to protect some members of society against those who occupy dominant or mainstream positions - is a subtlety often lost in contemporary readings of Mill’s work.

The continued importance of these tenants of liberalism underpin conventional notions of voice that privilege a singular, speaking subject. But as Miller (1993: 85) alters us, liberalism was “born a twin” and individual freedom has a “double-edged character” (Rose, 1999: 67). This tension continues to be borne out within contemporary liberal democracies. The tenet of freedom of expression and the modern conception of the individual that appears in Mill’s treatise continues to resonate today in different ways, some of which I take up again in Chapter Two. Celebratory claims to the expansion and democratisation of voice (explored in the following chapter) are often framed in these terms, where ‘having a voice’ is understood through the primacy of speech: speaking up, speaking out, speaking back and speaking truth to power. To not have a voice, in these terms, is to be silent or be silenced; to be denied the opportunity or capacity to speak or speak up. Equally, the right to express oneself and to have an opinion is enshrined as a fundamental right. We can see how freedom of expression can be understood in at least two ways, in the same way that the concept of liberty has traditionally fallen into two camps: through negative and positive frameworks.
Beyond Voice Poverty

Political theorist Isaiah Berlin (1969) famously took up Mill’s conception of liberty in his essay *Two Concepts of Liberty* in which he distinguished between two types of liberty: “positive” and “negative” liberty. Rather than understanding them as two aspects of the one concept, Berlin’s critique places them in stark opposition as “incompatible interpretations of a single ideal” (Carter, 2012). He argued Mill’s concept of liberty consists of the “negative goal of warding off interference” (Berlin, 1969: 6); that is, freedom *from* rather than in the positive sense of freedom *to*. The positive conception of freedom, he argued - most notably advocated in Amartya Sen’s (1985) capabilities approach to development with its emphasis on positive freedoms - draws attention to coercive powers of authority that shape the extent to which one can exercise control over one’s life and remains largely absent from Mill’s account. With Berlin’s distinction between two incompatible formulations of liberty, we can come somewhat closer to understanding the paradox of voice under neoliberalism that Couldry aims to critique: that if neoliberal values place the individual at the centre of social life and forms of organisation, then ‘having a voice’ can easily be confused with a rise in individual capacities for self-expression and the proliferation of individual voices in the public sphere.

Tensions between positive and negative formulations of freedom are seen in contemporary liberalism and conservative forms of government, as is the case with the current federal Coalition government in Australia⁴. Individual human rights, while a necessary instrument of recognition of the value of life, are often framed predominantly in terms of negative conceptions of liberty - for instance, in charters and bills of rights - and there is a danger in overlooking the need from which these rights emerge which are not individually, but socially, determined. And yet, voice is increasingly understood in relation to a singular speaking subject that demands the right to be heard.

Voice poverty: the right to be heard

In the last decade, voice has emerged as a connecting term within international development discourse. This discourse draws on the language of rights across a broad range of development agendas to strategically connect the category of voice to capability

---

⁴ For instance, in mid 2014 there was fundamental disagreement between the Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson and the Racial Discrimination Commissioner Tim Southpommasane over conceptions of liberty and freedom in relation to proposed changes to Section 18(C) of the Racial Discrimination Act.
Beyond Voice Poverty

and social choice (Sen, 2009), digital strategies for development (Tacchi, 2009; Tacchi et al., 2009), conditions of poverty (Lister, 2004) and participatory poverty reduction schemes (Narayan et al., 2001). Ruth Lister’s (Lister, 2004: 10) work notes an increasing trend to articulate the conditions of poverty in particular in terms of voice:

One of the most striking developments in the contemporary politics of poverty is the growing demands for poverty to be understood as powerlessness and a denial of fundamental rights for the voices of those in poverty to be heard in policy debates.

The above quote makes clear the potential value of reframing problems of poverty by conceptually pairing the idea of voice with rights: it connects the category of voice to liberal democratic discourses of empowerment and participation together with emancipatory discourses of localised, grass-roots development. The strategic adoption of the language of rights in this sense - connected to the category of voice - does important work to place the voice of ordinary people at the centre of rights-based approaches to development. It also signals a subtle shift in emphasis onto decision makers to hear the voices of the poor, another instance of the shift from speaking up to being heard.

While it is not my aim to supply an exhaustive history of the development of human rights instruments and approaches, it is at this point necessary to provide a brief context for the discussion of voice poverty by first unpacking what it is that rights ‘do’. The language of rights puts forward an ethical, moral and political framework connected to both liberal and democratic traditions. Rights-based frameworks have been broadly mobilised over many decades to place social, cultural, political, economic and environmental rights on the agenda in arenas stretching from international development and poverty reduction, to civil rights and equal opportunity movements, to questions of culture and social justice, and most recently to ecological concerns. They place the rights-holder at the centre of discussion. The international discourse of human rights was formalised in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and emerged out of a need for an international consensus out of the impact of human rights violations during the Second World War (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). It enshrines a set of human rights to which all people are entitled. The language of rights converged with development discourse and policy agendas in 1997 when this approach was formalised across all United Nations agencies (Sano, 2000). It has also played a role in other spheres
Beyond Voice Poverty

of social and political life, particularly with the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966) that aided the civil rights movement; as well as a whole sphere of other related sets of rights. Human rights have been valuable in safeguarding and promoting values held as fundamental to the condition of humanity. Rights are also incorporated into a range of legal instruments, mechanisms and state charters. Rights-based approaches to economic and social development, for instance, continue to be promoted globally through international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other international development institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, not without their critics.

In this broad context, international aid agency Oxfam Great Britain (2005) further strengthened the link between voice and rights when it coined the term “voice poverty” as part of its Democracy and Human Rights Programme. By placing voice within a rights-based framework Oxfam used voice poverty as part of its development agenda to make the claim that people have a “right to be heard” (2005; 2008). Oxfam’s Right to be Heard Framework has since been implemented in countries outside the UK (Oxfam, 2013), including Australia. Oxfam describe voice poverty as “the denial of people’s right to influence the decisions that affect their lives”, and asserts a right to “hold decision makers accountable” or “participate in that decision making” (Tacchi, 2008: 12). By mobilising the notion of voice poverty within its poverty reduction strategy, Oxfam aligns the right to be heard with other foundational human rights. This formulation attempts to reorient poverty reduction policies “in favour of the poorest sections of the community” (Oxfam Great Britain, 2008: 1) thus redistributing the uneven distribution of social power, not only of material goods or services. In this way, the paradigm of voice poverty also draws attention to barriers that prevent people from both influencing and participating in decision-making processes relevant to their lives.

In its Oxfam formulation, voice poverty works as a conceptual framework to enlarge the understanding of the multidimensional aspects of poverty and its social impacts beyond the lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and water. The term conveys the experience of disempowerment and invisibility it engenders amongst the world’s most vulnerable

---

5 For instance, Oxfam Australia’s Straight Talk program - which operates within the Right to be Heard development framework - connects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with aspects of the political system to build capacity, share information and develop strategies for change. See [https://www.oxfam.org.au/explore/indigenous-australia/straight-talk/](https://www.oxfam.org.au/explore/indigenous-australia/straight-talk/)
Beyond Voice Poverty

populations by highlighting both the structural and relational inequalities present within a given population and its impact on human wellbeing and empowerment. But it also places responsibility on policy makers and those in positions of power to be responsive and answerable to the needs of the people whose policies their decisions affect. It demands an active role from those in positions of power to listen and pay attention to the voices of all those who are excluded from giving account of their experience and conditions in which they act, and have that account heard and valued by others. This charge of responsibility does more than demand a right to be heard: it appeals to liberal democratic traditions to claim that voice does matter.

As this chapter has described, there is an assumption that ‘having a voice’ holds intrinsic value. Beyond the appeal to a discourse of rights, voice poverty also directs attention to the tensions involved - and what is at stake - in “giving account” (Butler, 2005) of one’s life and conditions. At stake, then, is not only securing the conditions to give account, but also in having some sort of control in shaping the terms by which those accounts are registered. This is what Appadurai (2004: 70) terms as “the capacity to aspire” which involves the capacity to “debate, contest, inquire, and participate critically”. This, I argue, involves something beyond an attention to questions of redistribution, rights or recognition; it must also take account of how the very categories of speech, listening and recognition condition the limits and possibilities of voice.

Voice poverty as a concept has largely remained within the sphere of development, but has been taken up by media anthropologist Jo Tacchi (2005, 2008, 2009) to frame her work in Information Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D). Through participatory content creation with poor communities across Southeast Asia, Tacchi’s work puts the concept to practical use by addressing conditions of voice poverty in small scale, local projects. By giving members of the local population access and skills to use media technologies to create their own locally relevant content, Tacchi’s (2009) work aims to build the capacity for communities to participate and influence decisions directly relevant to their lives through “finding a voice”. This illustrates the potential value of deploying voice poverty - both as a political strategy and as an intervention on the ground - as a way of addressing the differential distribution of power in conditioning whose voices are accorded legitimacy and value.
Yet liberal discourses of rights have their limits. While rights-based claims to voice offer a route to identify and address some of the imbalances between those whose voices are made to matter and those whose voices do not, they also present their own problems. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the right to be heard has attached itself to liberal discourses of free speech and individual expression that has arguably overshadowed any deep consideration of what is at stake when questions of voice are approached through the prism of rights claims alone.

The limits of ‘rights talk’

A discourse of rights does important work to place voice within a development framework of speaking up and being heard to bring attention to the power imbalances which determine who can access, participate and determine the choices that affect people’s lives. And yet, a rights-based approach to voice can reinforce a dichotomy between speakers-listeners precisely by shifting focus from speaking up to being heard, perpetuating or replicating binary models of power that sidestep more subtle considerations of how these conditions might produce other forms of voice poverty. For example, within a neoliberal framework which places high value on self-expression and individualism, a rights-based approach to voice might come to be understood simply in terms of giving people the space to speak up, to express themselves or tell their stories without requiring the other (person or institution) to engage in listening to or according them a form of recognition.

Further, an emphasis on what Noddings (2002) calls “rights talk” can potentially overshadow the needs that they arise from and protect. In developing a theory of care in relation to social justice, Noddings is hesitant to start from a perspective where people are bearers of certain rights. She instead urges to “dig beneath” the talk of rights to uncover and pursue a deeper understanding on the needs and desires that give rise to any particular set of rights (54). Without dismissing entirely the importance of rights-based approaches in addressing inequality, Noddings reorients her project to the sphere of relations between people, and encounters with others. Rights can be thought of as protecting needs. Nodding does however caution that a needs-based approach must be “approach[ed] carefully” because “rights protect needs” (Noddings, 2002: 156). Implicit in Noddings’ approach is the corollary idea that rights emerge from needs and rights demand to be met with
responsibilities. For rights to be realised, they must be acknowledged and fulfilled, but they must also be respected and protected by others.

An emphasis on an individual bearer of rights can, according to Noddings, overshadow a community sense of, and responsibility for, one another. A needs-based approach for Noddings (2002: 57) operates within the relational paradigm that sets up a set of moral obligations towards others:

 [...] when we acknowledge a need, we may be called upon to do something, to give up something or to respond to sympathetically and effectively to someone; whereas acknowledgement of a right often means leaving people alone, not interfering.

Nodding prompts the question about the extent to which people have an obligation to the needs of others. This relational paradigm connects back to the moral philosophy of MacIntyre (1984: 216) who situates the narrative of any one life in relation to “an interlocking set of narratives”, connecting people through a web of ethical relationships. Following this formulation, the right to be heard can be reformulated as a fundamentally relational right, one that arises in the space between people (and people and institutions). In activating this set of relationships - whether it be through a needs-based approach to care or through the interdependent concept of narrative identity - it becomes clear that rights is a contentious concept filled with tension, yet it also emerges from a deeply social and humanist response to meet this challenge, apparent in conventional claims to voice. If voice poverty is approached beyond rights through a needs-based approach, it can be understood that a right to be heard emerges from a need for recognition; which could also be thought of as a desire to be seen in the face of another. However, even needs-based approaches are founded in relational claims to voice, highlighting the tension inherent in identity models of recognition described earlier.

I have introduced the notion of voice poverty as a framing concept to consider the limits and possibilities of placing voice within a rights-based framework as a way of addressing the differential distribution of voices that matter. These include a needs-based approach and attention to listening practices and the desire for recognition. However, as I will argue, conditions of voice poverty are more complex and dynamic than a gap between speaking up and being heard and in some cases can even be reproduced through a politics
Beyond Voice Poverty

of listening and recognition. In later chapters, I rethink the notion of voice poverty beyond theories of listening and recognition to suggest other ways that the concept might be put to work to address voice inequalities, particularly when the category of voice becomes attached to an object of values that dissolve current formulations of voice.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have unpacked the model of voice put forward by Couldry (2009) that connects speech, listening and recognition in interdependent relation. As I have shown, this historical arrangement of voice is connected to a particular moral economy; a relational ‘triad’. I have considered its attachment to a particular set of values and practices - rooted in moral and political philosophy and democratic theory in particular. The ethical framework that Couldry (2010) establishes in this formulation is put forward to address what he sees as a “crisis of voice”, described in the following chapter. This arrangement connects to democratic theories of citizenship that hold speaking and listening in interdependent and dynamic relation (Bickford, 1996: 145) and draws into conversation a range of liberal, philosophical and rights-based traditions. While this economic arrangement of voice continues to be the most culturally persuasive narrative - what might be thought of as the normative framework of voice - I have shown that it is built on a hierarchy of values and norms that regulate and condition not just the possibilities for voice, but most importantly - how we think about voice in the first place. Further, I have foregrounded some of the tensions that emerge from relational, liberal-democratic and rights-based to voice. These play out across the rest of the thesis.

On the one hand, the category of voice comes to occupy a privileged space where individual autonomy, agency and subjectivity are negotiated in relation to others within a particular moral economy where intersubjective and relational ethics circulate to connect speaking, listening and recognition. Redistribution, rights or recognition are put forward as ways to register voices that ‘matter’. On closer inspection, these values and norms are based on a series of distinctions that mark out an interdependent and relational space of encounter and exchange with others: value is created, circulated and exchanged between speakers and listeners and further regulated by a process of mutual recognition. It is through an appeal to this economic framework that a distinction is conventionally made: between a moral economy of voice and its intrinsic value, and the values of ‘the market’
Beyond Voice Poverty

and market-driven priorities. I examine this distinction further in the following chapter. Further, in the logic of this moral economy, conditions of voice poverty can be understood to result from a disparity between opportunities to speak and be heard, or a gap between those whose voices ‘matter’ and those whose voices don’t, where ‘the right to be heard’ is put forward as a moral claim as much as it is a political one.

On the other hand, the concept of voice becomes ‘sticky’ as categories of speech, listening and recognition form sticky attachments to ideas of voice which circulate according to a set of relational and intersubjective ethics. I borrow the word ‘sticky’ from Sara Ahmed (2004: 89-90) who uses the term to think through how emotions become ‘stuck’ to certain objects and signs to produce specific affective economies. Ahmed’s concept of stickiness, a recurrent metaphor invoked through her work, can also be used to think through how voice works. This chapter has illustrated how the relational model of voice is constructed when speaking, listening and recognition are ‘stuck’ to each other in particular ways. Stickiness can be taken up as an orientation - towards connections, relationships and attachments - to theorise the way that the mechanisms of voice - as well as the category of voice itself - are conditioned through their attachment to a particular set of values and objects. These attachments are not fixed, and can instead be stretched and pulled in different directions, become unstuck, or re-stuck in different ways. This suggests that the charged connections and attachments Ahmed examines around emotions (such as hate, for instance) can be stretched or tightened to solidify or dissolve the intensity or affect of that emotion. It also suggests that the attachments that constitute the moral economy of voice are highly contingent and are not fixed to any kind of ‘natural’ order, but are socially and historically produced. Competing claims to voice - and seemingly competing tendencies towards celebration and crisis - come into view when the category of voice forms particular kinds of sticky attachments. Thinking with the quality of stickiness helps to examine how things are stretched, pulled apart, and become unstuck. I follow this ‘stickiness’ in the following chapter to further consider how the category of voice is put to work and pulled in different directions by liberal, democratic and rights-based notions of the individual.

I began this chapter by unpacking Couldry’s relational notion of voice to situate it in a humanist tradition of intersubjectivity whereby the struggle for voice takes place in a relational domain. This humanist formulation locates the individual within a broader
Beyond Voice Poverty

meshwork of personal, institutional, social and political relationships to connect the practices of speaking, listening and recognition to broader questions of power, agency and justice via an ethic of socio-political relations. The struggle for voice in this sense is both a political and a philosophical one: over the way in which people’s voices are made to matter or not matter as well as the desire for some control over the accounts we give of our lives in relation to the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Yet whether through an appeal to rights-based frameworks (in the concept of voice poverty), attention to listening practices (the shift from ‘speaking up’ to ‘being heard’), or recourse to liberal discourses of empowerment, participation and inclusion - interventions into the differential distribution of voice based on a relational model also have their limits. These forms of critique and intervention are valuable, but potentially overlook the complex forces that simultaneously expand and contract the category of voice - where voice takes on new forms and meanings through new attachments that confound or don’t conform to neat formulations based on a set of pre-defined moral values. Before considering some examples which trouble these historical arrangements, in the following chapter I examine how competing claims to voice begin to expose some of the gaps and fault lines extant in recent debates and analyses based on prevailing frameworks.
2.

COMPETING CLAIMS TO VOICE

INTRODUCTION

We live in a current moment where opportunities for ‘giving voice’ are simultaneously celebrated and decried, both on a broad political scale and at the level of everyday social relations. This chapter identifies two broad narrative trajectories in contemporary formations of voice and considers their relationship: first, the persistent narrative in the post-convergent West that celebrates a ‘democratisation of voice’, framed primarily in techno-utopian terms; and second, a counter-narrative that emerges primarily from cultural critiques of neoliberalism and a general pessimism regarding the contraction of social life to values of the market. In my introduction, I suggested contemporary discussions of voice are typically organised around these narratives of democratisation or crisis, making the struggle for voice a productive problem space in which to explore the meanings, values and practices that construct each of these dominant tropes. Yet both claims also reveal how conventional notions of voice continue to be tied to specific liberal formulations that privilege a singular, speaking subject.

I begin by considering narratives of celebration and crisis, before arguing that they can ultimately be more productively approached a constitutive contradiction that works together to regulate and distribute the conditions for voice: on closer inspection, each holds in dynamic tension expansionary and contracting impulses. Further, in looking at the contradictory forces invoked by each, I also hope to explicate the need to shake loose the historical arrangement of voice in order to examine its attachment to competing sets of priorities, values, practices and rationalities that construct new sites of struggle. This sets up the context for the core of my argument elaborated on in Part Two of this thesis. In the final part of the chapter I position the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement as a site of struggle that exemplifies how binary narratives of celebration or crisis can begin to dissolve, and instead bear out tensions between questions of differential distribution and social regulation; at the same time, OWS illustrates how the category of voice might expand
and contract along democratic and neoliberal lines, but in dynamic and often innovative ways.

CELEBRATION AND DEMOCRATISATION

Techno-utopian narratives

Celebrations of voice typically connect a general tendency in advanced liberal democracies towards individual liberty and freedom of expression with technologically enabled, non-hierarchical and distributed forms of expression and communication that, in turn, claim to enlarge the domain of voice. According to this narrative, there is an unprecedented proliferation of voices in the public sphere: an increasing number of people who make their voices heard in new and exciting ways - enabled by technology, liberated by individualism and empowered by a culture of self-expression and democratic freedom. In some senses, this narrative has always dominated the popular imagination: from the invention of the printing press to the design of the iPhone, new technologies have emerged as both a product of and a tool for innovation and social change. The dominant narrative in the history of media, for instance - particularly in the context of today’s increasingly interconnected, digital and mediated world - is that with each new technology comes greater opportunity for voice than previously available through new forms of self-expression, everyday cultural production (such as user-generated content) and distributed forms of speech.

This “democratisation of technologies discourse” (Burgess, 2006) is best exemplified in recent years by the so-called ‘Twitter revolutions’ that swept across North Africa in 2011 and the subsequent Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement in North America and parts of Europe later that year. Despite their particular, variegated forms and divergent political contexts, OWS and the Arab Spring do exemplify a convergence of democratic and technological narratives that coalesce around increased opportunities for voice. Both movements are connected in the popular imagination through their distinct use of social media (Castells, 2013; DeLuca et al., 2012; Theocharis et al., 2015) and their “utopian democratic framework” (Kerton, 2012: 307). While Aouragh (2012: 522) points out that “celebratory portrayals of the Arab revolutions made possible with (Western) technology are not completely new”, I would argue this particular techno-utopian narrative has
intensified since events in the Arab Spring. David Harvey (2012: 162) somewhat
offhandedly rejects the importance of social media in events in Cairo’s Tahrir Square: “it is
bodies on the street and in the squares, not the babble of sentiments on Twitter and
Facebook, that really matter”. Yet the history of street protest has always involved the
incorporation of available communication technologies as a way to organise, gather and
distribute people and information (see, for instance, Diamond and Plattner, 2012). The
‘babble’ of social media that Harvey so easily dismisses is increasingly hard to ignore as it
becomes enmeshed in people’s everyday lives. Both Occupy and the Arab Spring
combined traditional and affective forms of street protest with new assemblages of
technology leveraged for the complex politics of social protest (Penney and Dadas, 2014;
Tufekci, 2014). Yet despite the obvious dangers in collapsing the significance of each
specific instance of voice as having identical political motivations or impacts, the Left,
particularly within the Western media, have tended to make sense of these things together:
as a broad narrative trend that supports the ‘democratisation of voice’.

The use of social media in the OWS movement helped decentralise and redistribute
the collective voice so that authorship and authority were spread across several
geographical and temporal sites. Social and locative media - along with the ubiquity of
camera phones and photo-sharing apps - played a significant role in connecting individuals
nationally and then globally in a visual and immediate way as the movement spread, giving
it a far-reaching political ‘voice’, both online and on the street. Melissa Gregg (2006: 53)
contends that these sorts of media effect a “redistribution of authorised witness […] and a
democratisation of the information channels by which people decide their political agency”.
This redistributed form of authorisation connects back to Chapter One and Jackson’s
(2002) formulation of storytelling as a process that is “authored and authorised”
dialogically and collaboratively. Here, the political voice of Occupy gained authority and
legitimacy through an accumulated and decentralised meshwork of technology and
citizenry to participate in the co-creation of the Occupy story. Mobile camera phones and
Twitter also played a key role in the other ‘Tahrir moment’: the Arab Spring revolution in
North Africa of that same year. Both these instances mark a convergence of the
‘democratisation of technologies’ discourse referred to by Burgess with a more general
‘democratisation of voice’ narrative connected to histories of social protest.
More broadly, media convergence over the last three decades has given rise to a perceived “participatory culture” (Jenkins, 2009). Jenkins argues new configurations of technology redistribute traditional hierarchies and structures of authority and authorship; create new affiliations and affinities centred around various forms of media; redirect and shape the flow of media itself; and produce new expressions and creative forms (8). This can be seen in the rise of political weblogs and citizen journalism disseminated via social media, for instance, which presents a challenge to traditional and corporate media. These media forms are increasingly seen as forming a “fifth estate” (Jericho, 2012; Loewenstein, 2011), where alternative voices hold the potential to shift debate and sentiment. Access to increasing sources of information - independent of the ‘experts’ - is perceived to empower ordinary people with increased opportunities to participate in new ways as informed citizens and community members. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this shift in power is the strategic leaking of US classified military information by former US Army soldier Chelsea Manning and NSA contractor Edward Snowden. Their actions have each come to signify a tension in the debates around the democratisation of media that new assemblages of technology bring: both an instrument of state power as well as a challenge to that power. These “digital revelations” (Clemens, 2013) and breakthrough oppositional voices pose a challenge to traditional hierarchies of power that govern the relationship between the State and individuals. Manning famously used Wikileaks to anonymously upload and encrypt sensitive information that was then distributed publically to millions of people globally. A phenomenon like Wikileaks - defended by Julian Assange not just by appealing to freedom of speech, but also the public’s “right to know” (Flew and Liu, 2011) – uses anonymous channels of online distribution to effectively flood the system with an overload of classified State information.

At a less sensationalised level, the online space is celebrated as a platform for ordinary people to not only ‘have their say’ but to generate and disseminate their voices to wider publics via social media platforms, digital technologies and locative media devices. Social media platforms like Twitter, YouTube and Facebook epitomise such models of cultural participation, cultural citizenship and amateur entrepreneurialism that emerge at the conjunction between globalisation, networked digital technologies and late capitalism. These intersections dissolve the once entrenched distinctions of producer-consumer, amateur-professional, public-private (Bruns, 2008; Jenkins, 2006; Spurgeon et al., 2009; Zimmermann, 1995).
Yet while these platforms are built on the democratic promise of connection and participation, they are equally constructed through the commodification of speech, self-expression and public performance. Dean (2009: 22) identifies a “proliferation, distribution, acceleration and intensification of communicative access and opportunity” but maintains this results in a “deadlocked democracy” or “democracy that talks without responding” (10). She elaborates:

[…] expansions in networked communications media reinforce the hegemony of democratic rhetoric. Far from de-democratized, the contemporary ideological formation of communicative capitalism fetishizes speech, opinion and participation” (17).

This fetishisation of speech and opinion favours a particular mode of address and intention that privileges particular kinds of voices and further embeds and normalises the connection between voice and the singular, speaking subject. Such ‘democratised’ practices of voice often exhibit a tendency toward what Couldry (Couldry, 2010: 15) describes as “excessive individualism” and the amplification of market-driven values that are the legacy of the cultural impacts of neoliberalism. So while there is an exponential expansion in “resistances” and “assertions” (Dean, 2009: 22), this doesn’t necessarily affect an overall shift in the circuits and flows of power and influence, despite instances of disruption. For instance, video-sharing platform YouTube’s tag line - Broadcast Yourself - captures the tendency towards the expressive, therapeutic and the highly personal. Dean makes the case that weblogs and platforms such as YouTube work on a “registration effect” in which contributors “believe that one’s contribution matters, that it means something to and within a context broader than oneself [and therefore] treat their contribution to circulating content as communicative action” (31). This also troubles the idea that individual expression is intrinsically valuable or politically significant act.

Here, the nature between speakers and listeners is unclear. There are certainly instances of voices ‘breaking through’ and having impact⁶ but there is an uneven

---

⁶ One high profile example of consumer activism gone viral is of musician Dave Carroll who posted a video entitled United Breaks Guitars after a United Airlines flight he was on broke his guitar and wouldn’t replace it. The video went viral and within four days of its posting online, United Airlines stock fell ten per cent. The resulting book - United Breaks Guitars: the
distribution of whose ‘voices’ go viral or shape change. Going ‘viral’ might speak to having a certain number of ‘views’ or audience, but can also create a politics of exclusion based on consensus. Certainly, the online sharing and distribution of personal stories can foster awareness and build empathy for a cause or share information, signalling a shift in who can contribute an opinion to various issues. However, there is also an undercurrent whereby only certain narratives are able to occupy space, and where the proliferation of personal stories dissolves their broader political potential to catalyse change, beyond their immediate affective impact.

The privilege, and privileging of, free speech

While freedom of speech is one of the underpinning ideals of any liberal democracy, it is also highly politically charged. Questions around the limits of those freedoms have recently come under the spotlight in Australia in recent years. There has been much debate around injurious speech, specifically with regard to free speech, racial vilification legislation and categories of offence prompted by proposed changes to sections of the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act (1975) (the Act). These debates have been further inflamed in public discourse through the attachment that certain categories of speech - and certain speech acts - have to particular affective economies of voice and circuits of power and influence. Proposed changes to the Act were first mooted shortly after the successful case brought to the Federal Court in 2011 against conservative print columnist Andrew Bolt on the grounds of racial vilification for a series of articles in which he called into question the ‘genuineness’ of a group of “fair skinned Aboriginal people” (Federal Court of Australia, 2011). Section 18(C) of the Act provides legal remedy to the uneven distribution of power where certain speech acts can have serious and disproportionate negative impacts on minority groups or individuals based on reference to race, colour, religious or ethnic origin (Commonwealth of Australia, 1975). Without going into the details of the case, and setting aside the parallel conversation about settler-indigenous and race relations the country, the case reignited public and political debate on the appropriate limits (if any) on free speech.

Contrary to the popular prevailing view that the Act makes it unlawful to offend someone on the basis of their race, ethnicity or religion, Section 18(D) provides a number

*power of one voice in the age of social media - connects to the idea of social media being a platform for everyday voices to action change.*
Beyond Voice Poverty

of exemptions which makes some forms of speech legally permissible - including racial vilification - within certain limits. The language used in this section of the Act specifically connects the category of speech to an affective register of voice in granting exemptions, including references to the terms ‘in good faith’, of ‘genuine belief’, ‘reasonably’ and in a ‘fair’ manner (Commonwealth of Australia, 1975: Section 18D). Beyond a rights-based approach to the limits and freedoms of speech, the 18(D) exemption takes into consideration the tone and mode of address in determining whether a particular speech act is deemed unlawful. The exemption recognises this affective nature of speech and the interrelationship between intention (of speech) and intensity (of affect) in constituting what speech means and what speech does through its affective flows. These terms also connect the social nature of speech to the exercise of power. Words have symbolic and signifying functions, but also circulate as social currency within a system of power relations where the struggle over the terms and limits of speech are continually negotiated. Injurious speech (following Butler) frames speech in terms of its trajectory and effects on others: it details a movement from the one who speaks towards the one who is injured, where words - with their embedded and implied intentions and cultural histories - circulate between social actors in different social positions of power.

Justin Clemens (2011: 22) has persuasively argued that the term itself has collapsed as a meaningful political category in Australia:

That Julian Assange and Andrew Bolt agree - or at least pay lip service to the same 'principles' - that is, absolute freedom of speech, open and vigorous debate, and the quest for truth, probably shows that these are now essentially theological terms from which no one is permitted publicly to demur.

Wikileaks publisher Julian Assange and conservative print columnist Andrew Bolt each vigorously support the principle of absolute freedom of speech, at the same time deploying it in radically different way and to different ends. In defending Wikileaks publication of sensitive classified information, Assange often invokes press freedom and the people’s “right to know” (Flew and Liu, 2011). This position puts him at odds with those who support the need for hate speech laws, for instance, as he equates any restrictions on free speech with censorship. In this sense, Assange is somewhat uncomfortably aligned with federal Attorney General George Brandis’ controversial, but predictable, comments in the context of proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination
Beyond Voice Poverty

Act: that “people do have the right to be bigots” (Rice, 2013). Clemens suggests the most notable thing in the debate was that the utterances of these two “antithetical characters” have become indiscernible from each other. However, while they are antithetical in many ways, both political liberalism (Bolt) and informational liberalism (Assange) reveal the tensions that arise when the category of speech that becomes attached to both ideas of liberty and the individual and - more recently - to forms of data or information. This tension is explored further in following chapters. Rather than signifying a collapse in the meaning of free speech as Clemens suggests, the dissonance between Bolt and Assange instead reveals what is at stake in these contradictions over the meaning of ‘free speech’, going to the heart of tensions inherent within liberalism itself.

Another revealing aspect that emerged from the repercussions from the case is the way the ‘market of ideas’ came to support an economy of speech that makes no distinction between those in positions of power with those who hold less power. The free market of ideas - a concept first developed by John Stuart Mill - is an analogy used to describe the way that, in a vibrant public domain where competing ideas are circulated, the truth will naturally emerge. In a market of ideas that places high value on individual freedom of speech, all speech is said to circulate within a public domain where each idea is valued according to its merits. According to this argument, bigoted remarks in the public domain are socially regulated through a process of free expression and debate. Yet the presumption that all ideas are given equal consideration with the strongest ideas emerging does not fully account for the uneven structures of power that condition speech. As Waleed Aly (2013) pointed out at the time, there is no such thing as ‘free’ speech; there are only different costs. When speech is attached to this marketplace of ideas some modes of speech are made more valuable – and given more power - than others. Aly also expressed concern over comments like Senator Brandis’ that appeared to give unconditional support to people’s right to offend, cautioning that “the social regulation of speech places the regulation of speech in the hands of the powerful”.

From this brief account of debates surrounding the extent to which free speech should be circumscribed by considerations of racial offence etc., the limits and contradictions within liberal and democratic traditions are thrown into stark relief. This complicates any attempt to argue that increased opportunities to speak up and be heard is the defining shift in the post-convergent West. There is more at stake. Certainly the
Beyond Voice Poverty

argument is persuasive, yet, as I investigate in the following chapter, there are simultaneous undercurrents which pull voice in the opposite direction, impacting not only on opportunities for voice, but on the language, modes and forms that voice itself can take.

Democratic forms of social organisation also produce an uneven distribution of voice. The celebratory narrative of voice and its democratisation through the fetishisation of speech and opinion holds a potential danger to overstate the significance of new technologies and configurations of voice and instead obscure the continued uneven social relations of power and forms of control that pattern and sort which voices emerge or prompt change. Celebrations of voice are quickly met with counter-claims that complicate any attempt to argue that the ‘democratisation of voice’ can be a taken-for-granted outcome of technological development and political progress. As such, it becomes important to question the “rhetoric of democratisation” (Dean, 2009) that underpins these celebratory narratives. In the following section I turn my attention to cultural critiques of neoliberalism that further temper celebrations of voice.

CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF NEOLIBERALISM

Cultural critiques of neoliberalism are not new. Since the 1990s, the term has become a “ubiquitous concept in critical discourse” (Flew, 2012: 49). Despite, or perhaps because of, its ubiquity, it has become an “oft-used term that can mean many things” (Mudge, 2008: 75). From its emergence in the 1940s and 50s in the political philosophy of economist Frederick Hayek, the term neoliberalism has escaped the confines of economic literature to be deployed as shorthand for much of what is ‘bad’ about contemporary Western culture, with usage and definition varying widely depending on the discipline and purpose and imprecise in its meaning (Ferguson, 2010). Neoliberalism has been invoked in various ways: as a “doctrine” (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007), a “regime” (Sandel, 2012), a “rationality” (particularly amongst post-Foucauldian scholars), a “political ideology” (Aly, 2010: 30-31) and, by David Harvey (2007: 23), as a “hegemonic as a mode of discourse” which has become “incorporated into the common sense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world”.

His work The Constitution of Liberty, published in 1960s, was a famously influential document for the British Conservative Party in Margaret Thatcher’s Britain in the 1980s.
James Ferguson (2010: 166) attributes this situation to a problem in progressive politics more broadly, particularly on the Left, which takes up a predictable position of resistance and refusal that focuses on what he calls “the antis”: anti-globalisation, anti-neoliberalism, anti-privatisation, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and so forth. Without rejecting Ferguson’s claim, I would note that this oppositional position has been intensified in recent years, in part, by a deep frustration and disillusionment with large-scale social inequalities across Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States, making such entrenched opposition an understandable, if predictable, response. Flew (2012) remains cautious, however, of such totalising views. While purely theoretical accounts are by their nature artificially absolute and can neglect the cultural complexity of how these phenomena are enacted in practice, I agree it is important to attempt to account for the complexities, tensions and paradoxes that exist within the orthodoxy of neoliberalism; to fully describe and understand the nuanced way that power and ‘voice’ work. What these pervasive and hegemonic readings of neoliberalism can underplay is that hegemony itself not a monolithic ‘thing’ imposed from the top down, but a rather a complex and dynamic process that Stuart Hall (2011: 727) argues “has constantly to be ‘worked on’, maintained, renewed and revised”. It is for this reason I have sympathy with his insistence that “naming neoliberalism is politically necessary to give the resistance to its onward march content, focus and a cutting edge” (706).

Critiques of neoliberal culture often express concern over the privileging of certain values - individualisation, competition, entrepreneurialism, privatisation and unbound personal freedom - and their placement within the structural mechanism of ‘the market’. As already noted, there is a growing concern both within critical discourse and in some sections of the popular imagination that such values - when elevated over others - are increasingly detrimental to the social fabric of daily life (Sandel, 2012). The tensions and paradoxes inherent within the liberal tradition are magnified by neoliberal ideas of the market and celebrations of the individual. While not explicit in cultural critiques of neoliberalism, there seems to be an unspoken consensus that when values of the market become stuck to areas of social life previously thought immune to incursions from the market, there can be damaging effects. This rationale underpins Nick Couldry’s (2010: 11) key contention, and moral claim, that neoliberalism operates as a “voice-denying rationality”.

Beyond Voice Poverty

78
From market economy to market society

One of the distinctive features of neoliberal culture is the marketised ‘re-rendering’ of social life. Cultural critiques of neoliberal orthodoxy tend to express concern over the social repercussions of this as what political philosopher Michael Sandel (2012) identifies as a shift from a “market economy” to a “market society”. One of the consequences he observes in this shift is the “crowding out” effect where values of the market push out or erode important social and moral values. This, he strongly argues, has a deleterious effect on social and cultural life. Sandel’s work is significant for the distinction he makes between two regimes of value - economic and moral value - getting to the heart of what lies at the crux of cultural critiques of neoliberal orthodoxy. In the previous chapter I set out a particular arrangement of voice that I described as a moral economy of voice; that is, where the relationship between speech, listening and recognition that is regulated through a set of moral values. This set of values is clearly distinguished by Couldry from economic or market values, along similar lines to Sandel. The predominance of these values - with their roots in liberalism but their branches in the market - mark a cultural shift that begins to structurally transform the category of voice. So, as economic values also come to regulate the sphere of moral life, they come to be seen as an incursion into a moral space that is thought to otherwise sit outside of, or above, the market.

The expanding domain of health care and the rise of personalised medicine in recent years are exemplary of how neoliberal subject formation and values of the market begin to align; it is also an increasingly contested site where the struggle for voice takes place. I consider this domain further in Chapters Three and Five in relation to self-quantification technologies, where ideas of the ‘bio’ begin to connect the biographical and biological to the bi/o-informational and, in turn, reconstruct categories of speech and recognition in new ways. The rise of the Quantified Self movement, and the enthusiastic uptake of health-related social media apps in particular, exemplify the tensions between new economies of voice and rapidly shifting understandings of health, life, identity and subject formation in the spectre of big data, techno-scientific developments and the push towards privatization. Further, the broad neoliberal trend to reconstruct citizens as customers, clients and consumers also feeds into this new site of struggle. This is most palpable in the emerging economies of personalised medicine and the privatised i-health industry that intersect with the rise of ‘healthy lifestyle’ discourse and the increasing popularity of self-quantification. For instance, John Clarke (2005: 448) suggests that the neoliberal discourse of the
“activated citizen” under New Labour in the United Kingdom was a means of reducing cost and activity pressures on the National Health Service. This discourse recast patients as “expert patients”, and called upon individuals to be responsible for managing their own lifestyles and well-being, therefore requiring less direct attention from hospitals and general practitioners”. Similar approaches are increasingly common in Australia as well. The democratic rhetoric of inclusion, participation and empowerment, along with the liberal values of individual responsibilisation - and leaving aside the growing privatisation of health care - fundamentally alter the traditional social contract between those in need of care and health care professionals. This recasting of patients as ‘health consumers’ and physicians as ‘health providers’ also reshapes the political economy of voice in this context. This is just one domain of life that is witnessing an incursion by market-driven imperatives, having consequences for a politics of voice. This situation is further complicated with the rise of health technologies that make use of social media, wearable technology and self-quantification practices, as I elaborate on in Chapter Three.

**Connecting a ‘crisis of values’ to a ‘crisis of voice’**

While several critics of neoliberal culture have turned an eye on the social and moral costs of a market-driven society, Nick Couldry (2009, 2010) is perhaps the first such scholar to directly consider the consequences in terms of ‘voice’. He connects a “crisis of values” brought on by neoliberal culture to a contemporary “crisis of voice” (2010: 16). In doing so, he makes an urgent call to demonstrate a “commitment to voice that matters” by placing voice at the heart of progressive forms of social organisation and political cooperation (3). Couldry argues neoliberal logic is an anathema to voice:

‘Voice’ does more than value particular voices or acts of speaking; it values all human beings’ ability to give an account of themselves […] This value does not derive from particular political forms or from the position one takes on the different models of democracy (liberal, republican, communitarian, deliberative, cosmopolitan, radical), or indeed from the practice of democracy at all. Articulating voice – as an inescapable aspect of human experience – challenges the neoliberal logic that runs together economic, social, political and cultural domains, and describes them exclusively as manifestations of market processes (13).
Placing voice within a broader commitment to a set of values grounded in humanist ethics helps Couldry propose a post-neoliberal politics. His statement makes a clear distinction between values he regards as inherent in voice - those found in the writing of Arendt and Jackson where voice comes to be associated with fundamental human qualities - and the antithetical values of the market. There is a subtle distinction between two senses of value here that are staged in opposition to each other. That is, value in economic or market terms; and value (or values), in ethical or moral terms (Birch and Tyfield, 2013). This is a distinction Couldry doesn’t make explicit but rather assumes, one that underplays the importance of value(s) in such critiques of neoliberal culture in terms of a relational model of voice. Despite this, Couldry’s work begins to unpack some of the supposed tensions between market-based values and struggles for voice, even as his formulation exposes its own tensions.

Couldry (2010) uses the term “amplification” to invoke a sense of disproportion in the distribution of whose voices matter or given space in the public sphere. He contends the drive to normalise “values and mechanisms important to neoliberalism” leads to the amplification of some voices at the expense of others (73). This is perhaps another way of framing Sandel’s crowding out effect with particular attention to questions of voice. Michael Sandel’s (2012) notion of the crowding out effect under neoliberalism can also be used to think through how some voices might be privileged at the expense of others through twin processes of amplification and contraction. Like Bickfrord’s (1996) use of dissonance and James’ (2013) focus on attunement, described in Chapter Four, Couldry draws on an auditory metaphor to frame a contraction of voice. These metaphors seem to me to also be connected to a history of the uneven distribution of voice and the structures that privilege and occupy increasing space within the public sphere. Couldry’s (2010: 73) use of amplification also appeals to a sense of justice that seeks to include a plurality of voices – rather than a proliferation of similar voices - which for him means that simply adding “more voice” will never be sufficient to address the power differentials that determine both the terms of recognition and available modes of address. This argument suggests that accounts that support a narrative of individual responsibilisation, for instance, are amplified and reproduced to ‘crowd out’ alternative or resistant voices. The processes and mechanisms by which some voices are amplified over others works precisely through a figurative flooding of the market by voices that support, sustain and reproduce market values.
Another one of Couldry’s fierce critiques is the claim that neoliberal culture allows the world to become “unnarratable from certain points of view” (2010: 98). This claim troubles the very idea that giving account of one’s life and conditions is merely a matter of speaking up or being heard. The idea of unnarratability provides a route for Couldry to call into question the very notion that ‘naming the world’ is enough: if neoliberalism becomes the dominant frame for thinking about the world, then other ways of describing or imagining it cannot be brought into view. So for Couldry, the structures of intelligibility that govern such a vantage point can only ever be narrated in terms of the market, for voice retains the power effects of its own narration. This is not the same as claiming that some things are impossible to narrate because of some inherent unknowability or partial obscurity as Butler (2005) has examined, for instance, but more significantly it suggests the terms and frames of recognition, together with their attendant values, render certain narrative accounts unintelligible. More critically, they can render these accounts politically unimportant.

In critical pedagogy, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1993) used the notion of “naming the world” in the 1970s to describe a process where ordinary people transform and re-create their world using the tools of everyday language to uncover and name systems of oppression and subjugation which structure their lives. This concept was central to his struggle for emancipation and social justice through what he called conscientization or critical consciousness. But beyond critical consciousness, what happens when the structural terms of recognition make ‘naming the world’ impossible precisely because the terms by which people hope to be understood are rendered intelligible or politically unimportant within dominant discursive frameworks? Or further to that, that naming only becomes possible through a process of narration that relies on already established categories of value? Edward Said (1984: 31), writing in the context of the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war, for instance, contends that certain narratives can be rendered “barely in evidence” through a refusal for authorisation. Authorship, authority and authorisation - returning to Jackson’s (2002) observations on the politics of storytelling - draw into focus the limits of narrative self-evidence and the political power attached to particular accounts. A certain kind of ethical violence can occur, in part, through a withholding of authorisation and a denial of legitimacy or validity of claims to voice by another.
Said’s (1984) examination of the narrative politics of representation in the Israel-Lebanon war reveals the contested practices of giving account, at a public and heavily politicised level. Said argues there was a total absence of a Palestinian narrative, what he calls a “non-narrative”, made possible by a largely Western view of Israel (34). This absence, Said contends, was the result of a) the silencing of certain opinions and b) a lack of counter-narratives. Crucially for him, this occurred both at the level of discourse and was politically supported through media representations of the conflict. Here, facts do not speak for themselves. Setting aside the political question of Palestinian-Israeli relations, or even a judgement on Said’s position, the central claim of his argument remains persuasive: facts require a “socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain and circulate them” (34). Said provocatively maintains that the “Western master narrative” was accorded legitimacy and gave certain official ‘facts’ authority. This narrative, he argues, was privileged and promoted over the “non-narrative” framing of the Palestinian ‘problem’ (37). The terms by which Palestinians could give account of their conditions was delimited by competing claims to authority. Said uncovers a contradiction - or at least a political inconsistency - between United Nations resolutions recognising Palestinians as a people with legitimate struggles and a right to a state on the one hand, and such resolutions lacking authority on the other, particularly within United States and Israeli political discourse. He called the small number of Palestinian narratives that irrupted in the conflict as “pre-narrative” or “anti-narrative”, discussed in terms of absences or gaps (38). Although Said acknowledges the ethical importance of these alternative narrative formulations in contesting the national narrative, he does not see them as having political effect. What are constituted as ‘facts’ in the national discourse are embedded in history; but these facts can be recovered and reconstituted by human agents to delegitimise and, Said strongly argues, dehumanise the conflict.

Couldry’s argument that neoliberal culture hollows out the category of voice is based on an historical arrangement of voice I laid out in the previous chapter. In this sense, he identifies a certain prizing apart of voice from its relational attachments. Yet Couldry stops short of questioning the self-evident relational model in the first place or thinking through how this transformation of voice can also open up new horizons. As stated, Couldry’s work helps to uncover some of the social consequences of market-driven logic in terms of voice; the de-valuing and de-prioritising of processes and frameworks that might contribute to and support a plurality of voices in determining the direction of our society. Yet
Coudry’s critique, while a valuable springboard for this research, seems tied in large part to conventional accounts of how voice works - as set out in Chapter One - and does not fully account for the emergent forms of voice that this contemporary context presents. While there may be a ‘crisis’ of voice, this crisis is not only due to the ‘crowding out’ of some voices at the expense of others, or structural imbalances between speakers and listeners through amplification or denial: it is shaped by forces that reconstruct the architectures, practices and processes of voice itself, recuperating them in market and informational terms in non-linear and unpredictable ways.

I agree with Couldry that certain neoliberal values can work to reinforce a limited set of culturally acceptable narratives and norms at the same time discourage a diversification of voices. Yet I would argue that this is not the full picture, as I will illuminate in the following chapters. For instance, beyond the problem of uneven distribution and stratification, neoliberal schemas of intelligibility also condition and produce norms of recognisability (Butler, 2009: 7) that constrain the very possibility for voice. This means some points of view are literally unable to be narrated. These schemas of intelligibility limit acceptable modes of speech and structures of address to established terms and norms of recognition. I discuss this further in Chapter Six. Further, and central to my argument, there is a shift in what it means to give account, as the ‘story of you’ is increasingly reconstructed through new sets of attachments and values. I do not argue whether this is a good or bad thing, only to point out that ideas of narrative, story and giving account take on new shades of meaning that Couldry does not fully account for in his work. While I retain huge sympathy with this argument, and while Couldry’s work remains an important touchstone and influence for my own, I take a different analytical direction. Nevertheless, in order to develop my argument over the following chapters, it is productive to pay attention to Couldry’s key insights, as many retain their usefulness in laying the groundwork for my own critical analysis.

**BETWEEN CELEBRATION AND CRISIS**

As the first two parts of this chapter suggest, voice expands and contracts along both democratic and neoliberal lines. Narratives of crisis, while bringing to the fore concerns over the effects of neoliberal culture, do not fully account for complexities of voice when speaking, listening and recognition are recuperated in market terms. Yet equally, the
democratisation narrative underplays the uneven distribution of value attached to some voices over others, and the structural imbalances of power embedded within so-called ‘technologies of voice’. In this final section I consider a specific example - the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement and its ongoing sentiments - to highlight the tensions and contradictions inherent within liberal formations of voice and their neoliberal incarnations. I begin by considering how the language and framing of OWS took up the idea of ‘occupy’ and redeployed it to re-claim a discursive space within the public sphere to push back against and challenge the human cost of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy. Then, I shift my vantage point to think through how the neoliberal norms of recognition also played a part in the available terms by which the movement made its claims heard, and the way the movement critiqued those very same terms in an emerging economy of voice. In different, but connected ways, OWS represents both tendencies towards democratisation and crisis in terms of voice: the explosion in everyday voices of protest and new forms of technologically-mediated connectivity and conviviality on the one hand; and the neoliberal tendencies that produce narratives whereby only certain privileged voices and narratives of exceptionalism ‘occupied’ spaces of dissent on the other.

In no way do I mean to suggest that my brief discussion of OWS is comprehensive. Further, it is limited to analysis of its discursive, affective and mediated aspects, not an ethnographic account of it from the ground. Within these limits, OWS as a social phenomenon nonetheless provides a rich and provocative example through which to explore questions of voice at the intersection of neoliberal culture and new assemblages of technology. Together, these competing tendencies dissolve any neat distinction between the celebratory and crisis narratives of voice presented in the first part of the chapter and foregrounds new economies of voice in Part Two.

Occupying voice

Exemplifying disillusionment with the growing social inequalities and atomising economic policies and exacerbated by the fallout from the Global Financial Crisis, the Occupy movement that swept across North America and Western Europe captures both the possibilities and limits of democratic forms of voice and provides a neat illustration of the tensions and ambiguities bound up with the intensification of post-convergence culture and the productive capacity of neoliberal biopolitical power. Inspired by a call in June
2011 to Occupy Wall Street by Canadian culture-jamming magazine *Adbusters* (2011), America’s “Tahrir moment” became a very visible public platform for citizens to voice their disenchantment with the gross social and economic disparities produced by neoliberal economic policies and exacerbated by the concentration of corporate power and wealth. In many ways, OWS was very much a product of its time: globally connected individuals coming together online and on the streets to voice their protest for a cause (van Stekelenburg, 2012). On the political left, the social protest movement was celebrated by many as a powerful exercise of collective citizens’ voice through public protest (2011; Mitchell et al., 2013; Razsa and Kurnik, 2012; van Gelder and staff of YES! Magazine, 2011; Writers for the 99%, 2012). The Occupy Oral History project (Occupy Oral History, 2012) was established to record oral histories of people involved in the movement so that “the voices of those who have been hidden from history […] will be heard”, employing the emancipatory rhetoric of a representational politics of voice to promote a living archive of the movement.

Occupy deployed both liberal and neoliberal strategies of ‘voice’ to critique and refashion the category of voice itself. It mobilised an assemblage of online social media and offline sites of resistance to gather and disperse (a spatial negotiation of voice through affective politics); second, it simultaneously took up and rejected the terms and frames of neoliberal recognition to ‘occupy’ innovative forms of speech. The movement used a particular representational politics (speaking for the 99%) but also created other pathways for a politics of voice through the tactical appropriation of the word ‘occupy’ itself. Occupy invokes colonial, military and globalisation histories. W.J.T. Mitchell (Mitchell et al., 2013: 12) notes the way the word ‘occupy’ mutated from its function as a verb - one that carries both imperial and military weight - into a noun and an adjective, “as if it were occupying language itself”. By taking up the language of occupy, and its complex associations, the movement drew on these histories to establish its own utopian space. Further, as a trope, Mitchell (11) suggest that ‘occupation’ involves

[…] a paradoxical temporal and rhetorical dimension: it speaks by refusing (for now) to speak; it declares by refusing to declare; it endures and prolongs a silence and a temporary holding action that will inevitably be succeeded by more speech and action.
This paradox of speech - the refusal to speak as a form of speech – calls to mind Butler’s (2005: 12) phrase “refusal to narrate” discussed in Chapter One. For Butler, following Nietzsche, the act of withholding and withdrawal

 [...] calls into question the legitimacy of the authority invoked by the question and the questioner or attempts to circumscribe a domain of autonomy that cannot or should not be intruded upon.

Unconventionally, Occupy appeared to express no clear demands, leading some political commentators at the time to question the movement’s lack of strategy. However, Johnathan Smucker (2013: 221) rejects this claim, asserting that “the often-bemoaned ‘lack of demands’ was not really a lack at all; it was a strategic decision” focused on changing the national narrative around the post-GFC fallout. In light of this, along with the quotes from Mitchell and Butler, it becomes clear that a perceived lack of demands was part of a deliberate and effective tactic for a politics of voice, and part of the narrative of Occupy itself.

Beyond the temporal and rhetorical dimensions of Occupy, occupation also invokes a long, embodied history of urban street protest in which protesters used their bodies to interrupt the flow of capital and labour. These traditional forms of bodily protest - physically occupying public spaces - to create political spaces of recognition that manifest through embodied action and affective politics. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s Situationist idea of ‘the right to the city’, David Harvey (2012) suggests modern cities are a central site of revolutionary politics and anti-capitalist struggle. While there may have been no apparent demands or focused agenda to the movement, the physical presence of protesters’ bodies that converged in public parks and city spaces made its own demands through a politics of recognition: the recognition that we are here. In some ways, this bodily demand for recognition ruptured what Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 146-147) describe as the “arbitrary and violent rhythms” of some forms of neoliberalism in which the body is “hyper-instrumentalized” for a brief period of employment and then discarded as disposable labour. Butler strongly argues that being subject to such forceful rhythms produces an ongoing state of precarity and uncertainty (particularly in relation to health, housing and stability of work). She notes:
When the bodies of those deemed “disposable” assemble in public view, they are saying, “We have not slipped quietly into the shadows of public life; we have not become the glaring absence that structures your public life” (Puar et al., 2012: 168).

Through the spatial negotiation of voice in terms of recognition, the movement also ruptured these sites of economic violence to rebuild solidarity amongst those who experienced the dividing and exclusionary processes of global capitalist accumulation. Significantly, Ronald Green and Kevin Kuswa (2012: 283) connect these movements through the affective register of “bodies coming together” whereby people are “moved into/against/with other places of protest as bodies are affected by other bodies communicating with one another”. Affective surplus holds potential to rupture and break through tightly organised structures of society, posing a threat but also holding out a promise for change. In the flows and movements of OWS, affective surplus was harnessed to rupture or burst through the constraints of power. If affective surplus is conceptualised horizontally, it can be understood as an embodied connecting potential which links people across a global meshwork of solidarity and conviviality via an affective politics of voice.

These neoliberal rhythms of instability and precarity that OWS embodied highlights how processes and imperatives of neoliberal culture are implicated in the production of new conditions of voice poverty that exceed differential distribution of ‘voices that matter’ and structured hierarchies of power. Rhythm, as employed by Butler (in Puar et al., 2012), invokes a particular kind of dynamism: one that entails processes of instrumentalisation and intense subjectification on the one hand, and an ongoing struggle for individual autonomy and agency on the other. But it also suggests a kind of ethical violence in relation to the rhythms of neoliberal subjectification. Beyond the tension between speaking up and being heard, voice poverty - when considered in relation to the object of disquiet that OWS rejected - can also be understood to articulate a space where voice emerges precisely through the rhythms, flows and dynamics of power. In this way, the social regulation, modification and modulation of voice is produced (in some cases) precisely through new conditions of voice poverty.
Beyond Voice Poverty

Occupying neoliberal norms

But the movement and its significance are not as apparent as first appears and it is not without its own contradictions and tensions. The tensions inherent within the democratic ideals that protect and promote individual freedom of expression (predicated as they are upon the privileged role of speech and language in Western culture) also reinforce the reality that the differential distribution of voice means not all voices are represented: the few speak for the many. Further, neoliberal norms, in part, produced both the social inequalities that give rise to protests like Occupy and conditioned the form of protest that Occupy itself took. I briefly now turn my attention to the way Occupy took up the claim ‘we are the 99%’, and how it functioned to complicate any straightforward understanding of the movement and its politics through a dynamic expansion and contraction of voice. This tension uncovers that multiple and overlapping economies and registers of voice unfold and are enacted simultaneously, complicating the neat triad of speaking, listening and recognition. The expansion of new modes of voice in one register (as outlined above) can occur even when other aspects of the movement contracted the space for voice in other ways: through the exclusionary practices of inclusion. Further, the language of Occupy occupied the space for voice in another way: in its declaration that ‘we are the 99%’.

Some critics found fault with it as a largely white, middle-class movement. Self-defined “black Occupier” Emahunn Raheem Ali Campbell (2011) critiques the ways that voices of “white privilege” functioned within the Occupy movement. While the OWS movement voiced the concerns of the occupiers, Campbell’s examination of the internal dynamics of the movement suggests that it also excluded the voices of people of colour in various ways: structurally, demographically, and the way it grounded its social and political realities in that of the lives of affluent white people. He found that many black people and people of colour did not “feel that Occupy Wall Street has a safe space for them to raise issues of internal white privilege to Occupiers” (43). Campbell’s analysis maintains that, in taking up the frame of the 99% as a political tactic of voice, the movement fell short of its representative claims to speak for, and represent, the majority. The perceived exclusionary structures of Occupy’s internal organisation and values, I contend, partly replicated a form of neoliberal voice poverty that the movement was itself protesting. Writing from an indigenous and postcolonial perspective, Nathalia Jamarillo (2012) makes the broader point that as a global movement OWS was confined to the global North. She considers it ironic
that “the occupation movements in countries often considered at the core of the capitalist social order have their precedent in those deemed at the periphery” (67) where the so-called “neo-liberal revolution” (Hall, 2011) began. Latin American countries bore the brunt of neoliberal economic policies and structural readjustment in the 1970s, but the revolt and protest against their negative social impacts were not given the same space in the public consciousness of OWS, despite its global aspirations. Jaramillo (2012: 68) contends that while Occupy is a necessary response to the State, “vexing the space for social discontent to be voiced and heard”, the question remains: what follows the act of protest? Indeed, if the Occupy movement claims to be the voice of the people, the 99%, then are the concerns of all of us being heard?

In addition to questions of representation that the 99% claim raises, as discussed above, this framing also draws attention to the dehumanising aspects of econometric and quantifying rationalities at work in neoliberal culture. The Spanish Los Indignados movement - a European precursor to OWS - framed its protest in distinctly moral terms: through a sense of outrage and indignation at the impact of neoliberal orthodoxy on the lives of ordinary Spanish citizens. In contrast, OWS did not seek recognition in the same terms of moral outrage. Rather, OWS’s claims for recognition were produced through a different economy of voice. In rejecting the social and economic inequalities and deleterious consequences of the market-based global capital system, the movement re-incorporated its neoliberal frame of recognition through the claim: ‘we are the 99%’. This claim is based on a redeployment of what the movement considered were the social and economic costs of neoliberal orthodoxy and the differential distribution, accumulation and concentration of wealth.

The declaration ‘we are the 99%’ also draws into tension neoliberal critique with a frame of recognition that incorporates self-identification in quantitative terms within the broad structure of the market economy that is being called into account. This claim seeks recognition based on identification with an econometric measure (99%) that draws attention to the differential distribution of material and financial wealth. It could be argued that the US and UK incarnations of Occupy incorporates a neoliberal frame of recognition, while the Spanish movement sought to alter the terms. Claiming a space to voice their alternative politics for protesters involved with OWS involved a temporary alignment with an economy of recognition that redeployed the language of the market. The strategic use
of the 99% makes specific reference to and reincorporates a tactically calibrated percentage to re-articulate the human cost social and economic inequality precisely by taking up a neoliberal frame.

At the same time, the use of the 99% slogan makes specific reference to, and appropriates, the language of money, numbers and percentages to represent the majority of the population. Protestors involved with OWS sought recognition on the basis of disavowal and de-identification with the extreme concentration of global capital held by the wealthiest 1%, and simultaneous inclusion and identification with those who are rendered disposable within that system. Further, their politics of recognition attempted to include, and thereby rebuild solidarity across, those who did not actively participate in the protests, but who were - by definition - also the victims of the uneven impacts of market-driven policies.

As a social phenomenon, OWS bridges conventional and emerging economies of voice: it managed to produce creative modes of speech and action with post-convergent (new and old) technologies as well as draw on histories of protest that opened up new spaces for voice; at the same time it connects to new economies of voice in terms of taking up neoliberal strategies of recognition and redeploying them for their own ends. I have shown certain frames of recognition may inflict their own kind of ethical violence upon the other, causing further injury or harm; they can also be tactically redeployed to critique those very frames. Both these tendencies are evident in the complex formations of the OWS movement that confounds any clear sense of the value of the movement and its political and broader cultural impacts. I suggest this ambivalence is a quality found within the movement itself, and is what propels protestors to find innovative ways to take up neoliberal frames of recognition, without necessarily ascribing to its terms.

**CONCLUSION**

While narratives of democratisation and decline continue to occupy a dominant position in the social imaginary, each are built upon claims to voice that embed and solidify some of the inherent tensions and contradictions rooted within liberal-democratic and rights-based traditions of thought. In this chapter, I have teased out some of these tensions by arguing the category of voice both expands and contracts along liberal,
democratic and neoliberal lines, but not in simple or linear ways. Both celebrations of voice and narratives of decline continue to be based on a normative framework of voice that potentially limits the space to think through the complexity of how voice works under certain conditions. Such binary claims foster some inherent problems: at the one extreme, celebrations of voice can often overstate the role of the individual in carving out a space of agency, or place disproportionate faith in technology’s democratising role; at the other, critics of this narrative can equally minimise the agency of those whose voices are excluded or denied or refuse to concede that productive capacity exists even within rationalities presumed to limit the space for voice. Further, each tends to hold up a cohesive, ‘authentic’ idea of voice as somehow retrievable or recoverable, which can itself obscure instances of voice that emerge as a form of critique within the system itself, or that come into view through their attachments to new objects of value.

As suggested in Chapter One, the relational model of voice is rooted in a particular moral economy that invites particular forms of analysis and critique, many of which are productive but which also have their limits. In Couldry’s (2010) cultural critique of neoliberalism, for instance, there is a general tendency to make a distinct moral demarcation between the values of the ‘market’ and some implicit or inherent social values contained in relational models of voice. In other words, the values of the market signal the limits of a particular set of moral values found in social life (Sandel, 2012) and values of voice. In my introduction I foregrounded my focus in thinking through how notions of speech, listening and recognition become unstuck from their ethical foundation to be recuperated in market and informational terms. However, as I have foreshadowed here - and as the following chapters hope to further explicate - this does not necessarily constitute a ‘hollowing out’ or contraction of voice. Certainly, market values that privilege competition are increasingly positioned in apparent conflict with certain moral or social values such as cooperation (Sennett, 2012). However, as this chapter has suggested, and as I will elaborate in Part Two, the struggle for voice is not confined to a struggle between two sets of competing values, but plays out as a struggle over the very terms of these debates.

Voice poverty is an appealing framework for articulating the gap between giving account and being taken into account, but limits of a rights-based approach to voice is not the only problematic when understanding how voice works within this economy. Cultural
critiques of neoliberalism put forward by scholars such as Couldry construct a narrative of a crisis of voice. While sympathetic to this position, I am less convinced this is the most useful way of articulating what is happening as the category of voice is being transformed by these conditions. The crisis of voice argument fails to adequately capture how the restructuring of social life alters the very meaning and value of voice itself. As the deeply relational understanding of voice begins to breakdown, the category of voice itself undergoes a transformation: put under pressure and pulled in different directions by competing claims to voice; expanding and contracting along liberal, democratic and market-driven lines; and subject to revival, reinvention and resistance in ever surprising and unanticipated ways. Yet while market-driven values can have a contracting effect in terms of voice, it is not always or necessarily the case. As my brief examination of the OWS movement has shown, somewhere between celebration and crisis is a space where the very terms, frames and categories of voice are made, unmade and remade.

There is no doubt that that there are genuine concerns over the commodification or commercialisation of social life, and its impact on struggles for voice; and deep ambivalences exist in the role that technology has to play in that struggle. The move away from human interdependence and mutual obligation to others is, in part, symptomatic of a broad trend towards a more individualistic, competitive and market-driven environment. The gradual dismantling of the Welfare State by the orthodoxy of neoliberal capitalism in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia over the past thirty years, for example, are often framed as a clash of values: between values that organise the relational model of voice and the values of the market. Yet this framing potentially overlooks the variety of ways that the category of voice is re-animated precisely through new attachments and economic frameworks.

The shift that renders previously important non-market values (such as those fundamentally embedded in an intersubjective idea of voice) into a completely new “regime of value” (Appadurai, 1986: 4) have generative, as well as limiting, effects. Having interrogated some of the anxieties around this transformation in these opening chapters, Part Two investigates how this restructuring of voice also conditions emergent and unanticipated possibilities, not all of which can be dismissed as negative or inconsequential. In focusing on instances where the transformational restructuring of voice is unmistakable, the following chapters investigate how the categories of speech, listening and recognition
begin to operate according to an economic logic that regulates value not according to a set of pre-determined set of social norms, but rather by a set of values intensified by the priorities of contemporary market-driven, informational and regulatory logics. Yet, rather than call for a return to the relational model of voice (as Couldry and others do), I move in a different direction to interrogate some of these new economies where the frontiers of voice are currently being contested.

If we return to Sarah Ahmed’s (2004) metaphor of stickiness, it becomes clear that the bonds that form the relational model of voice are not fixed or predetermined, but are instead highly contingent. Thinking through the contingency of these attachments opens up an analytical space to question the self-evidence of the relational triad of voice; that prevailing theories of what holds speech, listening and recognition together – what makes them stick – are a set of moral or ethical values that must be struggled for in order to register voice. But what if new categories of speech, listening and recognition are possible through new attachments that take on significance and potency precisely because they emerge through a conjuncture of market-driven values, complex technological shifts and forms of power that are otherwise understood to limit the possibilities for voice? If we continue to work with the idea of stickiness, we can think through the simultaneous contraction and expansion of voice in different ways: by following the values and objects of value that voice has become attached to rather than an appeal to re-stick the old model back together. This is perhaps where the frontiers of voice lie.
PART TWO:
NEW ECONOMIES OF VOICE

Rather than evaluating voice against criteria demanded by its historical arrangement, in the three following chapters, I hope to theorise and describe how notions of voice are increasingly attached to, and caught up in, complex assemblages of technology, the market and structures of power that prompt different frames of analysis. In Chapter One I began by unpacking Nick Couldry’s relational model of voice to examine the particular moral claims and histories that underpin its construction. I found that the relationship between speech, listening and recognition in this arrangement is solidified through a series of attachments grounded in an intersubjective ethics. In the following three chapters, I use limit cases to explore how new economies of voice are connected to, and distinct from, these morally regulated notions; they function within new regimes of value and, as such, take on new meaning and significance.

I consider the ways voice takes on new meanings and values as it is reconfigured through this series of new attachments. In doing so, I eschew any fixed or stable idea of what voice ‘is’ or how voice is made to matter. What I hope to make clear - and central to my argument - is that an appeal for a return to the relational triad is not only insufficient, it is actually misplaced, as it fails to recognise new arrangements of components of voice alter their meaning and value and cannot be sufficiently understood through existing frameworks of voice. In new economies of voice, categories of speech, listening and recognition are dismantled and recombined to condition new possibilities and limits for voice that cannot be understood according to the prevailing model and therefore cannot be critiqued or evaluated as such.

Further, these chapters advance my theoretical contribution in support of the analytical value of voice. Voice as a framework supports a vantage point that brings into view, and makes connections between, several seemingly unrelated and otherwise disparate phenomena. By drawing on a handful of limit cases - together with supporting conceptual investigations into the changing nature of speech, listening and recognition - I hope to construct a position from which to frame these shifting meanings, values and practices of voice. This strategy also helps me build a bridge between the two parts of my thesis by
tracing a route from conventional associations between voice and ideas of story, narrative and giving account - rooted in biographical and biological ideas of identity and the subject - to the links forged in new economies of voice between increasingly bio-informational notions of self, story and subject formation. As I argue, the transformational restructuring of voice is propelled by a convergence of big data, microtechnologies and everyday social media practices which coalesce around neoliberal structures of control and value to mediate the social relations of power in ever-changing ways. In the following three chapters, I focus on sites where technosocial, bio-informational, market-driven transformations of voice intersect, in part, because they are at the frontier of what voice becomes in these emerging economies. What emerges out of these new economies of voice is far from straightforward. Some of the new arrangements I describe are clearly connected to the historical arrangement of voice I set up in the opening chapters. Others begin to challenge some of the basic assumptions embedded in such arrangements and the moral economy that underpins them.

There is a distinction to be made between new forms of voice (that is, modes that largely follow and exist within the triad model) and new meanings and categories of voice itself. These emerge, in part, through their circulation in the conditions I attempt to trace in Part Two. In other words, I am not simply charting a shift in register; I am charting a shift in kind. As I discuss in my final chapter, the new conditions of voice poverty, for instance, are not only produced through differential gaps between speaking up and being heard, but are increasingly determined by the ability to leverage new categories of speech and listening, or to develop new frames of recognition. When the ‘story of you’ is reverse-engineered through the collection and analysis of personal metadata, or biodata, for example, an appeal to the ethics of social relations or a call to repair the imbalance (structural or otherwise) of the historical connection between speakers and listeners no longer makes sense.

One of my key contentions in this thesis is that the ‘natural order’ of voice – constructed by the historical arrangement – begins to break apart when each element circulates in particular economies of voice. I focus on phenomena where struggles for voice are currently being contested to think through how prevailing notions of voice might not fully account for new categories and practices that emerge on the frontiers of the neoliberal, technological and biopolitical. These emerging sites of struggle provide the
context for my critical analysis and inform the provisional framework (new economies of voice) for thinking through these complexities. I argue these examples signal new economies of voice where previously held values connected to their historical arrangement (the relational, the intersubjective, a certain moral imperative) are loosened from their former attachments to forge new connections and relationships. While the following three chapters are each thematically focussed on a single domain of voice, they are intended to be read in relation to, and build connections across, each other. Further, these chapters are not sequential in terms of a hierarchy of value between speaking, listening and recognition, rather their order is intended to mirror the structure set out in the introduction and unfolds to advance elements of my argument.

In some instances, such as speech as code (Chapter Three), there is a complex and dynamic interplay between liberal formations of voice and their critique and reinvention through a deliberate redeployment of market values for non-market gains. In others, the relational architectures remain (as in therapeutic modes of listening described in Chapter Five) but are transplanted into different technosocial and neoliberal contexts to take root and become something else entirely. In some cases, new opportunities for voice are created. In others, the possibilities for voice are hopelessly constrained. In Chapter Three, I focus on three sites of ubiquitous cultural production that each extend the category of speech in novel ways: digital storytelling; free and open source software coding; and self-quantification technologies and practices. I draw on these limit cases to think through how bio-informational, digitally networked and data-driven categories of speech - along with technical and distributed forms of expression - begin to alter the domain in which the struggle for voice takes place. Each instance highlights a different kind of connection to the category of speech. In these new economies, personal biodata becomes a valuable commodity that retains traces of the 'story of you'; at the same, these fragments of digital narrative circulate in an individually competitive, entrepreneurial and market-driven context where corporate, commercial and extra-state interests intersect. Chapter Four begins with a more conceptual approach to practices of so-called therapeutic and inclusive listening, before addressing a single limit case: the United States’ PRISM program. This continues the biodata theme to consider how personal metadata becomes caught up in new listening and “dataveillance” (Orito, 2011) practices, in particular those conducted on civilian populations by state intelligence agencies in a post-Wikileaks, post-Snowden era. Chapter Five considers some of the limits of recognition when it begins to frame and favour
particular kinds of subject formations. It also draws on two limit cases: I return to self-
quantification technologies to consider how subjects are accorded recognition through
particular neoliberal subject formations; and second, I consider the Right to be Forgotten
legislation in terms of technical frames of recognition and the digital politics of
“informational self-determination” (van Alsenoy et al, 2014).

In tracing some of these new attachments, we can better understand, for instance,
what it might mean to extend the possibilities for speech through tactical incursions into
the architectures of voice (Chapter Three), while being exposed to listening practices of
surveillance (Chapter Four) or subject(ed) to neoliberal frames of recognition (Chapter
Five). In all, there is a complex interplay between competing economic arrangements of
voice - the values that circulate and are determined by certain modes of exchange - and the
individual instances and everyday interactions that further solidify or dissolve these
arrangements. Taken together, the following chapters build a picture of how the categories
of speaking, listening and recognition take on new meanings and forms when subjects
actively intervene in, or respond to, the shifting conditions of voice.

Voice as an economy

As briefly described in my introduction, the economic becomes one of the key
organising metaphors of my work: it directs attention to the flows, relationships and
connections between elements that increasingly construct the category of voice; equally, it
evokes the idea of political economy and a concern over the distributive and regulatory
systems that condition the possibilities for voice.

Sarah Ahmed (2004) uses the conceptual frame of the ‘economic’ to trace the routes
through which certain emotions are produced and accumulate value, allowing her to focus
on how an emotion works and what it does rather than in what an emotion is per se. By
following the movement of an emotion as it circulates between bodies, subjects and objects,
and through different associations, Ahmed is able to understand how particular circuits and
flows convert an emotion into a form of (surplus or negative) value. Ahmed also focuses
on the ‘stickiness’ of emotions - the way they become attached to certain objects, bodies
and values to accumulate particular affective qualities (130). In this way, she prizes open an
analytical space to investigate their cultural production; shifting attention away from what
an emotion is or does to how emotions are produced through these affective attachments and flows. For Ahmed, it is in this *circulation* between, and *attachment* to, bodies, objects and signs that emotion resides, not in an object or sign itself (118). I take up the notion of the economic in this sense as a kind of orientation that helps me examine the emerging connections and relationships between the elements of voice, and the way these connections are remade.

Taking as his starting point the observation that the economy is a particular social form that consists “not only in exchanging values but in the exchange of value”, Arjun Appadurai (1986: 4) investigates how “desire and demand, reciprocal sacrifice and power interact to create economic value in specific social situations”. He uses the term “regimes of value” to describe the “conditions under which economic objects circulate” in space and time according to differing systems of value. Appadurai makes a distinction here between values and value (or systems of value); a distinction easily collapsed or overlooked, but one that must be teased out to understand new economies of voice. Appadurai follows the flow of commodities as they circulate and are exchanged within multiple structures to create value. As the relationships that connect speech, listening and recognition in social relation begin to break down, the components of voice are implicated in both exchanging values and in the exchange of value within prevailing cultural regimes.

The related conceptual frame of the bio-economy has been widely used within the social sciences since the 1990s and 2000s (Birch and Tyfield, 2013; Cooper, 2008; Rose, 2007), with the rise of biotechnology and genetics and the resultant spaces for the management of life that emerge through these transformations in knowledge. In considering new economies of voice, the bioeconomy is a useful critical frame to draw together a Foucauldian analysis of power and knowledge (biopolitics) together with Marxist approaches to labour and capital (political economy) (Cooper, 2008; Larsen, 2007). As such, this theoretical approach draws attention to the way that biopolitics and political economy are co-produced. As Cooper (2008) has persuasively argued, the rise of the bioeconomy is also inseparable from the rise of neoliberal orthodoxy and related ideologies of economic and biotechnological ‘growth’. This is particularly useful to help me think through how voice works under these conditions because it provides a way to connect concerns over the differential distribution of voice together with the regulatory effects of social power.
In his work, Nikolas Rose (2007: 6) directly connects biopolitics to the bioeconomy. He marks out the bioeconomy as a new economic space in which

[…] Old actors such as pharmaceutical corporations have been transformed in their relation with science on the one hand and stock markets on the other. New actors such as biotech start-ups and spin-outs have taken shape, often seeking to stress their corporate social responsibility and combining in various ways with the forms of citizenship and expertise. Life itself has been made amenable to these new economic relations, as vitality is decomposed into a series of distinct and discrete objects - that can be isolated, delimited, stored, accumulated, mobilized, and exchanged, accorded a discrete value, traded across time, space, species, contexts, enterprises - in the service of many distinct objectives. In the process, a novel geopolitical field has taken shape, and biopolitics has become inextricably intertwined with bioeconomics.

Rose (2007: 6) marks out this “new economic space” to map the changing relationship between the possibilities of technology (biotechnologies and the new genetics in particular); the way that these technologies identify, categorise and extend the category of ‘life’; and their entanglement with power, knowledge and value. Rose uses ‘the economic’ in the sociological sense, but also as it increasingly connects to the political economy of the market. As such, his sense of the term bioeconomy captures the relationship between biopolitics and political economy; that is, the increasing ways in which ‘life’ is conducted, understood, managed, regulated and governed through particular economic rationalities.

Rose understood these new spaces for the governing of life as being intimately entangled with new assemblages of technology and technoscientific developments. Yet we now have a whole range of technosocial phenomena that impinge upon the ‘bio’ that have proliferated in the last five years since Rose’s book was first published. It is critical to note that the bioeconomy is fundamentally a technological one too. As such, I take up the bioeconomy specifically as a way to connect the ‘bio’ not just in the sense of the biological, but also the biographical. This connection allows me to trace the transformation of voice through its attachment to biographical ideas - narrative identity, autobiography, storytelling
etc. through various formations as they are further transformed by their attachment to bioinformatics, information and data to become a form of biodata.

In the following chapters, I pay attention to how speech as biodata is produced as a new form of biovalue (Chapter Three), as well as how listening practices can function to extract new forms of value based on such personal biodata (Chapter Four). For instance, the bioeconomy becomes a frame to critique a range of ways that the seeming expansion of voice (consumer-driven i-health, co-creative media practice, the rise of storytelling etc.) is contingent upon speaking, listening and recognition operating within these new economies that involve the governing of intimate aspects of life and its capitalisation. In this way, I move beyond the historical arrangement of voice and its connection to the ‘story of you’, to show how narrative identity becomes caught up in one’s personal biodata (that is, rendered bio-informatically) and that control over the value and production of that data – as well as its ultimate meaning – is the new frontier for the struggle for voice and a new site of contestation in this new bioeconomy.
NEW ECONOMIES OF SPEECH

INTRODUCTION

As new assemblages of technology and the market attach value to new modes of address, technical forms of expression and iterations of the speaking ‘i’, the category of speech is recast in unexpected ways. In this chapter I trace the development and rise of new categories of speech through their attachment to a techno-social trajectory connected to increasingly entrepreneurial and technical forms of expression and transaction. These include the rise of bio-informational and data-driven categories of speech that together begin to reconfigure the historical arrangement of voice. I describe this emerging economy to locate speech within a particular biopolitical field of governance that produces both limiting and generative effects. These emerging configurations of individuals, state power, social relations, market values and new technologies of voice have both real-world and broader theoretical impacts on how we think about the category of voice. Some of these attachments open productive routes for intervention into the structures, architectures and platforms that shape their formation. Others have concerning implications for the way that voice circulates within increasingly competitive and differentiated circuits of exchange. While the overarching architectures of voice are being reassembled by these technosocial shifts, the everyday practice and appropriation of new categories of speech continually refashion the broader meanings and values of voice. Yet, even when practices of speech become value market commodities, people find non-market ways to exchange social value.

In Chapter Two I described how speech has become the dominant metaphor for thinking about questions of voice in contemporary culture. This celebration of speech arises from a confluence of the tendency towards “phonocentrism” (Derrida, 1976) and the liberal democratic ideals of individual freedom and self-expression, together with prevailing techno-utopian narratives that suggest new configurations of technology bring with them opportunities and platforms to speak and be heard. As described in part one, these claims to voice are underpinned by specific liberal formulations of voice that privilege a singular, speaking subject and tend to celebrate the power of story as a pre-eminent cultural form.
The preoccupation with the singular, speaking subject is further intensified by neoliberal tendencies to regard the individual-as-enterprise that circumscribe the space for voice by creating particular narratives that link discourses of self-realisation and expression to ideas of freedom. In Chapter Two I noted how the priorities of the modern individual, together with contemporary market values, come to enlist people to become entrepreneurs of their own lives, free to pursue desires, aspirations and interests. In this way, speech begins to attach itself to values of the market in complex and often contradictory ways.

The rise of the ‘i-voice’

Mainstream culture is saturated with first-person narratives: from memoirs and self-help books written by ordinary people to the popularity of storytelling slams and the phenomena of live, public storytelling events such as TED Talks and The Moth. These examples connect personal modes of speech and everyday narrative practices to the affecting ‘power of storytelling’, amplified and replicated by network effects and global Internet culture. Contemporary forms of popular culture both celebrate voice and turn it into a commodity, and these popular modes of storytelling are made possible and supported through the media architectures and platforms they circulate in. In this section, I consider the emergence and development of digital storytelling as a recognisable form of personal, autobiographical and digitally distributed speech. I connect the rise of the i-voice to the ascendency of individual storytelling and narrative as a dominant cultural form: from political life to the popularity of real-life storytelling slams, to diverse forms of digital storytelling and its transformation in the context of social media and mobile technologies. I develop and extend Chion’s (1990) notion of the i-voice, also featured in the work of Burgess (2007), and take it up to propose that this form of self-narration has evolved to become the dominant mode of neoliberal subject formation that centres on the interior voice of the subject and their personal story.

Storytelling has gained currency in today’s convergence culture as a means of self-representation and self-expression and its power is best illustrated by the emergence and spread of digital storytelling since the 1990s. In this section, I employ the figure of the ‘i-voice’ to theorise and draw attention to the tendency toward the self-narrated, expressive and singular voice that permeates contemporary culture, inflected by market values. The i-voice emerges through its attachment to a convergence of democratic, neoliberal and
techno-utopian forces that prioritise speech as a form of self-narration and expression increasingly divorced from its social context.

I use the ‘i’ of the i-voice to conceptually connect the ideas of the individual present within liberal formations of speech to the idea of “narrative identity” as set out by McIntyre (1984). I have described both elements Chapter One. Further, it resonates with the ‘I’ of individualism and the individualised society that sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2001) has theorised to describe the self in the cultural conditions of late capitalism. The rise of the i-voice brings with it the potential for increased identification and empathy, but also touches on some of the problems raised by Bauman in my introduction: namely, that narrative accounts are detached from the broader structures and ecologies that condition them. Chapters One and Two of this thesis drew out some of these existing tensions. It also connects to the development and ubiquity of ‘i’ technologies - the iPhone, iPad and iCloud - and their generic counterparts. The notion of the i-voice also holds within it a tension this thesis attempts to articulate: one the one hand, the importance and value of voice, but also its vulnerability to and dependence on conditions that exceed and precede contemporary formations of the speaking ‘i’.

The idea that everyone has a story to tell and that greater empathy or understanding can be gained from hearing someone’s story - or that empathy and understanding itself is an end goal (Husband, 1996) - is so persuasive that it has become a dominant narrative in itself. Maria Tumarkin (2014: 175), in an essay for the Griffith Review, picks up on this contemporary trend:

[...] so often has the idea that humanity runs on stories been asserted of late that it has come to resemble a self-evident truth until, in next to no time it seems, we have started talking in excited voices about humans being hardwired for stories.

Tumarkin bravely goes on to argue that by holding storytelling up as the predominant cultural form of our time, their affective power can operate to discourage critical thought and work against other forms of engagement, such as argument, reflection and critical action. Certain cultural narratives are sustained and circulated by a certain organisation of social and political life. Market incursions and networks effects further intensify the power of narrative to produce a particular mode of address - what I describe
Beyond Voice Poverty

as the i-voice - that accumulates value primarily through the surplus layering of narrative affect. Yet while intimate stories do carry enormous affective qualities, a surplus of affect can paradoxically dissolve its political effect, thereby reducing the possibilities for broader social change, as some feminist critiques point out (Lather, 2009; Poletti, 2011). Lauren Berlant (1997: 41-42) elaborates:

[…] when sentimentality meets politics personal stories [they may] tell of structural effects, but in doing so they risk thwarting the very attempt to perform rhetorically a scene of pain that must be soothed politically. Because the ideology of true feeling cannot admit the non-universality of pain, its cases of vulnerability and suffering can become all jumbled together into a scene of the generally human, and the ethical imperative toward social transformation is replaced by a passive and vaguely civic-minded ideal of compassion.

Beyond Berlant’s concern over the collapse of the personal and political, the neoliberal insistence on the primacy of the individual further adds to the “inwardly directed gaze” of late modern society (Chrysanthou, 2002: 473). This culture of expression amplifies a particular mode of address that does not so much require a response from another than it does operate on what Dean (2009: 31) calls a “registration effect” - a hollowed-out form of recognition. I argue that this is also a symptom of the rise of the i-voice. This form of individuated self-narration has, I contend, become the dominant neoliberal mode of subjective voice that centres on the interiority of the subject and their personal story that circulates in a new economy of the market.

The digital storytelling model was developed at the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS), Berkley University by Joe Lambert and Dana Ashley and has roots in popular education, cultural advocacy and community-based media. The CDS model uses low-cost often open-source computer software and online forms of distribution to build the capacity of ordinary people to create and disseminate short-form, digital stories about their lives. Typically, this is facilitated through an intensive workshop-based process and participants - or co-creators - are given the tools to create their stories themselves. This model has a tendency toward autoethnography, with a high level of importance placed on accessing self-reflexive stories and narratives, particularly intimate, personal ones; and the use of personal artefacts such as photographs or videos that become visual anchors for the
narrative. Its motto - *listen deeply, tell stories* - hints at the connection between storytelling as a cultural form and the affective politics of voice that deep listening aspires to facilitate, and as such has appealed to a broad range of actors and institutions. More recently, the idea of participation in digital storytelling has been supplanted by the notion of “co-creativity” (Spurgeon et al., 2009), tapping into the potential that ordinary people have to be creators. This has come about from the dissolving of traditional distinctions between notions of the producer and consumer and the rise of “produsage” (Bruns, 2008), prosumption and “vernacular creativity” (Burgess, 2006) typified by the ubiquity of user-generated content in the digital sphere. It is also part of a system of “prosumer capitalism” (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) and unpaid forms of creative and digital labour (including expanding forms of user-generated content).

The concept of the “i-voice” was first developed by film theorist Michel Chion (1999) to describe a particular form of intimate, first person, voiceover narration in film and its particular affective qualities. Cultural studies scholar Jean Burgess (2007: 210) extends Chion’s notion of the i-voice to digital storytelling as a way of framing the warmth of human intimacy created through the use of first-person voice-over narration and simple visual imagery typically used in this form of storytelling. Chion (1999: 79-80) argues the i-voice serves as a pivot of identification with the viewer:

> When the voice is heard in sound close-up without reverb, it is likely to be at once the voice the spectator internalizes as his or her own and the voice that takes total possession of the diegetic space… of course the voice owes this special status to the fact that it is the original definitive sound that both fills us and comes from us.

Both Chion and Burgess draw attention to the affective intimacy and immediacy that the i-voice creates, and identification that occurs through a process of subjectification: we experience the i-voice like it is our own voice, originating from within our selves. For Burgess (2007: 210), this mode of direct address is key to creating potential for “shared experiences and affective resonances”. Appealing to the affecting quality of this mode of address, and arguing that it facilitates empathy in others, Burgess argues that the i-voice in digital storytelling contributes to their “power of social connectivity, while the sense of authentic self-expression that they convey lowers our barriers to empathy” (244). This sense of authenticity referenced here is one of the qualities that digital storytelling has been
celebrated for. Yet, as Berlant has pointed out, the accumulation of affective surplus produced by these intimate modes of storytelling, can also lead to saturation and ‘compassion fatigue’ amongst the broader public, or smother over other modes of address that attempt to reach beyond these tightly prescribed frames of recognition.

Digital storytelling’s distinctive form of storytelling was traditionally distributed on a localised scale, to targeted communities of interest. As a tool for advocacy and awareness raising, this form of self-narrative has now become an immediate and intimate mode of speech, predicated on individual experience and commonly unfolds as a personal journey. DST emerged from principles rooted in traditions of community and alternative media (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009; Howley, 2005; McWilliam, 2009) and participatory video models of the 1970s (Crocker, 2003; Li, 2008; White, 2003). Typically DST has been framed within emancipatory and participatory discourses that connect the power of storytelling to individual capacities for self-representation and expression (see, for example, Goudie, 2008-12; Tacchi, 2009). It appropriates the aesthetics and conventions of everydayness to inhabit an intimate mode of address, employing a deliberately affective form of storytelling, where the voice of the narrator becomes the central element around which the story is built.

While digital storytelling emerged in the technological context of the 1990s as a way of providing a platform for marginalised communities to create alternative stories that contest and collide with mainstream narratives (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009), as a broad phenomenon, I suggest it has institutionalised the i-voice as a particular mode of address which now circulates in an audience of people hungry for reality-based narratives, told by everyday people. The rise of the digital storytelling movement over the last two decades, and the proliferation of the broader form in the last five years - exemplified by the ubiquity of the first-person, autobiographical narratives found online - signals, in part, a shift in the way this category of speech - one which previously circulated within a community-driven, collaborative economy embedded within principles of popular education, community media and emancipatory traditions - now becomes ‘stuck’ to neoliberal circuits of value and digital platforms of exchange that reward stories of self-optimisation, entrepreneurialism and survival. Like the aesthetics of the selfie - which emerged as a form of technical apparatus (camera phone and social media) that formalises the compositional elements of
the image - the short-form, personal narrative has become a highly commodified form of speech.

The subsequent adoption and proliferation of digital storytelling in a range of contexts since the late 1990s has, I contend, solidified a mode of speech that now circulates in completely different contexts to become attached to neoliberal agendas of inclusion and participation. For instance, in Australia, digital storytelling has been enthusiastically taken up by local councils as a mode of community engagement to identify and address a range of policy areas, most commonly community wellbeing, social inclusion and cohesion, cultural diversity and community development (see, for example, Dreher, 2012; Foth et al., 2008; Gifford and Wilding, 2013; Podkalicka and Staley, 2009). Yet, in her unmasking of the related practice of participatory arts, Claire Bishop (2012) contends such practices are increasingly instrumentalised for social ends and neoliberal political agendas, making these forms of engagement highly problematic, both ethically and aesthetically.

Yet despite such critiques, this form of amateur cultural production has now been incorporated into the vocabulary of cultural democracy and participatory citizenship, with its own set of aesthetics and formal conventions. The mode of address celebrated in digital storytelling has become one of the cultural templates for the rise of the i-voice in contemporary culture. Here, it becomes clear that the ‘I’ of the i-voice is also a technological ‘i’ emerging from a particular arrangement of media technologies. There is an existing tendency for the i-voice to work in an internal direction, where the ‘i’ is turned inward onto the self. The camera-eye is now a camera-I, where the direction of the gaze becomes the self, but then turned outward again as a distributed ‘i’. It is the subjective I of post-convergence: where the ‘i’ is attached to a meshwork of smartphone, tablet and social media technologies that reaches beyond a single model and extends into an economy that privileges and cultivates the performance of sophisticated techniques of the self.

A brief critical analysis of the *It Gets Better* (IGB) viral video campaign illustrates this structural separation of personal narratives from broader social and political processes, and their subsequent attachment to discourses of individual transformation and optimisation. In response to a series of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) youth suicides in the United States in 2010, American author Dan Savage made a YouTube-based video that became the basis of the *It Gets Better Project* and viral video
The campaign has since attracted over 10,000 user-generated digital stories sharing personal experiences and messages of support by members of the LGBTQI community. Many of the videos feature a person speaking to the camera, telling their story in a simple, direct way, reflecting the everyday, intimate and first-person form of storytelling pioneered by the DST movement that emerged in the 1990s.

In aggregate, the personal stories uploaded in the *IGB* campaign are embedded within broader narratives of progress and individual optimisation that, while celebratory and hopeful, also emerge through processes of differential inclusion and the structural positioning of privilege (Puar, 2010). The campaign subsequently attracted conflicting and contradictory analyses: supporting arguments suggested that the campaign provided a platform for a plurality of ‘unheard voices’ to be represented (Ciszek, 2011); while savage critiques challenged the privileged position of Savage himself, as well as the exclusionary, homogenising and “homonormative” effects the stories had (Goltz, 2013). In her critique of *It Gets Better* Jasbir Puar (2010) argues it is precisely the “virality” of these videos that enables the circulation and reproduction of a liberal narrative of exceptionalism that celebrates the stories of predominantly white, male middle-class gay liberals.

Many of the videos uploaded as part of the *IGB* campaign both reveal and conceal structural and regulatory questions concerning contemporary conditions of voice poverty within emerging economies of speech. While the social struggle for equality and recognition underlying these stories are evident in each individual account, they also bear out a tension between intense identification with the storyteller on the one hand, and broader architectures and platforms of voice that prescribe how particular stories are best told. In other words, the media and political architectures that produce these kinds of stories are more often that not already in place and condition their form of narration. Common to many of the videos is a personalised and individualised story of hope and survival, in the face of adversity - exemplary of both the i-voice and therapeutic forms of selfhood increasingly common in the West. In this case, rise of the i-voice as the dominant

---

8 Videos can be viewed on the website [http://www.itgetsbetter.org/](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/). There is also an Australian chapter of this campaign, with around 30 individual stories posted to its YouTube channel; the remainder of the posts are from ‘personalities’, political leaders and representatives of corporations. The marked difference in popularity of individual postings of *IGB* experiences between the US and Australia is worth noting. While the initial impetus for the *IGB* originated in the United States, the large number of individual stories posted by people in US is also perhaps partly due to a longer history of the type of confessional, individual culture that these videos typify.
form of biographical account can reproduce conditions of voice poverty via a schema of intelligibility attached to neoliberal ideas about what it means for things to ‘get better’. As Puar (2011) provocatively asked in response to the IGB campaign: For whom does it get better? And at what cost? Such critiques also highlight the limits of the individual story where the personal ‘coming out’ narrative can erase broader contexts - in this case, the long history of activism in the queer community more generally, or the role of queer social services or community support networks that work to break down stigma. As Ulrich Beck (2002: xxii) observed over a decade ago, the logic that governs individualised society in the West “tells us to seek biographical solutions to systemic contradictions” or social inequalities. Yet this solution raises its own set of problems and sidesteps others.

While the technical effects of networked culture intensify the affective quality of videos like those in uploaded as part of IGB, they also potentially depoliticise their effect. I argue the privileging of individual stories and their disconnection from broader structural or social forces is exemplary of the economy of speech in which the i-voice circulates. In the case of IGB, ‘biographical solutions’ are disconnected from important histories of struggle and activism; revealing the limits of what Lauren Berlant (1997) terms the “intimate public sphere”:

The political as a place of acts oriented towards publicness becomes replaced by a world of private thoughts, leanings, and gestures projected out as an intimate public of private individuals inhabiting their own affective changes. Suffering, in this personal/public context, becomes answered by sacrifice and survival, which is, then, recoded as the achievement of justice or liberty. Meanwhile, we usually lose the original impulse behind sentimental politics, which is to see the individual effects of mass social violence as different from the causes, which are impersonal and depersonalizing (41-42).

We can see how the imperatives of neoliberal culture sometimes recuperate feminist discourses of liberation, empowerment and self-reliance that emerged in the 1970s - attached to therapeutic modes of subjectivity - to form these affective economies of speech. Subjects work on themselves with the aid of new emergent markets that rise to the challenge like phoenixes, which present a narrative of self-empowerment and having a voice. But in favouring this narrative arc, these techniques of the self favour particular expressions and representations of active and ‘positive’ optimisation, thereby
simultaneously operating as dividing and exclusionary practices that regulate what that ideal self consists of (or what one can say): in the case of IGB, marking out the space in which it can ‘get better’. In other words, difference is accommodated and normalised through a process that privileges a therapeutic narration of the self. These ‘positive’ practices - framed in terms of productive freedom and individual choice - operate on a neoliberal logic of self-governance and the internalisation of risk. Thomas Lemke (Lemke, 2001: 201), in his reading of Foucault’s *The Birth of Biopolitics*, argues neoliberal forms of governmentality often involve the strategy of “rendering individual subjects ‘responsible’” by shifting the burden of social risks (such as illness, unemployment, poverty etc.) and structural disadvantage onto the individual, “transforming it into a problem of ‘self-care’”. When coupled with a rationality underpinned by market values, including individual entrepreneurism and self-regulation, self-care also becomes an act of self-craft.

Along with the first person, biographical narrative, many of these digital stories also feature a tendency toward what Nigel Thrift (2008: 184) calls a “therapeutic form of selfhood”. Rose (1999: 196) argues that in a therapeutic version of subjectivity,

[…] health depends upon the discovery, acceptance and assertion by oneself of who one really is, upon bonding with those who are really the same, upon the claim that one has the natural right to be recognised individually and collectively in the name of one’s truth”.

The significance of Rose’s analysis is that it highlights how identity, subject formation and agency come to be bound up with claims to recognition based on identification with particular narratives of health.

Writing on the rise of the therapeutic state and Foucauldian ideas of governmentality, James Nolan (1998: 6) contends that through an “emotivist understanding of the self”, one which revolves around the individual’s subjective feelings, “the citizen recedes; the therapeutic self prevails”. This biopolitical narrative of self-realisation and choice emerges at the intersection of neoliberal, biopolitical and technosocial processes and is contingent upon a narrative triumph over suffering at the same time as it is underpinned by a drive to narrate and articulate that very process as part of self-formation. The therapeutic narrative of finding one’s ‘authentic voice’ (your true self) through a transformative process of
endless self-optimisation becomes more than a personal project of self-discovery: it becomes a biopolitical act of self-craft.

In the case of the IGB campaign, individual responsibilisation, self-acceptance and the positive assertion of one’s identity, sexuality and life choices become armour against stigma and violence. The ‘healthy subject’ here is forged through their ability to arm themselves against homophobia and bullying by ‘taking control’ of one’s story and narrative account of their status; where freedom of expression becomes a democratic, neoliberal and therapeutic pursuit. In a way, it is a narrative defence against structural violence, but one also that retains the imprint of that violence. Here, there is a new ordering of voice that cuts across traditional lines of class, race, gender or sexuality and recasts individuals in terms of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ neoliberal subjects. Market logic produces its own moral economy: ‘good’ subjects are those able to articulate themselves in a way that is both intelligible within this dominant narrative and who take responsibility for managing themselves appropriately. Implicitly, the logic of the market reinforces the normative and internalised idea that individuals are rewarded on the basis of personal effort and making the right choices. Without denying the important place of individual ‘coming out’ stories in challenging social norms and enacting membership and solidarity, these narratives of exception also expose the limits of the singular, speaking subject and the proliferation of the i-voice through online channels of distribution. Although criticisms of It Gets Better have been somewhat addressed through inclusion of more diverse experiences in the three years since the first videos were circulated, the “viral community” (Muller, 2011) that coalesced around these stories of survival and optimisation highlight the tensions in giving narrative account.

The rise of the i-voice is the cultural product of several connected trends that I have been tracing across this thesis. It emerges in a perfect storm of convergence between existing liberal tendencies that privilege individual speech, together with the entrepreneurial and self-realisation tendencies of neoliberalism and technological architectures that facilitate and distribute the proliferation of this mode of address. Through attention to the changing form of digital storytelling, I have hoped to show how the i-voice operates as a particular mode of speech that is both connected to and departs from current formations of voice: it is the product of a particular arrangement of voice in conditions of neoliberal post-convergence, as well as the historical traditions from which it has emerged. The mode
of speech privileged by the i-voice has emerged through the specific set of conditions that increasingly separate narratives of the individual from narratives of society. As categories of speech are remade through entanglements with new assemblages of technology and values of individualised society, the i-voice performs a double action: a simultaneous intensification of this digital mode of address, along with a dissolving of ongoing speech effects.

**Informational code**

The category of speech has always been connected to forms of value that are embedded within specific technologies. In this section I consider how the category of speech connects to informational code and is mobilised in counter-cultural, political and creative ways. There is a long history that connects the category of speech to data or code in the history of modern technological achievement: from the encoding of speech into written language, to the use of Morse Code and other forms of encryption to communicate private or secret messages, to computational algorithms and protocols that enable the recording, broadcasting and distribution of speech through a range of channels and platforms - both analogue and digital. I now connect the category of speech to informational code to consider the ways that those who possess the ability to write computational code push the boundaries of what is counted as ‘speech’ and open it up to a range of political and material effects. I focus on the free and open source software (F/OSS) movement to frame a discussion of how social and regulatory constraints that might otherwise limit the space for voice can also be subverted and tinkered with to produce new categories and platforms of speech.

The legal connection between computer source code and speech emerged in the 1990s out of opposition to software patents in the United States on the ground of free speech. In a letter to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, free software trailblazer Phil Salin (1991) argued computer programs are a form of “writing” that should be given First Amendment protections but should not be subject to patent law. Computer code, he maintained, was a specific language or dialect with its own vocabulary, the writing of software textually encoding the expression of an idea. Interestingly, while Salin’s free speech argument for the protection of code made a strong case that coding was a variant of writing, he did not express concern about the barriers to speech that intellectual property (IP) law might pose.

---

9 Interestingly, while Salin’s free speech argument for the protection of code made a strong case that coding was a variant of writing, he did not express concern about the barriers to speech that intellectual property (IP) law might pose.
medium for communication; it is the message. Along with the connection between code and speech, proponents of free and open software also extended this further to make connections between code and liberal ideals of freedom. To explain the concept of free software, computer programmer Richard Stallman (1996) proclaimed you should think of free as in “free speech,” not as in “free beer”. As such, free software became a matter of liberty, not a matter of price.

Practices of freedom in the name of individual expression and enterprise produce categories of speech that critique and extend prevailing notions of voice in innovative and surprising ways. Over the past decade, the free and open source software (F/OSS) movement has used the connection between code and speech to actively critique as well as refashion and reinvent important liberal ideals. The F/OSS movement connects the politics of software development with liberal discourses of freedom by building on computer programmer Salin’s legacy, but also targets copyright restrictions as an impingement on freedom of speech. The F/OSS community employs a deliberate and sophisticated use of the claim that “code is speech” (Coleman, 2009) to affirm the interconnected values of expression, exchange and the generation of knowledge, ideas and information. As anthropologist E. Gabriella Coleman (2012: 183) describes:

Many hackers, understood to be technologists, became legal thinkers and tinkerers, undergoing legal training in the context of the F/OSS project while building a corpus of liberal legal theory that links software to speech and freedom. By means of lively protests and prolific discussions, almost continuously between 1999 and 2003, hackers as well as new publics debated the connection between source code and speech.

Through ingenuity, craftsmanship and play, F/OSS coders and hackers create, tinker with and modify free and open source software that recirculates (and is rearticulated in) the public domain, building a strong sense of shared public culture and creative expression, in some sectors of the online community at least. Coleman (2012: 3) maintains that they “extend as well as reformulate key liberal ideas such as access, free speech, transparency, equal opportunity and meritocracy”.

F/OSS coders use the practice of coding to actively challenge the boundaries of and expand the architecture for what can be regarded as speech. Claims to freedom (the
production of code as speech) are deliberately connected to claims of distributive justice (equal access to software as information and knowledge). For the most part they share a commitment to developing new categories of speech to articulate and advocate for their practice. According to Coleman (2012: 161), the practice of coding free and open software connects ideas of information, communication, freedom and speech, “reconfiguring what source code and speech mean ethically, legally and culturally”. Speech here becomes a category that encompasses individual creativity and expression; the collective exchange and circulation of ideas; practices of recognition and solidarity; and the practice of productive freedom. At the same time, discourses of speech within the F/OSS coding community are also employed to critique the limits of current systems of power and control.

Further, as a social practice, F/OSS coding simultaneously affirms and erases boundaries between individuals through a “reciprocal recognition of identities in a larger community in which individuation is both recognized and transcended” (Coleman and Golub, 2008: 268). Here, individual identity is deeply connected to a broader community of practice engaged with questions of power and freedom in a technologically mediated ecology of information exchange and knowledge production. In this way, these practices of speech connect back to McIntyre’s relational idea of narrative identity described in Chapter Two, but also forge new connections with non-human (computer) categories of speech. Of course there is a diversity and continuum of hacker practice within the F/OSS movement and code as speech is variously deployed as an anarchic intervention; to support radical individualism; and to focus attention on the commons and the social good (Chopra and Dexter, 2007).

With keen anthropological insight attuned to the complexity of the F/OSS subculture, Coleman (2012: 4) offers a nuanced understanding of the relationship between F/OSS hackers/developers and the values of liberalism. Her ethnographic account highlights how they “not only reveal a longstanding tension within liberal legal rights but also offer targeted critique of the neoliberal drive to make property out of almost anything, including software”. In this way, the writing of code - and the distribution and circulation of free software - connects the category of speech to a non-market, gift-like economy. If code is remediated as speech, as Coleman contends, making software that is accessible to anyone can be understood to reclaim certain forms of speech as non-market values; a significant win for the political power of voice, but also for new forms of enterprise and
collaboration in the information economy. They simultaneously embrace and resist the liberal traditions from which they emerge. Not only do they use coding to actively reconfigure the category of speech, they also contest the architectures that establish the terms and limits of the category itself. As such, they understand speech as a deeply social and political category of action.

Writers of F/OSS software redefine not only what speech is and means, but participate in a new economy of speech whereby code or data - information bits - is attached to new values of voice to create, circulate and exchange value in an alternative system to that of proprietary software. I have cited the preoccupation with speech as a feature of both Western and liberal traditions, and Couldry’s (2010: 73) claim that the “amplification” of neoliberal values occurs through the mechanisms of speech and network effects, having concerning consequences for voice. But as proponents of the free and open software movement show, a dynamic expansion of voice can occur by actively connecting practices of freedom with new categories of speech that are redeployed to reshape - and critique - existing architectures and platforms of voice online. This emerging economy of speech based on both affirmation of individual creativity and practices of reciprocity. F/OSS also uncovers another direction that speech can take: a category of collective thought (encoded as data) that seeks to open up channels for genuine communication and exchange.

Further, coding and open source software actively remakes the architectures and platforms of speech, which can be then used for a variety of purposes. Alexander Galloway (2004: 172) suggests that hacking reveals an “exciting new ability to leverage possibility and action through code”. This is certainly the case in relation to the F/OSS movement; their leverage comes partly through connecting code to speech and mobilising it within overlapping technological, legal, political and social domains. However, in this complex post-convergent environment, this has both limiting and generative effects in terms of innovative strategies for speech. For instance, the free and open source web browser TOR (which stands for The Onion Router - a secure form of computer networking) was initially developed by the US Navy to protect government communications (The TOR Network, 2015). While TOR can be used by anyone for private web browsing, online communication and anonymous speech, it is perhaps the best example of the tension between proponents of informational liberalism and unrestricted
speech, and the protection of civil liberties: it makes it possible for whistle-blowers like Chelsea Manning to anonymously upload secure information to sites like Wikileaks; at the same time, it also leads to websites like the now-defunct Silk Road marketplace where the trading of illegal and illicit goods is protected by the same anonymity and encryption protocols.

While this new ordering of voice ruptures old hierarchical structures of information and distribution, it also creates new hierarchies and regimes of value. One major concern is that the vertical hierarchy that produces and distributes value is based on a new creative class whereby those who can code become the ones who can speak with power and authority. Beyond concerns about digital divides or participation gaps, the new frontier of voice poverty might be found in the gap between those who can leverage the speech effects of code, and those who must find modes of speech that operate within existing technosocial architectures. The new digital divide may not be between those who have access to technologies of speech, but between those who have the techno-social capacity to produce new forms and categories of speech itself, and those who don’t.

As my brief examination of the F/OSS movement reveals, coding and the production of open source software can create new opportunities to push the boundaries of what constitutes speech in an era of “informational liberalism” (Tréguer, 2014) through creative interventions that subvert and extend existing frameworks. At the same time, this emerging economy of speech throws up a new tension concerning the redistribution of power and the technosocial clustering of an emerging digital “creative class” (Florida, 2003). The tools and the code are open to anyone, but the participation gap is determined through technical capacity to produce that code as speech. While information libertarian Julian Assange (Assange et al., 2012) celebrates the new “high-tech rebel elite […] highly educated in the internals of [the] system” - important political actors who guard freedom and liberty against the totality of mass surveillance and control in the Internet age - it is this same elite who stand at the vanguard of what counts as valuable in this new economy of speech.

In many ways, the F/OSS movement provides an optimistic account of new possibilities for speech within emerging economies of voice. F/OSS coders resist neoliberal trends by actively critiquing the values of liberalism from within liberalism itself, as I have described above. At the same, the F/OSS movement can be understood as a
Beyond Voice Poverty

rearticulation of Spivak’s question for a data-driven time where those who build (encode) the internals of the system inevitably reshape the terms and bounds of what constitutes valuable speech within that system. The implications of this are yet to be fully realised.

Biodata

As new categories of speech are increasingly understood in relation to information channels and data traces, the connection between technology, biopolitics and the imperatives of neoliberal optimisation further intensifies. This can be seen most palpably in the health and lifestyle ‘industry’, and the increasing popularity and uptake of mobile digital devices and applications used to monitor and track the vital statistics of users. The rise of the consumer movement, together with the marketisation of health and the cult of the individual over the last thirty years has seen an apparent expansion in the capacity of voice for everyday people in relation to having a say in decisions that affect their ‘vital’ lives (to borrow Rose’s term). Yet, this expansion is contingent upon internally structured modes of transaction and exchange where social relationships, identities and narratives are remade according to the internal structures of neoliberalism, and the architectures and platforms of the networked digital culture.

Writing before the proliferation of Web 2.0 and smartphone applications, Linda Hogle (2005) used the term “enhancement technologies” to describe a range of technologies used to improve bodily functioning, capacity or appearance, including pharmaceuticals such as Viagra, cosmetic surgery and prosthetic limbs. As with all technological innovations,

[…] enhancements exist in a nexus of complex social, political, and historical relations, media representations, and medical and legal definitions of disorder and well-being. Although the rise of consumer culture plays a role, bodily enhancements are about more than commodification processes. They are a manifestation of changing ways of thinking about biological and social life that is fundamentally transforming institutions, economies, and meanings (696).

Today, smartphone apps, wearable digital devices and other forms of health and lifestyle monitoring tools - increasingly networked and connected to the ‘cloud’ - extend
enhancement technologies further: personal biodata can be collected and uploaded remotely from any location, at any time (Lupton, 2013). A recent report on the tracking and sharing of biodata, for instance, found that people who use health-related self-tracking technologies in their everyday life are “often inclined to share their personal data with others” (Fotopoulou, 2014: 4). This monitoring, sharing and dissemination of personal biodata extends the temporal and spatial boundaries of one’s vital statistics and opens the body’s processes and activities to continual scrutiny and feedback. The technological transformation from e-health (electronic) to m-health (mobile) to i-health (the internet connected ‘i-cloud’) that has paralleled the rise of individualised, distributed and privatised forms of health care, has witnessed an intensification of the generation, quantification and circulation of personal health data and statistics within a biopolitical field of governance. These technical forms of expression produce information and data-driven forms of speech that circulate within an economy of voice supported by increasingly competitive and entrepreneurial forces.

The Quantified Self (QS) movement10 - and the related everyday use of health-related self-quantification mobile apps - forge connections between regulatory and discursive practices, self-surveillance and the modulation of vitality and risk to construct new categories of data-driven speech that circulate in an expanding economic and political field. The convergence of neoliberal biopower and the primacy of the individual, together with the convergence of smartphone technologies, health informatics and the rise of big data provide the perfect storm for QS and self-quantification technologies to emerge. Self-tracking and quantification practices take up these technologies to extend the category of speech attached to units of personal digital information and biodata. As this section argues, with reference to the self-tracking and ‘body hacking’ practices of self-quantification, personal biodata is now a valuable category of speech that begins to connect the ‘story of you’ to micro-practices of monitoring and control, enmeshed with ubiquitous technologies; a new site of struggle where value and meaning are generated, extracted and circulated. New self-tracking applications are created every day, each with increased functionality, more sophisticated data visualisation capabilities and cross-platform integration.

10 Since its inception, the QS movement includes more than 100 groups from over 30 countries, with approximately 20,000 self-identified participants (see Nafus, 2014). While I use the term Quantified Self I take a more expansive approach to this practice than its ‘official’ configuration to include informal and everyday uses of health-related self-quantification technologies.
While I use the term Quantified Self or QS in this thesis, I take a more expansive approach to this practice than its ‘official’ configuration to include informal and everyday uses of health-related self-quantification technologies. Broadly, I use it to refer to the uptake and proliferation of health- and lifestyle-related mobile apps or wearable technologies that involve processes of self-quantification. Clearly, an argument can be made that certain kinds of apps and devices are aimed at, and taken up by, a particular privileged cohort of users that represent limited demographics in terms of age, class, region etc. However, the rise of these practices and their inclusion here is justified in two ways. Firstly, while technologies of optimisation like FitBit may currently be used by a relatively affluent few, the implications of how users are exposed to legal, medical or biopolitical regimes of governance through personal biometrics collected by apps are far reaching. Secondly, as public health strategies increasingly incorporate digital health technologies, it is not too far a stretch to imagine that populations with diseases like diabetes or obesity (which disproportionately impact lower socio-economic segments of the population), might have continuous self-monitoring mobile devices ‘pushed’ or imposed on them in order to qualify for treatment, or to monitor treatment remotely. For instance, Lupton (2014: 707) notes instances where ‘patients [are] being sent home from hospital with wireless self-monitoring technologies’. This is only the tip of the iceberg.

Through an assemblage of technology, neoliberal health discourses and individual narratives of empowerment and action, speech as biodata is at the frontier of new configurations of the voice in this emerging bioeconomy. The advent of i-health and the rise of the i-voice may be connected beyond their neat association with the technosocial ‘i’ that I have been tracing: they are also practically entangled in the way that speech and biodata are increasingly aligned. Biodata as a form of speech is an inherently unstable formation: while potentially valuable, it also exposes vulnerabilities within one’s own genetic and biological narrative when shared and circulated with others. Speech as biodata operates on multiple levels: at the micro level, biodata about the self is accumulated through the continual monitoring and recording of one’s vital health statistics, where ‘health’ becomes an endlessly expanding category in itself; and at the macro level, where the metadata can be collected and shared with other users, but is also vulnerable to collection by private and corporate interests.

\[11\] For instance, in two recent court cases in the United States, biometric data was used as evidence against two separate claimants whose FitBit data was analysed and interpreted to dispute claims of personal injury and rape respectively (see Crawford, 2014).
One of my intentions in this section is to connect the concept of biodata to ideas of the biographical, the biological and the bio-informational, and position it within an emerging economy of speech. The forms of biodata generated through new enhancement technologies increasingly attract attention from corporate, private and financial interests, competing within a lucrative economy that recognises its potential “biovalue” (Waldby, 2002). Aggregated biodata is put to use in multiple ways, some of which are largely obscured from view of the everyday user. Catherine Waldby introduced the term biovalue to describe the surplus value extracted from the vital properties of living processes; how bodies and tissues of the dead are redeployed in service of the enhancement and health of the living (Novas and Rose, 2005). Novas and Rose (2005: 29) situate biovalue within a broader context of the bioeconomy in which it circulates:

[...] the bodies and vitality of individual and collective subjects have long had a value that is as much economic as political - or rather, that is both economic and political.

I suggest that the data-driven surplus of personal biodata made available through these new enhancement technologies and technosocial practices also generates biovalue in this context.

These practices dissolve any clear distinction between participatory and market-driven tendencies, blurring the moral delineation between relational and market economies. It also dissolves the dichotomous nature of the celebration and crisis narratives problematised in Chapter Two: on the one hand, users transform their own biodata into meaningful and useful health information, creating new spaces for consumer ‘voice’; on the other, users modulate between intense self-surveillance and regulation. Under this configuration of voice, the twin imperatives of self-surveillance and disclosure attach personal biodata to performative modes of speech through market incursions in the economy of voice. Despite a commodification of the relationship between everyday cultural production and new forms of self-surveillance and regulation, these practices of self-quantification manage to modulate their expressive, communicative and exchange-value outputs in complex and nuanced ways based on the needs and desires of individual users.
With the potential to collect increased levels of knowledge about the self, users maximise their potential by extending, expanding and improving themselves in whatever areas of their life they choose. As Rose (2007: 26) maintains, in advanced liberal democracies, “individuals are enjoined to think of themselves as actively shaping their life course through acts of choice in the name of a better future”. This vision of a better future is folded into a neoliberal narrative where practices of entrepreneurial self-craft are privileged. Mastery of this is increasingly valued as a social competence. Colin Gordon (1991: 44) identifies an unceasing and necessary oscillation between preservation and optimisation in the regulation and management of this entrepreneurial ideal. He contends that being “an entrepreneur of oneself” involves continuously “preserving and maximizing one’s own human capital” through the “managerialization of personal identity and personal relations”. Both the pursuit and attainment of such competence is incentivised, commodified and marketised. The effect has been a realignment of the market to encompass the needs and desires of health consumers as well as creating and diversifying those needs and desires. This tension is made visible in the Quantified Self movement.

Typically, discourses surrounding such technologies of optimisation are constructed according to either utopian or dystopian narratives. But the inherent tensions that exist between such narrative poles are somewhat dissolved by the complex and sophisticated ways that individual practices of use and adaptation, together with shifting ideas of what constitutes health or even normalcy, challenge any such view. The distinction between one’s narrative identity and their bio-informational story begins to break down; the boundaries between the body and technology, as well as their very compositional elements, are dissolved by these new economic arrangements, and new data assemblages emerge.

Galloway (2004: xx) notes:

As the biological and life sciences become more and more integrated with computer and networking technology, the familiar line between the body and technology, between biologies and machines, begins to undergo a set of transformations. “Populations” defined nationally or ethnically are also defined informationally.

In this context, it becomes clear how speech is recast and transformed from a process of ‘giving account’ of oneself to accounting for oneself through personal data assemblages. Just as populations come to be informationally defined, notions of identity and subject
formation are permeated by the technologies that reshape the bounds and norms of human life. As Rose (2007) foreshadowed more than two decades ago, techno-scientific developments in biotechnologies, genomics, genetics, epigenetics and artificial intelligence further extend biopower’s reach into the “politics of life itself”. Biodata is collected, shared and circulated through distributed networks, both intimate and public. Data visualisation and bioinformatics transform one’s vital statistics into a new kind of “biosocial identity” (Rabinow, 1992) connected to health-related social media and mobile applications. The logic of this particular economy of voice favours certain modes of optimisation as key mechanisms through which one attains optimum health and self, ‘taking control’ of one’s own story. Surveillance of the body is no longer conducted through direct forms of disciplinary power, but through more subtle forms of “algorithmic governmentality” (Reigeluth, 2014) where subjects are enjoined to accumulate ever-detailed and continuous bio-information about themselves. The category of speech takes on new significance here: connected to i-health and the cloud, speech as biodata reshapes the assemblages of power that contribute to the contours of what constitutes health, the body and the self, beyond a simply being a novel form of ‘consumer voice’, user-generated content or crowd-sourced health data.

Emerging forms of speech, under the logic of control and modulation, are dispersed, distributed and recombined as units of value built on ever-detailed and granular levels of data and code (computational syntax, not natural language). The logics of modulation exampled in QS practices is a distinct feature of what Gilles Deleuze (1992) calls “societies of control”. In Postscript on Control Societies, Deleuze mapped out a shift from societies of discipline - as formulated by Foucault, where subjects are simultaneously rendered “useful and compliant” (Rose, 1999: 29) - to societies of control. Deleuze (1992: 5) argues that a feature of control societies is that state power is not exercised in a direct, centralised or even decentralised manner, but through continual processes of modulation and division: “individuals become ‘dividuals’ and masses become samples, data, markets or ‘banks’. In the QS movement, the ‘i’ of the ‘dividual’ is split: relentlessly self-monitoring, gaze turned inward; and with equal intensity, it is performative and representational, where aggregated biodata circulates in comparison to, and in competition with, others. As a category of speech, it is ambiguous because the desire for recognition evident in the sharing of metadata circulates in a lucrative bioeconomy where consumer-driven health needs (derived from consumer-generated biodata) is the driver for private interests to develop
and produce increasingly elaborate and sophisticated products. The speaking-listening-
recognition moral economy advocated by Couldry becomes attached to a market
imperative to ‘listen’ to the voice of consumers through their biodata, and find a way to
meet that need through the creation of new markets, and through creating new frames of
recognition (described in Chapter Five).

Together with the possessive logic of the individual under neoliberalism, control is
enacted through the individual modulation of choice and risk, enabled by the twin
proliferations of big data and microtechnologies. For Deleuze (1992), while the logic of
discipline was enclosure (the school, the factory, the prison etc.) the logic of control is
modulation: a process of constant change from one moment to the other, transmuting
from point to point. These metaphors of modulation do more than signify a shift in the
way that regulatory forces work on individual bodies; they also mark a temporal shift that
resonates with the language of the market. Further, they recalibrate Foucault’s two axes of
biopower - the anatamo-politics of the human body and the biopolitics of populations
(Teghtsoonian and Moss, 2008: 284) - according to new lines of demarcation. Here, the
category of speech is connected to micro and macro processes of control and surveillance:
at the microcellular level (through the biopolitical practice of tracking of one’s own
biodata) and at the level of metadata (where biodata is aggregated and shared through
social media channels). This continuous modulation in turn creates the possibility for
“perpetual training” (Deleuze, 1992: 5). This also uncovers an inherent tension in biodata
as a category of speech: subject to modulation and modification by users (who control
their own inputs and outputs) but also subject to speculation by the algorithmic forms of
power that determine value based on its use or application in a particular market. There is
a pull in both directions: as users of self-tracking applications modulate their vital statistics,
their biodata is tracked by the systems they use to input their vital information. I explore
this tension in relation to Lumosity in Chapter Five.

Despite this flow of speech between personal and informational domains, Deleuze
(1992: 7) argues that what counts in a control society is not the barrier, but “the computer
that tracks each person’s position [which] effects a universal modulation”. The
development of i-health technologies, quantified self-tracking applications and wearable
devices etc. make the continual monitoring of the body’s systems not just possible, but
highly desirable. The intimate digital traces QS users generate about their own health and
vitality aligns with neoliberal discourses of managing and improving one’s own life through individual responsibility and enterprise (Lupton, 2013), but also the priorities of the burgeoning ‘i-health’ industry and its cultivation of neoliberal subject formations like Swan’s (2012) notion of the “participatory biocitizen”. This logic of participation and control seem to be intimately entangled with Deleuze’s (1992: 7) future vision of the “new medicine”: ‘without doctor or patient’ [it] singles out potentially sick people and subjects at risk”.

While Deborah Lupton (2013: 5) describes the QS movement as the “apotheosis of self-reflexivity”, with its intense focus the use of one’s own biodata to shape future behaviours, there is also an outwards extension through the digital remediation and sharing of data with other QS peers and the circulation of this data within a broader bioeconomy. It is true that in many ways the biopolitics of the Quantified Self (QS) movement speaks to the ambivalent potentials of what Marc Chrysanthou (2002: 473) describes as the “inwardly directed gaze”. For instance, users who use self-tracking technologies to learn more about themselves participate in process of evaluation and innovation: monitoring and measuring the granular details of their vital statistics; at the same time engaging in creative processes of use and adaptation that reshape daily life. Circuits of biovalue extend beyond the self to connect to social media and web 2.0 networks where the comparison of one’s own biodata to broader indicators of health and wellbeing, aggregated from other users, forms a circuit of feedback and reincorporation through which speech as biodata flows, accumulates and accrues value. And yet, the impact and implications of these performative, self-optimising tools in terms of ‘voice’ are yet to be fully realised or understood. Certainly, this user-generated biodata (in similar ways to other forms of user-generated content) is taken up by neoliberal culture to become a marketable form of individual speech through self-surveillance (Lupton, 2013). However, it also reveals interesting potentials for users to contribute to, and in some cases, shape the environment that determine the priorities for the health industry.

Entrepreneurial self-craft enabled by self-tracking apps reconfigure the relationship between ourselves, others and the minutiae of our everyday experience in a way that collapses public-private boundaries, making the frontier of what constitutes our sense of ourselves not just permeable, but malleable (Rose, 2007). Lupton (2013: 1) contends that these technologies “promote techno-utopian, enhancement and health discourses”. Yet,
these discourses do more than promote an image of the self as endlessly improvable and malleable, they create an expectation of such, and in doing so they also open the possibility of the opposite. Underneath prevailing discourses of individual responsibility and self-management is a truth claim that social problems - such as chronic disease or levels of unemployment - are the result of personal choices rather than structural injustice, so that those made vulnerable to broad patterns of disadvantage are seen in terms of moral failure. Ethnographers Nafus and Sherman (2014), interested in the social dynamics and practices of the QS movement, argue

[...] the relentless focus on the self, we suspect, does have cultural roots in neoliberalism and the practices of responsibilization Giddens identified so long ago, but it also does important cultural work in the context of big data.

For the state, private sector and commercial interests, big data collected through emergent social practices such as QS represents a potential gold mine of information about the population that can be deployed in both innovative and unanticipated ways.

The accumulation of this valuable form of personal biodata is potentially useful for individuals who are interested in tracking and modulating their health statistics and lifestyle patterns, and this active participation in this vital politics is increasingly common. But the stories attached to your ‘data trail’ are also of interest and value to state institutions and corporate interests. Metadata-in-aggregate can work against practices of self-representation to create a story about you that might bring you under suspicion, or target part of the population for increased surveillance. As computer security researcher Jacob Applebaum has publically argued in recent years, “metadata in aggregate is content. It tells a story about you” (Poitras, 2014). I take up some of these questions in the following chapter in relation to listening. On the one hand, it becomes a valuable form of currency to participants and citizen-consumers who collect and curate their own biodata to take control of their bio-narrative; at the same time, the metadata that these apps produce - in aggregate - are also of increasing value and use to corporate or private interests who can monetise that data and redeploy it back into the system to create new markets.

In order to think through how personal biodata, the market imperatives of ‘personalised medicine’ and narratives of risk are increasingly intertwined, I take a brief detour here to consider this relationship. In her critical rethinking of the category of
Beyond Voice Poverty

disability through a biopolitics of affect, assemblage and queer theory, Jasbir Puar (2009: 165) pays specific attention to how bodies (both individual and population) are constructed in relation to “risk coding” and the associated notions of calculation, prognosis, statistical probability and variability. Certainly, the preoccupation with the calculation and mitigation of risk has become culturally all pervasive: it extends beyond the legal, corporate, economic and biomedical worlds to influence daily choices. Applications of the Quantified Self potentially take this one step further. For instance, a whole sub-industry is emerging in relation to new categories of risk created through the granular-level data produced through the constant monitoring and surveillance of health patterns.

The concept of risk has attracted significant attention within social theory over the last three decades (Adam et al., 2000; Beck, 1992; Beck, 2000; Beck et al., 1994; Douglas, 1992; Lupton, 2013). This literature is concerned with the question of how risks are constructed as social facts and the way that uncertainty is manufactured in response to a range of forces. Anticipating and mitigating against risk has become a dominant narrative trope in everything from public health and social policy to climate change and cyber security. Sociologists writing twenty years ago observed, even then, that “new preventive techniques of health promotion can be seen to reflect the operations of new techniques of social administration that target the individual-as-enterprise who is expected to manage his or her own relationship to risk” (Petersen, 1996: 45). Perhaps most influentially, German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992: 19) formulated the term “risk society” in the early 1990s to describe a condition bound up with processes of late modernity and individualisation whereby the “social production of wealth is systematically accompanied by the social production of risks”. He defined risk as:

[…] a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities introduced by modernization itself. Risks, as opposed to dangers, are consequences that relate to the threatening force of modernization and to its globalization of doubt. They are politically reflexive (21).

Beck was writing at a time when a range of transnational techno-scientific developments including emerging biotechnologies (the Human Genome Project) and the rise of the global Internet communications was at the forefront of public consciousness, but also in the spectre of nuclear catastrophe (the Chernobyl disaster) and post-Cold War political transformation. Since then, the financial disruptions spurned by the 2008 Global
Financial Crisis, the challenge of ecological climate change, and the spectre of global terror all add to the range of perceived threats and uncertainties. In canvassing the work on risk societies and reflexive modernisation, Jens Zinn (2008: 43) observes a shift in emphasis from technological-environmental risks and individualisation - particularly evident in the early work of Beck - to the “general logic of change in potentially all social domains within modernization”. Rose (2007: 70-71) argues “risk thinking” involves

[…] a family of ways of thinking and acting that involve calculations about probable futures in the present followed by interventions into the present in order to control that potential future.

Risk itself then becomes a pervasive force - no longer limited to the fields of economics, engineering and insurance claims, and instead occupying a central place in contemporary biopolitics (Rose, 2007: 71). As Beck (2006: 333) has convincingly argued, risk is not determined through a mathematical equation between probabilities of occurrence and exposure to harm, but rather is a “socially constructed phenomenon, in which some people have a greater capacity to define risks than others”. In the context of self-quantification technologies, when speech as biodata circulates in a privatised system of health care, for instance, it becomes a new way to ‘risk code’ the population, marking out and targeting some segments of population for care or treatment, while withholding it from others, leaving them to bear the burden of individual responsibility. As Giddens (1991: 5) described over two decades ago, under the conditions of late modernity, the “reflexive project of the self” involves the sustaining of “coherent, yet continually revised, biographical narratives” in the face of multiple choices and risks. Yet new economies of voice begin to transcode and reconstruct what constitutes the narrative ‘story of you’. This means that for some, self-quantification apps become a way to extend personal agency and positively influence outcomes in relation to their health status. For others, it becomes a way of determining which segments of the population are targeted for intervention or personal governance. The most obvious example for this might be in the development and deployment of self-quantification apps targeted towards monitoring Aboriginal health status, for instance, which are part of broader strategies of individual responsibilisation.

The QS movement exemplifies this shifting economy in which voice emerges and operates, and the contradictory ways that the category of speech both expands and contracts. Speech as biodata can be leveraged as a new form of consumer voice that
emerges in the context of social media and the rise of personalised and i-health care models. There are at least two registers of voice at work here: one where speech-as-biodata circulates between peers, and another where the medical-industrial-complex uses biodata-in-aggregate to develop individually targeted strategies for health and wellbeing, based on the needs and desires of each subject within a lucrative bioeconomy. It is easy to imagine how apps which track and monitor biodata for the management of chronic diseases, for instance - such as Type 2 diabetes - can be used to give users more control and say over the decisions and choices that affect their health. But other interests might use that data to work to condition new spaces of voice poverty - for instance, by affecting private insurance premiums, or withholding certain kinds of treatment.

Rose Galvan (2002: 115) connects the emergence of the “science of statistics” to the development and use of the concept of risk and the underlying moral component that it carries for individuals to manage both their risks and choices. This risk coding in turn reshapes the economics of speech in terms of biodata: we all become “subject to speculation” (Rajan, 2006: 280). This idea also connects back to Galloway’s point that populations are increasingly defined informatically and technologically as well as biologically: being ‘at risk’ is now partially determined through the patterns of your data trail. Jasbir Puar (2009) extends the work of Sarah Jain (2007: 79) who suggests that living in this risk-culture means we all potentially live “in prognosis”: living and dying in relation to risk, chance, probability and the science of statistics. While Puar is cautiously optimistic about the potentiality for hope that risk might offer - where particular disabilities are positioned not “merely in ideological terms as pathologies but as informational errors” which can be corrected - I am less convinced this formulation of error and risk, buoyed by the “neuromolecular gaze” of neuroscience (Abi-Rached and Rose, 2010), is immune from ideological incursion. Nevertheless, positioning risk in this way allows for new formulations of capacity and debility, and potentially new spaces for voice in this expanding bioeconomy of health.

How do practices of self-quantification reshape the expectations around how much subjects can know, control and modify about themselves? As already described earlier, neoliberal culture constructs the subject through acts of individual choice and freedom. Yet these choices are now increasingly determined by computational algorithms based on personal biodata that fundamentally alter what it means - and what is at stake - in the terms
and conditions of giving account. Increased self-surveillance produces new opportunities for productive freedom and self-expression, but at a cost: data is shared with corporate and state entities, and made visible through frames of recognition that designate value based on what the market prizes. Another way to put it would be to say there’s an expansion of speech - attached to forms of biodata - at the cost of others ‘tuning in’ to your data stream through listening strategies that monetise that value. In the following chapter, I consider these new economies of listening.

My brief examination of the QS movement reveals a simultaneous dispersal and dismantling of the elements of speech (in terms of their historical arrangement). Speech as biodata reconstitutes speech not through content or meaning, but as a series of information bits; units of use-value that can be split or recombined (blood pressure + sleep patterns, for example) into new arrangements - and new narrative forms - that can then be fed back into complex monitoring systems or distributed through networks. Distinct from F/OSS coders who are highly technically conversant in the systems of computational code - retaining direct control over the way their speech reshapes the architectures of the system - the average QS user may not fully understand the architectures, algorithms and protocols which reconstitute speech as biodata. In this way, categories of speech do expand, but in less stable, more volatile forms, subject to the speculation (and control) of others, and somewhat precariously connected to the (in)dividual and their bio-narrative. At one level, the everyday Quantified Self user conforms to the ideal neoliberal citizen: the self-optimising, entrepreneurial subject who voluntarily monitors, measures, regulates and collects biometric data on their own health, wellbeing and fitness; taking control of their own bodies on a minute and detailed level, making choices about what and how they use, share and represent themselves through that information. What is less clear is how this biodata also becomes a tool for new forms of regulation and control through the personal management of risk and an increased pressure to make the ‘right’ choices, while appearing to be a tool for the enlightened practice of freedom, enhancement, self-expression and ‘voice’.

**CONCLUSION**

As bio-informational, algorithmic and data-driven categories of speech gain increasing currency, it becomes clear that what is at stake in giving account of one’s life and
conditions is not just a struggle over who gets to speak, but over the very architectures and platforms that reconstruct, transcode and expand the domain of the ‘bio’. In tracing some of the nascent connections between the category of speech and new forms of expression, representation and transaction, I have illuminated both concerns over how speech has become commodified, but also how it is continually refashioned. This refashioning does more than ‘hollow’ out or devalue speech as a static category; it transcodes and expands the category of speech by creating new modes of address in terms of informational and computational frameworks and technologies. The increasing incorporation of market values into the structures of voice - including the architectures of the internet - doesn’t just create new forms of speech, for instance. They produce new incentives for listening and recognition to function as regulatory and disciplinary forces within the imperatives of a highly technical bioeconomy. Yet, as I have also shown, the consequences of this perceived contraction of voice are not always negative.

The chapter has focused on three examples to theorise a particular economy of voice and trace the development and transformation of the category of speech as it undergoes a shift from circulating within a relational or moral economy to confound such arrangements; where the value of speech is no longer located within the singular, speaking subject in straightforward ways but is instead transcoded as information, bio-information, informational code and biodata. I have examined three sites of cultural production that highlight some of the features of these new economies of speech: digital storytelling (DST), the free and open software (F/OSS) movement and the Quantified Self (QS) movement. Framed as ‘limit cases’, I have described how these emerging sites of struggle herald a rise in three emerging categories of speech: the ‘i-voice’, speech as code, and speech as biodata. I have shown some of the ways that the category of speech comes to be formed through new attachments: to biographical information (DST), informational code (F/OSS), and forms of biodata (QS). I have shown how each of these practices, in different ways, follow a techno-social trajectory where the value of speech is attached to increasingly entrepreneurial and technical forms of expression, transaction and value exchange. By placing them in conversation, I have mapped what I see as some interconnected trends: most significantly the intensification of individualised forms of speech, and the rise of the bio-informational in reconstructing the ‘story of you’.
Taken together, these three sites of everyday cultural production stand at the vanguard of new forms and possibilities for speech. Yet, they also mark a transformation in how speech is constituted and the values attached to its construction. The biographical narrative imperative set out in Chapter One has been transformed through technical configurations of the market in provocative, but also confounding ways. The economies of speech that emerge are not always distinctly ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, and the extent to which they can effect social, political or structural change is far from predetermined. In tracing a lose trajectory across this chapter I have described some of the emerging categories of speech that circulate in this new economy of voice. Each circulates in increasingly privatised, corporatised and monetised systems of bio-economic and technosocial value. In these instances, it becomes clear that the struggle for voice is increasingly reconstructed through sophisticated and technical categories of speech that forge new pathways into what constitutes the ‘story of you’. These struggles will only intensify in years to come.
4.

NEW ECONOMIES OF LISTENING

INTRODUCTION

The category of listening - like the category of speech - has undergone a transformational restructuring in terms of the kinds of connections and relationships that constitute listening itself, producing new sites of struggle in the politics of voice. The main work of this chapter is to map a change in how listening is deployed as it gets caught up in a series of competing priorities, imperatives, strategies and rationalities to be subsequently transformed from a “mode of attention” (Crawford, 2009) to a “mode of attunement” (James, 2013). I propose this transformation from attention to attunement is not simply a shift in register (that is, different levels of listening); it also signals a shift in category (different kinds of listening entirely). Further, this shift brings about changes in how listening is deployed: a trajectory that moves from intersubjective and relational listening; to neoliberal listening as a form of regulation and displacement; and the deployment of second-order listening as surveillance and extraction - where the ‘story of you’ is reconstructed through aggregated metadata and the transcoding of personal biodata. As in previous chapters, I make a distinction between practices that involve ethical exposure to, or openness towards, others, from tactical forms of listening that operate to maintain or reinforce established hierarchies, regulate the boundaries of acceptable modes of speech, or operate as a form of surveillance. At the same time, these categories of value are not always easily separable from each other.

In order to develop this account of listening, it is necessary to briefly revisit democratic and rights-based theories of listening to identify connections and distinctions between historical arrangements of listening and emerging economies of voice. However, as I have maintained throughout this thesis, these distinctions aren’t as clear or unproblematic as they might first appear: emerging strategies of listening are both connected to and depart from democratic, neoliberal and biopolitical imperatives. I begin by considering inclusive and therapeutic modes of listening to uncover how listening can be used to support democratic, participatory or justice-based imperatives, but are also put
to work in distinctly counter-productive and un-democratic ways. I do this to suggest that such practices in themselves are not value-neutral, but rather entangled in a broader meshwork of power and competing systems of influence. Later in this chapter, I draw on the work of philosopher Robin James (2013) to think through how democratic and rights-based theories of listening do not adequately account for new tactics and strategies of listening that challenge the very notion of what it means to ‘speak up’ or ‘be heard’. In tracing this development, I hope to develop a theory of listening that is unstable in its formation, where ideas of “tuning in” (Crawford, 2009), “dissonance” (Bickford, 1996) and “difference” (Dreher, 2009) take on more uncomfortable associations when attached to an emerging economy of neoliberal inclusion, regulation and surveillance. These listening practices instead operate as forms of regulation and control that stand apart from a moral economy of voice based on relational ethics.

As described in Chapter One, democratic theories of listening are conventionally formulated according to a relational logic of exposure and openness to others. This framing does important work to connect listening to relational practices that appeal to an intersubjective ethics: ideas of exposure, openness, and vulnerability to others through listening are commonly evoked in either arguing for a return to an intersubjective ethics or advocating for a re-thinking of the values placed on such moral orientations. These theories of listening activate a set of obligations, responsibilities or call for some sort of responsiveness and moral orientation connected to the needs of others; a “willingness to construct certain relations of attention” (Bickford, 1996: 147). Further, Dreher’s (2009) notion of “listening across difference”, which positions listening as a kind of bridging or connecting term; Bickford’s (1996) emphasis on listening and “dissonance” within democratic models of citizenship; and Fraser’s call for plurality within the public sphere (Fraser, 1990) each activate a reciprocal ethic of listening grounded in connection with others. In each instance, a politics of listening becomes a way to address structural imbalances that lead to the undervaluing of listening. Crawford (2009) has identified “emerging modes of paying attention online” as particular modes of listening to frame and examine the practices of “intimacy, connection, obligation and participation online” (Crawford, 2009: 527). Yet these emerging practices arise within a broader neoliberal economy of listening that also operate according to a logic of control and surveillance.
What this chapter hopes to illustrate is that particular tactics of listening can be deployed to maintain or reinforce established hierarchies, regulate the boundaries of acceptable modes of speech, and operate as new forms of surveillance and control. What follows does not attempt to be comprehensive or representative, but rather hopes to illustrate some of the ways listening is complicated by systems of value that compete with an ethical set of assumptions that generally underpin what it means to ‘listen’. These new circuits of meaning and pathways of exchange are, in some cases, attached to hierarchies of value that reorder voice according to its informational, data-driven and transactional components. According to this logic, it is no longer sufficient to ‘speak up’ or ‘be heard’. Neither is it necessary to engage in personal encounters in order to ‘listen’ or listen in to the lives of others.

REGULATING THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

While deliberate strategies of listening can be used to enlarge the space for a plurality of voices, this inclusive agenda is also subject to neoliberal and therapeutic reinvention. In this section I consider how listening can be implicated in neoliberal strategies of inclusion, predicated on the maintenance of established hierarchies of power through sites of narrative difference. This logics of listening is based less on a dialogic or participatory mode of listening than it is on a regulatory one. Listening practices associated with these rationalities mark out and distinguish between governable and resistant subjects, between those whose voices should be ‘included’ or accorded recognition, and those who are rendered unintelligible or identified as in need of reworking. The desire to hear and include a diversity of voices within the public sphere is also an imperative of neoliberal politics, as Lauren Berlant (1997) has noted in her theorisation of the “intimate public sphere”, and described in Chapter Three. Further, this intimate politics of listening and participation has become increasingly attached to the language of difference and diversity (Dreher, 2009; Husband, 1996); the rise of therapeutic culture and “emotional” or “caring” capitalism (Illouz, 2007; Vrasti, 2011); and the proliferation of “intimate economies”, particularly in the digital realm (Poletti, 2011; Poletti, 2011). All these intersecting forces make incursions into the spaces for listening.

Incorporated into this politics is an emphasis on listening as a socially desirable method of engagement for community building and cohesion. This can be seen in the
neoliberal policies of inclusion under New Labour in the United Kingdom in particular, but also in Australia. Neoliberal imperatives can also incorporate strategies of listening into social inclusion, where social inclusion itself is brought into alignment with political rationalities that enclose the marginal within the mainstream, co-opting and transplanting social justice agendas to its own ends. In this way, listening is implicated as a mode of governance of the other which simulates the feeling of being heard, without the attendant obligations of what it means to listen. This connects back to the rise of the i-voice I traced in the previous chapter in which I positioned digital storytelling as a particular formation of speech becomes attached to extra-social systems of value. This kind of listening, when coupled with narratives of individual responsibilisation, is often detached from a moral obligation on the part of the listener to address the needs and desires held within such accounts. Small-scale instances of voice may activate reciprocal listening at a community or personal level, but the broader architectures that structure voice are also implicated in instrumentalising listening as a strategy to ‘voice’ difference within processes of smoothing over that incorporate these narratives back into the grand narrative of progress. This feeds into the ‘celebration of voice’ narrative, without necessarily carrying any political or material effects. In this way, social power is temporarily redistributed through individual narrative sites and listening practices, but not necessarily maintained more broadly.

Further, while listening as inclusion celebrates the diversity of individuals speaking for themselves, it can also weaken community opportunities for gaining increased political or social power. Listening of this kind incorporates the mechanisms of being heard - the progressive tendency to embrace stories of the marginalised ‘in their own voice’ - but do not necessarily serve the long-term interests of these groups or change their position of power in society (Kennedy, 2013; Thill, 2009). This communicative and discursive shaping of the ways in which subjects are rendered intelligible occurs through this particular politics of listening. To be clear, these modes and forms of listening in themselves are not new, nor are they necessarily a barrier to registering voice. In certain contexts and circumstances, they work in productive ways. However, my interest is in how institutional practices of listening (and recognition) simultaneously construct and erase the margins through a

---

12 For instance, in mid-2012 former Prime Minister Tony Abbott embarked on a brief, but high-profile ‘listening tour’ to the Cape York community of Arukun - one of many that Abbott has embarked upon since. At the time, Crikey journalist Chris Graham, in his article ‘Cape York Listening Tour Falls on Deaf Eyes’, scathingly dismissed any long-term impact of the listening tour, suggesting it was “good if you’re looking for a headline. Not so good if you’re looking for a way out of entrenched disadvantage”.
politics of inclusion, where communities designated as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘marginalised’ are then brought into the mainstream. Here, practices of listening create spaces of enclosure or containment around voiced concerns, while appearing to register the needs of community. Conceptually, listening as enclosure - a tactic for deliberately or strategically closing off the possibilities for transformation or change, a way of reaffirming established systems of value - can be thought of as forms of non-listening or anti-listening. However, as I describe in the following section, I am more interested in how these modes of listening operate in the context of new economies of voice to instead ask: what kinds of listening practices are produced according to the present conditions, and how are they put to work?

**Therapeutic listening and economies of displacement**

Cate Thill’s (2009) work with remote Indigenous communities and their response to the Australian Commonwealth Government’s 2007 Intervention highlights the fault lines in liberal discourses of listening, and its operationalisation on the ground. Thill observed how listening was used in the Australian federal government’s Northern Territory Intervention response:

> While listening can figure as a way of responding to the other ... it is certainly not always open, empathetic or transformative. On the contrary, I would suggest that public debate about the NT Intervention manifests a range of communicative practices, including argumentation, therapeutic and selective listening, which function to preserve rather than transform established hierarchies of attention (541).

Of particular relevance to my analysis is Thill’s reference to therapeutic and selective listening, which I briefly address in turn below. While both modes of listening have important roles to play in democratic processes - such as in formal truth and reconciliation frameworks, or community consultation processes - Thill shows how the state can deploy these very same strategies of listening to solidify, rather than diversify or dissolve, existing relations of power and systems of knowledge, while masquerading as a form of community engagement and responsiveness to the needs and desires of community. While political listening of the kind Bickford and others put forward demands a certain kind of openness and orientation towards the other, therapeutic listening is instead directed towards marking out subjects as vulnerable, in need of care or governance.
Both post-Foucauldian (Rose, 1989) and feminist (Becker, 2005) frames of analyses have exposed these relations of power at play in ‘the therapeutic’, and the way it shapes subjectivity through intimate mechanisms of social regulation. The ascendency of “therapeutic culture” (Nolan, 1998) over the last few decades - and its attendant form of listening - holds out a promise of engagement (‘tell me your concerns’) but are often detached from a commitment to action, as the above quote reveals. Therapeutic culture operates on a dual logic of confession and optimisation; where speech is connected to self-reflexive and enterprising tendencies, and modes of listening are moulded around these. In this economy of listening, the performance of registering what one has to say may create the feeling of being heard without the necessary political effects: ‘the therapeutic’ becomes the dominant frame that prescribes how one can listen and what one hears (to borrow from Bickford). From a post-Foucauldian standpoint, therapeutic culture and, by extension, therapeutic listening, operate regulatory forms of social control, and a mechanism through which particular kinds of subjectivity are designated, shaped and maintained (Rose, 1989; Wright, 2008). Rose’s (1999) work on the governing of the self in advanced liberal democracies reveals how individuals are increasingly rendered responsible for decisions and choices. Following Rose, John Tebutt (2009: 550-551) argues this involves “learning to listen” as part of a therapeutic approach to governance that internalises and psychologises responsibility as a requisite for being a ‘good’ citizen.

Approaching Thill’s account of the NT Intervention with this post-Foucauldian frame, we can see how therapeutic listening can become intimately entangled with the “biopolitics of healing” (Million, 2013: 147), where the psychological trauma of dispossession within First Nations and indigenous communities becomes the object of listening at the expense of accounts of structural injustice, oppression, or making claims to human rights. This continual expansion of therapeutic modes of listening into the realm of politics and state sovereignty not only blurs the political and therapeutic, it also dilutes the power of a transformative politics of listening put forward by scholars like Bickford and Dreher. In his critique of national reconciliation projects and strategies of ‘healing’ in post-conflict societies, Michael Humphrey (2005: 209) contends that historical injustice is increasingly managed therapeutically and reconceived as psychological injury or individual trauma. This therapeutic ethos, he insists, “dominates relations between the state and its
Beyond Voice Poverty

citizens”. This subsuming of the political by the personal is a far cry from the emancipatory politics of ‘the personal is political’.

What Kaushik Sunder Rajan (2006: 179) diagnoses as the “enlarged of the domain of the therapeutic” also privileges a particular politics of voice based on the exposure to and the subsequent overcoming or managing or risk, and stories of optimisation that are paradoxically embedded within a precarious and ongoing site of maximisation. Individual stories take shape within this biopolitical field of governance, rendered intelligible via a neoliberal subjectivity (and their associated forms of recognition). When considered in this context, therapeutic listening practices can reproduce structures of colonial power rather than decolonise the terms of engagement between mainstream and marginalised communities (Dutta, 2014). This echoes Humphrey’s (2005: 203) caution that the therapeutic reframing of historical injustice is “no substitute for the reconstruction of an inclusive society”.

Thill’s (2009) analysis of “selective” listening suggests a related practice that involves a deliberate ‘tuning in’ and ‘tuning out’, or a kind of switching on and off of attention, that is contingent upon the degree to which what is said supports or challenges the position of the listener. As I have argued, listening shapes and regulates the boundaries of acceptable (and possible) speech, so that what is narratable is partially shaped by the priorities, purposes and objects of listening (Tebbutt, 2009). In modulating the degree and direction of attention, selective listening can be employed as a subtle but deliberate strategy of exercising power and authority. As Thill attests to in the case of the NT Intervention, when the listener - as a representative of the state - holds the power to determine when and how the object of listening is heard, listening itself is implicated in the reproduction of systems of oppression. This logics of listening also becomes a way of managing risks, categorising and prioritising segments of the population over others, as well as marking out subjects for reworking - in this case, Indigenous communities themselves. But it also helps me think through how listening can shift between a mode of attention and a mode of attunement as it becomes attached to competing priorities and political rationalities.

Some scholars might argue that such logics of listening give rise to non-listening or listening that is not ‘true’ listening because they do not challenge existing hierarchies, structures or conditions of voice poverty. However, I maintain it is more productive to
consider how these particular kinds of listening emerge within an economy of voice that is both connected to, and departs from, democratic and neoliberal imperatives. Specifically, in the way that certain strategies of therapeutic and selective listening are no longer accorded value through their attachment to a reciprocal ethics or intention of openness, but rather in the way they privilege certain modes of address to regulate the contours of what can be said, normalising the terms through which certain narratives come into being. For instance, when listening is incorporated into a logic of inclusion, narratives produced through these frames are increasingly based on the articulation of difference and belonging. When listening becomes a mechanism of therapeutic governance, narratives bound up with ideals of self-transformation and actualisation are favoured over narratives that insist on questioning prevailing sites of authority.

Further, listening practices that are attuned to, and coproduce, therapeutic narratives bear out a tension between capitalist narratives of progress and neoliberal narratives of self-regulation. This economy of listening is can be understood in the broader context of “therapeutic authority” (Miller and Rose, 1994: 59) and “emotional capitalism” (Illouz, 2007) that have emerged in advanced liberal democracies over the last thirty years. In the 1990s, Toby Miller and Nikolas Rose (1994: 59) charted the emergence of this “new species of authority” attached, as they saw it, to a diverse range problems concerning the governing and conduct of life, through reflexive modes of self-scrutiny and regulation. With this therapeutic authority came new “[e]xpertises, technologies and representations that give a form to the therapeutic machine [which] redefine the limits of vision, and create new ways of acting upon that which is brought into view” (59). Therapeutic listening then reconstructs the neoliberal subject by ‘listening out’ for narratives of empowerment, autonomy, optimisation and individual responsibility. This kind of listening is acutely attuned to registering the twin discourses of individual choice and responsibility, bringing into view various biopolitical strategies for transformation and intervention.

The cultural junction between therapeutic listening and neoliberal imperatives brings about an intensification of the ways in which subjects are incited to continually work on themselves. American sociologist Eva Illouz (Illouz, 2007: 56) - whose work focuses on the intersection of values, emotions and modernity - convincingly argues that the therapeutic narrative favoured by emotional capitalism is located at the “tenuous, conflict-ridden and unstable junction between the market and the language of rights which saturates
Beyond Voice Poverty

civil society”. This “enlargement of the domain of the therapeutic” (Rajan, 2006: 144), when underpinned by “emotional and economic discourses and practices [that] mutually shape each other” (Illouz, 2007: 5), conditions particular modes of listening. This mode of attunement is distinct from a moral economy of voice based in an ethical obligation to need. Rather, this kind of listening can prioritise continual narratives and practices of self-care and self-craft at over broader narratives of structural exclusion and disempowerment. As Illouz (2007: 54) describes in relation to the expanding domain of health, “therapeutic narratives create market niches” and encourage particular subject formations; the ‘good’ subject is recognised according to particular narrative identity formations that privilege self-empowerment and optimisation and rendered intelligible according to a therapeutic mode of attentiveness.

Here we can begin to see the transformation of listening from attention to attunement. This is not a “listening across difference” as theorised by Dreher (2009), but a listening out for difference (or dissonance, as I will return to further on) - a regulatory listening that works to reshape subjectivities according to market, neoliberal and biopolitical priorities; a therapeutic logics of listening out for difference and discord that operates in order to bring outliers back into consonance with values of the political orthodoxy. The exact quality that makes listening a regulatory force that forecloses certain kinds of narratives and conditions the production of others is also connected to the transformative potential of a politics of listening that addresses social inequalities and political power differentials. The regulatory effects of listening - both liberating and constraining - are often downplayed in calls for a shift from ‘speaking up’ to ‘being heard’. In emerging economies of listening, practices of reciprocity and obligation connected to the historical arrangement of voice are recuperated in the name of neoliberal enterprise and individual self-craft.

Whether listening to the self, or state forms of listening to the population, listening contains a double imperative: democratic and inclusive tendency on the one hand, and a mechanism for biopolitical governance on the other. Tensions, contradictions and uncertainties are smoothed out in the process of this kind of listening, not with the aim of building consensus or with activating change, but with the reincorporation of these back into the individual story. For instance, neoliberalism’s insistence on individual responsibility can obscure the inequities of race, class and gender and incorporates them in
broad narratives of difference and enterprise. This was partly evident in the example of the *It Gets Better* campaign discussed in Chapter Three.

Listening carries with it an enormous power - to open or shut down debate - as the political gap between ‘speaking up’ and ‘being heard’ goes some way to reveal. As such, listening can have both chilling or liberating effects: it can be an unwelcome intrusion or incursion into the space of another (whether personal or ethical), so that the metaphor of ‘tuning in’ - one so often invoked in discourses of positive psychology and therapeutic culture (and now embedded within the norms of everyday life), corporate leadership and other self-development mantras - takes on a more uncomfortable tone and register. It can operate as both a liberating and regulating force.

As new technologies fundamentally reconfigure the social fabric of everyday life and neoliberal culture proliferates across the globe, sophisticated techniques of listening and surveillance regulate the relationships and stories that flow between the subject and the state. Regulatory forms of listening reshape the behaviours, strategies and actions of the objects of surveillance. But as Robin James (2013) argues, and as I will elaborate in the following section, even these accounts of listening fail to recognise how listening works in these rapidly shifting conditions.

**LISTENING-AS-SURVEILLANCE**

Following the June 2013 leaking of classified information about the US National Security Agency (NSA) data-collecting program PRISM by former NSA contractor, Edward Snowden (coloured with some Cold War-era antics involving a Rubik’s Cube), a media storm blew up concerning civil liberties, the limits of privacy, the reach of state security, the implications of data mining on citizens, and how to respond to the continuing shadow of transglobal terrorism (Andrejevic and Gates, 2014; Hardy and Williams, 2014; Smith, 2014; Witte, 2014). Much of the debate evoked the political metaphors of state surveillance and ‘the gaze’ in the dystopian visions of Orwell’s Big Brother and Bentham’s Panopticon. However, philosopher and academic Robin James’ (2013) incisive critical analysis of this political incident called instead for a “new theory of listening” (James, 2013) to understand the significance of the use of PRISM program. This section takes up James’ challenge to think through how listening works in a way that accounts for these shifting
technological, informational and political conditions. I consider James’ formulation of neoliberal modes of listening and “listening as attunement” in light of the previous section to suggest a conceptual shift from ‘policing boundaries’ to ‘tuning frequencies’ as a way of state securitisation. I argue this can productively be theorised as a shift to a new economy of listening. This second-order register of listening circulates within the same economy that connects the category of speech to data, digital information and code.

Following the PRISM revelations, US President Barak Obama publicly defended his government’s program by claiming: “nobody is listening to your telephone calls” (Baker and Sanger, 2013). However, James (2013) rejected the basis of Obama’s claim with the observation that he was correct only in sense that we currently understand listening; an understanding she maintains is both insufficient and misplaced in this context. Obama was able to claim ‘nobody is listening’ by making a subtle, but deliberate, distinction between what I identify as two distinct economies of listening that each operate according to different set of logics: listening to people’s telephone calls or reading their emails; and “sifting through this so-called metadata” or “top line data” (Baker and Sanger, 2013). In other words, his claim rests on a distinction between listening as formulated according to a historical arrangement of voice (as mapped out in Chapter One), and a new economy of voice where the protocols and architectures of listening are connected to new objects of value, including personal metadata. This distinction highlights a key point in my formulation of new economies of voice, and is crucial to understanding how listening works in this context. It reveals two registers of voice at work: one in which listening is connected to the content of personal communications; and another where the listening apparatus itself is attuned to the flows and architectures of those communications.

Surveillant listening of this kind involves a continuous, systematic and automated sifting, sorting and transcoding of informational, data-driven ‘speech’. The kinds of listening involved in PRISM, and programs like it, are not concerned with the surveillance of content or meaning, but rather about the “attunement” of your data stream (James, 2013). What the PRISM revelations uncover are sophisticated and technical modes of listening that function as an incursion, as well as a high-tech form of extraction. These programs tactically strand out content (practices of speech) from metadata (architectures of speech) in the parsing of personal communication. James’ productive use of the metaphors of attunement, audition and dissonance helps her to understand the political
Beyond Voice Poverty

significance and impact of the PRISM surveillance program, and develop an account of “how listening works” in these conditions. In other words, rather than performing a slight of hand by mistaking the metaphor of listening for listening as it is increasingly deployed, James picks up on a crucial point: that metaphors cannot be separated from the political conditions in which they emerge. This is particularly relevant in the context of neoliberalism, biopolitics and big data. Listening is a metaphor, but it listening-assurveillance is also a very real strategy of biopolitical governance. Following James, I adopt this ‘double frame’ of listening in the same way that I deploy voice in this double sense. More importantly, it supports the case I’m developing across this chapter that there is a current shift from ‘attention’ to ‘attunement’.

Certainly, listening has been implicated in state surveillance and espionage since at least as long as listening devices have been invented. Strategies of intelligence gathering have always made use of - and emerged from - the available listening technologies of the times. In some ways, the technological architectures of post-convergence inevitably bring with them the listening tactics of a Second Cold War. Yet, unlike Cold War tactics, this emerging economy of listening is not a targeted, but a more pervasive and permeating kind, made possible by distributed and the networked internet architectures of everyday use. It also operates on a technical stranding out and sorting of biodata from other kinds of data also attached to ideas of the self (the biological, biographical). The significance of this in terms of voice is that the State - and its privatised, outsourced contractors - is finding new methods, tactics and narratives (global terror and crisis) to routinely scrutinise both citizens and non-citizens alike, through new circuits of attunement (Tebbutt, 2011). And, unlike the phone hacking scandals in Britain that revealed journalists from the UK-based tabloid newspaper News of the World had extra-legal and remotely tapped into the voice mails of a number of unsuspecting citizens to listen into their phone messages and private conversations – in many ways, conventional eavesdropping – I argue second-order listening operates on another register where the value of information is not found in the content of what people are saying, but in the order of their metadata. In other words, a program like PRISM ‘listens’ at a meta-level to identify and extract what journalist Glenn Greenwald (2013) describes as “transactional information”, rather than the content of communication or individual speech.
Snowden’s concerns over the capturing and use of personal metadata, and the subsequent incursions into the private lives of citizens by state surveillance and sovereign power, in many ways exemplifies these new economies of voice. On the one hand, Snowden’s public descriptions of the workings of PRISM and other similar state surveillance programs can be understood as an attempt to intervene in, and resuscitate, the ethical domain of human intersubjectivity into debates over privacy, liberty and freedom. At the same time, his revelations unmask the new frontiers of politics and voice in a globalised, privatised and deterriorialised technoscape. The general unease with which the Snowden revelations were initially met by the general public suggests a kind of ethical violence is being performed - at a highly technical and obscured level; an ethical violence that ruptures the connection between the ‘story of you’ and the story told through traces of your metadata. This highlights the importance of distinguishing between current and emerging economies of voice, and the way in which particular strategies of listening are deployed in complex and subtle ways for the purposes of surveillance and control.

The Snowden revelations also reveal the fault lines emerging in the idea of listening itself. These new economies of listening can operate to regulate and designate certain sectors of the population as targets for neoliberal reworking, without engaging directly with, or providing the opportunity for, people to give account of their lives, in any modernist or conventional sense of the notion. It reveals collapse and reconstruction of the elements of what is constituted as speech (in an information economy) and listening (in a society of control). In other words, it exposes the very frontiers of what ‘having a voice’ means, how voice works in these particular conditions, and the very terms that can account for such a shift.

Algorithmic listening

Listening practices that scan for dissonance or discord within the population are now incorporated into algorithmic processes of de-individualisation and disposability, covertly determining whose lives are deemed disposable, undesirable or threatening to established hierarchies and regimes of power. PRISM, and programs like it, tune in to patterns of dissonance within the population, supplanting traditional methods for identifying suspected dissidents not by identifying the content of speech, but speech as it is attached to personal metadata and extracted through algorithmic listening. A potential dissident, for instance,
Beyond Voice Poverty

might register at the level of dissonance under one of these programs, so that to remain within the limits of ‘normal’, citizens must carefully modify and modulate their speech (their digital input, data points and patterns of use) accordingly. The category of dissident here encompasses more than the narrowly defined political dissident. Instead, it also captures anyone who sits apart from established structures or mechanisms of power. This cannot be explained simply in terms of a new form of Foucauldian discipline through panoptic surveillance. Instead, this bureaucratic form of designation and control made possible by the era of Big Data is more akin to what Puar (2007: 115) describes as informational surveillance: a “process of administration, social sorting and simulation” made possible by new configurations and assemblages of technology.

The shift in economies of listening from movement of attention - where attention requires a deliberate act or intention with some sort of directionality where there is a targeted object of listening (Tebbutt, 2009) - to a mode of attunement, connects back to Deleuze’s logic of control: modulation. James’ critique reveals how PRISM operates as an algorithmic listening that sifts and filters (like tuning in to a radio signal) to register forms of dissonance or discord within the population. For instance, Zeynep Tufekci (2014) - whose research focuses on the interaction between technology and social, cultural and political dynamics - found that some activists during the Arab Spring who used Twitter and other social media platforms deliberately modified their online activity so as to render themselves invisible to machine algorithms, aware that their data trails were being monitored. In her digital ethnography, Tufekci found that activists used sophisticated methods of shifting between Twitter hashtags, while maintaining conversation threads amongst a network of peers to circumvent the listening tactics of online surveillance. The activists using Twitter generally worked within existing social media architectures to manipulate their online appearance to shield themselves from state scrutiny - a technical step under free and open source software coders who manipulate the digital architecture itself. However, these activists were still able to accumulate value within their own network of peers, while minimising their exposure to the surveillance apparatus of the Tunisian state that ‘tuned in’ to their posts and feeds. These machine algorithms ‘listen in’ to metadata patterns and movements within a population of users. From their online behaviour, it is clear that these activists - on the margins of the political order - were well aware of the implications of not modifying their modes of address and communications, or the consequences of not finding ways to circumvent state tactics of listening as surveillance.
This example may be at the extreme end of the surveillance spectrum, but is nonetheless a prominent and important instance of how second-order listening works.

The authority to listen in - to authorise second-order listening - is determined by larger coordinated systems of control and rapidly expanding forms of privatised and deterritorialised supra-state power, enabled by the architectures of the Internet. No longer are stories “authored and authorized” dialogically or collaboratively according to Jackson’s (2002) formulation. Authorship and authorisation - as well as the notion of ‘story’ itself - take on another layer of significance in relation to emerging economies of voice. The task of state listening is increasingly outsourced to government contractors and private corporations with an interest in state securitisation (Kallberg and Thuraisingham, 2013) and mechanised by systems and protocols set up to listen in to, and assess, continuous digital flows and personal data streams (Ball, 2013). Certainly, there are forms of labour and human capital that support and enable these mechanisms of listening, but it is decentralised, deterritorialised and outsourced so that any connection between ‘speaking’ and ‘being heard’ is tactically and carefully dismantled.

Second-order listening

As a theoretical frame, second-order listening opens up a route for thinking about new frontiers of voice poverty that challenge what it means to give account and be taken into account, to expose the architectural contours that shape what ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’ actually are, and how they come to work in different ways. I use second-order listening, not to convey the idea of ‘listening to listening’, but to convey the register at which this particular kind of listening occurs: at the level of metadata and architecture, at the level of patterns of speech, and at the level of processes and flows of information which are as valuable, or more valuable, than the content of the information itself. The technical operations and incursions of the PRISM program can be understood as a second-order form of listening that cannot be accounted for by a relational economy of voice that connects speakers and listeners. It operates on an entirely different register. Listening at the metadata level is an atomised and impersonal form of listening, independent from the idea that listening requires some sort of sensory interaction (Bickford, 1996: 144). But further than that, it is a disintegrated form of listening, one that breaks down the components of voice into bits of information and data. This distinction makes it easy for
Beyond Voice Poverty

the US President and others shift the focus from questions about personal privacy and intrusions on civil liberties to one of necessary state security. The NSA can claim it is not infiltrating the private sphere of everyday citizens to hear their communications based on a framing of second-order listening that operates according to a new economy of voice.

As our personal biodata and metadata make up more than just informational traces - they make up the new stories of our lives - second-order listening becomes part of the biopolitical economy of governing lives. Distinct from the historical arrangement of voice, second-order listening does not require an “appropriately attentive listener” (Crawford, 2009: 529) to tune in to segments of the population. Rather, this mode of listening understands that our ‘information chains’ are a new form of biovalue in the current neoliberal and informational economy, not just as external pointers to patterns of behaviour and interactions which can be shaped to fit social and political ends, but also as an algorithmic route to identifying and reconstructing the story of you, with unforeseen consequences.

Second-order listening can also be productively understood as a listening of extraction: there is a tuning in followed by a pulling out of relevant or valuable parts of your data stream (and often reconstituting a story about you from that information). The directionality of extraction - a pulling out - perhaps goes part way to explaining public discomfort with the Snowden revelations. This is not just a new kind of intrusion or violation, but, more significantly, it involves a particular kind of loss: a loss of control of one’s own narrative or story. Through a technological reverse engineering, second-order listening strategies work to extract and reconstruct the ‘story of you’ through the traces of metadata left behind; ordinary citizens potentially lose control of their own story in the process. Here, we can recognise the connection to and departure from a historical arrangement of voice. To continue the information metaphor, the re-combination and migration of data can often involve some type of digital loss (particularly in the erasure and discarding of information that is counter to or of little use value to surveillance priorities). So personal, subjective loss is transcoded as a loss of digital information. The implications of

---

13 For instance, the controversial US drone strikes on US targets based on metadata analysis and geo-location tracking devices within mobile phones, as reported by investigative journalists Glenn Greenwald and Jeremy Schuhill (see Andrejevic, M. and K. Gates, 2014: 185-96) can be understood in light of these new economies of listening, the digital processing of mass information and the reconstitution of individual histories, stories and identities through the extraction and triangulation of personal metadata.
Beyond Voice Poverty

this are more than a vertical flattening (‘hollowing out’) or horizontal squashing (‘crowding out’) of the category of voice. This limit case also highlights how control of your story is now mediated by technologies of surveillance so that ‘listening in’ has multiple effects: it not only alters strategies of narration and modes of address (as with the practice of sub-tweeting etc. described earlier), it also begins to reshape the digital narrative of you. This is not simply an inevitable result of an “algorithmic culture” (Galloway and Thacker, 2004) that breaks down and recombines units of our digital selves. Rather, the connection between strategies of listening, technologies of surveillance and the reconstruction of one’s digital story through metadata is a reminder that ideology is encoded within the protocols and architectures of the internet (Galloway, 2006), shaping the contours and affordances of voice within broader neoliberal and geopolitical agendas.

Second-order listening is a mode of attunement concerned not with the content of speech, but with the overall shape, pattern, form and direction of informational flows, pathways of exchange and the digital data traces and trails we accumulate in the course of our daily lives. In other words, second-order listening tunes in to the architectures of speech (or operates at the level of architecture). It operates on a logic that inverts and reverses the directional flow from a ‘right to be heard’ (which flows from the speaker to the listener) to a ‘right to know’ (which flows from listening towards the speaker), an opening of the subject of surveillance to a constant exposure to the powers of listening. This economy of listening is not attached to bidirectional flows, but is instead attached to state, corporate or private interests and information gathering mechanisms. Reconstructing subjects from their data is a new form of (non-ethical) relationality whereby subjects come into view through the sum of their data relationships. What I am attempting to describe and theorise is that a transcoding of personal biodata - and its attachment to new categories of listening and speech - through the tactical appropriation of listening in a variety of contexts. This creates new conditions and categories of voice poverty that cannot be addressed by a return to a relational model of voice.

Second-order listening uses de-identified but individuated personal data, but reconstructs subjects as potential targets for surveillance through their valuable units of information through a continual sorting and resorting. The everyday digital traces that citizens leave behind in their metadata tells a story that is not always of their making. This situation is not dissimilar to instances of the QS movement, where users are generally
aware of the biodata they are continually generating and distributing, yet less aware of the value and use this information is when put to use in other contexts. The actions and movements of citizens are ‘listened to’ and stored in massive storage facilities, rendered intelligible by complex computational algorithms that resuscitate a person’s metadata to reconstruct a new kind of digital story. But this digital story bears little to no resemblance to the everyday stories told by ordinary people giving account of themselves and their lives, as described in Chapter One. This account is entirely reconstructed through mechanisms of power that have been authorised - and have the authority - to determine the value or disposability of that story and the person it is attached to, through bio-informational channels. But it is not just the state - corporate and private interests also ‘tune in’ to your data stream, with algorithmic listening on social media such as social media hashtag sentiment analysis and Google analytics etc. that mine the value of a user’s metadata to determine their preferences and likes and to develop products, markets and niches that respond to the tastes of the neoliberal subject (Harcourt, 2014). The social impact on citizens both within and outside of the US of listening through mass “dataveillance” (Orito, 2011) is yet to fully take shape.

CONCLUSION

Like the category of speech, listening has undergone a transformational restructuring along neoliberal and highly technical lines to be deployed in different ways, acting as a regulatory and surveillance force of a new order. Over the course of this thesis, I have been building the argument that the historical arrangement of voice is being reshaped in complex ways to fundamentally alter the category of voice. This, in part, has involved the tactical prizing apart of the mechanisms of speech and listening from their relational foundations. This restructuring of voice, I argue, has necessarily impacted on everyday struggles over the very meaning and value of voice, and the terms of these debates. In this chapter, I have traced a subtle shift in the trajectory of listening from attention to attunement in the context of overlapping therapeutic, algorithmic and surveillance economies of voice. The modulation of voice and the attunement of listening are coproduced through a logic of continual regulation and management of inputs and outputs (a metaphor that cuts across increasingly interconnected neoliberal, computational and techno-scientific domains). These metaphors also mark a shift, perhaps, from the mechanical age and its disciplinary language (pressure, enclosure etc.) to a networked,
digital one. These metaphors are not merely conceptual tools. As I have argued, the data-driven, informational and market-oriented forms of that speech and listening are attached to (and reformulated by) make a strong case for rethinking voice through these frames.

In considering the way that therapeutic listening has increasingly become one of several neoliberal rationalities used to govern how subjects can account and take responsibility for themselves, I have suggested that these practices often solidify - rather than dissolve or challenge - existing structures of power. This mode of listening has arguably embedded itself in the structures of contemporary culture, beyond the concerns I raised in relation to colonial-indigenous relations. This therapeutic mode of listening can also be seen in recent efforts by federal politicians to appear more responsive to concerns of certain sections of the electorate. This apparent disconnect reveals how therapeutic modes of listening - even when undertaken with the best of intentions - can and must be understood to operate in a broader economy of displacement, where political claims for voice and restorative justice are replaced by a curative framework of healing, consultation or appeasement. Short-term, fly-in/fly-out tactics of listening - such as those described by Thill earlier in this chapter - certainly make a headline or two, and sometimes bring immediate relief, but the value of these particular kinds of listening are not self-evident.

The transformation of listening has taken shape in relation to new regimes of value that are attached to increasingly technical, algorithmic and distributed forms of power, so that what has been conventionally understood as an interdependent relationship between speaking and listening is now a cross-informational one. In addition to the displacement effects of therapeutic listening, and narrow frames of attention within this new economy of voice, I have also considered neoliberal listening in relation to tactics of surveillance and extraction. If the PRISM revelations exposed the vulnerability of ordinary citizens to the new frontier of voice poverty, it also challenged the very notion of voice poverty as a rights-based claim to voice. In some ways, a defence against the powers of listening-as-surveillance requires an inversion of the traditional formulation of voice poverty: it invokes a right to privacy over a right to be heard. Setting aside the limits of rights-based claims to voice I have already discussed, there is a further problematic at work here. The right to privacy, or the right not to be heard, only makes sense in an economy of voice that connects metadata to the category of speech through a mode of second-order listening that operates at the level of architecture. Securing the conditions not to be heard involves an
Beyond Voice Poverty

 intervention from one of two directions: a stopping of the modes of strategic listening, or from the other end of everyday action through a sophisticated modulation and modification of mediated acts that leave digital traces of the self.

As this chapter has argued, new sites of contestation are opening up that extend beyond the right to speak and be heard: they are sites of continual modulation and attunement. By considering just some of the ways listening has been redeployed, I have hoped to show that relational models of listening can no longer be called upon as a self-evident remedy to these new conditions of voice poverty. In the cases I described, the very idea of listening has been displaced or detached from the act of being heard and instead connected to new regimes and objects of value. Rather than drawing attention to the structures that shape who can speak, who is heard and to what effect, for voice poverty to retain its theoretical usefulness as a frame for these debates, it must be re-conceptualised beyond these limits to account for an economy of voice that privileges technical, market-driven (including therapeutic) and individuated systems of transaction and control.

This new economy of listening is characterised by instability, precarity and a constant reworking in response to an exposure to multiple sites of monitoring and surveillance. As described in relation to PRISM, as well as in the previous chapter, it is the emerging class of high-tech elite fluent in the internals of the system (including individual actors, but also contractors and private arms of decentralised government) that have the most power to influence and participate in this new economy of voice. The new ‘voice poor’ might indeed be those increasing number of everyday actors who are left to find ways to refashion the architectures and platforms of voice through new modes of participation, or who otherwise find themselves exposed to the opaque and technical tactics of listening. As I have hoped to show, these modulations of speech arise, in part, through a response to an economy of listening that use automated processes to sort and assess Big Data sets by ‘tuning in’ to certain patterns of behaviour.

As both therapeutic listening and the PRSIM revelations reveal in relation to second-order listening, framing voice entirely in terms of social relations or rights can foreclose other routes to analysing voice. These approaches cannot account for new economies of listening that expose subjects to new conditions of voice poverty beyond its development-oriented origins. As state, corporate and commercial interests intersect and converge, the
architectures of voice are unmade and remade. In the era of big data and microtechnologies, the bi-polar scale of Foucault’s biopower is recast in a new light: tuning in to the population occurs in increasingly sophisticated and complex ways; and individual subjects remake themselves but, as Marx emphasised, in conditions not of their own choosing.
5.

NEW ECONOMIES OF RECOGNITION

INTRODUCTION

Like the categories of speech and listening, recognition is put to work in different ways. This chapter rethinks the concept of recognition in light of the cultural shifts outlined in part one to describe how some frames of recognition - when attached to particular objects of value and neoliberal norms - can themselves be implicated in the uneven reproduction of power. Yet these limited frames are also redeployed in new ways, or produce new forms of recognisability. On the one hand, the increasing incorporation of market values into the structures of recognition (entrepreneurial enterprise, individual optimisation and reponsibilisation) constitutes the neoliberal subject in different ways: increasingly, the subject deemed ‘worthy’ of recognition is the one who demonstrates their value in terms of market productivity, bodily capacity, individual enterprise and the imperatives of personal governance. Where Fraser (2000) expressed concern over the displacement of emancipatory politics of recognition by an identity-based politics (described in my opening chapter), political claims to voice are now also entangled in an enterprise, market-driven politics, where recognition is garnered through the performance of productivity. For instance, I revisit practices of self-quantification and enhancement technologies (first described in Chapter Three) in light of neoliberal frames of recognition to explore these very questions. When market values are incorporated into particular frames of recognition, this changes the terms in which voice can be registered, and produces new forms of recognisability. At the same time, ‘technical’ frames of recognition connected to ideas of “informational self-determination” (van Alsenoy et al., 2014) and the rights of “data subjects” also point toward new horizons for voice, as my final limit case illustrates.

In Chapters Three and Four, I built an argument that categories of speech and listening become attached to new objects of value that transform - and, in some instances, transcode - conventional notions of voice and come to circulate within an economic relationship underpinned by a particular set of neoliberal and technically-mediated values.
In this chapter, I propose that recognition - the frames, terms and norms - is increasingly attached to values prioritised by market individualism and the tendencies of neoliberal culture. To elaborate: whereas speaking and listening have historically been understood as implicitly linked and constituted through a process of mutual recognition (Couldry, 2009), emerging economies of voice recast speech and listening as new objects of value that are constituted through neoliberal values of recognition. It would be a mistake to overlook this restructuring of recognition by simply categorising it as a form of ‘misrecognition’, ‘distorted’ recognition or ‘non-recognition’ alone, despite the value and appeal of this approach. My hesitation in following this line of critique is that it uses one evaluative model - what Fraser (Fraser, 2000) calls the “identity model” of recognition - to shed light on an economy of voice that operates within another regime of value, for it risks misrecognising recognition itself. However, my intention in this chapter is not to entirely dismiss claims for recognition embedded in the philosophical need and desire to be rendered visible in the face of another (outlined in Chapter One). Rather, it is to consider how claims for recognition - in the light of its increasing attachment to market and informational imperatives - can disrupt formerly established frameworks and push the frontiers of what constitutes voice. While these two economies of recognition are increasingly prized apart to circulate within different systems of value, there are important connections and overlaps between them. My focus of interest, therefore, is to examine how such claims circulate within a particular economy of recognition to both solidify and dissolve the terms and frames through which they are produced.

The chapter begins with a return to Judith Butler, in particular her more recent work. This work is particularly significant in terms of my argument; specifically for its interest in how recognition produces certain “frames of ontology” (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013: 87) which condition the available ways in which subjects or populations can be rendered visible. Following this line of critique, if intelligibility is a precondition for the recognisability of others, then claims to voice cannot be based on a shift from ‘speaking up’ to ‘being heard’ alone: they must first expose the mechanisms that prescribe the terms and frames in which voice is registered. I then extend this argument to focus on the neoliberal restructuring of recognition and its sticky attachments to market objects of value - enterprise, optimisation and individual responsibilisation - as they have increasingly become attached to schemas of intelligibility that precondition and shape the category of voice.
FRAMING THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

In order to develop my account of how recognition operates within new economies of voice, it is useful to first consider the recent work of Judith Butler (2009; Butler and Athanasiou, 2013), in particular her critique of particular “schemes” or “frames” of recognition. This work - written in the context of post-9/11 US politics and what she argues are the violent rhythms of neoliberal expropriation around the globe - helps me think through what it is that conditions the recognisability of others. Misrecognition, distorted recognition and non-recognition are useful as ways to articulate the ways in which voice can be rendered silent, marginal or futile. However, these prefix descriptors do not fully capture the ways that recognition itself is subject to restructuring by particular rationalities and impulses. While Honneth (1995; 2007) is interested in the ways misrecognition causes injury or moral harm at the level of psychic distress or self-esteem, the value of Butler’s work is that she uncovers how recognition itself can perform a different kind of ethical violence, one that is in many ways more insidious.

In coming to terms with post-9/11 America and the resulting War on Terror, Butler (2009) carefully examines how categories of difference and frames of recognition helped constitute those whose lives were worthy of being regarded as a ‘life’, and those who fell outside the category of human. By formulating recognition through a series of preconditions, Butler performs a simultaneous excavation and uncovering of the hierarchies of value that lie behind its production. More pressingly, she reveals what is at stake in its conferral or withholding. To be apprehended, regarded or accorded recognition does not assume that recognition is a pre-formed object that can be bestowed upon another; instead, certain categories of recognisability render subjects worthy or unworthy of recognition in the first place, or worth only of a recognition that places them in a vulnerable state. Butler insists that recognition is contingent upon intelligibility: “just as norms of recognisability prepare the way for recognition, so schemas of intelligibility condition and produce norms of recognisability” (7). This ‘ordering’ of recognition into its prerequisites - norms - and subsequent processes of identification - schemas of intelligibility - draws attention to the terms and frames of recognition that precede its formation. In this work, Butler uses the language of exposure, vulnerability and precarity, invoking a dynamic and affective politics of voice useful to my own analysis. It is a reminder that certain kinds of ethical violence are pressed or imprinted upon subjects; that one can be “subject(ed) to recognition” (Gray, 2013). In other words, some lives - and
certain kinds of subjects - are made precarious through their exposure to certain processes of recognition.

The incorporation of difference and the production of exception are twin imperatives in this economy of recognition. They condition a variety of effects. Certain liberal discourses of recognition are important in claims to rights, but they can also work to inflict their own kind of ethical violence by assimilating and incorporating difference, transgression and alterity into a single homologous category of tolerance or diversity, as touched on in Chapter Four. But the politics of recognition is not solely based on social claims alone; the desire for recognition arises in political claims for intelligibility by people excluded from the normative frameworks that regulate and accord status within society. Butler’s recent thinking (see Willig, 2012: 140) also uncovers how recognition itself is a “structure of intelligibility” that conditions what is regarded as recognisable. For instance, she argues that for those who have been excluded from the “structures and vocabularies” of representation, recognition becomes a problem. This, she suggests, is particularly acute for “those who can only enter the existing structures of political representation by assuming a position as a subject that actually effaces their historical and cultural history and agency” (140). Further, Butler, with Athanasiou (2013: 82) argue “schemes of intelligibility and norms of recognition are interlinked in both state-centered and biopolitical forms of power”. This stranding-out of recognition into its constituent frames and resulting norms highlights the different registers in which recognition operates. For instance, the continual performance of productivity through market participation is increasingly demanded by the state, requiring citizen to adopt particular subject formations that align with these frames of recognition. In other words, the cost of recognition might involve a degree of self-effacement. For instance, Butler and Athanasiou (91) argue that, in some cases,

[…] formal recognition comes with the requirement of the recognized subject’s conformity to certain standardized accounts of victimization and depoliticized modalities of injurability.

This speaks to a larger question of ethics about how, and to what degree, it is possible for the mechanism of recognition to meet the voices of structural and historical injustice, discrimination and inequality without reducing such claims to the individual. As described in relation to therapeutic strategies of listening and the state, accounts of individual trauma or suffering are not a substitute for injuries caused by historical injustice (see Humphrey,
Beyond Voice Poverty

2006). From the vantage point of recognition, we can see how the terms of recognition can be a form of exclusion, as well as inflict further injury on communities impacted by a history of discrimination or displacement. The social divisions of class and culture are intensified and dissolved through what Butler describes as the “differential distribution of recognizability” (Willig, 2012: 140) which, on the one hand, recognises citizen-subjects as autonomous individuals, while on the other, marking out regulatory spaces for those deemed disposable or undesirable, outside the existing regime. In this way, Butler uncovers how recognition becomes implicated in the uneven reproduction of power.

The liberal values of inclusion, and the neoliberal discourses of market participation and responsibility, are increasingly accommodated through frames of recognition that work to manage and regulate difference. As Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 65) suggest, the liberal form of recognition “endlessly works to encompass, adjudicate and commodify ‘difference’ and thus depoliticize and legitimate the differential configuration of subjects, lives and the world”. Thus, the terms, norms and frames of recognition can operate as both a productive and limiting force. This does not mean recognition is not a useful or necessary as an important connecting term. Rather, it requires a concession that recognition is not always “unambiguously good” (82). For instance, as I discuss further on in relation to self-quantification technologies, neoliberal frames of recognition - along with new categories of data-driven speech - work to prescribe acceptable and aspirational modes of participation through the values of enterprise, optimisation, responsibilisation and productivity. Access to neoliberal recognition in some cases involves careful and continuous work on the self, so that self-craft becomes a pursuit in the name of recognition within the dominant frame of the market. We can see how neoliberal norms of recognition restructure relationships in terms of the market and circulate in a moral economy distinct from one based on a Hegelian intersubjectivity alone, even if these shifts can’t be described as clearly good or bad. Democratic participation is recast as market participation, where particular modes of recognition are shaped around the values of individual optimisation and enterprise. This shift in value and emphasis can be seen in the nesting of identity politics within a broader politics of self-craft. Certainly, the mechanisms of neoliberal biopolitical power operate precisely to dismantle and distribute cohesive social structures and reconstitute them as markets. This means that there are always potential markets that can accommodate any claims to voice based on a need for recognition, transforming the meaning and value of recognition in the process.
Access to recognition may be continent upon using the vocabularies of the dominant organising structures of society, but it is also conditioned by the extent to which it is possible to be understood in terms other than those made available through existing frames of recognition. For instance, when frames of recognition favour the enterprising individual - where a politics of identity has been replaced by a politics of individual productivity - access to recognition is contingent upon narratives of participation that incorporate the self-regulatory and surveillance tendencies on the market. In this context, Spivak’s (1988) critical question can the subaltern speak? takes on a new resonance - a culture of productivity and enterprise can prevent access to recognition (or makes access contingent upon) narratives that fall outside these dominant frames. The paradox of Spivak’s question, of course, is embedded within its own framing: to give account of the subaltern, one must take up the terms by which the subaltern is rendered an intelligible subject, even if these terms are used to critique the very structures of their formation. But Spivak’s question highlights a further point: that is, the co-constitutive relationship between categories of speech and the terms of recognition in registering voice. Pushing beyond Couldry’s (2010: 98) claim that neoliberal culture allows the world to become “unnarratable from certain points of view”, I suggest that neoliberal terms and frames of recognition regulate and govern the boundaries of those very points of view. It is not just a case of being unable to speak (or be rendered intelligible) from a certain subject position, but struggling to render those positions visible by forging new spaces of recognition within the existing structures of society.

Certainly, there are problems when recognition is confined to either a restricted band of what is of what is recognisable or limited terms in which one can be made intelligible – both of which could be said to have a ‘narrowing’ effect on voice, as cultural critiques of neoliberalism often claim. But further than this, and of relevance to my argument, it is not simply a shift in the terms or frames of recognition alone that condition the possibilities for voice, but the resultant transformation of the category of recognition itself by values and attachments operate according to a non-relational set of logics. Like certain modes of listening, as described in Chapter Four, recognition can also operate as a regulatory force that designates the terms by which subjects can make claims to voice.
If being apprehended is contingent upon certain kinds of neoliberal identifications and identities, then the available modes of speech are adjusted accordingly. Even while objects of market value that have become attached to recognition have altered the modes of address and kinds of narratives produced, Appadurai’s (2004) insistence that control over the “terms of recognition” is what strengthens the capacity for voice still holds strong. This is not to say such modes cannot be redeployed to critique the structures and norms of recognition (as Spivak and subaltern and postcolonial studies in general aim to do), but it is to suggest that sites and practices of voice are always nested within existing architectures with multiple registers, held in dynamic tension. The terms of recognition within any struggle for voice must be taken into account and understood in these changing terms.

**From ‘activated ‘citizen’ to ‘participatory biocitizen’**

Institutionalised processes of recognition, based on the politics of individual responsibility and self-governance, are part of the broad neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state in advanced liberal democracies through dismantling, privatisation and outsourcing (Clarke, 2005; Harvey, 2007). They carve out spaces of containment and regulation. The liberal rhetoric of choice (which dovetails neatly with the reconstruction of citizens as consumers) is also increasingly used to lay claims to support the marketisation or privatisation of public goods and services like health, education and government services. Connections between health and the marketplace in particular, produce new sites for this kind of governance and ubiquitous surveillance (French and Smith, 2013). Galvin (2002: 119) argues that contemporary conceptions of chronic diseases such as obesity and diabetes, for example, have been increasingly “shaped by the rationality of neoliberalism, specifically in its interaction with the notions of individual responsibility and choice”.

This section builds on my analysis in Chapter Three of categories of speech and self-quantification technologies to investigate how recognition works in relation to aspects of self-quantification, as values of the market and the technical operations of the information economy increasingly frame the neoliberal subject. I focus on the expanding domain of health as a way of mapping the conjunction between neoliberalism, biopolitics and subject formation onto new economies of voice. As argued in Chapter Three, the QS movement, and related practices of self-quantification, potentially expand the category of speech to include personal biodata and bio-information, but they also come into view through
neoliberal frames of recognition that encourage intense focus on the “informed body” (Chrysanthou, 2002: 473), congruent with today’s health-oriented consumer culture. This focus is both symptomatic of late modernity’s self-reflexive gaze and neoliberalism’s celebration of the individual as centre of society; at the same time, it provides the context for practices of self-quantification and health monitoring in the spectre of big data and the burgeoning i-health industry where risk management, enterprise, surveillance and control extend and modulate practices of authentic identity and subject formation. Like each of the previous limit cases, this has implications for how we understand the very notion of voice and what is involved in giving account.

Whether the object of recognition is the “participatory biocitizen” (Swann, 2012), the “self-crafting entrepreneurial subject” (Gray, 2013), the “activated citizen” (Clarke, 2005) or the “biosocial” self (Rabinow, 1992), these neoliberal subject formations are partially conditioned through a set of values that encourages twin processes of continual self-optimisation and self-regulation. As noted, the social application of market-driven logic operates to shift increasing degrees of responsibility onto individuals in order that they manage on their own affairs, through increasingly privatised and distributed channels of networked communication (Clarke, 2005). Claims to neoliberal recognition in this context are contingent upon, but tied to, tightly defined discourses and truth claims about individual participation and empowerment that recast subjects as ‘participants’ or ‘consumers’. As such, this economy of recognition is constructed, in part, through the cultivation of practices of self-care and regulation, and the desire for people to be regarded - and recognised - as legitimate citizen-subjects. I am interested in the ways these subject formations are also conditioned through a particular frame of recognition attached to values prioritised by neoliberal culture and emerging applications of technology. Some of these frames rework Hegelian ideas of self-esteem and social identity through a competing moral economy of enterprise and individual responsibility, so that recognition itself takes on different meanings and values.

Brian Brown and Sally Baker (2012) - taking a post-Foucauldian approach to recent health policy in the United Kingdom, and building on the work of Rose (1989; 1999), Füredi (2004) and others - argue the imperatives of personal governance and individual responsibility, or “governance through responsibility” (Brown and Baker, 2012: 1), have come to shape notions of health, citizenship and the subject. Chronic and complex
diseases like diabetes and obesity have attracted particularly high levels of public scrutiny in this context - including in Australia - where public discourse is often centred on individual ‘lifestyle’ choices and the encouragement of ‘healthy living’. To be recognised as legitimate and cooperative within this regime of value, so-called “health consumers” (Harley et al., 2011) are increasingly called upon to participate in terms of neoliberal recognition. In other words, access to recognition is contingent upon participating in the ‘right way’: where subjects take up the practices, behaviours, sentiments and attributes (as well as the discursive formations) of the productive neoliberal subject, prepared to bear ultimate responsibility for current and future behaviours, actions and choices. Attaining and maintaining optimum health is intertwined with processes of recognition: the subject’s body and choices become sites of neoliberal governance and the exercise of power precisely through frames of recognition that position them as certain kinds of subjects. Broader social, cultural and economic conditions of disadvantage are recast as a problem of the individual.

For John Clarke (Clarke, 2005), the “activated citizen” embodies a particular subject formation that emerged largely in the context of the neoliberal restructuring of the health sector - specifically changes to the National Health Service (NHS) - under New Labour in the United Kingdom. Shifts in policy and rhetoric along these lines are also a feature of current Australian health systems as well14. Far from being passive recipients of neoliberal ideology, citizens are instead reconstructed are ‘activated’ through a complex meshwork of truth claims, discursive practices, and dominant strategies for intervention that place responsibility firmly within the realm of the individual. For Clarke, the term draws on “social democratic and communitarian conceptions of the citizen, but [is] dominated by the neo-liberal concern to ‘liberate’ the citizen from the state” (448-449). It collapses and eschews the tensions between social democratic and neoliberal paradigms, but also demonstrates their mutability. In bringing ideas of self-optimisation and citizenship together, Clarke’s notion of the activated citizen also suggests a conditional category of recognition: where the ‘good citizen’ is accorded recognition only when they take ultimate

---

14This can be seen in everything from drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs and chronic disease management programs within the public health system and in the social service sector, that heavily emphasise individual responsibility for behaviour change and health recovery. See the ADAPT and START models for Pain Management in a number of Australian hospitals - built on a UK model of the ‘expert patient’, or social service rehab programs structured around an AA model of ‘activating’ personal control and discipline.
Beyond Voice Poverty

responsibility for their own individual position in society. He makes sense of this in terms of voice and recognition:

[...] both ‘choice’ and ‘voice’ embody New Labour’s view of active citizens as independent agents, rather than dependent subjects waiting on the state’s whims [...] whose voices get to be recognized and heard, and what the consequences of being heard are, remain critical issues…..(450).

However, this cultivation and recognition of active citizens also operates to “decollectivize the public and its relationship to public services” (Clarke, 2005: 450). In a study by Harris et al. (2011: 1) which examined the extent to which people identified with dominant health discourses in Canada and the United Kingdom as a way of navigating and understanding their own health, they found that “good citizenship” was strongly associated with “taking personal responsibility for health, becoming an informed health ‘consumer’ and managing self-care”. In this context, we can see how the enthusiastic uptake of self-quantification practices using mobile and locative media has intensified at a time when recognition frames align with neoliberal forms of citizenship, as noted by Clarke (2005). It is too soon to know what the full social implications of this will be.

Related to the Clarke’s notion of the active citizen is Melanie Swan’s (2012: 108) notion of the “participatory biocitizen”:

“[..] what it is to be a biocitizen in the modern world is changing, and starting to include data-sharing, participation and more proactive health self-management and responsibility taking”.

Swan uses the concept of the participatory biocitizen to champion the potential of crowd-sourced health data, personal health informatics and the use of mobile self-quantification technologies. Certainly there are potential benefits to these new kinds of user-generated content, as described in Chapter Three. However, Swan makes no reference to competing imperatives to marketise and monetise the i-health and m-health domain, nor does she consider the ascendant bioeconomy where this form of bio-citizenship is privileged, both of which impact struggles for voice. While the participatory biocitizen emerges at the intersection of neoliberal, biopolitical and technosocial fields of power, it can also be approached from another angle: as a particular frame of recognition. I want to take up
Swan’s formulation of the participatory biocitizen and put it to work in another way to suggest this particular subject formation is produced through a neoliberal frame of recognition that designates and accords value based on a series of identifications and identities amenable to the market (participation, active self-management and individual responsibility) and entangled with the configurations and applications of technology (data-sharing).

My analysis here examines how the subject formations described above by Clarke and Swan each take shape in an economy of recognition that privileges both neoliberal and techno-scientific modes of subjectivity and identity formation. Participation in such an economy rewards enterprise and entrepreneurship, but within a particular moral universe where responsibility is shifted from the state to the individual, and where an intersubjective model of recognition begins to break apart. But further than this, and central to my argument, recognition itself has been reconstructed through the values - and objects of value - that the market prizes. In other words, it is a new economy of recognition. Notwithstanding the dramatic cultural and historical reconfigurations that constitute new understandings and constructions of health and illness, the increased alignment of public health strategies with private interests - and within a broader ‘productive’ economy - means that recognition becomes entangled with larger biopolitical forces that extend beyond the subject by putting forward certain ‘truth claims’ that are underpinned by market forces.

How does recognition work in this political economy of healthy living and personal optimisation? The need and desire for recognition now circulates within an economy built upon the proliferation, and diversification, of ‘niches’ and markets for recognition that are restructured around individual claims - including therapeutic and health-related markets. Fraser’s (2000) concern over the “psychologisation” of the identity model of recognition discussed in Chapter One takes on a further political relevance in the context of what Illouz (2007) has described as “emotional capitalism” and “therapeutic culture”, a condition that dismantles any clear distinction between the personal desire for self-expression (as seen in the rise of the ‘i-voice’) and struggles for individual autonomy in the face of broader social forces. Illouz’ notion of emotional capitalism might also be thought of in relation to Ahmed’s (2004) “affective economies”, where certain affective states are caught up within broader structures of personal governance. Access to this narrow frame
of recognition can perpetuate political rationalities that locate individual struggles with structural disadvantage, inequality or susceptibility as a personal obstacle to be overcome.

As argued in Chapter Three, the enthusiastic uptake of health-related self-tracking apps has implications for how we understand and relate to ourselves as technologically mediated “biological citizens” (Novas and Rose, 2005) in the age of techno-scientific developments in biomedicine, biotechnologies, genomics and neuroscience. The merging of the biographical with the biological through the collection of biodata, for instance, produces not only what Rabinow (1992: 186) has termed the “biosocial self”, but also begins to reconstruct how people can give account of their lives. Market incursions into voice recast capacity in terms of responsible citizen-subjects in charge of their own care and development. This confounds existing categories of speech in this context, but also prompts questions about the frames of recognition that condition such categories. On the one hand, mobile and web applications that encourage incessant self-quantification and surveillance give rise to new forms of subjectivity and embodiment that emphasise individual responsibility and align with the privatisation of care. From this perspective, it signals a new level of “vital politics” (Rose, 2007: 3): a politics concerned with “growing capacities to control, manage, engineer, reshape, and modulate the very vital capacities of human beings as living creatures”. On the other, these techno-scientific developments potentially open new pathways for ordinary people voice their claims, where personal biodata can be leveraged and redeployed to ‘speak’ for and advocate change, or identify clusters of disadvantage. Both these tendencies are not easily separable from each other, as they circulate within this same economy of voice. The QS movement, and related practices of self-quantification, offers a productive site to think through how certain frames of recognition - highly technical, but also inflected by neoliberal values - also come into play. In some cases, the values that reconstruct recognition in the present operate as an evaluative regime to mark out and target segments of the population for further regulation and optimisation based on their own biodata (as described in Chapter Three). Other formations are rendered bio-informatically to circulate within a particular bio-economy of voice that I discuss in the following chapter.

In Chapter Three I framed the Quantified Self movement as an innovative practice that activates new forms of speech through the collection and sharing of one’s own biodata. As such, users who actively engage with self-quantification technologies are also exposed to
forms of algorithmic listening and surveillance practices that tune in to a user’s digital traces. I examined some of these related modes of listening in the previous chapter. This draws attention to the double imperative within such techno-social practices: it taps into personal optimisation narratives (tuning in to the intimacies of one’s own vitals) as well as narratives of self-regulation and surveillance produced through an “algorithmic governmentality” (Reigeluth, 2014: 246). The QS movement’s self-described motto - self-knowledge through numbers - reveals this simultaneous aspirational, informational and governmental description of the self. Corporate interests - including app developers - can tune in to the accumulated data and look for ways to monetise and marketise this knowledge. These neoliberal frames of participation and aspiration are not easily separable from the proliferation co-creative, user-generated and consumer-driven content that enhancement technologies and social media apps make possible. The significance of emerging theme will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Taking the specific example of the popular game-based web and mobile application Lumosity, I turn a critical eye on how its enthusiastic uptake by users reveals what is at stake in taking up frames of recognition based on the ideal of the activated and participatory (bio)citizen. Developed by Lumos Labs Inc., Lumosity is a personalised self-optimising tool that developers argue can help promote brain ‘plasticity’ (Lumos Labs Inc., 2013). Registered users of the app can personalise their ‘training’ program by choosing from a series of specifically designed games to focus on the areas of cognitive functioning that they wish to develop. Lumosity now boasts over 70 million registered users worldwide, and conducts its own research into the effects of its use on cognitive functioning and enhancement, in a range of health-related and productivity contexts (Lumos Labs Inc., 2013). The popularity of Lumosity comes on the back of the ascendancy of the brain sciences in the last decade, and a growing trend towards “neuropolitics” (Rose and Abi-Rached, 2014), where neuroscience comes to occupy a privileged space in the shaping of many areas of public health and social policy, and where the brain and mind become new sites of governance (Rose and Abi-Rached, 2013). Lumos Labs itself - a neuroscience research company - exemplifies the increasing convergence between privatised and corporatised health research, narratives of self-optimisation, sophisticated and targeted enhancement technologies and neoliberal frames of recognition that together condition the activated and participatory (bio)citizen.
Along with generalised user data that the Lumosity app collects - such as username, name, e-mail address, date of birth and gender - its terms of service stipulate that it “may also automatically collect and store” a whole set of cognition-based data about a user, including “how you use Lumosity” (Lumos Labs Inc., 2013). In other words, it collects specific data about the games users play and users’ performance in those games. This may seem benign and appealing to users - it allows developers to customise and personalise games for their users. But there are other ways users’ metadata is put to work, including to “show aggregate performance measures to users to allow them to evaluate their performance against other Lumosity users” (Lumos Labs Inc., 2013). This feedback loop of data sets up a competitive environment where users are enjoined to further optimise their performance and rank their abilities in comparison to other users. Further, registered user data provides a massive database of de-identified aggregated data for Lumos Labs to draw on, using it in their own Human Cognition Project to “evaluate, study, and improve the effectiveness of our programs or human cognition more generally” (Lumos Labs Inc., 2013). This lofty aim of improving human cognition through brain science masks concerns first voiced by Rabinow (1992) concerning the social and ethical questions raised by the Human Genome Project over two decades ago.

While Lumosity is in many ways at the vanguard of collaborative, consumer-driven models of research and development, it is also clear these techno-social entanglements favour particular forms of participation and engagement and encourage increased exposure to the private collection of personal data. In isolation, Lumosity can be a useful, productive and even enjoyable tool for individual self-quantification and personal development. Yet it also connects to broader values of individual optimisation and enhancement that are increasingly recognised as key competencies of the activated and participatory (bio)citizen. This also potentially reconstructs ideas of the subject, identity formation and narratives of the self. I would argue that the model user of Lumosity is formed, in part, in response to a frame of recognition that requires subjects to take up the values of self-optimising technologies and market-driven niches, at the same time give away other aspects of their identity. The implications and future applications of this are yet to be fully determined.
The terms of access to recognition

The figure of the participatory biocitizen sketched out above embodies a tension in this emerging economy of voice. On the one hand, neoliberal norms of individual choice, responsibility and optimisation come to frame and shape how ‘good’ citizen-subjects are recognised and can participate, potentially expanding possibilities for voice. On the other, as both Puar and Illouz (Illouz, 2007; Puar, 2009) have noted, capitalist narratives of progress are increasingly linked to an exposure to, and narration of, vulnerability. In this context, recognition contains a kind of polarising quality with competing tendencies towards narratives of productivity on the one hand, and narratives of subjugation or victimhood on the other. These conflicting tensions are also exemplified by lifestyle-based reality television shows like The Biggest Loser\textsuperscript{15} where contestants navigate the demands of this cultural conjuncture. The emergence of reality television as a global project, for instance, has long been understood as a particular neoliberal phenomenon (Couldry, 2008), one which also exemplifies this commodification of speech and opinion, at the same time celebrating ordinary people’s participation in the media space. The performance of self-development in these shows becomes a therapeutic and enterprising pursuit emerging through the recognition frames of emotional capitalism and the participatory biocitizen. These kinds of narratives are made intelligible through what Puar (Puar et al., 2012: 153) provocatively describes as a “liberal eugenics of lifestyle programming”. In the case of TBL, access to recognition is contingent upon individual identification with a neoliberal framing of obesity - one that denies the broader patterns of social disparity in the determinants of health, and instead recasts these conditions as a problem of the will, or lack of individual self-control. This frame of recognition both privileges and rewards narratives encompass and celebrate these values and norms.

There have been several critiques of this format from the perspective of neoliberal biopolitics and governmentality, especially in relation to the ‘war on fat’ and the ‘obesity epidemic’ in the West (Greenhalgh, 2012; Sender and Sullivan, 2008; Silk et al., 2011). Taking a different approach, Couldry has suggested that such programs operate on the

\textsuperscript{15} The Biggest Loser (2004-current) is a reality television format that started in the United States and has subsequently been franchised globally, including Australia. Overweight contestants compete for prize money given at the end of the series to the person who loses the most weight. Each week, contestants are subject to a series of gruelling exercise regimes, personal challenges (often including the temptation of unhealthy food) and weekly weight-loss goals. The drama is constructed through pitting contestants against each other, as well as often tense relationships with the personal trainers on the show.
promise of recognition but instead provide “distorted recognition” (Couldry, 2010: 82). The terms ‘distorted’ recognition or misrecognition go some way to describing the frame through which subjects are rendered intelligible; yet the values of enterprise, entrepreneurship and individual responsibilisation embedded in such neoliberal restructuring of recognition continue to shape and condition the possibilities for voice. A focus on distorted recognition can pull attention away from the uncomfortable moral economy that these neoliberal frames of recognition produce. Attached to the values of individual optimisation and enterprise, recognition begins to align lifestyle and identity politics through mechanisms of the market. Contestants who are recognised to participate in the ‘right way’ are given a platform - albeit a tightly constrained one - to ‘tell their story’, but the discursive tools of feminism which were used to critique power have now also been incorporated into neoliberal narratives of self-regulation and enterprise. I see this economy of recognition as being connected to the rise of the i-voice and emerging modes of speech I theorised in Chapter Three, where the norms of recognition condition how contestants occupy particular subject formations to give account of themselves.

Further, and in a broader context, by framing recognition of subjects as ‘participants’ (or recognition in terms of participation) and activating a whole series of biopolitical acts of self-craft and control (techniques of incorporation), issues of class, gender, education, race etc. are subsumed and amalgamated within one continuous project of individual enterprise. Just as listening is implicated in a politics of inclusion that inverts the exclusionary forces that position subjects outside the mainstream, these forms of recognition recast ‘non-participation’ or resistance as non-recognition, and issue a subsequent refusal or social invalidation. Non-participation - or not participating in the ‘right way’ - is recognised only insofar as it brings with it consequences - be they material, social or political. The rhetoric of free will, responsibility and choice frames this participation discourse, and yet recognition is conditioned by and contingent upon not exercising the ‘wrong’ choices. Equally, subjects must not be too wilful, nor should they have a lack of will, as Sara Ahmed (2014) has elegantly shown in her excavation of the history of wilfulness. So this economy of recognition works to regulate affective surplus through emotional governance. At the same time, it activates a ‘moderate’ wilfulness only insofar as it is directed toward self-development and market optimisation or productivity, rather than a challenging of the norm.
Challenging or altering the terms of recognition not only requires a kind of linguistic capacity, or an ability to actively leverage existing power and redirect its flow; it also comes with the risk, and consequences, of moving outside of the frames which govern whose voices matter and whose don’t. Non-participation in this economy of voice means recognition is withheld or extinguished. To move outside this economy of recognition involves risk and exposure to the violent rhythms of other neoliberal forces, including disciplinary and punitive responses to this unruliness. To question the terms of recognition - drawing attention to the objects of value that now form the horizon of what is rendered visible and accorded value within this economy of voice - is reframed as non-participation. In this sense, neoliberal recognition is implicated in the reproduction of the categories of disposability and precarity that Butler is concerned about, as well as categories based on the circulation of economic objects of value.

THE ‘RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN’

As described in the opening chapter of this thesis, voice poverty and the ‘right to be heard’ place claims to voice firmly within a rights-based framework as an intervention into the structures that condition the degree to which people can give account of their lives and conditions, and be taken into account by others. While I have found this formulation to be both problematic and inadequate in various ways, rights-based frameworks can still provide an initial point of departure to think through other, related questions of interest. In the last few years, legal developments in Europe have invoked another rights-based claim that I examine from the perspective of ‘technical’ frames of recognition - one that emerges in an economy of voice that increasingly connects personal forms of data to the digital ‘story of you’. The recent decision around the Right to be Forgotten can be understood in the light of these new frontiers of voice; specifically, in the ability of “data subjects” (European Commission, 2013) to have some control how they are represented online in the face of data mining and system sorting. It also foregrounds the limits of invoking conventional notions of a ‘right to be heard’ when addressing new conditions of voice poverty, in an era of digital liberalisation and transglobal information networks.

In 2010 the European Court of Justice ruled on a case brought to the national Spanish Data Protection Agency by a Spanish citizen against the internet search engine Google, requesting it to remove from its search results links to out-dated personal data
Beyond Voice Poverty

pertaining to that citizen. Commonly known as the Right to be Forgotten, the ruling strengthened the protections for “data subjects” and the processing of personal data, as set out in the 1995 Data Protection Directive (European Union, 1995) and has attracted increased attention in recent years. It also opened the way for legal remedy for individuals within EU member states to ask search engines to remove links with personal data about them, in certain conditions: where that data is found to be “inaccurate, inadequate, irrelevant or excessive” (European Commission, 2013). This decision against Google makes clear that computational algorithms used to process, sort and rank links pertaining to search results are not value-neutral: the ‘story of you’ is partially controlled and modulated by corporate and commercial interests that shape how your data appears to others.

In its ruling, the Court found the need to balance the right to have links to personal data erased with the need for freedom of expression; it also invoked important notions of personal dignity within a particular understanding of privacy. In this regard, the ruling highlights tensions between individual and collective notions of privacy, as well as the need to rethink what privacy itself means in a global, digital world. Karen Etlis (2011: 95), who specialises in internet law, suggests that the Right to be Forgotten reframes privacy in terms of positive - rather than negative - rights: “privacy can be conceived as the right to engage in individual self-definition and self-invention, rather than a right to be secluded or free from surveillance”. Etlis’ important distinction also makes clear that the right not to be heard - the right to be forgotten and the right to erasure - mark out a new horizon of voice conditioned by technical frames of recognition in an age where the global flow of data is commonplace.

Ongoing battles between transnational corporations such as Google and Facebook and state and supra-State interests (for instance, the European Union) continue to play out across the globe, and we are yet to see the full flow on effects. Significantly - and contrary to Google’s persistent claim that it simply collates and presents pre-existing information - the court ruled that search engines such as Google are in fact “controllers of personal data” (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2014) and subsequently held them to account. In Google’s Advisory Committee’s report (Google Advisory Council, 2015) on the matter, Google refers to the process of removing links in search results based on queries of an individual’s name in a value-neutral way as “delisting”, downplaying the politics behind
their ranking algorithms. The report goes to great lengths to make the point that the ruling “does not establish a general Right to be Forgotten” (Google Advisory Council, 2015: 3) and distances itself from this everyday interpretation of the ruling. Google’s refusal to take up the terms implicit in a right to be forgotten draws attention to what is at stake in struggles for recognition in a post-privacy world, where recognition itself takes on a new meaning.

Unlike in the United States where the privileging of individual rights to free speech and First Amendment protections trumps various other rights, the European response has been to recognise the values of dignity and positive definitions of privacy, rather than making it a debate about the limits of rights and freedoms. Larson observes this contrast between “dignity-based notions of privacy in Europe and the autonomy-based formulation of privacy in the United States” (Larson, 2013). The understanding privacy in relation to the Right to be Forgotten in terms of dignity and respect shifts the emphasis from a power exercised by a person, to a duty owed that person by other members of society (Elits, 2011). Yet perhaps the most significant aspect to the ruling lies elsewhere: it interrupts, and somewhat reverses, the uneven power flows between creators of metadata and user-generated content, and commercial content controllers like Google that otherwise become the sole arbiters of what and how links to personal data appear when searched.

Bert-Jap Koops (2011) argues that the idea of “informational self-determination” underpins current thinking on the decision around the Right to be Forgotten. This position highlights the significance of the ruling because it reveals a different kind of motivation beyond the need or desire for personal privacy, or privacy in the traditional sense at least. Informational self-determination was first recognised by a German Constitutional Court in 1983 and, as van Alesnoy et al. (2014: 188) describe, allows for

---

16 The exception to this seems to have been the US approach to the hacking of images of celebrities from the i-cloud and the use of copyright restrictions to threaten with infringement and prosecute people who circulation the images without permission. It is significant that the use of copyright, rather than a right to protection of personal data, such as those developed in Europe, are being used to tackle this challenge.

17 The contrast between European and US conceptualisations of privacy are in part explained by the difference between social and liberal democratic paradigms, but the EU’s data protection laws also emerge in the context of a collective history of post-WWII Germany and the surveillance tactics used by the Stasi, which included the extensive collection and use of personal information. Unlike the US approach to the management of personal data that includes hiring online image management agencies like www.reputation.com, the EU instead frames the right to be forgotten as a collective right to protection and dignity.
Beyond Voice Poverty

[…] the free development of the individual’s personality, includes the interaction with the other members of the society on an equal basis and enables the individual to participate in a free way and without the fear of being prosecuted in a democratic society.

When applied to the current context, informational self-determination also suggests a representational politics of voice, where control over how your data is presented by search engines is attached to ideas of self-determination and autonomy. This also supports Etlis’ (2011) reading of positive rights to privacy. Further, informational self-determination can also involve a politics of recognition based on the counter-intuitive idea of representation-as-invisibility that lays claim to shelter or protect those most vulnerable to misrepresentation against an arbitrary ranking system of value determined through digital protocols and practices. In other words, it seeks to counter the information asymmetries that exist between individuals and data controllers (van Alesnoy et al. 2014). Further, it hints at an economy of voice that resists the total commodification of speech as biodata, wresting control away from powerful corporate interests. As such, it points to a potential future site of hope, advocacy and activism.

While the Right to be Forgotten is primarily conceived of as a legal right - and in many ways has limited impact in terms of its application across jurisdictions18 - I suggest its real significance lies beyond the legal realm. Rather than prompting debate about the potential limitations and regulation of speech or individual rights (as First Amendment concerns in the United States generally frame it), the Right to be Forgotten can perhaps be more productively approached as a technical frame of recognition that seeks to redistribute power between data subjects and corporate entities like Google in determining who has the authority and authorisation to shape the digital ‘story of you’. The Right to Be Forgotten inverts a claim to recognition built on ideas around visibility and representation to instead focus attention on the powers of recognition that determine the degree of visibility/invisibility or representation/non-representation subjects have control over online. In other words, this frame of recognition can be understood as a kind of technical un-framing: it allows for individual weblinks to be taken ‘out of view’ from the algorithmic framings that sequence and rank how search-terms.

18 For instance, in the initial Spanish case, Google erased links to the local search engine www.google.sp, but links to search terms would stills show up on google.com, making it only partially effective outside of the local context and legal jurisdiction.
A theory of mutual recognition, for instance - based largely on Hegelian models of intersubjectivity and identity claims - goes some way to describe what is going on here. But perhaps more significant is that it highlights the need for recognition to be recast in a way that accounts for non-traditional notions of what constitutes identity and subject formation in this post-convergent and rapidly corporatised cultural space. As such, the ruling highlights a new site of struggle over the terms of recognition between the creators of personal metadata (and data directly relating to those individuals) and the decision makers who order, sort and curate that data within a hierarchy of value largely determined by commercial and market interests. This marks an emerging frontier in the struggle for voice that accounts for new forms of global, supra-state, algorithmic power embedded in everyday forms of cultural production online.

CONCLUSION

The ideas in this chapter have developed, and connect back to, aspects of the previous two chapters. As in those chapters, this chapter has made a subtle distinction between historical and emerging economies of voice to bring into view what is at stake in contemporary sites of struggle; at the same time it concedes this distinction is by no means clear, nor is it fixed. Some struggles for recognition conform to conventional notions of ‘giving account’ but take shape in relation to neoliberal subject formations, while others restructure what giving account means. For instance, from the vantage point of recognition, we can now see how new categories of speech - described in Chapter Three - come into view, in part, through neoliberal and technical modes of recognition that reframe participation in self-optimising terms (including co-creativity, user-generated content, the production of quantified self biodata etc.). This chapter has also shed light on how second-order listening, described in the previous chapter, serves to strengthen or dissolve the current terms of being ‘made visible’. It further complicates the notion of ‘being heard’ to propose that the terms in which one is recognised, and the relations of power that determine terms, set the barometer for whether voice ‘matters’ or not. I have shown how speech and listening become stuck to new objects of value (information, code and biodata) and how they set up new relationships. From the vantage of recognition, these categories can also be understood to emerge, in part, through neoliberal schemas of intelligibility that increasingly connects ideas of individual autonomy to the values and
Beyond Voice Poverty

practices of enterprise and self-optimisation. Securing access to the terms of recognition contains inherent tensions: modes of speech and practices of listening are formed in relation to the terms of recognition necessary to register the material and political effects of voice; at the same time, these terms of recognition do not fully prescribe the forms of speech or listening that emerge.

As speech attaches to biodata, recognition is garnered through practices of ‘voice’ like those found in the Quantified Self movement. The new economy of voice is produced through the connection between speech, listening and recognition, but in a way distinct from both liberal and relational arrangements of voice. In all, the chapter has draw together and highlighted my point that speech, listening and recognition are still connected through a set of relationships, but the nature and kind of relationships have dramatically changed, as well as the categories themselves; these, in turn, alter the meaning and value of voice and the very terms of contemporary debates. The QS movement and The Right to Be Forgotten, for instance, signify new sites of struggle that push beyond identity-based or rights-based claims to recognition alone. While both cases can be understood in relation to rights-based or identity politics, and are partly built upon traditional claims to voice, my interest and focus has instead been in thinking through how each deliberately takes up aspects of neoliberal culture and the globalised technoscope to remake the category of recognition itself. Each put recognition to work in a particular way, not only as a provocation about what recognition means in contemporary society, but what recognition does. In other words, both QS and The Right to be Forgotten reveal micro and macro practices of recognition that illuminate emerging sites where the struggle for voice is currently unfolding.
6.

BEYOND VOICE POVERTY

This chapter revisits the research aims and the main points of my argument. It discusses the major themes and key findings that have emerged across the thesis, in light of the previous three chapters in particular. It also considers some of the caveats, and concludes with some implications and future directions for research.

RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH AIDS

In this thesis, I have presented an argument for the on-going political importance and analytical value of voice in the context of its transformational restructuring by neoliberal culture and new assemblages of technology. Through a critical account of these changing conditions of ‘voice’, the thesis set out to develop an account that strategically pushes beyond prevailing relational, liberal-democratic and rights-based claims to, and current formulations of, voice. In taking up an interdisciplinary critical frame, I have offered a provisional framework - new economies of voice - that accounts for the complex ways that categories of speech, listening and recognition undergo their own set of transformations, forged through new attachments and relationships. I have considered this transformational restructuring by mapping the relationship between two trajectories: the prizing apart of the relational practices of speaking, listening and recognition from their historical arrangement embedded in an intersubjective ethics; and the subsequent shift in the meanings, values and politics of voice through an analysis of new sites of struggle.

My strategy here has been two fold: first, to unpack and trouble some of the self-evident assumptions, values and norms embedded in conventional notions of voice, as set out in Part One; and second, to built a platform from which to consider radically different notions of what’s involved - and what’s at stake - in giving account of one’s life and conditions, when the category of voice takes on new meanings and associations. My aim has not been to offer a mere taxonomy of these shifting frames of value that impinge upon and reshape historical arrangements of voice. Rather, I have revealed how these categories
and objects of economic and informational value re-combine in various ways to reshape the category of voice, and its various components, in ways neither linear nor predictable.

My argument began by critically unpacking prevailing notions of voice that place speaking, listening and recognition in interdependent relation and considered the Western philosophical, ethical and political traditions that construct this moral case for the importance - and inherent value - of voice. I then considered competing cultural narratives that flow from this model, which claim that voice is either witnessing a broad democratisation or is in a state of crisis. The ‘democratisation of voice’ is perhaps one of the most persuasive narratives that emerges in the post-convergent West, where ubiquitous communication technologies and global online networks are said to dissolve and redistribute the hierarchies of power and structures of authority and authorship that condition whose voices are made to count or matter. On the other hand, a persistent counter-narrative laments the ‘hollowing’ or ‘contraction’ of voice to the terms of the market, which, it is argued, further limit the possibilities for voice. In seriously considering cultural critiques of neoliberalism, and the work of Nick Couldry in particular, I found that appeals for a return to a relational, humanistic formation of voice - and an embrace of associated ethical and moral values - while compelling and valuable, do not account for the creative redeployment that occurs according to new circuits of meaning, logics and economies of voice.

Narratives of the democratisation and decline of voice each note a radical shift in the hierarchies of value and structures of power that condition possibilities for voice. This leads to an apparent paradox, where opportunities and platforms for voice simultaneously proliferate and contract. But I have shown that these new orderings of voice - and the circuits of value and meaning in which they operate - do not have predictable or such singular outcomes. While framing my opening chapters in terms of competing claims to voice and oppositional sets of values, I have hoped to uncover what is ultimately a false paradox. I have achieved this through an investigation of several limit cases that complicate and confound simple analyses. In presenting my argument, I have resisted the cultural pessimism present within many cultural critiques, especially by the Left, to instead offer a provisional framework for thinking about the flexible formations of voice, and the constant process of reinvention that happens even under constraining conditions. Similarly, I have resisted an emphatically optimistic approach. Thus my focus and interest has been
in describing what voice becomes in these conditions, rather than taking a position that supports either argument. Instead, I have hoped to temper both impulses with a curious, but dispassionate, consideration of **how voice works** and **what voice becomes**, prompting an analysis that seeks to articulate economies of voice that might otherwise be overlooked when viewed through prevailing frameworks.

Rather than evaluating voice against criteria demanded by its historical arrangement, I have instead theorised and described some of the ways voice as a category takes on new meanings and values as it is reconfigured through a range of processes and practices. My particular focus has been to investigate the fringes and frontiers of voice, so as to hone in on the places where meaning and value are increasingly contested. The significance of this approach is has allowed me to ask broader questions around the relationship between changing conditions of voice, and its emergent forms and modes. Through focused attention on specific cultural locations and social phenomena where the frontiers of voice are currently being contested, I have considered how the categories of speech, listening and recognition extend the possibilities for intervention into the structures and mechanisms that attempt to foreclose the possibilities for voice; at the same time they expose subjects to multiple sites of surveillance, regulation and control. I have developed a provisional framework for rethinking the politics of voice that attempts to account for this transformation - and its transcoding - within emerging economies and circuits of value. Further, using voice as a framework for thinking through the differential distribution and regulation of voice allows for an analysis of a whole range of social formations that may not conventionally be approached in this way. I have honed in on, and teased out, particular elements in order to illustrate both how voice works under current conditions, but also how the meaning of voice itself is dynamic and transformed through a constellation of social, political and structural forces.

The analytical value of voice

Voice has constituted an important framing device for my work. I have drawn on its significant historical and cultural weight, but have refused to be bound to any single or settled notion of what voice ‘is’. Rather, I have taken up the notion of voice as both a tool and object of inquiry. These twin imperatives form the heart of my theoretical contribution to an object and method of inquiry that will only prove more relevant in
coming years. The benefit of this approach has been that it expands my analytical horizon: it has helped draw together several disparate disciplinary perspectives and domains under a single ‘matter of concern’, allowing me to focus on several sites of struggle that extend beyond conventional sites of analysis in terms of voice. By deploying voice in this way, I have also been able to strand out speaking, listening and recognition and consider them in relation to their historical arrangement, and under their more recent configurations. I have made connections between and across chapters to illuminate how their rearrangement begins to affect the meaning and value of voice itself, as well as give rise to new frontiers of struggle that emerge through their recombination.

This thesis has aimed to intervene in debates around the value of voice in this context, when neither the future direction of social forms of organisation nor the tensions over these directions are a certainty or foregone conclusion. In my analysis, I have taken up the category of voice as a frame to bring into view a range of contexts that might not conventionally be understood in terms of voice, but which benefit from such an analysis. By developing an analytical approach to the value of voice, I have put into conversation some of the broader architectures and structures that shape and set the terms for voice, with how these might be articulated and practiced everyday. In doing so, I have shown that voice retains the power effects of its formation, without being fully prescribed by that power. As the formation of voice change through new arrangements and connections, so too do their meaning and value. I have considered some of the ways these rearrangements are unfolding.

Caveats

In presenting my argument for the ongoing political importance and analytical value of voice, I have chosen a critical and theoretical approach. While drawing on several limit cases to probe the everyday complexities where struggles for voice are contested, my account has remained necessarily detached from more detailed or granular accounts that might be given from the ground up. This has brought its own benefits: it presents a strong re-theorisation of voice and offers several routes of analysis for future investigation. It also has its limits. My own preliminary co-creative and ethnographically informed case studies were abandoned early on, before they were completed (due to personal circumstances that lie beyond the scope of my discussion here) and were not directly included in the substance
Beyond Voice Poverty

of my argument, for practical and theoretical reasons. Yet this experience did inform a particular sensibility. Future research, then, would certainly benefit from field-based, ethnographic or co-creative methods that would further enrich and deepen the present intellectual argument.

A second caveat is also worth noting. Again, it is a limit that has also brought its own benefits. As discussed briefly in relation to interdisciplinarity, I have used voice as a frame to draw together several disparate limit cases. Smaller than conventional case studies that might warrant chapter-length analyses, I have chosen to focus on limit cases that each highlight particular shifts in the struggle for voice, and together form a picture of just some of the places where future struggles will play out. I made this choice taking into account the more fragmentary nature of these micro-examples because, on balance, their disparate nature was part of their appeal. It was important to include the number that I did - even if this meant a more brief analysis than a more in-depth case study - because they each built elements of my argument and highlighted particular qualities I wanted to focus on. The overarching interdisciplinary approach, and the frame of voice, drew them together in what I hope was a cohesive and logical way.

Finally, the economies of voice I have presented in this thesis - and the limit cases themselves - are neither exhaustive nor representative, rather I have focused on a handful of significant social and cultural formations which act as limit cases that illuminate how the category of voice can be an analytically valuable way to articulate and understand what these new practices and circuits of exchange mean, and how they work. Without generalising from the findings of my analyses, I expect that the architectures of analysis that I have constructed are able to frame, and be applied to, other sites of interest.

DISCUSSION

Rethinking the politics of voice

The category of voice is a charged notion that carries with it powerful associations with, and connections to, liberal-democratic traditions, rights-based discourses and humanist philosophical ideals. However, over the course of this thesis, I have made it clear that these traditions are neither stable nor fixed, nor are they unproblematic. In the face of
radically divergent cultural narratives that place voice in either celebration or crisis, my contention in this thesis has been that, at the heart of this tension lies a false paradox that solidifies fixed notions of what constitutes voice, and distracts attention away from other sites of consideration or forms of analysis that push beyond conventional theoretical perspectives. In taking up an interdisciplinary and critical frame, I have aimed to offer an account of voice that strategically pushes beyond prevailing relational, liberal-democratic and rights-based claims, to bring into view emerging sites of struggle where the frontiers of speaking, listening and recognition are currently being remade in distinctly provocative ways. In doing so, I have hoped to avoid reducing voice to its constituent components or essentialist details, to instead provide a more dynamic analysis.

In making connections between the mechanisms of voice and their unstable attachments to new objects of value, I have set out a particular economic arrangement of voice to follow the flows and attachments that operates in different a way to what has generally been considered to comprise the category of voice. In doing this, I have intentionally loosened the associations that have historically connected speech, listening and recognition together within a relational ethics. Instead, I have considered the multiple ways that these new attachments work to constitute and reconstitute the modes and conditions of speech; extended the technical frontiers of what it means to ‘listen’; and recast the terms of recognition through new circuits of meaning and value. This is not to discount different registers or parallel economies of voice. Rather, it aims to bring into view a range of instances that blur any clear line between ‘voice’ and ‘voice poverty’.

New connections and distinctions are made between the elements of voice as they circulate within these economies. In Chapter Two I troubled the techno-utopian narrative that celebrates the ‘democratisation of voice’ to instead put forward a more tentative proposal: specifically, that there has indeed been a shift in the hierarchies of value that have traditionally conditioned whose voices are heard or made to matter, but that these new orderings of voice are by no means straightforwardly ‘good’ nor are they fixed. I have resisted casting any formation as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ and instead aimed to hold tension and ambivalence within a set of dynamic, often contradictory, tendencies. In this way, I have been able to show how different regimes of value condition different formations and instances of voice. I have argued that the way in which voice is ordered - as well as the values that order it - are continually being refigured both by broad cultural change, and in
everyday struggles for voice. What I have hoped to make clear is that the perceived democratisation of voice that post-convergence technologies afford does signify a redistribution of sorts, but the effects of this redistribution of the hierarchies of value and structures of power are more complicated, and less straightforward, than prevailing narratives suggest.

Through an analysis of several limit cases, I have been able to bring into conversation a range of seemingly disparate phenomena. This strategy has allowed me to examine a range of cultural trends and technosocial phenomena in terms of voice, including: user-generated content and participatory media practices, changes in consumer-driven i-health, new forms of social media participation, open source software development, emerging forms of technical- and mass- surveillance, and technosocial protest movements. Each of these was framed as an emerging site of struggle where the limits of voice, and the bounds of voice poverty, are put to the test. The benefit of this has been that it reveals - just as cultural critiques of neoliberalism express concern over the contraction of voice to the terms of the market - that diverse sites of struggle also dissolve and rearrange the terms of current debates centred on voice.

A significant degree of focus has been given to the categories of speech and listening, in particular as they become entwined with personal biodata and information - to think through some of these formations in terms of their political, material and embodied effects. My choice to focus on the technosocial, bioinformational, market-driven transformations of voice were determined, in part, because they are at the frontier of what voice becomes in these emerging economies. But technology doesn’t simply sit ‘on top’ of or separate to social life and cultural values; it is inseparable from the values that shape its protocols and determine its paths. For instance, in Chapter Three, I considered the rise of the i-voice as a particular mode of address that connects back to liberal ideas of the individual and the singular, speaking subject, but proposed that new categories of speech forge new attachments to biodata and informational code. Free and Open Software coders and the increasing use of self-quantification technologies each extend the category of speech through such connections to biodata, but this expansion also increases the opportunities for, and techniques of, listening to segments of the population. These techniques of listening expose also subjects to technical frames of recognition that identify and designate sites of potential disruption or dissent and target segments of the population for reworking.
Beyond Voice Poverty

accordingly. My analysis has also allowed me to trouble the ‘positive’ practices of self-monitoring and user-generated content in terms of speech and biodata (Chapter Three); probe broad concerns over privacy, security and technology in relation to tactics and strategies of listening (Chapter Four); and make connections between biopolitics and neoliberal subjectivity in terms of technical frames of recognition (Chapter Six). In these chapters also I made connections between the politics of giving account and increasingly bio-informational channels of distribution and control that work to reconstruct the ‘story of you’ in unsettling ways.

Beyond voice poverty

This thesis began life as a critical investigation into the conditions of voice poverty, but in the course of undertaking this research, it has become clear that the value of such a concept lies beyond its traditional formulation. Despite this shift in emphasis and a broadening of my argument, several connected lines of inquiry prompted by the notion of voice poverty have subtly shaped the final form of my argument. Through limit cases and broader theoretical considerations in the preceding three chapters, I have found that, along with the category of ‘voice’ itself, voice poverty must also be rethought for it to be relevant to future debates. The resulting argument put forward therefore sought to find a way to move beyond traditional notions of voice poverty - while retaining an interest in what happens at the edges and borders of voice - to instead investigate new frontiers that challenge existing frameworks. The concept of voice poverty retains its practical and analytical value in framing the conditions that produce unevenly distributed relations of power and disparities in development only if it can also accommodate the new economies of voice I have described in this thesis.

Most immediately, voice poverty provided a way for me to consider rights-based claims to voice - specifically the ‘right to be heard’, and attempts to address the differential distribution of voice. It helped me to frame disparities between ‘having a voice’ and having a voice that ‘matters’, by considering the gap between ‘speaking up’ and ‘being heard’. This framing raised the initial question: what is at stake in contemporary struggles for voice? While conventional notions of voice poverty importantly draw attention to power imbalances involved in giving account of one’s life and conditions, or co-determining the decisions that affect people’s lives, ultimately I argued that approaching voice via a liberal
politics of individual rights has its limits and cannot contend with new sites of struggle where recent cultural shifts trouble the very notions of speaking up and being heard. Further, I found that approaching claims to voice through rights-based, distributive and relational frameworks alone was insufficient, as new economies of voice - detailed through several limit cases - challenge existing models.

My particular focus has been to investigate emerging sites of struggle where the frontiers of speaking, listening and recognition are currently being remade in distinctly provocative ways, and where the meaning and value of voice are contested. For instance, as I have described, it is no longer sufficient to understand voice poverty as a gap between giving account and being taken into account by others, particularly when what constitutes ‘giving account’ is also undergoing a transformation. This conventional formulation of voice poverty becomes problematic when considered in relation to recent social phenomena like the QS movement, for instance. Health consumers and everyday users alike both expand the category of voice through extending ideas of speech as they generate and share personal biodata; at the same time, they become objects of surveillance precisely through the digital traces that self-quantification technologies generate. Further, neoliberal subject formations become new frames of recognition that expose users to a range of competing corporate and private interests. This example dissolves any clear distinction between conditions of ‘voice’ and ‘voice poverty’ conceived of through liberal theories of rights, and insists on a more nuanced theorisation.

This is perhaps the difference in using voice poverty to articulate a gap (between speaking up and being heard) and opening up a space to think about the complex ways that voice is indelibly linked to the conditions and flows of power. As such, the new frontier of voice is found not so much in the gap between speaking up or being heard; rather, in the degree of vulnerability and exposure to increasingly technical, diffuse and often obscure systems of power and control that select and decide who counts and who doesn’t based on regimes of value attached to market-driven, neoliberal and techno-social imperatives, fundamentally altering what it means and what’s at stake in giving account of one’s life and conditions.
From biographical, to bio-informational, to the bio-economy

The bioeconomy has emerged a useful conceptual bridge for me that links historical attachments of voice - the singular, speaking subject found in the biographical ‘I’, and the biological roots of what it means to be human - to bio-narratives tied to bio-information and personal biodata. It helps make connections between a whole range of ‘bio’ concepts I have described over the course of the thesis - the biographical, the biological, biopolitical, the bio-informational and biodata - and how they intersect with, and circulate in, particular economies of voice.

As Cooper (2005), Rose (2007) and Birch Tyfield (2013) have each observed, the bioeconomy also brings into view the relationship between biopolitics and political economy, drawing into conversation Foucauldian and Marxist frames of analysis. This approach resonates with the critical frames described in my introduction. While Birch and Tyfield (2013: 301) have suggested bringing biopolitics and political economy together are a problemtic fit, they themselves see the bioeconomy as inseparable from the structures of neoliberalism and the “financial and economic restructuring of the economy”. Indeed, they admit: “markets are central for understanding the bioeconomy” (318). As such, the various ‘bio’ concepts these scholars develop are formed precisely in light of recent economic transformations and the way in which the components of ‘life’ are reassembled and caught up in this process.

Most conceptualisations of the ‘bio’ by scholars such as Rose (2007), Rajan (2006) and Waldby (2002) - who give us the concepts of “bioeconomy”, “biocapital” and “biovalue” respectively - are primarily concerned with developments in biotechnology and technoscience as they relate to a whole range of ‘vital’ or life-related concepts. Indeed, as Waldby (2002: 308) describes, they make possible the “reorganization of the boundaries and elements of the human body”. Melinda Cooper’s (2008) work on the idea of “life as surplus” and the production of excess, specifically in relation to the life sciences, uncovers a lucrative economy that links the processes of late capitalism with the production of new forms of value created through biotechnologies. These scholars are primarily focused on techno-scientific developments within the life sciences, and their relationship with new forms of governing life through the “production of a surplus out of vitality itself” (Waldby, 2002: 15).
But, as my analysis has found, the bio-economy also increasingly intersects with the several domains examined in my limit cases to reconstruct the boundaries and elements of voice, ideas of the subject, and what constitutes the story of you. Beyond the field of techno-scientific and biomedical developments that these scholars examine, it becomes clear that as personal biodata and the bio-informational self is also caught up in these lucrative bio-economies, where new categories of value and voice are also created and exchanged. While not a stated or explicit focus of the research, the notion of the bioeconomy has emerged as an important theme for discussion, and is analytically productive because it connects Foucauldian notions of governmentality and the “management of life itself” (Rose, 2007) to particular economic rationalities and the range of ‘bio’ concepts identified above. In terms of my own analysis, thinking with the bioeconomy has helped me make connections between the differential distribution of voice, its social regulation through the productive capacity of power and its re-rendering by the market arising from interconnected processes, thus overcoming the dialectic tension between the celebration and crisis narratives presented in the first half of this thesis.

Perhaps unconventionally, it also helps me to think through the connections and distinctions between narrative identity and storytelling (as described in my opening chapter) - connected as they are to ideas of the biographical and deeply relational aspects of what it means to have a voice - to, at the other extreme, the purely bio-informational - where categories of speech and practices of listening become attached to personal biodata and put to work in novel ways (considered in both Chapters Three and Four). Further, the ‘bio’ and the ‘economy’ together help make connections back across the thesis to probe how circuits of exchange and value are reassembled and redistributed as voice is reconstructed through neoliberal, biopolitical and techno-utopian forces. It also provides a way to frame the connections between neoliberal culture, biopolitics and new assemblages of technology with the subsequent expansion of the domain of the ‘bio’ itself. In making these connections through their intersection with the components of voice, I have been able to map the shifting formations of speech, listening and recognition onto the development of technosocial and neoliberal cultural trends to examine the changes in consumer-driven i-health, social media participation, software development and emerging forms of surveillance and social protest and intervention in terms of voice. For instance, in the case of health-related self-quantification practices as described in Chapter Three, health value is constituted in relation to others (comparative statistics, risk etc.) through constant
monitoring and modification of both behaviour and biodata and the harvesting of potential value of one’s own labour; and in turn, through the production of a bio-narrative of such health status. The politics of voice in some of these emerging bio-economies would be a rich site for more focused, future analysis.

**Reconstructing the ‘story of you’**

One of the most significant themes to emerge in my analysis has been in relation to changing ideas of what constitutes the ‘story of you’, and the implication this has on what it means and what is involved in registering voice. In the preceding three chapters I have considered a range of attachments, practices and values that are increasingly at play in present-day struggles over these very terms: Chapter Three focussed on the way that speech is reconfigured through attachments to the i-voice, informational code and biodata; Chapter Four considered therapeutic, algorithmic and second-order listening practices; while Chapter Five focussed on neoliberal subject formations and technical frames of recognition. By mapping some of these new cultural economies, my own analysis has sought to take account of these connections and relationships in a way that pushes beyond recent histories, traditions and frames for thinking about voice. In doing so, I have hoped to offer a glimpse of just some of the ways neoliberal culture and new assemblages of technology fundamentally alter *what it means* and *what is at stake* in giving account of one’s life and conditions. This means that struggle for voice take on new meanings as what constitutes our ‘story’ changes: giving account of the conditions of our lives increasingly involves accounting for the way that these multiple forces impinge upon shifting ideas of the subject and identity. In other words, the struggle for voice is not just a struggle over the *terms* of giving account, but a struggle of what giving account actually *means*.

The concerns raised by Bauman and foregrounded in my introduction take on different shades of significance in this context. Having explored just a few instances where even notions of ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ are no longer self-evident or fixed, it becomes clear that concern over the de-coupling of individual stories from broader conditions of society only partially contend with the rapid reconfiguration of these very ideas. Thinking back to Alexander MacIntyre’s (1984) notion of “narrative identity” or Judith Butler’s (2005) view of “giving account” both discussed in Chapter One - these very ideas come to mean different things in this new economy of voice. As I have also touched upon, what
constitutes one’s story is no longer straightforwardly a question of the ‘bio’ - as in biography or biology; rather, subjects are increasingly formed and scrutinised through bio-informational and bio-economic frames that in turn remake the politics of voice.

Related to this shift in what constitutes the ‘story of you’, is a radical transformation in what constitutes user-generated content. While proponents of participatory culture celebrate the rise and proliferation of everyday forms of cultural production - including the ability to generate, upload and share personal ‘content’ directly with millions of people online - I found other sites of everyday cultural production that prompted more questions than answers. For instance, in relation to self-quantification technologies, neoliberal frames of participation and aspiration are not easily separable from the proliferation new forms of co-creative, user-generated and consumer-driven content driven by the increased popularity of enhancement technologies and social media apps. Yet, this ‘content’ is not connected to conventional ideas of story or narrative, but constructed through micro-cellular and data-driven components of voice. This has implications not just for domains like consumer-driven i-health or crowd-sourced health data - but dramatically alters the extent to which individuals can retain control over intimate aspects of their bio-narrative. Or, as described in relation to PRISM surveillance, as citizens increasingly become subject to technical and obscure tactics of listening, tracked through patterns of movement, relationships and networks found in personal metadata - the very architectures of voice - they are also targeted for various strategies of intervention or governance based on an interpretation of this ostensible ‘voice-print’.

**IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

With a growing understanding of the value of personal metadata as a form of speech and the powerful attachment it still holds to the idea that it contains traces of the ‘story of you’, it is possible to imagine collaborative and cooperative social arrangements that might mobilise this knowledge as collective voice to intervene in how individual or collective biodata is put to use. This is an emerging site of ubiquitous cultural production. Yet these emerging technologies of speech are also co-produced through various strategies and tactics of algorithmic listening made possible through channels of surveillance that separate ‘form’ from ‘content’ to collate and process personal biodata and begin to reconstruct the ‘story of you’, as I alluded to in the previous chapter in relation to the Right to be
Forgotten and technical frames of recognition. This prompts a series of questions for future consideration: what are the implications for how notions of privacy, consumer rights and even what constitutes user-generated content are understood in this new economy of voice? How can we better articulate these emerging relationships between new technologies of speech and listening that are not confined to neat moral frameworks? And is it possible to reconcile an imperative to shelter the category of voice from an ‘outside’, with the desire to expand those very same incursionary forces?

One of the next frontiers in the struggle for voice might be over “informational self-determination” (Buitelaar, 2014) and the rights of “data subjects” (van Alsenoy et al., 2014) - as hinted at in the previous chapter - rather than a advocating a power shift from speaking up and being heard. For instance, user-generated content and co-creative media practice are often discussed in relation to a democratisation of technologies narrative, however, if we include the prolific generation and distribution of personal biodata as a new form of user-generated content or site of cultural production, then the discussion demands a more complex consideration of a politics of voice that extends beyond one of expression or representation to rethink what constitutes self-determination. This will become a particularly crucial discussion in the area of crowd-sourced health data (its uses and application), for instance, but also in pervasive forms of everyday surveillance where a person’s movements, relationships, consumption patterns and tastes, financial and health status etc. can all be tracked and aggregated to form a picture of who you are based on bio-information and personal metadata. These questions extend beyond old-fashioned notions of privacy. They go to the heart of how notions of voice and giving account must also be updated to contend with these new challenges. My brief account of some of these frontiers has only scratched the surface of this terrain, but is rich ground for future exploration and analysis.

As described earlier in this chapter, voice has constituted an important framing device for my work opening innovative routes of analysis and bringing into view several disparate phenomena. It is my hope that such a theoretical perspective can be taken up by other scholars and applied to different sites of interest or matters of concern, to probe the edges and frontiers of other contemporary cultural debates.
CONCLUSION

The unsettling effects of neoliberal culture - with its shaking loose of the social connections that bind individuals to each other, placing them within increasingly competitive and entrepreneurial markets - together with the uncertainties that come with new configurations of technology, bring with them an urgent desire to reclaim a sense of agency over the structures and processes that shape daily life. In this context, the category of voice has gained currency as a frame and intervention into some of these disruptive rhythms and their unevenly distributed impacts. As I have argued in this thesis, this neoliberal and technosocial restructuring of the social, political and cultural sphere has far reaching effects, many of which we are yet to fully comprehend. Yet beyond existing critiques and celebrations, I have shown that the figure of voice offers itself a problem space in which to critically rethink what is at stake in the very terms of these debates. If the practical struggles over the meaning and value of voice are taking place at the edges of such debates, then it is through attention to these sites of contention that we can best understand the complexity of how voice works in the current moment.

Despite attempts to re-humanise voice through a persistent appeal to an intersubjective and relational ethics, I have argued that the neoliberal and technosocial restructuring of the category of voice demands an analysis that both exceeds and precedes this social formulation. Like current notions of privacy and the individual, the category of voice begins to take on new forms and meanings as it is caught up in a series of competing values, relationships and practices - both connected to and distinct from their historical arrangements. My interest and focus has been to use voice as a frame to animate new sites of struggle where the terms of these very debates are currently being contested. I have argued for the ongoing importance and analytical value of voice in this context. It may be desirable to appeal to a relational model of voice to rectify what some see as a ‘flattening’ or ‘contraction’ in value or meaning, but this approach alone is not enough to either describe what is going on, or to carefully think through the implications of such a transformation.

In titling this thesis Beyond Voice Poverty, I have aimed to evoke the imperative to address the uneven structures of power that condition any claim to speak, be heard or accorded recognition; at the same time explicate a need to ultimately push beyond the limits of rights-based claims to, and current formulations of, voice. Any account of voice
therefore must appeal to its important relational and ethical quality, while at the same time account for the ways that the processes and mechanisms of speaking, listening and recognition are recuperated to circulate in new economies of voice that operate according to a different set of logics. It is here that the frontiers of voice are currently being made, unmade and remade in tactical, thought provoking and often unexpected ways.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Beyond Voice Poverty


Court of Justice of the European Union (2014). ‘An Internet Search Engine Operator is Responsible for the Processing that it Carries out of Personal Data which Appear on Web Pages Published by Third Parties’. Press release No. 70/4, Luxemborg, 13 May.


Beyond Voice Poverty


Fraser, N. (1990) ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy’, *Social Text* 25/26: 56-80.


Beyond Voice Poverty


Beyond Voice Poverty


Author/s:
DE SOUZA, POPPY

Title:
Beyond voice poverty: new economies of voice and the frontiers of speech, listening and recognition

Date:
2015

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/56250

File Description:
Beyond voice poverty: new economies of voice and the frontiers of speech, listening and recognition