

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Weatherald, Nathalie

Thesis title: Reinventing the 'blurry oval'? Practitioner perceptions of deepfakes as a tool for anonymisation in documentary film and video journalism

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Silverio, Robert

Affiliation: FSV UK

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
1.2	Methodology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
1.3	Thesis structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific):

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	A
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	A
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	A
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	A
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	A
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	A

COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems):
The theoretical framework is clear , the structure of the thesis as well.
No objections.

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	A
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	A
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	A
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	A
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	A
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	A
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	A

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):

The thesis is well structured. It has all the appropriate formal necessities.

4. OVERALL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis's strengths and weaknesses)

The thesis is focused on a specific, very narrow theme. The subject is original, and the methodology is adequate.

The individual chapters are well written. It is good that the author included ontological views on photography (including Bazin's essentialist - somewhat naive - perspective).

The only flaw I see is the lack of summarization of what was the main concerns of the respondents. Wasn't there any dominating tendency or pattern of views that could have been traced out? It seems to me that the chapter 3. Findings and discussion gives some basis for that.

The conclusion is after such a thoroughly written thesis too short. I understand that the *small sample size limited the generalisability* (p53), yet I believe prevailing views of this small size might have been emphasized.

In the end, there is an interesting point about whether to call this kind of image manipulation deepfake. Ryan Laney says it is "a philosophical question if it should be called deep fake or not." That takes us back to the title; I think the term is problematic simply because, in this case, it is not fake; it is (at least as far as I understood) admitted transformation without ambition to deceive. That is why I would prefer the term deepfake-like tool, which the author herself occasionally used in the text.

One aspect of this technology approach remained mostly unaddressed, which is the possible change of expression of the interviewed person. Only on page 54, the author says that "the use of the deepfake, or digital mask, served to underscore both the material danger that the sources were in, and *preserve the facial movements and emotion of their testimony*." It is briefly touched on later on (p.61).

5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	Why did you choose not to make any summarization of the views of respondents?
5.2	Could you address the problematics of the change of expression of the transformed faces of the protagonists in a documentary that uses deepfake-like technology and possible shift of the meaning (since the meaning of what one says is not carried with words only)?
5.3	
5.4	

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis' URKUND score.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	
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7. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

- A** excellent x
- B** very good (above average but with some weaknesses)
- C** good (average with some important weaknesses)
- D** satisfactory (below average with significant weaknesses)
- E** marginal pass (meeting minimal requirements)
- F** not recommended for defence

If the mark is an “F”, please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

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Date: 7.9.2022

Signature:Robert Silverio.....

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer’s behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.