Methodological statement

In this methodological statement we outline the research approach, tools, and processes employed for conducting a netnography and semiotic analysis to explore AI anthropomorphism. This methodological framework serves as the foundation for the development of our 15-minute video.

Our curiosity for the anthropomorphism of AI came from collective discussions of how we tend to speak about applications such as ChatGPT. We decided on Semiotic Analysis and Netnography as appropriate methods to explore this curiosity, as each would give us insight into cultural outputs regarding how people conceptualise Artificial Intelligence.

Our Semiotic Analysis was split across the anthropomorphic representation three decades, and a film was chosen from each of these decades to understand representations of anthropomorphism in AI across time. This was split by decade, as such a film was chosen for the 80's, 90's and 00's. We chose the films 'Electric Dreams' (1984), 'Ghost in the Shell' (1995) and 'A.I. Artificial Intelligence' (2001).

Alongside this, we conducted a three-tiered netnography. Whilst our semiotic analysis covered past representations of human traits in AI, our netnography was aimed to look at the present. Here, we examined the present on three levels: the visual anthropomorphism of AI online, the anthropomorphism in AI language and the anthropomorphism of AI in human language, when projecting AI future.

The film 'Electric Dreams' features a poignant scene wherein the computer faces its limitations and Miles (the protagonist) embraces it. This challenges preconceived notions surrounding the perfection of AI whilst anthropomorphizing the machine as it embodies human flaws. AI embodying human flaw was a key theme within the anthropomorphism of David, a sentient little boy robot, in the film 'A.I. Artificial Intelligence', whereby David, in learning through human observation, mimicry and iteration begins to embody flawed human characteristics such as hope. The context surrounding both of these films is a reality where 'the singularity' has been reached. This was foreshadowed within the r/singularity forum, whereby speculation was held over AI inheriting human flaw, and manifesting with it mysticism or addiction.

In this way, we can see AI as holding a mirror to humanity. A reflection which can be interpreted by the beholder of the machine. This was reflected within the semiotic analysis of 'A.I. Artificial Intelligence', whereby David's actions were interpreted and as such responded to with either aggression or affection depending on the person's stance upon those human traits he was exhibiting. This is supported by the netnography on AI companions, whereby people were able to roleplay with robots as though they were human as well as depend upon them for emotional support – despite the lack of authenticity in emotional response. People are able to interpret and as such ignore aspects of the reality of the machine they are interacting with in alignment with their own perceived reality. These attitudes could contribute towards the anthropomorphic myths highlighted by the semiotic analysis in 'The Ghost in the Shell'.

This theme of negative human traits as an outcome of AI anthropomorphism, and the subsequent treatment of AI in a more human way can be seen clearly with the social media influencer, Lil' Miquela. Though not an actual AI, and instead a mimic of an AI – she still receives comments that exhibit human envy towards her activity and relationships.

This phenomenon, AI exhibiting the negative traits of humanity, and the narrative humanity will build around this, contributed heavily towards out video concept. Our video concept was an immersion into a reality whereby we have reached 'the singularity', and AI is sentient, as well as used as a commonplace tool within society. The video is set as a research video into the complaints against the new anthropomorphic system update underscoring various AI products to exhibit the issues which could arise in prominence of negative human traits within the AI, notably the deadly sins described in the Bible. We hope that the audience of the video can reflect upon their own idealisation of AI, and the co-

dependent influence AI and humanity have on one another, negative as well as positive due to AI being made in the image of man.