"DO YOU REMEMBER THE IDEA OF LIKE BEING LIKE JUST I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE": THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF M.I.A'S ALTERNATIVE ARTIST IDENTITY ON QTV INTERVIEW AND ITS AUTHENTICATION IN YOUTUBE COMMENTARY.

Master's thesis
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JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Kielten laitos

Tekijä – Aino Huotari	

Työn nimi – "Do you remember the idea of like being like just I don't know who you are": The discursive construction of M.I.A's alternative artist identity on QTV interview and its authentication in YouTube commentary.	

Oppiaine – englanti	Työn laji – Pro gradu -tutkielma

Aika – Maaliskuu 2014	Number of pages – 115 + liite

Kriittisen diskurssianalyysin ja sosiolingvistisen kielentutkimuksen parissa identiteetit nähdään ennen kaikkea sosiaalisina ja diskursiivisina rakenteina, jotka nousevat esiin vuorovaikutustilanteissa kielenkäytön kautta. Identiteetteihin kohdistuu myös ideologisia odotuksia, joiden uusintamiseen ja murtamiseen identiteettien diskursiivinen rakentuminen osallistuu. Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee vaihtoehtoartistin identiteetin diskursiivista rakentumista juuri tästä näkökulmasta; ensin sen rakentumista haastattelussa, sitten sen sosiaalista ja yhteisöllistä arviointia, koskien haastattelussa diskursiivisesti 'esiin nousevan' identiteetin autenttisuutta tai sen epäaitoutta. Analyysin aineistona on YouTube-sivustolle ladatusta videosta litteroitu haastattelu vaihtoehtoartisti M.I.A:n ja radiotoimittaja Jian Ghomeshin välillä, sekä videoon kahden ensimmäisen vuoden aikana liitetyt kommentit, joiden kautta pyritään selvittämään autenttisuuden määrittelyä ja rakentumista suhteessa videolla rakentuneeseen artisti-identiteettiin.

Tutkimuksen tarkoitus on selvittää, miten ja millaisia diskursiivisia keinoja käyttäen vaihtoehtoinen artisti-identiteetti rakentuu osapuolten välisen vuorovaikutuksen kautta ja miten tämä identiteetti otetaan vastaan yleisön puolesta YouTube kommenteissa. Analyysin tulokset osoittavat, että kyseinen identiteetti rakentuu haastattelussa kahden musiikkimaailmassa vallalla olevan ideologian törmäyskohdassa, jossa artisti diskursiivisin keinoin, vuorovaikutuksessa haastattelijan kanssa, ottaa kantaa ja tämän myötä sijoittuu eri tavoin suhteessa artisti-identiteetin kannalta olennaisiin tekijöihin, kuten musiikkiteollisuuteen, kaupallisuuteen, luovuuteen, kuuluisuuteen ja yleisön reaktioihin. Näin artistin nähdään rakentavan autenttista ja itsemäärittelemäänsä vaihtoehto artisti-identiteettiä yhdessä haastattelijan kanssa.

Videoon liitetyt kommentit heijastavat samaa ideologioiden konfliktia. Kommentoijat joko tukevat artistin tapaa rakentaa identiteettiään tai kyseenalaistavat tai kokonaan torjuvat artistin kielenkäytön kautta tapahtuvan identiteetin rakentumisen kyseenalaisena tai epäaitona. Kommenteissa olennaista on niiden toisiinsa kytkeytyminen, joka korostaa autenttisuuden sosiaalista määrittelyä.

Asiasanat – identity, socio-linguistics, critical discourse analysis, alternative music, authenticity

Säilytyspaikka – Depository

Muita tietoja – Appendix 1

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1 INTRODUCTION

Identities seem to lie on a mundane paradox; in the core of our understanding of self they should be easily explicable by the means provided by our linguistic and other, non-verbal resources. The attempt to pair identities with the categories and roles defined to ease our understanding of ourselves and others, however, is confronted with the inescapable fluidity of the identities; no matter how comprehensively studied and analyzed to meet these categories, identities hardly ever seem to be as black and white people preferred them to be.

As shown by the present study, within the popular music scene the attempt to define artists into certain categories has to deal with the intricate relations with the industry on the one hand, and the diverse and complex artistic expression on the other. Many times an externally, possibly industry-imposed definition or classification of an identity does not necessarily have the final authority to determine how the artist herself defines her artist identity or whether the wider audiences actually considers the artist as an authentic representative of a certain musical genre. Instead of being completely dependent upon these partly artificial definitions made to facilitate our everyday life while dealing with the diversity of our experience, identity construction and its validation is rather a discursive and social process where the person's own understanding of self emerges in interaction with other people and their evaluations and interpretations.

In order to take both of these aspects into consideration, the present study analyzed the artist identity from two different perspectives. To understand the social, interactional dimension of the artist identity, the study focused on the ways in which the identity discursively emerges from the interaction between the artist and the interviewer, whereas the communal, more public side of the emerging artist identity was observed in order to shed light on the ways in which the emergent artist identity was either authenticated or rejected in a social online environment of YouTube. The used discourses were analyzed by following the three principles from Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework, with the help of Booth's (2010) notions on online communities and the intratextual relations that exist in the commentaries.

Music industry with its genres, charts, and awards boasts with a seemingly organized diversity of styles and influences that are used to describe and separate the acts from one another, serving especially the needs of the customers and the commercial goals of the music industry. Despite the closely defined genres, a deeper look into the music scene, however, reveals that the seemingly organized structure of the genres is to some extent make-believe, possibly contributing the consumption of music, but for a thorough understanding of its effects on how musicians themselves view their own artist identity, or how they define their own music needs a more critical approach.

After M.I.A, an alternative artist, had been nominated as a candidate for Grammy and Oscar awards, she was interviewed on QTV, which is a CBC Radio One's show where the radio host Jian Ghomeshi has interviewed a large variety of celebrities ranging from artists to actors. The interview took place at an interesting time on her career; she was clearly balancing on a razor's edge; on the one hand, there was her past as a multicultural underground artist with a political message tried to keep its head up while, on the other hand, there was her sudden success and popularity which had raised the music industry's awareness of her, making her exposed to all the expectations of the mainstream music industry. Given this situation, M.I.A's alternative artist identity and its authenticity in public's eyes offered an interesting phenomenon to be analyzed.

2 M.I.A – THE ARTIST BEHIND THE MONIKER

Unlike her moniker suggests, Mathangi Maya Arulpragasam went never missing in action, as her music's distinct message and sound established a global following. Since the early 21st century, M.I.A, a combination of letters that stand for 'missing in action', has reined alternative music circles around the world. Born in London in 1975, then returning to her parent's roots to Sri Lanka, she has a background unlike many other artists working within the same field. From a young age she witnessed the effects of a civil war and experienced how it felt to be a refugee from a grandstand view, which accompanied with her vivid multicultural background, are often referred to as the source of her artistic style and the key to understand her music and visual arts (Rolling Stones 2014).

Surprising or not, considering her current status in the music scene, M.I.A's art contributions took place in other media forms. Before stepping into the world of beats, rhythms, and sounds, according to Rolling Stone's artist biography, M.I.A's career started with projects including visuals for musicians such as Elastica in addition to work with film. These connections eventually lead her to try her wings in the music scene, and she quickly established a signature sound accompanied by her voice that seemed to function as a mouthpiece to those oppressed and mistreated, tackling issues such as identity politics, globalism, and revolution (Rolling Stones 2014).

Apart from her occasional confrontations with different media, such as the discussion that followed the twisted interview in *The New York Times* by the journalist Lynn Hirschenberg and the fate of 'Born free' music video that got banned by YouTube for its alleged brutal imagery, from an academic perspective, M.I.A has gained very little attention, particularly if one bears in mind her background and her career as a multi-talented artist. There are a few exceptions to this. The study by Weems (2009), concentrated on M.I.A's position as a representative of postcolonial youth, focusing especially on her work as a representative of novel forms of girls' resistance and agency in postcolonial settings. Being musically a diverse pallet of beats and traits from all over the world, M.I.A has turned the heads of cultural and musical scholars as is demonstrated, for example, by Brown (2010) who mentions M.I.A in her study on global pop music emerging from contexts of oppression and torment and its connection to 'utopian fantasy and material possibilities'. In her essay, Brown (2010:132) offers interesting insights in M.I.A's music that reach beyond the music itself and address social and political issues such as new Diasporas and the narrowed technological gap between under and over developed countries, which nevertheless, are unequal. In addition to M.I.A's interest in third-world issues, she is known to utilize the possibilities of the Internet in an experimental and fresh manner. For example, during the release of her third album, she tested the limits of the Internet and Google by typing the album name in a style unrecognizable to the search engines. In a book *Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture* M.I.A has been discussed exactly from this point of view, drawing attention to the possibilities offered by new media forms (Christian, 2010).

As the above-mentioned studies show, M.I.A's art has attracted some interest in social and political terms. Approaching her work from the perspective of discourse and sociolinguistic

studies, I wish to complement this emerging research tradition on M.I.A and argue that her persona and career as a performing artist, however, have a great deal more to offer than has previously been discussed. After contributions to various films and gaining the status of an acknowledged, award-winning act, M.I.A is no longer an underground artist. At the same time, she represents the voice of the powerless and mistreated not often heard in the mainstream pop markets. This position is one ridden with contradictions, and it raises questions of her own artist identity and its authenticity. In such an ideologically and culturally contradictory context her artist identity is faced with the need to be reconstructed and redetermined. The ways in which such renegotiation of identity is done will be one of the main foci in this study. Following the traditions of critical discourse analysis and the recent sociolinguistics, M.I.A's language use will be approached as the key to understand how she construct her explicitly alternative artist identity within the music industry that she both openly criticizes and in which she in many ways belongs to.

In his article for a music website *Flavorwire*, Tom Hawking writes about M.I.A's art and its intricate ways of combining her persona with the art and the politics, pointing simultaneously to an interesting relationship that seems to exist with her and her followers, where her personality is argued to be so closely intertwined with her art that the opinions for one or another correlate with each other.

> "Her personal mythology is entirely interwoven with her music, and that appears to be exactly the way she wants it….The flip side of this, however, is that her music and her persona are so deeply connected that people's opinion of the former has proven very much contingent on the latter." (Hawking, 2013)

Taking into account her position at the border of mainstream and alternative scenes, as an alternative artist the role of her audience and fans is crucial in determining her authenticity. Given this, in addition to the attention her art has given to Internet both in exploring the possibilities it has to offer and the kinds of restrictions it imposes on artists of her kind, the way her authenticity is discussed in social media such as YouTube, reflects the other side of her artist identity, the one defined socially beyond her own reach. The investigation of how her audiences make sense of her identity will, thus, be the other main focus of the present study.

3 DISCURSIVE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: A CRITICAL APPROACH

Since identity as an academic concept is such a broad and intricate phenomenon that the attempt to grasp its comprehensive essence in here would be impossible, this chapter aims is to introduce the concept of identity as it is used in the present study. To be more specific, I will take a brief look at the history of identity as an analytic concept in order to show how identity was first considered as a stable inner state of human beings and how at present it is understood as a dynamic and multilayered social and discursive construct emerging in interaction, in this way drawing attention to the social, interactional dimensions of identity considered essential in this particular study.

In this study I will approach alternative identity construction from a critical perspective and investigate the questions of the perceived authenticity of the identity by looking at audience response in social media environment. In order to be able to conduct this kind of multi-faceted research venture, the theoretical background of the study will draw on various theories on identity, which all share the understanding of identities as discursive and social constructs, and shed light on the ways in which social media functions in relation to identity work. In this study, identities are discussed in the light of such research orientations as sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Positioning Theory and linguistic anthropology. Firstly, in this section, I will take a brief look into the history of the concept of identity and show how a variety of research orientations consider it a dynamic discursive and social construct. Then, I will discuss the ways in which Critical Discourse Analysis views language both as a powerful means to assign and impose certain identities to people and as a liberating resource available for people to break free from these socially and normatively constructed positions. Thirdly, drawing on Positioning Theory, I will approach identity as a set of interactive and momentary positions people assign for themselves and to which they are assigned by others. Finally, I will discuss the role of YouTube as an arena for social interaction where people are able to evaluate and assess a number of different phenomena, as in this case, the authenticity of an alternative artist.

3.1 Identity: past and present

Along with many other semiotic systems available to human beings, people use language to represent themselves in various situations, for diverse purposes and to numerous individuals and groups with whom they have different relationships. Consequently, the ways in which people use language and construct their identity are inevitably interwoven. However, the concept of identity as it is now understood has not always existed. For example, it is argued by Benwell and Stokoe (2006:18-21) that at the time identity first came to be known as a word, it described the person's inner self as a stable unified entity – in other words, as something that clearly clashes with the current understanding of the concept. It is clear that the definition of identity has since evolved enormously. It has, for example, witnessed the rise of a more humanist approach during the Enlightenment era, after which the influence of Romanticism gave emphasis to the self- expression. In the early 20th century, the concept of identity was strongly influenced by Freud's theories on the importance of individual mind as a key constituent of one's identity (ibid.).

According to Bucholtz and Hall (2004:370), 'the term identity literally refers to sameness.' In many respects, this literal definition gives reason to expect that people who appear to be most similar with each other could be argued to share the same identity. In reality, however, the definition of this phenomenon is more problematic (ibid.). Bucholtz and Hall (2004:370) point out that even if a group of people share the same external categories, such as ethnic origin and educational background, their identities might still vary to a greater extent. In other words, they may be very different as to how they perceive themselves and how others take them to be. This notion aptly describes the complexity of defining identity nowadays.

In the past years, identity has been approached from a post-modern perspective that acknowledges the cultural and social diversity of both the social world and its subjects. As a particularly influential example, Stuart Hall (2002:20) has argued that identities are something unstable, decentralized and spatially scattered. His view draws on all-encompassing changes in the society involving 'class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and nationality', which, in their simplistic and unified form, have traditionally been considered the cornerstones of people's identities (ibid.). Discussing identity, Hall (2002:21) crystallizes three kinds of different subjects a) the subject of enlightenment b) the sociological subject

and c) the postmodern subject. In his opinion, the definition of the sociological subject already touches upon the discursive construction of identity in that it sees identities being constructed in interaction between the subject's inner self and the others in the surrounding culture and society. However, as Hall points out, this view still gives too simplistic picture of both the surrounding society as well the subject positioned within it. The problem here is that neither one these two is as predictable or unified as the definitions suggest. As a solution, a postmodern definition of identity offers a view which sees identity as something in a state of flux – as something mobile, transforming according to the discursive and representative powers and resources present and available in the society (Hall, 2002:22-23).

According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006:22) people nowadays live in a world that is defined as postmodern, founded on change, globalization, multiculturalism and translocalisation. Similar observations have recently been made by Blommaert and Varis (2011:3-4) who view identities as circulating in the middle of 'the complex of micro-hegemonies', which is to be understood as the diverse selection of possible discourses and practices for identity work. In their opinion, people have access to a multitude of different, even contradictory identities, which they adjust for themselves depending on the social context. Essential for their view on identity is the concept of 'enoughness'. By this they point to the way in which an identity is available for a person if he or she fulfills a socially acceptable number of criteria for that particular identity.

3.2 Identity as a discursive and a social construct

In sociolinguistics, identity has gained major attention due to the prominent role of language in self-definition and social interaction. Sociolinguistics, sociocultural linguistics in particular, views language as the prominent resource for identity construction. Bucholtz and Hall (2005:588) point out numerous directions of sociocultural linguistic, which, despite their differing backgrounds, all share the understanding that identity is not simply an inner, psychological system for defining oneself, but in contrast, something that takes its form through social activities, most importantly, by the means of language use. These include ethnomethodological views on identity as something that is 'done' in action and interaction,

conversation-analytic views on identity, and the poststructuralist theory of performativity, to mention a few. Along with Bucholtz and Hall (2005:587), a number of other scholars draw on the notions of linguistic anthropology and interactional linguistics as they consider identity to be a linguistic product that is constructed, but also altered bit by bit in the course of social interaction (see also Rymes 2009:19).

Bucholtz and Hall (2004:369) explain that of all these disciplines, it is especially linguistic anthropology that has been interested in analyzing the relation between language and identity. In their view, despite the fact that the term identity has achieved its central position in the field only lately, the studies have nevertheless long concentrated on how language use enables people to take various culturally dependent positions. As a result, the role of language use in the construction of identity has raised a stronger interest in studying the topic no longer as part of the language user's background, but as a research topic of its own. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2004:369) many studies in the field of linguistic anthropology have conducted their analysis with the help of linguistic material used in, for example, interviews, narratives, and oral discourse, which further supports this new approach on studying identity construction on its own right. In their opinion, the role of language compared to other symbolic means to culturally express identities stands out due to its dynamic and pervasive nature.

In addition to linguistic anthropology, a number of scholars seem to agree on the view of identity as a discursive and social construct regardless of the different research orientations they represent. To illustrate this, the studies by a number of scholars have reached similar conclusions. For example, in his studies on Samoan people Duranti (1992:86-87) noticed that the use of a specific language invoked differing roles, 'sides' or statuses of the people present in the communicative situation. These observations support the view of identities as dynamic and context dependent, in short, as something that is activated through language use. The ways in which identities are put in action through language use are central to Widdicombe (1998b:191) too. In her studies she emphasizes the importance of a detailed analysis of talk-in-interaction to understand how identities come into play in social encounters. To her 'the important analytic question is not therefore whether someone can be described in a particular way, but to show that and how this identity is made relevant or ascribed to self or others.'

Also Hall (2002:29) describes human beings first and foremost as discursive entities that are in the center of the turbulent movements of modern societies. Along with Duranti (1992) and Widdicombe (1998b), he understands identities as something variable and something one cannot take for granted (Hall 2002:28). To be more specific, from his point of view, one can either gain or lose a certain identity, depending on the ways subjects are addressed in different contextual settings. The numerous discourses people have at their disposal, then, could be seen to play a major role in defining people's identities at a given time and in a given place.

The views of the feminist linguist Mills (2003:19) support the view of identities as social processes embodied in language use. She eclectically draws on disciplines which all acknowledge the reciprocal relation between language and identity construction. Firstly, she argues that especially in the fields of cultural and literary theory, it is particularly language use where identities are seen to manifest themselves. Secondly, she points out that many theorists consider 'language or discourse' as the core elements in constructing subjectivity. Furthermore, she draws attention to psychoanalysis for which identity never appears as a unified and stable construct but rather as something that is continually 'in process'. Finally, Mills (2003:19) explains the meaning of identity construction for a number of linguists who emphasize the construction of identities as processes and the way conversations are the stages where identities are acted out.

In terms of the conversations where Mills argued identities to be acted out, Gumperz (1982:53) introduces a number of essential features to be taken into account in addition to the actual physical setting in how people interpret the language use and consequently, the constructed identity. He emphasizes the role of people's individual background knowledge, the attitudes the participants have toward each other, and the way they perceive roles and statuses at play, not to forget the kinds of values that are associated to the content of the messages. Furthermore, Gumperz (1982:154) views language use to be interpreted by following the explicit or implicit cues on how to understand each utterance.

The way Benwell and Stokoe (2006:29) conceptualize the discursive nature of identity profoundly sums up the above discussed approaches. In their view identity can either be understood as a performance or construction that takes place in social interaction, through

language or as something dependent on historical context and regulated by the related power structures. In the context of the present study, these two ways are put together; for one, identities are seen as discursively emerging in social encounters, being influenced by the current social norms and cultural conventions present in each encounter.

3.3 Construction of identity as positioning

The power of language in constituting identities does not solely lie on its ability to define us, and others in interaction. In many respects, one of the major functions of discourses is that they position people on many different levels. Laclau and Mouffe (1985:115) argue that discursive structures always entail particular 'subject positions', meaning that particular language use always situates people in certain positions in the society and in relation to other subjects. Bound to these positions are the expectations people confront in terms of their actions and language use; in other words, what they are or are not allowed to say and do. When people deviate from the normative language use tied to a certain identity position, they simultaneously expose the expectations people have related to these positions. To sum up, the conflicting discourses, which are at use in social interaction, shed light into the social expectations underlying the identities and contest and alter the existing identities, contributing to possible social change (Laclau and Mouffe (1985) as referred to by Phillips and Jørgensen (2002:41).

The model by Harré and Moghaddam (2003:1-11) offers a profound account in order to understand the mechanisms of positioning theory. In their view, every instance of language use entails these three aspects; *position*, *speech and other acts*, and *story line*. Position covers the actions the person is entitled to as well as the kind of language use that is socially allowed to and expected of the person, bringing along a number of restrictions and limitations to peoples' language use.

> "…in each social mileu there is a kind of Platonic realm of positions, realized in current practices, which people can adopt, strive to locate themselves in, be pushed into, be displaced from or be refused access, recess themselves from or so on, in a highly mobile and dynamic way." (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003:6)

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Speech and other acts refers to the way the instances of language use become meaningful only interpreted in their context as a part of a whole, being dependent on what preceded this instance and what consequences it might have. Most importantly, each moment of language use should be viewed 'socially meaningful act'. Lastly, social actions are dynamic contributions of a number of people involved, expressed in the form of story lines that are to some extent established, not random consequences of social interaction.

The positions people acquire or to which they are situated through language use are by no means always neutral, but complex and ideologically intertwined processes as shown by Fairclough (1992:137) who argues that discourses play a major role in the 'processes of cultural change'. In his view, language serves as a tool in re-determining, reconstructing and transforming identities, which are firmly tied to certain social and institutional spheres and constructions. By this he refers to the relationship that exists between language use and a certain identity; identities are equipped with different possibilities and resources to participate and function in the social reality. In other words, in situations where language use of a person deviates from the one expected of and assigned to that particular identity, identities are going through processes of re-determination and reconstruction.

Fairclough (1995a:73) emphasizes the ways in which discourses are simultaneously constructing and revising people and the kinds of relations and social positions they have with and in relation to each other. The relationship between discourses and the various 'extra-discursive structures', which comprise the numerous subjects, objects, and relations in the social reality play their role in the above-mentioned processes. He underlines the effects of 'economic, political and discursive/ideological structures' in the discourses' constructive power, which means that in his view people, as subjects possessing certain identities, are both 'subjects of history' and 'affected'. In other words, people are the agents of the current social and institutional circumstances and products of these circumstances, shaped by the dominant power structures in the society.

Fairclough (1995a:39) argues that in order to be a particular subject in society, a person must acquire certain normative discursive resources which help the person to 'talk' and 'see' in a required way. Inoue (2004) discusses a related linguistic phenomenon called indexical inversion. Inoue (2004:44) explains indexical inversion as a process through which certain

discursive features become intertwined with indexical associations imposed on certain identities. These discursive features might then equip the speakers with certain ideological expectations with regards to the identity in question and, therefore, influence the linguistic outcome as well. Also Holland et. al (1998:26) point out that the society marks its members with established discourses and categories on a personal, interpersonal and institutional level, which means that their identities are constituted on multiple levels through various discourses and their embodiments.

Despite the seemingly simple pattern for positioning people, the consequences can be problematic. Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2003:158) argue that positioning people to particular categories fails to acknowledge people's individuality, oppressing them to pure 'representatives of categories'. The process, however, should not be viewed as emerging solely from stereotypes and oversimplifications. Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2003:158) wish to point out that positioning is a conscious act through which participants either elect or do not elect to utter particular statements that position themselves or others in a certain way. Discursive positioning, therefore, is a more complex process not solely a question of utilizing simplified cultural assumptions in social encounters.

3.4 Identity as struggle

What the above-discussed theories suggest is that in each society, there are certain pre-discursively crafted models and categories in which people either position themselves or to which they are positioned as social subjects. To illustrate this Harré and Slocum (2003:128) argue that identities entail certain

> "rights, duties and obligations to perform or to require the performance of certain kinds of acts. In psychological reality they exist as expectations, beliefs, and presuppositions." (Harré and Slocum 2003:128)

In other words, people are expected to adjust their identities to the socially accepted and available categories, since otherwise there is a clash between the established social, cultural and institutional order. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:96) tackle this issue by addressing the process of finding an identity as 'struggle'. For them struggle over identity always entails

questions of difference. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:96) point to discursive choices in the construction of identities, which rule out the possibility of difference by assuming universal homogeneity. Thus, when language use is understood as a site for identity construction and therefore a means to use power in the society, it is worth considering the occasions of conflict and controversy related to the processes of identity construction.

The studies on punk and Goth identities by Widdicombe and Woffitt (1995) serve as a relevant example of how these external expectations can clash with the peoples' own understanding of self and how their identities are constructed. In her studies, Widdicombe (1998a:53) paid attention to conflicts and controversies that arose from discursive identity construction with which the people were engaged. In their work they analysed the interviews of people who were representatives of punk and Goth subcultures, approaching the data from the perspective of the interactional management of membership and non-membership in these sub-cultures. As a result, they defined a number of descriptive strategies, which were used to manage these identity questions. Based on these interviews, Widdicombe (1998a:53) makes a number of relevant and interesting points regarding the controversies involved in identity construction. On the one hand, she points out that the use of category terms, either by the person him or herself or by others, triggered a number of characteristics. On the other hand, the process might work in the other direction, meaning that certain actions or features were considered to launch a particular membership category.

What the findings of Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) revealed was that many people who were considered belonging to a certain sub-culture showed rejection towards questions that presupposed a straight connection between self-definition and physical appearance. To illustrate this, the members of these sub-cultures did not see a connection between their dress style and the sub-culture membership nor did they see themselves filling the criteria for being a member of a certain sub-culture. The conclusion Widdicombe (1998a:53) reaches out of this is that the discursive strategies used to reject and diminish a number of characteristics of and actions related to a certain sub-culture are a means to construct a more authentic and self-determined identity which is not purely dependent on the characteristics spelled out by the sub-culture membership and external, public expectations towards it.

The findings of Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) have a great deal in common with the views of CDA scholars. The conclusion they came to in their studies shows how the process of assigning a social identity to person is a means to perform social control. By this Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) mean that the actions, beliefs, and opinions of a person are often observed purely in the light of the expectations and assumptions related to the category the person is seen to belong to. For this reason, Widdicombe (1998a:59) suggests that 'speakers' resistance to category affiliation is a way of addressing the inferential consequences that might follow accepting the categorical identity; in particular that affiliation is driven by a desire to conform and to be similar to others.' With many respects, peoples' unwillingness to conform to a certain cultural or social identity category embodies the struggle over their right to self-determine their social and cultural identities despite of the external socio-cultural, ideological and institutional expectations imposed on them.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004:371) observe the above-discussed phenomenon through 'agency and power', which they view as essential factors leading people to form groups. To put it simply, in the case people find the existing identity categories in controversy with their own they are driven to define novel ones for themselves with which they feel more comfortable (ibid.). Bucholtz and Hall (2004:371) highlight that it is in particular this diversity or heterogeneity in human beings that contributes the most to the formation of meaningful identities, in other words, people find it easy to define themselves with relation to others they perceive different. For this reason, as argued by Holland et. al (1998:19), not only is it meaningful what people say about themselves, but also how people address and perceive others around them. Thus, the analysis of identity construction should address the more embedded implications related to the process, since on its own the understanding of the most visible use of language is insufficient and scratches only the surface of the deeper processes in action.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004:372) meet these requirements by acknowledging the meaning of the underlying power relations and the ideological processes embedded in the processes through which identities take their form. For them the way in which certain identity categories have become unmarked and others marked by discursive means is an indicator of embedded ideological processes in play. The power relations determining the status of each identity category vary locally, but are all accompanied by unmarked or marked language use. Bucholtz and Hall (2004:372) argue that often the statuses of the unmarked categories are

masked and made to seem natural by normative language use and by repressing the visibility of the marked categories. No matter how equal certain identity pairs or categories seem on the surface, internally the way in which people are associated with one and not the other entails social inequality, which leads to the formation of hierarchies. These hierarchies then naturalize the most powerful ones as the norm eventually drifting away of an identity which makes the others not conforming to the norm seem as deviations, as marked options. Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall (2004), power relations and ideological processes are therefore an essential part of language use and identity construction. From this perspective, identities should be understood to be influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that simultaneously interact with each other; people form their identity based on their inner notions of oneself which are partly constructed and controlled by the social and cultural structures and conventions, embedded in different ideologies.

4   YOUTUBE: A VENUE FOR IDENTITY EVALUATION

As Strangelove (2010:6) points out, despite its current status as a daily companion for many at least in the Western part of the world, YouTube is a rather novel phenomenon. It was established as a commercial site in 2005 and aimed at offering a venue for advertisers to gain visibility on the Internet. In 2006 the ownership changed hands and it became part of Google's possessions. Nowadays, YouTube is a home, among other things, for an immense number of homemade videos, which, as Strangelove (2010:6) argues, do not appeal to advertisers who are afraid that their material will appear in an inappropriate or dubious context. What this seems to imply is that YouTube has mainly become a venue for ordinary people to broadcast their own material or optionally edited or modified material stemming from other origins.

Despite the vast number of amateur videos, as Strangelove (2010) calls the videos uploaded by ordinary people, YouTube also offers a broadcasting venue for various institutions, media corporations and organizations to present their own material. The numerous television shows, news clips, radio shows and live performances broadcast on YouTube illustrate how traditional media have harnessed social media for their own purposes. This phenomenon gives reason to argue that YouTube has at least partly replaced television as a venue for broadcasting, possibly because it is a more user-friendly for viewers as the videos are not tied to any specific broadcasting timetables.

In a similar vein, Tolson (2010) views YouTube as a medium that has both borrowed from the past and invented something new. Traditional media, such as television, newspapers and radio still serve as sources of information, but they either offer relatively few possibilities for interaction with the public or, if they do so, allow this interaction in a somewhat limited way or slow in pace. YouTube deviates from television in its ability to offer its users an immediate possibility to comment the videos and interact with other users. For this reason, as

a social medium it has created and enabled completely novel dimensions for social interaction.

4.1 The role of YouTube in identity evaluation and interpretation

In comparison to television, the most remarkable change brought along the introduction of YouTube is related to the way in which people can react upon and make use of the information easily accessible and available to them. Strangelove (2010:172) sees television and YouTube differing from each other mainly in regard to their audiences. Whereas television positions its audience as viewers, YouTube upgrades the possibilities of its audience by allowing them a variety of functions in its virtual world where people can actually act as both interpreters and producers of meanings.

By signing in as YouTube users, people are able to take part in commenting on the videos uploaded in YouTube, which allows them to become active participants in this online environment. This possibility to comment on videos enables a high level of interactivity, which the newspapers, radio, and even television seem to lack. From the moment the videos are uploaded on YouTube, they become open to user evaluation and reactions receiving feedback from all over the world. In terms of the present study, this technical property of YouTube offers an interesting possibility to scrutinize the relationship between the video content and the viewers.

Hermes (1999: 69-70) draws attention to how various disciplines have been interested in the relationship between celebrities and audiences, however varying in their perspectives and main focus. For instance, a number of psychological approaches to celebrity-audience relationship draw on ideas of catharsis and identification or theories concerning mass hysteria. What these approaches fail to acknowledge, as suggested by Hermes (1999:70), is the role of the different media that cover our everyday experiences nowadays. Similarly culture and discursive dimensions that are intertwined around people and their social environment are left without closer inspection, while the focus is on presumable straightforward connection between the audiences and the celebrities.

Tolson (2010:277) offers another perspective on studying the relationship between the audiences and the celebrity. He draws attention to how the 'mediated performances', and their quality in particular, are evaluated. According to Tolson (2010:277-278), the questions that mostly attract people concern 'sincerity' and 'genuineness' of the performances and the personas. To illustrate this, he discusses Oprah Winfrey as a media figure whose authenticity is problematic to judge due to the difficulties in separating the real persona from the role as a TV-host.

YouTube opens up a new venue for meaning making processes; in their comments YouTube users as an audience can choose to support, contest, agree, and disagree with the material provided for them, and through these processes, form their opinion on the celebrity in question. As a social medium, YouTube offers its users the chance to exchange opinions with one another.

By viewing the videos and performing other activities on YouTube such as commenting on the videos, people gain what Strangelove (2010:9) calls 'representational power' which gives them the opportunity to both construct their own image, but similarly contribute to the construction of other people's identities and images. Consequently, as Strangelove (2010:59) points out, YouTube gives random people the possibility to express their views of others in, often surprisingly hostile and indecent ways. The way in which especially celebrities have exposed their lives to the public - that means mainly complete strangers who now possess the ability and opportunity to comment on the material – allows them to comment on one's personal identity and self-representation as well. More importantly, as Strangelove (2010:59) points out, the material uploaded on YouTube becomes public possession that is open to be annexed, altered and manipulated. He emphasizes the way in which the materials, once made accessible to wider audiences, are subjects to reinterpretation. On YouTube this is particularly visible due to the possibility to comment the videos.

According to Strangelove (2010:40), YouTube creates a rather problematic environment for constituting identities. The accessibility and interactive dimension of the medium allows people to represent themselves to wide audiences around the globe, but, at the same time, forces people them to face the risk of possible misinterpretations as the meanings are constructed without paying attention to the context and the characteristics of the actual person

in question. Due to their public status and media coverage, celebrities form a group whose occupational identities are in a riptide of opinions that are for the most part constructed on the celebrity's perceived public image, since people hardly ever have the chance to meet these people in person or in unprofessional settings.

Especially around alternative acts, authenticity of the artists is highly valued (Shuker, 1998:6). This sets the artists and their agenda under closer inspection, since their authenticity lies on the public's perception of how sincere their artistic output and its social and political message actually is. What these evaluations are based on YouTube draws on numerous factors, bouncing from the comments of other users to the video and each person's individual background knowledge of the artist at hand, not to forget the underlying ideological dichotomies in the music industry.

5   MAINSTREAM AND ALTERNATIVE WITHIN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY: QUESTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity as a concept in music industry has previously been mainly a concern of studies on rap and hip-hop scenes (see Kubrin 2005, Hess 2005a&b) and, within them, only a few have been interested in studying authenticity as a socially and interactively constructed discursive phenomenon (see Clarcke and Hiscock 2006). Outside these studies, although an essential characteristic defining indie and alternative music circles and artists, authenticity has received rather minimal attention in academic sense.

In the following chapters, I will first discuss what is seen to separate alternative scene from the mainstream, with the attempt to approach the division from various perspectives to offer a comprehensive understanding of the underlying difference reflected in the related artist identities. As a social and interactive phenomenon, authenticity is made visible through discursive means. I will introduce views on how authenticity is a discursive construct that depends on what is socially agreed as 'enough' to be considered authentic.

5.1 Mainstream vs. alternative music

> Alternative music is "a broad label, and (arguably) a loose genre/style, which has been used since the late 1960s for popular music seen as less commercials and mainstream, and more authentic and 'uncompromising'. At the historical heart of alternative music was its rejection of the commercial music industry and the emphasis it place on rock music as art or expression rather than as a product for sale for economic profit." (Shuker 1998:6)

Music industry is and has been throughout the history a battlefield of numerous dichotomies used to classify artists in different categories and genres. One of the prevailing divisions is the classification of artists belonging to either mainstream or alternative side of the industry. Through a number of cultural and musical studies it has become clear that these concepts are interdependent; one cannot exist without the other. In music industry, there are various definitions for alternative and mainstream as profound orientations to music and the surrounding industry. For instance, for Shuker (1994:37), the question is inevitably political, since within the music scene 'alternatives' do always exist as a counterpart for the commercialized, 'mainstream' music.

In many respects, the division to mainstream and alternative is ideological. A look at the on-going discussion of the topic quickly reveals that this division does by no means rest solely on the type of music the act is performing, but rather calls for a number of other characteristics, leading the interpretation on a more abstract level. This relationship between mainstream and alternative can be pinpointed as follows:

> "In true culture we invariably find a high degree of specificity, a strong sense of context, of time and of location, a sense of unique relationships, of binding existential meanings; in false culture we tend to find the reverse, we find a high degree of generality in which all things prickly, problematic and diverse have been conveniently dissolved." Abbs (1975:53) as quoted by Shuker (1994:21)

For Shuker (1994:21), this argument by Abbs (1975:53) sums up the idea seen to differentiate mainstream from its alternatives. Its aim is to point out the ways in which popular culture impairs the authenticity within the cultural experience, assimilating human experience to the most common form. According to Shuker (1998:36), it is the question of authenticity that lies in the heart of the ideological differences, being the cultivating force behind divisions such as 'mainstream versus independent' and 'commercialism versus creativity'.

Shuker (1998:21) argues that the basic assumption in the musical innovation theory is that 'commerce dilutes, frustrates, and negates artistic aspects of the music.' This division is based on a fundamental view on art and business arising from completely differing origins; art stemming from creativity born in the streets and commerce being based on calculations and dominating the markers. Thus, alternative artists and their artistic contributions are often considered to pursue beyond mere commercial success. Free from commercial impositions, they have their own ways of doing creative work, which also serves other purposes than reaching exclusively growing sales.

Studies on rap and hip hop genres show similar features with the ways in which alternative music is often characterized. Motley and Henderson (2008) discuss how commercialism has pervaded in the rap scene and is seen to threaten the 'realness' of rap music. In a similar tone, Keyes (2002:122) as cited in Kubrin (2005:368), points out that many rap artists are often characterized by their resistance to the popular music industry, as they prefer to identity themselves with the 'underground' and stay 'real', which calls for authenticity and keeping up the ties to the 'streets'.

In addition to its anti-commercial attitude, alternative music is often considered to deviate from the mainstream for its political undertones. Similar to the functions of pop music back in the history, according to Shuker (1998:223), alternative music has continued the tradition by offering a venue for people to express their views on social, cultural, and political issues in order to either raise public awareness or as a means to support some common cause. According to Shuker (1998:223), these kinds of acts often confront the oppressing power of the mainstream music industry, which tries to tone down and neutralize their expression. Shuker (ibid.) points out how this involvement by the authorities of music industry has created a counter act, where alternative artists along with some other acts belonging to genres such as punk and reggae, have used their creativity to air out opinions on issues ranging from class and gender politics to topics related to racism and environmental issues. Unlike mainstream music that fishes for popularity and acceptance, alternative acts usually have courage to address topics in ways that might not be easily consumed or approved.

The division between mainstream and alternative has attracted some scholarly attention: for example, there have been attempts to define tools to analyze artists as belonging to one

category or another. Hesmondhalgh (1997) discusses mainstream and alternative in the light of music networks. For him, mainstream means combining artwork with business, which is in contrast to being alternative, in other words, keeping distance from the commercial side of the work. Surprisingly, he nevertheless lists 'distribution, booking, and public relations' as spheres, which have also been the concern of a number of independent labels, suggesting that the division to either alternative or mainstream is not always so clear cut.

How simple and natural the division might first seem, it is still one of the most complex and controversial issues in the music industry (Kruse 1993:35). Based on Kruse's interviews with a number of musicians and other people within the industry and media such as radio hosts and record salesmen, she came to the conclusion that alternative was for some part 'an industry imposed definition', yet drawing remarkably on 'uniqueness' in sound and audience. Similar to Kruse's (1993) views, Shuker (1998:7) points out that 'alternative' as a genre has become a label used by the recording industry to classify acts, and in this way, it has its own connections to the more mainstream side of the industry as well. In a similar tone, Bertsch (1993) points to the controversy the alternative acts were faced with after the somewhat easily defined start of the whole genre. Due to the increased development and quicker use of technology, it was easier for big record companies to find and push alternative acts towards mainstream popularity and success. In this way, both the ideological and stylistic borders between these two emerged and became growingly vacillating.

The way alternative artists have come closer to the mainstream music industry can be seen to relate to the phenomenon of pop music, as illustrated by Shuker (1998:229). According to him, popular music from the postmodernist perspective embodies deeper changes in conventional polarities such as 'art and the commercial, the aesthitic and unaesthetic, and the authentic and unauthentic.' What his view suggests is that authenticity along with many other values or features, are no longer an easily defined, intrinsic characteristic of some artists, but something more contradictory and complex in this new cultural environment of pop music.

Carrying along a great deal of symbolic value, Shuker (1998:20) views authenticity to entail expectations for the sincerity, creativity and originality of the music and the person behind the 'creative work'. Traditionally, as Shuker (1998:171) states, authenticity within the music industry is a concept related to indie bands often equated with the term 'alternative bands', as

one of their core values as a counter act against the 'stereotyped mainstream'. Shuker (ibid.) points out that, while indie music has been characterized 'raw and immediate', mainstream music, due to its produced nature, has been considered 'processed and mediated'. In addition to indie bands, Shuker (1998:6) views authenticity as a value that has been associated with alternative rock, possibly for its uncompromising and less commercial approach to music. In addition to this, Shuker (1998:43) brings up authenticity as a way to express perceptions of the music's 'realness' and 'honesty'. Authenticity, however, is not solely an intrinsic feature of the music, but a socially defined and assigned feature. Shuker (1998:20) argues authenticity to be dependent on its 'legitimization' and 'assimilation' by subcultures and other related communities. As a result, for something to be authentic people need to negotiate it by the discursive means.

5.2 Authenticity as a discursive and a social construct

Despite its seemingly physical manifestations in the music industry, authenticity is first and foremost a discursively defined and socially agreed and contested construct. In their work on identity authentication in superdiverse contexts, Blommaert and Varis (2011:3-5) have defined the relationship between discourses and authenticity as follows. Through various discursive means, people take differing stances on certain attributes seen essential in order to be a member of certain identity category. For some these, by no means randomly picked attributes are easier to address than for others, resulting in people mastering these attributes by differing degrees. At this point, Blommaert and Varis (2011:4) introduce their concept of *enoughness*. In short, they argue that a person needs to have 'enough' of attributes or what they call 'emblematic features' to become a socially accepted representative of a certain identity category. They continue that the process of validating 'enoughness' seldom happens without contradictions in determining and agreeing on what counts as 'enough', which further emphasizes the social and interactional nature of defining authenticity. This view is also shared by Bucholtz and Hall (2005:601) for whom authenticity is not an 'inherent' quality of some identity. They argue that authenticity is discursively constructed in interaction with other people among whom a certain identity is ratified and authenticated – the very relationship that is under closer inspection in the present study.

As a means to define an authentic musician and music, Shuker (1998:20) considers the personal creative input of the musician central, pointing to such concepts as 'seriousness, sincerity and uniqueness'. Although the main emphasis here is placed on the artists' own effort, Shuker (1998:20) also acknowledges the role of 'subcultures and communities' among which the artists and their music are to varying degrees assimilated and legitimized, in this way assessing the authenticity of a musician. In the present study, it is exactly this communal, interactive aspect that is seen essential in determining whether the emerging artist identity is authentic or not.

This communal view on authenticity is further discussed by Weigert (2009:38) who sums up the definition of authenticity as 'a motivating meaning of self'. He underlines how authenticity bears close resemblance to self, being an open, developing phenomenon for the person's self-observations as well as for others in the form of 'actions and symbols'. Most importantly, he reminds us on how authenticity cannot be observed in the same way as objects in the world, but instead, it should be viewed as something that can be experienced and construed at all times between self, the surrounding people and institutions that take part in this through cultural codes.

Clarke and Hiscock (2006) have previously studied this social and discursive side of authenticity in their research on online audiences and their role in authenticity evaluation. In their study, they analyzed audience responses in a number of online blogs on a hip-hop group from Newfoundland whose music was only available online. Clarke and Hiscock (2006:252) examined comments posted in blogs, focusing on their evaluation of the constructed 'skeet' identity of the hip-hop group members. The analysis showed that the issues people were mainly concerned about were the street credibility of the group and the use of local linguistic features in their songs, to be more specific, whether they actually had 'street cred' and whether their use of local linguistic features was authentic, a means to form the local, 'skeet identity' or fake, serving some other purpose.

The commentary in a number of blogs made it clear that people had differing opinions in terms of the group's authenticity; some were irritated by their style and constructed 'skeet' identity, whereas others did not pay that much attention to the whole issue. Furthermore, some people were left puzzled by the group, meaning that they did not actually know if they

were being serious or not. In addition to paying attention to online commentary, Clarke and Hiscock (2006:255) also took the question of authenticity on a another level, pointing out that by claiming an authentic identity of 'skeets', which as a term refers to the socio-cultural identity category of young working class Newfoundlanders in Canada, the hip hop group 'Gazeebo Unit' actually violated the values within the hip-hop culture in general.

As this study shows, the ways in which people either validate or reject a certain identity as unauthentic can vary in terms of how strong claims they make and on what they base their evaluation. Furthermore, these evaluation processes are dynamic and might change as they are related to larger cultural and ideological issues in society.

6 THE SET UP OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study aims at exploring the ways in which an alternative artist identity of the artist M.I.A is constructed in an interview uploaded on YouTube and how the YouTube users evaluate this emerging identity. First, the analytic focus is on the verbal interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, and attention will be paid to the different discursive means that are used to construct what I here argue to be an alternative artist identity. In the second part of the analysis, the study will draw attention to the commentary by YouTube users and in particular to their reaction in relation to the emerging alternative artist identity. Here, the interest lies in whether the YouTube users find the emergent identity authentic or not.

6.1. Aims and research questions

Drawing on the data of the present study, I wish to argue that by rejecting and questioning certain identity categories and other portrayals assigned to her in the course of the interview, M.I.A constructs an alternative artist identity, which at the same time brings forth the ideological expectations and dominant characteristics of the artist identity within the

mainstream music industry. By being in controversy with these expectations, M.I.A constructs her own alternative artist identity, which simultaneously questions the dominant position and necessity of the mainstream artist identity and modifies its dimensions to fit her own needs.

Within the outlines laid by the definitions of alternative and mainstream music genres and of conceptions of authenticity spelled out earlier in this study, the first part of the study focuses on how the dominant perceptions of being an artist are discussed by the interviewee, M.I.A, and her interviewer in the context of a radio interview in the studio of the CBC Radio One's programme "Q" published on YouTube on October 18th 2010, how they orient themselves towards the possible underlying ideological associations related to those perceptions and what kind of influence do these processes have on the emerging alternative artist identity. As this study understands identity to be a discursively and socially emerging construct, therefore dependent on not only the person's own understanding of self, but other people's evaluations as well, the second part of the analysis will look at the comments on M.I.A on YouTube. These are argued to offer a valuable resource for understanding how the YouTube commentators ratify the emerging alternative artist identity. In the second part of the analysis, therefore, I wish to pay attention to how the emergent artist identity is evaluated and assessed based on the YouTube user commentary on the video. To be more specific, drawing on the concept of authenticity as socially agreed and negotiated 'enoughness' of attributes and qualities, I will be looking at whether the audience considers the emerging alternative artist identity as authentic or not. Hence, the research questions I aim to address in this study are the following:

1. How is an alternative artist identity constructed for the artist M.I.A in interaction between the interviewer Jian Ghomeshi and the interviewee Maya Arulpragasam?

2. Based on the YouTube commentary related to the video, is the constructed identity considered authentic or not? What do the commentators draw on in either validating or rejecting the alternative artist identity?

6.2. Data

The data in the present study consists of two sections, which are both derived from YouTube. First section is the interview with Jian Ghomeshi and Maya Arulpragasam uploaded as a video on YouTube by CBC Radio One whose program the radio show "Q", hosted by Jian Ghomeshi, is. The analysis started by transcribing the spoken data in the interview by following the transcription conventions. The main concern of the transcription process was in documenting the verbal content of the interview, which meant that non-verbal elements and a number of other conversational features such as pauses and overlapping speech were not in the centre of the analysis. After transcribing the spoken data, I needed to come up with thematic categories that would guide me in the analysis. As the analytic question with respect to the interview data was about the emergent alternative artist identity, I chose to draw on the definitions of the alternative artists and the alternative music scene by Shuker (1998) and adjust his views to create thematic groupings that fit my purposes. As a result, I came up with the following thematic groupings:

1. The artist's working methods: ties to corporate music industry and commercialism, success and growth
2. The artist's unique and boundary pushing art
3. The artist's relation with the public: fame and public's reactions

During the analysis I picked out sequences from the data, which in one way or another dealt with these three themes. After selecting the sequences I started to analyze the extracts by following the three principles by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) I chose to use for the purposes of this study to pay attention to the different discursive processes through which the alternative artist identity emerged.

There were three reasons for choosing this particular video as data for this study. First of all, I have been following the career of M.I.A and her media exposure for quite a long time and she has struck me as an interesting personality and media figure. Although not reaching the same status and fame within the music industry as some other female stars such as Madonna or the more recent pop phenomenon Lady Gaga, she has definitely become known to large audiences for her colourful combination of politically loaded lyrics, her personal style and

appearance, and her genre of music, which many people find hard to classify. She could be described as the black sheep of the pop industry, rooted in the system to some extent, but still not really part of it, following her own path, which is the reason why this study chose her as the object of studying the construction of an artist identity. Lastly, I wanted to analyze a video that would not resemble an autobiography, following the interviewee's life history from the beginning to the present. I considered this type of interview, which is more unpredictable in its structure to be more productive for the analytic purposes.

The second section of the data comprises the written comments from the two first years following the release of the video uploaded on YouTube, posted as a response to the video by the registered users of YouTube. The comments were collected on October 29th 2013 at 12:33 am in a file. The comments had to be collected at once since YouTube commentary is constantly changing compilation of texts that are replied to and that get removed from the page or reported as spam, and in this case require the reader to click the comment open. YouTube commentary related to video was included in the analysis since I wanted to show how public identities, such as artist identities, are both discursively constructed in social, momentary interaction, but when published to the public arenas such as YouTube, they become exposed to evaluations and interpretations of total strangers, who in one way or another therefore are a part of the identity construction and its evaluation. Similar to the way in which the transcribed interview was analyzed, I selected comments from the YouTube commentary based on the three categories introduced earlier in this section in order to show the connection between the interview and the commentary.

6.3. Methods of analysis

The five-principle framework crafted by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) offers detailed analytic steps for analyzing discursive identity construction. For the purposes of this study, however, it is not necessary to apply all of the principles and as the framework functions well even when not applied to its fullest, I have chosen three principles that in my view serve the needs of the present study the best. In the following, I will briefly discuss the three principles in more detail to show the relevance of each principle to the present study and its analytic

purposes. To accompany the three principles, I will shortly discuss the analytic tools I have eclectically from various fields, including concepts from Conversation Analysis (CA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Positioning Theory. Finally, I will introduce and discuss the somewhat novel method used to analyze interactive online environments by Booth (2010), which I considered to bring additional help to the analysis of the YouTube commentary.

6.4 Principles used in the present study

The five-principle framework provided by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) offers an all-encompassing method for studying identity construction in social interaction. While I acknowledge the advantages brought by the use of all the five different principles, this study nevertheless lays the analytic focus on three of the principles, leaving the first and the last principle in the background. The principles seen as most relevant and productive in terms of the present study are *the positionality principle*, *the indexicality principle* and *the relationality principle*. In the following I will introduce the above mentioned principles accompanied by the suitable analytic tools more in detail, showing their relevance to the discursive identity construction in the present study.

6.4.1 The positionality principle

In accordance of recent lines of thinking in socio-cultural linguistics, Bucholtz and Hall (2005:591) highlight that identities are responsive to each and every moment in interaction. In their view, studying identity construction from this perspective gives value to such interactively formed positions, which have not previously been considered having an impact on identity construction. By introducing the positionality principle, Bucholtz and Hall (2005:593) aim to show how identities are not only dependent on the more commonly acknowledged social identity constructs but also on roles and positions people both take in and that are assigned to them in interactive situations and in local contexts. The positionality

principle, according to Bucholtz and Hall (2005:591) enables the analysis of the 'nuanced and flexible' identities, which the major identity categories would possibly fail to acknowledge. In sum, how the participants in interactive situations both position themselves and others giving emphasis to interactively and locally determined identity roles and categories with less resemblance to the conventional and dominant socio-cultural classifications used by analysts. To complement Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) view on positionality, and to get a deeper understanding of how positioning in interaction actually functions, this study will also apply two analytic concepts from Harré and van Langenhove (1991) and an analytic concept suggested by Fairclough (1992).

In their work, Harré and van Langenhove (1991:396) introduce two concepts relevant in terms of the present study, those of *first order positioning* and *second order positioning*. By the former, they refer to the ways participants situate themselves and others within the interactional context through various discursive means whereas the latter describes the situation where this first order positioning has been questioned and therefore needs to be negotiated and possibly transformed to suit the personal and momentary purposes. To illustrate this, the person in question might be assigned a particular identity category based on the dominant cultural expectations and due to the attributes conventionally associated with the certain identity category. The person him or herself might, however, reject this type of classification, and offer a modified, self-determined identity category through one's discursive choices.

A third relevant concept, that of formulation, a form of interactional control is introduced by Fairclough (1992:152). Fairclough (1992:152) points out that interactional control offers an insight to the social and power relations between the participants, which again are genre dependent. He continues that, although interactional control is something that all participants possess to some extent, occasionally the participants have unequal access to it. Fairclough (1992:152) introduces a number of interactional control features that he views important for interaction to flow smoothly. Among these are turn-taking, change of topics and opening and closing of interactions. The feature that is seen most relevant in terms of the present study is, however, *formulation*. In his work, Sacks (1972:338) gives formulating the following definition:

"A member may treat some part of the conversation as an occasion to describe that conversation, to explain it, to characterize it, to explicate, or translate, or summarize, or furnish the gist of it, or take note of its accordance with rules, or remark on its departure from rules" Sacks (1972:338).

Heritage (1985) as referred by Fairclough (1992:158) reminds us that although more common, for example, in police affairs, formulation is a typical feature of radio interviews as well. Fairclough (1995b:22) points out that is often used by the interviewers to paraphrase the words of the interviewees, concentrating on two functions; drawing attention to some aspects of the utterances over others and making the possible implications more explicit. According to Fairclough (1992:158), with the help of formulation the participants in a conversation can reach out to 'win acceptance from others for their versions of what has been said, or what has transpired in an interaction, which may then restrict the latter's options in ways which are advantageous to the former.' Heritage (1985) as cited in Fairclough (1995b: 22) states that formulation facilitates the work of the interviewers as they try to work within the limits set by constraints coming from the presence of the audience and the interview as a genre that requires a rather neutral approach on behalf of the interviewer. However, this neutral style of formulations can be replaced by some other options, which give space for implicit evaluations and means to guide the conversation toward a desired direction (ibid.). In terms of identity construction, the conventionalities of formulation offer a way to contest and question identity related claims in an institutionally accepted manner, as it becomes more difficult to tell the difference between the interviewer's personal opinions and the conventionalities involved in doing interviews.

These three analytic concepts are by no means separate entities, but are more likely overlapping phenomena within the interaction. With their analytic concepts Harré and van Langenhove (1991:396) offer a profound means to observe how the participants, through varying stances and identity categories, position themselves in relation to identity related issues, and especially pointing out how the emerging identity is constructed not only by the interviewee herself, but in co-operation with and drawing on the turns of the interviewer, who through the formulation of his own or other's utterances questions and calls for clarification of the positions taken through first order positioning. In addition to this, by analyzing the ways participants formulate their own words or the utterances of others one is capable of

showing how the used discourse constructs the emerging identity both on a broader social level and on a more momentary, interactive and institutional level.

Within this principle the focus is on different *cultural positions and stances* taken or assigned by others through first and second order positioning or triggered by formulation. Like Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Harré and van Langenhove (1991:395; 399) view participants in interaction both self-positioning themselves and positioning others depending on the possibilities for these social and discursive actions that are governed by the socially constructed expectations and rights people have in different contexts. For Bucholtz and Hall (2005:591), the main aim of this principle, therefore, is to show how identities are locally constructed, dynamic and subtle constructs. They consider these roles or positions people engage in interaction, though temporary in nature, having equally important role as broader sociological and ethnographic identity categories in how subjects and their relations take shape in the used discourse. They point out that the effects of this approach on identity are two-fold. These roles may bring with them ideologically embedded associations related to identities both at larger and more local level, while at the same time it is possible that these associations guide the interaction to a certain direction.

Especially the positions raised by the interactive situation, as pointed out by Bucholtz and Hall (2005:591), shape the interaction and consequently, the discursively emerging identities. Moreover, the emerging identities are prone to the ideologically intertwined associations of certain broader scale and local identity categories and stances evoked by the interactive roles and cultural positions (ibid.). In other words, this particular discursive moment might orient the participants differently toward particular cultural and social issues and objects than another moment would. Consequently, to understand how identities emerge in the course of unfolding discourse, it is worth paying attention to how the participants themselves orient towards the ideological associations related to certain identities and how the interactive situation brings forth certain roles and stances that have an effect on the used language.

6.4.2 The indexicality principle

For Bucholtz and Hall (2005:594) the indexicality principle comprises a number of discursive processes through which identity positions are constituted. Thus, their indexicality principle is closely connected with the positionality principle, as the former deals with the ways the identity positions in the core of the latter are being discursively embodied. Bucholtz and Hall (2004:378) define indexicality as a semiotic process where 'one entity or event points to another'. Taken to the context of identity construction, Bucholtz and Hall (2005:594) place the focus on the ideological dimensions of indexicality; in other words, how identities are intertwined with certain type of language use and how these associations come across/are reflected in cultural beliefs and values. They list a number of indexical processes that are useful for the purpose of observing identity construction. These include explicit means such as the use of categories and labels to position the person in a certain social or cultural category, role or group, whereas more implicit means entail presuppositions and implicatures that are used to refer to one's own or other people's identities, ways to evaluate or orient towards the interaction referred to as a certain stance, and language use that is ideologically tied to certain groups and people.

In the framework of the present study, I aim to concentrate on three indexical processes suggested by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), that of *explicit use of identity categories and labels*, *stance* and *implicatures* as a way to evaluate and orient towards the ongoing discourse and the assigned or adopted categories and labels.

For Bucholtz and Hall (2005:594) the kinds of identity categories, whether they are used in an overt or covert way, and their accompanied qualifiers, function as indicators of the discursive identity construction in process in interaction. In the interview data of the present study the use of identity categories and social labels is an apparent characteristic of the on-going conversation. Both participants use identity categories and social labels in their discourse and their meanings are negotiated in interaction, in relation to the dominant conceptions of these categories and labels on the broader social level. Their use can be seen to serve several functions in terms of the identity construction.

Stance, in turn, is a broad concept, which Bucholtz and Hall (2005:595) understand to be a process by which a person presents his or her 'evaluative, affective, and epistemic' orientation within the ongoing interaction. In their view stance provides identity studies with

a productive concept, as it is able to show the ways in which people in every interactional moment take certain positions for themselves and in relation to others, thus making stance a subjective and intersubjective phenomenon. Du Bois (2007:163) gives another comprehensive account on stance: he divides its usage to three different consequences, object evaluation, self-positioning and alignment with others. In the present study object of evaluation is the constructed artist identity to which the participants position themselves and at the same time, align or do not align themselves with one another in terms of the issues related to the emerging identity. To sum up, in the present study stance taking by the participants is investigated in order to make observations about how they position themselves in relation to the assigned/discussed identity categories and other artist identity-related attributes or elements in the unfolding discourse.

In addition, in the present study identity is seen as constructed not only through self-definition, but also through references to other people. In case of evaluating or defining others, it is often easier in social terms to use more implicit means to air out one's opinion, in comparison to explicitly addressing the others. For this reason, one way of looking at how participants strive to deviate from others, is to pay attention to conversational implicatures; how they are used and interpreted by the participants in the interview. Drawing on Grice's theories, Levinson (1983:97) points out three reasons that validate the use of implicatures in the present study. Firstly, he explains how implicatures are a means to infer or mean more than what is explicitly and literally expressed through language use, therefore making them a subtle, but still powerful means to build a relation between self and the other. Levinson (1983:101) goes on to argue that implicatures are a way of creating meanings and carrying on communication without using any general tools to carry out an intended message. Finally, he views implicatures as not random mistakes, but rather intentional contributions to conversation and open about the inferred meanings. In short, as identity construction is a discursive and intersubjective process intertwined with the existing ideologies, implicatures enable people to construct their identities in interaction with others in a subtler and socially polite manner. In other words, they are not forced to express their views only in an explicit, direct way.

6.4.3 The relationality principle

The third principle of Bucholtz and Hall's (2005:588) framework that is applied in the present study is the relationality principle, which in their view, is founded on the first three principles of the framework; emergent, positionality and indexicality principles. They argue that in the processes involved in identity construction, there are multiple, coexisting relations at work simultaneously. By this approach Bucholtz and Hall 2005:599 aim at ruling out the assumptions that identity work is simply based on relations of sameness and difference. Consequently, in addition to the aforementioned relation, their analytic work takes in the relations of genuiness/artificiality and authority/delegitimacy. Of these three relation pairs the current study is mostly interested in the sameness/difference relation and the relation of genuiness/artificiality. These identity relations are tackled by what Bucholtz and Hall (2004; 2005) call tactics of intersubjectivity. The relations relevant in terms of the present study have each their own tactics.

The relation of similarity and difference is analysed through processes of adequation and distinction. Here the focus is especially on processes of distinction. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005:600), distinction is about eliminating similarities in order to protect the attempts to deviate. In their framework Bucholtz and Hall (2004:384) emphasize two relevant aspects of distinction. First they point out that distinction is usually seen as a tool of domination used by those in power. However, those whose access to power is limited or oppressed may as well utilize it. Another relevant issue is the way distinction does not necessarily narrow down the social diversity to us and them, but instead, it functions as a means to construct an alternative to either extreme.

The other relevant identity relation is that of genuiness and artificiality, which is studied through the processes of authentication and denaturalization. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005:601) point out, both of these discursive processes deal with authenticity, however, in different directions. The discursive means to validate a certain identity are in the core of authentication, while denaturalization concentrates on the ways identities that are assumed unified, unambiguous constructs are obstructed. In other words, language use can question the dominant, 'naturalized associations' related to certain discursive choices and an identity

category (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005:591). In the present study processes of both authentication and denaturalization are being examined. The discursive means to validate a certain identity are taken to refer to the ways in which the interviewee defends her way of doing, saying, or thinking about something as regards to the alternative artist identity. The processes of obstructing an assumedly unified and unambiguous identity are seen as a counter reaction to the dominant, expected artist identity, which functions as the backbone of the interview structure against which both the interviewer and the interviewee orient their turns. By offering alternatives, questioning, modifying and rejecting, the naturalized relationships between discourses and the social reality are made transparent and open for possible changes.

6.4.4 Three principles and the multifunctional discourses

The three principles discussed above, as well as the accompanied analytic tools considered suitable for analyzing the data are all individualistic, stressing different aspects of the discursive identity construction. The linguistic phenomena and discursive structures that are being observed from their perspective, however, show also how these principles rather often overlap, making the different principles an intertwined network of interdependent phenomena where one is the result of other and the other way around. Positionality principle, for instance, offers tools to analyze the kinds of roles and their influence on the emerging identity the participants occupy both locally and on a broader socio-cultural level. These roles and positions are offered and assigned to the interviewee through discourse, calling for the indexicality principle, which aims to highlight the ways in which language use constructs these positions for the participants in the interaction. Similarly, stance, which is studied within the indexicality principle, is about positioning oneself in relation to others, thus showing one's stance toward the given object, that of an alternative artist identity in the case of the present study. The two pairs of relations focused in relationality principle, in turn, draw on all the above-discussed discursive features and means to construct an identity. In other words, the way one positions oneself in relation to others by showing a certain stance can authenticate one's identity or denaturalize an ideologically expected identity construction. Likewise, by rejecting a certain identity category, the interviewee might implicitly make a

distinction between herself and some other people, in drawing on their difference rather than showing similarity.

These observations give reason to believe that the linguistic features and discursive structures analyzed in the data have multiple functions and the result of their co-operation in social interaction is the emergent identity. Consequently, this means that the analysis of ways of identity construction should be conducted not only by making clear cut categories and lists of instances that best correspond to each single principle, but by showing how the sequences in the interview data entail linguistic features that serve multiple functions and for this reason, can be analyzed and elaborated by the means of some or all of the three principles from Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework. In addition to the three principles by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), the textual links connecting YouTube comments to the interview video need to be analyzed, since they are considered to discursively manifest the processes of either rejecting or authenticating the emergent artist identity. The way in which these connections can be analyzed and observed by viewing them as a carnival is elaborated in the following section.

6.5 YouTube commentary as carnival

In his book *Digital fandom*, Paul Booth (2010) introduces a novel approach to studying digital communities and their relation to the different texts online. Although in his study the main emphasis was on blog texts, in this study I will broaden the concept of online texts to include discursive wholes as videos. Booth's (2010) approach draws first of all on the distinction between *intertextuality* and *intratextuality*, the latter one being a central concept in his work. While intertextuality has been primarily used to investigate the re-appearance of texts through multiple media, intratextuality, according to Booth (2010:56-57), points to the 'movement within a whole', viewing texts such as blog entries establishing unified wholes when combined with the related comments and other accompanying material, therefore being the result of its parts and their interconnectedness. In other words, materials such as videos and their related comments are not solely separate entities, but together form new readings

and alternative interpretations of the original texts, for example, of the meanings constructed on the video.

Despite the fact that Booth (2010) deals with blog entries and fan fiction, I wish to argue that the same principles apply to the YouTube videos and their related commentaries. Based on this view, I argue that the video in the present study, once uploaded on a new media environment, cannot be solely interpreted on its own terms as an interview on air on the radio, but needs to take into account the comments that, as stated by Booth (2010), rewrite and contribute to its readings by questioning the content of the video and suggesting their own interpretations of it in interaction with all the other commentators.

Like the people commenting on the blog posts in Booth's (2010:60) study, the commentators on YouTube leave their real identities behind when they use nicknames and pictures to participate in commenting videos on YouTube and let loose their opinions and evaluations. As pointed out by Booth (2010:61), what this anonymity enables is a community free of established hierarchies, something he calls *the carnivalesque*. In sum, carnivalesque cannot be ruled by anyone particular, since, as 'everybody makes carnival, everyone is carnival' (ibid.). In YouTube the commentators have a major role in contributing to the online contents and for this reason, they are an inseparable part of the YouTube carnival. It should be noted that despite the nature of YouTube environment as seemingly free of hierarchies, the commentators on YouTube, however, have some power, in the sense that they have the possibility to flag and mark messages as spam, and in this way, control the community from within.

In the same way as in the blogs with their commentary, on YouTube the video and the related comments form, in Booth's (2010:62) words, a form of *quasi-hierarchical writing*. Booth (2010:62) discusses the organization of the text, which in the case of the present study, means that the video is situated on top and the comments posted beneath it. In his view, the text, be it a blog post or a video, is considered more important than the comments by the readers. In the communal sense, to the contrary, the comments seem to draw attention form the main text to what goes on between the commentators and what sorts of readings they have of the text.

In many respects, Booth's (2010:62) arguments shed light on the way also authenticity can be viewed to be dependent on the community online, such as the one on YouTube. To begin with, he views the texts online as objects that raise people's interest, which leads them to comment on these texts. Secondly, through this activity, people come to form communities, since they are brought together by the same practise, that of commenting the same object. While the attention in Booth's (2010:62) study is on revealing the ways in which the principles of carnivalesque, with the help of intratextuality, influence the hierarchical functioning of criticism in blogs and fan fiction, in the present study the aim is to show how authenticity is discursively constructed or contested by these intratextual means used to build a connection between the comments and the video.

6.5.1 Self-reflexivity in defining authenticity

Booth (2010:62-63) introduces the concept of self-reflexivity. In this he draws on ideas originally discussed by Brown (2007: 171,173) as one of the analytic tools useful for observing intratextuality and its functions. Drawing on Brown (2007), Booth (2010:62) defines self-reflexivity as 'the specific, textual connections between one element and another in the document'. In his studies, Booth (2010) concentrated on fan fiction in the blogs where the authors of the original texts were able to reply to the comments posted by the people reading the blog texts. Despite some obvious differences such as the inability of the video in the present study to respond to the YouTube comments, I strongly believe that the same analytic procedures are applicable to texts such as YouTube video sites.

According to Booth (2010:63), self-reflexivity deals with the connections between the different features within the text. He lists three ways to explicitly refer with a comment to the post by which intratextuality is constructed in a text. These include quoting of the post, use of pronouns or other grammatical means to point to the post or showing a connection to it either my naming it or mentioning the content of the post. Booth (2010:63) argues that by, for example, highlighting one part of the post and making observations of the most relevant elements in the text, a commentator does not only comment on that particular part of the post, but on the whole text. In my view, this property of intratextuality is the connective factor between blog texts and YouTube sites. Similar to the comments under a blog post, the

comments on YouTube do point out to the previous comments of the video and create links to the content of the video, in this way, constructing a dialogue between the different users and the video.

Booth (2010:63) moves on to discusses the ways in which commenting on posts affects the reading process of the other commentators. As commentators use verbal means to connect their comments to the post, as in this case, the video on YouTube, they draw the readers' attention back to the post itself, instead of focusing on the comment they just made. In addition to this shift in focus, the commentators show their own interpretations of the text, the events in the video, contributing to the process of rewriting the original content by offering their views on how to understand the content of the video. Booth sums up this process as follows:

> "Because the post and the comment are attached to the same document, the intra-textual connection between both coheres these disparate elements together." (Booth 2010:63-64)

The difference between blog posts and YouTube sites is that unlike the blog posts where the author is present in the same environment with the commentators, the video lacks the resources to respond to the comments and consequently, the possibility to interact with its audience. Despite this difference, blog posts and YouTube sites share a feature of self-reflexivity – the process of rewriting the text, which, however, does not alter the content. Booth (2010:64) points out that this requires the reader to be aware of the two different versions of the text simultaneously, meaning the text as it is and the version with the commentary. In his view, this is the feature that brings forth the collective-to-the-core nature of texts such as blog posts and therefore, I argue, also YouTube sites. Since these texts are the collaborations of the texts and their commentators, questions related to identity and its authenticity cannot be analyzed without paying attention to the ways in which they are discursively and socially constructed between the two intratextually linked texts; the comments and the video.

To sum up, by commenting on the video, YouTube participants offer their own interpretations, which to varying degrees influence the other users' readings of the same video and consequently, their comments on the video. At the same time, it should be remembered that not all commentators necessarily read through all the comments or even any of them before commenting on the video, while others read the comments and make direct

replies to certain users, generating dialogue between the different users. With regards to authenticity, the artist identity becomes contested and projected on the video itself, and the comments related to it. The way in which YouTube offers a venue for this interplay between the comments and the video is the reason why its analysis is relevant when authenticity is in question.

7   THE EMERGING ALTERNATIVE ARTIST IDENTITY

Following Bucholtz and Hall's (2005:587) argument for identity as intersubjectively and discursively emergent in interaction, the aim of the following section is to show how the alternative artist identity of M.I.A discursively emerges in interaction between her and the interviewer Jian Ghomeshi. The analysis with the help of the three principles of Bucholtz and Hall (2005) will identify the most relevant discursive and interactive aspects of the emerging identity in the interview, which will then be divided into themes and subthemes I constructed by applying the definitions and views of the alternative music genre by Shuker (1998). Most of the time the principles co-operate and seem intertwined, and relatively inseparable, while at other times the language use in the sequence might appear relevant in terms of only one principle.

Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall (2005:585), identity in the present study is understood as a cultural and social construct emerging from the used discourses in each interactive moment. The focus of the analysis therefore is here on the various discursive choices and features that are seen to index certain social, cultural and interactive positions and roles relevant in terms of the alternative artist identity. As a result, features such as word choices, stance, identity categories, and social and cultural positions and roles are paid attention to and analyzed in the light of the definition of alternative acts. Furthermore, the kinds of relations the artist constructs through self-assigned categories, roles and positions or by either accepting or rejecting other assigned positions and roles is an important dimension of the emerging identity.

In the second part of the analysis, the alternative artist identity that emerged in the first part of the analysis is observed through the evaluative processes visible in the YouTube commentary. Here the focus is on its authenticity or artificiality as something socially constructed, negotiated and agreed or disagreed. Instead of offering only a rather subjective view on what M.I.A's artist identity consists of, the choice to include the comments in the analysis increases the objectivity of the study.

7.1. The artist's working methods

One of the key aspects defining alternative artists according to Shuker (1998:6) is the way in which they work independently within the otherwise corporate run music industry dominated by commercialism and profit-driven mentality. To pay closer attention to all of these themes, this section is divided into two subthemes for more convenient illustration of the meaning of these themes in terms of the emerging alternative artist identity. The focus in this category is therefore on instances in the interview, which show M.I.A's ties to corporate music industry, her attitude towards commercialism and success. In the following I introduce a number of extracts from the interview where the above-mentioned topics are discussed.

7.1.1 Ties to corporate music industry

The first subtheme includes an instance of the interview, which profoundly illustrates M.I.A's relations to corporate music industry. The first example shows how Ghomeshi and M.I.A discuss M.I.A's relations to the corporate run music industry in the light of the changes that took place in her career and whether these events had an influence on her art. Ghomeshi points to M.I.A's nominations in Grammy and Oscar awards, some of her songs having reached the status of a 'hit song', and her grown popularity worldwide in order to show how these could have altered M.I.A's position in the music industry. These discursive choices are ideologically embedded expressions with values that entail power to alter M.I.A's position in the music industry compared to her past. In other words, considering the early stages of her career as an underground artist, these events could have had an effect on her career. If not having an effect on her own understanding of her position, these changes might have at least affected the public; in other words, the kinds of cultural positions people assign to M.I.A and the kinds of cultural and ideological expectations these positions carry along. This possible shift in M.I.A's artist identity is supported by the way Ghomeshi discursively constructs a storyline from M.I.A's past to present, along which she is positioned very differently through the use of different identity categories and ideologically embedded choice of words.

Example 1

I: [is is your reality] a different reality in terms of where you're at in the publics imagination and in your career based on the fact that again the last time you were here a couple of years ago you were well known in particular music circles and certainly had a massive cult following you all round the world but now, post massive hit with Paper planes all around the world post more accessible songs like Jimmy post Grammies post Oscar nomination did you grapple with being a different M.I.A being a worldwide star with making this record did that affect you creatively?

M: mts ammm no because I think I think I was still slightly out of the that world..and amm..even though I was sort of living in the music industry's back yard like literally l was like fifteen minutes down the road it was kind of you know I did not have management and amm I was sort of kind of free wheeling on my own still so it felt like I had the opportunity to lock myself away but it definitely amm I think you know it was an issue but it was weird because there was so much going on in my personal life and yeah

Ghomeshi's ideologically embedded discursive choices define M.I.A's past and present in opposing ways. The expressions such as 'in particular music circles' and 'massive cult', are used to define the beginning of her career. To elaborate on this, in the beginning of her career she was well know in particular underground music circles in contrast to being well known, within the mainstream music scene. Furthermore, to use the word 'cult' to describe the following she gained is not the most neutral one, suggesting that she was a phenomenon that a group of people were fanatically following, but she was still rather unknown to the mainstream music scene. All of these choices depict a different reality in terms of M.I.A's career, constructing a clear division between her past and present.

After defining M.I.A's past, the attention turns to describe the current situation. Expressions such as 'massive hit', 'more accessible songs' and 'Oscar nomination' are expressions pointing to her present status and position within the music industry. The aim here is to point out how her reality could have changed due to her songs being more accessible and reaching the status of massive hit or her music being nominated in the well-known awards such as Grammies and Oscars. These word choices are ideologically attached to the mainstream corporate run music industry, which values success in awards, accessible music that can be easily consumed by large crowds, leading to hit songs that are popular worldwide, making profit for the record companies.

These word choices pave the way for a new and possibly more mainstream artist identity that Ghomeshi indexically offers for M.I.A. The way in which Ghomeshi also assigns M.I.A an

identity category of 'a different M.I.A' that he validates by pointing to the perceived difference between M.I.A's past and her present position as an artist. Through first order positioning and possibly based on features mentioned above, such as the nominations, increased popularity and hit songs, he assigns M.I.A an identity category of a 'worldwide star', positioning M.I.A into a quite a different identity category compared to the one she was seen to belong at the beginning of her career. As an identity category, 'worldwide star' carries with it different values than someone having a more defined following and an underground status. The discourse Ghomeshi uses in his question thus constructs two identity categories, which position M.I.A in opposing ways. Of these two, 'worldwide star' is brought up by explicit means in the form of an explicit identity category, whereas the other, which I here suggest to be that of 'alternative artist', is more dependent on the recipient, as it is implicitly referred to in the form of ideological associations carried out by the choice of words. The dominant cultural expectation behind Ghomeshi's question seems to be that due to the amount of publicity and popularity M.I.A gained through a number of nominations and hit songs, M.I.A could have turned from an alternative artist to a more mainstream artist.

The actual relevance of these two identity categories to M.I.A's artist identity, however, is to be evaluated through her reactions to these positions offered by Ghomeshi. M.I.A first states that she felt she was 'still slightly out of that world', making it clear that she did not see herself as having changed into a different M.I.A or having been exposed to all those issues 'that world' could have brought with it, pointing to the reality music industry creates with its nominations and the success following popular songs. She points out that although she was 'sort of living in the music industry's backyard' she 'did not have management' and she was 'kind of free wheeling' on her own still, which offered her what she calls 'the opportunity to lock myself away'.

M.I.A's choice of words makes her stance towards these changes clear. She discursively constructs an image of herself as someone in charge of her own career. By discursively distancing herself from all these possible changes, she reconstructs and emphasizes her position as still a more underground artist. Despite the close proximity of the music industry she chose not to step into this world that could have come along the nominations, hit songs and success – the world of more commercialized music industry. As she did not have management, she was not controlled by any external parties or authorities, which made it

possible for her to be free and make her own decisions; in this case it meant a conscious decision to lock herself away from all the major issues in her career at that moment.

M.I.A's utterance functions to overrule the discursively crafted change in her artist identity suggested by Ghomeshi. Instead of aligning herself with the position offered by Ghomeshi, she second order positions herself closer to the definition she was given in terms of the earlier stages of her career as someone not affected by or a part of the mainstream music industry. It should be noted that at the end of her turn, however, she admits that all these things in her career felt weird since there was so much going on in her personal life at that moment. In this way, she makes clear how she was aware of these certain events that took place in her career, which if given the chance, could have altered her artist identity.

M.I.A rejection of the identity category of a 'different M.I.A' illustrates the relational dimension of the emergent artist identity. The relations at work here, as Bucholtz and Hall (2005) call them, are adequation and distinction and authentication and denaturalization. On the one hand M.I.A is clearly making a distinction between her, still as an alternative artist, and the other artists, who could have turned into more mainstream artists given the same circumstances she found herself in, pointing to the amount of fame and popularity Ghomeshi assigned to her in his previous question. On the other hand, her rejection simultaneously authenticates her alternative artist identity as well as denaturalizes the dominant expectations as regards to the way artists should deal with fame and success. Her rejection of the identity category of 'a different M.I.A' questions the dominant expectations laid on artists who get nominated in awards and whose songs get the status of a 'hit song'. The way in which M.I.A deals with fame and success makes transparent the dominant expectations for dealing with these issues. Despite her worldwide popularity, as an authentic alternative artist identity, she stayed true to her independent working practices and to her principles guiding her artwork. Although her music had been acknowledged in their system of awards and hit charts, she did not let her career be influenced by the corporate music industry.

To conclude, M.I.A's decision to stay independent, working without management and keeping her distance from the commercial side of the industry clearly violated the ideological expectations brought up by her sudden success and grown popularity on her career. While Ghomeshi brought up a possible change in M.I.A's career from an underground artist to a

worldwide star, also pointing to the public expectations on her musical style, M.I.A's comments indicated how she had made a conscious decision to stay detached from the corporate run music industry as illustrated by her reluctance to allow changes such as the award nominations, hit songs, and grown popularity influence her artist identity or her way of making music. By showing her awareness of the changes, but not letting the mainstream music industry affect her music or artist identity despite the public's expectations, M.I.A separated herself from artists who could have let these changes affect them, this way both making transparent the dominant expectations on how artists should proceed in their careers and authenticated her alternative artist identity by defying these expectations.

7.1.2 Commercialism, success and growth

In the same way as in various other fields of cultural life perforated by business mentality, the logic of business has long influenced the production of music especially within the mainstream music industry. As a result, as Shuker (1998:6) argues, music as an expression of personal creativity, or as a form of art, has turned into a commercial product, dependent on the consumer driven production processes. This shift has transformed the music scene into a field comparable to any type of business based on marketing, economic growth and far-reaching success in its attempt to make profit.

At the time of the interview M.I.A was at a crossroads in terms of her career as an artist. Now, as an award-nominated artist with hit songs and worldwide popularity, her position within the underground music scene was more controversial. In other words, the attributes previously easily at her use, due to these changes in her career, were no longer as simply sustained. With many respects, she had to face the expectations brought along her success in the commercialized music business. In the following example, these dominant expectations regarding success are made transparent by Ghomeshi's question, which turns the attention to people's reactions towards M.I.A's new album.

Along the same lines of his previous question on possible changes in M.I.A's artist identity, Ghomeshi points out how people expected the new album to be a 'really pop record' 'having

hit songs', which against all these expectations, turned out to be at times 'less accessible'. This question clearly strikes a chord with M.I.A as it discursively positions her in a way that contradicts her own stance on commercial expectations. Her criticism falls heavily on the expectations that draw a parallel between artists and corporations, which both, following the rules of market economy, are expected to produce economic growth. In the first comment her expressions such as 'I don't understand' shows how she questions the dominant view on success and growth brought up by Ghomeshi. She criticizes the way 'progression' should be represented in a similar style as a 'chart' that 'looks like the same fucking chart as the growth of like Mac', which further emphasizes her dislike of juxtaposing art with business, an ideological contradiction that is seen to exist within the music industry between alternative artists who value music as art and mainstream industry where music has started to become a product to be sold and consumed.

Her second comment with the expression 'I don't see it like that' highlights the contradiction she considers to exist between her own view of growth and success, and the ways in which corporations, and therefore the mainstream music industry as well, represent their success. Growth to M.I.A is growth in her 'own way', which further emphasizes her own alternative way of measuring growth, which does not draw on the same principles as the commercialized music business. Her final statement 'I fucking have grown on my record' illustrates how for M.I.A, music represents a means to deal with the issues happening in her personal life and in her career. In other words, growth and success are something she measures on a more personal level, on a level that the conventional ways used to measure economic growth and success could never manage to comprehend or represent.

Example 2

> M: [I] don't understand why the progression has to be a chart that looks like the   same fucking chart as the growth of like Mac or like something
>
> I: (h) (h) (h)
>
> M: like I don't understand why I have to represent my success in the same way as a corporation's growth you know it's like I don't see it like that growth to me is growth to me in my own way I fucking have grown on my record

In terms of her alternative artist identity, the discursive choices of M.I.A serve three functions. First of all, the way she uses an anti-establishment discourse functions to make explicit the ways in which she rejects the position she was expected to adopt or how she was expected to change after success, discursively constructing her own modified cultural position through second order positioning. Furthermore, it authenticates her alternative artist identity as an artist who opposes the way in which the business world tries to feed its rules to be used in the world of art and creativity. By reasoning her decision not to let the commercial expectations to influence her creativity, she sets herself in the position of an artist who stays true to her own principles and alternative ways to deal with success, authenticating her artist identity, as her final comment on her personal growth on the record illustrates. Thirdly, her rejection of the dominant expectations make transparent the way her alternative artist identity, as Bucholtz and Hall (2005:602) decribe it 'violates' the ideological expectations related to artists in her position. Instead of allowing her art to be affected by success and harnessed by the economic forces, she understands growth to be a more personal process. As a result, her ways of measuring growth and success have to do with her art, which, instead of trying to achieve bigger sales and popularity, might lead to music not readily digested for people to be consumed.

Example 3

> I: this record you feel it's confused?
>
> M: yeah I think you know it was definitely it was definitely dealing with all those things of people going like @heyy@ you know here's the fucking Cinderella's shoe and be thankful you that little refuge who was on the leaflet of like an aid you know leaflets from Africa and now you've made it you've got the Oscars and just go and

drive a Bentley and be happy and you know I wasn't there and yeah my growth chart is a bit wanky but like do you remember like human beings like do you know what I mean does anyone remember that shit like do you remember the idea of like being like just I don't know who you are or like being a bit sort of yeah

M.I.A's stance on success and growth is further elaborated as Ghomeshi catches on her argument about the record she felt was confused. Ghomeshi forms his question by repeating M.I.A's words, thus using his interactive and institutional position of a radio host to formulate her answer in order to receive a more in depth account on her opinion about the record. M.I.A's answer entails a narrative that depicts her experiences at the time she entered the mainstream music industry. This narrative resembles a 'from rags to riches' type of story that reflects the ways in which M.I.A herself perceives the public treating her in the industry. The narrative is constructed through the choice of words and the way M.I.A uses what Bucholtz and Hall (2005:593) call 'representative discourse', which indexes the position M.I.A feels others assigned to her after certain changes in her career.

According to M.I.A, she is viewed to be the Cinderalla of the music industry as shown by her expression 'fucking Cinderella shoe', who by luck fell in the middle of success and the nominations, indexed by the ideologically embedded lexical choices. According to her, people demanded her to be happy as the imperative expression 'be thankful' leads to believe. The 'you've made it', then again, illustrates how M.I.A's way to the music industry was some sort of journey or even battle that she had to go through and, as opposed to all the expectations, she succeeded in reaching the music industry as the expression you've got the Oscars' shows. Now she should be happy for all that she has achieved as implied by the expression 'just go and drive a Bentley and be happy', in which Bentley, an expensive car brand represents the luxury life of the stars. Her narrative includes also references to her multicultural and war related background as 'little refuge' and 'leaflets from Africa' point out. These identity categories and ideologically embedded word choices function as further proof of how, given her arguably deviating and possibly poor background, she was expected to accept everything success has to offer without questioning it. Furthermore, these choices highlight her unexpected journey that she started as an immigrant and ended up as an artist known worldwide. As a result, the used discourse symbolizes the way in which her unexpected success in the music industry was reacted upon and how she got exposed to the

prejudiced attitudes of some critics. By using 'representative discourse', as argued by Bucholtz and Hall (2005:593), she negates the way she felt other positioned her and the way she was expected to deal with success and fame, implicitly assigning positive value for her own decision and ways in which she rejected all what was expected of her.

At the end of her narrative, she explains how despite these expectations, she 'wasn't there', meaning she did not feel as part of the industry in the sense she was expected to be part of it or the lifestyle that could have followed her success. In this way, she emphasizes her stance on success and makes transparent the dominant ways to deal with it. To back up her views, she draws attention to whether people 'still remember human beings' or 'being who you are', which are used to criticize the dominant views on success and the commercial side of the music industry, which expect people to change just to fit in the needs of the industry. For her, despite the given chance or the expectations of others, staying true to one's own principles and style is something not to be compromised. Thus, through this narrative she rejects the position she felt she was set by the public, through second order positioning discursively constructing an authentic alternative artist identity based on staying true to oneself.

Example 4

> I: but when you say little people are you a little person I mean you you're small nd th physically but are you you're a global pop star rock star don't you have a lot of power don't ya feel you know when people look at you and go yo you're you're powerful at this point people you have legions of people listening what you say they'll come to you they pay they'll pay_to s to hear what you have to say

> M: yeah but it's not of course I'm not the day I just like jump down an be like @hellouu here's my name on a coca cola fucking promotion@ yeah I'll be like that but I do turn I turn down practically everything and that's the difference it's like if you if you you know if you don't compromise or something then you're not you're not gonna get to reach out a lo to a lot of people like the less you say the less you stand for and the less you mean nothing the more successful and more powerful you are

> I:hmh

> M: you know that's how it works and [I]

> I: [you you]

> M: have a big mouth

As indicated by Ghomeshi's question in Example 4, successful people are often considered to have power and influence over others. In his turn, Ghomeshi first seizes on the M.I.A's self-

assigned identity category of 'little people', through formulation, asking directly if she views herself as a little person. Then as an attempt to challenge this category through second order positioning, he assigns her the identity categories of a 'global pop star' and 'rock star' suggesting that she is in an influential, powerful position within the industry, seeking further proof for this argument by pointing out that M.I.A has 'legions of people' who 'pay to hear' what she has to say.

The identity category with its associations can be seen to confuse Ghomeshi as a discursive choice not easily associated to M.I.A who he views to be a global pop star. It is, however, an example of how M.I.A adjusts the discourse which is not often associated with artists of her scale to her own needs, to bring up her ideology and sense of herself as opposed to the mainstream music industry. Ghomeshi's discursively crafted position is again overruled by M.I.A who seems to view power to be achieved only through compromising one's principle and devoting oneself to commercialism as pointed out by her reference to Coca Cola promotion, therefore something she does not possess. Through her discursive choices, M.I.A rejects her role as a powerful global pop or rock star by differentiating herself from the kinds of artists who would promote and sell their selves to companies such as Coca Cola, which implicitly negates those others and positively evaluates herself. Apparently for her, being a global pop or rock star entails commercial projects, which contradict her own values. Her anti-commercial attitude embedded in the used discourse authenticates her alternative artist identity and is further supported by her comment on how she 'turns down practically everything' which in her opinion is 'the difference'; a difference between artists who are commercialized and thefore have power, and her, as someone who has stayed true to herself. Thus, to reach out to big crowds and to be an influential artist, in her view, the artist has to make compromises and leaves the person standing for nothing, which for her is not an option.

The way she metaphorically uses the expression, 'I have a big mouth' highlights her position as an opinionated, outspoken artist. She has principles not to be compromised despite the changes that took place in her career and despite the increased popularity that followed these changes. Instead of compromising her agenda, she has a message that does not fit the purpose of selling products. Once again, Ghomeshi's question brings up the dominant ideological assumptions on how artists are expected to have power, which is a view M.I.A does not align herself with. Power for Ghomeshi and M.I.A in this question represents two different things.
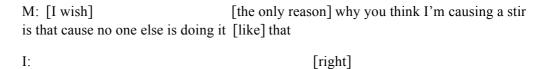
As Ghomeshi views power achieved through popularity, M.I.A considers power to be based on compromises and selling out one's principles. Her views on power denaturalize the dominant, more mainstream way of defining power and the kind of position it sets artists within the music industry. The way she sees her own position in relation to the assumed power and popularity she has gained, authenticates her alternative artist identity with a political message, instead of trying to achieve power over huge crowds by standing for nothing.

7.2 The artist's unique and boundary pushing art

The second main theme in the analysis of the interview deals with M.I.A's art, which, drawing on Shuker (1998), I here argue to be unique and boundary pushing. In others words, giving less value for commercial success, alternative acts such as M.I.A emphasize art that originates from personal and genuine experience, which at times might not conform to the norms of the mainstream music industry (Shuker, 1998:20,171). In addition to sound and visuals, this uniqueness is also embodied in the political and social themes their music is considered to voice. In the following chapters M.I.A's views on creativity and her ways of doing artwork, mainly music, are discussed in the light of the definitions of alternative genre in order to understand their role in discursively and interactively constructed alternative artist identity emergent in the interview.

The fact that M.I.A's third studio album '/\/\ /\ Y /\' had been released some time before the interview took place was probably the main reason why she was invited to the interview. Consequently, the album also contributed to the topics that were discussed. There were a few questions that dealt with creative work and the processes related to it, and others that focused on the album and its recording process. While Ghomeshi's questions mostly reflected the more dominant expectations on creative work circulating in the society, M.I.A's responses often tackled these expectations as she presented her own perceptions of doing artwork in more alternative and personal ways.

Example 5

M: [I wish]   [the only reason] why you think I'm causing a stir
is that cause no one else is doing it [like] that

I: [right]

M:'s why I stick out like a sore thumb on somebody whose obviously so wrong (h) (h)
(h) and it's like no that's just because there's no one else doing shit it's like that we
have to sort of deal with right now

Example 5 is a part of a sequence where Ghomeshi asks about M.I.A's public image as an artist whose art often arouses negative attention and conflicting emotions. What he is interested in finding out is how important this heated attention is for M.I.A's art and her work as an artist and what she would feel like if the responses were not as strong and critical. In short, if negativity and causing a 'stir' is something her creativity is based on or what she strives for on purpose.

In her response M.I.A indexes her own stance on the issue by both agreeing and disagreeing with Ghomeshi. M.I.A first seems to agree with Ghomeshi's view, in this way aligning herself with him as she laughs and admits that sometimes she would feel disappointed and as not doing her job if people did not react in a negative way. These discursive choices emphasize the meaning of heated discussion and reactions to M.I.A's artist identity and to her art as indicators of whether she has succeeded or not. In addition, her choice of words validates her alternative artist identity as an artist who is concerned with her art's ability to create something unique and socially and politically relevant, shaking the existing structures and in this way, creating reactions and discussion. However, immediately after Ghomeshi uses his institutional and interactional position to paraphrase her words, defining her as a 'victim' makes M.I.A to withdraw. This she does by replying 'no not at all I wish', indicating that she has now changed her mind. By thus showing some sort of dissatisfaction with the way Ghomeshi formulated the essence of the principles outlining her artistic work, she does not align herself with Ghomeshi. This leads the conversation to a point where Ghomeshi brings up the video shot for the song 'Born Free', which could be interpreted as a means to back up Ghomeshi's view on M.I.A 'causing a stir' on purpose as the video was publically judged provocative and YouTube banned the video shortly after its release (Pickard, 2010). In order to understand the implicit meaning behind the mentioning of the video requires background knowledge of the artist and her works, in other words, the viewer needs to know

that the video was a dramatized genocide with white skinned ginger people being tracked down and executed and all this was shown in close detail.

The way in which Ghomeshi discursively challenges M.I.A's artistic agenda by questioning whether her art aims to achieve this one type of attention forces M.I.A to explain the decisions behind her artwork. For her, the negative attention her art triggers is not just some inherent feature of her work, but a proof of her unique and boundary pushing style of dealing with issues happening in the world that no one else dears to bring up. Here the processes of distinction and authentication are well on display as discussed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). M.I.A explains that in her opinion she is seen to cause a stir just because she is the only one doing things in this way, implying that in this she deviates from all the other artists within the music industry. Again, she thus strives to validate her alternative artist identity, pointing to her own, personal decisions on how she works and expresses her artistic work. As a result, her emerging artist identity highlights a conflict between the two ideologies; in making art in a personal and sincere manner, she fails to follow the norms and expectations of the mainstream, commercial music industry, which expects artists to fit within the dominant norms and values in society. By denaturalizing the status of dominant ideological expectations on what topics and forms of expression are suitable to be used in the art, she validates her own alternative artist identity. As her ways of making art do not meet these public expectations, people feel uncomfortable with it as it is something new and unexpected.

Aside from dealing with issues that are politically and socially explosive, M.I.A's artwork is experimental in nature. Its unique nature results from the fact that is hardly ever limited to musical expression only, but also uses other artistic media such as graphic design and moving images. In Example 6, M.I.A explains the kinds of restrictions she encountered while making her third album, that for her never consisted solely of music, but which formed a multi-media whole with images depicting sounds for which she would have needed the kind of application capable of running art in 3D-format.

Example 6

> M: but when I built it they weren't ready for it you know and there's so much shit that I did around this record that I there was no way for the music industry to support the level of thought I put into it and the level of creative thinking I put into it on all level you know that every every sound had an image every like you know every image had a story and every song had a tidi di di daa it was just like you know I felt like I tried to

build an all-encompassing sort of a reflection of what I was going through and in the end I got you know squashed into this narrow sort of music industry pipeline of how to put your work out and that's not me that's just how the internet hasn't caught up to the amount of creativity in the presentation that could exist

I: hmh

For her disappointment, music industry was not prepared for this kind of artistic expression. The way in which she describes this situation she encountered, while making her third album, reveals her views on the ways she feels the music industry oppresses and limits creativity, and on the kind of relationship she has with her own art. Firstly, she argues that the music industry was not able 'to support the level of thought…and the level of creative thinking' she had put to her art at that time, implying that her creativity and her way of doing art is above the average level and constantly pushing the limits of what the music industry is used to dealing with, which makes it art that the dominant music industry is unable to present. Again, she is thus separating her creativity and herself as an artist from all the other artists who put their work out in ways, which are supported by the industry.

Secondly, her comment reflects the music industry's oppressive influence on what she regarded as sincere and personal experience in her work. As her comments 'I tried to build an all-encompassing sort of reflection of what I was going through' and 'I got you know squashed into this narrow sort of music industry's pipeline of how to put your work out' give reason to believe that the mainstream music industry was not willing or able to support the personal and experimental way in which M.I.A aimed to bring out her music and art. As M.I.A argues, the only choice left for artists is to conform to this 'music industry's pipeline', a ideologically embedded expression depicting the conforming power of the mainstream music industry, which however, was not what she was about, as made clear by her expression 'that's not me'. By highlighting this contradiction and by rejecting the dominant ways that artists are expected to work, she denaturalizes the belief that music industry and the artists are in some natural symbiosis where both participants contribute to the existence of the other. Trying to break free from these impositions is her way of validating her creativity based on unique and boundary-pushing artistic expression.

In sum, the way in which M.I.A describes her creative work, the way in which she experiences it on all different sense levels that cannot be supported or understood by the

dominant music industry further supports the view of M.I.A as an artist who is difficult to define with the help of norms currently available. At the same time, by showing the different experimental and creative aspects of her art and by explaining her personal working methods, she validates her alternative artist identity in a way that is in line with the definitions of alternative music as something personal, original, creative and not tied to any rules and conventions imposed by big corporate markets (Shuker, 1998:20, 43). Her explicit expression 'that's not me' points to the way in which she feels the possibilities offered by the music industry are unable to represent her art, and restricting and governing the ways in which art in general is brought out, giving the mainstream music industry the power to rule the style and medium of expression. As an artist, M.I.A is well aware of herself and of the type of artistic work she wants to do and therefore, she criticizes the way industry forces acts such as her to conform to their needs.

As shown by the previous example, for M.I.A music represents one of the many dimensions of her art. Her uniqueness, therefore, can be regarded as well as a side product of her multi layered artist identity. This is shown in Example 7, in which she emphasizes that she is more than a musician. In his question Ghomeshi points to some previous discussion where M.I.A has rejected the identity of a musician. Now, he aims to bring this topic back to discussion in order to hear what M.I.A has to say about it now.

Example 7

> I: let me ask about how you see yourself as a musician or as an artist because I know you're someone who started as a visual artist in and in film and kind of stumbled into making music and despite this string of great records that so many so many of us love that you put out you you you suggested a few times over the years that you're not really a musician do you still feel that way or are you willing to accept that you're a musician at this point
>
> M: aaa yeah, no I'm not
>
> I: you're not?
>
> M: yeah I'm still not gonna I I think you know I've been really lucky that… I don't know cause I still sort of make all the art work and do all that stuff you know at the same time so I feel like I haven't quite let it go and sort of taken to one medium you know but I think that's gonna be like more and more important to me in the future you know

Ghomeshi's question directly addresses the way in which M.I.A sees herself as an artist, including the use of three explicit identity categories, 'a musician', 'an artist' and 'a visual artist', which all offer her positions she can either align herself with or reject. Ghomeshi mentions that her career started with visual arts and film. After this he points out how M.I.A 'kind of stumbled into making music', and how, despite her albums that 'so many so many of us love' she considers herself 'not really a musician'. The choice of Ghomeshi's words throughout the interview is something worth paying attention to. Every time Ghomeshi refers to M.I.A's career as a visual artist or as a musician, there is a difference in how these two positions are dealt with. Throughout the interview she is being addressed as a visual artist. This identity category seems to be more or less accepted by M.I.A: she does not seem to reject in any ways. In many respects, visual arts and film are seen as her background as an artist. As the interviewer shifts to talk about her as a musician and the time she stepped into making music, his approach, however, changes completely. To illustrate this, in Example 7 the choice of words builds a contrast between her as someone involved in music and as a visual artist. Ghomeshi desribes her having 'kind of stumbled into making music', implying that she started to make music almost by accident. Moreover, in the introduction given at the beginning of the interview, Ghomeshi points out how M.I.A was 'a visual artist who picked up the mic and made a noise on that record', depicting her first and foremost a 'visual artist' who chose to make music as well. Given this difference in the used discourses and their associations, Ghomeshi's reaction to M.I.A refusal to identify herself as a musician is surprising. Considering the way in which Ghomeshi has positioned M.I.A throughout the interview, M.I.A's reaction is rather logical.

The fact that M.I.A refuses the category of a musician indicates that what we see emerging here is an alternative artist identity. She points out how she has been 'really lucky', taking an affective stance on her ability to do art through multiple media, and referring to the way she has not been forced to give up her roots as a visual artist. She also explains how she has been able to 'still sort of make all the art work' and how she feels that she has not 'quite let it go and sort of taken to one medium'. What this comment could imply is that as M.I.A has not taken her work to one medium, she has been able to create something personal and unique, something in which she can combine her background as a visual artist. Through these discursive choices she validates her alternative artist identity by making it clear that she will

not be one of those artists who narrow down their expression into one medium, in this way, facilitating their categorization and showing their willingness to submit to the expectations and demands of the music industry. Yet, it is worth noting is that she does mention that music is going to be 'more and more important' to her in the future, implying that the role these different art forms play in her career is her own decision as she is the one determining the kind of influence they have on her creativity and consequently, on her art.

Example 8

> I: Ikh I kind of don't believe you, if you write these songs and you make and you create the music kh h hh how can you how can you not self-identify on some levels of musicians?
>
> M: I don't know what musician is these days
>
> I: hmm
>
> M: I just don't know yeah I feel like I'm I don't know do I need to have be making like club hits you know for for kids and deny everything else and you know I'm not I'm not really sure what

The next sequence entails a formulation of M.I.A's utterance by Ghomeshi, which simultaneously indicates his stance in terms of the authenticity of M.I.A's statement. The epistemic expression 'I kind of don't believe you' highlights how Ghomeshi does not completely align himself with M.I.A's position as someone not identifiable as a musician M.I.A discursively constructed for herself through first order positioning. To challenge this position, his utterance entailing an epistemic stance brings up two attributes traditionally combined with musicians; writing songs and creating music. In Ghomeshi's mind, a person who writes one's own songs and creates the music has to be labeled as a musician, at least on some level. Here, his ideologically invested discursive choices, the attributes he lists, inevitably reproduce the dominant artist identity of a musician; in short, what constitutes the identity of a musician or what kinds of characteristics are held essential to musicians.

This formulation forces M.I.A in a position where she, as an interviewee, once again needs to elaborate on her views and enhance her own stance on these issues. Here I wish to argue that in the cases where M.I.A is asked to explain her statements and opinions contradicting the dominant views, she simultaneously reconstructs her identity as an alternative artist. This

time, M.I.A's response seems to question the whole meaning of being a musician. Her turn entails an epistemic expression, which clarifies her stance on being a musician. She refers to her uncertainty in terms of what counts as a musician as she argues that she 'doesn't know what musician is these days'. What she is suggesting is that the meaning of musician has altered from what it used to be in the past.

Contrary to the mainstream, alternative music is often based on sincere and personal experience as well as political goals, which are achieved by breaking old social, cultural and political conventions. Unwilling to only sell products and meet the needs of the markets, M.I.A's alternative artist identity seems to be based on her unique and boundary pushing art. The uncertainty about what musicians are expected to do nowadays increased her willingness to consider herself as one. As she felt that being a musician was about making club hits for kids, pointing to the commercialized music business and its attempt to make profit, it would force her to deny everything else, which I here take to refer to her music's social and political cause and the principles she argues to stand for. Sincere and unique art, as M.I.A pointed out, does not come without a price to be paid. Sometimes, M.I.A's way of putting her work out did not follow the norms and conventions set by the music industry, which caused public unease. This unease, she felt, was the result of her being the only one doing artwork in this way, which gave her as an artist and her art, a unique status within the industry.

7.3 The artist's relation with the public: fame and public's reactions

Along with her distance from the commercialized corporate music industry and her boundary pushing, unique art, also M.I.A's relation to her audience and fame, on a more abstract level is worth paying attention to. Related to this, Shuker (1998:148) emphasizes the relationship between a classified genre and its fans and audience. This relationship between fans and their preferred acts, Shuker (1998:148) argues, is an important aspect of artist identity as it is partly built on the ideologically and culturally bound expectations fans set for these artists and their art. How the different acts are positioned with the hierarchy of the music industry, according to Shuker (1998:148) is based on three factors; 'authenticity, sincerity, and commercialism'. M.I.A's perceptions of fame and how she relates to the feedback and the

public's expectations interact with all of these dimensions, positioning her accordingly within the music industry.

In the analysis I will approach this relationship by paying attention to two topics; those of *fame* and *public's reactions*. In terms of fame, there are two different perspectives present in the interview, one possibly more dominant, mainstream view traceable in Ghomeshi's questions and the more alternative view brought up by M.I.A herself. Public's reactions discussed in the interview, in turn, point to how M.I.A relates to her audience, how she deals with the feedback she receives, and how she deals with the public's expectations.

7.3.1 Stardom: perceptions of fame and popularity

For Shuker (1998:283), 'stardom' in the music industry is both an abstract socially constructed illusion and an acknowledgement of the artists 'talent and creativity'. In the same way as other persons with a public profile, 'stars' in the music industry, attract fame, which brings along its own ideological expectations as regards to these people and what they do. These expectations, however, are not always equivalent with the artist's own ideological views related to their work and position within the industry.

Related to their discussion on the mainstream music industry's commercial undertone, M.I.A draws attention to the controversy she feels to exist in how artists should meet the commercial expectations of making profit, and still be able to produce personal art, personal music. Her view, according to which people are expecting 'two different things' leads Ghomeshi to question the meaning of fame and popularity to her career and art. He does this by formulating M.I.A's previous turn, and by discursively constructing an imaginative situation where M.I.A would not 'get an Oscar nomination', 'fewer people come to the shows' and 'a lot of people don't by the record', which all depict an opposite position she was considered to be at the time of the interview. What Ghomeshi strives for with his question is to find out the possible effects of this imaginative situation in terms of M.I.A's career.

Ghomeshi's question 'as long as you feel good about the music that stuff won't bother you?' followed by a formulaic question with formulaic function, 'is that what you're telling me?' again gradually constructs the ideological juxtaposition of art and commerce already discussed earlier in the interview. Nominations, popularity and economic success through concerts and record sales are the factors determining success within the mainstream and the fuelling factor behind many artists, as for alternative acts, what really seems to count is the originality and honesty in their art, as in this case, in the music they are producing. In the core of this question then, are the two ideologies and the meaning of fame and popularity for M.I.A as an artist.

Example 9

> M: yeah, yeah music, you expect music to be a personal thing, you know you expect music to be made by people who are musicians who are like in tune with all that stuff so that's like you're asking two different things you know

> I: but are you saying that you're completely unaffected by all that stuff I mean, in other words, if this record comes out and you don't get an Oscar nomination nobody ca starts fewer people come to the shows and a lot of people don't by the record that as long as you fe feel good about the music that won't that stuff won't bother you? Is that what you're telling me?

> M: well I think anytime you're doing something interesting it's a bit uncomfortable for people, I think anytime you're sort of pushing something forward it's uncomfortable and you know people don't get it and if they don't get it then it's just you know I think it's just that I'm doing something

M.I.A does not give a simple and straightforward answer to Ghomeshi's question on how she would react if her art would not attract attention anymore. She starts to talk about how doing something interesting and limit pushing is uncomfortable for people and how people not getting what she is doing is actually a sign of her 'doing something'. She points out that as an artist, she is doing interesting things that test the boundaries of what is common and comfortable for people, which may lead to people not understanding her work or views. This comment explicitly brings forth her alternative style in the music industry. Instead of channeling all her efforts to chasing success and growing sales, she has chosen to create art that has an honest and sincere message, which however accompanies the risk of not pleasing

large crowds. Instead of aligning herself with the position of a mainstream artist, she thus accepts her role as an alternative artist.

Example 10

> I: at what part of it? You know like meeting fans or rmm I don't know wh what part of it you're lousy at?
>
> M: well I think it's just you know if you're like an artist and stuff it's so it's about th the process you know you're making something above the line which is really addictive and stuff and when people get it they wanna talk about it 'n it's cool but amm yeah sometimes when you become like the thing that's really annoying and that's what I think fame is like fame is when you yourself become the art and not your art and that's like yeah that's a bit difficult cause if you're not really driven by it then it's difficult for you to like cope you know

In his question in Example 10, Ghomeshi explicitly asks M.I.A if she likes being famous, which, given the amount of media attention she has had, is a natural consequence of her position in the public eye. As M.I.A states that everybody feels she is really 'bad at it', referring to the way others around her position her in relation to fame, Ghomeshi asks M.I.A to elaborate on her view. This he does through formulation, to get at the core of M.I.A's views on fame. He asks if there is a certain part of fame she feels being 'lousy at', pointing for instance to 'meeting fans'. Compared to her earlier humorous comments on her being really bad at fame, in the following turn she seems to offer a profound, personal account on her ideology behind fame and the kind of relationship she views that to have with art. Instead of referring explicitly to her fans, she explains how she does not value fame what she considers to be the phenomenon when the famous person becomes more important than the person's artwork.

The way in which M.I.A constructs her answer reveals the kind of relationship she prefers to have between fame, her creative work and her followers. From her perspective, creating something 'above the line', referring to something unusual and new, can be 'really addictive and stuff', implying how creativity can be really addictive and attract a great deal of attention, and if people who understand that artwork want to discuss it, it is fine. If, however, the artist him- or herself 'becomes like the thing', referring to the ways in which the people as artist receive more attention or value over their actual art it is something she finds

'annoying'. This kind of contradiction is what she sees as the basis of fame; fame for her occurs when the person becomes the art and focus of all the attention and admiration, instead of the art itself. As a result, she argues how fame can be difficult to cope with if the artist is not 'really driven by it'. What her utterance implies is that as an artist she is not fueled by fame, therefore it is something she feels to be bad at. Most importantly, it is not the reason why she is doing her job as an artist.

In many respects, M.I.A's views on fame are in conflict with the ways in which fame is dealt within the mainstream culture. To be more specific, within the mainstream music, artists are often commercialized extremely efficiently, positioning their personalities and style above their artistic work. By bringing up her own way of defining fame and by not relating to the dominant view on it, she separates herself from other artists in the same field and clarifies that she is not such an artist who lives by fame. In this way she also authenticates her own alternative artist identity as based on valuing art not fame.

In the beginning of the interview Ghomeshi already described M.I.A as having started from an artist with a cult following, then, after the nominations and hit songs, having turned into a star known worldwide. This change in the fan base and in the amount of publicity gives reason to pay attention to the ways M.I.A on the one how she deals with the public's expectations and on the other, how she relates to both positive and negative feedback she receives.

Example 11

> I: I was gonna get to this stuff later but I mean since we're already talking about it how do you inoculate yourself just to be able to survive to to not you know not to be mobbing around thinking that people are saying taking shots at you how do you, how do you in ad[vance go]
>
> M: [because] you have to believe it it's like you know it's sort of as long as when I was making this record to me I know I've put like my blood and guts in this record more than the others who have records so I knew that it was the only way to sort of protect yourself is if you gave it your all and if you were completely truthful and honest then it just doesn't matter you know that's how you can take like millions and millions of cheap shots and not be hurt because it's coming from you know where it should come from you know

One of the prevailing themes in the beginning of the interview was the M.I.A's newly released album. Possibly against all expectations, M.I.A constructed a rather dark image of the kind of audience response she felt the album had received. Her discursive choices clearly drew Ghomeshi's attention to this topic, ushering him to ask M.I.A how she then deals with this negativity passed on the record. In his question, his choice of words is again worth paying attention to. The use of medical words and expressions such as 'inoculate', 'survive', and 'taking shots' with their associations to pain and vulnerability, index this position of someone on the losing side. Considering the interview as a whole, this position has been implicitly present throughout it. Both M.I.A and Ghomeshi support this role of M.I.A with their ideologically intertwined discourses that position M.I.A as the underdog of the music industry. In many respects, M.I.A seems willing to accept this position as she partly constructs it herself as she self-assigns a number of attributes defining this role.

M.I.A's response to the previous question focuses on her sincerity and her personal effort invested in her music. Her answer serves two different relational functions, which all in one way or another construct her alternative artist identity in relation to other recording artists. First of all, she argues to have put more of her 'blood and guts' in this record than other recording artists, which differentiates her from other artists rather than draws on their similarities. In short, these word choices metaphorically represent how the amount of sincerity and effort of the other artists in making music is nothing compared to the amount of work and honesty M.I.A has put into this album. She continues to emphasize how her creative work comes from 'where it should come from', which further supports her sincere

and authentic manner of doing art, not to forget her independency as someone in charge of her own career, therefore totally aware of the origins of her art. In sum, her ability to put up with all the negativity is based on her sincerity and ways of dealing with fame.

Secondly, she authenticates her alternative artist identity by using discursive means to prove or validate the way in which she has been 'completely truthful and honest', and how she has really given her all to the record. By handling the negative feedback with the strength given by her sincere and honest art she authenticates her alternative artist identity. Whereas in the mainstream music industry based on record sales and commercial success negative feedback is commonly understood as a sign of failure to meet the expectations and needs of the consumers, alternative artists such as M.I.A, do not consider the negative feedback as a sign of failure. Instead of letting the negative response to crush them, they lean on the strength given by their sincere and honest art, which they appreciate and value, as it is their personal creation, whether liked or not by the public. Thus, the main emphasis is on the art itself and the artist's perception of it, not on the public expectations and the fear of failing to meet them.

Example 12

> M: (h) (h) you know what I mean (h) (h) (h) I think eventually they will cause you know good people are often hated at the time when they're around you know and yeah and that's ok

In Example 5 Ghomeshi and M.I.A discussed the type of public discomfort M.I.A's art was sometimes considered to have created. Example 12 is a turn that actually continues the sequence that began in Example 5, but as itself, serves as an interesting comment on the kind of relationship M.I.A views to exist between her and her fans, and the wider audiences. Throughout the interview M.I.A defined her art as not always easily understandable, as something one needs to dedicate time to in order to understand it. Thus there is a contrast between her and all the easily consumable mainstream artists. Despite the annoyance caused by and attention to her music and other art forms, M.I.A nevertheless believes audiences will eventually understand her work: consider, for example, her comment 'I think eventually they will'. This utterance explicitly refers to her comment preceding this one on how people do not always understand art or music that for her is interesting and pushing something forward.

Another interesting feature of this comment is her statement how 'good people are often hated when they're around'. This comment entails a conversational implicature, which positions her in this identity category of 'good people'. By referring to this category, she implicitly states she is one of those people who push something forward and do something interesting, and therefore make people feel uncomfortable at the time. As she points out in her comment, their work can be hated, but eventually, as the time goes by their work is understood. In other words, the good work of some people is only understood and appreciated after the initial rejection and confusion. At the end of her comment she states 'that's ok' showing her emotive stance towards this social or cultural role of music industry's contradictory pioneer or forerunner she just assigned to herself. Suggested by her stance on this issue, M.I.A seems to be at peace with her way of being in controversy with the dominant ways of being an artist and doing creative work. Negative feedback, therefore, is something she is willing to confront as it serves as a proof of working towards issues she finds important.

The way in which M.I.A's art arouses conflicting emotions serve as a proof that she is tackling issues that need to be paid attention to and what others within the industry are not willing to deal with as they do not support the commercial expectations in that they might unbalance the artist's popularity. For her, popularity seems to be something she is happy to compromise as long as she feels she is living up to her own expectations and doing art by following her own non-commercial agenda. As she told in the interview, she does not mind having both 'lovers and haters' if it creates constructive discussion around issues, but as the world is faced with issues that she finds to be nothing compared to whether people like her record or not, she does not give too much value to the what people think about her art.

In sum, M.I.A is a famous person who, like most of the famous people has both lovers and haters. Her views of fame, or stardom, and the way she dealt with public's feedback on their own part contributed to the construction of M.I.A's alternative artist identity. Fame for M.I.A was about the person behind the art becoming more valuable and admired over the art itself. Her definition positioned her as an artist not driven by fame, pointing to how the attention at times was hard to deal with. In expressing her own alternative ways of dealing with the fame and expectations, M.I.A denaturalized the dominant artist identity showing how one is capable of working within the same industry without having to give up on one's principles or

follow the way paved by the industry for worldwide stars. In the interview, she frequently questioned the public expectations on how artists, after having reached a certain point in their career, should proceed and follow dominant trends to make their art popular and easily consumable.

Her approach to the public's reactions and feedback gives an extremely pessimistic image. The feedback she receives seems to be mostly negative. For her this negativity is not a sign of failure or of defeat, but tells her more about the surrounding world and what the audiences want on a larger scale. M.I.A does not mind having both lovers and haters, as long as the debates and discussions create dialogue, further supporting her identity as an artist not completely driven by commercial goals and whose strong personal agenda behind her art does not reach out to please masses, but to awaken discussion. Her way of referring to good people who she viewed to be often hated first, since these people like her, deviate from the norm and shake the existing systems and conventions in their attempt to change the social and cultural structures, creating discomfort among the people. This negative feedback is a sign for her doing something interesting and boundary pushing, and the sincerity she invests in her art is the key to put up with all the negativity.

8 EVALUATING IDENTITY: YOUTUBE COMMENTARY

As pointed out by Bucholtz and Hall (2005:591), identities 'are only constituted as socially real through discourse, and especially interaction.' In the present study, this aspect of 'socially real' is analyzed in two related settings. In the first part of the analysis the interview between the radio host Jian Ghomeshi and the artist M.I.A showed how and what kind of an alternative artist identity was discursively and interactively constructed in that very moment of interaction. Concentrating solely on this dialogue between the artist and interviewer, however, would rule out other interpretations of the emerging identity, especially given the fact that the interview was uploaded as a video on YouTube. In particular, questions related to the identity's socially perceived authenticity would be left untouched. Thus, in order to understand the other dimension of 'socially real' one needs to pay attention to the processes of validating this alternative artist identity and move beyond the very moment the interview

took place in order to reach other people's readings of this same interactive situation. In this way, the analysis also transcends the artist's own or the interviewer's perceptions of the authenticity.

According to Blommaert and Varis (2011:3-4), authenticity is first and foremost a social and discursive construct that is dependent on people's differing stances on a certain identity and its 'enoughness' to be regarded as an authentic representative of a certain identity category. In terms of alternative artist identity, this understanding of authenticity being socially agreed on is supported by Shuker (1998:20), who points out how sub-cultures and communities play an important role in ratifying an act as authentic or not. To get a nuanced view of this social and communal dimension of authenticity in the present study, the commentary related to the video on YouTube will next be investigated for the purpose of finding out how it reflects the audience's reactions to the emerging alternative identity and its authenticity. Similar to the social and discursive construction of the identity done by M.I.A and Ghomeshi in the interview, the commentators on YouTube process the discursive content in order to craft their own interpretation or reading of the emerging alternative artist identity and its authenticity.

Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principles, it can be observed that both Ghomeshi and M.I.A used discourses, which entail indexical power in that they position M.I.A in certain ways as an artist and within the music industry. These positions were either accepted or rejected by her, and sometimes she adjusted or modified them to her own purposes. Similar processes are seen to take place also in the comments by YouTube users. When the discursive content of the interview is analyzed by the discussants, they either align themselves with a certain aspect of the emerging alternative artist identity, in this way showing agreement with the discursive positions crafted through first order positioning either by M.I.A herself or the interview Jian Ghomeshi, or reject or question this identity, sometimes in relation to other users' comments, through second order positioning, in this way offering their own readings of this emergent identity.

YouTube commentary is constantly changing as people post new comments and as old ones are flagged or erased as spam. The comments chosen for the purposes of the present study were collected on October 29th 2013 among the comments posted during the first two years since the video was uploaded on YouTube. Following Booth's (2010) views on

intratextuality, in the collection of my sample the main emphasis was on comments that constructed self-reflexive links to the content related to the emerging alternative artist identity, focusing on how the comments either aligned with the positions, roles and identity categories found relevant in terms of the alternative artist identity or how they rejected or questioned their authenticity, in this way offering their own reading of the content of the interview and the emergent artist identity. Similar to the first analysis, the definitions of Shuker (1998) were applied as the background for understanding alternative and mainstream music scenes. The intratextual links between the commentary and the video were analyzed in terms of their self-reflexive references pointing to some dimension of the constructed alternative artist identity, leading to either positive or negative evaluation of this identity.

8.1 Comments on the artist's working methods

In the interview M.I.A came across as an outspoken and opinionated artist whose artist philosophy was for major part based on criticism of the corporate music industry and its oppressive influence on creativity. This position of hers as an artist keeping her distance from the commercialized corporate music industry was constructed by her own discursive choices and their ideological implications as well as brought up and supported by Ghomeshi, who from time to time also questioned this position, drawing more on the views of dominant artist identity.

Despite M.I.A's apparent breakthrough from the underground music scene to the consciousness of a wider audience, she decided to keep her distance from the mainstream music industry and the control over her career in her own hands. In addition to keeping her distance to corporate music industry, M.I.A criticized the music industry's way of viewing success and growth from the commercial perspective, in the same way as corporate companies measure their success. In her opinion, this results in understating the value of personal experiences and more alternative means to deal with progress. Proven by her comments, M.I.A self-identifies as an artist who does not only sell products, but for whom success and growth are something she works within her music. In the light of M.I.A's arguments and the discursively indexed stance on music industry, the comments on YouTube

offer an interesting perspective on how and why people either validated or overruled this aspect of her alternative artist identity.

8.1.1 The artist's ties to corporate music industry

The comments dealing with M.I.A ties to corporate music industry were few when compared to the comments that addressed the closely related issue of commercialism and her views on success and growth. However, the following two examples illustrate opposing views on the same issue.

Example 1

> **matako07** 2 vuotta sitten
>> oh,she doesn't want to be corporate...how Original.
>>
>> boring... **Vastaa** ·

In the first example, M.I.A's anti-corporate attitude is criticized by the user matako07. By referring to M.I.A as 'she' and bringing up the aspect of 'corporate' music business, matako07 constructs a self-reflexive connection to the interview and how issues related to corporate music business were discussed. In this user's comment M.I.A's opposition of corporate driven music business is evaluated unconvincing and unoriginal, as the ironic expression 'how Original' suggests. As one of the core attributes of alternative artists was the originality of their expression, by underrating M.I.A's originality, this comment clearly questions M.I.A's credibility as an alternative artist who opposes corporate music industry. Matako07's opinion becomes even clearer as the comment continues with an expression 'boring' embodying the user's emotive stance on M.I.A's attitude towards the corporate music business as not really that groundbreaking. In other words, Matako07 does not see anything new or interesting in the way M.I.A objects the dominant music industry and its attempt to force all the different artists to adjust their artistic expression to follow the same patterns. To the contrary, her stance on the corporate music industry is considered to function

in the opposite direction; instead of validating her alternative artist identity, it erodes her credibility as one.

Example 2

> **Jaggehs** 1 vuosi sitten
> Ugh. She's so brilliant. How many REALISTIC, creative thinkers have managed to become successful and not let the industry change them? In all of history, you could count on your fingers. She's not trying to be defiant or rebellious, she's trying to reveal truth. I love her. **Vastaa** ·

While matako07 downplays M.I.A's stance on corporate music business, the user Jaggehs, in contrast, decribes M.I.A as 'brilliant' in her ability to resist the music industry's control and influence, which as an emotive expression shows this user's stance on M.I.A anti-corporate attitude. Jaggehs poses a direct question that supports M.I.A's position as an alternative artist who has not given in to the music industry's influences. Jaggehs indirect question entails an identity category of the 'REALISTIC, creative thinkers' to which this user considers M.I.A to belong. These realistic, creative thinkers, such as M.I.A, have 'managed to become successful and not let the industry change them'. According to this user, they are so few one can count them with 'fingers'- What this comment implies is that although few in 'all of history', M.I.A has claimed her position as one in this user's opinion.

With this comment Jaggehs aligns him/herself with the way in which M.I.A positioned herself in the interview in relation to the dominant music industry and the possible effects of success. In doing so, Jaggehs supports her position as an alternative artist who did not let the success change her to a more mainstream artist following the dominant expectations. Instead, despite all the changes, M.I.A chose to stay true to her own ways of making music and having a more personal way of measuring progress and success, which is why Jaggehs admires her as the emotive expression 'I love her' gives reason to believe. Furthermore, her authenticity is emphasized by this user's view, according to which M.I.A is 'trying to reveal truth', which implies that she is authentic enough to bring out the truth, possibly about the music industry.

8.1.2 The artist's views on commercialism, success and growth

One of the differences between mainstream artist and the alternative artists could be argued to lie on their philosophy or ideology guiding their production of music. In order to achieve big sales, mainstream artists are often commercialized to produce music that meets that meets the expectations of the audiences and therefore, they are sometimes seen to 'sell out' their own principles in their pursuit of popularity and economic profit. As M.I.A's views in the interview showed, the more alternative artist, to the contrary, achieve part of their credibility and authenticity by working in the opposite manner; for them, it is their personal principles that guide their creative work, which at times may result in music that does not meet the public expectations for music to be popular and easily consumable.

Example 3

> **Matt Currie** 1 vuosi sitten Funny how she say all that shit about not selling out and then does a song with Nicki Minaj and Madonna **Vastaa** ·

In his comment, Matt Currie mentions the theme of 'selling out', making a self-reflexive reference to the content of the video and the interview. This commenter points out that in the interview M.I.A criticized artists who 'sell out' in order to be powerful and end up standing for nothing, but nevertheless, chose to do a song with Nicki Minaj and Madonna. The way in which M.I.A's comments on 'selling out' are referred to with the word 'shit' explicitly spells out this user's opinion on M.I.A stance on commercialism and the theme of 'selling out'; something that Matt Currie considers unconvincing, not worth believing. This juxtaposition constructed between M.I.A and Nicki Minaj and Madonna implies that the commenter probably considers Nicki Minaj and Madonna as representing the commercial, and consequently the more mainstream music industry, therefore in great controversy with what M.I.A claims to represent. As a result, the way M.I.A discursively positioned herself within the interview as this artist who does not do music for the commercial purposes, but instead, has a personal approach to making music, not letting the industry oppress her art to follow the needs and expectations of the more commercial side of the business, is not ratified by the

commenter Matt Currie. Collaboration with the mainstream artists in this commenter's opinion clash with the stance M.I.A took on corporate music industry and the way in which she differentiated herself from the artists who she views to have sold out their principles to have power within the industry.

Example 4

> **icripafo** 1 vuosi sitten shes rediculous, i'll just watch her vids cause hearing her views is rediculous sometimes-NEWSFLASH!!!!!!!!!!!!-!!! you did sell out! super bowl halftime show- the most commercialized program in the history of tv. - i still dig her though **Vastaa** ·

The user Icripafo tackles the same issue of 'selling out', which as an expression functions to connect this comment to the video. This user attacks M.I.A by calling her 'ridiculous', which functions to show this Icripafo's dissatisfaction with the way M.I.A's stance on 'selling out' present in the interview contradicts what she had done in real life. In contrast to her comments on ranging against the system, he or she sees M.I.A having already sold out as she performed in Super Bowl halftime show, which according to this user is 'the most commercialized program in the history of tv'. The way this user uses capital letters in an expression 'NEWSFLASH!!!!!!!!!!!!-!!!', highlights the kind of contradiction Icripafo views M.I.A's actions and comments to represent. In addition to this expression, the way Icripafo addresses M.I.A with a personal pronoun 'you' in the comment 'you did sell out' is aimed straight at her to point out this user's unwillingness to align with her anti-commercial stance and her position as opposed to the mainstream artists constructed in the interview. However, like the Icripafo's final comment implies, there is also a contradiction in this user's feelings about M.I.A as an artist. 'I still dig her though' indicates that despite the strong contrast Icripafo sees between M.I.A's real life actions and her artist philosophy, she is someone this user nevertheless likes.

Example 5

> **scorpioxf** 1 vuosi sitten I for one am glad she hasn't sold out. There aren't many people like that around as artists, and you don't often hear about them unless they've been

commercialized like Bieber, Katy Perry, and in the US we have a high tolerance for violence but not sex or female telling you to fuck off unless she also lessens herself (just a girl, anyone?). **Vastaa** · 2

Unlike the two previous commenters, a number of commenters did not view M.I.A as an artist having sold out. To illustrate this, the user Scorpioxf explicitly shows his or her gratitude for M.I.A for not having 'sold out'. The commenter then moves on to explain how these kinds of artists are rare, separating M.I.A from other more mainstream artists. Scorpioxf draws attention to how these non-commercial artists such as M.I.A, are rather unseen in contrast to artists who are 'commercialized like Bieber, Katy Perry' who are the ones people hear about. This comparison to Justin Bieber and Katy Perry links this commenter's ideas to the ideas presented by M.I.A herself. In the interview she talked about how artists who aim to reach out to big crowds and a status of an influential artist end up standing for nothing. These artists M.I.A argued, however, have power, which means that people hear more about them, as pointed by Scorpioxf's comment. As a result, this comment enhances M.I.A's identity as an alternative to the more mainstream artists and separates her from these mainstream artists based on her decision not to sell out her principles.

M.I.A's emerging alternative artist identity is further supported by Scorpioxf's last argument, which points to a strong contradiction between how people tolerate violence and outspoken opinionated females who do not compromise their integrity in order to be taken seriously. M.I.A for this person clearly represents someone who has not sold out and has not resigned herself to being a woman who 'lessens herself' just in order to please the needs of the industry. For Scorpioxf, M.I.A is the kind of artist who does not sell her principles in order to be accepted by the public. It is exactly M.I.A's resistance of marketing powers and her being an independent woman knowing her value that seem to construct her authentic artist identity in this user's opinion.

Example 6

Following the same theme, Coreboy7 criticizes the common patterns of 'indie bands' achieving popularity and then making a 'pop album'. By drawing attention to how easily 'indie music' in general turns into pop music after achieving popularity, Coreboy7 emphasizes the position of M.I.A as an artist who has 'stayed true' to who she is, not giving in to these effects of success and popularity. Coreboy7 states how s/he 'never understood how you can produce music you don't event like just for fame or money', suggesting that M.I.A represents a true alternative artist who creates music based on her personal experiences and preferences, not letting her artistic work be influenced by mass culture and its expectations for growth and popularity set for her musical style and career development. Commercial goals are not the reason behind M.I.A's art. For her, sincere personal experience is the key to success.

This comment by Coreboy7 also relates to how M.I.A dealt with growth and the difficulty to balance between originality and people's expectations. As shown by the interview, after her nominations in the Grammies and Oscars and her hit song that made her widely known, she was expected to make a more pop album, which she did not do despite all these expectations. Coreboy7's way of positioning M.I.A as this user's 'hero' indicates how she as an artist represents this authentic alternative artist who, despite the public pressure, did not follow the cultural and economic expectations, but stayed true to what she wanted to do in her music on a more personal level. By assigning the identity category 'hero' to M.I.A, Coreboy7 positions M.I.A ideologically among the kind of people who do something to be admired; in this case, her way of opposing the industry and defying the economic and cultural expectations authenticate her alternative artist identity for this commenter.

Example 7

Kalyna Sparks 2 vuotta sitten

It is so great that M.I.A., who came from poverty and has achieved celebrity status has not been totally corrupted by our society of consumerism and self absorption. We need more people of influence to think beyond their immediate riches about how fucked up our society is. It is only when we question our values about what constitutes success and happiness that we may look to the future and innovate- in the way we think, live, interact and work. **Vastaa** ·

In a similar tone, the user Kalyna Sparks self-reflexively refers in her comment to the short narrative of 'rags to riches' M.I.A used in the interview in order to point out how she felt people used her background and her sudden success against her. In this comment this narrative is used as a proof of M.I.A's authenticity as an alternative artist who did not let the commercial values of the music industry to influence her. Having defeated the difficulties she had in the beginning and having achieved the celebrity status, for Kalyna Sparks M.I.A nevertheless appears as someone 'who has not been totally corrupted by our society of consumerism and self-absorption'. Instead of producing music that would sell as much as possible, she does music she feels representing her and her own artistic desires. In sum, as discussed in the interview, M.I.A was given the chance to grow mainstream and gain popularity outside her own 'cult following', but she refused to seize on this opportunity since she felt her art and her philosophy were in controversy with the commercial values dominating the mainstream music industry. With many respects, this commenter uses this story in a similar way to authenticate M.I.A's alternative artist identity as M.I.A did herself in the interview. This way, the comment aligns the commenter with M.I.A's own views, validating her position as an alternative artist within the music industry.

Example 8

Austin Lyman 1 vuosi sitten

She believes a person's road to success or progression through life should not be cookie cutter or stuck to a fixed pattern once they've reached some point of notiarity, and that by mandating she must record a pop album would then deny her own independence, originality, or ability to pave her own progress, journey through life or path toward success. This relates to her reference to French Revolution by the fundamental idea of revolution-an act denied by corporate power over individual power **Vastaa** ·

To authenticate M.I.A's alternative artist identity, a commenter called Austin Lyman offers an interpretation based on this user's own reading of the interview. The backbone of this interpretation seems to have a great deal in common with the definition of the alternative music genre, going simultaneously hand in hand with how M.I.A herself was defining many issues related to her artist identity that were discussed in the interview. To start with, this user uses the personal pronoun 'she' to relate the comment to the video, accompanied with this user's reading of what M.I.A meant with her comments on success and growth. Austin Lyman points out, how for M.I.A, 'road to success' is not necessarily something easy and based on certain commercial factors as the dominant views suggest. According to this user, following the dominant guidelines for making art and meeting the expectations would shake M.I.A's 'independence, originality, or ability to pave her own progress, journey through life or path toward success'. This comment more or less defines what alternative artists are about. To be more specific, as defined earlier in this study, independence, anti-commercialism and art stemming from personal experiences were factors considered to be in the core of alternative acts. By bringing up these issues, Austin Lyman aligns him or herself with M.I.A's own views. This user then concludes his or her comment by self-reflexively drawing attention to M.I.A's reference to the French Revolution, explaining how she used this example to illustrate how her own way of working in the music industry, like the French Revolution in the past, is confronted dominant authorities limiting and restricting her work, trying to sustain the system serving a certain purpose and power relations in the society.

User drabbadon points self-reflexively to the video and M.I.A by evaluating her comments in

the interview as 'amazing', describing how she is unique in the sense that she talks about issues like they really are. In addition, she is described to be someone who 'for once' resists the 'establishment' and tells them to 'FUCK OFF', which are strong expressions showing how this user appreciates M.I.A choice to keep her distance from the commercial music industry. In other words, these word choices function to align this commenter with the position M.I.A set herself in relation to the music industry. What follows is a statement that summarizes M.I.A's own comments on the video. According to drabbadon, M.I.A does not care about success and charts in their traditional sense, but values her own personal growth, underlining her alternative artist identity as someone valuing her own personal creativity and growth over the corporate industry and its economic expectations. The emotive expression 'amazing, really' makes clear this user's stance on M.I.A personal views on success. By aligning with her views, drabbadon authenticates her alternative artist identity by supporting her anti-commercial attitude and the way she appreciates personal growth over the corporative growth expectations.

Example 9

> **drabbadon** 1 vuosi sitten She really is quite amazing. She says it like it really is, for ONCE someone tells the establishment to FUCK OFF! She doesn't care about charts and "success" she cares about her self and how she is growing. Amazing, really. This interview will be seen in the future as an artist who drew a line in the sand and said no more! **Vastaa** · 3

The previous comments varied to the extent to which they either questioned, rejected, showed support or comprehensively authenticated M.I.A's alternative artist identity in terms of her decision to keep her distance from the corporate music industry and anti-commercial attitude she highlights in the interview. What the commenters clearly agree on is that one certainly needs to fulfill and live up to the standards one publicly assigns to oneself in order to be authentic. The way in which M.I.A has managed to do this divided opinions. A number of comments were concerned about the possible contradiction between M.I.A's actions and her ideological views, while others found her anti-establishment and anti-commercial attitude as a sign of braveness and true artist spirit. Surprisingly some commenters did not rule out the

possibility to like her or her music, although they viewed her actions in great controversy with what she talked about in the interview.

8.2 Comments on the artist's unique and boundary pushing art

As Shuker (1998:22, 223) argues, alternative artists are seen to share a unique way of experimenting and combining styles in their music, which is often considered to entail a social dimension as well. For Shuker (1998:6,20), alternative acts are considered to produce music that is commonly regarded as more personal and authentic, or original than the mainstream pop music. Stemming from personal and sincere origins, not tied to commercial conventions, this music is often capable of dealing with issues outside the most popular sphere, thus pushing the boundaries of the society and the dominant conventions and ideologies within the society. This political and social undertone is often reflected in the lyrics and in the public appearances of these acts. In this sense delivering a deeper message, separates them from the mainstream artists, who can be seen to touch lighter, less controversial topics.

In the interview, M.I.A made some strong arguments for the sincerity and personal effort she had put in her music. First and foremost, music was about her personal experiences, and not about trying to meet the dominant commercial expectations. She made music that reflected her experiences, and therefore failed to meet the public that expected it to be more pop and easily consumable, especially after hew breakthrough to wider audiences. Moreover, the 'stir' her music and music videos were seen to cause reflect her boundary pushing working methods and practices dealing with issues that only few in the music industry dear to tackle. Standing for something in her case meant that at times, her work as an artist was made difficult by some external authorities as her music aims at reaching beyond the purpose of 'selling products'. Furthermore, she felt the music industry was not able to support her creativity in the way she wished, which she felt positioned her differently in relation to other, more mainstream artists. Especially her way of working with multiple media, as well as her uncertainty concerning the identity of a musician, set her in a rather unique position within

the industry, which is further supported by the comments both for and against her alternative artist identity.

Example 10

but her music sounds as contrived as any Britney Spears.

It sounds like "Look at me- I'm trying REALLY HARD to be what some people think is weird." The Flying Lizards did that back in the 1980's already...BORING.

The comment by matako07 shows how for this user, M.I.A's music does not come across as original or sincere. In this user's opinion, it sounds 'as contrived as any Britney Spears', a view which does not separate M.I.A from mainstream acts, but rather draws a parallel between her and other more mainstream artists' ways of making music. To further support this view, matako07 juxtaposes M.I.A with a band 'Flying Lizards' from the 1980's to illustrate how what M.I.A is doing is nothing original, but something already done by Flying Lizards. By making up this fictitious quote by M.I.A 'Look at me- I'm trying REALLY HARD to be what some people think is weird', matako07 points out the problem s/he views to exist in M.I.A's artist identity; she does not come across as authentically different or unique. In this case the question is not about whether M.I.A has enough of some characteristics to be considered an authentic alternative artist. To the contrary, this person views M.I.A's way of constructing her alternative artist identity as forced and exaggerated. As a result, her artist identity lacks credibility to be really authentic. The comment ends with the evaluative expression, 'BORING', further emphasizing how this user's rather negative stance on the emergent alternative identity, which matako07 finds unoriginal, therefore something this user does not want to support or align with.

Example 11

> **ugn669** 1 vuosi sitten musician - person who creates music... simple! theres nothing complicated is the definition of a musician. i think shes trying too hard to be anti-establishment... she picked up some good sounding words and phrases but it just sounds like she almost doesn't know what shes talking about. just pointless bla bla bla... **Vastaa** ·

Every once and a while an identity category was introduced in the interview, either by the interviewer Jian Ghomeshi or by M.I.A herself. What often happened was that M.I.A rejected the category completely or alternatively modified and adjusted it to fit her own purposes. In his/her comment, the user ugn669 takes under closer inspection the sequence of the interview where M.I.A is asked about her stance on the identity category of a musician. She refuses to accept this identity category and goes on to explain how she relates to music in her own way as just one medium among others. From this perspective, music does not have the status of defining her artist identity completely. Moreover, M.I.A made it clear that she is not sure what being musician means, which increased her reluctance to position herself as one. To illustrate this, she indirectly questioned the importance of making club hits for kids in order to be considered as a musician. As shown by her comments in the interview, for her, music has to have a message, since in her own words, she has a 'big mouth' and her agenda in making music transcends the purpose to sell products.

Ugn669's own interpretation of this identity category of a 'musician' constructs a self-reflexive link between the comment and the interview. This user's negative stance on M.I.A rejection of the identity category is further emphasized by the use of an evaluative comment 'simple', indicating this user's self-evident attitude towards this identity category, therefore strongly questioning M.I.A's way of defining the category of a musician. In other words, M.I.A's way of defining herself appears too complex, contradictory or artificial for this user whose own definition of the identity of a musician is simple and straightforward. At the end of the comment, ugn669 argues M.I.A to sound as 'like as she almost doesn't know what shes talking about' further evaluating her talk to be 'pointless bla bla bla…'. By these evaluative comments this user states her or his opinion on M.I.A as an artist who does not actually have anything intelligent to say, which diminishes her authenticity in this commenter's eyes.

Worth noting is that by downgrading M.I.A's statements in terms of her artist identity, ugn669 sets his or her opinion in great controversy with how M.I.A wanted to come across in the interview herself and how she was represented both in the synopsis and in Ghomeshi's comments.

Example 12

> **bebopbountyhead** 1 vuosi sitten
>
> We artists aren't "visual artists." We often use sound and other senses. It's more that we're "sensational artists." She isn't a "musician" because making music can easily be part of an artist's portfolio. Calling herself a "musician" would just box her in. Like she said: it's not about what others think you do best. **Vastaa** ·

Unlike ugn669, the user bebopbountyhead supports M.I.A's rejection of the identity category of a musician. This user crafts a detailed description of M.I.A's artist identity through positioning him or herself in the same identity category with M.I.A. Bebopbountyhead states 'we artists aren't "visual artists"', where 'we' entails both the commenter and M.I.A, therefore adding up a more personal aspect to back up this commenters view. By this comment bebopbountyhead explains how artists, such as him or herself and M.I.A, use different senses in their work and therefore should not be categorized strictly to one artist category. This goes in line with M.I.A's own art which she explained to be a constellation of different media, as she would have liked to have an image corresponding every sound every sound on her album. According to bebopbountyhead, M.I.A is not a musician since it is just one part of her 'artist's portfolio' and 'calling herself a "musician" would just box her in'. This opinion indicates a strong will to align this user with M.I.A's own views.

In this comment, the user clearly accepts the way in which M.I.A contests and rewrites the identity category of being a musician or being an artist, which is in line with the way this user defines his or her own artist identity. In the final statement bebopbountyhead interprets M.I.A's words and makes a point 'it's not about what others think you do the best', showing how this user and M.I.A both value independent creativity and control over one's career, which should be free from what other think you are and how they define you. The way in which this user supports M.I.A's views on why she does not consider herself simply a

musician, enhances and thus authenticates her alternative artist identity.

Example 13

> **licq1** 2 vuotta sitten i think she's just sending the message that revolution will be permanent, and a mold that induces conformation will never be allowed in this world for her. She's just giving a voice, not a thesis and an essay following down, so it's okay she's rambling sometimes i guess.

The comment by the user licq1 functions to authenticate and support M.I.A's alternative artist identity, but instead of addressing the multimedia aspect of M.I.A's artist identity, it draws on another aspect in terms of her creativity. By positioning her as the spokeswoman for 'revolution', licq1 aligns her/himself with M.I.A's views on how the mainstream music industry tries to limit her artistic expression. For M.I.A, according to this commenter, conformity is not an option proven by her reluctance to accept the 'mould' she is being pushed by the music industry's conventions and expectations, which echoes the way M.I.A talked about the ´music industry's pipeline'.

In this comment, M.I.A is explained to offer 'a voice' for this revolution, not a scientific 'thesis' and therefore, her occasional unintelligibility should not be taken so seriously. In addressing M.I.A's communicative style, licq1 contributes to the ongoing discussion on M.I.A verbal appearance on the video strongly present in several other comments posted under the video. Thus, this user's comment does not only offer licq1's own interpretation of the content that functions to authenticate M.I.A's alternative artist identity, but shows how this interpretation is partly based on the ongoing topic of M.I.A's communicative style discussed throughout the posts building an intratextual connection that perforates the three different dimensions present; the video, this user's own comment and the other users with their comments, showing how the authentication process is dependent not only on the video, but on the comments by the other users as well.

In terms of M.I.A's artistic output and its role in her artist identity, the choice of words in this comment suggests two related issues. The use of the expression 'revolution' is ideologically embedded in that it refers to someone politically active and more importantly, someone who

wants to change things. As the expression 'revolution will be permanent' indicates, this user positions M.I.A as an artist with a social and political agenda, trying to change the society through her music. For M.I.A, music is not simply a product, but a means to address social and political issues as was indicated by the expression 'big mouth' she used to describe herself. This 'revolution' is also made visible through her ways of doing creative work, as she is not willing to limit her art for it to fit in the 'mould' imposed by the industry. As her criticism towards the limited artistic working methods and the dominant way of measuring success in economic terms show, she does not give in to 'conformation' as licq1 puts it. Hence, this comment gives a reason to believe that for licq1, M.I.A is an authentic alternative, rebellious voice opposing the industry that tries to limit her personal ways of doing art.

Example 14

> **msblurgirl** 2 vuotta sitten I love the fact M.I.As Q tv interviewer is politicaly deep, tense and contraversial and in the gorillaz one damon albarn just moans about glee **Vastaa** ·

A number of discussants highlighted M.I.A as one of her kind as they viewed her to be one of the few, if not the only one, in the music industry capable of talking about issues brought up during the interview. As a good example of these views, the comment by the user msblurgirl evaluates M.I.A's contributions in the interview on Q Tv as 'politically deep', 'tense' and 'controversial' in comparison to Damon Alban from the band 'Gorillaz', who had been to the same show earlier 'moaning about Glee'. What this comment implies is that instead of touching light topics such as TV-programs as referred to by 'Glee', M.I.A brings up political views and touches issues that are contradictory, therefore avoided by some other artists. Considering the ways in which M.I.A was defined in the interview as an outspoken artist and how she positioned herself as an artist aware of the many social and political issues in the world, this comment seems to agree with the alternative artist identity that emerged in the interview. It could be argued that according to msblurgirl, M.I.A's way of touching sensitive and controversial issues, makes her an authentic alternative is comparison to Damon Alban's contributions in his interview on QTV.

Example 15

Touching on the same topic of M.I.A's outspokenness, but from another perspective, the comment by gbo102386 brings up the way in which M.I.A has been handled in publicity. On the one hand, this user strongly criticizes the way in which people put M.I.A on a pedestal as the only artist addressing relevant themes, by pointing out how 'there are plenty of American artist who have music with important subject matter'. Aside from not aligning with the position of M.I.A as the only one doing music in this way, this commenter positions him or her in opposition with the other commenters who in gbo102386's opinion are saying that M.I.A is hated by Americans and some other nationalities since 'SHE'S TRYING TO EXPRESS OPINIONS THAT ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN MOST OTHER SINGERS". In contrast to many other commenters who referred to M.I.A as this unique sound of rebellion opposing the established music industry along a number of other issues considered wrong in the world, possibly referring to her opinion on Sri Lanka and freedom of speech, this user draws on similarities between M.I.A and other American artists to tone down M.I.A's alleged uniqueness. In constructing an intratextual connection between other commenters, M.I.A and this particular comment, gbo102386 shows how his or her own opinion is if not completely, at least to major parts influenced by other commenters and their opinions.

On the other hand, however, gbo102386 makes sure his/her comment is not interpreted as a total dislike of M.I.A. This user's statement 'don't get me wrong, I like m.i.a her music dope' shows how his or her comment was not only aimed to judge her artist identity, but to question her position as this only opinionated alternative artist as she on the video and other people in the comments claim her to be and show that her music is still, despite this criticism, also liked

by this user. This evaluative comment on M.I.A's music emphasizes the view according to which the evaluation of an identity as authentic or not is a social process. As the comment by gbo102386 shows, the commenters on YouTube draw on others' comments both to support the emerging identity and reject its authenticity. The fact that gbo102386 nevertheless likes M.I.A's music complicates the analysis of this comment. Although M.I.A's unique artist position is strongly questioned or even rejected, her music is still appreciated. As a result, this user's stance on M.I.A's political agenda might be somewhat negative, but only when it is importance or status is exaggerated in relation to other artists with a similar style and agenda. Her music is still liked by this user, which proves that M.I.A's authenticity as an alternative artist is not totally dependent on her position as the only unique artist tackling important social and political issues.

Example 16

> **XximwishinxX** 2 vuotta sitten Why are you even comparing Lady Gaga to M.I.A.???! I mean I like Lady gaga, but M.I.A. is better. And honestly, they are two different musicians. According to you lady gaga is stirring stuff up just because. M.I.A. is stirring things up because it's her music and it's what she knows, speaking her mind and getting us aware of what's out there. "...any time you are pushing something forward it's uncomfortable." Just Saying. **Vastaa** ·

Related to M.I.A's politically sensitive role in the music industry, XximwishinxX addresses the other commenters by using the personal pronoun 'you' to question why others are comparing M.I.A to Lady Gaga, who both are artists seen to raise public attention with their music. By explicitly addressing the other viewers and commenters this user constructs an intratextual link between his or her comment, the video and the other comments that have made comparisons between these two artists. First this commenter explains how he or she prefers M.I.A over Lady Gaga, but then goes on to point out, that the comparison is actually unnecessary since 'they are two different musicians', in this way discursively differentiating M.I.A from Lady Gaga. In his or her view both M.I.A and Lady Gaga are seen to 'cause a stir', but in their way of doing it, they differ from one another. XximwishinxX goes on to point out how other commenters have argued Lady Gaga's way of being different and

arousing feelings as more commercial and done for self-explanatory reasons. M.I.A on the contrary, in this user's opinion, is seen to stick out for social and political reasons. These reasons reach beyond her own career and personal desires, as she is seen an artist who aims at 'getting us aware of what's out there'. The comment ends with a quotation of M.I.A, therefore self-reflexively connecting the comment to the video and serving as a supporting line for the whole argument in the comment.

The comparison to Lady Gaga, who to some extent was seen to belong to the same category with M.I.A functioned to indicate the shortcomings of Lady Gaga, therefore giving more credibility for M.I.A and her artist identity. The juxtaposition illustrates the ideological differences between the mainstream and alternative artists; although Lady Gaga and M.I.A were considered to have similar positions in the music industry, Lady Gaga's reasoning behind certain actions was considered fake and lacking an authentic purpose whereas M.I.A's purpose was profound and deep, which authenticates her alternative artist identity.

M.I.A's unique art and her way of not identifying with musicians raised voices both for and against within the YouTube commentary. Despite her account on how music for her was not about reaching a commercial goal, but a sincere expression stemming from her own experiences and what was happening in society on a larger level, her music was judged to be overdone. In her attempt to sound different, she was not seen to do anything unique or new as there had been other bands in the history, who had already succeeded in what she was trying to do now. Her unique sound, therefore, was not different, but boring. For some, the way in which M.I.A approached the identity of a musician, focusing not only on the surface features, but trying to reach the deeper purpose of what musicians are expected to present in the current system, appeared as artificial, her trying too hard to be anti-establishment. Others understood her rejection as musician as a cultural label would restrict her artist identity. M.I.A's dissatisfaction with the music industry in its lack of possibilities to express art gained support as well as did her outspokenness and unique message. The way in which M.I.A positioned herself as someone trying to oppose the industry and its attempt to conform art to its needs was supported by commenters who praised her rebellious attitude and her outspokenness as someone who talks about things no one else would.

8.3 Comments on the artist's relation with the public

In addition to questions dealing with M.I.A's ties to music industry, her music and the creative processes involved in her artwork, the interview shed light on her views on fame and public's reactions. These issues were visible in the interview due to the amount of publicity and attention she had attracted in media due to her altered position within the music industry. Moreover, being relevant themes in defining alternative music scene these issues were worth bring up in the analysis.

8.3.1 Fame and public's reactions

As an alternative artist first followed by what Ghomeshi referred to as a 'cult', M.I.A was later faced with the worldwide popularity due to her music attracting attention outside this well-defined group of fans. As a result, an important topic Ghomeshi and M.I.A discussed was fame, what it was for M.I.A and how she perceived her position as a famous person. For her, fame was about people valuing the person doing to the art over the art itself, which for her, was not the kind of relationship she wanted to have with her audience or to her art.

Ghomeshi also drew attention to the ways in which M.I.A's position in the public's imagination could have altered along her breakthrough. In the light of these changes people had expectations for her music and career, which however did not go along with M.I.A's own views on how she wanted to continue making music, leading to a situation where M.I.A felt people related to her in a negative way and how she felt they did not understand her art or the point she wanted to make through it. M.I.A's ways to deal with the public's reactions were tackled in the interview from two different directions. Ghomeshi was interested in finding out how M.I.A was able to take all this negativity instead of letting it destroy her.

For M.I.A, the answer was simple; since she was making her art in the most sincere and honest way, she was able to take all the negativity, as she knew where her art was coming from. In her view, people who were seen to push things forward and aspire change often faced negative reactions first, but later as time goes by, the meaning of their work was

understood. The way in which M.I.A seemed to come into terms with her role as someone trying to change things for better and therefore set in a difficult position in the public's eye, was her own way of dealing with the negativity.

Example 17

> **dayglowjoe** 2 vuotta sitten
> She is definitely better at expressing herself musically and visually than in spoken interviews. I love her to bits, but I see why people find her vagueness and nimbly hesitation frustrating. I love her for it, she's just real and concerned with real issues and not afraid to make a stand and be unpopular for saying what is right

For M.I.A, fame in the sense of admiring a person over the art that person was making was something she did not want to align herself with. A similar stance on the issue is discursively constructed by dayglowjoe's comment, which starts by making a self-reflexive connection between his or her comment and the interview by pointing to the contrast this user feels to exist between M.I.A's artistic expression and the ways in which she comes across in spoken interviews such as the interview on QTv. To put it simply, she is considered to be better in expressing herself through her music. M.I.A's criticized communicative style seen to frustrate and annoy others, is exactly the reason why dayglowjoe loves her as an artist. The way she comes across in the interview is what dayglowjoe considers to make her 'real' and to show how she is 'concerned with real issues'. These explicit expressions already validate her artist identity as a real artist who is concerned with important and relevant issues in the world. Furthermore, dayglowjoe argues that M.I.A is 'not afraid to make a stand', which supports her resistant attitude in the music industry as someone standing for her own principles as regards to her career, creativity and social and political issues she finds important nor to 'be unpopular for saying what is right', which as a value embedded attribute indexes M.I.A a position which supports M.I.A's self-assigned attribute of 'having a big mouth', which she used to reason her views on why she did not identity with someone powerful. In other words, for her unpopularity is worth more than selling one's principles and not standing for anything.

The way in which she is viewed to be concerned with social and political issues instead of making music just to sell products might make her unpopular among some people, especially

among those who had differing expectations as regards to her music and career. To stand against the public's expectations and to be ready to face negative feedback demands courage, which M.I.A in dayglowjoe's opinion has as she is viewed not to be afraid to stand for what she finds important. As an artist dealing with these difficult, yet important issues, her way of swimming upstream is in the core of her artist identity, and an essential part of her music, therefore not something she could ever compromise. Moreover, the way in which dayglowjoe considers her being 'real' supports M.I.A's own perception of her art work as stemming from sincere and honest origins. It could be argued that M.I.A as an alternative artist can be authentic even if she is unpopular. In fact, this comment by dayglowjoe shows how unpopularity might even enhance M.I.A's status as a real, authentic alternative artist amongst other artists.

In the interview unpopularity and even hatred were discussed in relation to an identity category of 'good people' to which M.I.A implicitly self-assigned. To be more specific, the way in which M.I.A referred to good people as people who are often hated at the time they are doing something new and interesting served to implicitly explain the way she was able to put up with the amount of negativity and conflict her art was seen to create. In the following comment by jakeheke, the sincerity in M.I.A's self-assigned identity category of 'good people' has drawn this user's attention.

Example 18

> **jakeheke** 2 vuotta sitten
>
> Unfortunately for Maya her lack of intelligence far outweighs her personal agenda. Of course good people are hated but her egocentric-self seeps through her facade of martyr-like demeanor. Sorry Maya but there are thousands of people who stand up against autocratic regimes and systems everyday yet you feel that using profanity in air suffices to set your place in the chain of philanthropists. Sorry luv but you're gonna have to try harder than that. Go take a leaf out of Immortal Techniques book.

Instead of supporting M.I.A's position as one of these good people, which M.I.A used to explain her ways of dealing with the negative feedback, jakeheke judges M.I.A's delivery as reflecting her 'egocentric-self' and her behavior as 'martyr-like', strongly overruling her attempt in the interview to appear sincere and honest. Instead of aligning with M.I.A's rebellious role in the music industry, Jakeheke views her anti-establishment and anti-

corporate stance as unauthentic and not original since she is not the only one standing against authorities and the system. In many ways, the sincerity behind M.I.A's words has turned into a form of artificial self-pity in the eyes of this user. Jakeheke points out how there are 'thousands of people' who do that as well, and for this reason she should not view herself as too philosophical and draw a parallel between her and the 'philanthropists'. These word choices set this comment in a great controversy with the comments that emphasized M.I.A's unique status in the music industry. Consequently, the comment by jakeheke seems to reject the position that was discursively constructed for M.I.A in the interview, drawing on her lack of sincerity and unoriginality.

Towards the end of the comment jakeheke adds ironically in an apologetic manner that in order to be taken seriously, M.I.A has to 'try harder'. Expression such as 'sorry luv' and 'gonna have to try harder than that', highlight this user's stance on M.I.A's sincerity as something she forces or tries to achieve, but which to jakeheke is not enough to stand out from the others if she wants to claim this position of someone opposing the established music industry and standing for political issues. The expression, 'try harder' implies that M.I.A's effort at the moment is not 'enough' or it her political agenda at the moment is not sincere 'enough' to be a validate part of her alternative artist identity. Consequently, this user's stance towards M.I.A's alternative artist identity is rather clear; instead of viewing M.I.A as an authentic alternative artist who succeeds in delivering a unique and powerful message, jakeheke views M.I.A too self-absorbed to give her agenda full potential and sincerity, therefore lacking credibility and authenticity.

Example 19

For the user Ravishme2, however, M.I.A's authenticity draws exactly on her ability to tackle political issues. This user points out the difference how M.I.A's work was discussed five years and how it is talked about today. Ravishme2 feels that back in the days, it was M.I.A's art and the topics she dealt in it that was really appreciated and concentrated on, pointing to 'M.I.A's work', 'Arular', 'the genocide', 'Tamils' and 'Sri Lanka' to refer to both M.I.A's music and the related political issues she has brought up in her music and appearances in media. Furthermore, as ravishme2 points out, those were the issues that ' the critics, the commentators were excited abt'. Now, however, the attention has turned, somewhat ironically in the light of the present study, towards 'the authenticity debate' and M.I.A as a person, instead of concentrating on her music and art, or the political message within them. In short, how she 'comes across' in public's eye, pointing to the way people react upon her as a person.

The self-reflexive link between the interview and ravishme2's comment is built through mentioning 'Jian', the interviewer, and the way he brought up people who liked M.I.A's record as a response to M.I.A's own views on how the record had received 'cheap shots'. Ravishme2 seems to draw attention to how the real issues behind M.I.A's work get dismissed as people's attention is more on whether she is authentic or not. What this concern echoes is the essential question of fame and its influence on art, which as a theme was discussed in the interview and on which M.I.A had a very profound view. As the times have changed, the emphasis has moved away from the art to the person behind that art. In this way, ravishme2's comment aligns this user with M.I.A's own stance on fame and how it should not be the

driving force behind the art as then, the person, not the art itself becomes the centre of all attention. Consequently, this user is suggesting that M.I.A should not concentrate on this non-essential debate, but pay attention to those who 'like the record', and as a result, probably understand what should be paid attention to. In many respects, this user follows M.I.A's own views on what is important, although for M.I.A the positive reactions the record might have triggered was not a reason to celebrate as there are many serious issue going on in the world.

Example 20

> **0society0** 2 vuotta sitten
>
> its gotta be true though--but i mean who cares if she's on drugs or not? her music is fucking amazing, which is what really matters anyway. i couldn't give a shit whether she's fucked up, but i've heard her give much more intelligible interviews. she gave interesting answers, just in a chemical kind of way. **Vastaa** ·

From time to time the momentary inarticulate and disjointed communicative style of M.I.A was speculated to be the result of her being under the influence of drugs. In these comments the focus was on her appearance and not on her opinions and views, or as the comment by 0society0 points out, on her music. In this user's opinion, M.I.A's music is 'fucking amazing', an evaluative expression immediately followed by an expression 'which is what really matters anyway', highlighting this user's stance on what should be appreciated and valued in an artist that seems to follow the ways in which M.I.A relates to her art. By drawing attention to her music and emphasizing its meaning, this user aligns him or herself with the stance M.I.A took on fame and how she did not align herself with fame and its way of highlighting the person and not the art itself.

Example 21

A number of commentators emphasized the meaning of M.I.A's music over everything else. Some pointed to the way her music was the key to understand her music and how her music, at times demanded time to be understood. The user Cyclona666 approaches the issue of M.I.A's communicative style as something hindering her agenda. Instead of judging her, this user offers a solution to the problem many commenters found her communicative style to cause. In this comment, Cyclona666 expresses his or her wish to be able to 'sit down with MIA and give her the vocabulary to properly discuss what she is trying to say'. The rest of the comment, however, overturns the first statement by drawing attention to M.I.A's music, explaining how her ideas and opinions 'come through 100% via her music', again supporting the role of music, the art over what the person her or himself actually is. In giving more value to the music and relying on its ability to express what M.I.A has to say to her audiences, this Cyclona666 takes a similar stance with M.I.A on how music, or art in general, should be valued and paid attention to instead of concentrating on the person creating that art. This comment proves that for many users, M.I.A's public appearance in the interview is not the priority, since they value her artwork over her verbal delivery.

All in all the comments related to fame and public's reactions on M.I.A as an artist or her music were mainly positive, emphasizing M.I.A's music, not overrating her as a person, which aligns the comments with M.I.A's way of defining fame. Her strength was considered to lie on her music and its way of turning the attention to issues that were sometimes neglected by others due to their controversial nature. Some commenters praised her courage to talk about issues other artists would not touch as it could decrease their popularity, while others rejected her position as the only one touching relevant issues, therefore undermining her position as a unique alternative artist different and possibly better from other artists

within the industry. As a response to her occasional difficulty in her verbal delivery during the interview, her message was argued to come clear through her music, which most of the commenters valued. What this shows, is that most of the commenters seemed to value her outspoken and brave music over her as a person. In many respects, this supports the way M.I.A seemed to prefer the relationship between her, her audience and her art.

As the comments illustrate, authenticity is a flickering and a dynamic concept, which is clearly dependent on what particular people consider constructing the identity of an alternative artist and in particular, what they count as 'enough' to claim one. Her criticism towards the restrictions of the dominant mainstream music industry and its commercial values were widely praised by commentators. M.I.A was seen as an artist who was making the kind of art she wanted, not letting her creativity be controlled by fame and money. For others, to the contrary, M.I.A's anti-establishment attitude came across as fake and contrived, and her attempt to create personal art free off commercial constraints were condemned lacking sincerity as she had already done contradictory decisions in her career, such as the performance in the Super Bowl halftime show. A number of commentators agreed on M.I.A's music having deeper, political message and her being concerned with real important issues, which made her differ from many other artists. For some, however, this same argument seemed to work in the opposite direction as few commentators argued that, contrary to M.I.A's own and also other commentators' claims on her being unique in terms of the issues she was addressing in her art, she was not the only artist tackling these issues and her attempt to come across as unique decreased her credibility, sincerity and agenda. The way in which M.I.A made clear in her comments her views on fame and how admiration of an artist can lead to underrating the actual art gained a great deal of support in the commentary. Several commentators agreed with her view and emphasized how M.I.A's art was the issue people should concentrate on and how her message came through via her music. What the comments consequently showed was that M.I.A definitely has what in the interview she called lovers and haters.

9   M.I.A – THE ALTERNATIVE WITHIN THE MAINSTREAM

The present study focused on analyzing the artist identity from two perspectives. In the interview, the main interest was in how an alternative artist identity discursively emerged within the interaction between Jian Ghomeshi and Maya Arulpragasam whereas the YouTube commentary was analyzed in order to see whether the commentators authenticated the emerging identity or not and on what they based their evaluations. The analysis was conducted on the basis of the framework by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and accompanied by a number of analytic tools. In addition to the framework by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Booth's (2010) ideas on online intratextuality were utilized while analyzing YouTube commentary. Based on the foreknowledge of the artist, the study approached M.I.A as an alternative artist whose artist identity, given her underground past and then, the sudden fame in the mainstream music industry, was contested and therefore offered an interesting topic to study both the discursive identity construction and its social and discursive authentication in relation to these events.

In the interview the contradiction formed by the expectations brought by her breakthrough in the mainstream music industry and her past as a more underground artist were embodied by the ideologically intertwined discourses. The participants discursively crafted positions and stances that either aligned or showed disagreement with issues regarded relevant in terms of M.I.A's alternative artist identity. M.I.A's language use showed her strong resistant stance on issues such as corporate music industry and commercialism, and her views on success, creativity and fame also supported her position as an alternative artist as her views often followed the definitions for alternative music genre and artists offered by Shuker (1998). It should be remembered that these discourses were possibly a means to reproduce her already existing cultural and social position within the music industry. To the contrary, given his interactive and institutional position as a radio host, Ghomeshi both questioned M.I.A's ways of positioning herself and assigned her positions and roles that often opposed M.I.A's experiences as an artist, which I take to indicate his approach to represent the dominant ideological and conventional expectations within the mainstream music industry, but partly a

result of the discursive and interactional conventions brought along by his profession. The language use and consequently, the emergent artist identity were dependent on the positions and roles both preceding the interactive moment and the positions and roles assigned to M.I.A in that very moment.

Based on this resistant attitude, M.I.A's artist identity can be seen to belong to the continuum of other identity struggles in progress within the music industry and in society on a broader level. For many parts, her identity shared the characteristics of how rap artists were seen to position themselves within the studies by Keys (2002:122) as referred to by Kubrin (2005:368). As for rap artists, staying true to oneself and keeping distance from the mainstream music industry were essential factors for M.I.A's artist identity as well. Being this fracture in social and cultural norms, the way in which M.I.A's artist identity emerged in the interview supports the ways in which Fairclough (1995a:39), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:96) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005:602) emphasized the power of ideological expectations in identity construction; how identities are to some extent socially and culturally imposed on us through the expectations laid on language use and one's ways of viewing the world, which makes identity a struggle for many who do not identify themselves with the dominant identity categories.

What I considered to take place in the interaction between Ghomeshi and M.I.A supports Fairclough's (1992:137) view of discourses as the means to re-determine and reconstruct identities. Faced with all the changes on her career, M.I.A was in a position where she had to re-determine her alternative artist identity in the light of the social and cultural expectations set by the industry and the public. M.I.A's language use then gives reason to believe that each and every individual also has discursive power in determining one's identity despite the predetermined identity categories and the various positions individuals are assigned to. The struggles over the right to determine and construct one's preferred identity make the dominant and readily crafted identities in society transparent and in this way also open for change and redetermination. As M.I.A seemed to stand strong behind her identity as an alternative artist, she consequently reconstructed her old artist identity too. However, she had to re-determine the previously easily accessible attributes and ideological views as she was now considered to have entered the world of mainstream due to her nominations, grown popularity, and hit songs. Thus, in order to sustain and authenticate her alternative artist

identity, she had to work harder in order to justify and authenticate her decisions and views related to her art and profession as an artist, which at many times, as shown by the interview, were in great contradiction with the dominant conventions and expectations both the public and the mainstream music industry had for her.

In many respects, this effort she had to put in the interview to support her own artist identity echoes the way in which Blommaert and Varis (2011: 3-5) discussed the concept of 'enoughness' in relation to identity's authenticity. As they argued, the socially agreed attributes constituting a particular identity as authentic, for some, were easier to acquire than to others, which resulted in people having differing opportunities in issuing and assigning them for themselves. To M.I.A's case this can be applied as follows. During the early stages of her career, as pointed out by Ghomeshi, M.I.A was an underground artist with a following that was rather small, compared to the number of people who know her music now after her worldwide breakthrough. Her music and her artist identity were therefore easier and simpler to define as belonging to this alternative side of the music industry. Now, after stepping into the world of mainstream music industry, the attribute seen to constitute an alternative artist identity has drifted further away due to their replacement with all the new attributes brought along by the new position in the music industry. As her comments show, however, for M.I.A this new position was something that she felt was imposed on her, instead of being something that she felt comfortable with or something that she wanted to represent. Her ways of rejecting, questioning and modifying positions she was assigned to show her attempt to reconstruct and authenticate her alternative artist identity, which despite all the changes, had not altered to a more mainstream direction.

Another relevant phenomenon visible in M.I.A's discursive identity construction bears resemblance to the phenomenon discussed by Widdicombe (1998), whose ideas on category affiliation were discussed earlier in this study (Widdicombe and Wooffit, 1995:59). Although M.I.A might have been considered a more mainstream artist by the public and the way in which her position as an artist who was not seeking for popularity in the traditional sense was occasionally doubted by Ghomeshi, M.I.A had a strong sense of her own artist identity. In denying her 'category affiliation', as Widdicombe and Wooffit (1995) call it, with the more mainstream artist identity, she brought up the consequences that might have followed her accepting and taking in all the changes she faced in her career, such as turning her music into

more pop and accepting commercial collaborations and letting her work to be guided by fame and success to reach economic profits. Her struggle to balance between these two positions was constantly visible within the interview. Instead of conforming to the position in the mainstream music industry she was both pushed to and a part of, she discursively authenticated her own, self-determined alternative artist identity that was based on her sincere and honest art and her will to stay independent and true to what she represented as an opinionated artist with multiple media at her use. By separating herself from the other artists within the industry, she took part in a process of constructing an alternative for an extreme described by Bucholtz and Hall (2004:384) in their relationality principle. By constructing an alternative for the underground artist within the paradigm of the music industry as someone operating within the mainstream, she was nevertheless able to stay true to her own principles although she was no longer simply an underground artist with a well-defined fan base and a limited visibility.

In many respects, the relationship between the public's expectations and M.I.A's own experiences echoes the contradiction presented by Abbs's quote (1975:53) as presented by Shuker (1994:21), where 'true culture' is seen a complicated historically bound illustration of 'unique relationships' in comparison to 'false culture' where all complexity and 'diversity' is readily decoded. For M.I.A this kind of conformity, whether it concerned her music, her ways of doing creative work or ways to define her artist identity, was not an option. The way in which M.I.A rejected and questioned the mainstream music industry's working practices and economic expectations, which in many ways had become so naturalized that they constituted the norms within the music industry, showed how these expectations were also the ones shared byt the public as well. Illustrated by Ghomeshi's questions, she was often expected to follow these norms in her own career. Her reluctance to obey these norms caused conflicts between her and the public and as result formed the grounds on what her alternative artist identity was based.

Aside from how M.I.A positioned herself and how a certain alternative artist identity was constructed to her in the interview, her identity as a public person is exposed to numerous reinterpretations especially in this case where the interview was uploaded on YouTube. The processes of determining how authentic M.I.A's alternative identity were visible in the commentary where the commentators shared their own readings of the interview,

simultaneously contributing to the social and discursive evaluation, either authenticating, questioning or rejecting it artificial.

Some of the comments represented clearly extreme views, whereas others expressed their views both for and against M.I.A's artist identity, which gave their evaluation multiple dimensions. The content of the comments gave reason to believe that the viewers did not base their evaluations solely on the material provided by the video, but based on the other users' comments and on the background knowledge the commenters had in terms of M.I.A's career and music industry in general. The intratextual links constructed between the different comments and the video as well were sometimes explicit, but at times, they had to be read between the lines as more implicit means were used to build these connections.

There was a clear connection between the authentication of the alternative artist identity and the way in which Du Bois (2007: 163) defined the three-fold process of stance taking and how Booth (2010) discussed the intratextual links between different online texts. By addressing the topics discussed in the interview, M.I.A, Ghomeshi, other possible viewers or the people who had already commented the video by explicitly referring to these people by their nicknames or personal pronouns, the commentators positioned themselves in relation to M.I.A, Ghomeshi, or the other commentators by either aligning with their views or by rejecting them, in this way showing their stance on the issue at hand. In other words, through these processes the object, in this case, the alternative artist identity, was evaluated in social interaction and with the help of various discursive means, which constructed the intratextual links between the video and the YouTube commentary.

Consequently, by either rejecting or aligning with the emerged identity in the interview, the commentators participated in two processes; those of reproducing or questioning the underlying ideological dichotomy and what is considered as 'enough' to be authentic alternative artist in this context. As discursive and social constructs, according to Fairclough (1992) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identities were with many respects ideological; intertwined with expectations and socially agreed attributes seen to constitute them. The ways in which the comments of M.I.A and Ghomeshi highlighted the ideological expectations and norms circulating within the music industry and in society in general, the comments on YouTube showed the commentators' stance on these expectations and norms by either strengthening them or questioning their relevance and validity. It should also be noted that

not all of the commentators were black and white in their opinions. Many of the commentators showed indecisiveness in whether they supported M.I.A as an alternative artist or not. The used discourses in the comments reflected this pondering of opinions both for and against the emerging identity.

A number of commentators showed support to M.I.A critical approach to the music business's commercialized working practices and goals, while others considered her to have embarked on this same industry as shown by her collaboration with mainstream artists and Super Bowl as a commercialized TV-spectacle. Moreover, her style in music and its political message were either praised as sincere and standing out from all the other artists within the industry or shot down as artificial and contrived ways of trying to be different and unique despite of the fact that many other artists were seen to tackle with the same important issues. Similarly, M.I.A's communicative style was seen to undermine her message and agenda, but for others, her music was the answer to understand and get to her, making her a real artist concerned with what should be concentrated on; the art itself. These comments showed clear support to M.I.A's views on fame, in this way reproducing the ideology of the alternative music scene as validating these views as authentic and relevant part of an alternative artist identity.

The division of people to those who found it easy to align with M.I.A's views and opinions and to those who had difficulties in finding a common ground with her reflected a difference in what was considered 'enough' to authenticate her identity as socially and culturally valid. M.I.A's anti-corporate attitude and her personal ways to deal with fame and success for some were enough to authenticate her artist identity as real when compared to other artists whose aim was to achieve commercial success instead of trying to make a change, like M.I.A. Moreover, M.I.A's stance on commercialism and its influence on art and the way in which she positioned herself as opposing the oppressive influence of the mainstream music industry were considered to draw attention to the mould that the mainstream industry tries to push all the artists. For others, to the contrary, M.I.A's anti-corporate views, might have been enough, but nevertheless, functioned not to authenticate her alternative artist identity, but to show how despite its traditional role in defining alternative artists, her anti-commercial attitude actually diminished the authenticity of M.I.A. Similarly, her efforts in trying to differentiate her from other artists with her musical style and political message were too much or forced or, despite

their traditional link to alternative music scene, just in great controversy with what had happened in her career, therefore lacking credibility and sincerity. For this reason, the line separating enough and too much seemed to be in a state of flux, hard to control and predict.

Before the Internet and numerous social media, the role of subcultures and communities in identity construction and its authentication was not as easily visible for larger audiences. Now, their evaluative processes are open to all, as YouTube offers an arena for expressing one's views and opinions. What was considered as 'enough' for these users has to do with their background knowledge and personal experiences, which cannot be reached through the means of this analysis. However, what can be seen through the analysis is the fact that for some, M.I.A represented an authentic alternative artist who had stayed true to her creative work and important political message she aimed to spread through it, making her an exemplary artist for others to learn from, while others judged her artist identity to be based on contrived difference and uniqueness, and her actions being in contradiction with what she preached, therefore making her position within the music industry invalid and phony.

What the comments both for and against M.I.A's artist identity on YouTube reflect is the similar ideological conflict that emerged in the interview. This conflict was visible both at the level of the changes that had taken place in M.I.A's career and at the level of more profound, deeper ideological differences that form the base for the division to mainstream and alternative on which music industry is understood to be constructed. The main finding of the analysis of the interview supports Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) view on the relations involved in the identity construction. Instead of positioning herself to the other extreme within the music industry, M.I.A tried to construct her own, self-determined alternative for working within the mainstream, not completely conforming to its expectations and norms for making music and dealing with fame and success, but acknowledging that she was faced with this new situation with challenges that forced her to work harder in order to sustain and validate her alternative artist identity. The public seemed to be aware of this contradictory position as shown by the YouTube commentary where some viewed M.I.A to have succeeded in navigating between these two worlds of the music industry, while others viewed her to lack sincerity and authenticity in her attempt to hold on to the alternative artist identity within the mainstream music industry.

10   CONCLUSION

Despite the ability of the present study to show how identity emerges through interaction and the used discourses and how its validation is dependent on the socially agreed enoughness of attributes and factors that vary from moment to another, it had its limitations and challenges in terms of the data it used and the kind of analysis it conducted.

Having access only to the video and the written comments, the analysis was based solely on my own interpretations of the used discourses, which I reflected on the definitions provided by Shuker (1998). The validity of the observations could have increased if the participants in the interview or the commenters in YouTube had been interviewed as regards to their comments and opinions. Analyzing other people's language use has to take into account the inherently ambiguous nature of language and the possibilities of misinterpreting the social and cultural connotations and associations people load in their expressions. Especially, in written language the tone of the voice, therefore implications of irony, for instance, might be missed in the analysis.

Another factor I consider having influenced the study was my background knowledge of the artist. As I already had a certain picture of the artist readily at use, the analysis was to some extent influenced by my own background knowledge. If I had chosen an artist not known to me as the target of the analysis, the results might have been more objective, without the possibility of my interpretations being biased due to my background knowledge of the artist. As regards to the future research, it would be interesting to analyze interviews of several artists and see, whether the their discourses would entail the same ideological contradictions and if there was a pattern in how artists would relate to the issues discussed during the interview in the present study. Similar to the present study, the kinds of stances they would take on issues such as commercialism, creativity, and fame would be in the core of the analysis in the forthcoming studies.

Thirdly, the analysis could have utilized a different thematic structure. Although the categories or themes used in the present study captures the different issues discussed in the interview rather well, the data could have been analyzed also by focusing on the interactive and discursive strategies used to bring up the different ways to construct M.I.A's alternative

artist identity. Now the themes were based on the main factors and characteristics seen to define alternative acts, which were then reflected on the topics discussed in the interview. In YouTube commentary, the comments were divided based on the ways in which they related to these topics discussed in the interview. The way the definitions by Shuker (1998) and their correspondence to the issues discussed in the interview and their relations to the comments might from time to time seem vague and contrived for the person not familiar with the artist, the data of the study or the music industry in general.

Finally, I wish to pay attention to the concepts used in the present study. Despite their social and discursive nature, people's identities are different, even when people are seen to belong to the same identity category. As the studies by Bucholtz and Hall (2004;2005) show, people might still feel differently about themselves, compared to the others seen to belong to the same categories at numerous levels. Studies on identities, therefore, should stay alert and sensitive to all the nuances of the identity formation and not draw too strict causal relations in their attempt to fit a person into a particular grouping. The present study takes its own part of this criticism, since M.I.A was already set in a certain position before the actual analysis. To alleviate this point of view, M.I.A's positioning in the alternative artist category was, however, reasoned by drawing on the interview and on some background knowledge of her career and musical style that validated the starting point of the study.

Similarly the concept of authenticity is a relative, not a static concept, which varies in its meaning and relevance from one moment to another. Due to its dynamicity and the subjective experiences used to define it, the studies on authenticity should be aware of their uncertainty and accept the fact that one is never capable of achieving a complete consensus about it, neither no single person can reach a status of being permanently authentic in the public's eye. Similar to identity, authenticity emerges discursively in interaction, and in addition to each and every person's subjective contribution, it's dependent on the other people and their evaluations as well as on ideological conventions, norms and expectations circulating in society on a broader level.

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APPENDIX 1

I: Interviewer Jian Ghomeshi

M: Artist M.I.A (Maya Mathangi Arulpragasam)

(h): laughter

[overlapping]: overlapping speech

@:animated voice

I: This is Q on CBC radio 1 across Canada's series 137 across North America from PRI Public Radio
International and (Unbolt) television Well.. you know it is hard to believe that just a few years ago Maya
Arulpragasam was still working on the relative obscurity of the London UK art scene when her debut album
"Arular" dropped under the moniker M.I.A. She made a noise on that record that reverberated through London,
through New York, around the world. A Sri Lankan and British visual artist who picked up the mic and changed
the game with a global mash up of sounds and whose own experiences of growing up in the shadows of Sri
Lankan civil war and then later in the political reality of London councilor state gave her music a pointed
political message to hang on those great beats. The most apt description of M.I.A when she first arrived in the
global scene might have come from rap star Nas who declared that M.I.A's sound is the future. Well the future
is now yet again with the release of M.I.A's third full-length record Maya and I'm very glad to have M.I.A back
here in studio Q hello!

M: Hi

I: (h)(h)(h)

M: hiya, hiya, [hello]

I: [welcome back]

M: hi

I: nice to have you here again

M: thanks for having me

I: replete with fancy new nail polish as we[ll]

M: [mh]

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I: and socks

M: I've figured that I'm I'm one of those eh eh things that is ehm yeah I've toned down the colour basically.

I: you've toned down the c[olour] but yo[u e]xpress it on finger nails still.

M: [this is]   [yes]

M: yes.

M: @If you know me you'd get it@

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: (h) (h) (h)

I: well I get it that you wear black and white otherwise and then there's this..ehh.. wild splash of colour [on]your fingers

M: [mh]

M: I'm inspired by Photoshop (h) (h) (h) today.

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: (h) (h) (h)

I: right so you've photoshopped your fingernails

M: yeah (h) (h) (h)

I: [alright]. aha, this album I mean it came out on July here in North America. I get a sense there's been a lot happening in your world over the summer. does this still feel like a new record to you?

M: yeah I haven't even started. I'm just, I'm just takin' the punches you know? sitting back seeing what happens and ehm yeah I guess ahh yeah I've been starting to see

I: what you mean by "taking the punches"?

M: amm, I don't know I feel like a lot of people have been taking cheap shots because that's how it goes and amm you know but the whole point is to, is to show that, you know and I think it's mm, it's good… it's almost like my version of collecting data

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: [do you know what I mean?]

I: you collect ch[eap s]hots?

M: [yeah]

M: so I've collected cheap shots, lots of them and I'm mmhh, yeah

I: I mean the cheap shots how actively do you see(k) that stuff out or do you see it? or do you are you one of those [people who]

M: [I don't seek] that out like I don't

I: you don't google yourself out and see what nasty things people are saying or something

M: you don't seek it out but then it's like you feel it you know and I think..I think when you put..when I put the video out born free video like I knew it was gonna come but even before then I knew it was gonna come just because like the internet had changed hands and I'm amm sort of exactly the person that needs to be kind of @eradicated@ of you know what I mean?

I: the internet had changed hands or are you saying for that the internet went from a democrat[ic]

M: [mhh]

I: open frontier to corporate controlled effectively?

M: mhh

M: so yeah I , I think that was the thing you know it had changed hands and and people didn't know

I: hmm

M: but I think you know I feel like, I feel like for me its it is a good indicator to sort of see who really wants what you know what I mean

I: I was gonna get to this stuff later but I mean since we're already talking about it how do you inoculate yourself just to be able to survive to to not you know not to be mobbing around thinking that people are saying taking shots at you how do you, how do you in ad[vance go]

M: [because] you have to believe it it's like you know it's sort of as long as when I was making this record to me I know I've put like my blood and guts in this record more than the others who have records so I knew that it was the only way to sort of protect yourself is if you gave it your all and if you were completely truthful and honest then it just doesn't matter you know that's how you can take like millions and millions of cheap shots and not be hurt because it's coming from you know where it should come from you know

I: I mean but a lot of people like it too (h) (h) (h) it's not that that's like there's a gallery

I: of peop[le   iss]uing you cheap shot[s]

M: [ouuuuuuuuu]   @[B]UT [I WANT] HA[TE]@

I: [I don't]   [you] want to be the victim ha?

M: not at all it's just that you know if you liked the record I think it's sort of one of those things it's like if you like the record and you get the record and you get what I'm trying to say on the record then it's just one of those things it's not like you can get up there and like drum up this like you know sound and be like @it's so fucking great!@ It's not, it's just that it's the term we're going through it's like people like me and you or people like who I feel like get it this time is a tibe.. time of hibernation to rebuild rebute you know cause it's not it's not this the last two years it's just been you know we're dealing with like some other shit that's not you know I just feel that it's not as great and optimistic as it's been written you know

I: Let me come back to erm [th th that]

M: [I don't know if I'm making sen[se]

I: [No] yo you I get what you're saying I'm gonna get back to if there are any cheap shots and what they are but let's talk about the record first of all you you, I mean speak of the word hibernation it's interesting because the last record the last time you sat here on the release of your last record we were talking about how you had been on this adventure both musically and geographically you recorded all over the globe you went to Liberia, Trinidad, India. This record you recorded in Los Angeles or or

M: It's recorded in @America@

I: hehehe it's recorded in America

M: yesss

I: that's obviously a conscious decision what was the intention

M: It's recorded in the back alley of the Silicon Valley in the United States of America

I: Why?

M: You know? It's pretty in places but it's ugly in places, it's soft in places and it's aggressive in places, but yeah welcome to America you know and I also think that it's just sort of I don't know, I feel like right now even the French Revolution wouldn't not fucking happened you know what I mean. The way we've set up our world is like everyone would be tracked down on *Facebook* (h) (h) you know what I mean like there's no possibility for anything anymore you know

I: There's no possibility for anything anymore?

M: aahh, that sounds so [raw]

I: [That] sounds like dire what are you saying?

M: No it's not dire it's just it's just you have to go look here's the gold post, here's the edge, here's the edge, here's the ceiling here's the floor and like now work within it you know [and]

I: [but] what does it have to do with not globetrotting to make your record and staying in one place?

M: Oh that was just my own personal reality like how I couldn't leave the America cause I overstayed my visa

I:hmh

M: and if you overstay your visa you know even for 24 hours you get denied like blanked denied forever

I: So given the choise would you still do what you've done in the past and amm be making aa sounds from all over the world [by going to diffe]rent places

M: [yeah yeah yeah]

M: So once there were like we've if you in order for you to get the extension on the visa then you have to stay in America so you know I ran out of time like I was so pregnant couldn't get on a plane so I wasn't like @fuck it@

I: (h)

M: you know, I couldn't do that so I was there and by this time I had overstayed about a month or two and the Grammies happened like that had the baby there and then yeah it took about eight or nine months before I got my visa approved so and as soon as they approved it I left you know to England again but I made the record in America and that's just my reality and that's just [how it went down]

I: [is is your reality] a different reality in terms of where you're at in the publics imagination and in your career based on the fact that again the last time you were here a couple of years ago you were well known in particular music circles and certainly had a massive cult following you all round the world but now, post massive hit with Paper planes all around the world post more accessible songs like Jimmy post Grammies post Oscar nomination did you grapple with being a different M.I.A being a worldwide star with making this record did that affect you creatively?

M: mts ammm no because I think I think I was still slightly out of the that world..and amm..even though I was sort of living in the music industry's back yard like literally l was like fifteen minutes down the road it was kind of you know I did not have management and amm I was sort of kind of free wheeling on my own still so it felt like I had the opportunity to lock myself away but it definitely amm I think you know it was an issue but it was weird because there was so much going on in my personal life and yeah

I: having a baby

M: having a baby

I: pretty big deal

M: yeah

I: yeah

I: but you know yeah, some people are suggesting that musically and I would understand that you I mean you didn't choose given the opportunity to make it really pop record (h) (h) following having hit songs you made a record that at times

I: [is less accessible]

M: [but well why do we] have to do it like [that]

I: [you] do[n't]

M: [I don't] get it

I: [but]

M: [I]don't understand why the progression has to be a chart that looks like the same fucking chart as the growth of like Mac or like something

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: like I don't understand why I have to represent my success in the same way as a corporation's growth you know it's like I don't see it like that growth to me is growth to me in my own way I fucking have grown on my record

I: hmm

M: and to me I was dealing with shit that growth to me you know what it represents how I was dealing with it that's why that record is so confused because I was dealing with it

I: this record you feel it's confused?

M: yeah I think you know it was definitely it was definitely dealing with all those things of people going like @heyy@ you know here's the fucking Cinderella's shoe and be thankful you that little refuge who was on the leaflet of like an aid you know leaflets from Africa and now you've made it you've got the Oscars and just go and drive a Bentley and be happy and you know I wasn't there and yeah my growth chart is a bit wanky but like

do you remember like human beings like do you know what I mean does anyone remember that shit like do you remember the idea of like being like just I don't know who you are or like being a bit sort of yeah

I: it is interesting because, by the way Maya, you know every time you say the F word we need to bleep it you kno[w]

M: [sor]ry

I: I'm just you know (h) (h) (h) it's it's just we just need [quick fingers with you around]

M: [I'll just put some]

M: hand sanitizer in my mouth (h) (h) (h)

I: but aa I mean that's an interesting erm I don't know a philosophical point or ideological point in the sense that we do always track success as based on the graph going up

M: yeah

I: sales u[p nu]mbers up,

M: [yes]

I: bigger crowds up

M: yes and to [me]

I: [and] you're saying that up isn't necessarily the graph going up doesn't necessarily mean success

M: ((shaking her head)) naaaa

I: we're so socialized to think that's the way it has to go though

M: yeah

I: I mean if it goes up and down without and we we're told that's bad

M: yeah, yeah music, you expect music to be a personal thing, you know you expect music to be made by people who are musicians who are like in tune with all that stuff so that's like you're asking two different things you know

I: but are you saying that you're completely unaffected by all that stuff I mean, in other words, if this record comes out and you don't get an Oscar nomination nobody ca starts fewer people come to the shows and a lot of people don't by the record that as long as you fe feel good about the music that won't that stuff won't bother you? Is that what you're telling me?

M: well I think anytime you're doing something interesting it's a bit uncomfortable for people, I think anytime you're sort of pushing something forward it's uncomfortable and you know people don't get it and if they don't get it then it's just you know I think it's just that I'm doing something

I: hmh

M: (h) (h) you know what I mean (h) (h) (h) I think eventually they will cause you know good people are often hated at the time when they're around you know and yeah and that's ok

I: I'm alws I remember I remember this in times I've met you before I your I marvel at your strength like do I mean your ability

M: I'm just a little bit ignorant

I: but is that just like talk?

M: (h) (h) (h)

I: or are there moments when you're like in the corner of your bedroom in a fetal position balling I mean do you do yoy or are you always that strong? To be able to say I don't care what you know are people taking cheap shots at me or this or that or I don't [know]

M: [naaa] I just think you have to be like you have to be like prepared going in it's like of course this is like gonna happen like hello welcome to the world this has been like that for people you know for so long like what's happening with me or two me or whatever is like nothing on the scale of who the shi..how unbalanced this shit is on on like a bigger level

I: Do you feel like if people didn't react in in sometimes in a negative way you wouldn't be doing your job and you'd be disappointed in yourself

M: mhm (h) (h) no (h) (h) (h) [alright] sometimes (h) (h) (h)

I: [ok I mean] a part of a part of the intent is to cause a stir

M: no not at all I wish

I: [w w what] was the born free the [video come on with the video]

M: [I wish]   [the only reason] why you think I'm causing a stir is that cause no one else is doing it [like] that

I: [right]

M:'s why I stick out like a sore thumb on somebody whose obviously so wrong (h) (h) (h) and it's like no that's just because there's no one else doing shit it's like that we have to sort of deal with right now

I: but when you put out Born free the video

M: yeah

I: you you don't put that out ndd and without knowing that that's gonna cause a stir and a lot of people are not gonna like it

M: what part of that they didn't like by the way I don't get it

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: like I don['t]

I: [th]at's a good point

I: maybe tha..hmhm

M: cause it was just ketchup and fake blood

I: too gratuitou[s?]

M: [d']you know what I m[ean]

I: [right]

M: that was what blew my mind that in the end of the day that was like the real execution video I had tweeted like two months before hand nobody even like tweeted it back to me going @that is some aweful shit@ or anything like that you know that they were totally down for watching naked dead bodies being shot in the head blind folded and arms tied behind and you know and and just like executed bodies lying around in the field and no one even gave a shit no one even talked [about that]

I: [for the real] thing and yet when you make a video

M: two months later I refilm that with some ginger people with some fake blood imported from China and it's the most horrific thing people have ever seen [and]

I: [you] you think you're a victim of censorship when that was pulled off?

M: yeah of cour[se]

I: [ye]ah

M: but like that's what I'm saying the ownership of the Internet has changed hands you know like internet isn't this amazing free utopia [that we've created]

I: [and yet people can] still find your video you know that too that I mean

M: yeah of cour[se]

I: [any]body creative on the Internet can still find whatever they want right

M: yeah

I: to certain extent I mean [they] haven't

M: [yeah]

I: [it might have changed hands but not]

M: [yeah that's that's] what it's about you know that's why my album is difficult because it's not that shit is not easy anymore like you have to it's tough life it's like you wanna find the truth you're gonna have to sit there and dedicate some time to it you have to like learn to read between the lines to sharpen your skills to tell the human from the machine and you have to be able to to like decode shit like you have to you know I might have to come out with this and never ever have the opportunity from this day onwards to ever say anything that's like

I: hmm

M: straightforward what it is you know cause like every day I s say this stuff and there's another publication another like politician or another journalist or another you know whose gonna try and cut you down because it doesn't go with the status quo being an artist who just sells products like you know buy this and buy that and I I I don't I don't sell things well

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: you know (h) (h)

I: well actually you do you sell a lot of records

M: I don't sell that many records

I: you [don't?]

M: [that's] that's [that's]

I: [the last] record didn't sell a lot of records

M: no!

I: comparatively?

M: so people need to quit saying that's my best record because if that's the case then they would have bought loads so (h) (h) (h)

I: (h) (h) (h)

M: so that's why I forget about this one

I: why are you why are you such a scrap I mean this music aam this song I've played of the top love a lot aa you say I read aloud you say I really love a lot I really love a lot but I fight the ones that fight me and you make a point that you're not Gandhi you know you're not just gonna to take the take a blow and take the high road you're gonna you're gonna punch back its that just in you instinctually or do you aaa or is that aaa a core belief of yours that if somebody fights you you gotta fight back?

silence

I: as opposed to Gandhi, passive resistance

M: well you know I think in the end (silence) I think in the end you know it is difficult for little people to win but there's no reason why they have to sort of take it lying down you know and I think it's everything is really about who writes the history you know and fighting back doesn't actually mean you have to like pick up a gun and go and like blow someone's head off but it just means that you just have to be aware and you have to know that and you know the the it's just what gets written

I: [but]

M: [you know]

I: but when you say little people are you a little person I mean you you're small nd th physically but are you you're a global pop star rock star don't you have a lot of power don't ya feel you know when people look at you and go yo you're you're powerful at this point people you have legions of people listening what you say they'll come to you they pay they'll pay to s to hear what you have to say

M: yeah but it's not of course I'm not the day I just like jump down an be like @hellouu here's my name on a coca cola fucking promotion@ yeah I'll be like that but I do turn I turn down practically everything and that's the difference it's like if you if you you know if you don't compromise or something then you're not you're not gonna get to reach out a lo to a lot of people like the less you say the less you stand for and the less you mean nothing the more successful and more powerful you are

I:hmh

M: you know that's how it works and [I]

I: [y] ou you

M: have a big mouth

I: you feel like you'd have to sell out to actually have power

M: yeah it's true to to actually have access to you know sort of a @million@ people you kind of have to stand for nothing

I: [hmh]

M: [you know]

M: and cause that's how it [wor] ks

I: [just] arguably the saddest thing I've ever heard

M: hello welcome to the music industry

I: (h) (h) [(h)]

M: [you know]

M: when Justin Bieber starts sayin' some of this shit you know then I come back on your show

I: I don't [know]

M: [and] we'll do a joint interview (h) (h) (h)

I: you know I think Neil Young has you know he can he he has a powerful voice you know and he plays (xx) shows and that's the kind of a guy who still [has his integrity]

M: [yeah yeah but] that's what I'm talking about is musicians now like you know you have to take take like all the people who came up in the last five years

I: right

M: and [that's]

I: [they] held to a different standard than some[one like Neil]

M: [yeah because] that's what I'm talking about Neil still remembers that time when that used to be like that

I: hmh

M: you know and that's the thing like

I: let me ask about how you see yourself as a musician or as an artist because I know you're someone who started as a visual artist in and in film and kind of stumbled into making music and despite this string of great records that so many so many of us love that you put out you you you suggested a few times over the years that you're not really a musician do you still feel that way or are you willing to accept that you're a musician at this point

M: aaa yeah, no I'm not

I: you're not?

M: yeah I'm still not gonna I I think you know I've been really lucky that… I don't know cause I still sort of make all the art work and do all that stuff you know at the same time so I feel like I haven't quite let it go and sort of taken to one medium you know but I think that's gonna be like more and more important to me in the future you know

I: Ikh I kind of don't believe you, if you write these songs and you make and you create the music kh h hh how can you how can you not self-identify on some levels of musicians?

M: I don't know what musician is these days

I:hmm

M: I just don't know yeah I feel like I'm I don't know do I need to have be making like club hits you know for for kids and deny everything else and you know I'm not I'm not really sure what

I: it's interesting to listen to you I'm not gonna say you're a negative person but you you you definitely are ammm mtsa maybe you're realistic? maybe you're a cynical? .. about the world?

M: [naaa] I'm just

I: [what]

M: I'm just optimistic

I: you're optimistic?

M: yes because I think now you can make work that you know music goes with like on this tour I'm gonna buy a dotcom site for every day I do in every single city and just put up whatever I have made on my laptop that sat around like that

I: hmh

M: that's the problem that I've had with this album is that I never saw this record like this it was really three dee you know I've built like special @web like 3D moving pages@ you can like enter and go into it and explore it with iTunes but ITunes hasn't built a format that supports what I've built you know and they'll have it in three years' time and I'm sure you know Katy Perry is going to be the first person to who launches it

I: (h) (h)

M: but when I built it they weren't ready for it you know and there's so much shit that I did around this record that I there was no way for the music industry to support the level of thought I put into it and the level of creative thinking I put into it on all level you know that every every sound had an image every like you know every image had a story and every song had a tidi di di daa it was just like you know I felt like I tried to build an all-encompassing sort of a reflection of what I was going through and in the end I got you know squashed into this narrow sort of music industry pipeline of how to put your work out and that's not me that's just how the internet hasn't caught up to the amount of creativity in the presentation that could exist

I: hmh

M: five years ago artists on the internet were way more experimental and way more progressive and how they like presented stuff on the internet and now even if you look at the most creative human being on the planet and look at their web site it's still exactly the same as everybody else's header at the tops bunch of shit on this side and there's a picture and a blog and tada da daa and eventually we all get told to sort of squash it into this this mold that fits the the the you know system that's already

M: [in place]

I: [but aren't] you an example of defying that I mean how in control of your career do you feel?

M: yeah, I'm in charge but that's the thing I have to like bring the people around to it and its like there are certain things I do people don't you know people are just like huh?

I:hmh

M: you know and it's like

M: that's the that's the battle like if I I shot by own you know photos with my artist that I've signed to my label called mmm Jaime Martinez and he only takes 3D photographs and I was like I just want all my press photos to be 3D because people are only gonna see it on the internet you know and I didn't want all the you know money from the record industry for press promos to be spent on hiring a really good photographer they just needed to go and pitch these cheap photos we'd made but they looked ten times better on the internet but can we go with this but even the blogs all of the blogs you know they're just like no we wanna run with the 2D flat image and we don't have to you know the the the the tool can support like like more than that you know so even if I try

it's not it's not it's not there yet and I don't have that much power to change the fucking like the whole look of the internet but I wish that was my job

I: hmh

M: (h) (h) I would like that very much but you know I think yeah

I: let me come back to what people say you know and back to this I mean we don't have to talk about cheap shots in general, Maya, you get so much attention, like, censorship or not, you've had media exposure all over the world magazine covers, profiles I mean even just doing research for this interview it's astounding how much has been written about you a your profile by the New York magazine even before your first album came out in United States do you like that attention?

M: ammm, I think you know if it kind of goes and creates discussion it is good because ideally that's what it is all about ammm but yeah it depends you know it's like I don't I I I don't mind having the extreme of you know lovers and haters as long as it creates some sort of dialogue you know if it makes people think then it's good

I: do you like being famous?

M: aaa everyone always says I'm really bad at it (h) (h) (h)

I: (h) (h)

M: I mean even the people who work for me like you're so shit at this (h) (h) but ammm

I: at what part of it? You know like meeting fans or rmm I don't know wh what part of it you're lousy at?

M: well I think it's just you know if you're like an artist and stuff it's so it's about th the process you know you're making something above the line which is really addictive and stuff and when people get it they wanna talk about it 'n it's cool but amm yeah sometimes when you become like the thing that's really annoying and that's what I think fame is like fame is when you yourself become the art and not your art and that's like yeah that's a bit difficult cause if you're not really driven by it then it's difficult for you to like cope you know

I: when you're the happiest?

M: when I'm making stuff I think yeah I think that's it's always been like that ever since I was a kid you know

I: why do this stuff at all then? Why not just make stuff and forget about the

M: yea what and be a hippie?

I: well (h) (h)

M: (h) (h) and [just like live on a farm, do some paintings and]

I:				[first of all maybe there's nothing wrong with that]

I: but no you know make stuff and don't do the touring don't do the radio and tv visits or don't do all the things that you feel compro[mising]

M:					[well I] think kids need it more than fucking ever now you know I I do feel that and you're gonna be like "God you're so cynical" but I I think it's just kids do need it now you know I could do it as long as I can do it you know yeah

I: Before I let you go, let me ask about amm Sri Lanka o o one thing you've done with your fame is draw attention to the Tamil people and of course, Canada is home today to the largest Tamil population in the world that's outside Sri Lanka so the civil war that effectively ended there last year a lot of Canadians have paid attention to it what kind of influence do you feel like your art your outspokenness has had inside Sri Lanka?

M: well I have no idea because the last thing I read was on the government website and it said that if I ever came to Sri Lanka there's a grave waiting for me but in terms of like kids outside you know I just wanna say that they have to like get they have to get on on on the Internet or they have to find ways to educate themselves where they can actually be really like constructive and its not like you know like what I've learned from watching how the whole thing went down because I was you know most of the stuff I knew about it was also from the same news outlets as everybody else you know and just from seeing even like the BBC being threatened by the government and like big sort of editors being killed and stuff like that who oppose the war and just you know even what's happening with the UN now and stuff like that in Sri Lanka like it's just kind of interesting to see th the Tamil people just didn't understand what was going on like you know

I: hmm

M: there was no way to fight back the idea that the government had already put it into this system that all Tamils equals terrorists you know and if you take the incident with the boat people you know that's what's happening like it's easy to even call a little baby you know a potential threat to the country or potential you know a a terrorist or something and when we know in the West it's gonna be it's just like ludicrous you know and I think I think for for it for that sort of ideology to penetrate so hard into even like everyday person's like psyche that all these people are bad and then you just like wash your hands

I: hmm

M: off them and let them live on the boat for a year or whatever or put them in de detention centers and stuff it's like that's how much they've achieved you know that sort of like propaganda and yeah I just think the only way you can sort of get Tamil people's voices heard is for them to like start talking and not live in fear and just actually just you know

I: home base for you is now in Los Angeles you and your fiancé and your son 18 months old now, your son? is it more difficult to feel connected to Sri Lanka while living comfortably in L.A.

M: errmmm well I haven't been in L.A. since I got my visa and ermm like March or something like that but yeah I mean you know or maybe it's just sort of I've been touring so I connect with people wherever I go you know there was a journalist in Norway who was really interesting and ermm she was talking to me about how dangerous it is for for all the journalists still in Sri Lanka and how like so many of them have been hiding and stuff like that but she's yeah it was really great to meet someone like that you know cause like the the government basically benefit from that perception of you know the tigers still existing or [they're still like]

I: [she's Sri Lanka]n journalist?

M: no she's Norwegian

I: she's Norwegian

M: but you know even the Norwegians got called terrorists for trying like to help and stuff and some of them got killed and yeah I just felt like it's just you know it it it's interesting to see people around the world and like go to the shows and connect with them and he hear stuff from their own mouth because I feel like even in the Internet there's not necessary a place to go anymore where people can exchange these stories and stuff because you can still be tracked down and killed you know

I: what about the btt wha what about the United States in general I mean given that you have a home base there you you've had a complicated relationship with that country I mean are you comfortable in United States, living in the United States?

M: yeah I think yeah I think it's funny how after Born Free video or anything I talk about in my work when you're in America talking about it there's like a general assumption that I'm talking about America and the American government and all things to do with America but I'm not you know what I mean and it's kind of weird it's just that's just like the conclusion they jump to cause everything's is about them and it's kind of hahah

I: the hubris of the dominant country and the [ideology]

M: [yeah] so sometimes I think they understand me wrong but there's a lot of people in America who are also very great (h) (h)

I: do you think you'll always feel like a refugee no matter [where] you are

M: [yeah]

I: hmm

M: yeaahh

I: I mentioned your son, what has he meant for you, what have you learned from him?

M: ehhmm hmmm there's just some things I have to keep to myself yeah that's it

I: maybe that's what you've learned from him?

M: mhhm

I: it was really nice to have you here

M: yes

I: thanks for taking all the time and being so candid

M: thank youu for having [me]

I: [not] that I expected anything different from (h) (h)

M: yeah (h) (h)

I: than candor

I: an best of luck with this record and and beyond and we'll see you back here hopefully

M: thank you

I: that is M.I.A and the new record is called MAYA it's out now and M.I.A has been here with me live in studio Q