



## DEVELOPING THE VANISHING MEDIATOR AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYNTHESIS AND APPLICATION

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### Abstract

The concept of the vanishing mediator is basically a theory concentrating on a mediation that ceases when its task is complete. However fundamental its function is, it still has nuances that are, when juxtaposed altogether, quite differing. What I intend to do in this paper is to develop the concept to be utilized as a theoretical framework for further researches. To do that, I will: 1) succinctly clarify theory both in its essence and its being a concept through symbolic logic; 2) review related literature and tabulate the recently cited related works on the vanishing mediator; 3) frame a structure or methodology and discuss its nuances based on the common references strategically extracted; 4) attempt to develop a refined version of it and its process through synthesis; and later, 5) present areas or topics in some selected disciplines where the concept can be applied as conclusion.

**Keywords:** Vanishing Mediator; Theoretical Framework Development; Synthesis; Application.

### 1. PRELIMINARIES: INTRODUCING THE ESSENCE OF A CONCEPT

What is the concept of the vanishing mediator and how can it be developed to be applied as a theoretical framework in research? A preliminary point has to be made regarding the vocabulary of science. First, there is a hypothesis, a proposition made on the basis of reasoning. The hypothesis is the basis of the investigation. When the hypothesis is confirmed, it is elevated into a theory. Theory in this sense or in scientific advances is not merely hypothetical but is already a supported claim. When the theory is universally accepted, it is now called a law. Herein lies the differential analysis: Cohen (2014), however, claims that there is inconsistency even in the attempt of trying to systematize scientific language. He notes that the discovery of Newton is called the *law* of gravitation but the improvisation that Einstein made of it is only called '*theory* of relativity.' Cohen concludes this point by saying that the general propositions of science are 'essentially' hypotheses, which are never absolutely certain. And the validity of this claim can be proven by a simple hypothetical syllogism:

$$\begin{array}{r} H \supset T \\ T \supset L \\ \hline H \supset L \end{array}$$

The above syllogism is derived from a symbolic form, given that H stands for Hypothesis, T for Theory, L for Law, and  $\supset$  'horseshoe' as the symbol for conditional statements or material implication. If the hypothesis is confirmed, implying that H is already a simplified value (from  $H \bullet C$  to H using simplification where C is confirmation in conjunction 'dot' with H), thereby presented as an antecedent of a conditional, what follows is T as the consequent of the confirmation. If T is again confirmed, what follows is L. The conclusion is that the hypothesis symbol H is here also an implicans or protasis antecedent L as law. What this suggests is that H is the very essence that founds scientific vocabulary, whether it is by Theory ( $H \supset T$ ) or Law ( $H \supset L$ ).

At this juncture, one can already notice that T as theory itself vanishes, the middle term that mediates the premises to the conclusion. After it has served its purpose, it vanishes. Isn't this the basic function of the concept of vanishing mediator? The act of vanishing is characteristic of theory, that is, as the hypothetical element that shrouds the validity of an argument, and extensively, of a research project.

The other preliminary point that conjoins with this idea is the presentation of the term 'concept' with theory. Keil (1989) proposes that 'most concepts are partial theories themselves in that they embody

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explanations of the relations between their constituents, of their origins, and of their relations to other clusters of features.' Here, concepts are not part of a terminological process that is subsumed and equally utilized *within the framing of theories*. If pushed towards the end, Keil's proposal makes the direct equation: concepts in themselves *are theories*.

Concepts as well can very much be transposed into models, which are a characterizing feature of theories. What the preliminary points are deriving at is that first, the 'concept' of the vanishing mediator acquires also a theoretical standpoint, and second, by nature, it is subjected to the hypothetical essence of theory. In this study, therefore, the concept of the vanishing mediator is fundamentally established as a theory so that it will be detached as a variable from a wider theoretical framework while retaining its essential proposition as a hypothesis. The pilot forwarding of this essence pivots the cause of why there are nuances for the concept or the theory in this regard.

## 2. STRUCTURING THE FRAMEWORK OR REVIEWING RELATED LITERATURE

The structure of the framework can be well-founded even for a single theory, but only if the theory already is completely acknowledged to have emerged after reviewing thoroughly the literature of the study (cf. Susan, 2002; Tavallaei & Mansor, 2010; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017; Reyes, 2017; Trochim, 2006; Weick, 2014). In fact, Reyes (2017) claims that the theoretical framework is basically the review of the literature, the structure by which a hard look at the sources and related studies can be framed upon. As the backbone of the study, it is necessary to explore the usages of the concept.

The vanishing mediator functions as a concept between two phases, after which it disappears the moment the task is done. However, there are many nuances that render this function in differential variances. Manners (2006) bases his idea of Etienne Balibar's Notion of Europe as a 'vanishing mediator' where the task of translating languages is ascribed to the intellectuals of Europe. A year after, the same reference is used with a co-author (Diez & Manners, 2007). March (2011), in reference to Balibar's concept of vanishing mediator and Frederic Jameson's, applies the concept not on a *metaxy* or a state of in-between but on a process where the very unfolding of law *is* a vanishing mediator. He situates his application in three stages or moments, that is, classical legal theory as (1) mandate for political moderation, (2) mandate for legal change, (3) multiplying law's purposes. After classical legal theory does its task, it vanishes towards a post-legal theoretical consequent. In de Vries (2002), the cacique (political boss) serves as a vanishing mediator who 'unveils' and 'masks' the absence of a center while standing as a corrupt producer of a 'particular mode of hegemony' through enjoyment and image of excessive power. It is a historical figure whose gap is able to create something.

What is noticeable here is that studies on the concept are founded with references. For Cyoro (2012), Žižek's account of the concept of the vanishing mediator is vital in assessing turbo-folk as making possible the apolitical transnational contemporary pop through its nationalist 'excess' and vanishes when the 'new' Serbia attempts to purge nationalist elements. In another study, Shanahan (2008) claims that Cavendish is a vanishing mediator in the development of experimental science when after she contributed to the conceptual formation of the new science in the seventeenth century by imagining highly forensic spaces or examination of rival hypotheses and by focusing on the inherent theatricality of empirical experimentation, she vanishes as the New Royal Society disavowed and rendered her work invisible. Gigante (1998) also uses Žižek's concept of the vanishing mediator but on different direction, that is, Žižek himself is a vanishing mediator who stands in-between various theoretical points of view (e.g. philosophy, politics, psychoanalysis, aesthetics, film studies, to name a few) but vanishes when he assumes no fundamental position or a 'hybridized critical identity', making it impossible to pin him down. Perhaps the status of acquiring no position or not being in a position but merely represents a position proves as another vantage point, so that for Hutchings (2013) the gypsy is a vanishing mediator serving as proxy for ethnocultural difference and negotiating between cultural and racial aspects of ethnicity, however operating only on a liminal status.

From here, there are then modifications and not just direct references from the sources of the concept. Arditi (2014) studies that insurgencies are vanishing mediators but the concept is a modified version of Jameson's take. Charnes (2000) also anchors the theory in reference to Žižek while taking note also that the concept is modifying Jameson as well. Lehmann and Reynolds (2006) are adapting Frederic Jameson's but are broadening it to Žižek's understanding of vanishing mediators as 'certain kinds of dialectical, intermediary structures, socio-political entities...institutions that precondition their own transubstantiation thereby allowing new societal structures to manifest themselves.' The political aspect of the concept is telling as well as enriching from previous analyses. Dean (2013) who wrote the book *Žižek's Politics* (Dean, 2006) makes the analysis that the anarchist moment was a vanishing mediator. Spande (2010)



also bases his analysis from Žižek in saying that film music demonstrates characteristics of a *vanishing mediator* as a spectacle that disappears necessarily from the field of its own effects. The background music that goes on in every film is a ‘contingency through which rides a necessity.’ However, ‘for the necessity to flourish as such, the original contingency must necessarily vanish.’ In the same vein, Gunkel (2007) in his article *Blind Faith: Baudrillard, Fidelity, and Recorded Sound* claims that ‘the best copy would be one that eludes detection as such – a vanishing mediator...’ pointing to the vanishing act when ‘the technique of mediation is not detectable.’ What is unique about Gunkel’s resemblance is that his reference is not from Žižek but from Jonathan Sterne (2005).

There are recent renderings of the concept, extending even to other disciplines such as literature and theology. In Gottlieb (2017), the White Lady in Walter Scott’s *The Monastery* is a vanishing mediator, clarified with the help from Žižek, whose structural function is an agent of historical change. Anchoring in the co-authored book of Žižek and Milbank, Rayman (2017) echoes Christ as ‘model for dealing with paradox and difference through the vanishing mediator.’ In order to structure the frame by which the theory can be deduced, the following is a roster of related works strategically examined, sifted, and arranged to locate the underlying source or reference utilized by the recent works who applied the vanishing mediator.

Table 1: Studies that anchor on the Vanishing Mediator as Theory and their References

Author	Title	Year	Google Scholar Citations	Vanishing Mediator Reference
Arditi	Insurgencies Don’t Have a Plan - They Are the Plan	2014	55	Jameson and Žižek
Dean	Occupy Wall Street: after the anarchist moment	2013	39	Jameson
Cvoro	Remember the Nineties? Turbo-Folk as the Vanishing Mediator of Nationalism	2012	5	Žižek
March	Law as Vanishing Mediator in the theological ethics of Tariq Ramadan	2011	13	Balibar and Jameson
Spande	The Three Regimes: A Theory of Film Music	2010	9	Žižek
Diez	Reflecting on normative power Europe	2007	162	Balibar
Lehmann and Reynolds	Awakening the Werewolf Within: Self-help, Vanishing Mediation, and Transversality in <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	2006	4	Jameson and Žižek
Manners	The European Union as a Normative Power: A Response to Thomas Diez	2006	44	Balibar
De Vries	Vanishing Mediators: Enjoyment as Political Factor in Western Mexico	2002	50	Jameson and Žižek
Charnes	We were never early modern	2000	10	Jameson and Žižek
Gigante	Toward a Notion of Critical Self-Creation: Slavoj Žižek and the “Vortex of Madness”	1998	28	Žižek

The crucial factors in the strategic selection of the articles are the citation and reference. For the recurring nuance of the vanishing mediator, the names Jameson, Žižek, and Balibar are frequently applied with 171, 133, and 219 citations respectively. The citation count albeit basing only from Google Scholar (as of December 2018) is important in this regard, including the date of publication, because it means that the vanishing mediator is a valid theory that crosses borders among academic disciplines and recent researches. The next step is to frame a method by which the structure can be managed.

### 3. FRAMING THE STRUCTURE OR METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

In framing the structure, this study consults works whose methods deal with introducing or developing a theoretical framework. Shafidan (2011) presents a new theoretical framework which attempts to ground language in cultural conceptualizations and cultural cognition. He claims that ‘identifying conceptualizations operating at the cultural level hinges upon extending the unit of analysis to more than one individual and more than one instance of discourse.’ The fundamental step therefrom is to ground a framework that although analyzes a particular locus of study, flees from a singular or particular scope. This goes with the idea of Malterud (2001) that the reference for theory can be referred as ‘the analyst’s reading glasses composing of theories, models, and notions applied for interpretation of the material and for understanding a specific location.’

In Nelson and Narens (1990), the gravity of differentiability significantly contributes to the validity of the framework. They in a way affirm the reviewing of related and cited studies made above to detect

nuances that increase validity. From there, the frame indicates where to go to resources (Malterud, 2001). Puntel (2008) stages a four-way philosophical method. First, he identifies the structures and construction in forming theories. Second, he includes how theories are constituted. Third, he examines theory systematization. And lastly, he evaluates through the adequacy of the theory in its truth status the comprehensiveness of the system or network (See Figure 1.)

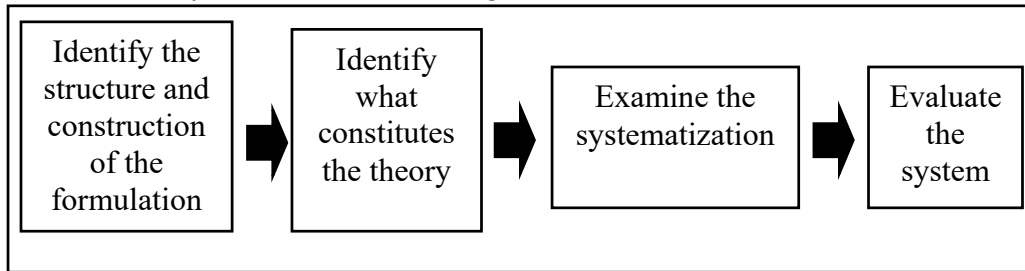


Figure 1. Puntel's 4-step philosophical method in the foundation of theories

What Puntel does is to identify, examine, and evaluate the construction of a system from which the theory is based (systematization) and applied (adequacy). An example of this evaluation is the triangulation of self-reports, implicit measures, and situational or dispositional moderators (Hofmann, et.al, 2014). Lugg (2006) adds by making a caution to make the framework understandable and to carefully sift and sort considerations. He discusses that theory can aid to 'reconstruct a broken mirror' that once reflected a given reality or sets of realities in 'helping sort out which fragments are likely to fit together, sometimes in novel and unanticipated ways.' Sorting out and reflecting the rules of fitting together does not necessarily mean copying univocally but it can also be done by analogy 'by which the interpretation of an analogy is derived from the meanings of its parts (Gentner, 1983).'

Considering the guidelines for a method above, which so far are: 1) to make the framework broad if not entirely inclusive or universal, 2) to welcome nuances, 3) and to identify, examine, and evaluate the comprehensive systematization of the theory, the concrete manner of doing them can be deduced through a method of synthesis. The study of Muis, et. al, (2006) develops a theoretical framework by synthesizing the critically examined 19 empirical studies. It provides an overview of nuances from philosophical perspectives, examples based on a 'synthesized definition', presents a framework, and concludes or ends with implications on education. In another account, the framework developing of Riff-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) presents 4 models and concludes with implications for policy, practice, and research. If there is a crucial lesson in the development of a theoretical framework, it is that the practice of synthesis and its applicability adjudge any paper that aims to do precisely what a developer of frameworks does. The method of the study, therefore, can be framed by a process (Figure 2.)

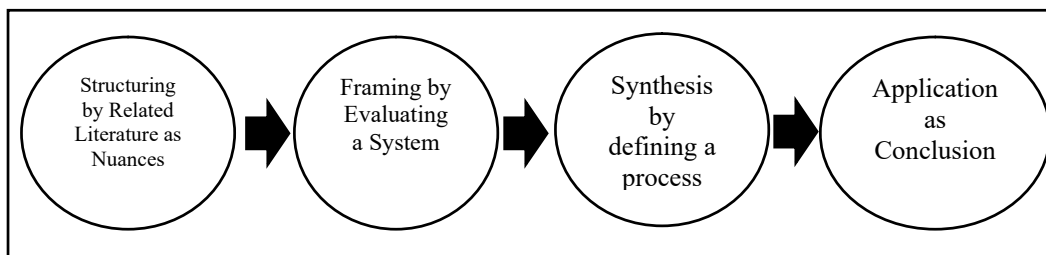


Figure 2. Methodology of the Study

The structure of this study grounds itself in examining the reviewed literature. The paper broadened the frame by reviewing studies in various disciplines, thereby welcoming the nuances that govern the concept of the vanishing mediator. It is found out that, outside the modifications, there is a system of referencing happening in applying the concept. The names of Balibar, Jameson, and Žižek appear. Delving further on the examination and evaluation of the system of reference, this study finds that Balibar and Žižek are also applying Jameson. In going into Jameson's use of the concept, Max Weber emerges as the source.

From there, the study again goes through the whole process of identifying, sifting, and evaluating a nuance of the theory which is cited by scholars and the result is the work of Boer. Boer introduces vanishing mediators in the 88<sup>th</sup> volume of *Semeia*, a journal of biblical criticism, and the work was cited as well. He does





it by adopting neither Jameson's nor Balibar's but of Weber himself. Below is the additional tabulated form of the references of the vanishing mediator along with their sources.

Table 2: The sources of most studies using the vanishing mediator and their further reference

Author	Title	Year	Google Scholar Citations	Vanishing Mediator Reference
Balibar	Europe: Vanishing Mediator	2003	60	Jameson
Boer	Introduction: Vanishing Mediators?	2001	13	Weber
Žižek	For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor	1991	184	Jameson
Jameson	The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber	1973	117	Weber

With these results from the system of referencing, the cited sources as nuances directly tied to the basic function of the vanishing mediator can already be synthesized. What follows is a discussion of the concept from the sources themselves.

#### 4. THE VANISHING MEDIATORS OF JAMESON, ŽIŽEK, BALIBAR, AND BOER

##### 4.1. Structuring and Vanishing in Jameson

Jameson (1973) coins the vanishing mediator to explain the narrative structure of Max Weber. He further defines the vanishing mediator as 'a catalytic agent that permits an exchange of energies between two otherwise mutually exclusive terms (Jameson, 1988).' In Weber (1992), Jameson finds that the values of capitalism are formed from Calvinism's mediation out of medieval monasticism. Calvinism's doctrines of 'predestination, election, dependence on God's grace,' form part of ascetic practice in monastic living. The practice of excelling, producing profit, and self-sacrificing to improve oneself backed by the capitalistic framework, reflects the same ascetic practice of monastic life, this time transported to secular life. The line of structuring goes: from the institutions of monasticism to secular asceticism, what lies in between is the Protestant Ethic of Calvinism that fuels the self-sacrificing drive for salvation, which in the case of capitalism is a success (drive for salvation=drive for success). Life after the structuring of Calvinism has not been reduced in terms of religiosity but paradoxically, the whole idea of life itself becomes structured by the same ascetic religious practice. Jameson completes his analysis when Calvinism achieves its vanishing point after it 'has accomplished the task of allowing rationalization of innerworldly life to take place' since 'it has no further reason for being and disappears from the historical scene (Jameson, 1988).'

##### 4.2. Unique Emergence in Žižek

The vanishing mediator for Žižek 'acts as a conductor through which different stages of history unfold and after which the 'conductor-epoch-bridge' disappears (Žižek & Milbank, 2009; cf. Appelbaum, 2001).' Inevitably oriented with Marxist elements, he expounds this as a subversion that creates radical potentials where power structures will soon face decay in emancipations. In this sense, Hegel for Žižek is a 'vanishing mediator' between 'traditional metaphysics and postmetaphysical nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought.' Žižek emphasizes that without Hegel, postmetaphysical thought would not have emerged. In *The Monstrosity of Christ*, Žižek pressed the concept to the question of the incarnation debated by postmodern philosophers today in Christianity. If God is triune and the son is incarnated in the immanent plane (to use Deleuze's term) here on earth, what happens to God transcendent in heaven - is heaven empty? Žižek reiterates Hegel's premise that 'what dies on the Cross is not only God's earthly representative-incarnation but the God of beyond itself: Christ is the vanishing mediator between the substantial transcendent God-in-itself and God qua virtual spiritual community (Žižek, 2009).' Milbank (2009), however, counters that Žižek still is trapped in the auspices of paradox: when Žižek identified the vanishing mediator as the atheistic Christ as God, the contingency happening in his utterance on the cross 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' there is a mediating of mediation when specifically the mediator is identified as Christ - he does not vanish. Žižek sees the transition of Christ vanishing as the moment of the new egalitarian community as the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, but for Milbank, the Spirit is not a synthesis in a Hegelian sense of the dialectical thesis-antithesis-synthesis, but an affirmation of the two early phases - Father and Son. The paradoxical logic then is: 'the third is a *remaining and not a vanishing mediator* (Milbank, 2009).' Žižek counters that the mediating position is 'unique' that something emerges out of it. When Hegel, for instance, happened in philosophy, his 'sudden eclipse' gave rise to 'big anti-metaphysicians like Schopenhauer, Marx, and Kierkegaard (Žižek, 2009).'



### 4.3. Balibar and the Task of Translation

For Balibar, the vanishing mediator 'is the figure (admittedly presented in speculative terms) of a *transitory* institution, force, community, or spiritual formation that creates the conditions for a new society and a new civilizational pattern – albeit in the horizon and vocabulary of the past – by rearranging the elements inherited from the very institution that has to be overcome (Balibar, 2003).' Its presence is transitory, but it is necessary. The vital task of the intermediary is that it caters to a new horizon. Even though it disappears from the scene, its critical significance makes for the dissolution and emergence of concepts. Balibar notes that 'without this *vanishing* mediation, no transition from the old to the new society would have been possible (Balibar, 2003; emphasis mine).' He points this task to Europe as a vanishing mediator that functions as 'the interpreter of the world' as it is 'translating languages and cultures in all directions.' Europe's intellectuals after they do their task will 'vanish in their intervention' in reference to Althusser (cf. Balibar, 2003). The European intellectuals are important since only in Europe, 'not even in India and China', can one find the 'necessity to organize to the same degree the political and pedagogical conditions of linguistic exchange (Balibar, 2003).'

### 4.4. Boer and the Vanishing Criticism

For Boer (2001), the Postcolonial critics are vanishing mediators. He claims that postcolonial theory (and consequently, postcolonial criticism) is quickly becoming a comprehensive topic in various fields such as the social sciences, literature, political science, and geography. Postcolonial criticism's intermediation has the facility to offer 'a way for certain voices, particularly those in the former colonial spaces, to throw off the gags and untie the cords that restrained our voices and writing hands (Boer, 2001).' Boer explains the points why he says that postcolonial critics are vanishing mediators:

Firstly, *postcolonial criticism is a distinctly academic activity*, carried out by and large by people who work in tertiary institutions. Secondly, they seek, more than in many other approaches, to *speak for and on behalf of those who lived under colonialism and who continue to live with its legacies*. It is in this respect that they seek to become enablers and media of lost voices, whether human or textual, acting as transitional figures whose task, when complete, disappears from the scene (Boer, 2001).

The important feature of criticism is that when what it asks is already given, the criticism vanishes. In postmodernity where metanarratives are abolished (Lyotard, 1984), small voices can now be heard. The plight of the poor and those in the peripheries of human development are aided to highlight the needs and resources to address their predicament. And there are many other voices that the intermediation of postcolonial criticism unfolds. Boer notes that 'the end of master narratives seemed to both enable and recognize a host of suppressed voices in political theory and action, such as those of gays and lesbians, indigenous people and colonial subjects (Boer, 2001).' After the criticism eventually set the stage for these voices, it now vanishes.

## 5. SYNTHESIS: REFINING THE VANISHING MEDIATOR

By identifying the patterns in the nuances of the four cited sources (Jameson, Žižek, Balibar, and Boer), resemblances and variances can be recognized and juxtaposed. From here, it is essential to arrange for a 'synthesized definition' (cf. Muis, et.al, 2006). The vanishing mediator has a basic model (See figure 3.). In this case, it shall serve as the jumping board of the framework.

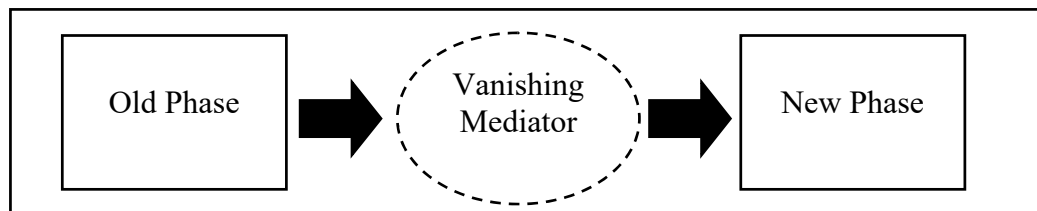


Figure 3. Basic Schema of the Vanishing Mediator

For the definition to be synthesized, the more potent issue here is to provide features of mediating (thesis) and vanishing (anti-thesis). On the standpoint of mediation, Jameson's take is embedded in Weber's analysis, that is, that the mediator has an agency that allows exchange – an agent of intersection between exclusive terms (in his case, religious vs secular practice). More from this agency is that the allowed connection makes room for structural transfer also, a transfer of practice. In Žižek's formula, the mediating



character assumes a 'conductor-epoch-bridge' status that disappears at the point of passage. What is distinctive of Žižek's take is that it does not veer from structural analysis and goes for a more historical position facing radical emancipations. The radicalism or revolutionary character of his mediator allows possibilities for unique emergence: postmetaphysical thought from Hegel's mediation, and a new egalitarian Christian community founded on the Holy Spirit from Christ's mediation. In Balibar, the intermediary position is given to a transitory task of creating conditions, rearranging past elements, and overcoming them into giving way for a new horizon. Translation here is making way for new horizons to be explored. In Boer, mediating means precisely to make the invisible visible. Those lying in the margins are staged to the center for their voices to be heard. Considering their takes, the central tenets for mediation can be expressed in the following propositions:

1. The vanishing mediator has an agency that is active, rather than passive, in permitting exchanges of exclusive terms.
2. The vanishing mediator's position can be historically determined.
  - 2.1. The historical position caters to the emergence of unique concepts.
  - 2.2 The historical position is radical and permits further radical possibilities.
3. The historical agency of mediation rearranges the elements of the past phase.
4. The vanishing mediator stands as an arbiter of neglected areas of the previous phase.

On the standpoint of vanishing, the antithesis in this set-up is expressed in the argument of Bottone (2010). He criticizes Balibar's use of vanishing mediator on Europe as 'nihilistic' and without enough support since it 'destabilizes identity.' Asks Bottone: 'Europe does not come from nothing, so why should it become nothing? Why should Europe vanish (Bottone, 2010)?' Herein lies the falsifying element of the scientific process (cf. Popper, 2002): what is the hindrance that defines the anti-thesis to the equation of mediation in the concept?

The compelling answer here lies in the essential characteristic of the concept: the mediation vanishes because there is no other way or reason for it to exist after its task is done. As Spande (2010) points, 'its status as a vanishing mediator necessitates that it not be considered too deeply or it will stop working.' The concept simply 'becomes submerged and disappears from the effect' (Spande, 2010). Žižek (2010) expounds that the vanishing mediator is 'the founding gesture of differentiation which must sink into invisibility once the difference between the irrational vortex of drives and the universe of *logos* is in place.' Dean (2013) remarks concerning the vanishing mediator that though crucial, 'even necessary', it still couldn't persist. The easiest way for this to proceed then is to wait until the agency expires, that is, when the anti-thesis of vanishing as negation completes its own negation or its own task; hence when it creates its own synthesis.

The double scansion of this process enables us to grasp in a concrete way the worn-out formula of the 'negation of negation': the first 'negation' consists in the slow, underground, invisible change of substantial content which, paradoxically, takes place *in the name of its own form*; then, once the form has lost its substantial right, it falls to pieces by itself – the very form of negation is negated, or, to use the classic Hegelian couple, the change which took place 'in itself' becomes 'for itself' (Žižek, 1991).

This brings us to the synthesizing point of the vanishing mediator. The task for the researcher is not to synthesize the mediator's vanishing of itself. Instead, the synthesis is already done by the concept itself, and the task of the researcher is different for the theoretical framework to work. To make it more concrete, the task of the researcher is to *retroactively reconstruct* the synthesis of the vanishing point to trace the mediation since the vanishing part is 'the structure of an element which, although nowhere actually present and as such inaccessible to our experience, nonetheless has to be *retroactively constructed*, presupposed, if all other elements are to retain their consistency (Žižek 1993; Emphasis mine).' Such task of retroactive reconstruction is doable since the concept's paradox of synthesis (negation of negation) is sustained by a further paradox (vanishing does not necessarily mean total annihilation) or as Dean (2006) clarifies: 'mediators do not just vanish but are displaced by active forces or choices.' The presence of the mediator though is 'vanishing' is still 'a subsumed structural element' since it is 'crucial to the intelligibility of a social logic' of the new phase (Charnes, 2000). For Arditi (2014), a concept will not vanish without a trace. Considering the aspects above, a synthesized definition and a refined process of the theoretical framework is developed.

5. The vanishing mediator is the disappearing mode of intervention whose modality ceases in itself the moment the intervention is complete.
6. The vanishing mediator is already a synthesis of its mediation (thesis) and vanishing (anti-thesis).
7. A further refined synthesized process of using it as a theoretical framework can be followed in a retroactive manner of reconstructing the thesis and anti-thesis. (See Figure 4 below)

Finally, figure 4 below explicates the process of the theoretical framework to be utilized in other researches. In other disciplines, the researcher has to start first by tracing an intervention in a retroactive manner. Second, the researcher has to evaluate the intervention in terms of its function. Third, the mediator has to be identified. And lastly, the researcher has to locate the vanishing point of the mediation.

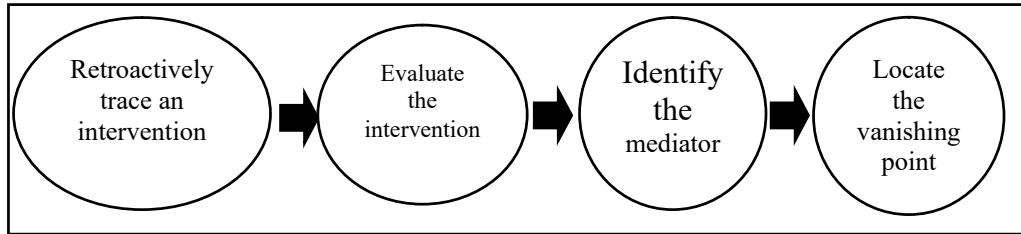


Figure 4. A refined process of the vanishing mediator as a theoretical framework

The refined process in the figure above suggests that the process' location of the vanishing point is the synthesis of the mediator. Moreover, the evaluation phase has a vital step, which is to assess whether or not there is an agency that works and not just a passive condition that appears to take an effect. If this proves position, then one can already start identifying this agency.

#### 6. APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK TO SELECTED AREAS FOR RESEARCH AS CONCLUSION

In applying a theoretical framework, further researches must still follow with the protocol of examining their research problem, the key variables, related literature, and assumptions or propositions, in order to delimit the scope of data (cf. Torraco, 1997; Jacard & Jacob, 2010; Ravitch & Matthew, 2017; Sutton & Staw, 1995). What the application of this theoretical framework critically identifies are some issues of the research so that it can prescribe the framing of questions in addressing such issues. The following may be taken as recommendations but not necessarily in a univocal fashion. A degree of analogy may be applied (cf. Gentner, 1983).

In the *social sciences*, one can analyze the persistent acts of social movements. Researches that explore feminism, LGBT or LGBT+, and Queer Studies, for instance, can hinge their framework on the vanishing mediator as they mediate in something that caters to a new phase. Retroactively speaking, the relentless persistence of these social movements and the effects they produced are indications that something has substantially challenged and changed in the structure. Questions can center on variables such as tolerance, the breakdown of a conservative social ethos, pressure on patriarchy, and so on – which traces an agency opening path for new vicissitudes in the sensitive domains of empowerment, sexuality, and social justice.

In *Anthropology, Postcolonial or International studies*, researches can focus on the oppressed, the philosophical exploration of the 'Other,' as means to project critical analyses on an unjust condition, intervening for the plight of the global poor, the immigrants, the victims of racial or religious prejudice and the vulnerable caught in the auspices of war. *Indigenous studies* can revisit the concept of diaspora and retroactively view it as a vanishing mediator that emancipates new indigenous identities (cf. Kahambing, 2018a).

In *Economic Studies*, researches can frame their questions on Marx or Marxism (Boer, 2001) as a vanishing mediator when his thoughts still resonate with the predicaments of the working class, the changing strategies of capitalism and future reinventions of the tenets of socialism.

In *postmodern studies*, researches may analyze power structures or the effects of institutions to individuals, the modern structure as vanishing mediator, its legacy and eventual downfall that gave rise to postmodern facilities. Studies may center their questions on the ideas of, but not limited to, Nietzsche, Kuhn, Derrida, Althusser, and Foucault (cf. Audi, 1999) as vanishing mediators to analyze contemporary society. This applies strongly to *historical studies* where unsung heroes and agents can be given attention.

In *posthuman studies*, one can account for a particular aspect of the human that already disappeared in the innovative impetus of current technological transhumanist trends. The directions of such studies can also be futuristic in outlook where an essential human characteristic might be bypassed after the posthuman process, including, for instance, the possible disappearance of sex in the advent of human cloning and genome replication (cf. Kahambing, 2018b).





In *Psychology* as well as *Psychoanalysis*, explorations can be framed on Oedipus complex as vanishing mediator, acting as mediation and vanishing at the losing power of paternal authority, its alternative in Electra complex, to analyze personality; or trauma as a mediating experience that activates social inhibitions. Moreover, *Theology* topics can delve on questions of belief as vanishing mediators to explain new age atheism, as well as its relation to the psychological need for divine assurance and how its status is suspiciously dependent to such need.

Lastly, in *educational research*, what accounts for the real learnings of students as they go out of the educational setting? What are the vanishing mediators that account for the students' success, the teachers' professional growth? Or who, in case of persons, such as teachers or administrators, established their legacy in an institution and in what way are they rendered invisible?

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