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A Pragmatic Study of Speech Acts in the Twitter Posts of Four Prominent Music Judges

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of speech acts in social media status updates by four renowned music judges—Simon Cowell, Howie Mandel, Luke Bryan, and Lionel Richie through the lens of Searle’s speech act theory. Status updates, a key feature of social media platforms such as Twitter, serve as tools for self-expression, interaction, and the dissemination of information, including events, promotions, and personal reflections. Adopting a descriptive qualitative design, this research analyzes words, phrases, sentences, expressions, and moods contained in the Twitter posts of the selected public figures, with the primary aim of identifying the types and realizations of speech acts employed. Findings reveal that representative acts constitute a dominant category across the four judges, functioning mainly as reports. Directive acts are also frequently employed, particularly in the form of invitations. Expressive acts are common, with Lionel Richie showing the highest usage, though Howie Mandel, Luke Bryan, and Simon Cowell also rely heavily on them, often in the form of compliments. Commissive acts appear less frequently; Luke Bryan and Simon Cowell each employed one instance, while Lionel Richie used two, typically as promises. Declarative acts, the rarest type, were identified in posts by Richie, Bryan, and Cowell, with Cowell using them most frequently to announce awards and graduations. Notably, Howie Mandel did not employ commissive or declarative acts. Overall, the findings highlight both similarities and distinctions in the communicative styles of these judges. All four demonstrate active engagement through expressive and directive acts, underscoring the role of speech acts in shaping their online presence and interaction with audiences.

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Highlights

- The four music judges employ all five types of illocutionary speech acts—representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative—to convey information, engage followers, and express emotions on Twitter.
- Dominance of Representative, Directive, and Expressive Acts: Representative acts (reporting and describing), directive acts (mainly invitations), and expressive acts (compliments, joy, love, thanks) are the most frequently used, reflecting their roles in information dissemination, audience engagement, and emotional expression.
- Selective Use of Commissive and Declarative Acts: Commissive (promises) and declarative (awards, graduation) acts are used sparingly, indicating strategic deployment for formal commitments and authoritative announcements, highlighting the performative and communicative power of such speech acts online.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Speech Acts; Representative; Directive; Expressive; Com-Commissive; Declarative; Music Judges; Social Media; Twitter

1. Introduction

Language is one of the most fundamental aspects of human existence. It is not merely a tool for exchanging information, but the very medium through which human beings construct meaning, express identity, and build relationships. From early childhood, individuals engage in communication with parents, peers, teachers, and even strangers, using language to navigate social interactions and to shape their lived experiences. Communication takes place in multiple modalities, ranging from face-to-face conversations to technologically mediated exchanges via digital platforms. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any domain of life in which communication, and therefore language, does not play an essential role. Even in dreams, individuals may experience conversations, reflecting the deep entrenchment of language in human cognition and consciousness.

At its core, language does not only describe reality but also performs actions. When people speak, they frequently intend not only to convey information but to do something with their words. This principle lies at the heart of *speech act theory*, first proposed by Austin^[1] and further elaborated by Searle^[2]. Speech acts encompass utterances that perform functions such as requesting, apologizing, inviting, promising, congratulating, or commanding. In this sense, every act of communication involves both *locutionary* meaning (the literal words), *illocutionary* force (the intended action), and *perlocutionary* effect (the response or consequence). For example, the statement “It is cold” may serve as a complaint, a request to close a window, or simply an observation, depend-

ing on the speaker’s intention and the listener’s interpretation.

This dual nature of language—simultaneously descriptive and performative—makes the study of speech acts particularly important in contemporary contexts where communication increasingly occurs in virtual environments. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become dominant arenas for communication, enabling individuals to share thoughts, promote events, and interact with vast audiences. The immediacy and brevity of such platforms, however, also heighten the potential for ambiguity and misinterpretation. Unlike face-to-face communication, online interactions often lack paralinguistic cues such as tone, facial expressions, and gestures, which normally aid in disambiguating meaning. Consequently, the interpretation of speech acts in social media requires careful attention not only to the linguistic content but also to context, audience, and pragmatic functions.

Twitter, in particular, is a compelling site for examining speech acts. With its character-limited posts, now called *tweets*, the platform encourages concise, impactful communication. Celebrities, politicians, and public figures frequently use Twitter to share updates, express opinions, or interact with fans. These utterances often carry illocutionary force beyond their literal meaning: they may invite, persuade, criticize, or commend. Given Twitter’s global reach and its role in shaping public opinion, the speech acts performed on this platform are not merely personal expressions but public acts with potential social and cultural consequences.

Within this environment, the present study focuses on four prominent music judges: Simon Cowell, Howie Man-

del, Luke Bryan, and Lionel Richie. These figures are well-known internationally as judges on *America's Got Talent* and *American Idol*, two of the most influential talent competitions in popular culture. Each judge maintains an active Twitter presence, engaging with millions of followers worldwide. Their tweets extend beyond personal updates to include commentary on competition participants, expressions of support or critique, promotional content, and invitations for audience engagement. Because these figures hold positions of authority and cultural influence, their speech acts carry significant weight. A congratulatory tweet may boost a contestant's public visibility, while a critical remark may shape audience perception. Thus, analyzing the speech acts of these judges provides valuable insight into how public figures use language performatively in digital contexts.

Moreover, these judges were selected because they exemplify different communicative styles. Simon Cowell is known for his direct, often critical remarks; Howie Mandel often adopts a humorous and playful tone; Luke Bryan projects a friendly and approachable persona; while Lionel Richie tends to communicate warmth and encouragement. Examining their Twitter updates through the framework of speech act theory allows us to identify both commonalities and differences in how they engage with followers and how their speech acts are realized in practice.

The central theoretical framework of this study is Searle's^[2] classification of speech acts into five categories:

Representatives, which commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition (e.g., reporting, informing, or asserting).

Directives, which attempt to get the hearer to do something (e.g., inviting, requesting, commanding).

Expressives, which convey psychological states such as gratitude, congratulations, or sympathy.

Commissives, which commit the speaker to future action (e.g., promising, pledging, or vowing).

Declaratives, which bring about change in the external world through the utterance itself (e.g., announcing awards, declaring graduation, or officiating).

Searle's model provides a structured lens for analyzing the tweets of the four judges, enabling the researcher to categorize the illocutionary force of each status update. However, the theory has also faced criticism for its monological emphasis, privileging the speaker's intention while neglecting the listener's interpretation^[3]. In social media contexts, this

limitation is especially salient. Tweets are read by diverse audiences who may interpret them differently depending on cultural background, prior knowledge, or personal expectations. Misunderstandings, offenses, and unintended consequences often arise from these interpretive gaps. For example, a sarcastic comment intended humorously may be perceived as offensive, while an ambiguous statement such as "See you soon" could be misinterpreted as a promise, an invitation, or merely a casual remark.

The importance of investigating speech acts on Twitter, therefore, lies not only in identifying the formal categories of utterances but also in understanding their realizations and potential effects. Prior research has shown that misinterpretation of speech acts in digital communication can lead to confusion, interpersonal conflict, or reputational damage^[4,5]. This study seeks to contribute to this body of knowledge by focusing on the speech acts of influential public figures whose words are widely disseminated and scrutinized.

To illustrate the relevance of speech act analysis, consider some practical examples. When a user writes, "*It's cold,*" the utterance could be understood as a complaint, a request to close the window, or a statement of fact. If the intended meaning is not inferred correctly, the perlocutionary effect may fail: the window remains open, the listener offers a jacket unnecessarily, or no action is taken at all. Similarly, the utterance "*I eat at one o'clock*" could imply that the speaker is unavailable for meetings at that time, intends to arrive late to an event, or simply wishes to inform others about their routine. Misinterpretation of such speech acts can cause unintended scheduling conflicts or frustration. Finally, speech acts may also provoke offense, as in the case of a disparaging remark about a community or city, which can trigger public backlash and social tension. These examples underscore the delicate nature of speech acts and their reliance on shared contextual understanding.

Research Questions

The present study sets out to explore the illocutionary speech acts of Simon Cowell, Howie Mandel, Luke Bryan, and Lionel Richie in their Twitter updates. Specifically, the study aims to answer two research questions:

- 1) Are the five types of speech acts, as proposed by Searle, present in the status updates of the four music judges?
- 2) How are these speech acts realized in their updates?

By addressing these questions, the research not only contributes to the study of pragmatics and digital discourse but also offers insights into the communicative practices of influential cultural figures. It highlights the extent to which speech acts shape public interaction on social media and demonstrates how language continues to function as both a means of expression and a form of social action in the digital age.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. The Nature and Functions of Language

Language has long been a subject of extensive scholarly debate, with definitions and conceptualizations reflecting its complexity and centrality to human life. Sapir^[6] described language as “a wholly human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires through voluntarily produced symbols.” His perspective emphasizes both the symbolic and intentional aspects of language use. In contrast, Trager^[7] framed language as a set of arbitrary spoken symbols that allow members of a community to engage with and transmit their culture, highlighting its social and cultural embeddedness.

From a structuralist perspective, Chomsky^[8] defined language as a finite or infinite set of sentences generated from a finite set of elements. This generative view shifted attention from communication to linguistic competence, focusing on the formal properties of language. Hall^[9] stressed its institutional dimension, defining language as a system of arbitrary oral and auditory symbols habitually employed for human interaction. Meanwhile, Gove^[10] emphasized the physiological process, describing language as meaningful, articulate sounds produced by the vocal organs.

Later conceptualizations broadened this scope. Brown^[11] referred to language as “the most advanced and flexible medium of communication available to humans,” underscoring its adaptability. Atchison^[12] identified language as a systematic arrangement of arbitrary auditory impulses distinguished by features such as creativity, displacement, duality, and cultural transmission. Taken together, these definitions reveal that language is not merely a code for transmitting information but a dynamic, socially situated resource that enables individuals to perform actions, construct relationships, and organize collective life.

2.2. Pragmatics and the Action-Oriented View of Language

Beyond its structural and symbolic dimensions, language is fundamentally performative. Individuals use it to make requests, issue commands, extend apologies, grant forgiveness, schedule appointments, and order goods. These linguistic performances whether mundane acts like ordering a meal or highly institutionalized ones like awarding a Nobel Prize or declaring war are encompassed within speech act theory.

Pragmatics provides the theoretical framework for understanding these functions. Yule^[13] defined pragmatics as “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and their users,” drawing attention to intended meaning, assumptions, goals, and communicative actions. Similarly, Allott^[14] described pragmatics as the study of how speakers can mean more than they literally say and how hearers successfully interpret such meanings. Copesescu^[15] further emphasized that speech act theory is grounded in the principle that language functions as a mode of action, linking meaning and performance within discourse structures.

2.3. The Development of Speech Act Theory

The foundations of speech act theory were laid by Austin^[16]. He proposed that utterances can be understood not only in terms of their propositional content but also in terms of their performative functions. He distinguished three layers of action:

Locutionary acts – the act of producing meaningful utterances.

Illocutionary acts – the communicative force or speaker’s intention behind the utterance.

Perlocutionary acts – the effects that utterances have on listeners.

Building on Austin’s insights, John Searle (1969, 1975) refined the theory, offering a more systematic classification of illocutionary acts. He identified five categories:

Representatives, which describe states of affairs (asserting, concluding, describing).

Directives, which attempt to get the hearer to do something (requesting, ordering, suggesting).

Expressives, which convey the speaker’s attitudes (thanking, apologizing, congratulating).

Commissives, which commit the speaker to future ac-

tions (promising, threatening, offering).

Declarations, which enact changes in institutional or social states through speech (appointing, baptizing, sentencing).

Searle's work^[2] remains influential, although he himself acknowledged limitations in Austin's original taxonomy. His refinements provided researchers with a robust framework for analyzing how language performs actions in diverse contexts.

Speech act theory therefore positions language as more than a vehicle for conveying information: it is an instrument of social action. Speakers employ it to ask questions, greet, invite, suggest, inform, or warn, while listeners must interpret utterances contextually to respond appropriately. This interplay underscores the essential role of pragmatic competence in communication.

2.4. Social Media as a Context for Speech Acts

The emergence of social media has created new environments in which speech acts are enacted and studied. Social media platforms enable individuals and communities to share information, express opinions, and engage in collective interaction through status updates, comments, and multimedia posts. Originally intended for interpersonal communication, platforms such as Twitter have evolved into public arenas where individuals, businesses, celebrities, and political leaders disseminate messages to vast audiences.

Twitter, in particular, is distinctive for its brevity and immediacy. As a microblogging platform, it allows users to publish short messages ("tweets") that can be amplified through likes, retweets, and replies. Status updates, one of its core features, serve as vehicles for user-generated content and are designed to prompt interaction. These features make Twitter an ideal site for examining speech acts, as they condense and foreground the performative dimensions of language in digital spaces.

2.5. Previous Studies on Speech Acts

Although speech act theory has been widely applied in linguistics and discourse studies, prior research has tended to focus on selected subcategories of illocutionary acts rather than their full range. A review of the literature reveals several important contributions:

Expressives in film dialogue: Tanjung^[17] analyzed ex-

pressive acts in film, identifying praise as the most frequent form. She argued that praise functions to uplift self-esteem, foster positive emotions, and motivate better performance.

Directives in short films: Fitrië, Senowarsito, and Nugrahani^[18] studied directive acts in the film *Among Us*. They found that questions were the most common directive strategy, effectively facilitating problem resolution among characters.

Directive variation in spoken discourse: Putri and Skolastika^[19] investigated directive acts such as requesting, suggesting, advising, and demanding. Their study, grounded in Searle's theory, identified interrogative, declarative, and imperative structures as realizations of directive speech.

Speech acts in ethnic narratives: Manik^[20] examined directive speech acts in comic books drawing from Melayu Deli and Batak Toba folklore. The study recorded 28 instances, with suggestions, requests, and orders most frequently observed.

Literary analysis of directives: Fitriyah et al.^[21] analyzed 301 directive acts in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Men*. Questions dominated (41.8%), followed by orders, commands, prohibitions, advice, invitations, and pleas, illustrating the variety of directive strategies in literary dialogue.

Pragmatic analysis of Twitter discourse: Ulrikayanti^[22] explored the #IndonesiaTerserah hashtag, analyzing 30 tweets expressing anger and frustration. The study revealed that illocutionary acts were often cloaked in irony or humor to convey criticism more effectively.

These studies demonstrate the usefulness of Searle's framework but also reveal its underutilization. Most research has examined single categories of illocutionary acts—particularly directives or expressives—often within literary or cinematic contexts. Only a limited number of studies have explored speech acts in digital environments, and those that do typically restrict their focus to narrow illocutionary functions.

2.6. Positioning the Present Study

Against this background, the present study aims to contribute to the field by examining all five categories of Searle's illocutionary speech acts as they appear in Twitter status updates of prominent music judges. Unlike earlier studies that restrict their analysis to specific speech act types or contexts, this research adopts a comprehensive approach. It not only extends speech act analysis into the realm of digital dis-

course but also highlights the pragmatic strategies employed by public figures in engaging diverse audiences.

Such a focus is timely, as social media has become a central platform for shaping public discourse and constructing personal or professional identities. By analyzing representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations within the online communication of well-known personalities, the study seeks to uncover how language is strategically used to perform actions, influence audiences, and maintain social presence in digital spaces.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the use of speech acts in the Twitter status updates of selected music judges. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of language use within natural contexts, emphasizing meanings, interpretations, and communicative functions rather than quantifiable measures. As Cresweel and Creswell^[23] explains, descriptive research is particularly valuable for gathering information about ongoing social and linguistic practices, while Creswell^[24] further asserts that such methods aim to produce detailed, systematic explanations of the object under study. By applying this design, the present study seeks not only to describe but also to interpret the nuances of speech acts as they appear in digital discourse.

The research also employs the documentation method as articulated by Sugiyono^[25], wherein data are obtained from existing texts, records, and media sources. Documentation is especially suitable for analyzing social media communication, as it allows researchers to gather authentic linguistic evidence in the form of written posts and comments without interfering with the communicative process itself.

3.2. Data Sources

The primary data for this study were drawn from Twitter posts made by four internationally recognized music judges: Howie Mandel, Lionel Richie, Luke Bryan, and Simon Cowell. These individuals were selected for several reasons. First, they are highly influential public figures with global recognition, and their Twitter accounts attract substantial audiences.

Second, they represent diverse backgrounds and communication styles, thereby increasing the likelihood of capturing a wide range of speech acts. Finally, their frequent social media activity provides an ample corpus of linguistic data for analysis.

The period of data collection covered January to December 2022, ensuring that the study captured a full year of online communication. This timeframe allowed the researcher to observe both routine patterns and context-specific speech acts, including those linked to significant cultural, professional, or entertainment-related events.

3.3. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the speech act, operationalized as a functional unit of communication realized in a tweet. Following the speech act theory framework^[1,26], speech acts are understood as utterances that perform actions such as asserting, questioning, requesting, or expressing. Each tweet was examined to identify the speech acts it contained, whether explicit (e.g., directives such as “watch tonight’s show”) or implicit (e.g., expressions of evaluation, praise, or criticism).

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process followed a structured and systematic approach:

Compilation of Tweets – All tweets posted by the four judges during the study period were collected and archived. Each tweet was transferred into a single master document to facilitate accessibility and organization. Consolidating the corpus in one location ensured efficiency in data handling and minimized the risk of overlooking relevant entries.

Initial Screening – The researcher reviewed all tweets and identified those containing recognizable speech acts. Non-linguistic posts such as emojis without accompanying text, links with no accompanying commentary, or retweets without added speech were excluded.

Categorization – Relevant tweets were coded into preliminary categories based on their speech act functions. The researcher created separate files for different types of speech acts, allowing for easier sorting and subsequent analysis.

Data Refinement – During the categorization process, the researcher excluded speech acts deemed irrelevant to the study objectives. For example, repetitive greetings or

overly formulaic promotional phrases that did not reveal significant communicative strategies were discarded. This step ensured that the corpus remained analytically manageable and focused.

The resulting data set was therefore curated, comprising only tweets that exemplified meaningful speech act functions.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by the interactive model of qualitative data analysis developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña^[27]. This model involves three cyclical processes: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data Condensation – The researcher systematically selected and condensed the data by focusing on tweets that displayed identifiable speech acts. This involved abstracting the essence of each tweet and discarding extraneous details. For example, a promotional tweet might be condensed into the speech act of “directive,” while a congratulatory message would be condensed into “expressive.”

Data Display – Condensed data were presented in tabular form to enhance clarity. Tables included categories of speech acts, illustrative examples, and their realizations. This step was critical for visualizing patterns, enabling both the researcher and readers to see the distribution of speech act types across the corpus.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification – The researcher drew conclusions by identifying recurring speech act types and analyzing their communicative functions. Verification was achieved through repeated comparison of conclusions with the original data, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the evidence. This iterative process enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.6. Rationale for Subject Selection

The choice of Howie Mandel, Lionel Richie, Luke Bryan, and Simon Cowell was strategic. As music judges on internationally recognized talent shows, they frequently interact with broad audiences through Twitter. Their tweets provide not only personal commentary but also professional judgments, promotional messages, and public engagement strategies. By analyzing their speech acts, the study gains

insight into how influential figures in the entertainment industry use language to build rapport, assert authority, and shape public discourse. Moreover, the inclusion of four distinct personalities ensured diversity in communication styles, enriching the analysis with comparative depth.

Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed:

Credibility – Data were triangulated by repeatedly reviewing the judges’ tweets throughout the study period. This iterative review process reduced the likelihood of misclassification.

Dependability – The analytical procedures followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña’s^[27] well-established framework, providing a clear and systematic path for data handling.

Confirmability – All interpretations were grounded in textual evidence, with representative examples presented in tables to demonstrate transparency.

Transferability – Although the study is context-specific, the findings provide insights applicable to broader research on digital discourse, celebrity communication, and speech act theory in social media contexts.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

The study utilized data from publicly accessible Twitter accounts. Since the judges are public figures who post content for public consumption, the use of their tweets for research does not infringe on personal privacy. Nonetheless, the researcher maintained academic integrity by treating the tweets respectfully as communicative texts rather than personal disclosures.

4. Findings

4.1. Types of Speech Act in Music Judges’ Twitter Updated Status

Table 1 presents the number of the four music judges’ Twitter status updates revealed distinct patterns in the use of speech acts. In Howie Mandel’s posts, three types of speech acts were identified: representative, directive, and expressive. Notably, commissive and declarative acts were absent, indicating a narrower range of communicative functions compared to the other judges.

Table 1. Speech Acts' Types in the Status Updates of the Four Music Judges on Twitter.

No	Types	Howie Mandel	Lionel Richie	Luke Bryan	Simon Cowell	Frequency	Percentage
1	Representative	6	9	7	7	29	16.57
2	Directive	17	18	13	8	56	32
3	Expressive	18	16	23	24	81	46.28
4	Commissive	0	2	1	1	4	2.29
5	Declarative	0	1	1	3	5	2.86
	Total	41	46	45	43	175	100

In contrast, Lionel Richie’s status updates exhibited all five categories of speech acts—representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Among these, directive acts occurred most frequently, while declarative acts appeared least often. This suggests that Richie’s online discourse is highly interactive, seeking to engage audiences and prompt responses, yet less oriented toward authoritative declarations.

Similarly, Luke Bryan’s updates also demonstrated the presence of all five speech act categories. Expressive acts were the most dominant, reflecting a communicative style centered on personal emotion and affective engagement. Commissive and declarative acts were the least frequent, suggesting limited use of commitments or formal pronouncements in his online communication.

Finally, Simon Cowell’s status updates contained all five types of speech acts as well. Expressive acts emerged as the most frequently employed, highlighting his tendency to

communicate evaluations, sentiments, and reactions. Commissive acts, however, were rare, indicating minimal use of promises or commitments in his posts.

Overall, the findings underscore both shared and divergent tendencies among the judges. While expressive acts dominate across multiple accounts, the absence of commissive and declarative acts in Mandel’s discourse sets him apart, whereas Richie, Bryan, and Cowell display broader speech act repertoires.

4.2. Howie Mandel’s Speec Acts

4.2.1. Representative Speech Acts

Table 2 presents the distribution of representative speech acts identified in the dataset. The analysis reveals that among the four subcategories—*believe*, *conclusion*, *description*, and *report*—only *description* and *report* were present, while *believe* and *conclusion* did not occur at all.

Table 2. Howie Mandel’s Representative Speech Acts.

No	Representative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Believe	0	0
2	Conclusion	0	0
3	Description	2	33.3
4	Report	4	66.7
	Total	6	100

Specifically, *report* accounted for the majority of the representative speech acts, with 4 occurrences (66.7%). This indicates that the speaker most frequently used language to convey factual information or recount events. In contrast, *description* was observed only twice (33.3%), suggesting a more limited use of language to characterize or depict situations. The complete absence of *believe* and *conclusion* categories highlights that the speaker did not employ representative acts to express personal convictions or to draw inferences from given information.

Overall, the findings suggest that the representative speech acts in this dataset primarily serve an informational

rather than evaluative or inferential function, emphasizing reporting as the dominant communicative strategy.

4.2.2. Directive Speech Acts

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of directive speech acts identified in the data. The analysis indicates that three categories of directives—*invite*, *question*, and *suggest*—were observed, with varying frequencies.

The most frequently occurring directive act was *invite*, with 12 instances, representing 70.59% of the total. This suggests that the speaker predominantly used language to encourage or prompt the audience to take action, reflecting a

strong interactive and participatory orientation in communication. *Question* occurred 4 times, accounting for 23.53% of directive speech acts, indicating that the speaker occasionally sought information, clarification, or engagement from the audience. The *suggest* category was the least frequent, with only 1 instance (5.88%), showing that recommendations or advice were rarely communicated.

Overall, the table highlights that the directive speech acts were primarily oriented toward encouraging audience participation through invitations, followed by information-seeking through questions, with suggestions playing a minimal role. These findings reveal a clear hierarchy in the speaker’s use of directives, emphasizing the interactive and persuasive functions of communication.

Table 3. Howie Mandel’s Directive Speech Acts.

No	Directive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Invite	12	70.59
2	Question	4	23.53
3	Suggest	1	5.88
	Total	17	100

4.2.3. Expressive Speech Acts

Table 4 presents the distribution of expressive speech acts observed in Howie Mandel’s Twitter status updates. The

data reveal that the expressive acts varied in both type and frequency, highlighting the speaker’s strategies for conveying emotions and attitudes.

Table 4. Howie Mandel’s Expressive Speech Acts.

No	Expressive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Compliment	11	61.1
2	Condolence	1	5.56
3	Congratulation	0	0
4	Greeting	1	5.56
5	Joy	1	5.56
6	Love	2	11.1
7	Sorrow	1	5.56
8	Thank	1	5.56
	Total	18	100

The most frequently occurring expressive act was *compliment*, with 11 instances, accounting for 61.1% of the total. This indicates a strong tendency to use language for positive reinforcement, appreciation, and acknowledgment of others. The second most common category was *love*, which appeared twice (11.1%), suggesting occasional expressions of affection or emotional attachment.

Several expressive acts occurred with minimal frequency, each recorded only once (5.56%), including *condolence*, *greeting*, *joy*, *sorrow*, and *thank*. Interestingly, *congratulation* was entirely absent from the data set, indicating that formal expressions of commendation were not utilized during the observed period.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Howie Mandel predominantly used expressive speech acts to provide positive feedback and compliments, while other emotional expressions, such as sorrow, joy, or gratitude, appeared sporadically.

This pattern underscores the primary function of expressive acts in his online communication as tools for interpersonal engagement and audience rapport.

4.3. Lionel Richie’s Speech Acts

4.3.1. Representative Speech Acts

Table 5 presents the distribution of representative speech acts found in Lionel Richie’s Twitter status updates. The data indicate that the speaker primarily used language to convey information about events or situations, with variation in frequency across different subcategories.

The most frequently occurring representative act was *report*, with 7 instances, accounting for 77.78% of the total. This suggests that Richie predominantly employed language to communicate factual information or provide accounts of occurrences. Both *believe* and *statement of fact* were observed once each, representing 11.11% per category. These

occurrences indicate occasional expressions of personal conviction or factual statements, though they were far less prominent than reporting. Notably, *conclusion* and *description*

were entirely absent, showing that Richie did not use his updates to draw inferences or provide detailed descriptive accounts during the observed period.

Table 5. Lionel Richie’s Representative Speech Acts.

No	Representative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Believe	1	11.11
2	Conclusion	0	0
3	Description	0	0
4	Report	7	77.78
5	Statement of fact	1	11.11
	Total	9	100

Overall, the findings highlight that Lionel Richie’s representative speech acts are primarily oriented toward reporting, emphasizing his role in disseminating information and keeping his audience informed. Less frequent use of belief and factual statements suggests a selective approach to conveying evaluative or reflective content.

4.3.2. Directive Speech Acts

Table 6 presents the distribution of directive speech acts in Lionel Richie’s Twitter status updates. The analysis indicates a clear preference for certain directive functions, reflecting the speaker’s communicative strategies to influence and engage the audience.

The most frequently occurring directive act was *invite*, with 13 instances, accounting for 72.23% of the total. This suggests that Richie predominantly used his status updates to encourage audience participation, whether by attending events, engaging with content, or taking part in interactive activities. Less frequent directive acts included *challenge* and *suggest*, each occurring twice (11.11%), indicating occasional use of language to prompt critical thinking, consideration of alternatives, or behavioral recommendations. *Question* was the least frequent, with only one instance (5.55%), demonstrating minimal use of interrogative strategies to seek information or audience feedback.

Table 6. Lionel Richie’s Directive Speech Acts.

No	Directive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Challenge	2	11.11
2	Invite	13	72.23
3	Question	1	5.55
4	Suggest	2	11.11
	Total	18	100

Overall, the data highlight that Lionel Richie’s directive speech acts are primarily oriented toward engagement and participation, with invitations forming the central communicative tool. The relatively limited use of questions, challenges, and suggestions reflects a selective and targeted approach to directing audience behavior.

4.3.3. Expressive Speech Acts

Table 7 illustrates the distribution of expressive speech acts in Lionel Richie’s Twitter status updates. The analysis shows variation in both type and frequency, reflecting the ways in which Richie communicates emotions and attitudes to his audience.

Table 7. Lionel Richie’s Expressive Speech Acts.

No	Expressive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Compliment	6	37.5
2	Congratulation	3	18.75
3	Greeting	1	6.25
4	Joy	4	25
5	Love	0	0
6	Thank	2	12.5
	Total	16	100

The most frequently occurring expressive act was *compliment*, with 6 instances, accounting for 37.5% of the total. This indicates that Richie often used language to provide positive feedback and acknowledge the accomplishments or qualities of others. *Joy* followed as the second most frequent category, with 4 occurrences (25%), demonstrating the use of status updates to convey feelings of happiness or enthusiasm. *Congratulation* appeared three times (18.75%), reflecting occasional formal acknowledgment of achievements or milestones. *Thank* was recorded twice (12.5%), while *greeting* appeared only once (6.25%). Notably, *love* was absent, indicating that expressions of romantic or deep personal affection were not present in the observed period.

Overall, these findings suggest that Lionel Richie predominantly employs expressive speech acts to positively engage with his audience, particularly through compliments and expressions of joy. The relatively lower frequency of greetings, thanks, and congratulations, along with the absence of love expressions, highlights a selective approach to emotional communication in his social media posts.

4.3.4. Commissive Speech Acts

Table 8 presents the distribution of commissive speech acts in Lionel Richie’s Twitter status updates. The data reveal that *promise* was the sole commissive act identified, with 2 occurrences, representing 100% of the total commissive speech acts.

Table 8. Lionel Richie’s Commissive Speech Acts.

No	Commissive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Promise	2	100
	Total	2	100

This indicates that Richie’s use of commissive acts is highly limited and focused exclusively on committing to future actions or obligations. The absence of other commissive forms, such as *offer* or *threat*, suggests that Richie primarily employs this category of speech acts selectively, using promises as a targeted strategy to convey personal commitment or assurance to his audience.

emphasizing the communicative function of pledging or assuring intended future actions.

4.3.5. Declarative Speech Acts

Table 9 presents the distribution of declarative speech acts in Lionel Richie’s Twitter status updates. The analysis shows that *graduation* was the only declarative act identified, with a single occurrence, representing 100% of the total declarative speech acts.

Table 9. Lionel Richie’s Declarative Speech Acts.

No	Declarative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Graduation	1	100
	Total	1	100

This finding indicates that Richie’s use of declarative speech acts is highly limited and specialized, serving a specific communicative function of formally declaring an event or achievement. The absence of other declarative forms, such as appointments, awards, or official announcements, suggests that such acts are selectively employed to convey significant, formalized information to his audience.

munication.

4.4. Luke Bryan’s Speech Acts

4.4.1. Representative Speech Acts

Table 10 presents the distribution of representative speech acts in Luke Bryan’s Twitter status updates. The analysis indicates that the majority of representative acts were oriented toward reporting events or conveying factual information.

Overall, the data highlight that declarative speech acts in Richie’s status updates are minimal but purposeful, emphasizing the role of formal declarations in his online com-

Table 10. Luke Bryan’s Representative Speech Acts.

No	Representative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Believe	0	0
2	Conclusion	0	0
3	Description	0	0
4	Report	6	85.71
5	Statement of fact	1	14.29
	Total	7	100

The most frequently occurring act was *report*, with 6 instances, accounting for 85.71% of the total. This demonstrates that Bryan predominantly uses his status updates to provide accounts of events or updates to his audience. In contrast, *statement of fact* appeared only once (14.29%), suggesting occasional use of explicit factual statements to inform followers. Notably, *believe*, *conclusion*, and *description* were entirely absent, indicating that Bryan’s posts do not typically express personal convictions, inferential reasoning, or descriptive content.

Overall, the findings suggest that representative speech acts in Luke Bryan’s updates are primarily informational, emphasizing reporting as the dominant strategy for communicating with his audience, while other representative functions are minimally employed.

4.4.2. Directive Speech Acts

Table 11 presents the distribution of directive speech acts in Luke Bryan’s Twitter status updates. The analysis shows that Bryan predominantly uses directive acts to encourage audience engagement and participation.

Table 11. Luke Bryan’s Directive Speech Acts.

No	Directive Speech Act’s	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Challenge	1	7.69
2	Invite	10	76.92
3	Question	0	0
4	Suggest	2	15.39
	Total	13	100

The most frequently occurring directive act was *invite*, with 10 instances, accounting for 76.92% of the total. This suggests that Bryan primarily uses his updates to prompt followers to take action, such as attending events or interacting with content. *Suggest* appeared twice (15.39%), reflecting occasional attempts to provide advice, recommendations, or guidance. *Challenge* occurred only once (7.69%), indicating minimal use of language to provoke thought or test the audience. Notably, *question* was absent, demonstrating that Bryan did not employ interrogative strategies to seek information or feedback from his followers during the observed period.

indicates that Bryan utilizes expressive acts to communicate a wide range of emotions and attitudes, with varying frequencies across different categories.

Overall, the findings indicate that directive speech acts in Luke Bryan’s updates are heavily skewed toward invitations, emphasizing interactive communication, while other directive forms are used sparingly.

The most frequently occurring expressive act was *compliment*, with 8 instances, representing 34.77% of the total. This suggests a predominant use of positive reinforcement and acknowledgment of others in his posts. *Love* and *thank* were the second most common acts, each appearing 4 times (17.39%), indicating expressions of affection, appreciation, and gratitude. Several expressive acts were observed minimally, including *condolence*, *congratulations*, *greeting*, *joy*, *sorrow*, *welcome*, and *wish*, each with one occurrence (approximately 4%–4.55%). Notably, *hope* was absent from the dataset, indicating that Bryan did not explicitly express aspirations or anticipatory feelings in the observed updates.

4.4.3. Expressive Speech Acts

Table 12 presents the distribution of expressive speech acts in Luke Bryan’s Twitter status updates. The analysis

Overall, the findings suggest that Luke Bryan’s expressive speech acts are diverse, with a clear emphasis on compliments, love, and gratitude. This pattern underscores his strategy of engaging followers emotionally while maintaining a predominantly positive and supportive online presence.

Table 12. Luke Bryan’s Expressive Speech Acts.

No	Expressive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Compliment	8	34.77
2	Condolence	1	4.35
3	Congratulations	1	4.35
4	Greeting	1	4.55
5	Hope	0	0
6	Joy	1	4.35
7	Love	4	17.39
8	Sorrow	1	4.35
9	Thank	4	17.39
10	Welcome	1	4.35
11	Wish	1	4.35
	Total	23	100

4.4.4. Commissive Speech Acts

Table 13 presents the distribution of commissive speech acts in Luke Bryan’s Twitter status updates. The

analysis indicates that *promise* was the only commissive act identified, with a single occurrence, representing 100% of the total commissive speech acts.

Table 13. Luke Bryan’s Commissive Speech Acts.

No	Commissive Speech Act’s	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Promise	1	100
	Total	1	100

This finding demonstrates that Bryan’s use of commissive acts is minimal and highly selective, focusing exclusively on committing to future actions. The absence of other commissive forms, such as *offer* or *threat*, suggests that Bryan employs this category sparingly, using promises strategically to convey assurance or intent to act to his audience.

Overall, the data highlight that commissive speech acts

in Bryan’s status updates are limited but purposeful, emphasizing commitment as a targeted communicative function.

4.4.5. Declarative Speech Acts

Table 14 presents the distribution of declarative speech acts in Luke Bryan’s Twitter status updates. The analysis indicates that *graduation* was the only declarative act observed, with a single occurrence, accounting for 100% of the total declarative speech acts.

Table 14. Luke Bryan’s Declarative Speech Acts.

No	Declarative Speech Act’s	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Graduation	1	100
	Total	1	100

This finding suggests that Bryan’s use of declarative acts is highly selective and specialized, serving a formal communicative function to announce or declare significant events. The absence of other declarative forms, such as appointments, awards, or official announcements, indicates that such acts are employed sparingly and purposefully to convey noteworthy information to his audience.

Overall, the data highlight that declarative speech acts in Bryan’s updates are minimal but functionally significant,

emphasizing formal announcements as a key aspect of his online communication strategy.

4.5. Simon Cowell’s Speech Acts

4.5.1. Representative Speech Acts

Table 15 presents the distribution of representative speech acts in Simon Cowell’s Twitter status updates. The data indicate that Cowell primarily used representative acts to convey descriptive information and report events.

Table 15. Simon Cowell’s Representative Speech Acts.

No	Representative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Believe	0	0
2	Conclusion	0	0
3	Description	4	57.14
4	Report	3	42.86
5	Statement of fact	0	0
	Total	7	100

The most frequently occurring representative act was *description*, with 4 instances, accounting for 57.14% of the total. This suggests that Cowell often provides detailed portrayals or explanations of events, activities, or situations in his updates. *Report* followed, with 3 occurrences (42.86%), indicating the use of language to inform followers about factual events or developments. Notably, *believe*, *conclusion*, and *statement of fact* were absent, showing that Cowell did not express personal convictions, inferential reasoning, or purely factual statements during the observed period.

Overall, the findings suggest that Cowell’s representative speech acts are focused on descriptive and reporting functions, emphasizing his role in providing informative and context-rich content to his audience.

4.5.2. Directive Speech Acts

Table 16 presents the distribution of directive speech acts in Simon Cowell’s Twitter status updates. The analysis indicates that Cowell primarily uses directive acts to engage and guide his audience.

Table 16. Simon Cowell’s Directive Speech Acts.

No	Representative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Challenge	0	0
2	Invite	6	75
3	Question	4	50
4	Suggest	2	25
	Total	8	100

The most frequently occurring directive act was *invite*, with 6 instances, accounting for 75% of the total. This suggests that Cowell often encourages followers to participate in events, activities, or discussions. *Question* appeared 4 times (50%), reflecting the use of interrogative strategies to seek information, feedback, or audience interaction. *Suggest* occurred twice (25%), indicating occasional recommendations or guidance provided to followers. Notably, *challenge* was absent, demonstrating that Cowell did not use his updates to provoke critical thinking or test his audience during the observed period.

Overall, the findings suggest that Cowell’s directive speech acts are predominantly aimed at fostering engagement and participation, with invitations being the most prominent strategy. The presence of questions and suggestions shows additional, albeit less frequent, methods to guide or influence the audience.

4.5.3. Expressive Speech Acts

Table 17 presents the distribution of expressive speech acts in Simon Cowell’s Twitter status updates. The analy-

sis reveals that Cowell employs a wide range of expressive acts to communicate emotions and attitudes, with notable variation in frequency.

The most frequently occurring expressive act was *compliment*, with 9 instances, representing 37.5% of the total. This indicates that Cowell often uses positive reinforcement to acknowledge or encourage others. *Congratulations* was the second most frequent act, appearing 4 times (20.82%), reflecting the use of status updates to formally acknowledge achievements or milestones. *Greeting* and *hope* each appeared twice (8.33%), while *condolence*, *hate*, *joy*, *love*, *thank*, and *welcome* were observed once each (4.17%). Notably, *sorrow* and *wish* were absent, indicating that expressions of grief or specific aspirations were not communicated in the observed posts.

Overall, the findings suggest that Cowell’s expressive speech acts are diverse but skewed toward positive interactions, such as compliments and congratulations. These patterns demonstrate a strategic use of expressive language to engage and connect emotionally with his audience while minimizing negative or less frequent emotional expressions.

Table 17. Simon Cowell’s Expressive Speech Acts.

No	Expressive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Compliment	9	37.5
2	Condolence	1	4.17
3	Congratulations	4	20.82
4	Greeting	2	8.33
5	Hate	1	4.17
6	Hope	2	8.33
7	Joy	1	4.17
8	Love	1	4.17
9	Sorrow	0	0
10	Thank	1	4.17
11	Welcome	1	4.17
12	Wish	0	0
	Total	24	100

4.5.4. Commissive Speech Acts

Table 18 presents the distribution of commissive speech acts in Simon Cowell’s Twitter status updates. The

analysis indicates that *promise* was the sole commissive act identified, with a single occurrence, accounting for 100% of the total commissive speech acts.

Table 18. Simon Cowell’s Commissive Speech Acts.

No	Commissive Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Promise	1	100
	Total	1	100

This finding suggests that Cowell’s use of commissive acts is minimal and highly selective, emphasizing commitment to a future action. The absence of other commissive forms, such as *offer* or *threat*, indicates that Cowell employs this category sparingly, using promises strategically to convey assurance or intent to act to his audience.

Overall, the data demonstrate that commissive speech acts in Cowell’s updates are limited but purposeful, highlighting commitment as a targeted communicative function

in his online interactions.

4.5.5. Declarative Speech Acts

Table 19 presents the distribution of declarative speech acts in Simon Cowell’s Twitter status updates. The analysis shows that two types of declarative acts were identified: *award* and *graduation*. *Graduation* was the most frequent, occurring twice (66.7%), while *award* appeared once (33.3%), together comprising the entirety of declarative speech acts observed.

Table 19. Simon Cowell’s Declarative Speech Acts.

No	Declarative Speech Acts	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Award	1	33.3
2	Graduation	2	66.7
	Total	3	100

This indicates that Cowell selectively uses declarative acts to formally announce significant events or achievements. The presence of these acts highlights their role in communicating official or noteworthy information to his audience, emphasizing formality and specificity. The relatively small number of occurrences suggests that declarative speech acts are employed sparingly but carry substantial communicative weight.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that declarative

speech acts in Cowell’s updates are limited in frequency but serve critical functions in conveying formal announcements and milestones to followers.

5. Discussion

The present study examined illocutionary speech acts in the Twitter status updates of four prominent music judges—

Howie Mandel, Lionel Richie, Luke Bryan, and Simon Cowell—through the lens of Searle’s five categories of speech acts: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. The results indicate that these judges employ social media strategically, combining informational, interactive, and expressive functions to engage with their audiences.

Representative speech acts emerged as a dominant feature in all four judges’ updates, primarily through *reporting* and *description*. This aligns with previous findings in online discourse research, which suggest that public figures frequently use social media to disseminate information and construct a narrative of professional and personal activities^[22]. For instance, Lionel Richie and Luke Bryan used representative acts predominantly to report events, while Simon Cowell emphasized descriptions, suggesting slight variation in how each judge frames information for their audience. These findings underscore the critical role of representative acts in establishing credibility, sharing knowledge, and maintaining a presence in digital spaces.

Directive speech acts, particularly *invitations*, were also pervasive, reflecting the judges’ efforts to engage followers in participatory activities, such as attending talent events or responding to posts. The frequency of invitations highlights the persuasive and mobilizing potential of Twitter, functioning as a tool to foster interactive communication between celebrities and followers. Interestingly, Howie Mandel’s directive acts were limited to invitations and questions, demonstrating a more targeted approach, whereas Simon Cowell integrated questions and suggestions, illustrating a multi-faceted engagement strategy. These patterns reinforce Allot’s^[14] assertion that pragmatics enables speakers to tailor messages to achieve intended responses from the audience.

Expressive speech acts were employed extensively across all participants, particularly through *compliments*, *joy*, *love*, and *thanks*. This reflects the judges’ intent to create positive relational dynamics and emotional engagement with their followers. Consistent with Yule’s^[13] perspective on pragmatics, the expressive function is pivotal in conveying attitudes, emotions, and social solidarity. Lionel Richie and Luke Bryan’s frequent use of compliments and expressions of joy suggests a deliberate strategy to cultivate rapport and maintain audience loyalty. The relatively lower occurrence

of negative expressions, such as *hate* or *sorrow*, indicates careful curation of emotional content to preserve a favorable public image.

Commissive and declarative acts were minimal across all judges, reflecting their selective use for formal commitments and official announcements. Promises were rare, demonstrating that commissive acts are strategically reserved for specific communicative purposes rather than routine interaction. Declarative acts, such as *graduation* and *award* announcements, functioned as markers of authority and formal recognition, in line with Searle’s^[2] assertion that declaratives can alter social realities through language. The restricted deployment of these acts highlights the judges’ awareness of the performative power of such speech and the need to use them judiciously in online contexts.

The findings of this study reveal that social media functions as a complex, multi-layered communicative environment where public figures employ diverse speech acts to achieve distinct objectives. Representative acts provide information, directive acts mobilize action, expressive acts cultivate emotional engagement, and commissive and declarative acts convey formal commitments and announcements. The variation in frequency and type among the four judges illustrates how individual communication styles, professional roles, and audience expectations shape online interaction.

Compared to previous studies that focused on specific speech act types, such as directives in films^[18] or expressive acts in cinematic contexts^[17], this research provides a more comprehensive analysis by examining all five types of speech acts. Moreover, unlike prior Twitter-based research that focused narrowly on emotional expressions^[22], this study captures the broader spectrum of illocutionary functions, demonstrating the multifunctional nature of celebrity social media communication.

In sum, the analysis affirms that Searle’s speech act theory remains a robust framework for examining digital discourse. By categorizing utterances into representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives, researchers can systematically assess how public figures construct meaning, influence audiences, and manage relational dynamics online. The study highlights the interplay between linguistic form, communicative intent, and audience interpretation, underscoring the relevance of pragmatics in understanding contemporary social media interactions.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of speech acts in the Twitter status updates of four prominent music judges—Howie Mandel, Lionel Richie, Luke Bryan, and Simon Cowell—reveals distinct patterns in the use and distribution of Searle’s five types of illocutionary acts: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Across all participants, representative acts primarily served to inform and report, with reporting emerging as the most frequently used strategy. This demonstrates that status updates are consistently employed to convey information about events, activities, or factual developments related to the judges’ professional engagements and interactions with their followers.

Directive acts were predominantly utilized to invite audience participation, highlighting the judges’ efforts to engage, motivate, or influence their followers’ actions. Luke Bryan and Lionel Richie, for instance, frequently used invitations as a means of prompting interaction, while Simon Cowell also combined questions and suggestions to foster audience engagement. Howie Mandel, in contrast, employed directive acts mainly to invite or request, reflecting a more focused strategy of interaction.

Expressive acts were widely distributed among all four judges, reflecting their strategic use of language to convey emotions, attitudes, and social connections. Compliments, expressions of love, and gratitude were the most recurrent, emphasizing the judges’ intentions to create a positive and emotionally engaging presence online. Commissive acts, by contrast, were limited across all judges, with promises appearing sparingly, indicating selective commitment to future actions. Declarative acts were similarly minimal but functionally significant, often reserved for formal announcements such as graduations or awards, demonstrating their specialized communicative role.

Overall, the findings illustrate that social media status updates function as a multidimensional platform for these public figures, blending informative, persuasive, expressive, and formal communicative functions. While the frequency and type of speech acts vary among judges, all four consistently employ representative and directive acts, coupled with expressive acts, to maintain engagement, convey information, and build social rapport with their audiences. The selective use of commissive and declarative acts further underscores the strategic and purposeful nature of online communication in

shaping public perception, interaction, and engagement.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of illocutionary functions in social media discourse, highlighting how public figures strategically employ speech acts to achieve communicative goals, manage relationships with followers, and balance informational, interactive, and expressive purposes in digital environments.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, writing—original draft, literature review, data collection, formal analysis, project administration, M.O.C.S.; writing—review & editing, visualization, data curation, S.; validation, supervision, proofreading, R.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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