GRASSROOTS WRITING RESEARCH JOURNAL

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Contents

GWRJ CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Grassroots Writing Research Journal welcomes submissions from all writers investigating how people, tools, and situations influence our everyday writing and literate activity practices in the world.

We invite submissions of texts in our newly published genres in GWRJ 14.2:

- **GWRJ Shorts**
- **Documenting Literate Activity**

Visit our "Writing for the GWRJ" webpage to find descriptions of these new GWRJ genres and their evolving genre conventions–and check out examples published in this GWRJ issue 14.2.

Visit our GWRJ webpage to find

- Past issues archive
- Resources for writing
- Submission requirements
- Editorial team members

www.isuwriting.com/grassroots-writing-research-journal

Have questions? Article ideas?
Want to talk? Ready for feedback?
Email us at grassrootswriting@gmail.com

GWRJ Mission

The *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* (GWRJ) is dedicated to publishing writing research by everyday writers like you—like all of us.

Who we are

We are committed to publishing GWRJ authors who are undergraduate writing students, graduate student teachers, university faculty members, high school teachers and students, middle school teachers and students—anyone! Because we are all writers and writing researchers.

What we do

We encourage people to write about any range of subjects that intersect with writing research. You might describe how you practice writing in your lives, how writing works toward specific writer and community goals, how you're learning writing as a complex activity over time, or how writing makes things happen in your worlds.

What we publish

We look forward to receiving submissions for genres we often publish (like full-length GWRJ articles), and we are always excited to experiment with new genres and media whether they're some we've created recently (GWRJ Short, Documenting Literate Activity) or ones we hope you might create and share with us.

Visit our GWRJ webpage for more information and an archive of past issues since 2010.

www.isuwriting.com/grassroots-writing-research-journal

GWRJ Writing Facts

We have all learned stories about what writing is and how we learn and practice writing. Since our GWRJ mission is to publish complex, messy, different kinds of stories about writing and writers, we hope these GWRJ Facts make clear how we think about writing.

GWRJ Fact: Everyone is a writer.

More than privileging any one kind of writing, we think it's important to publish accessible writing content, style, and everyday grassroots research from a wide range of writers.

GWRJ Fact: All kinds of writing are valuable.

We encourage writers to use a more informal, conversational tone and style without privileging formal or overtly "academic" language to be more accessible to readers.

GWRJ Fact: Writing advice doesn't work for everyone all the time.

We know there is no one piece of writing advice that works for all writers and all writing situations because people learn and write differently across different writing situations.

GWRJ Fact: Writing is a messy activity.

We know that writing doesn't have neat formulas for success because writing is a complex activity that involves challenges that change over time.

GWRJ Fact: Writers learn from other writers.

We encourage writers to show readers how we learn about writing and specific genres through research and practice, not by being told what to do in school.

GWRJ Fact: We are always learning about writing.

We know that no one is simply a "novice" or "master" writer because we are all learning writing in progress as we encounter different writing situations.

GWRJ Fact: We don't all learn writing in the same way.

We know that learning writing is not universal (or unique) because we learn writing in specific ways, moments, and genres that work for us–until they don't.

GWRJ Fact: Writing is never general.

We encourage writers to show how writing is specific all the time and related to the genres we write in, the languages and tools we use to write, and the cultures and communities we write for.

From the Editors

Janine Blue

With this issue, the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* has wrapped up its fourteenth year of publication, and we are thrilled with what 14.2 has to offer our readers. We feature a variety of articles from undergraduates, graduates, and writing research instructors. These authors include new and returning voices whose articles and interviews provide an inclusive and compelling look into embodied writing practices, professional literacies, multimodality, P-CHAT, and more. The Writing Program at Illinois State University (ISU) uses a version of CHAT specifically aimed toward pedagogy called P-CHAT or pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory. Our pedagogical version of CHAT includes seven terms that provide a framework around which students interrogate texts and genres as they exist out in the world while accounting for such texts' nuanced and dynamic structures. In addition, with this new journal issue comes the return of two specialized genres—Picturing Literate Activity (PLA) narratives and a co-authored transcript from the Writing Program podcast, Conversations with GWRJ Authors—as well as the introduction of two new Grassroots genres. The *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* is proud to present Documenting Literate Activity (DLA) narratives, which are articles in which authors talk about creating cool projects and learning new things, and GWRJ Shorts, which are brief pieces that provide snapshots of literate activity and writing research in action. With these different genres included in this issue, 14.2 continues to expand our collective understanding of the diverse nature of literacy.

The articles in issue 14.2 range in subject matter from writing identity and self-expression to the various forms of multimodal communication. As we continue to expand the scope of the journal, these articles include nuanced conversations about designing productive writing spaces and how we engage with writing literacies based on our career paths and hobbies. These articles take a closer look at what literate activity means and the different ways we engage with it in our daily lives. What we continue to find so interesting and crucial about these articles is their continued focus on writing identity and community. They remind us that while writing is a unique and personal journey, no one ever truly writes alone. These articles

also include discussions of a range of concepts related to the study of literate activity through topics as diverse as navigating translingualism in graduate school, the transformative relationship between writing and ADHD, the literacies of being a certified nursing assistant (CNA), and considering how blankets can be read as texts.

With this latest issue, we had the opportunity to bring back former Grassroots authors Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez and Alyssa Herman for the series Conversations with GWRJ Authors, which includes a transcript of their interview as well as a reprint of Alyssa Herman's article "The Danger of Filter Bubbles and Digital Isolation: Exploring Ethical Research Practices" originally featured in issue 10.1. 14.2 also includes contributions from the Grassroots staff, including Jennifer Coe's and Rachel Gramer's PLA narratives, along with Piper Coe's and Jessica Kreul's GWRJ Shorts. Certainly, the contributors' work in this issue demonstrates the multifaceted nature of literate activity and the work of writing and researching in the world. We hope you enjoy this new issue as much as we do.

To start issue 14.2, we've included some new front matter sections ahead of this letter: "GWRJ Mission" and "GWRJ Writing Facts." The hope is that these brief sections will help to frame and contextualize our view of writing and the work of the journal for readers, contributors, and any other writing researchers engaging with this issue.

To bring us to the heart of the issue—the articles—the first four pieces offer unique perspectives on connecting embodiment and literate activity. These articles are highly personal and detailed conversations about how the body and mind work together to accomplish writing. First, **Janine Blue's** article examines her embodied literate activity of brainstorming and drafting. She analyzes how the state of her body plays a crucial role in her progress and creativity. Using images, narrative, and Writing Program terms, Janine guides us through her writing process and how she nurtures all five senses in unique, specific ways to create a positive and generative writing experience. Our second article is an interview transcript written by **Emad Hakim**. He interviews his friend, scholar and activist **Ahmed Hamdy**, who leads us through the multimodal genres he engages with as someone with a visual impairment. Ahmed describes his everyday literate activities and the accessibility tools he uses to aid him, such as Braille and screen readers. Following, **Jennifer Coe** shows us her writing spaces in her PLA narrative. The two images included in the article allow us to step into her writing world. As someone who lives with a disability that sometimes makes writing and focusing at a desk a difficult experience, Jennifer explains how her specified desk configurations help her literate activities be more

comfortable and manageable. The last article that explores embodiment and writing is **Ali Bazzi's** piece. He speaks frankly about how his ADHD affects his writing and literate activity, along with misconceptions about writing and research being universal development processes for everyone. At the same time, Ali articulates how having particular symptoms of ADHD intersect positively and productively when engaging in literate activity.

14.2 then shifts to professional writing literacies and how antecedent knowledge plays a pivotal role in learning new literacies. **Abantika Dhar** discusses her writing researcher identity and how it's evolved from being a young student in Bangladesh to a Master's student in Missouri to a graduate student and teacher at ISU. As someone with an academic history in Bangladesh and the US, she dissects how her antecedent knowledge has impacted how she has viewed writing from a stern and strict practice to a more fluid and individualized process. Abantika further speaks on how translingualism has bridged writing cultures for her and evolved her ideas of what it means to be in graduate school. Next, **Lauren Kendrick** uses the concept of activity systems to explore working with young people with disabilities at a leadership gym. She steps us through obtaining a position at the facility, why she loves her job, and how her antecedent knowledge and relationship with a neighbor helped prepare her for working at the gym. Our seventh article, by **Hannah Davis**, details her life as a certified nursing assistant and patient care technician, or a CNA and PCT for short. She shares how her passion for her work stems from her antecedent knowledge and personal experience with hospital care involving a loved one. Hannah then talks about the many conventional and emotional literacies she had to learn for the two professions, claiming that being in health care is as much about emotional connection as it is about scientific practices.

The journal then turns to the reprint of **Alyssa Herman's** article about filter bubbles. Algorithms dictate what a person sees online based on search history, identity, and other factors, which create our own personal filter bubbles. Alyssa walks us through the function of filter bubbles and how they can lead to biased content and feelings of isolation on the internet, using the ads she sees on her Facebook page compared to a friend's page to demonstrate this theory. She also explores how to combat filter bubbles when researching online to create a more ethical and inclusive process. The transcript of her interview with **Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez** for Conversations with GWRJ Authors is featured after the reprint article, and their discussion focuses on how Alyssa came up with the idea for her article and the different forms of research she implemented to fit her writing researcher identity.

The remaining five articles center on multimodal expression and communication, with each author offering visual media to help explore their topic. First, **Rachel Gramer's** PLA narrative features her current workspace. Employing the PLA theme "Writing After Dark," she invites us to see her literate activity when the sun goes down and it's time for her to turn on her lamp. Rachel describes the items on her desk that are a part of her nightly writing routine, how they help her process, and how each piece is a small part of her personality and personal life. Next, **Piper Coe's** GWRJ Short discusses knitted and crocheted temperature blankets, providing images and QR codes to webpages depicting temperature blankets throughout the article. Piper educates us on what temperature blankets are and explains how these blankets can be remediated for scientific purposes. Piper also discusses the culture and community surrounding temperature blankets and how they can be read as visual, multimodal texts and used as a research tool to publicize climate change. Following, **Amelia Heinze** explores K-pop music and her love for the South Korean boy band BTS. She uses P-CHAT in her article to delve into the discourse community devoted to BTS and how translation is vital for fans not fluent in Korean. Through genre analysis, Amelia also examines how an album cover is an effective communication tool and includes QR codes to webpages for specific BTS album covers. Afterward, **Jessica Kreul's** GWRJ Short analyzes popular texting styles. She investigates this multimodal form of communication, including abbreviations and spacing choices, to demonstrate how complex and fascinating texting has become in recent generations. Jessica also presents different texting techniques used to stand in for verbal speech. She includes screenshots of texts between her and a friend, highlighting the modes they use to do this work. Finally, the last article in issue 14.2 is a DLA narrative by **Sofia Link**. Here she explains how she turned a research assignment for ENG 101 into a journey of discovering her passion and skill for stop-motion animation. She walks us through using P-CHAT and genre research to learn how to produce this digital, image-based artform while relying on antecedent knowledge to figure out where to begin. In addition, Sofia highlights how multimodal composition is an intricate, slow process and a fun and liberating experience. She includes photos of her final project, as well as a QR to the full project on Canva, which became a stop-motion journal tour.

Our spring issue concludes with some new ending segments: "Researching for the GWRJ," "Writing for the GWRJ," and "Submitting to the GWRJ." Altogether, these segments seek to encourage prospective writers to conduct and submit their own rigorous investigations of how people, tools, and situations affect writing in complex ways. As we complete our fourteenth

year of publication, we continue to receive a wide range of articles from writing researchers interested in publishing their studies in the journal. In the coming year, we hope to continue to receive submissions that reflect diverse perspectives, explore various distinctive genres, and provide a richer understanding of the culturally and historically bound spaces in which those genres are embedded.

Notes

Making Sense of All the Writing: My Embodied Literate Activity

Janine Blue

Janine Blue discusses how writing is a complex literate activity and an embodied experience. Blue examines her literary practices as a creative writer and takes a deep dive into how she uses and nurtures her five senses as she engages with writing.

I'm a creative writer and have been all my life. We are all writers who write creatively, but it's more than a hobby or pastime for me. I want to be a storyteller as my career. Teach creative writing as a job. Get my PhD in the field of creative writing. My journey started with constructive response assignments in elementary school. It progressed to book reports in middle school. Essays, research projects, and fanfiction in high school. More essays and original fiction and workshops in undergrad. Thesis, more workshops, essays, and more fiction in my MFA (Master of Fine Arts) program. And now, all of those things, times a hundred, for my PhD program, including a dissertation and writing exams. Throughout my writing journey, I've realized how much goes into different types of writing—whether for assignments, creative publications, or simply for myself to enjoy reading on my computer from time to time. There are various strategies, tools, research, and deadlines to follow for these types of writings as well. At this point in my life, doing all of this work, I understand that I've got the **literate activity** of my writing down to a science.

Literate activity refers to all the activities we do in creating and using texts across space and time ("Literate Activity Terms"). It includes writing, reading, listening, speaking, thinking, and feeling, but it also includes all our social practices that influence how we make meaning and communicate. Our histories, bodies, emotions, relationships, resources, tools, and social interactions with other people and the world shape our literate activity.

Embodiment is the idea that the mind and cognition are deeply interconnected with the physical body. Our perception, thought processes, and consciousness are not isolated functions of the brain but are intricately tied to the body and its interactions with the environment and outside stimuli (Clark and Chalmers).

When I think about my literate activity as a writer, I'm not only including things I'm doing consciously, like planning, researching, writing, and editing, but what my body is doing while I'm engaging in these practices. It's not just what we do but *how we are* as we engage in an activity that matters. There's an **embodiment** to literate activity that I have become very aware of and do my best to nurture. I engage with all five senses in the literate activity of my writing because I don't write without my body being present. None of us do. I'm simply hyper-aware of my embodiment during the process, and it shapes my progress. If my embodiment is in balance, I can write when I'm sick, tired, stuck, or feeling lazy. That's how my creativity sparks and how I can get excited and focused, whether it's a short fiction story or a literature review I have to write. This awareness and balance are not something that happened overnight. It's taken me years to see how my senses coexist with my writing and creativity and how it's progressed. In this article, I will take you on my writing journey, showing you my embodied literate activity and all its components as I think about writing, begin writing, do the actual writing, and finish writing. It's obsessive, strange, particular, random, and honest. It's how I'm able to write this article.

A Sense of Taste, A Sense of Memory

My hunger level is one of the most significant impacts on my writing capacity. At this stage in my creative process, I use my **antecedent experience** to prepare for writing sessions and carve out brainstorming periods. I often found myself creatively sluggish after lunch in elementary and middle school. I felt full, relaxed, and ready to go home. It was harder to brainstorm and engage with writing assignments. I would get fed up and bored, or my mind would slip away to other things. I could taste the pizza, stromboli, or chicken sandwich and just wanted to bask in the flavors and think about going home to watch TV or hang out with my friends. I took this past embodied knowledge to college and deliberately chose not to eat big meals before

outlining my projects—definitely wasn't going to attempt the process after dinner. I'm not as comfortable and relaxed when I'm not full and content, so there's a slight edge and alertness to my creative spirit. I'm more focused, and there's a faint rush in me to get things right, along with an impatience to finish outlines. So, I tend to brainstorm in the early morning, deep into the afternoon, or right as the evening starts—the transition times of existence between meals. I'm a person who honestly plans better when I'm slightly hungry. I outlined this article before breakfast.

"**Antecedent experience** refers to embodied experiences that we each bring with us into familiar and new-to-us writing situations. When we talk about antecedent experience, we include our feelings and embodied responses to particular kinds of writing and prioritize articulating responses that we are often not required to describe or unpack explicitly" ("Uptake Terms").

On the other hand, when drafting, I can't give it my all unless I've eaten and feel hydrated. The antsy feeling doesn't work for me when I'm writing. I must be relaxed and slightly sluggish to do my best work—which I know might sound odd. I tend to write in a better frame of mind after dinner (Figure 1). This understanding of when to write in conjunction with my meals is another part of my embodied literate activity that relies on my antecedent experience. Being an adult who teaches and takes classes and doesn't always have a set schedule makes it tricky to know when I'll eat and how much I'll be able to. Whenever I feel "I'll get started. I'll be fine," I have to remember when I tried making progress on an empty stomach or possibly dehydrated and felt lost or frustrated. It's worth it creatively to have food in my stomach and a full water bottle before I hunch over my desk and start drafting. On weekends, when I go through long multi-hour writing sessions, I always take eating and water breaks. It's so easy to forget to eat and especially to stay hydrated when cramming a writing assignment or 120 pages into a novel.

Figure 1: My dinner the first night of drafting this article.

A Touch of This, A Touch of That

In my creative works, I always have a character who fidgets, has a repetitive movement, or some sort of tick for when they're nervous, embarrassed, or zoning out. Often, it's something that runs in their family. I do this because I

"**Multimodality** describes how human communication always relies on more than one singular mode to make meaning. When we talk about multimodality related to writing and literate activity, we consider how modes of communication overlap and intersect, how we use multiple modes to compose texts in particular genres, and how our multimodal choices have consequences for making texts, making meaning, and mediating uptake" ("Multimodality Terms").

These modalities include aural, gestural, linguistic or alphabetic, oral, spatial, tactile, verbal, visual, and written modes.

fidget, never more so than when I write. I have always loved things that I can click, snap, pop, squeeze, or stretch. It could be a pen, bubble wrap, slinky, small containers with flicky tops, stress balls, or small plush toys—just anything I can manipulate. It soothes me. The texture and motion become part of my breathing and thought process. Of course, my sense of peace never extends to the people around me. It's never too long before someone takes the thing out of my hand or tells me the sound or motion is driving them up the wall. I do my best to keep my fidgeting to a minimum in public places, but it's a different story when I'm in my office. I have every style of fidget tool imaginable. It's a **multimodal** fidgeting playground on my desk.

I have fidget spinners and poppers of various weights—some are quiet, and others make noise. I have textile toys—some are smooth and cold, and others are spiky, hard, or bumpy. I have colorful rubber bands that I wrap around my fingers and snap. Small, soft balls I throw against the wall. I have a dart board. Plush toys that I squeeze that may or may not make noise. I even have books with texts in different fonts and colors that I quickly flip through for stimulus. Figures 2 and 3 show some of my fidget items.

Figure 2: A few of my fidget items.

Figure 3: My dart board which is on the wall in front of my desk.

My sense of touch might be the most important aspect when I'm knee-deep in the creative weeds and feel lost, confused, frustrated, or self-conscious. I look away from my work and click, squeeze, throw, snap, and pop. It truly does help me focus, pull me out of the funk, or guide me through the murky unknown and the feeling of being overwhelmed by the words and blank pages. Writing sometimes requires so much, and I write about so many things simultaneously while different emotions run through me. The literate activity of my writing has to include multimodality to keep me organized. I need diverse outlets and ways to soothe and flourish my creativity. This need is also why I always draft on paper. No matter the assignment or creative piece, I use hand to pen to paper first—either on printer paper or in spiral notebooks. I need to be able to feel the words as I write them to better my connection to what I'm trying to say. I need to feel the inevitable ache and soreness in my fingertips to know when I'm on a roll or need a break. I love cracking my knuckles during writing breaks. It gives me proof that I'm doing a lot of work. I also just love the physical aspect of flipping through pages. There's a sense of accomplishment seeing a huge stack of paper.

Smells like Progress

Some might wonder, "How is smell connected to your literate activity?" Well, much like multimodal touch, I incorporate scents into my writing process that come in various fragrance **genres**, meaning these fragrance items are distinguishable by their conventions and features. I often have dryer sheets on my desk when I'm outlining. I find the fresh scent of clean linen inspiring, a "beginning" smell that gets me in the frame of mind to start something. I get the same feeling from freshly brewed coffee, which many people can relate to. It's sunrise—up and at 'em. It gets me excited to start my writing process and brainstorm ideas, so I have coffee-scented candles I light in the morning. Both dryer sheets and candles are scented items, but they are obviously not the same genre due to their characteristics and functions. I am also a huge fan of citrus. Orange, lemon, lime, and grapefruit are fragrances I find incredibly energizing. There's just something about tang and zest that keeps me sharp and focused. I have scented oils to keep these fruit scents around me and connecting my love of citrus to my taste sense, I also have citrus gum I like to chew when outlining and brainstorming. As you can see, just for the brainstorming and outlining process, I might engage in three different fragrance genres!

Genres are described by the ISU Writing Program as "typified responses to recurring social situations" ("Genre Research Terms"). Alternatively, a **genre** is a text or production that is recognizable by its conventions, features, or characteristics.

Writing can be daunting or even a bit lonely when you're in the thick of it, churning out an essay or trying to finish the last few pages of a short story. I've found that dessert aromas—vanilla, icing, toffee, sugar cookie, cinnamon, birthday cake, buttercream—are highly relaxing, welcoming, and simply make me happy. I feel encased and less alone. Smells are closely tied to memory, so antecedent experience connects to my sense of smell. When these cake aromas are under my nose, I think of holidays, parties, and happy events. I have lotions and body sprays that I use (in small doses) when I need a pick-me-up.

Figure 4: Lotion and mouthwash.

I also have random fragrances across random genres. I have lavender, rose, and cocoa butter soaps. There are a few tropical-scented erasers on my desk organizer. I have travel-sized mouthwash bottles that are spearmint or peppermint scented. I even have old books I like to put my nose in. Depending on how I'm situated in my body and where I am in my creative process, I use these random scents for creative kicks, guidance, calming effects, or to energize my body and mind. Figure 4 shows a couple of scents I have right in front of me: Lavender + Vanilla and Whisper Mint.

See It to Believe It

I do this odd thing where I'll put on a movie or TV show and mute it, and then I'll just watch the actors do their thing. I like the slideshow feature on Netflix that kicks on when you're idle for too long, highlighting things you're currently watching or featured content. I'll stop writing and look up, then closely study the still faces and postures. **Semiotic resources** play a crucial role in my process, and specifically for me in a writing context, **gestural and body language semiotic resources** are key. I gather meaning from watching people express themselves with their faces—eye movement, eyebrow-raising, nostril-flaring, lip movements, and how they move their bodies and conduct posture. Body language helps me craft my fictional characters' personality, movements, emotion, and motives. When writing an argument between loved ones, I find movies or TV shows that show great examples

"**Semiotic resources** are all the resources people use to organize how we understand the world and to make meaning for ourselves and in communication with others" ("Literate Activity Terms").

of what that looks like. I do the same for hugs and conversations in kitchens or as I'm describing people driving or contemplating hard decisions. Even how people do laundry or shop at grocery stores is something I study in actors' movements and facial expressions. If I'm writing academically, I often watch game or competition shows (Figure 5). The constant movement, color changes, and expressions translate into me making meaning of the assignment I'm trying to complete. Watching people compete or complete challenges, seeing their victory or defeat in their facial features, motivates me to find success in my writing and fully understand what is being asked of me.

Gestural and Body Language Semiotic Resources

Non-verbal communication is an important semiotic resource. Gestures, facial expressions, body posture, and movement can convey meaning, emotions, and intent. These non-verbal cues are particularly important in face-to-face interactions (Hinnell and Mittelberg).

I use this semiotic resource with the sound off. I don't want to be influenced by the music, tone of voice, or sound effects. I want to focus on the raw emotions and bare humanity of expression. Yes, as a writer, I can craft these states of being in my head, but I find it so much more authentic and more manageable when I see what it looks like on real people. Describing someone coming to terms with loss at a funeral is so much easier to do when I can see those expressions and take in the body language in front of me. It also helps that the actors convey specific expressions and meaning from the scripts they read and the direction they are given (Figure 6). It is helpful as a

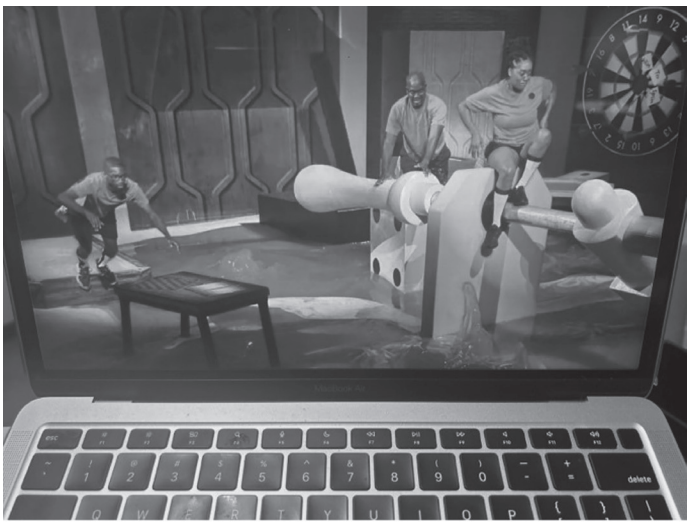

Figure 5: A family expressing both excitement and panic on Netflix's gameshow "The Floor is Lava."

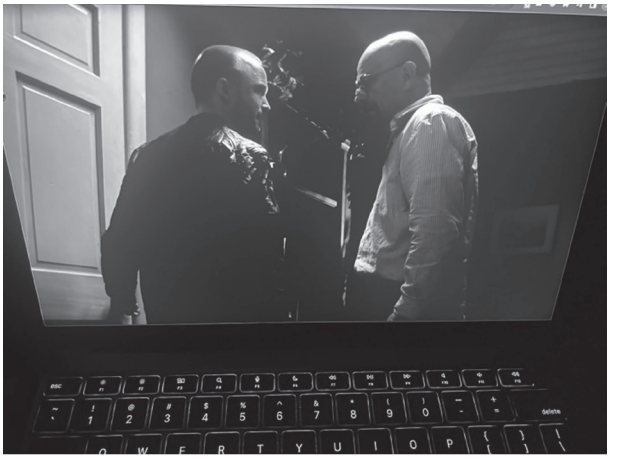

Figure 6: Walter White and Jesse Pinkman sharing an intense conversation during AMC's "Breaking Bad."

writer to see how people interpret words and make meaning with their facial expressions and body language. It guides me to see the expressions people create with concepts I share with scriptwriters and directors.

Do You Hear What I Hear?

I am a part of a writing group comprised of graduate students, recent graduates, creative writing teachers, creative writing professionals, and people with a deep love and commitment to storytelling. We try to meet at least twice a month over Zoom. Our group has an overall length of time we meet, depending on circumstances. Within that period, we set a time to silently write, ask for help or opinions, let people know about upcoming publication opportunities and contests, and share work. We never do anything else outside the specified time slots, and there is total silence during our writing period unless it's someone's turn to provide the background sound. It wasn't until I came to ISU and learned and taught in the Writing Program that I understood that what I am a part of is a **discourse community**. We have members and rules and use specific genres such as Zoom, laptops, books, Submittable, and Spotify. We share language when discussing our writing styles, such as prose, experimental, flash, poetry, or historical fiction. We reference books and adapted screenplays. We have members who join who are referred by current members, and we have people who leave our community when our group is no longer something they want or can keep up with. Some people in our discourse community are married partners or parents. Their families, who are outside of our community, know to let

them be during our meeting because this group time is important to us. Our goal is straightforward: to get some writing done for work, publication, or school. Also, to share pieces aloud to get more comfortable and familiar with our work.

> "**Discourse communities** are collections of people or groups that work toward collective goals through specific genres. Often, when we talk about discourse communities, we describe their communication practices, shared knowledge and language use, and the power structures that shape community features both to people who participate within the discourse community and others" ("Genre Research Terms").

Something else I realized about our community is how much sound plays a role in our meetings. Our quiet writing time is sacred. We either mute ourselves or make sure people can only hear faint typing, writing, or page-turning. When it is time for deliberate sounds, everyone has to agree that it's the right time, but we also have to follow the rules on the background sound. The only music allowed is lofi, mellow beats, or chill-hop, and nothing that involves singing. Our preference is environmental realism: busy street soundscapes and coffee house rumblings (Figure 7). Thunderstorms or heavy rainfall. Crackling fireplaces or ocean waves. Another essential part of the audio of our meeting is a group discussion about pieces or someone sharing their work. They can have their camera off, and listeners aren't required to look at the person speaking. We can close our eyes and listen to the cadence of delivery. In our discourse community, it's so much more about what we're hearing than what we're seeing, even though it's a writing group.

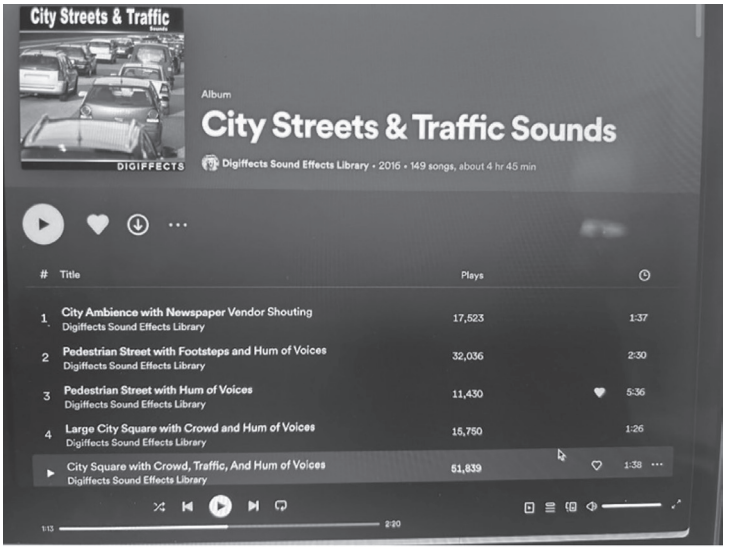

Figure 7: A popular Spotify playlist my discourse community listens to.

I always encourage writers of all kinds to read their work aloud or have someone read it to them. You can hear things that you can't always see. It's an entirely different kind of writing, drafting, and editing process. When I teach for the Writing Program, I create playlists with the people in my class to listen to during in-class writing and group work time. When I teach creative writing, people listen to their playlists during in-class prompt writing time. Listening is crucial to any writing process.

Janine, Party of Five (Senses)

When my five senses are in balance, it allows for an enjoyable and smooth writing process. My best work comes from my embodiment being in harmony with my literate activity. Of course, it is often that I am out of balance. Sometimes, I'm in a writing space without my scents. Sometimes, I have no choice but to draft while hungry. Occasionally, the grass is mowed while I'm knee-deep in the creative process. I also can't always access a fidget spinner or visual media. However, I'm still able to plan, write, and get things accomplished. I succeed without sensory harmony. My embodiment just feels off, and I know I'm not performing at my best.

The literate activity of my writing process is much more than my fingers gripping my pen or my fingertips pressing keys. It's more than reading the words or Googling resources. I often think about the **trajectory** of my literate activity. It's not a static practice; as a human living in this world, I will change, and time will change me. I'll always need to be mindful of what works for my body and creativity and what negatively impacts my writing performance. Future technology could influence my semiotic resources or my discourse community. Graduating might change my eating habits in connection to writing. Simply getting older will affect what I want to smell or use as my multimodal fidgets.

"**Trajectory** is a way to understand how literate activity changes across places, times, people, and artifacts. When we talk about trajectory, we might refer to how texts move through the world and change as people adapt and take them up, how writers change over time and across writing situations, and how our learning also transforms as our motivations, goals, and identities change too" ("Literate Activity Terms").

We all have routines, traditions, and rituals to get into our preferred headspace for productive writing. Even if you don't think you do, you do. It's merely a matter of pausing in the middle of your writing process to see how you're doing it. Being more conscious of your body and understanding its needs helps with creativity and writing progress. The next time you write and feel stuck or uninspired, note where you are. What are you hearing? Are you

hungry, thirsty, or full? If you find yourself in a groove, concentrate on the state of your body and how it's being nurtured. What's around you that's helping you progress? What can you see in front of you? Take an inventory of your five senses and if you're creating a positive, productive embodiment. Literate activity is intricate, as is the writing process. You might as well make things as easy as possible for your body.

As I'm drafting this article, I certainly feel in balance. I'm finishing my hearty bowl of tomato soup. I've got this vanilla bean cake lotion on. I'm listening to babbling brook nature sounds. I've been rolling my cushion ball around my palms, and I've got Netflix's Glow Up playing on mute on my laptop. Hopefully, this is a winning combination for me in writing a great article!

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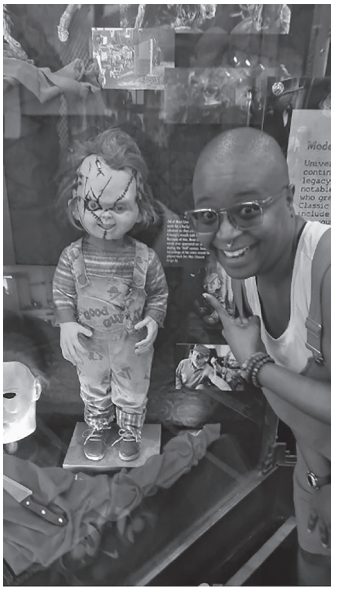

Since writing "Left-Handed Literacies" for the 13.2 GWRJ issue, not much has changed for **Janine Blue**. She's still learning, teaching, and writing. She still uses her weighted blanket and enjoys simulation games. She did win a couple of writing contests and gained a few more publications. She also bought some new pens, highlighters, and a better pair of headphones.

Genres, Multimodal Composition, and Access: Stories of Personal and Embodied Experience

Emad Hakim and Ahmed Hamdy

Emad Hakim interviews his friend, scholar and activist Ahmed Hamdy, about his literate activities. The authors discuss the interconnectedness of multimodal genres and accessibility by examining their lived experiences within different contexts and ideologies.

> "Those who want to make changes in the world need to make those changes against and especially through genres" (Devitt, 2021, p. 18).

Emad's Introduction

Let me start this article by asking you a question: What forms of writing do you expect to work with or produce after graduation? For example, professionally, I expect that I will produce many different texts, such as syllabi for my students, articles like this one, and research papers that I will try to publish. I expect to engage with (and sometimes learn from scratch) different learning management systems like Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, and so on. I also expect to continue engaging with many of the texts I use now, such as texting, Facebook posts, tweets, Instagram posts, and so on. Actually, I engage with these texts on a daily basis. What about you? Unfortunately, this article's modality is not interactive enough for me to hear or see your answers, but I urge you to take two minutes and jot down some ideas in the margins of this article. Write down one or two genres you expect to produce or engage with

as a professional and maybe another two that you may engage with in your daily life. I will come back to what you wrote in the margins at the end of the article.

In this article, I will be interviewing my friend Ahmed Hamdy about the literate activities he engages in as a scholar and activist with visual impairment. There are many reasons I want to do this interview with Ahmed. First, I feel compelled to educate myself about his use of distinct modes of communication, especially when I recognize that I have lived for a long time with stereotypical ideas about persons with visual impairments. My knowledge about people with visual impairments was almost entirely based on oversimplified depictions in movies and on TV, which often represented those communities through stereotypes as well as ideologies and cultures of ableism. Indeed, meeting Ahmed was a turning point in my life because he helped me reexamine my ideas about what it might be like to live with a visual impairment.

A Few Important Concepts

Before I proceed with the content of the interview, I want to spend some time exploring a few concepts that will help us along the way. I want you to buckle up because this part might sound dense at first glance, but I promise you that the rest of the article will build on these concepts with examples.

First, I mentioned above that I want to explore the literate activities that Ahmed is involved in. So, what is literate activity? According to the ISU Writing Program, "**Literate activity** is a way to describe the complex activity involved in people producing and using texts across spaces and times, in ways that are shaped by our histories, tools, social interactions, resources, bodies, emotions, and relationships with the world. When we talk about literate activity, we include reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and feeling—all social practices that influence how we make meaning and communicate" (Literate activity terms, n.d.). In this definition, reading and writing are seen through the lens of a complex activity system that is intertwined with elements of time, place, human interaction, and artifacts. So, a literate activity involves more than just a person engaging with a particular kind of textual production or communication at a particular time and place. Rather, it involves a combination of elements (tools, people, modalities, genres), plus the meanings and uses associated with the activity that have been developing culturally and historically over time. These historical and cultural meanings impact how people understand their literate activities, and even what they might believe is possible to do or make in a

particular situation. If my expansion on this definition has not been as simple as you want it to be, I hope the embodied examples in this article will help get the concept across.

Another concept I want to introduce here is genre. What is a genre? In fact, there are many definitions of genre, and it is my opinion that all the definitions complement one another in some way. Among the different definitions, I will focus here on the three definitions that I drew from the ISU Writing Program website (Key terms & concepts, n.d.):

- Definition 1: **Genre** refers to a kind of production that is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make that production recognizable.
- Definition 2: A **genre** is a typified response to a recurring situation.
- Definition 3: A **genre** is a kind of text that makes a particular action possible (or impossible).

While these definitions may look totally different, they are actually strongly connected to each other. The first definition of genre focuses on its recognizability and identification through its features. In fact, the recognizability of a genre is one of the most powerful factors in successful communication. Let me give you an example. How much time does a driver have to recognize a stop sign (Figure 1) on the road? Technically, seconds or less. Without those features that can be identified at a glance—the octagonal shape, red background, and white letters—the activity system of driving would be hindered. This is just one example. How many other examples can you think of in which you need to identify or recognize the features of a text quickly for successful communication?

Figure 1: A stop sign (Dickelbers, 2013).

However, Amy Devitt (2004), a prominent scholar in rhetoric and composition, argues that this first definition does not capture the essence of genre because it focuses on form while actually ignoring function. Let me give you another example here. How many times have you looked in your mailbox and picked up an envelope that looked like a personal letter only to find out that it was a sales letter or offer from a company? The authors of those sales letters deceived you by using the typical, identifiable features of a personal letter. The same thing happens with hackers and phishing emails whose authors try to imitate certain features of professional or personal

emails in order to take advantage of the reader. Therefore, the second definition—a typified response to a recurring situation—focuses on the rhetorical action that a genre performs. So, when genres respond to recurring situations, they perform the rhetorical actions that the situation needs. And since the situation always changes (even when recurring), so, too, do genres.

The third definition of genre—a kind of text that makes a particular action possible or impossible—connects all the definitions together. For example, the stop sign that we mentioned earlier makes the action of stopping the car for pedestrians and oncoming traffic possible. Without this genre, cars can run into people or collide. What other actions do genres make possible? Think of tax forms, receipts, medical records, or the ingredients label on your cornflakes box. These genres make the actions of collecting taxes, recording a purchase, documenting medical history, and informing consumers about what their breakfast cereal is made of possible. Another very important question to ask about genre is this: Do they make actions possible for everyone? Are all people able to read stop signs, receipts, or medical records? Can anything be done to enhance the quality of how these genres respond to their situations?

The final concept that I want to discuss here is multimodal composition. According to the ISU Writing Program, **multimodal composing** specifically refers to "ALL of the modes that humans can use to communicate, which would include alphabetic (stuff we write using the alphabet), visual (pictures), aural (sound), oral (spoken), and symbolic (using symbols that aren't alphabetic, like emoticons or emojis). Practicing multimodal composing means being aware that a lot of our work as writers includes much more than just a single mode" (Key terms & concepts, n.d.). This is critically significant when we try to connect composition with accessibility. If you remember my question above about access to certain genres, some genres are historically and culturally designed based on ableist ideologies that assume all people are the same. But, if we agree on the diversity of human beings, and the diversity of our audience in almost every context, how can we use and develop modes of communication to be inclusive of that diversity? Those are questions to ask as you proceed through the rest of the article.

As a writing researcher, I am so interested in knowing more about the literate activities that Ahmed engages in. But before the interview, let me tell you some of what I already know about Ahmed's literate activity, and I hope the interview will give both me and you a deeper and more informed perspective than what I already mentioned in this introduction. First, Ahmed is actively engaged with various platforms of social media. His interest in different topics ranging from world politics to sports manifests in his

presence on social media as well as in different forms of formal and informal communication. He is also a big fan of the Premier League, and he competes against other fans on a platform called Fantasy, which I tried to learn from him but didn't find interesting actually (sorry, buddy!). As a linguist, Ahmed is fluent in three languages—Arabic, English, and Deutsch—and he has published a number of research articles in reputable journals. He also got his Master's degree in political science at the American University in Cairo.

This is what I already know about Ahmed, but there's much more information and details about his literate practices that I am eager to learn through this interview. So, without further ado, let's get into the interview!

Emad: Let me start with a kind of survey question: On a scale of one to ten, how important are reading and writing to your daily life?

Ahmed: Definitely, I would say ten. Reading and writing are crucial parts of my day, and thanks to technological breakthroughs, there are currently many distinct modes of reading and writing that I use, from my phone to my laptop to my other assistive technology devices. I use reading and writing for a variety of reasons, personally, socially, and academically.

Emad: Focusing on your social activity, how do you use reading and writing in your social interactions?

Ahmed: Well, that's a crucial question because I believe many people are eager to ask people with visual impairments about this. As I told you before, I use different tools for reading and writing: my phone, my laptop, and other devices too. But in my social interactions—my digital social interactions in particular, like using social media, texting, calling, or reading messages—I mainly use my phone. Again, thanks to technology, there is now software available called a screen reader. I have this software on my devices, but it's available on all devices, not just mine. It helps me read whatever is shown on the screen, and it helps me write too.

So, for example, platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook (Meta), and Twitter (X) are now more developed and can be used with screen reader apps. My devices then can help me use the different modes available on these platforms, including the use of emojis in reading and writing.

Emad: Screen reader technology seems really helpful as an alternative modality. I'm interested in learning more about this. Would you like to expand on the process of using this with a particular social media platform as an example?

Ahmed: So, let's say it's Facebook. I open my Facebook app, like any other user, and the more I scroll down the timeline, the more it tells me that this person or that person is writing a post and comments and so on. It also tells me all the options available, such as reacting, commenting, sharing, and everything else. For sure, there are more technical details I could get into about how to give commands. Screen reading is considered an oral mode of communication as I get a lot of information through text-to-speech software.

There's a similar process for writing a post, a tweet, or an email. I go to the text field, I touch the screen for the letters, and I get auditory feedback about what letters I pressed. The same for sure goes for using my laptop and any other gadget with screen reader software.

Emad: OK. I can see that your literate activity is rich with different modes of communication. Would you like to tell me more about multimodal writing and its value in your literate activities in different contexts?

Ahmed: First of all, I would like to talk about modes of writing in general. Different modes of writing are inherently important because they give more choices and meet the needs of many different people, not just me. These modes include alphabetic, symbolic, visual, oral, aural, and tactile, among others. For me, if I am stuck with one or two modes of writing, I will not be able to write what I want to write. For instance, one common mode of writing that people use is alphabetic. Now, modes of writing are rapidly developing due to technological advancement. For me, this is very important. If I went back thirty years, it would be a lot harder for me because assistive technology was not that advanced. As I mentioned before, I use devices with special programs, called screen readers, to express my thoughts, to write my articles, or to write whatever I want. Other important modes of writing for me are things like braille. For those who do not know, braille is a system of writing for the blind that uses characters made up of raised dots (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Braille, in this case, is considered a tactile mode of communication. If this did not exist, I would be losing a lot because I would not be able to read or write. This is why different modes of writing are important for everyone because they meet different needs, preferences, or sometimes personal situations.

Emad: Alright, I'm glad you mentioned this point about what could happen if these modes of writing were not there. Would you like to tell me about some of your experiences when you found these modes unavailable?

Ahmed: Actually, I usually find myself in situations where there's only one mode of writing available to me. When I'm stuck in such a situation, especially when the mode of writing being used is not accessible to me, all my activities are hindered. On the other hand, when I'm in a situation where different modes of writing are being used, this absolutely helps me. Let me give you an example. At one of the many conferences I have attended, there were presentations, and the plan was that presenters would receive questions from the audience. The organizers moved around the audience, and they gave everyone a pen and paper to write down their questions, but they didn't give me anything because they knew I would not be able to use these tools. So, I was not able to ask questions. It was very frustrating. Even if they had given me a pen and paper, I wouldn't have been able to use them unless someone had helped me write the questions I wanted to ask. So, the absence of different modes of writing here limited my experience at the conference and put me in kind of a passive role. In this situation, an alternative mode could have been, for instance, an email to send these questions to, or some other method that I could use.

I also think that my experience is not only restricted to persons with visual impairments. For instance, if you are at a conference where there's only one way to ask questions, say, by sending text messages, and you don't have a phone, you won't be able to send in your questions.

Another example was when I was applying for a travel visa for a certain country. The website of the embassy used high-security methods that required me to enter a CAPTCHA, a tool used to prevent robots from using websites and services. The screen reader technology on all my devices could not help me go through this security test. When I wanted to log in to my application, I had to video call you so that you could read the CAPTCHA and help me solve it and log in.

Furthermore, some services such as online banking, travel planning, hotel booking, and visa appointments may be hindered for persons with visual impairments because they are not able to use CAPTCHA. While some websites and apps provide audio alternatives (which are not as efficient), other vital sites and services ignore that option even though screen readers, in many cases, do not read CAPTCHAs, unfortunately.

Emad: Wow! I sometimes fail to recognize all the communication challenges that can occur until I hear stories of them really happening. And yes, I remember that time when I was helping you access the embassy website. This just reminds me that this is not only about technology but also about a human's willingness to consider the

reception of their genres and the access it gives or denies to different individuals.

Ahmed: This is very true. By the way, I just noticed that you refer to texts as genres. Why do you use this term in this context?

Emad: Very important question. Like many people, I used to know genres as categories of music or movies.

Ahmed: Yes, that is how people generally define the word. Has this meaning changed? ☺

Emad: No, it hasn't. But the meaning of genre has expanded for me.

Ahmed: How is that?

Emad: Well, I started to learn that genres are not mere categories of things, but rather socially constructed kinds of texts that are meant to respond or react to specific situations. In other words, I started to understand how genres came to be in the first place and to study the influences that made particular genres into particular shapes.

Ahmed: OK, do you mean that genres are responses to any kind of situation?

Emad: They could be, I think. However, I studied genres in the context of writing studies. So, I understand the definition as genres responding to rhetorical situations.

Ahmed: OK, now you are making things more confusing for me by adding another term that I don't know. What do you mean by rhetorical situations?

Emad: This is also a good question, which I think will be the key to how I can explain genres to you. So, Lloyd Bitzer (1968), a prominent scholar in the field of rhetoric and composition, defines **rhetorical situations** as situations that can be modified by introducing discourse. Now don't get confused. Discourse here means communication. Let me give you an example. If a driver has a flat tire on the road, he has a situation, but I don't think I can consider this a rhetorical situation, at least in my opinion. No matter how much he tries to communicate with the tire, it is flat, and it won't turn back. He needs to do something physical like opening the trunk of the car, getting out the spare tire, and replacing the flat one with it. This is why communication here might not make a big difference, especially if the driver is planning to do that by himself. On the other hand, if there is a crooked part of the road that has caused

a couple of accidents, I think we have a situation, and I think this is a rhetorical situation because communication can make a difference in this case. For example, a stop sign or a slowdown sign can be put on this part of the road. Or one can communicate that there is a hazard there through Google Maps. So, the stop sign is a genre because it responds to that rhetorical situation, and same thing with Google Maps—both of these can bring communication and change to the situation.

Ahmed: This is a very interesting way to think about writing, but I have something to say about your first example: I think it can be a rhetorical situation. If the driver doesn't know how to replace the tire, communication can have its place there. He can look at the car's manual, check out a video tutorial on YouTube, or call a mechanic, right?

Emad: I think this makes a lot of sense. So, the point is that if communication can make a difference in the situation, then the situation is rhetorical. The genres we study are the means through which we respond to these situations, like the examples we mentioned above.

Ahmed: Is this all about your new understanding of genres?

Emad: Actually, no. There are two important features of genres that I never thought about before. First, genres are rapidly changing, and this is due to the changes in the situations surrounding those genres. For example, technology breakthroughs have allowed many books to become YouTube videos, turned blogs into vlogs, and so on. These rapid changes make it almost impossible to think of any established rules of a genre that we can learn and always follow. Hence the call for writing research becomes necessary in writing studies.

Another important feature of genres is that they not only respond to situations, but they also shape and are shaped by the values and cultures surrounding those situations.

Ahmed: I think I need some examples to understand this second point better.

Emad: Door signs are an obvious example that we experience in many organizations and campuses. You will find some door and elevator signs written only in alphabetic text, while in other places, these signs are written in alphabetic text as well as braille (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A door sign from a room in Stevenson Hall at Illinois State University.

Ahmed: True!

Emad: These genres reflect the values and considerations of each organization. While one organization might think of people as diverse and provide different forms of communication, another organization might think of people as homogenous and only depend on one mode.

Ahmed: Alright. Now I understand how genres can respond to specific situations, and since these situations are changing constantly, genres do too in order to respond to these changes. Based on this, can we consider assistive technology, including assistive braille devices and screen readers, as genres?

Emad: I think these examples of assistive technology are the tools or modes that help you to create a genre that "makes a particular action possible" (Key terms & concepts, n.d.). So, if you think about any of those devices, they produce multimodal texts that make many activities possible for you, and without them, some of these activities may be hindered. They also respond to situations where there's a need for communication through different modes.

I am curious to hear about the different options and modes of communication that current assistive technology provides for you.

Ahmed: Sure! Currently, thanks to technology, I have many options that make numerous activities available to me. For instance, most smartphones provide more modes of writing than just using the screen to write letters. Other devices provide something called a virtual braille screen (Figure 3). This device enables me to take notes on the screen, and it helps me read and write electronic documents through the braille entry method. Those pads below the touch screen produce the same sensation as braille letters and they change according to what the document provides. I can also connect this device to my phone or my laptop and use the same features through it. As a person who already knows how to read and write in braille, this feature provides a lot of help for me. This is easy because I can write faster and with more accuracy on the touch screen than with other modes of writing.

Figure 3: Braille notetaker device with touch screen (Assistive Technology Service, n.d.).

Emad: I had never even heard about these features. Thank you for educating me about it! This is very interesting and helpful. I could only imagine braille in a tangible form, like on a paper that we can touch. But it is just magical how technological devices can produce the

same sensations to help us read electronic documents using braille. I love it! I think that is a great example of the tactile mode of communication.

I have another question that you reminded me of. I now understand that your devices can read the text on your screens. But I was chatting with you once, and I sent you a picture of one of our friends, and your phone was able to recognize the person. How could this happen? I thought it would only be able to read words on a picture.

Ahmed: That's a good question. One of the new services offered to help persons with visual impairments is alt text or alternative text. This means that when uploading a picture to any platform, you can write alt text to describe the picture and mention any details about people in the picture. Facebook, for instance, in some cases, compares people in a picture with their profiles and then may tell you who is in the picture. There are also other programs that rely on optical character recognition (OCR) which allows the software engine to read what's in a picture and determine whether there are people in this picture.

Emad: Let me ask you about your childhood. Do you want to tell me something about your literacy practices and modes of communication when you were young?

Ahmed: Yes. I remember when I was young, I liked to play cards with my friends. So, I would buy the cards and play with my friends, but it was a challenge since I can't see the cards; I didn't know which numbers, shapes, or colors were on the cards. I used the braille writing that I was learning at the time to write the numbers, colors, and shapes on the cards, so I could use them on my own. That was before I knew that a braille card deck was going to be available on the market. So, I tried to find a solution to the problem by using distinct modes that would allow me to play the game with my friends more easily and without having to ask anyone about the cards during the game. I think this was a creative idea that helped me a lot in those social activities.

Emad: Thank you for all this information, but I still have some questions. I know you play an advocacy role for the rights of persons with disabilities. So, I have two questions in this regard. First, do you consider multimodal writing to be an individual or systemic responsibility? Or both?

Ahmed: I would consider it to be both for sure. It is an individual responsibility in the sense that there is a human drive for expression, but it is also systemic in the sense that how societies and communities value the right of expression for all people, including persons with disabilities,

determines the amount of accessible multimodal communication options available. Highly valuing this right would result in inventing, creating, and allowing more multimodal writing.

Emad: OK, I'm curious to ask you, have you been in a position to resist the systemic struggle of having unfit or inconvenient modes of communication?

Ahmed: In fact, yes. I have a story of resistance from when I was an undergrad student. I thought the activity system that was available to me created many obstacles for my academic success. To remove these obstacles, I had to go through a series of discussions with school officials.

The traditional practice there was that the department would provide staff members as scribes to write for me, and others with visual impairments, in the final exams. I had to orally dictate my exam responses to them, and they would write what I said in the exam papers. Since the beginning of my first year, I did not feel comfortable with this method. I used to feel lost and unable to express my thoughts this way. In my third year, I took the initiative and talked to the department administration and some professors about it. I proposed a change to the system, one in which persons with visual impairments could type on a computer instead of dictating their answers. I had to deal with a lot of resistance and bureaucratic challenges in the beginning. I think many of the university officials thought it would be too difficult to make this alternative happen, and they were not courageous enough to try. Even for me, it was a new experience—I thought, I can type well, so why not try it in an exam? It was a little bit risky for me, honestly, but I took that risk so that I could try something that felt more comfortable for me. After a lot of bureaucratic stuff and talks with officials, I successfully managed to get permission to use my proposed alternative method (only for me, though). After trying it, it proved to be a great enhancement to the system, and the university endorsed it by providing special training for newcomers so they could effectively use this mode of writing and the tools associated with it.

Emad: OK, my final question: What do you think about the future of multimodal communication and literacy? Is there more access for persons with disabilities that you expect to come or that you think people should strive for?

Ahmed: Definitely. The more time passes, the more technological breakthroughs and inventions we will have in the world. In the end, it is not about the service or device that's invented for a certain purpose, it

is all about human creativity and imagination working in inclusive and diverse ways. The more user-centric we make our approach, the more creative and innovative ideas we will be able to produce, and hence, the more inventions we will have. To cut it short, in the near future, I expect more enhancement to the already available services and devices for persons with disabilities regarding usability, ease of use, portability, and accuracy. Again, it is all about inclusive thinking and creativity rather than inventing new devices. This is clearly related to the two features of genres that you previously mentioned: rapid change and being shaped by values and cultures. Thus, the more humans consider diversity and inclusion in their genres, the more advanced and diverse our modes of communication will be.

Ahmed: But before we reach the end, let me ask you a question. We have been friends for almost five years now. Did your interactions with me influence your literacy practices?

Emad: Absolutely! And in many different ways. To a large extent, it depends on what I know about you and the modes available for communication between us. For example, when I first met you, I literally didn't know any means of communication that you were using, and I was ignorant about all of what you mentioned. At that time, I used to only call you on the phone when we would talk. After I learned about the screen reader, I started texting you. However, I never knew about alt text technology. So, I was too hesitant to send you a picture or a meme. Now, I send you almost anything I want in our texts, and sometimes I will accompany a meme with an audio voice note that describes the visual part of the meme. So, I always make sure to translate the parts that I assume might be missing due to a lack of modes of communication. And I think I am always growing in my literate activities and my consciousness about using different modes of communication and the reception of what I write.

Additionally, I think my writing and communication skills have naturally acquired a higher level of sensitivity to the diversity of my audience and the modes of communication I need to incorporate. For example, professionally, I produce many documents ranging from syllabi, assignment sheets, and course plans. My production of these genres has been largely influenced by my sensitivity to multimodal communication and the desire to be as inclusive as I can.

Thank you so much for this interview, Ahmed.

Ahmed: Thank you for interviewing me.

Emad's Conclusion

Now, let me take you back to the question that I asked at the beginning of this article. Looking back at the genres you wrote in the margins before you read this interview, do you think you would approach those genres any differently after reading this? How do you think multimodality can play a role in your future writing and the bodies you want to give access to? I understand that this is not an easy question to answer, but the answer to this question has the power to transform the world. In Devitt's words, "Those who want to make changes in the world need to make those changes against and especially through genres" (2021, p. 18). So, please use the margins of this page to think about how you can make changes in the world through the genres you produce.

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Emad Hakim is a third-year PhD student and teaching assistant at Illinois State University and an instructor of English at Millikin University. He is interested in learning about and researching critical and transformative pedagogies in TESOL and writing studies. He likes nature, walking in green areas, and drinking tea while chatting with his friends and family. He also likes grilling so much!

Notes

Picturing Literate Activity: A Tale of Two Writing Spaces

Jennifer Coe

In two images, Jennifer Coe shows the tools behind—and underneath—the devices she uses to be able to write on multiple screens and in different positions.

Along with approximately fifteen percent of the world's population, I have a disability. Its most challenging symptoms—brain fog and severe pain in my spine that prevents me from sitting upright or walking and is only slightly relieved by lying flat—come and go and are always completely unexpected. In the decade that I have been living with this disease, I've had to construct ways to accommodate these intermittent periods of severe pain and cognitive issues, while keeping calm and carrying on. Because I'm not getting well soon. And I have things to write.

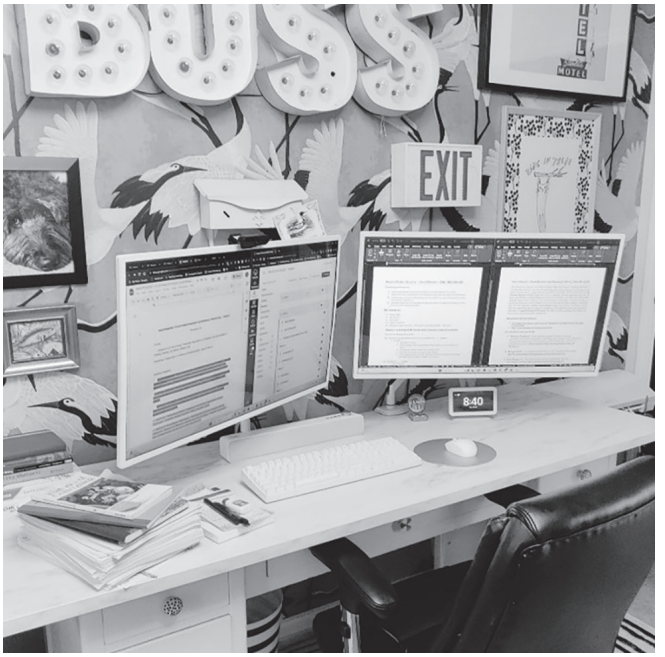

Figure 1: This is where I write most often. These large screens are connected to a device I use to dock my laptop, which allows me to take my laptop (and all my works-in-progress) with me, wherever I go. I am notorious for having dozens of files and programs open when I write, and then complaining about my computer running slow.

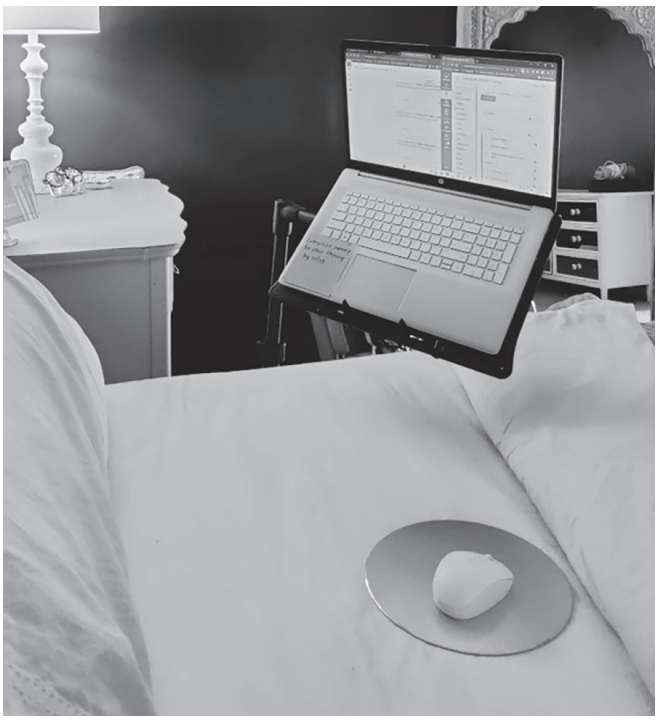

Figure 2: This is where I write when I am experiencing a flare and need to lay flat. The laptop stand allows me to write when I cannot sit at my desk, but it can be frustrating to be limited to the one small screen of this portable device, when I am accustomed to two large computer screens. I don't do my best writing here, but I do complete a lot of writing here.

Jennifer Coe is a Master's student in the English Department at Illinois State University. Her research interests include Disability Studies and Writing Pedagogy. In her free time, she loves spending time with her family, sewing, and listening to audiobooks.

Notes

Identifying the Symbiotic Potential Between Writing and ADHD

Ali Bazzi

Ali Bazzi explores the understudied and often understated relationship between writing and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Bazzi shares ways to see that, when harnessed effectively, writers with ADHD can transform the writing process from a daunting task into a holistically expressive, fulfilling, and transformative activity.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often makes academic pursuits, namely writing, uniquely challenging for students—and many with the condition will tell you that it's hardly out of a lack of interest that these difficulties present themselves. We tend to mischaracterize writing as having a universally accepted process of development and organization, and understandably so. Like science or mathematics, the rules of language continue to be fine-tuned by their arbiters and passed down to us to master through standardized curriculum and five-paragraph argumentative essays. Accuracy can be important in professional and academic settings, and certain forms of standardization—even hyper-specific MLA citations (that's MLA 9th Edition, not 8th)—help us effectively structure and relay information in ways that are consistent. However, some of us with ADHD often find the structural aspects of writing more difficult than many would have the energy to describe, as the lack of focus and thought regulation has been shown to result in poor structure, grammar, and content accuracy in students with the disorder (Re and Cornoldi 315). Such active trains of thought can make ideas feel sporadic and difficult to manage, which is why some writers with

ADHD, such as myself, have lost valuable time trying to circumvent these symptoms to produce academic work.

Naturally, these struggles can leave people like me prone to discouragement over our ability to write both creatively and academically. Sometimes, the process can be so daunting that it prevents me from wanting to start at all, even when writing about subjects I find interesting. It's an ultimate tragedy, especially considering the diverse thought processes, unique ideas, and creative aptitude commonly expressed both by children and adults with ADHD (Boot et al. 1857). Funnily enough, I was never told it might help to tailor my writing around these symptoms rather than try so hard to pretend they don't exist; learning to do so could help students and writers with ADHD harness our cognitive ability to create truly original and inventive works. Additionally, the potential that writing holds in its mediative ability (Roozen) may even help effectively mitigate the many anxieties and real-world struggles people with ADHD often struggle with. When encouraged and appropriately guided, people with ADHD may find writing immensely fulfilling, and the process could pose a considerable two-way benefit for both the writer and their work.

ADHD and Literate Activity

If writers with ADHD wish to use writing for their personal benefit, it helps to understand exactly what we mean by writing. In schools, we are often taught that literacy means reading and writing. For this reason, many of us tend to associate being literate solely with the ability to read and write. In some ways, that is what literacy means. But we often hear people throw around phrases like "computer literate" or "financial literacy" as indicators of one's understanding of those subjects. So, in the broadest of terms, as I understand it, literacy can be defined as the ability to understand something. We conflate literacy with reading and writing because, in school, we are often asked to learn by reading and show we've learned by writing. But processes of understanding take place in lots of ways between multiple individuals or between an individual and themselves. We each have different brains, which means we each understand things differently—ADHD or not. Regardless of what we call it, **literate activity** is our human process of understanding things in the world using written, spoken, or any form of language and symbols to interpret, understand, and communicate with ourselves and each other (Walker 118). Your understanding of literate activity may differ from mine, but neither one is inherently more valuable or productive than the

other. The most important thing is to value our literate activity to the extent that it helps us understand what we are trying to engage with.

When discussing literate activity, particularly in relation to ADHD, I want to distinguish between "regulated" and "unregulated" literacies. "Regulated literacies" resonate closely with Deborah Brandt's concept of literacy sponsorship, which describes literate sponsors as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (166). To put it simply, regulated literacies are literate activities with stakes. They are assigned to someone—usually by an academic, professional, or social institution—and subject to judgment or an expected outcome by someone affiliated with some kind of institution. Think of school assignments, work emails, essays, or just about any activity that is regularly judged by others as part of a reward-based or accrediting system.

Literate activity

Using Paul Prior's description of literate activity, Joyce R. Walker defines **literate activity** as the limitless ways we use written, spoken, or any form of language and symbols to interpret, understand, and communicate with different aspects of our community and environment. We all constantly engage in our own forms of literate activity, even when we don't call them literate activity (Walker 118).

By contrast, I see unregulated literacies as any literate activity that isn't created to be judged and assessed by one of these systems. That isn't to say that people don't engage in judgments about unregulated literacies; it's just that judgments people might make about these activities and texts don't happen within a specific institutional process and, usually, without any real stakes involved. Unregulated literate activities can range from journal writing to conversations, from Reddit posts to brainstorming an idea, or from starring a location on Google Maps to naming your alarm something unique because that specific word is what reminds you of the task you need to complete.

At first glance, and likely due to how education inevitably shapes our perceptions of literacies, it may be difficult to grasp how unregulated literate activities can benefit a writers' personal, academic, or professional lives, particularly for writers with ADHD. In my experience, we often develop a compulsion against our symptomatic habits in an effort to productively engage with society. However, embracing ADHD symptoms through certain forms of unregulated literacies, including personal literacies, can use ADHD symptoms to benefit writers' personal, professional, or academic lives.

Personal Writing and ADHD

ADHD results from a deficit of the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine, two chemicals that are essential to help the brain maintain focus and motivation. For the neurodivergent ADHD among us, this can manifest in poor life habits at a young age, such as low academic performance and behavioral issues. As a result, children with ADHD are more likely to be penalized for what, to them, may seem like innocent and inconsequential behavior. These patterns can lead to feelings of inadequacy, which can cause neurodivergent children to internalize the belief that they are inherently deficient and less capable than their peers. If symptoms carry into adulthood, it can become increasingly difficult to maintain a healthy professional and social life due to the added weight of trying to function in a world that expects neurotypical behavior. As a result, anywhere between one-third to one-half of all people with ADHD also develop an anxiety disorder at one point in their lives (Rosen). All people can sometimes feel overwhelmed by a mixture of our thoughts and self-perceptions, but for people with ADHD, this state of mind can feel constant and never-ending, often making it difficult for us to follow and address a train of thought. This is where I see the benefits of personal literacies coming into play for me—and potentially other writers with ADHD, too.

Neurodivergence

The root word neuro refers to nerves, and in this case, the nerves inside the brain (think neuroscience). Divergent means different from. **Neurodivergent** describes those whose brain chemistry is different from what is considered typical, or neurotypical. While I am referencing people with ADHD, neurodivergent can be used to describe those with autism, dyslexia, and other diverse cognitive conditions (Wiginton).

Personal literacies are the unique ways we use unregulated literacies to engage with and/or understand our environment (Roozen). This can be done through journal writing, sticky notes, mental reminders, or anything the individual finds productive. While personal literacies are unregulated, not all unregulated literacies are necessarily personal. In this article, I see an unregulated literacy as personal when it's applied by the individual, for the individual.

While unregulated literacies such as brainstorming are emphasized as useful writing tools, one incessant failure committed within language curriculum is the failure to address how personal literacies can benefit students (Roozen), made worse if we struggle to engage with elements of writing as a whole. Personal literacy is a tool to explore new avenues of creative expression and emotional catharsis because writers can articulate our inner monologues in many different ways. By allowing writers to visualize, track, and organize our thoughts without fear of stakes, pressure, or judgment, personal literacies that are unregulated, such as journal writing, can be accessible tools to help mediate our inner

conflicts (Roozen 541) and potentially mitigate ADHD symptoms. Other kinds of personal literacies can help writers sort out our thought processes, recall memories, and recognize the regularity of ineffective writing habits. Writing in planners and on sticky notes can be especially beneficial for supporting people with ADHD to navigate real-world difficulties. While a model for structure, a planner can also be tailored around a writer's lifestyle, which helps us foresee and prepare for future responsibilities. This can be done in whatever way works for a writer.

For example, I can be quite forgetful, which makes it difficult to rely on my short-term memory for daily tasks and obligations. To work around this, I opt to use Google Calendar since it is already integrated into Gmail (Figure 1). How else would I keep track of my assignments?

Add on that my current job requires me to constantly multitask, manage hefty amounts of data, and accurately coordinate information between dozens of different people throughout the day, which can sound like an operational nightmare for somebody with ADHD. So, to help me get through the day with minimal collateral, I rely on another form of personal unregulated literacies: I keep a small notebook on my desk and use it to track daily tasks (Figure 2). Each morning, I open a fresh, new page and dedicate it to things I need to remember that same day, writing them down as they come to me. By the end of the workday, the page looks far from anything legible or coherent—but were it not for these sloppy sheets of paper, my

Figure 1: A screenshot of my Google Calendar that shows how I tracked homework assignments for the month of September.

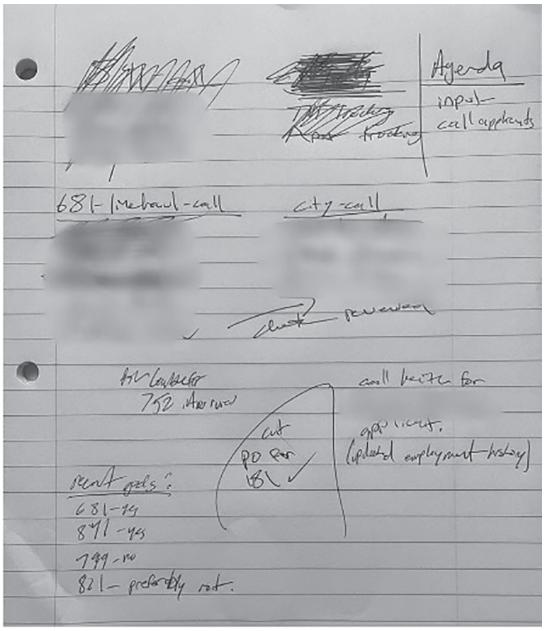

Figure 2: A page from the notebook I use at work to keep track of my daily tasks.

time at work would likely be a lot less productive. Is it pretty? No. Is it neat? Not by any means. Am I the only person in my office who still keeps a notebook? Yes. Does it work for me? Without a doubt. Neurodivergent people can have a lot going on in our minds. We may be perfectly adept at performing a task and maintaining a deeply intuitive understanding of how to do so, but with so much going on at once, we can forget the small things, like remembering to actually do them. That's why a mere three-word agenda can be enough as long as it keeps my daily responsibilities within my line of sight.

Unregulated Literacies for Academic Writing

Comparing the writing of ADHD students to those of non-ADHD, or neurotypical, peers, educational psychologists Re and Cornoldi found ADHD student writing to be "poorer than those of the controls for structure, vocabulary, grammar, length, and accuracy," but containing a greater "richness of themes" (315). This suggests an equal proficiency in conceiving new ideas and diverse subject matters (Re and Cornoldi 321). When it comes to academic writing, generating ideas is often not the problem for ADHD writers. Rather, the issue begins to present itself when putting those ideas down. This is one potential reason why the importance of clear expression and organization makes academic writing such a daunting process for students with ADHD. Since motivation plays a crucial role in sparking people's creative potential—and the cognitive traits desirable for effective writing aren't lost on the neurodivergent—it should be no surprise that when people with ADHD have difficulty expressing our creativity, it hinders our motivation to write.

Despite its lack of formality, many writers, especially younger ones, may be surprised to learn how embracing unregulated literacies may benefit their writing in academic situations. Unregulated literacies, such as journaling, can allow ADHD writers to see our thoughts in front of us, removing the

burden of having to remember our thoughts when moving to our next idea. In fact, people with ADHD often enjoy the mental aspect of brainstorming as it allows us to explore our ever-active trains of thought with zero rules or regulations. Since expression can be difficult for me, learning to structure and relay my ideas through academic writing can be incredibly rewarding; but to effectively write and find fulfillment in academic writing situations, I need to explore strategies to coherently verbalize and consolidate my thought processes using unregulated literate activity practices—which, ironically, starts with an initial disregard for coherence altogether.

Just (Don't) Focus

We are often taught that writing should be approached with an organized structure or idea in mind, which can be a very unhealthy approach. When trying to write as someone with ADHD, I tend to have multiple chains of ideas going through my brain with little coherence, which can be difficult to regulate. The most accurate description of my thought process that I've heard is that of a television that keeps switching between channels with the remote nowhere to be found. When I began to take my own writing seriously during high school and my first few semesters in college, far too often I would find myself sitting in front of a blank screen without knowing what to write. Or, consequently, how to start.

Maybe all it took was rigorous amounts of conceptually vague prompts and inquisitive figure-it-out essays before the paradigm shift hit me, but in navigating writing with ADHD, I've found that using unregulated literate activity to embrace random ideas is a pretty good first step toward developing good ideas. As I learn more about writers, I find many writers who feel the same way. Professional writer Anne Lamott writes, "The right words and sentences just do not come pouring out like ticker tape most of the time … Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere. Start by getting something—anything—down on paper" (2). We make it a habit to internalize our academic struggles due to standardization's dominance over education curriculum. This is why many of us try to compensate for this lack of confidence through our writing—and trust me, that doesn't work. Brains do not produce standardized thoughts, let alone ADHD brains, so we ought not to be so harsh on ourselves, especially during the early writing process when we might need unregulated literate activity practices the most.

What seems most unique to me about my writing process is that my initial writing tends to precede my outline. At its most basic, my writing

Externalization

In writing, **externalization** refers to the process of expressing or conveying internal thoughts, feelings, concepts, or understandings in a visible form. In other words, it's the act of writing down what's inside our minds and making it external or accessible to ourselves or others through writing (Bazerman and Tinberg 61).

process involves writing as much content as possible about the subject, forming an outline around which to organize that content, and then restructuring it into a cohesive piece of writing. It is important, however, that I first determine the barest of information for my academic writing situations. Long et al. prioritize identifying a topic, purpose, and audience as a framework for influencing the trajectory of the brainstorming process (23). For me, the result could be as simple as the following: "Topic: dog nutrition; purpose: show the best way to feed your dog and keep them healthy; audience: dog owners."

Once I have established those basics, I find it necessary not to let the burden of finality intrude on my next literate activity steps. In other words, it doesn't have to make sense right away. In a process called externalization, paper can become a space to ramble about anything that comes to mind regarding the subject matter (Bazerman and Tinberg 61). I write whatever comes. I see externalization as writers actively transcribing our inner monologues. These can be more or less focused, depending on what the writer is thinking. The process can be a test of confidence because so many of us are made to believe that the natural ways that we process language are not sufficient to be taken seriously in academic writing situations. So, let me say: that's far from the truth. Trust yourself, and you could seriously be surprised with what you create. As Anne Lamott writes:

> You just let this childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come through and onto the page. If one of the characters wants to say, "Well, so what, Mr. Poopy Pants?" you let her. No one is going to see it. If the kid wants to get into really sentimental, weepy, emotional territory, you let him. Just get it all down on paper because there may be something great in those six crazy pages that you would never have gotten to by more rational, grown-up means. There may be something in the very last line of the very last paragraph on page six that you just love … that you now know what you're supposed to be writing about, more or less, or in what direction you might go—but there was no way to get to this without first getting through the first five and a half pages. (1)

By allowing myself to make sense of my own ideation and thought processes through externalization, the types of unregulated literacies I shared here actually benefit my writing process (Figure 3). For me as an ADHD writer, my hands can't always write what my eyes don't see, so for

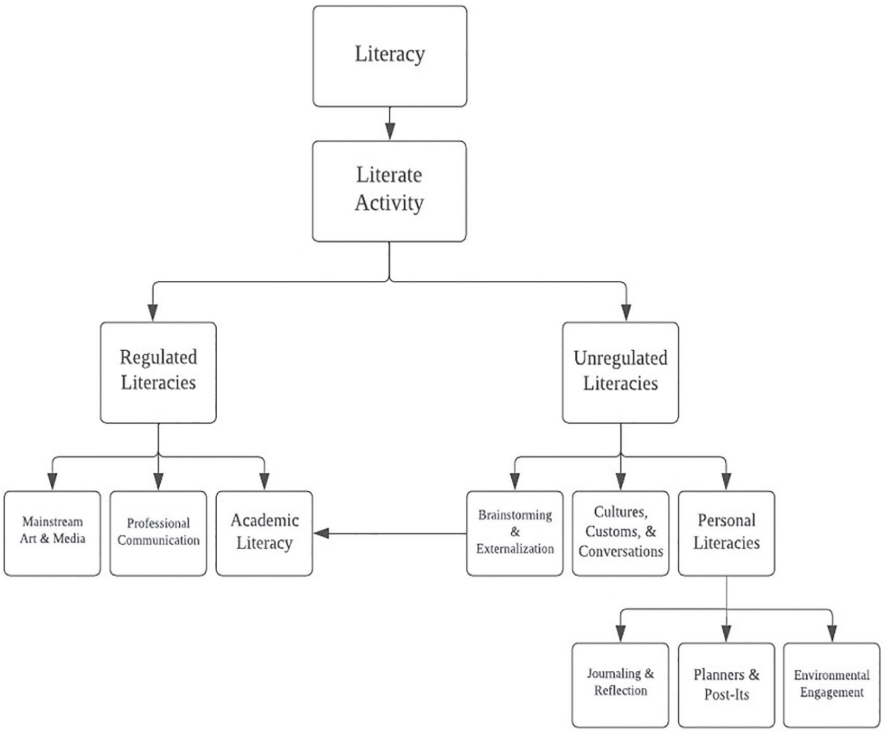

Figure 3: A flow chart of the different kinds of literacies and literate activities identified in this article and how I use them in relation to one another.

me physically laying out and visualizing my thoughts provides a base to determine what works and what doesn't.

This is where attention deficit can show its benefit—the neurodivergent nature of ADHD cognition can result in unique ideas that should be included. Take my dog nutrition example into further consideration, where I was writing as I thought:

> What do I know about dog nutrition? My friend has a husky. I wonder what he feeds him. What dog food brands does he buy? What are the most commonly purchased dog food brands? I should research what's good for dogs. Dog food brands have a lot of ingredients. Are they good ingredients? Once I find out what's good for dogs, I can find out if those brands include those ingredients. Do they have preservatives that are bad for dogs? Actually, I've seen my friend cook chicken for his husky. Is there something to that?

(It should go without saying, but that was substantially polished for legibility.) Identifying these ideas is an intuitive process, so I don't anticipate

the order in which they come. When free of pressure, and with the self-granted ability to write whatever comes to mind, I find that good ideas flow in much more quickly for me. I have never seriously considered anything regarding dog nutrition, so when improvising that example, I had no pre-determined statements to make. Other than a few small observations, I let my questions guide me. These sorts of questions provide a direction around which I guide my writing and research as an ADHD writer.

Alternatively, mind mapping on paper can also be part of ADHD writers' unregulated literate activity practice to help navigate thoughts and harness ideas. Mind mapping is a process that includes visually connecting ideas and "major nouns, verbs, and adjectives, as well as phrases to use in writing each paragraph" (Collins). That seems like a broad definition—because it is. People with ADHD tend to structure our practices in ways that make unique sense to us. Just because two mind maps are different in structure does not mean that one is any more or less productive than the other. I use mind mapping when I struggle to lay out ideas chronologically and make them flow together. In Figure 4, by listing a small set of concepts I wanted to cover, I was able to formulate a thesis. The example in Figure 5 was for a short online discussion post. Anything that I learn through research and inquiry, I must articulate in my own words. This provides me with a more elaborate and complete information pool that I can use for my writing content.

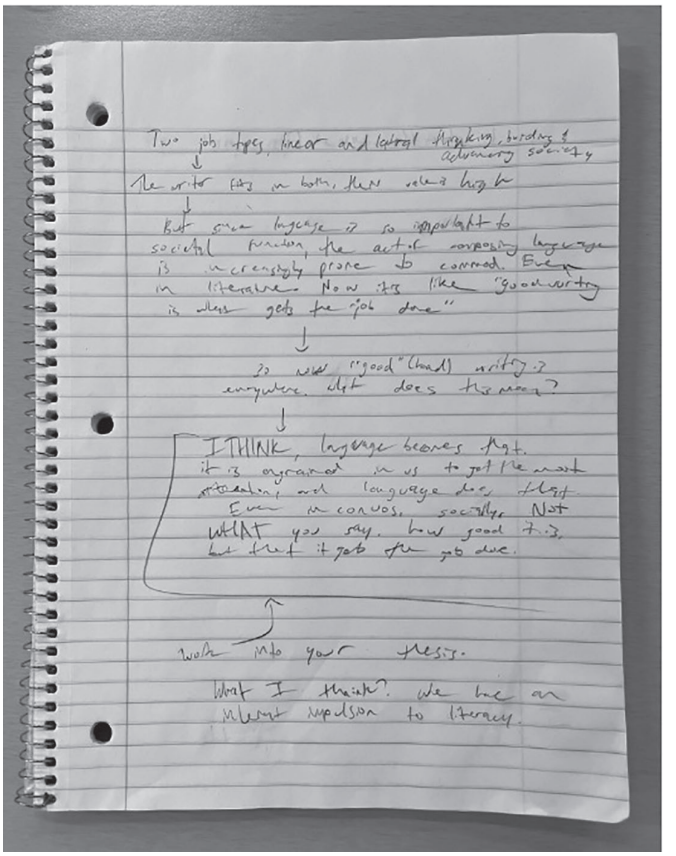

Figure 4: A mind map of concepts that lead me to a thesis.

Don't let this focus on academic writing lead you to believe that unregulated literacies are not equally useful when used outside of academic writing situations. I cannot emphasize the extent to which techniques such as

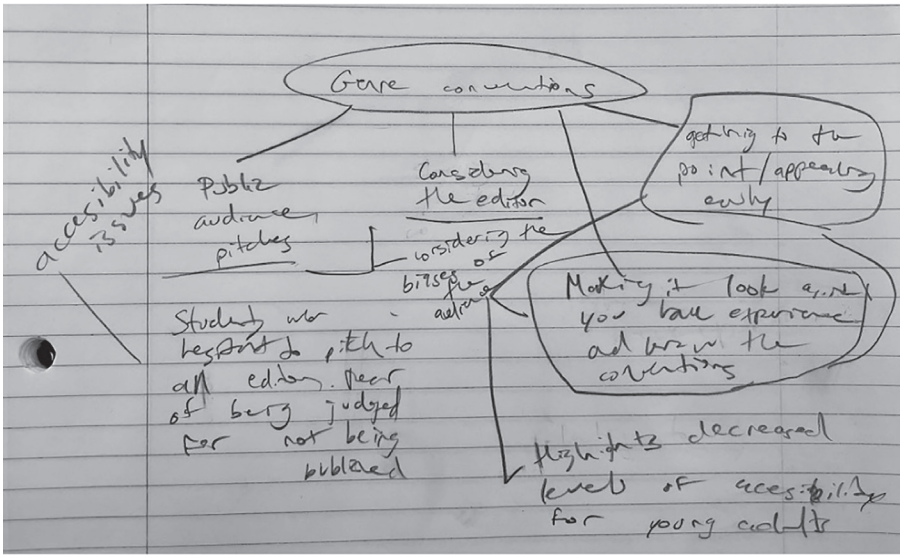

Figure 5: A mind map I made to help me compose an online discussion post.

externalization and mind mapping have aided my personal life (Figure 6). Like many people with ADHD, I'm prone to feeling overwhelmed when I have a lot to do in a relatively short period of time. Picture a cognitive swirl of thought bubbles and green apple slices with my brain as the blender. When I feel this way, I quickly write down every responsibility I can think of—regardless of whether I put it in my calendar—in order to organize my thinking. It most often ends up in my Notes app. It's important not to let my worry over my responsibilities inhibit my ability to actually do them. In moments like these, it helps to have a single space where I can view, map out, and compartmentalize any possible sources of internal stress I may be feeling.

Writing center appointments Tuesday at 2, Wednesday @12
Interview on Wednesday @2pm
Get questions ready for Wednesday

Get drills set up for practice Wednesday

Tuesday: do HR, COMM then COMP hw
Wednesday: do COMP HW
Friday: COMP hw due

Figure 6: A screenshot from my Notes app with a list of my responsibilities for a few days.

Filtering and Funneling

Now, how do I organize that content?

If a writer, with or without ADHD, asked me how they should organize their content, I would respond with the same question I ask myself: How would you like to have learned it? Writing, in part, involves structuring information in a way that the writer feels best communicates it. This means that, neurodivergent or not, writers should consider themselves just as much as they do another audience.

Assume you know nothing. If you have a hard time doing that, ask somebody else who knows nothing about the topic. The most productive forms of literate activity are the ones that work for you, and this is a concept that you can carry over into academic writing situations. For example, if I owned a dog and wanted to know how to properly nourish it, I would first like to know what nutrients are good for the dog and which are not. Then, I would like to identify whether the dog food I already use includes those ingredients. Depending on the outcome, I would like to be informed of proper alternatives. And there we have an outline. Using these kinds of unregulated literate activity is instrumental in planning the structure of our writing and streamlining our content (Long et al. 53). Early on, an outline does not have to be detailed or concise. For myself, a short list of topics laid out chronologically is all I need to organize my writing:

1. Introduction
2. Describe the nutrients that dogs need
3. Identify ingredients commonly found in most dog food
4. Provide alternatives
5. Conclusion

From there, I can collect my previously written idea fragments and arrange them in relation to the part of the writing they belong to. I then develop them into complete ideas and sentences, and finally, list them in an order that I feel best communicates my thinking. It can even act as a cheat code for constructing a paragraph. I call this part of my literate activity practice bullet pointing because the list of incomplete ideas resembles bullet points.

For myself as an ADHD writer, I find these unregulated literate activity practices rewarding since they help me track and develop my thoughts directly in front of me, something I find difficult to do without pen and

paper. At that point, filling out and connecting the bullet-pointed paragraphs becomes a much more tangible process. While I am doing this, it helps me to read the content out loud to form an appropriate sentence structure, ideally one aligned with my ways of writing. The content of sentences should support the aim of the section or paragraph they are in. When they don't, I write them anyway—and I move them later. Whenever I'm writing and something slightly unrelated yet insightful or useful comes to mind, I still write it. I even elaborate on it if needed, and then I continue what I was doing. I encourage writers with ADHD to read this carefully because I am addressing you directly: please do that. Whether you write a word or two, or a sentence or four, you will not believe the content you miss out on by not doing that. I often put these ideas to the side to remind me to move or include them later on. Most of my final drafts look like mass-rearranged versions of my rough drafts for this very reason.

In educational settings, it's important to be keenly aware of the organizational struggles that students with ADHD can experience, to work to destigmatize them, and to assist ADHD students in the classroom. ADHD writers can be encouraged to use tools such as dictionaries, spell-checkers, and thesauri to navigate writing hurdles. Since ADHD typically involves distraction, this is not something that we should avoid. Fragmenting and even controlled procrastination make the writing process less intimidating for ADHD writers, which gives people space to reflect on and further develop ideas (Collins). ADHD can also make it difficult to control focus when producing content, resulting in writing that is longer than needed due to an abundance of detail or restating of ideas. (My instructors can attest to this.) Here, ADHD writers can also be encouraged to explore practices toward brevity, such as shortening or combining sentences and removing repetitive statements and unnecessary content. For me, after developing a semblance of a draft, I revisit my list of the writing's purpose and establish which parts serve that intent before I edit accordingly. This helps me to make my work more concise and the content more relevant—a process that I call filtering and funneling.

Conclusion

The relationships between ADHD and writing are under-researched and misrepresented. It's one reason I'd be foolish to pin the blame on any one educator for not introducing me to such beneficial writing concepts earlier. Considering the popular—and like many popular things, inexact—discourse surrounding ADHD cognition, too often the relationship is inadvertently seen as one of discord and not of potential symbiosis. Writing is a domain

that encompasses a wide range of literate activities, and the creative potential of ADHD should warrant it to be studied and observed as an avenue of literate activity possibility rather than an obstacle.

As a prominent official space of knowledge and discovery that we interact with during our early lives, educational curriculum so often shapes the logical frameworks around which we evaluate and understand our potential as writers. In order to open up the literate activity potential of writers, ADHD or otherwise, we should emphasize and encourage more unregulated literate activity practices in our curricula, beyond the five-paragraph persuasive essay and simple reports. Relying more on unregulated literate activity practices is one way to support all students—including those with ADHD—in holistically benefiting from writing and language classes, especially in light of easy-to-alter writing tools such as Chat-GPT.

I call for balance. By advocating for individualized writing strategies and emphasizing the merits of ADHD cognition, it's possible to cultivate a literate activity landscape where diverse thought processes are not only acknowledged but celebrated. That's not to say traditional or standardized approaches don't emphasize important concepts, such as structure and coherence; but many times, they inadvertently overlook, and often curb, the vast cognitive creativity and unique ideation patterns that can be exhibited by those with ADHD and other kinds of neurodivergence. If instead we could be taught to embrace our symptoms rather than avoid them, we might be able to embrace writing as a transformative outlet that channels our trains of thought into more coherent states of mind, transformative habits, impactful narratives, or just A+ academic papers. To reimagine the relationship between writing and ADHD as symbiotic benefactors is not only a point of obligation for educational and research institutions; it is an imperative.

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Notes

The Transition of Writing Researcher Identities: From a Self-Conscious Second Language Writer to a More Confident Graduate Student Writer and Researcher

Abantika Dhar

Abantika Dhar uses her newly acquired knowledge of concepts like antecedent knowledge and writing researcher identity to discuss the evolution of her learning as a second language writer. She uses examples of her writing from classes in Bangladesh and the US to explore how a rhetorical genre studies focus has helped her to understand the evolution and expansion of her translingual writing identity.

Let's Talk about Writing

One of the most discussed terms in the Illinois State University (ISU) Writing Program is writing researcher identity. According to the ISU Writing Program, to become a successful writer one needs more than the conventional writing skills of putting a comma in the correct spot or writing a thesis statement. A successful writer should be able to use their knowledge "flexibly in different situations and must also be able to determine when new skills and knowledge are required" (Key terms & concepts, n.d.). Building a **writing researcher identity** means that you're able to do more than just acquire new writing skills. You also gain an understanding of how to use those skills to recognize what you "can and can't do as a writer." As the result of my exposure to these ideas, I've come to believe that each writer possesses a separate and unique writing researcher identity. The journey to becoming a successful writer is a continuous process of learning how to write in every new situation or relevant context and understanding the balance between using one's previous knowledge and newly acquired skills in writing.

Literate Activity

The ISU Writing Program's newly updated website defines **literate activity** as "a way to describe the complex activity involved in people producing and using texts across spaces and times, in ways that are shaped by our histories, tools, social interactions, resources, bodies, emotions, and relationships with the world. When we talk about literate activity, we include reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and feeling—all social practices that influence how we make meaning and communicate" (Literate activity terms, n.d.).

Writing is an integral part of our lives and people write for many purposes. The forms of writing people engage in are varied and may include writing for school, writing a personal journal documenting regular activities, and writing to accomplish regular mundane tasks like making a grocery list. Writers engaged in these writing tasks use different kinds of genres to fulfill their **literate activity** goals. To understand this way of thinking about genre, we could use one of the definitions of genre provided by the ISU Writing Program: "**genre** is a kind of production that is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make that production recognizable" (Key terms & concepts, n.d.). Rhetorical genre studies researcher Anis Bawarshi (2003) has compared genres to discursive sites (discourse places for productions, like texts) that "coordinate the acquisition and production of motives by maintaining specific relations between scene, act, agent, agency, and purpose" (p. 17). Bawarshi has further noted that "when writers begin to write in different genres, they participate within these different sets of relations, relations that motivate them, consciously or unconsciously, to invent both their texts and themselves" (p. 17). To me, these definitions point to the idea that genres are discourse spaces that provide humans the opportunity to create meaning for different people, in different places, and through different kinds of activities, contexts, and tools.

Genres are a part of writing as a complex activity system. According to *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* (GWRJ) author Brianna Zangara (2022), an **activity system** works towards achieving a goal which consists of cooperative interactions among people, tools, space, and genres. Zangara also mentions that "all activity systems come with genres or texts people use to achieve their goals" (p. 107). This view asks us to pay attention to all of the ways we use writing across different settings and for different purposes. However, I had a different attitude towards writing earlier in my life. I was unaware of the fact that I was involved in different activity systems, related to the phases of my education. These systems included various people, tools, ideas, and goals. For me, the idea of writing was limited to just one fixed genre of academic writing. All I knew was that I should strictly follow the five-paragraph essay format and use some so-called advanced English vocabulary in my writing to sound smart, which also provided me less time

and scope to think and work on the actual content and flow of my writing. However, focusing more closely on my own evolution as a writer has helped me to realize that even different academic writing genres have different features and genre conventions. For example, features of academic writing in the field of literature are different from academic writing for science and technology.

In this article, I want to focus on two particular features of my writing and consider how these practices changed as I moved through different activity systems in my schooling, especially in terms of how my antecedent knowledge impacted my uptake as I moved from one space to another, and how my evolving knowledge has shaped my writing identity. The two features of my writing that I will discuss are:

- Common phrases that I use at the beginning of different writing tasks
- My use of high-end words (advanced English vocabulary)

Antecedent Knowledge of Writing

In thinking about the writing of this article, I've realized that my antecedent knowledge of writing was much different in the past. I used to perceive the idea of writing to be something that always follows the same structure—meaning that I felt that no matter what I was writing, I'd basically follow the same general rules for organizing and structuring my texts. The ISU Writing Program defines **antecedent knowledge** as all the knowledge that a person has that they bring into their understanding and choices when they encounter something new (Key terms and concepts, n.d.). For writers, this previous knowledge can have a big effect on new writing tasks. If someone is asked to write a certain type of essay and they have written similar types of essays before, they will use their antecedent knowledge of writing those essays in the new situation as well. But the use of antecedent knowledge can be tricky in the sense that "we're not always fully aware of all the knowledge we are using when we write, and sometimes we use knowledge and experience that are actually NOT useful in a situation" (Key terms and concepts, n.d.). For example, my antecedent knowledge of always writing a five-paragraph essay following strict academic format and using incomprehensible, out-of-context high-end words (advanced English words) was not useful for my writing as a graduate student in the US.

During my high school years, my writing voice was a lot more structured and sterner. I completed my schooling and undergraduate studies in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, schools generally follow three types of curricula:

1) Bengali Medium: The national curriculum in the Bengali language with English studied just as a subject; 2) English Version: The curriculum used in Bengali Medium schools is translated in English; and 3) English Medium: The curriculum is mostly based on the curriculum of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, which uses British English. I have completed my school from Bengali Medium schools. As a second language speaker of English, I only had the opportunity to learn writing in English for specific English classes, as the rest of the subjects were taught in Bengali. The English teachers at these schools expected that the students would memorize the prewritten notes of essays that follow certain rules of academic English (including five-paragraph essays) and regurgitate them during tests. Students who were able to write word for word from those prewritten notes of essays would get the highest grades in tests. On that account, writing for the school was a kind of activity system in which I was only allowed to write in a certain genre (academic writing) using similar kinds of tools like five-paragraph essay formats.

I always had my interest embedded in English language and literacy during my high school years. But I had difficulty memorizing those prewritten notes of essays, and as a result, I never got the opportunity to excel in my English writing classes. I would try to rewrite them in my own writing voice, which I now know is called paraphrasing, though I still had to follow the five-paragraph essay format to achieve at least a decent grade in writing tests. However, this experience affected my writing researcher identity in a manner that I developed into an extremely self-conscious writer—or perhaps I may say, a self-conscious second language writer. After graduating from high school, I chose English language and literature as my area of study for undergraduate and graduate degrees from Bangladesh. Unfortunately, even for Bangladesh students who major in English, writing revolves around memorizing prewritten notes from different books and online websites (like SparkNotes). During this time, I developed another habit of using unnecessary, high-end English words (Figure 1) in my writing because teachers would give higher grades if students used advanced vocabulary in their writing.

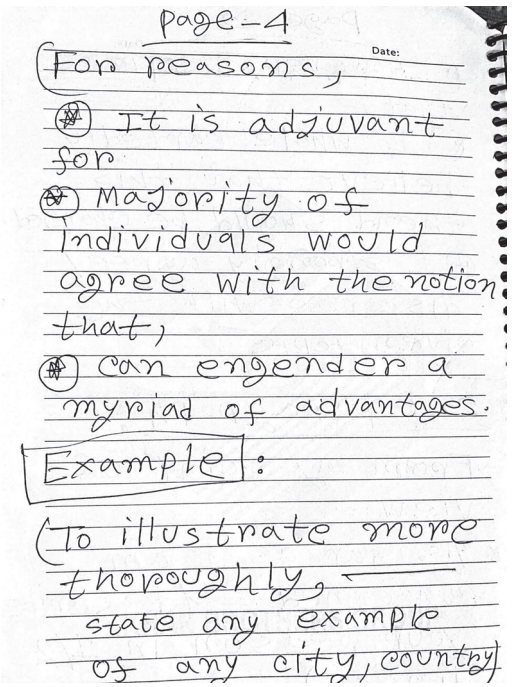


Figure 1: My list of high-end words from IELTS writing samples.

IELTS Writing Task 2

"IELTS Writing Task 2 is the second part of the writing test, where you are presented with a point of view, argument or problem and asked to write an essay in response" (IELTS writing task 2, 2022).

After completing my Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Bangladesh, I started preparing for my graduate studies in the US. To be able to study in English-speaking countries like the US, United Kingdom, or Australia, international students must get good scores in standardized English language tests like International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Though I didn't have to memorize answers for the writing sections of those tests, I still had to follow certain formats of writing to make my writing look academic enough to be able to get into grad school. To prepare for the writing tasks of IELTS, I went through the online study materials that were available on Google and YouTube. The study materials were mostly focused on analyzing successful writing samples that received good scores in previously held tests. All those writing samples used a very similar structure (five-paragraph essay format) and language (an academic tone with high-end vocabularies) for all different writing prompts and questions. Figure 1 is a list of phrases I created that were used to depict reasons in the arguments. However, you can see that I tried using high-end vocabularies like adjuvant, engender, myriad, and so on. So, studying for the English proficiency exams was the next activity system I was involved in, which revolved around achieving the goal of successfully preparing to write in another genre (IELTS writing tasks) to get a satisfactory score, which substantially affected my writing once again.

To succeed on this test, I decided to make my own notes to prepare for the IELTS writing tasks, following the suggested format of the successful writing samples. One of the writing habits I developed from following the writing samples for the IELTS writing task 2 was using common phrases at the beginning of argumentative essays. Figure 2 is a list of introductory phrases that I created after analyzing those successful samples for IELTS writing

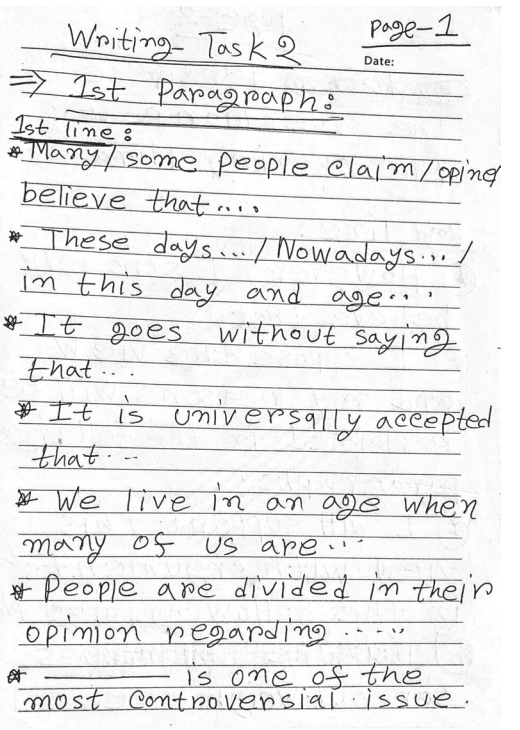

Writing- Task 2 Page-1
Date:
⇒ 1st Paragraph:
1st line:
* Many / some people claim / opine believe that...
* These days... / Nowadays... / in this day and age...
* It goes without saying that...
* It is universally accepted that...
* We live in an age when many of us are...
* People are divided in their opinion regarding ....
* _____ is one of the most controversial issue.

Figure 2: My common introductory phrases list from IELTS samples.

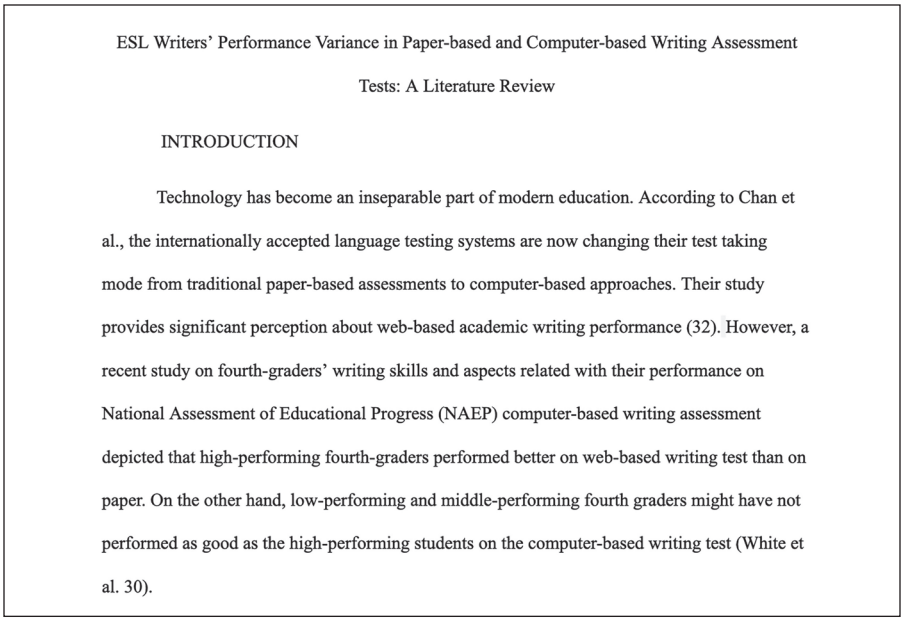
task 2. Usually, I would paraphrase the question after these opening phrases, as done in those samples.

The Effect of Antecedent Knowledge on My Uptake

As mentioned by the ISU Writing Program, "**Uptake** is the process we go through to take up a new idea and think about it until it makes sense (if we get that far with it—sometimes we don't!)" (Key terms and concepts, n.d.). Uptake is the process of learning any new information in the world, or engaging in new activities that cause us to have to learn new information. Now let's rewind back to my story again! You must be wondering what happened to my IELTS test. Well, I managed to get a good enough score in that test, following the notes I made after analyzing successful sample answers, and that led me to the new chapter of my academic life as a graduate student in the US. However, the real struggle began when I started my Master's studies in Applied Linguistics at Missouri State University. I had to write scholarly literature review-based research papers for my courses—a genre that was new to me. I quickly realized that the common phrases and high-end words I had used in order to score well on the IELTS exam were getting in my way when I started to learn to write in this and other ways.

For those who aren't familiar with this genre, "A literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated" (5. The literature review, n.d.). Though I had the experience of writing research papers from my undergraduate and graduate classes in Bangladesh, the way literature review-based research papers are written for the area of Applied Linguistics in the US was completely different from all the prior experiences I had. I was especially unaware of the language and tone needed to write those papers. I discussed the matter with my professors, and they suggested that I read journal articles in my area of concentration in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Applied Linguistics to make myself familiar with the language and tone of writing in the field. This activity is called **genre research** by the ISU Writing Program and is, among other things, the process of searching out examples, explanations, and directions for writing specific kinds of texts that we, as writers, may want or need to learn (Key terms and concepts, n.d.).

However, my antecedent knowledge of writing according to a strict structure continued to follow me for quite a long time. When I decided to



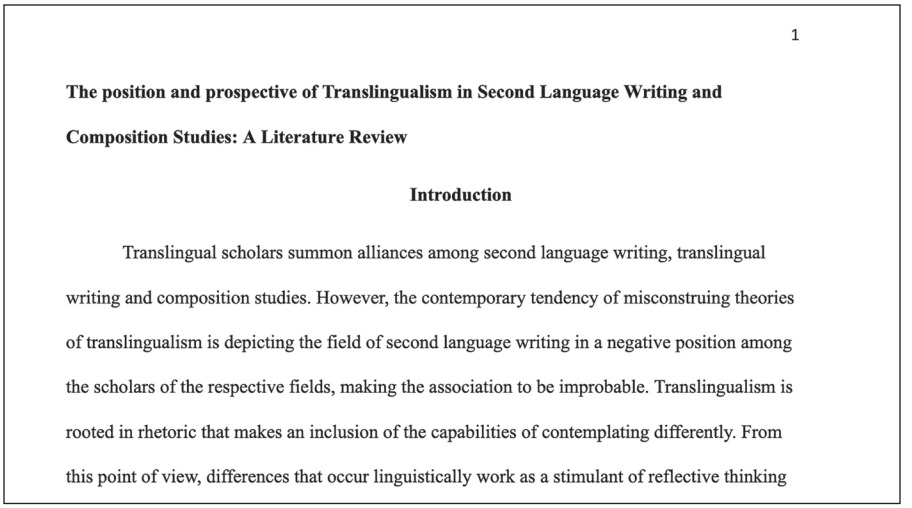
ESL Writers' Performance Variance in Paper-based and Computer-based Writing Assessment Tests: A Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Technology has become an inseparable part of modern education. According to Chan et al., the internationally accepted language testing systems are now changing their test taking mode from traditional paper-based assessments to computer-based approaches. Their study provides significant perception about web-based academic writing performance (32). However, a recent study on fourth-graders' writing skills and aspects related with their performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) computer-based writing assessment depicted that high-performing fourth-graders performed better on web-based writing test than on paper. On the other hand, low-performing and middle-performing fourth graders might have not performed as good as the high-performing students on the computer-based writing test (White et al. 30).

Figure 3: An excerpt from a literature review-based paper I wrote during my first year of graduate school in the US.

write about my own writing practices for this GWRJ article, I decided to look back at the literature review papers I wrote during the first year of my Master's studies in the US. As you can see in Figure 3, I wrote this literature review-based paper comparing writers' performance in paper-based vs. computer-based writing assessment tests. I started the introduction paragraph with the sentence "Technology has become an inseparable part of modern education." This sentence is quite general and not closely related to the topic of the paper which is "paper-based vs computer-based writing assessment." I think my antecedent knowledge of writing common phrases in the beginning of introductory paragraphs hindered my uptake of writing relevant first lines. At this point in time, if I needed to write a paper on this topic all over again, I have more knowledge of this genre and would write something related to "paper-based vs computer-based writing assessment" in the first line of the introduction paragraph. I also continued using unnecessary and irrelevant high-end words like summon, misconstruing, etc., in my research papers, as you can see in Figure 4. I started receiving feedback from my professors stating that my writing was difficult to understand with all the irrelevant high-end words and the use of common phrases that made my writing seem out of context.



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The position and prospective of Translingualism in Second Language Writing and Composition Studies: A Literature Review

Introduction

Translingual scholars summon alliances among second language writing, translingual writing and composition studies. However, the contemporary tendency of misconstruing theories of translingualism is depicting the field of second language writing in a negative position among the scholars of the respective fields, making the association to be improbable. Translingualism is rooted in rhetoric that makes an inclusion of the capabilities of contemplating differently. From this point of view, differences that occur linguistically work as a stimulant of reflective thinking

Figure 4: Excerpt from another paper I wrote during my first year of graduate studies.

Light at the End of the Tunnel: The Development of My Confident Writing Researcher Identity and Understanding Translingual/Transcultural Writing

At this point in time, I realized that I needed to change my way of writing again. My antecedent knowledge of following just one structure for all kinds of academic writing was hindering my own writing voice. I needed help and someone to guide me to figure out my own writing researcher identity. I sought help from one of my professors. She pretty much had the same background as mine: she was from India, a South Asian country that shares a partial border with Bangladesh, as well as many similar educational practices. She could relate to my situation and told me she also went through similar kinds of experiences when she started graduate school in the US. She introduced me to the term "genre discourse" and explained how different genres have different writing features. She told me that, in Applied Linguistics, the language should be lucid and simple to understand with evidence to support any claim. She also mentioned how words and phrases should make sense idiomatically. For example, the phrase "summon alliances" that I wrote in Figure 4 does not fit to the meaning of the sentence. One probably cannot summon an alliance. One can summon a defendant to the courtroom, which is used in the genre of legal discourse. Her suggestions literally opened my eyes, and I could understand the root of my problems with writing. After that conversation with her, I started to learn that different kinds of genres and discourses have different features, including different tone, style, organization, citation styles, etc. I also specifically learned that my antecedent knowledge

about one-style-fits-all organization and high-end word choices needed to change for my writing practices as a graduate student in the field of Applied Linguistics in order for me to flourish.

As you can see in Figure 5, which I wrote during the final semester of my Master's studies, I wrote a relevant first line for my introduction paragraph and there are hardly any high-end words that do not fit the context of the topic. I finally discovered my own writing researcher identity and writing voice, which made me a more confident graduate student writer and researcher.

I also realized that most writing tasks are shaped very much by the situations and settings we compose them for, and that means our writing will change as we begin following the features of different genres. For instance, to write an article for the GWRJ, I had to follow the writing conventions or features of GWRJ articles, like keeping an informal tone, using simple language, and using headings. I also came to gradually understand that genres evolve over time, and that people's uptake of new genres can include elements of other genres and activity systems they've previously worked with.

My writing experience is connected to the notion of **translingual and transcultural writing**, which are ways by which humans write, communicate, and think across languages, cultures, and societies (Key terms

A Critical Literature Review on the L1 influence in Indian English of Hindi/Urdu speaking ESL learners

1. Introduction

One significant real-life issue ESL educators encounter while teaching English as a second language is the influence of L1 in the target language that affects the accuracy of L2 acquisition (Alonso Alonso, R. 2016). The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze the L1 influence in second language acquisition focusing on the Indian English of Hindi/Urdu speaking ESL learners so that the ESL teachers of United States can consider the L1 influence in the interlanguage of Hindi/Urdu learners and customize their language instructions for better and individualized second language learning. Even though the Gujarat High Court mentioned that Hindi is not the official language of India, a huge number of people in India consider Hindi as the national language by speaking Hindi and writing in Devanagari script (Khan, 2010). As mentioned in the

Figure 5: Excerpt from a paper I wrote during the final semester of my Master's studies.

and concepts, n.d.). Before starting my graduate studies in the US, I only had the experience of writing in similar kinds of academic spaces following a particular standard writing structure and tone that was acceptable and welcomed by the people and academic culture surrounding me, which then became a comfort zone for my writing researcher identity. I was not ready to accept the reality, or in some sense even not aware of the fact, that writing in the world does not work in a singular way. The ways I wrote for my high school exams or the English proficiency tests were not incorrect or wrong. Rather, they were parts of certain activity systems that required different kinds of writing compared to how people write for other kinds of activity systems, like writing for graduate school in the US. When I moved to the US, I encountered an academic space with different language/writing practices where I was required to write for an activity system I had not experienced before.

My Present Writing Researcher Identity and Trying to Find a Conclusion

So, have I learned writing perfectly? The answer is obviously no, as there is no way of learning how to write perfectly. As I started writing in different activities systems for different goals, I realized that I wrote in different education systems which were influenced by different cultural and linguistic norms. My writing varied and changed across those different linguistic settings and activity systems. However, though I learned that writing changes over time in different activity systems, I never changed my writing style or tone. Whichever situations I wrote for, my writing carried the linguistic norms I learned from my educational and cultural systems with a strong South Asian academic tone. For example, even as a PhD student in the US, whenever someone asks me to write in an informal way, I would rather choose to write in an academic tone (often using a lot of transition markers) and that is all right. That is how translingual and transcultural writing works, which is an important part of my writing researcher identity.

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Notes

Who's Teaching Whom? Learning and Teaching in the Leadership Gym

Lauren Kendrick

Lauren Kendrick describes her experience of working with disabled young people in leadership gym as a complex activity system. Kendrick shares her story of how her antecedent knowledge expanded to include new knowledge of the complex tools, goals, rules, and people involved in leadership gym.

Looking back at high school, leadership gym had a significant impact in my life. I'm not talking about any ordinary gym class, but my high school's leadership gym class which was a program where I worked with special needs students. Leadership gym is a program for students with disabilities held at my high school every school year and still being held today. Students get chosen after an application process and interview to be able to work with disabled students. During the interview process, they focus on qualities that will be valuable for supporting disabled students and building relationships. Together, we would do activities, practice social skills, and go on field trips. During this program, I made special bonds and friendships with disabled peers that I will never forget.

An article from University College London states that "People affected by learning disabilities often face negative attitudes and behaviors from others, and also experience exclusion from education and social activities" ("Tackling Stigma Associated with Learning Disabilities"). Still in 2023, too many people stereotype people with disabilities. Many people often struggle with seeing students with disabilities as people, rather than seeing only their disabilities. Many people have not been in contact with, related to, or worked with

disabled students. Being a part of leadership gym gave me an opportunity to learn about students with disabilities like autism, Down syndrome, ADHD, cerebral palsy, and others—and to learn about the complex system of the program that supported our work together. Through the literate activity of working with young people with disabilities, I learned a lot of new things, like how to interact with different people, different methods of learning, and different ways of communicating. Like all of us, disabled students need different ways of interacting and need people to adapt to what we need.

Antecedent Experiences Paving the Way

I was first interested in this program when my neighbor Cal, who is autistic, came to our house to play basketball and baseball with me and my sister. When I was interested in the leadership gym program, I talked with my older sister Kaitlin Kendrick who had already completed the program. I realized my experiences interacting with Cal were part of my antecedent knowledge. According to the ISU Writing Program, **antecedent knowledge** is a term that describes all the things a person knows when they enter a given situation ("Uptake Terms"). This is a way of saying my "previous knowledge" on the topic, but it's more than that. Antecedent knowledge can shape how we approach new kinds of activities and learning in different ways. For example, a person might get frustrated if they are using prior knowledge and experience that they think will apply in a new situation, but that knowledge doesn't match up well or does not seem to be helping them succeed in a new activity.

In my case, this part of my antecedent knowledge was useful. I had already learned a lot from knowing Cal, and my sister's experience was also useful to me because it made me curious about working more with students with disabilities. To learn more about the program, I informally interviewed my sister about her experience. She explained how excited the disabled peers would get for each meeting and how they would have something new to share. She shared that, like all of us, each disabled student was different and said that leadership gym was always something to look forward to because it was something new each day (Kendrick). After hearing stories from being in leadership gym, I was inspired to join. When I talked to my sister, she explained she would never forget the bonds she formed and how special they were to her (Kendrick). I was even more excited to join the gym.

My sister explained to me that I would need to go through an application process and interview with teachers to get into the program (Kendrick). I submitted a written application, obtained teacher recommendations, and

interviewed with both leadership gym teachers. This was a new situation for me, and having an interview my sophomore year of high school was nerve-racking. I hadn't yet had a job at that time, so I had no idea how the interview process worked. Asking teachers to recommend me was also nerve-racking. The constant thought of "what if they don't like me or don't think I'm a good fit?" was terrifying. But I knew I needed to be confident going into the process.

After finding out I got into the leadership gym program, I had a lot of learning to do. Before this class, I didn't have much of an understanding about working with people with different abilities. Some people with disabilities are nonverbal, which means we must learn to communicate with them using methods we may not have relied on before. After talking to teachers in the leadership gym program, I had some helpful tips and tools to communicate with students who are more nonverbal. I learned that I could use hand gestures, using one hand to mean yes and one hand to mean no, and then someone who was nonverbal could pick a hand as an answer to communicate with me. Like many of us regardless of age or ability, some disabled students also struggle with anger, which required me to learn how to work to help calm people down when I could. I also learned that disabled students can have ways of communicating that involve moving their bodies and playing. One person I worked with liked fidgets to play with, and someone else liked playing a tapping game where she would tap me on the shoulder and look away, and then I'd do it back to her. These were all ways of coping during the school day by moving our bodies.

Learning to Teach in the Leadership Gym Activity System

Anyone who has taken a leadership class in high school or has worked with anyone with disabilities knows that both can be complex **activity systems**. An activity system is made up of the cooperative interactions of people, tools, and spaces to achieve a shared goal. No matter what the goal is, there are always a lot of steps to accomplish it ("Literate Activity Terms"). Leadership gym can be an activity system because everyone has a shared goal of teaching and working with young people with disabilities in a shared space using tools and methods for supporting diverse learners' needs.

Activity Systems

"An **activity system** refers to a group of people or community working toward shared goals over time. When we talk about activity systems, we include the people in the system, the tools people use to accomplish shared goals, the rules surrounding their activity, and how people go about doing work in the system" ("Literate Activity Terms").

Literate Activity

"When we talk about **literate activity**, we include reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and feeling—all social practices that influence how we make meaning and communicate" ("Literate Activity Terms").

Learning how to do this work also meant, for me, learning a lot of new ways of teaching and communicating with people. So even though a lot of the things I was learning and teaching were activity based, and not only limited to reading or writing, they can altogether be understood as **literate activity**, which describes the range of complicated activities we engage with when we're trying to teach, learn, or communicate with each other ("Literate Activity Terms"). Working with others can often be difficult and takes a lot of patience. As a high school student, I had to figure out my own teaching and learning styles—and figure out how to work well with people whose styles were likely different from mine. With little professional training, I had to fill in many of the gaps in my antecedent knowledge about ways to accommodate people with disabilities based on their individual and social needs. This process was challenging because the students with disabilities can get upset and need ways to express their feelings. This literate activity was a struggle and learning process for me. When someone was upset during the school day, trying to make their day better was a rewarding experience when I succeeded.

Going into the activity system of leadership gym, I was so nervous that I would do or say something wrong, that I wouldn't have the tools I needed to respond to young people with disabilities, or that I would not fully understand the rules of the complex system I was participating in. The more I learned how to work toward the shared goal of meeting individual disabled students' needs, the more I felt comfortable in the activity system of the program. Within a few weeks, I started to look forward to participating and learning alongside young people with disabilities more and more each day.

Literate Activity: More Than Just Reading and Writing

"In the ISU Writing Program, we often use the term **literate activity** rather than just saying writing, because we want to remember that communications between humans involve much, much more than just words written on a page or screen. Not only do we write (or communicate) using lots of different modes (speaking, visuals, writing, sound), but we use many different kinds of tools to create our texts. And every human activity also includes semiotic signs and forms of meaning-making that we often overlook.

"In addition, we like to use the word **activity** because it helps us to remember that our literacies are not just in the texts we produce, but in the things we do in the world." (Walker)

Like everyone, disabled students have vastly different personalities and needs. When I was learning to participate in leadership gym, I was told about the different disabilities of the specific students I would be working with so that I could learn

how to better interact with individual people. But like all activity systems, leadership gym is complex, and human communication is never simple. When I learned how to communicate and interact with each student in ways that worked for them, I was amazed to see how relationships grew between us. For example, I worked together with a student who was nonverbal and had a visual impairment. In my role in leadership gym, I had to support him in working toward the system's shared goals for each student (1) being able to participate in activities and (2) being able to communicate with other students. I was able to learn how to participate in this activity system toward these shared goals because of the support and knowledge of the teachers who worked with each student before I had even entered the system.

It's also just as important to note that the ways people in this system communicate change over time depending on the situation and goals. When the goals of working with disabled students changed—and when disabled students' goals changed—then as participants in leadership gym, we also had to change how we communicated. For instance, I worked with two disabled students who often wanted to participate in activities with me at the same time, but who communicated in very different ways. I had to learn to be able to communicate both ways simultaneously as best I could to support them in feeling included: one through speaking and one using an iPad to communicate.

Flexible, responsive social skills are a very important tool to succeed in leadership gym. In the ISU Writing Program, the term **socialization** might help here to describe this process: "We use socialization to consider how people represent and transform social and cultural practices as we interact … whether we do so intentionally or not" ("Literate Activity Terms"). One example is transforming the social and cultural practice of teaching and learning how to play a sport. During leadership gym, we worked with disabled students to learn and play sports like soccer, basketball, and volleyball. For everyone, learning a sport is a process that involves a lot of steps and takes a lot of time. Specifically for disabled young people who have varying antecedent knowledge of a particular sport, I had to in some ways relearn the rules of the sport (and system) to be able to break things down into manageable, teachable parts that we often forget how we learned: learning who is on your team and how teams work, learning the rules about how to pass the ball (which varies by sport of course), and learning what practices are available to try to score (a goal, a basket, a hit). My antecedent knowledge and flexible social skills were necessary to participate in this activity and this activity system with the available tools (sports equipment) and people (teachers and students).

When we can practice flexible, responsive social skills, the activity system works for the most part: people have fun, and we build relationships while we are doing the activity, creating an unforgettable bond. However, that is not how every activity system works all the time. Sometimes, we don't succeed in an activity system, whether it's because of the tools, people, goals, or rules. It's important to remember that disabled young people are young—and people. People often have trouble focusing, listening, hearing, processing, and then remembering what to do, too. We struggle to follow instructions and need things to be repeated. And, like all learners, we learn by doing, so we need to see a demonstration in practice—and then do one ourselves to learn what it's all about. Add to this that all components of activity systems are complex and constantly changing, including people's emotions. For example, people get upset when we don't get what we want or when things don't go the way we planned or hoped. In leadership gym, these moments required responsive social skills and emotional intelligence. It was often up to leaders to figure out if an emotional situation could be made better by encouraging words (telling someone they've done a good job), by interacting with others to change what's happening (asking someone to pass the ball to a particular person the next time), or by taking a time out and having a brief rest (for an individual or for the game).

Understanding different possibilities for action—and different paths for socialization, for transforming a social practice we think we understand to make it work in a new situation with different people and priorities—can help people reach our goals in a specific activity system like leadership gym. But we also need to constantly assess, rethink, and change the system's goals to accommodate different ways that participants can engage and succeed. While this is true of all activity systems, it's true of leadership gym because of the diverse and constantly changing nature of young people with disabilities at the center of the system and its goals.

Social Identities Influencing Action

In every activity system, it's also important to recognize that people are diverse in so many ways and have so many intersecting social identities that influence how we act.

In the ISU Writing Program, we understand **social identities** "influence people's … beliefs and actions among themselves and each other." So even though people were in the program because they had been identified as disabled, their different disabilities aren't the only things

different about them. In addition to gender and race differences, people in the program have varying socioeconomic backgrounds and different home lives—all social identities that influence how they interact with each other and other members of leadership gym. There's no way of fully knowing how each part of their social identities influenced their actions or personalities. Some of the disabled students were shyer than others, some expressed how they felt often through sounds and movements, and some were more comfortable engaging physically than others. Each person had their own way of interacting with others, whether it was physical touch, telling stories, asking questions, or other ways.

Social Identities

"In our program, **social identities** refer to the broad categorizations that individuals are born into or assigned (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sex, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, religion/ religious beliefs, national origin, and emotional/developmental abilities/ disabilities). We focus on how these identities influence peoples' collective/ individual beliefs and actions among themselves and each other" ("Identities Terms").

Based on my experience in the leadership gym activity system, I also saw how as leaders we brought in our own social identities that influenced our actions, which then influenced the interactions we had with the students we were working with. Sometimes, we were role models for interaction, and some disabled students would imitate what we would do. For example, after seeing one of the leadership gym teachers tap a student on the shoulder and then look away as a playful joke, one of the disabled students took up the same playful joke with that teacher and other people. So, it was important for us to recognize that our presence in the activity system was shaping the experience not just for ourselves, but for the young disabled people we worked with in small ways that we don't always pay attention to.

My Relationship with Michelle

Each day I participated in leadership gym, I tried to make the students with disabilities day better, and other people made mine better whether they knew it or not. I would also see people outside of leadership gym. In the hallways, their faces would light up and they would give me a hug, sharing that they missed me. This truly warmed my heart.

During leadership gym, I had the opportunity to work with a young woman named Michelle (to protect her privacy, I'm not using her real name), who is super outgoing and loves dancing and singing. Over time, Michelle and I built a strong connection in a way that shows me that what matters

most to me about activity systems is not just the people in them but the relationships between people as its own goal for the system. During our interactions, Michelle would tell me all about her day and what she was doing over the weekend and ask to talk to me outside of school, too. She would also ask other people where I was if I wasn't there that day and would talk to her teachers about our friendship. Building this relationship with Michelle made me feel like I accomplished my goal as a participant in leadership gym. We have made an impact on each other's lives as young people. So, if two of the activity system's shared goals are for each student to (1) be able to participate in activities and (2) be able to communicate with other students, I would also add a third: (3) building relationships with people that last beyond the bounds of leadership gym. I know that we have accomplished this goal. Even though I'm no longer a participant, I still talk about Michelle to my friends and family, and she talks about me to her friends and teachers. My friends who are still participating in leadership gym have told me that Michelle continues to talk about our friendship. I talked to my friend Alyssa Krass who is in the program, and she shared with me that Michelle had said, "You are my best friend because you remind me of Lauren" (Krass). Alyssa sends pictures and videos with messages from Michelle waving and smiling to me, telling me she misses me and that she hopes I am liking college. Knowing that I have made a long-term bond with her warms my heart. When I return home for break, I plan to go visit her and other folks in leadership gym.

For me, participating in the activity system of leadership gym took a lot of patience, kindness, learning, and relearning, but it was worth it in the end. My participation in leadership gym has influenced me to continue to work with disabled young people, and I have joined a Best Buddies club here at ISU. As a participant in that club, I work with one young person with disabilities. We do a lot of crafts and have conversations, too. I am also thinking about minoring in special education. Being a part of leadership gym showed me some of the basic things I need to know to continue to do this kind of work. It's a complex and often challenging activity system with many constantly changing factors that play a role in meeting goals successfully. One of the most important tools is flexible, responsive social skills, and one of the most important goals is building relationships with other young people. Working with young people with disabilities using this tool toward this goal has impacted me deeply, and the people of leadership gym will always have a special place in my heart.

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Notes

The Heart of a CNA

Hannah Davis

Hannah Davis dives into some of the different kinds of knowledge and literacies involved in the working life and habits of a certified nursing assistant (CNA) and a patient care technician (PCT). Davis discusses what a CNA/PCT is, how to become one, and the emotional connections that develop with residents/patients. While there are important aspects of learning that involve conventional literacies (reading, observing, test taking), there are also important emotional literacies involved in this work.

Ever since I was a little girl, I have wanted to be a doctor. I was always helping my family when they got hurt and would practice bandaging up my stuffed animals. The driving factor of wanting to help people started when my little brother was born at 1 pound 6 ounces. My dad's wedding band fit around his extremely small ankle. I was only three years old at the time and couldn't do much to help him. I did my big sister duties, but I couldn't hold him very often as my germ-filled toddler body posed a threat to his health. That's when I knew that I wanted to be able to save little babies born early just like him. When I started high school, I set myself up to take the CNA course my senior year to get familiar with working in the hospital and nursing home settings. I also thought that it would be a wonderful opportunity to get to help people while working towards my Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Working as a CNA/PCT enhances your bedside care abilities and gives you experience in navigating hospitals or nursing homes. It also provides you with practice taking

Vital Signs are taken to indicate the health of a person. There are five vital signs that are taken: temperature, blood oxygen (SpO2), blood pressure, respiratory (breathing) rate, and pulse. Vitals are usually taken when you go to the doctor so you may be familiar with this action.

vital signs, which is a basic skill for nurses. Along with that, the transition into becoming a nurse happens smoothly as there is less to learn on the job.

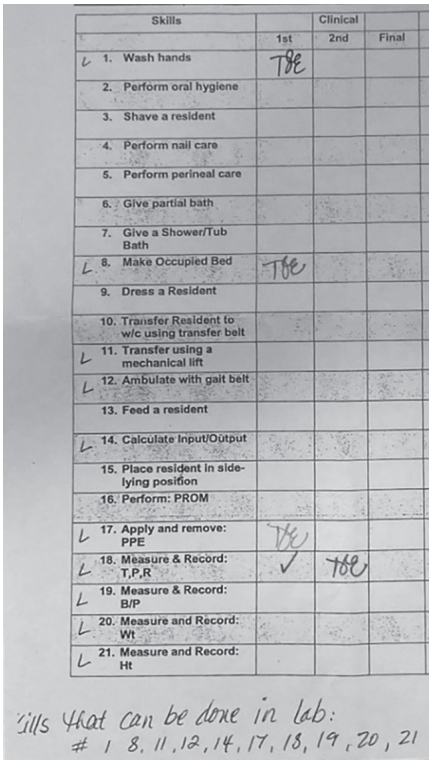
What Exactly Is a CNA or PCT?

CNA is an abbreviation for certified nursing assistant. Just from the name it sounds like a very important job, right? That's because it is. The person that is with the patient and/or resident most is the CNA. They examine patients for pressure ulcers (injuries patients can get from lying in the same position for a long time), any open cuts, and changes in mood or behavior along with mobility. And these are just a few of the things they watch for throughout their shift. Another name for a CNA is PCT which is an abbreviation for patient care technician. There is really no difference between the two, but hospitals typically call their certified nursing assistants PCTs while assisted living and nursing homes call them CNAs. Becoming a CNA and PCT is something that I am very proud of, and I have worked very hard for it. Currently, I am working at a hospital, so I am considered a patient care technician. In the hospital there are a few tasks you need to accomplish that you wouldn't typically do in a nursing home. These include taking a catheter and IV out, taking vital signs three times a shift, giving baths with wipes, restocking, and taking soiled linen to the laundry chute. In the nursing home you only take vitals when someone falls or per policy (typically once a shift). Something that is unique to the nursing home is getting a patient dressed in their own clothes. Nursing homes typically don't put their residents in hospital gowns; instead, they get to wear their own clothes from home.

Skills Checklist and Clinical

One of the first steps in becoming a CNA is demonstrating a list of twenty-one skills that can be completed either in lab or during clinical training, which usually takes place in a workplace setting (like a nursing home or hospital). This slightly intimidating skills checklist (Figure 1) includes a vast range of skills, and you only have a certain amount of time to complete the list. To get a skill checked off, you must have a clinical instructor watch you perform the skill. If you do something wrong, you get two tries at a different time to get that skill checked off. If you are unable to get a skill checked off, you are not able to sit for the state exam. There is a lot of pressure when it comes to making sure you complete them to become a CNA. Completing your clinical training is also required to sit for the state exam. Clinical training

is when you take what you learned from a class and apply it to real life. For clinicals, you're assigned to different locations that can include local nursing homes and hospitals. Before you start your clinicals, you must engage in a range of activities while learning and obtaining important skills to participate. First, students participating in clinical training are required to have the COVID-19 vaccine and a tuberculosis (TB) skin test. The TB test takes a while to complete because you must get the liquid injected under your skin, have it checked, and repeat the process. The equipment a student needs to begin clinical training includes scrubs, water resistant shoes, a watch, hand sanitizer, and a notepad. Since the clinical locations vary, the environments a student works in throughout clinicals can vary quite a bit. I participated in two different clinical environments: one in a hospital and one in a nursing home. In the end I preferred working with patients in a hospital setting because I enjoyed feeling like I was involved in their recovery.



Skills	Clinical		
	1st	2nd	Final
L 1. Wash hands	TBE		
2. Perform oral hygiene			
3. Shave a resident			
4. Perform nail care			
5. Perform perineal care			
6. Give partial bath			
7. Give a Shower/Tub Bath			
L 8. Make Occupied Bed	TBE		
9. Dress a Resident			
10. Transfer Resident to w/c using transfer belt			
L 11. Transfer using a mechanical lift			
L 12. Ambulate with gait belt			
13. Feed a resident			
L 14. Calculate Input/Output			
15. Place resident in side-lying position			
16. Perform: PROM			
L 17. Apply and remove: PPE	TBE		
L 18. Measure & Record: T,P,R	✓	TBE	
L 19. Measure & Record: B/P			
L 20. Measure and Record: Wt			
L 21. Measure and Record: Ht			

Skills that can be done in lab:
1 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

Figure 1: An example of a skills checklist that is signed by the instructor.

The chart on the next few pages shows the clinical skills list, and for this article I've tried to emphasize how the items on this list are more than just specific skills (Table 1).

The State Exam

Before taking the state exam, the student's clinical and lab hours must be completed. Lab hours include textbook material and other assignments that help you gain a complete understanding of the work involved in patient care. When I did my lab hours, I was given guided notes to complete weekly that covered each skill. I would have to read the textbook and fill in the blanks as well as answer multiple choice questions. The guided notes were big packets that were time consuming to complete. As soon as clinical hours and lab hours are complete and a person has an overall grade of 90 or above, they are allowed to sit for the state exam. In my experience, the CNA class was a dual credit class along with medical terminology. These classes were taken

Table 1: Clinical Skills

THE SKILL	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO PASS THE SKILL
Wash Hands This isn't just about washing hands, of course. The details here are meant to prevent the spread of disease, and CNAs need to be conscious of this in all their tasks.	- Don't touch your body to the sink - Wash hands for 20 seconds - Don't flick hands to dry them - Use paper towel to shut water off - Dry hands from fingertips to wrist - Part of infection control
PATIENT CARE	The next items on the list are all about learning how to properly care for patients. These literacies are specific, but they also include an overall understanding of how to help people feel better while they're in the hospital or a nursing home.
Perform Oral Hygiene	- Brush patient's teeth and tongue - Use emesis basin (curved pan) for spitting toothpaste - Take out dentures appropriately (use gauze instead of bare hands)
Shave a Resident	- Shave resident's face or legs - Use real razor or electric razor - Open patient's pores on face with warm water - Use shaving cream to prevent cuts - Confirm patient is not on an anticoagulant medication (will bleed out if cut because blood will not clot)
Perform Nail Care	- File nails with emery board - Clean under nails with orangewood stick - Paint nails if requested - NEVER trim patient's toenails with clippers (Nurse task)
Perform Perineal Care	- Properly clean male and female genitalia - Wipe after changing a Depends (diaper)
Give Partial Bath	- Clean all areas of the body - Patient is in bed (bed bath) - Grab all towels and supplies needed - Wash everything except for the resident's hair
Give a Shower/Tub Bath	- Grab all towels, clothes, linens needed beforehand - Change bed sheets and give fresh linens - Wash whole body including hair - Provide privacy - Get water at appropriate temperature
Dress a Resident	- Put on resident's clothes
MOVING and FEEDING PATIENTS	Notice how these literacies focus mostly on helping patients move around and feeding patients who need that care. Again, they're specific, but overall, they focus on both helping patients who need help AND on using the equipment needed to do that work. Getting patients up and moving can be important in a patient's recovery.
Transfer Resident to w/c using Transfer Belt	- Resident needs to move from bed to wheelchair - Use transfer belt to get a good grip on them

THE SKILL	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO PASS THE SKILL
Transfer Using Mechanical Lift	- Allows the transfer of residents that cannot bear weight on their feet - Must be 18 to operate this lift - Must demonstrate hooking up sling to the lift according to hospital or nursing home standards - Must safely operate lift
Ambulate with Gait Belt	- Walking up and down hallways - Gait belt is for your and their safety
Feed a Resident	- NEVER feed resident with a fork - Only fill spoon 1/3 full - Provide resident with a drink every few bites - Clean resident's face and hands when done
Make Occupied Bed	- Make patient's bed while they are in it - Includes taking off their linens and putting new linens on Notice how this skill combines caring for patients who can't move very well, making sure the space is clean and pleasant for patients, and doing tasks that help prevent the spread of disease. So, although making a bed seems like a simple thing, for a CNA it means combining several kinds of literacies.
USING EQUIPMENT TO GATHER AND RECORD INFORMATION	These next skills all involve gathering and recording information about patients that the medical staff needs to treat them properly. These skills all involve reading, writing, and math literacies, but also the mechanical knowledge of how to properly use the equipment.
Calculate Intake/Output	- Accurately record patient intake - Accurately record patient output - Use urinal or urinal hat to collect urine - Dump urine in toilet after recording
Place Resident in Side-Lying Position	- Place in certain position (learn in class) - Pillows must protect bony prominences
Perform: PROM (Passive Range of Motion)	- Passive range of motion - Assist resident with movement of joints and appendages
Apply and Remove PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)	- Don and doff PPE in correct order - Sanitize hands after removing gloves - Do not touch soiled PPE
Measure and Record: T, P, R (Temperature, Pulse, Respirations)	- Take patient's temperature - Take patient's pulse - Take patient's respirations - Must be accurate to instructors reading
Measure and Record: B/P (Blood Pressure)	- Use sphygmomanometer (blood pressure cuff) to take patient's blood pressure - Must be accurate to instructors reading
Measure and Record: Wt. (Weight)	- Put patient on scale and appropriately record weight
Measure and Record: Ht. (Height)	- Measure patient's height (sit or stand) - If laying down, record the straight sections of the body and add them together to get most accurate reading

Antecedent Knowledge

According to the ISU Writing Program, "**antecedent knowledge** refers to the facts, information, and skills that we each bring with us into familiar and new-to-us writing situations. When we talk about antecedent knowledge, we include our previous writing experiences with particular kinds of writing and prioritize articulating previous knowledge that we are often not required to describe or unpack explicitly" ("Uptake Terms"). In my case, I was transferring the knowledge I'd learned in these settings, but then I had to try to apply it to the specific questions on the exam.

simultaneously in a two-hour class period. The first hour was to account for the hands-on CNA skills and bookwork and the other hour was for the medical terminology portion that I got college credit for. My community college paid the $75.00 for the exam. The state exam is the written portion of the test to get a CNA license. I remember going to Illinois Central College and walking into a room where there were a bunch of computers and dividers that separated me from the person next to me. It was an intimidating space as it was completely silent. The questions on the exam were all multiple choice, and I had to sit at a computer to record my responses. There was not an oral part to my exam, just written. You get three tries to pass it, but my college only paid for the first attempt. The thing that prepared me most for the exam was the clinical experience and studying the notes I'd taken during my lab. I knew that if I applied the questions on the exam to real life (my **antecedent knowledge**), I'd be able to figure out the answer. I tried not to overload my brain before the exam because when I do this, I often end up second-guessing myself. Honestly, I was not particularly confident in my work on the exam right after I took it, but it ended up not being as bad as I thought. For me, the best way to prepare was to try to make sure I was understanding the material as I went through the class and thinking about that material as I was doing my clinical, and then I used both experiences to help me remember the material during the exam. To me, it makes the most sense to remember material as you go. A lot of questions are application based and it helps to have that experience to look back on. If you wait till the last minute to cram information, it will be more stressful, and you'll be less likely to pass.

Getting the Job

After you pass your exam, you are ready to start looking for jobs. I found this to be an intimidating process, and I think that's true for lots of people as you are a brand-new CNA and have only worked under the supervision of your instructor. Out in the real world there are places that are extremely short staffed, so most of the time you are working by yourself and don't have anyone to help you. This is quite different than it was for me in my clinical setting

because there were a lot of us, and we got to work in groups to complete tasks. I waited to get a job until after graduation so that I would have flexible hours and more time to work. My first CNA job was at a nursing home where I worked second shift from 3–11 p.m. Currently I work as a PCT at OSF St. Joseph. I work one 12-hour night shift a week. My shift that I work is from 7 p.m.–7:30 a.m. It is a little longer than 12 hours to allow for a 30-minute break. Places are always hiring, and a lot of places have competitive wages. You must be employed as a CNA within a year after you take your exam to maintain your license otherwise you have to take the test again. If you would like to further your education and move on in the medical field, there are a lot of places that are very understanding and will work with your schedule while you go to school. This gives you the experience of working as a CNA and is a flexible way to earn money while going to college. Working as a CNA or PCT means working within a particular **activity system**. In addition to the patients, there are other professionals that I interact with regularly; like me, they all share in the overall goal of the system, which is to make sure everything runs smoothly, and the patient is getting the greatest care. This includes ensuring that the patient is being checked on often. Nurses and PCTs have specific tasks that need to be completed for each patient because some patients need more care than others. For example, a patient may need their vitals taken more often because of a medication they are on. It is also very important that everything that is done in a patient's room is documented and recorded. If it's not documented, it didn't happen. Some of the professionals who participate in the patients' care include the occupational therapist, charge nurse, nurse, other PCTs, and the cafeteria staff. Occasionally at the hospital I will see a physician, doctor, or advanced practice nurse (APN). They come in to talk to the patient to make sure that the care plan is being followed and to check whether any changes need to be made regarding the patient's care. This ensures that the patient is getting the most effective care. As I mentioned, health care activity systems include rules that everyone within the system must follow, and constant, accurate communication is one of the most important rules for patient and resident care. Communication between individuals and groups within the system can be complicated, especially at points where one group of people might be taking over for other people, which happens regularly during the shift change. Communication when changing shifts is extremely crucial. As a PCT taking over a shift you would want the PCT that just worked the shift to

Activity Systems are defined as a group of people who share a common objective and motive over time. When we're studying activity using the idea of activity systems, we're interested in the people involved but also the rules, tools, texts, and other semiotic resources they use to achieve their goals, as well as the ways they plan and participate in the activity (ISU Writing Program's "Literate Activity Terms").

explain everything about the patient to you. You would want to know if they use the urinal, bedpan, or commode; if they are independent; if they may be aggressive; and if anything is unusual. You give a report after every shift and the goal is to be as specific as you can be. Another thing that is important to note is if you gave that patient a bath because the patient doesn't want two baths in one day. Along with the communication with other PCTs, it is important to communicate with the patient's nurse. Communicating with the nurse at a nursing home is different than communicating with a nurse at the hospital. In the nursing home, it is mainly just verbal communication as the charting can vary and may not transfer to the nurse right away. Verbal communication may consist of telling the nurse when things are abnormal. For example, if a resident is being combative and confused. This is important so the nurse can assess the resident and potentially figure out why they are acting out. However, in most nursing homes, like the one I used to work in, CNAs run on a strict schedule, which is based on company policy. There are certain papers that you must fill out to document showers and other forms of care. In the hospital there are many ways that you can communicate with the nurse. It varies on the importance or urgency of the message. I am currently employed at a hospital as a PCT. At the hospital I am employed at, PCTs are required to notify the nurse verbally when a patient's vital sign or blood sugar is out of range. For example, if the patient's temperature is 104, I would immediately notify the nurse as that is a high-grade fever and we would need to get their temperature down as soon as possible. You are also required to chart this in an online charting program. The charting program is an essential tool that tells the nurses, PCTs, and other healthcare professionals what tasks have been completed for each patient. Since communication is one of the most important rules to follow within this activity system, a principal belief is that if a task or interaction is not charted, it wasn't completed or didn't happen. At my old place of employment, we used a computer charting system that let us know what care had been given and what was still to be done. Another form of communication is a secure chat, like a text message, through the same charting program that is used to communicate with all nurses and PCTs. This is helpful when someone is in a patient's room, and you have information to give the nurse or PCT. The last form of communication is another tool called a Vocera. This is a small device, like a phone, that you are required to log into every shift (another rule to follow within the system). This device is clipped to your scrubs and lets you know when a patient's call light is going off. You can also use this to communicate with other nurses and PCTs as well as the cafeteria when needing to order food for the patient. A CNA or PCT is the first person to notice abnormalities of the skin or other things that are out of the norm for that patient. It is crucial that you tell the nurse when you have any concerns

as the nurse is not always going to notice the small things since they are not the one to give the resident or patient a bath. The nurse doesn't typically see their bowel movements either which can tell you a lot about a resident's health. Overall, there are many people working behind the scenes who make it possible to keep nursing homes and hospitals open, and there are many tools and rules in place to help keep patients and residents alive and well.

Emotional Connections

As a CNA/PCT, you develop emotional connections with the residents and patients that you take care of. This can be related to **emotional literacy**. It is important to be able to connect emotionally with patients, especially since they are often in the most vulnerable state, and you want to gain their trust. This idea connects to the ISU Writing Program's explanation of **literacies** as "the ways that we interact and communicate in the world not just by reading and writing, but also by speaking and listening, to create communication and share our experience of the world as we know it" ("Writing Research Terms"). For CNA literacies, it's definitely about more than just reading and writing—although those kinds of literacies are also involved.

For me, it's like the patients are my grandparents, in a way. Patients often let me know if I'm doing a good job or not. In my experience, the residents and patients are obsessed with my hair, especially when I wear my hair in two braids. Although most of the residents are sweet and kind, there are some residents that are short-tempered. They can be this way for several reasons. One reason could be that they are confused and the only way they know how to show their emotion and confusion is through aggression. These residents you must take care of differently and remember not to take the things they say to heart. In this field you have empathy for the residents, and it's hard to think about how they must be feeling. They are lost, confused, and most of the time lonely because they don't have any family left. The activity system of the nursing home space and a hospital has a shared goal (among the professionals) to care for the patients, but that doesn't mean things always go smoothly or that you can treat all the patients the same way. Instead, you must pay attention to their specific needs and try to understand them as individuals with histories; remember that they have good and bad days, just like other people, and that some patients will be more pleasant or easier to deal with than others.

As a CNA and PCT, you hear a lot about the resident's lives as you chat with them while caring for them, or you ask questions generated by the

pictures that many of them have around their rooms. I believe it makes my patients happy to know that I really care about their lives and that I love it when they tell me stories about their adventures through life. Of course, the most devastating part of the job is when a resident or patient passes away. It is almost as devastating as one of your own loved ones passing away, as you've often developed a close relationship with them. I have experienced a few times when one of the residents has passed away. Even though I wasn't super close to those residents, it was still very devastating each time.

Conclusion

Now you know the answer to the question: Why become a CNA? You know about some of the work and study that goes into training, and you have a good idea about the complexities and hard work required. You also know something about the many tasks that CNAs perform and the literacies they must have to do their jobs well. Hopefully, this article might also encourage you to treat CNAs and other medical professionals with respect because this helps make their jobs easier. That brings me to a final reason that I think becoming a CNA/PCT was a great choice for me. When I become a nurse, I will have so much respect for my nursing assistants and treat them with respect and kindness. It really does take a village to make things work in the healthcare field, and I think care teams can do better work if there is an understanding of what each person knows and their contributions to the patient's care. Overall, I would recommend becoming a CNA/PCT, but don't stop there! I'd also advise folks to continue their education and become a nurse or doctor. Getting your CNA certification is a great foundation to many kinds of professional work in health care.

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Notes

The Danger of Filter Bubbles and Digital Isolation: Exploring Ethical Research Practices

Alyssa Herman

In this reprint article from GWRJ 10.1 (2019), Alyssa Herman uses Eli Pariser's concept of filter bubbles to understand (un)ethical information-seeking behaviors and research habits. Drawing on past experiences with academic research, Herman unpacks how we can consciously embrace ethical research and writing practices as responsible writing researchers.

"Your final research paper needs to be 10 pages in length, and I'd like you to cite six peer-reviewed scholarly articles," my professor explained.

"Um … what!? I don't know what that means, and I definitely don't know how to write a paper that long," I thought to myself. (Except the language I actually used was a little spicier.) My mind began racing, and the premature panic attack set in.

It was my first year of college, and I had just switched my major to English at the last minute without knowing what the degree really entailed. My academic advisor suggested that I take a literature course because it was one of the few English courses still open and available to me. I probably should have expected to read a lot and write long papers, but when my professor introduced the final research paper requirements, I felt unprepared and overwhelmed. I had never written a paper like that before, and the task was daunting.

First, I had to figure out what it meant to write a research paper in the English field and how I was going to negotiate this specific research paper

Writing studies researcher Dr. Elizabeth Wardle defines **mutt genres** as "Genres that share superficial conventions with other genres but have been taken out of their original context, resulting in obscured audiences and purposes" ("Mutt Genre," 2010).

Wardle writes about mutt genres that are essentially made-up assignments for school, including the five-paragraph essay and the research paper (Wardle, 2009).

as a writing researcher. According to the Illinois State University (ISU) Writing Program, part of being a **writing researcher** means using your skills and antecedent knowledge to help you successfully adapt to new writing situations ("Key Terms and Concepts"). **Antecedent knowledge** refers to our past knowledge (the things we consciously and unconsciously already know) and how our past knowledge affects our behaviors in new writing situations ("Key Terms and Concepts"). My antecedent knowledge of writing papers was entirely based on my high school experience where everything I wrote was a variation of the five-paragraph essay and limited to four pages at most. This **mutt genre** I was taught in high school did not prepare me for academia, and this literature course was my first exposure to academic research and writing. It was at this point that I began to realize every research paper is unique and complex, as requirements change based on the field of study, the course, and even the instructor. Since my skills and antecedent knowledge were limited, my first instinct was to go straight to Google Scholar and search for sources there because I didn't know where else to start. I knew the university library was available to me, but since I had never used the library before, it seemed easier to look for sources online through a platform I was comfortable with. I scrolled through the various results and chose sources that agreed with my argument. The sources that disagreed seemed irrelevant, so I ignored them. Once I found six sources that agreed with me, I pulled out six quotes and proceeded to write my final research paper around those quotes. I did what I could to meet the requirements of the final research paper, and this was the only way I knew how.

It wasn't until the end of my sophomore year of college that I was introduced to the concept of filter bubbles, and I was formally taught more effective research practices. Learning these things completely changed who I am as a writing researcher, and it has greatly impacted how I conduct research and how I integrate research into my writing. My **writing researcher identity**—how I think of and view myself as a writing researcher ("Key Terms and Concepts")—has become stronger over the last five years as I have learned how to conduct and use research in a variety of ways. However, I still get anxious when I start a new research assignment. I get caught up in all the requirements, and I catch myself checking boxes. Do I have 10 pages? Check. Do I cite six scholarly sources? Check. It's really easy to focus

on the list of things I have to get done and simply worry about finishing the research paper. When I have this "just get it over and done with" kind of mentality, though, I don't think about how I'm getting the research done. This mentality promotes poor information-seeking behaviors and research habits, which leads to a bigger issue: Are my information-seeking behaviors responsible? Am I ethically engaging with other sources?

These are really important questions to ask ourselves when we're beginning a research assignment or project and starting our research process. These overarching questions led me to another question: What other factors—beyond our own antecedent knowledge and experiences toward research writing—affect our information-seeking behaviors? In other words, what outside forces encourage poor research habits? Our information-seeking behaviors are impacted by both our approach to research and our emotions about it. If we have negative feelings toward the activity of doing research, then we might end up with substandard research practices. For example, if we try to finish a research project as quickly as we can and hurry through the research process in order to finish, then that would impact our information-seeking behaviors. I'm definitely guilty of this myself. However, this isn't always the case. Sometimes we have poor information-seeking behaviors because we stick to the platforms we're comfortable with, and some of the platforms we use to retrieve information on a daily basis encourage one-sided thinking. This is especially evident when we look at Eli Pariser's concept of filter bubbles. I argue here that we can use filter bubbles in relation to literate activity—specifically our research practices and information-seeking behaviors—to be more responsible when we seek information and engage with different research sources in our writing.

What Are Filter Bubbles?

In March 2011, Eli Pariser coined the term filter bubble in his TED Talk, "Beware Online 'Filter Bubbles.'" His book, "The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You," was published two months later. I would highly recommend watching the full TED Talk online (it's only nine minutes) because Pariser explains filter bubbles in such a logical and eloquent way (scan the QR code in Figure 1 to see the TED Talk video). But just in case you don't want to go watch the whole video, I'll give you a quick rundown.

Figure 1: Scan this QR code to view Pariser's filter bubbles TED talk video.

Essentially, Pariser notices that his Facebook feed is being tailored to his likes and the links that he clicks on most often. Facebook tracks his history and starts to edit out things that he rarely clicks on or views. Pariser sees this kind of algorithmic editing on other platforms as well. Companies are focusing on personalizing the internet to our likes, which "moves us very quickly toward a world in which the internet is showing us what it thinks we want to see, but not necessarily what we need to see" (Pariser 3:40). This personal customization may seem convenient at first, but it's a serious problem because companies and algorithms are choosing what we can and can't see without our full, well-informed consent.

Based on his observations and experiences, Pariser created the term filter bubble and defines it as such:

> Your filter bubble is your own personal, unique universe of information that you live in online. And what's in your filter bubble depends on who you are, and it depends on what you do. But the thing is that you don't decide what gets in. And more importantly, you don't actually see what gets edited out. (4:10)

Pariser's definition highlights the most problematic thing about filter bubbles: we don't know what information we're missing out on. We're relying on algorithms to feed us information that we need, but those algorithms are narrowly designed to give us what we want. As Pariser notes, algorithms are computer programs that do not come with "embedded ethics" (6:30). Because these algorithms are simply focused on patterns of relevancy, they don't "show us things that are uncomfortable or challenging or important" (Pariser 6:45). Filter bubbles are one-sided—showing us the side we want to see—and, ultimately, unethical because they narrow our point of view and isolate us from each other.

What Do Filter Bubbles Actually Look Like?

Almost every social media platform you use online has some kind of personalization algorithm. It's important to see what filter bubbles actually look like so we can identify them and recognize what information is (and isn't) getting through our filters. Let's take a look at my Facebook page as an example (Figure 2). I went onto my Facebook, and this is what immediately came up. There are a few ads, which are all sponsored, and they are all stereotypically gendered. The big ad on my newsfeed is from a clothing company called Maurices—a company that I do not like or follow on Facebook. The Marketplace ads on the righthand sidebar are also clothing and makeup related even though I have never used the Marketplace feature.

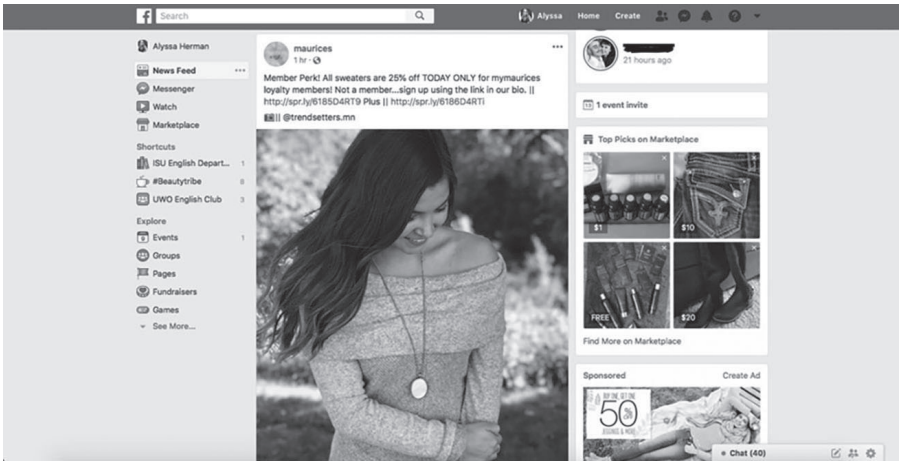

Figure 2: A screenshot of my Facebook newsfeed in 2018.

Some of these ads may be present because of other pages I like or other links I have clicked on in the past. However, I'm assuming some clothing and makeup ads simply show up because I identify as female on Facebook.

To show just how different our filter bubbles can be, I asked one of my colleagues, Dan Freeman, if he would screenshot his Facebook page as well. Let's take a look at Dan's newsfeed (Figure 3). Dan, who identifies as male on Facebook, has completely different sponsored ads than I do. The main ad on his newsfeed is a political ad, and the ads on his right-hand sidebar are for the Shedd Aquarium and Zillow, a real estate and rental site. It's almost laughable that my ads, as a female, are limited to clothes and makeup while Dan's ads, as a male, include politics, real estate, and social activities. The whole thing has a Victorian-separate-spheres vibe that I do not appreciate.

Figure 3: A screenshot of Dan Freeman's Facebook newsfeed in 2018.

Filter bubbles don't just exist on social media platforms, though. News sites that are supposed to be as unbiased as possible—Yahoo News, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and others—all use personalization algorithms in different ways. Even Google, a supposedly impartial search engine, uses personalization algorithms. Pariser argues that there is no such thing as a "standard Google" search anymore (2:28). How many times a day do we say "just Google it" when we don't know the answer? For me, it's a lot. But even if we Google the exact same thing, our search results will be completely different. To test this theory, Pariser had two of his friends Google "Egypt" and send him screenshots of their results. Their search results were so different that they weren't even getting the same news. One friend's results were based on Egypt's protests in 2011, and the other friend's results contained information about traveling to Egypt and vacationing there. This goes to show that many different webpages—from social media sites to news sites and search engines—are filtering the information that we receive. Filter bubbles, like the ones I've shown here, keep us from learning new things and truly narrow our perspective.

How Do Filter Bubbles Relate to Literate Activity?

When I first started writing research papers for different classes as a first-year college student, no one formally taught me how to seek information effectively. I attempted to teach myself how to research and gather information based on my antecedent knowledge, which led to bad research habits. I would pick a topic, come up with an argument, and then I would go look for research on Google Scholar that supported my argument. I thought it was OK—and totally normal—to choose sources that aligned with my views and just ignore the sources that contradicted my views. I didn't know how to engage with different sources and incorporate conflicting arguments into my writing.

Looking back, I see this as unethical information-seeking behavior and unethical writing on my part. Obviously, it's not my fault that I wasn't officially taught how to research effectively when I was a first-year student. But because I didn't have these research skills, I relied completely on my antecedent knowledge. I used the only scholarly platform I knew because I was comfortable with it, and I went about research in a completely backward way. If we want to be ethical in our information-seeking behaviors and research practices, then we should come up with a topic, research multiple sides of the existing argument on various platforms, and then come up with our own argument. This allows us to see different perspectives and engage

in a complex, multifaceted conversation. If we only search for and quote scholars who agree with us, then we're painting half of a picture and leaving out half of the argument. Sometimes we do this because it's easier, and sometimes, like in my case five years ago, we simply don't know any better.

> "**Literate activity** is a way to describe the complex activity involved in people producing and using texts across spaces and times, in ways that are shaped by our histories, tools, social interactions, resources, bodies, emotions, and relationships with the world. When we talk about literate activity, we include reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and feeling—all social practices that influence how we make meaning and communicate" ("Literate Activity Terms").

So why did I automatically assume that this information-seeking behavior was acceptable? Probably because all the online platforms I used to retrieve information fortified this unethical, one-sided behavior. Webpages that deploy personalization algorithms to create filter bubbles negatively affect our **literate activity** because they encourage poor research habits, and they reinforce our antecedent knowledge. Filter bubbles show us what we want to see and what we already know. These personalization algorithms don't challenge us or push us to think about new ideas. This is problematic because we engage with filter bubbles on a daily basis, and it's difficult to avoid them.

We all engage with filter bubbles differently, but my personal engagement looks something like this: Where do I go when I need to quickly look up a bit of info? Google. Where do I get most of my news? Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. If I see some news that is particularly interesting to me, then I head over to Google to learn more about it. Where do I go when I first start a research assignment? I go to Google to do a few preliminary searches on my topic. We're all different, but I imagine we have similar habits. We are completely immersed in webpages that create narrow filter bubbles for us, and we don't always see how these filter bubbles are negatively impacting our research practices.

Let's Pop Our Filter Bubbles!

Filter bubbles are so ingrained in our society that this may seem like a hopeless cause, but I don't think it has to be. We can't necessarily bring an end to filter bubbles altogether. (If we can, it's going to take some time.) But we can attempt to pop our filter bubbles through self-awareness and critically thinking about how we can improve our research practices. Once we know about filter bubbles—what they are, what they do, what they look like, and how they can lead to unethical research habits—it is our responsibility to

transfer that knowledge into our research and writing practices. Transfer is the process of taking the knowledge we learn in various settings and applying it in new situations ("Key Terms and Concepts"). As writing researchers, we can transfer what we know about filter bubbles by trying to work around them. How do we work around filter bubbles? I have learned to work around them through more ethical research practices.

First, I want to say that determining what is ethical is subjective, and I am in no way condemning Google and Google Scholar. Sometimes, a preliminary Google search is helpful when I'm looking for a topic idea, and sometimes a Google Scholar search is great when I'm looking for a broad review of my topic. These databases can be useful depending on the research situation and the kind of writing I'm doing. However, databases like Google Scholar still use different filtering algorithms. As Heather Campbell writes in her article "Google Scholar: A Credible Database?,"

> Google Scholar intends to be a place for researchers to start. As their "About" page says: Google Scholar provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. The way Google Scholar indexes or collects its information is different from other databases, too. "Scholarly" databases usually index articles on specific disciplines or topics, with certain journals being included on purpose. Basically, they're created by people. Google Scholar, like regular Google, is created by a computer: Google's "robots" scan different webpages for scholarly material, with less care going into the journals that publish these articles. (2–3)

In other words, Google Scholar cannot replace a university library database. Results on Google Scholar are filtered through various computer algorithms, so the results are less comprehensive and less relevant to specific topics. I have learned to rely more heavily on my university's library database (at ISU, it's the Milner Catalog) when I'm doing research because the sources I find there end up being much more useful in terms of relevancy and credibility. Using a university library database is a great way to avoid filter bubbles because these kinds of databases do not rely on personalization algorithms.

University library databases may seem daunting and difficult to navigate at first, but they're not as inaccessible as you may think. University libraries generally have resources to help you navigate their online database and their library as a whole. For example, as you can see in Figure 4, Milner Library has a webpage with a number of resources and an entire page dedicated to research. This page allows you to search for sources available at the library through the Milner Catalog, to search through a list of Milner Library's

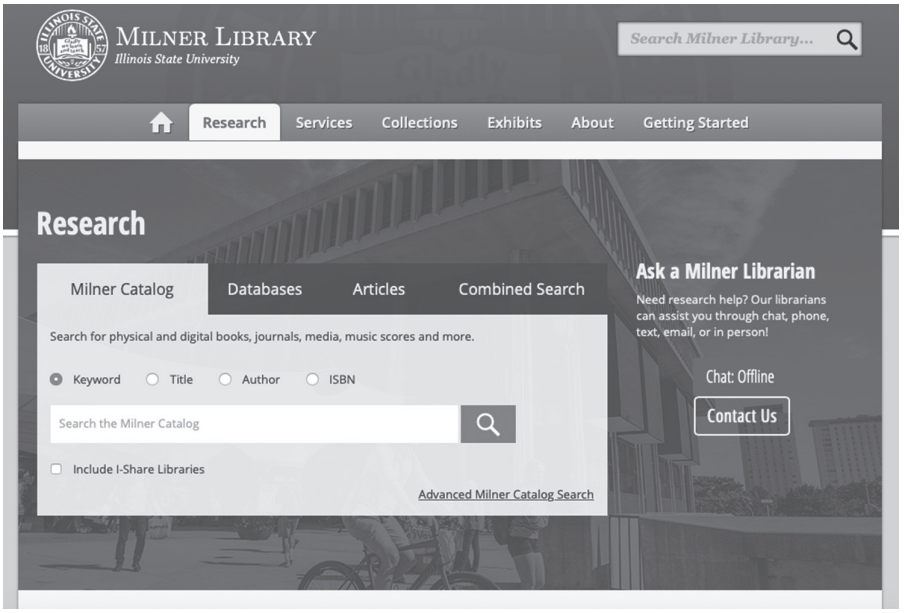

Figure 4: A screenshot of Milner Library's Research landing page in 2018.

database subscriptions, and to search for sources available at other universities that Milner Library may not have through I-Share and Interlibrary Loan. Even though this webpage is specifically for students and faculty at ISU, most universities have similar webpages that serve the same purpose. Sometimes, it's just a matter of exploring the webpage and learning to use the database through trial and error.

However, if you can't figure out how to navigate a university library database on your own, there are a number of ways to get help. At Milner Library, "librarians can assist you through chat, phone, text, email, or in person!" (Figure 4). So, if you're like me and you don't always feel comfortable with in-person social interactions, there are other ways you can get research help from a librarian. It's also important to note that university libraries almost always have subject librarians. Subject librarians have "an advanced education and experience in a particular subject or academic discipline. One of their most important assignments is to help you with your research. Subject librarians create online [Subject] Guides as a primary method of giving you help" (Hutchings). If you take a look at the screenshot in Figure 5, which was taken farther down on Milner Library's research webpage, you can see that Milner Library has subject librarians and subject guides to help you in your field and sometimes in your specific class. At ISU, every student is assigned a librarian based on their declared major, so it is possible to get personalized research assistance if that's something you want or need.

Figure 5: A screenshot of Milner Library's Research landing page with information about subject librarians.

As I've demonstrated here, university libraries offer many resources to make their databases more usable and accessible. It may take a few more clicks and a little more time than the average Google search, but it's important to slow down and build new research skills that move beyond just Google searching. Exploration is a key part of being a writing researcher, and it is absolutely necessary for conducting research and establishing ethical information-seeking behaviors and research habits.

I want to finish by issuing this challenge: Let's consciously decide to pop our filter bubbles by actively looking for what we need to see instead of simply looking at what we want to see. We can't allow filter bubbles to isolate us from each other and narrow our perspective because this negatively impacts our literate activity and our world. Filter bubbles encourage one-sided thinking and poor information-seeking behaviors, which may lead to unethical research and writing practices if we allow it to.

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Notes

People and Places: Research Doesn't Happen in a Bubble

Alyssa Herman and Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez

In this interview transcribed from an episode of the Conversations with GWRJ Authors podcast series, Alyssa Herman talks with Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez about researching and writing her GWRJ article "The Danger of Filter Bubbles and Digital Isolation: Exploring Ethical Research Practices" and why she chose information-seeking behaviors as a topic.

Talking to peers to brainstorm ideas, browsing past journal articles, and leaning on antecedent knowledge are essential steps in creating a *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* (GWRJ) article, according to GWRJ author Alyssa Herman. In this transcript of an interview from the podcast series Conversations with GWRJ Authors, Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez interviews Alyssa about her article-writing practices and highlights the types of research she conducted. Her insightful and detailed responses emphasize how broad the idea of research can be: talking with friends and co-workers; visiting the library; and exploring past articles, TED Talks, and past experiences. These diverse ways of examining a topic show us that no one writes alone and showcase the importance of ethical research practices.

Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez: Hello, and welcome to the series Conversations with GWRJ Authors. Today, we're talking with Alyssa Herman about her GWRJ 10.1 (2019) article "The Danger of Filter Bubbles and Digital Isolation: Exploring Ethical Research Practices." We love to talk about ethical research practices. In this article, Alyssa looks at Eli Pariser's concept of filter bubbles to understand unethical

"**Content research** is a practice we use to find, process, and attribute information we are writing about, including evaluating all information, practicing ethical citation, and recognizing all research as someone's writing for a particular writing situation" ("Learning Practice: Content Research").

information-seeking behaviors and research habits by drawing on her past experiences with academic research. In relation to filter bubbles, Alyssa unpacks how we can consciously embrace ethical research and writing practices as responsible writing researchers. Alyssa, thank you so much for being here.

Alyssa Herman: Thank you for having me.

Edcel: How did you come up with the idea for your GWRJ article on filter bubbles?

Alyssa: Well, I remember looking through the Grassroots Journal and wanting to write something about **content research**—the learning practice about researching content, information-seeking behaviors, evaluating information, and citation practices. I felt like there was a gap there. Not many GWRJ articles addressed this learning practice explicitly and the ethics involved in research and citation practices, but I wasn't totally sure how I wanted to go about discussing it in my article. I was in class with a few of my friends back in 2018, which feels like forever ago. I was talking with them about the article, and I told them why I wanted to focus on content research and ethical implications. They agreed with me that this was important work. So, we started brainstorming different ways to talk about content research in a Grassroots style. One of my friends, and also GWRJ author, Allison Hauser suggested the idea of examining filter bubbles as a way to discuss the ethics of research behaviors. So, Allison's suggestion triggered a memory of watching Eli Pariser's filter bubbles TED Talk back in my undergrad (see QR code in Figure 1), which was a perfect way to talk about how my research practices have changed over the years. And that's basically how this article came to be. It went through a lot of stages between research, writing, and revision, but this was the original premise.

Figure 1: Scan this QR code to watch Eli Pariser's TED Talk "Beware Online 'Filter Bubbles.'"

Edcel: I really like how you wanted to write an article about content research. It's one of the learning practices that, while we teach it a lot in our Writing Program, people have a hard time writing a specific article about it. When you think about the ethics behind research and all the process that goes into the research itself, especially thinking about more ethical ways to do research, I know that a lot of people might be intimidated

by that or might be scared and think, "Whoa, what if I say something wrong and then people will backlash because of what I wrote or the ideas I had?" So, I think writing an article is a good way to be more transparent and talk about the importance of ethical research practices.

Alyssa: Yeah, for sure. I think content research is one of those learning practices we teach more implicitly, which isn't inherently a bad thing. I mean, there are a lot of research habits we do automatically. But those automatic research habits can be an issue if we're not thinking through what we're researching and why we're researching it in the different research stages—like when we're initially looking up information or in the stages of citation creation. We can be perpetuating harmful ideas of what research is.

Edcel: Right. And that also gets me thinking about the writing process, which perfectly leads to my next question. What did the writing process of your article look like?

Alyssa: I started by doing a lot of content research. So, for me, this was rewatching the filter bubbles TED Talk and diving back into Eli Pariser's work on algorithmic bias. Then, I did some research on filter bubbles in my own life to see what they really looked like. So that's the part of the article where you see me comparing my Facebook page to my friend Dan Freeman's Facebook page, and that part of the article actually came about unintentionally. I was sitting in Dan's office talking with him about the article, just scrolling through my Facebook page and noticing some of the ads on my Facebook page, but I wasn't sure what other people's ads looked like. So, Dan was like, "Well, we could look at my page in comparison." And so that research emerged just from a conversation with a friend. Once I had this content research between Eli Pariser's work and analyzing some of the differences in Facebook ads between a male friend and my own as a female-presenting person, I then went back to the Grassroots Journal and considered the concepts I really wanted to emphasize. The four main ones I wanted to think through were writing researcher identity, antecedent knowledge, literate activity, and information-seeking behaviors, and how those all feed into each other. This is the point where I started outlining, thinking about in what order I wanted to introduce these concepts and where I could effectively present my research to support my main ideas. Outlining isn't easy, but it goes pretty quickly for me once I've done all my content research. I've noticed that if I spend more time researching upfront, the writing process becomes a lot easier for me, and that was definitely the case in this article. So much research took place prior to drafting! I'm

definitely a slow writer, so it took me a week or two to get a complete draft together. But I think it would have taken me a lot longer if I hadn't had those conversations with friends and done the research in advance.

Edcel: That's really interesting. I like how you mentioned that the article idea and brainstorming process was because you were having conversations with friends. I think that's wonderful. When people hear the word research, they often think, "Oh, I have to read like 100 articles. I have to do all this extra groundwork." But really, it's just talking to peers. And not only peers who are your friends, but people who genuinely care about the things you care about and want to discuss them. That can change the process in so many ways. A lot of my best ideas come from conversations with my friends, too. And it's really helpful to have someone to share those ideas and the back-and-forth conversation with, which you don't easily get access to if you're just reading by yourself and spending all your time thinking by yourself.

"**Genre research** is the practice of investigating how we learn about and understand specific genres in use in the world, including the people, tools, and recurring situations that influence how texts get produced in a genre. When we do genre research, we participate in activity like finding our own examples in a genre and analyzing what people do—and how they do it—in those examples, so that we can create recognizable, effective texts in genres that are familiar and new-to-us in current and future writing situations" ("Genre Research Terms").

"**Antecedent knowledge** refers to the facts, information, and skills that we each bring with us into familiar and new-to-us writing situations. When we talk about antecedent knowledge, we include our previous writing experiences with particular kinds of writing and prioritize articulating previous knowledge that we are often not required to describe or unpack explicitly" ("Uptake Terms").

Alyssa: Yeah, for sure. I mean, I think we don't always consider the ways that knowledge is mediated and co-produced. And we're not just sitting in our own little bubbles—to draw back on the filter bubbles theme of my article. It's something that we have to navigate and negotiate with others. So, it definitely helps to talk things through and see what other people think or hear what ideas they have.

Edcel: Yeah, and these are sometimes the best ideas, too. It's cool to discover when thinking about genre research that it also comes from cocreating knowledge. And this brings me to my next question. What was your **genre research** when you were working on this article? What were some of the resources you used?

Alyssa: A lot of my genre research was based on my **antecedent knowledge** of the Grassroots Journal. At this point, I had read quite a few Grassroots articles and taught them

as well. So, I had a good understanding of what Grassroots articles tended to contain, like personal narratives that tied back to learning outcomes and key concepts (see QR code in Figure 2), research to back up substantial claims, and then smaller, easy-to-read sections that were simply fun bits of storytelling. So, I had a good idea of what a Grassroots article generally looks like and its conventions. My reading up to this point served as my primary form of genre research, which I briefly mentioned earlier, but I also went back through previously published Grassroots issues on the Writing Program website (see QR code in Figure 3) to see what learning outcomes tended to be addressed. This also served as genre research because it gave me a better sense of the journal and what it was missing. And that's where I came to the conclusion that I wanted to write an article on content research.

Figure 2: Scan this QR code to check out the ISU Writing Program's "Terms in Categories" webpage.

Figure 3: Scan this QR code to check out the ISU Writing Program's GWRJ webpage "Publishing Writing Research."

Edcel: Wow, thanks for sharing these details with us. I really like how you mentioned that once you had a better sense of the Grassroots Journal and its conventions, everything came together, or "weaved together" like a lot of folks like to say—the metaphor meaning the threads of thought woven together that create interconnectedness. It's really important as well because we don't just create Grassroots articles so people can read them. We also create them so people can practice writing them. Practice things like analyzing genres, how different writing genres work, and who your audience is. Also, what kind of topic would a person like to explore? And I find that works really well when reading journal articles. So, hopefully, people can get inspired and write their own articles.

Alyssa: Yeah, for sure. The learning outcomes are not just theoretical concepts. They're things we have to work on putting into practice—especially with content research. We can talk about ethical behaviors, and we can talk about ethical citation practices, but if we're not actually

doing it ourselves, that totally defeats the purpose. There's definitely an in-practice component that may be even more important than the articles or concepts themselves.

Edcel: I agree with that for sure. So, once you finally had a draft you were happy with, how was the review process of your article?

Alyssa: The review process was really easy. I sent my article to the Grassroots editorial team, who emailed me back really quickly. They said my article was a good fit for the journal and then offered revision ideas. I think I went through two rounds of revision. One of their main ideas was adding a section on library resources. I hadn't originally planned for that to be in the article. However, it made sense to demystify Milner Library by showing how to use the online resources and how Milner's online resources differ from other platforms like Google and Google Scholar. So again, this goes back to the in-practice part. It wasn't just talking about content research. It was also about asking how we can practice ethical research using Milner Library sources. That became the end of my article, which added an action item for readers instead of just talking about content research and ethical information-seeking behaviors to conclude the piece. It added a "what do we do next" component. Overall, I think the review process was super helpful because it helped me polish my article in ways I hadn't considered initially.

Edcel: Thank you for walking us through all that. It sounds like the review process went smoothly, and the Grassroots editors gave you some solid advice. I definitely agree with your comment about demystifying the Milner Library and its resources. It's funny because just the other day, for a children's literature class, I talked to students about Milner's children's and YA collections on the sixth floor and encouraged them to explore these public spaces and access books. I also mentioned the Normal Public Library that's within walking distance from campus as well, and even talked about places like Walmart where you can just browse different books. Suppose you're waiting for an oil change, for example, which was my case last week. I browsed a bunch of different picture books and just used my time there. So, yeah, I definitely agree. Creating a consciousness of these resources that are accessible and available to us is really important, and it fits really well with content research.

Alyssa: For sure. There are so many awesome resources at Milner Library (see QR code in Figure 4) and the public library. And a lot

of times, people don't know they exist, or maybe they're too nervous to figure out how to navigate these places. That's something I talked about in my article, too. There are a lot of awesome online resources. This is helpful for people like me who have social anxiety and do not like going to places or figuring out new things when it requires human contact. A lot of article research can be done online. Browsing the Milner Library site brings up so much, including resources for writing. Definitely some cool stuff to look into!

Figure 4: Scan this QR code to check out the ISU Milner Library website.

Edcel: Fantastic. You heard it here, folks! So, thinking back to your article: If someone were to approach you, thinking they want to write a Grassroots article, what advice would you offer them, especially if someone doesn't know where to start or how to begin the research process?

Alyssa: I think for me, and it showed in my process, I recommend talking about your ideas with other people, brainstorming with friends, peers, mentors, whoever you like to talk through your ideas with—because **literate activity** is complicated and often way more collaborative than we realize. It doesn't have to be an isolated activity. I think we tend to picture ourselves writing alone in our rooms, like Googling random stuff when we don't know what it means. And coming up with ideas just off the top of our heads, like we're knowledge-making machines. And sometimes writing research might look like this. But other times, it looks like going to your friends when you're drawing a blank for ideas or don't know how to go about doing research. Or everyday office chats that turn into little research sessions. Or considering feedback from editors you hadn't thought about before. So, I think if you've got even a sliver of an

Literate Activity

In the ISU Writing Program, we talk about **literate activity** as "a way to describe the complex activity involved in people producing and using texts across spaces and times, in ways that are shaped by our histories, tools, social interactions, resources, bodies, emotions, and relationships with the world. When we talk about literate activity, we include reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and feeling—all social practices that influence how we make meaning and communicate" ("Literate Activity Terms").

idea or any kind of motivation to write something, see where it goes and be open to the chaos of all the conversations and different writing research moments.

Edcel: Awesome. Really great advice. Well, thank you so much, Alyssa, for sitting down to talk with us.

Alyssa: Thank you so much for asking me to do this interview.

The Grassroots team thanks Alyssa Herman for participating in this interview, and you can check out her article, "The Dangers of Filter Bubbles and Digital Isolation: Exploring Ethical Research Practices," reprinted in this issue (14.2, Spring 2024) and in the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* issue 10.1.

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Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez is a proud Puerto Rican, scholar, and graduate worker who is pursuing a PhD in English studies with a focus in Children's and Young Adult Literature. When he is not working on academic things, he enjoys cooking, playing video games and writing about them in the website Gamers with Glasses, and writing his monthly children's literature review in Spanish for the *Palabreadores Newsletter*. Edcel is the author of "Irma, Maria, Fiona, and Me" published in May 2023 by PRESS 254/Spoonfuls and the recipient of the 2023 Outstanding Student Social Media Manager Award by #REDBIRD-PROUD social media awards. Edcel's creative work has been published in *Palabreando*, *Euphemism*, *Sabanas: Literary Magazine*, *Ediciones Enserio*, *El Vicio del Tintero*, *Abolition Dreaming: A Zine Project*, *White Noise Zine*, and *Grad Punk Zine*.

Notes

Picturing Literate Activity: Lights, Words, Writing after Dark

Rachel Gramer

What does it look like when you're writing after dark? Rachel Gramer shares her after-dark writing space full of lights and words that each have their own stories to share, too.

Figure 1: My desk in the living room as my writing space after dark.

I took this picture a while ago when I was working on co-writing a research article for publication. Specifically, on my screen in this moment are a Google Doc window where we revised our writing together and a Finder window on my Mac laptop where I was working with images for the article: selecting, cropping, renaming, and placing them in our collaborative text. Looking at it a few months later, I notice a couple of things about my literate activity after dark.

I add a lot of soft lights whenever I'm writing after dark, and it shows. There's a lovely little lamp on my desk (which just broke last week), the light of the screen, the reflection of another lamp in the background (IKEA from when I lived in Michigan, going strong), the reflection of the TV (probably watching "CSI" and thinking about trips to Las Vegas), and even the light from the church sign across the street.

I also have a lot of words around me at my desk. I have an inspirational quote set in a little gold and white striped box (from Target); a Louisville, KY, coaster (from a place I've lived, loved, and miss); an Effin Birds daily calendar offering a sarcastic swearing bird image; and my work calendar/planner—all in addition to what's on my screen.

Not pictured: My little doggo Benson, just out of frame, next to my desk on the floor in his doggo bed whenever I'm writing. While I'm writing after dark, he's waiting for bedtime.

Dr. Rachel Gramer will tell you she doesn't usually write after dark, but that's when she's writing this PLA narrative. So she has another story about writing to interrogate. Right now, she's recovering from COVID (also after dark), and in 2023 she's also committed to fully enjoying her dog Benson.

GWRJ Short: This Blanket Is a Text

Piper Coe

The *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* presents a new genre: the GWRJ Short. Here, describing how crocheted or knit blankets are texts, Piper Coe discusses multimodality, remediation, and how makers use temperature blankets to make visual meaning.

We Can Make Meaning in the World Without Words

I began my fiber arts journey in 2020 with crochet and soon after learned about the art of temperature blankets. Temperature blankets, usually constructed through either crochet or knitting, are colorful blankets where each row represents one day's temperature for a full year (Figure 1). Typically, crafters create a temperature gauge that corresponds to a specific color (>100°F=Bright Red; 21–32°F=Dark Blue, etc.) and fits the weather of the maker's region (Figure 2). Some artists use these blankets to capture a day's highest temperature through color. Temperature blankets make it possible to visualize temperature changes over the course of a year or more, and track how humans are affecting our planet, as well as climate change. Makers can compare their blankets with ones they made in previous years and see how the colors changed and what month this change occurred. Temperature blankets are physical archives of how our world is changing.

Figure 1: A swatch made by the author showing the first two weeks of October's weather for Normal, IL (data gathered from AccuWeather).

Figure 2: An example of a temperature gauge for Normal, IL based on temperature highs (data gathered from US Climate Data; "Climate Normal – Illinois").

Medium, or media, refers to the systems we use to deliver and receive communication. We consider how the tools we use to communicate across modes mediate or influence others' uptake ("Multimodality Terms").

Tapestries (what we might consider "vertical blankets") are another **medium** for displaying temperature changes. For example, The Tempestry Project (Figure 3), a collective of artists, activists, and scientists, create "tempestries" (temperature tapestries) depicting climate change. They make two kinds of tempestries: one catalogues "daily high temperatures for a given year and

location," and another shows "annual deviation-from-average-temperature going back to the late 1800s and up through the present" (The Tempestry Project). They collect tempestries and put them on display for viewers to see the timeline on a larger scale and show how the earth has changed over time.

Figure 3: This QR code leads to The Tempestry Project website.

Most crafters' blankets are made with the colors of the rainbow, so they tend to come out super colorful. When we look at temperature blankets, we don't just see the colors of the rainbow, however; we can see the blankets as remediating alphanumerical characters through the use of color as a **visual modality**. **Remediation** "is the practice of transforming a text in one genre into a different genre. It is an activity that requires writers to mediate (change, transform) something again (re-), including altering its conventions to work toward different goals and/or in different writing situations" ("Genre Research Terms"). For example, dark red represents a high temperature, and as readers of this text, we gather this meaning from the color used. By using colorful crochet or knit as the medium to track temperature, crafters are influencing others' uptake of temperature blankets as texts. If this data were visualized in a table, it would be harder to comprehend with just a glance. But when data is visualized in this colorful way, the simplicity of the remediation allows a more thorough and complex transfer of meaning with the temperature encoded in the colorful fibers.

Visual (**modality**) is a mode that makes meaning through images and characters that we see. When we use the visual mode in writing and literate activity, we might use drawings, still or moving images, data visualizations, words, and visual design elements ("Multimodality Terms").

Temperature blankets and tapestries aren't the only way that fiber enthusiasts remediate alphanumerical characters through colorful yarn. Crafters also make temperature scarves, sky scarves, mood blankets (Figure 4), blankets that track how much sleep the maker (or someone else) got (Figure 5), health change blankets, and more!

Figure 4: This QR code leads to a blog with instructions on how to crochet a mood blanket ("How to Crochet")!

Figure 5: This QR code leads to a Tweet containing images of a sleep blanket (@Lagomorpho).

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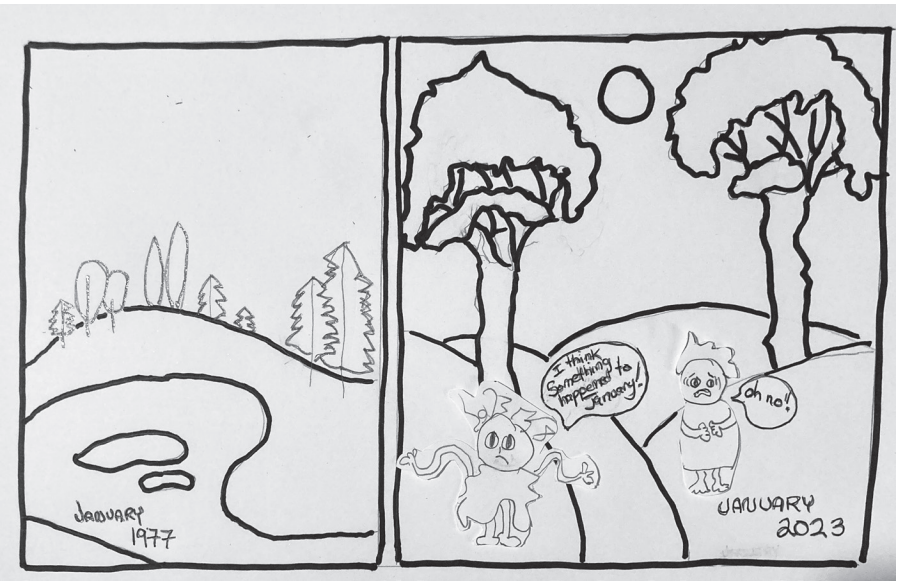
Piper Coe is an undergraduate at Illinois State University studying English with an interest in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Queer studies. When they are not outside birding, they enjoy reading, crocheting, and playing Stardew Valley.

Notes


JANUARY
1977
I think Something happened to January!
oh no!
JANUARY
2023

BTS Albums through the Years

Amelia Heinze

Amelia Heinze takes readers on a journey through the world of K-pop and South Korean boy band BTS to explore how album covers can act as powerful visual texts that communicate messages about musical genres and the bands that create them.

Remember when music came in the form of vinyl records and CDs? I know, old, right? You would grab the new album and start ripping it open, but have you ever noticed all the aspects of the album that you're holding? Well, you probably noticed the front, who doesn't? But what about the tiny, tiny words on the back? Didn't think so—or at least, I usually don't. When I first thought about writing an article for the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*, I didn't start by thinking of album covers. I had other ideas in mind, like dance, bookmarks, song lyrics, and so on. My first choice was digital wallpapers. Most, if not everyone, uses some type of wallpaper, even if it's just a pattern or plain color on your phone or laptop. Since there are so many people who could relate to this topic, I was thinking of conducting a survey asking people what type of wallpaper they had and the reason behind their choice. When it came to the research, the internet gave me recommendations on wallpapers for computers but zero information on when digital wallpapers were invented or how they evolved over time. The results were drastically different from what I had anticipated, and that was really disappointing.

Ultimately, with some help from my writing mentor, Dr. Kieffer,[1] I came up with album covers as a new topic.

People do look at album covers (even if they're just doing a digital download), and cover art is a common topic in pop culture discussions of music. However, while there are definitely some iconic album covers that everyone would recognize, and while we all might look at the images on an album we purchase, we don't often think about the work that album covers do as a genre or the story behind their designs. So, in this article, I want to look at some of those choices and some of the deeper meanings behind the often overlooked, intricate details that make up album covers.

History

This section is just meant to give you a little background information about album covers. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the definition of **album** is as follows,

> [The] Latin *album* is literally "white color, whiteness"; it is a noun use of the neuter of the adjective *albus* "white" ... The English word in reference to bound photographic collections is recorded [in use] by 1859. The meaning "long-playing gramophone record" is [in use] by 1951, because the sleeves they came in resembled large albums. (n.d.)

The first album cover was invented in 1939 by Alex Steinweiss (Novin, n.d.). Steinweiss was an art director and a graphic designer. He got the idea when he was hired by Columbia Records. He explains:

> I got this idea that the way they were selling these albums was ridiculous. These were shellac records and they were in four- or five-pocket albums to make one symphony. The covers were just brown, tan or green paper. I said: "Who the hell's going to buy this stuff? There's no push to it. There's no attractiveness. There's no sales appeal." So I told them I'd like to start designing covers. (n.d., para. 2)

The album cover underwent its first big change in the 1950s, when the use of color photography on album covers became popular. On top of the designers' work, photographers such as Charles Steward added to the charm of albums by capturing the artists themselves (Novin, n.d.). Many artists in the 1950s (or their studios) also started picking up on typography, creating

1. Dr. Deb Rigger Keiffer is a writing studies scholar whose research includes the study of middle school students and their literacy activities.

logos and trademark colors. An example of this evolution in album artwork is the record label Impulse!, established in 1960, which devised a black, orange, and white color scheme for its albums (Chilton, 2023), and also established the practice of "using cutting edge photographers for its covers" (Impulse! Records, 2023). Color and typography are still a big part of the design in today's album covers, such as in the case of the Asian group Blackpink with their trademark colors being black and pink, like on their album "Square Up" (2018), and the group TXT with their albums having either a "+" or "x" on the cover, as with "The Dream Chapter: Star" (2019).

So, there you have it, the album cover as original artwork was established when Steinweiss wanted to make album covers look more appealing. Although we often think of album covers—whether vinyl or CD or just images on a music download—as nonessential to the music we're buying or downloading, they're actually works of art that have been an important part of art media and history for many years.

Choices, Choices, Choices

So now, what you've been waiting for. As I worked on this article, I was advised to narrow down the number of album covers I chose to discuss, and that makes sense. You don't want to read a 30-page article, after all! But choosing the covers I wanted to discuss was a real challenge. Think about it, having to choose just three, out of millions. I wanted to use examples that I know a bit about and that had a deep meaning for me. So, in the end, I chose:

1) BTS's "BE"
2) BTS's "LOVE YOURSELF: ANSWER," and
3) BTS's "DARK&WILD."

And now you might be asking, "Who are BTS? What does BTS even stand for?" Well, BTS is a South Korean boy band that debuted in June 2013 (Chon, 2020). There are seven members: Kim Seokjin, Min Yoongi, Jung Hoseok, Kim Namjoon, Park Jimin, Kim Taehyung, and Jeon Jungkook (listed oldest to youngest). BTS was also the first Korean band to get nominated for a Grammy in 2021. Now, if you're into BTS, you're probably thinking, "OMG! SHE'S AN ARMY!" (Yes, I am an ARMY.) But if you're not into or have never heard of BTS, you might be thinking, "What is BTS and what is an ARMY?"

P-CHAT? What's that?

P-CHAT, or pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory, refers to how the ISU Writing Program specifically teaches and explores writing. P-CHAT is "one way to investigate, break down, and describe what's really happening when we're participating in complex writing activity" (Literate activity terms, n.d.). Applying this framework involves looking at some or all of these seven components of an activity, genre, or text: representation, production, distribution, activity, ecology, socialization, and reception.

Interestingly, both of these responses relate to the ISU Writing Program **P-CHAT** term **socialization**, which "describes the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute and use texts" (Walker, 2010, p. 76). If you have been socialized into the BTS world, you would immediately guess that my choice to discuss BTS means that I'm part of the fandom group that calls itself ARMY, Adorable Representative MC of Youth (Moon, 2020). But for those of you not in the fandom, you may not know what being a true ARMY is. Being an ARMY is more than just being a fan, it's a community that communicates with one another and connects to the artists through social media and music. For me, being an ARMY is being someone who cares and thinks of BTS as if they were a family member—knowing them like a best friend, knowing their background and history, and keeping up-to-date on them—whether that's following them on their Instagram page, YouTube channel, or Weverse page. This is different from the average music enthusiast who might stumble upon a few of their songs while scrolling through YouTube.

Because I'm an ARMY, I immediately wanted to do "BE" for my study of album covers. Who wouldn't? Well, that's ARMY-me speaking. And it also means that it might be time for me to introduce another Writing Program term, reception. **Reception**, another one of the P-CHAT terms, deals with the ways any text is taken up and used by others (Walker, 2010, p. 75). Selecting this album and expecting others to also be interested in it relates to my reception of it. Let me explain. My own understanding of BTS and what I value about their music has an impact on my choices and what I think you (my readers) might find interesting. I chose "BE" because it's BTS's most recent Korean album (as of February 2021), and it's the one I think almost anyone would be able to relate to due to the fact that it focuses on the effects of COVID-19. I also wanted to do "LOVE YOURSELF: ANSWER" because that's one of my favorite albums. I additionally chose "DARK&WILD"—this wasn't my first choice, but when I was starting my research, that was one of the very first discussions I found. So, I decided to give it a shot because I thought it might be a challenge to research an album that I don't know everything about. In a way, you could say that my choice of topic for this article is part of my own efforts to become even more socialized into a community I love, by learning more about the band.

OK, so you know how I was talking about how everyone can relate to the "BE" album? Well, that actually isn't the case, again, because of reception. When texts (like album covers) go out into the world, different people will engage in different kinds of reception—that is, they might understand and use the texts in different ways and for different purposes. So, your reception of "BE" would be different from mine and might depend on whether you're an ARMY or non-ARMY or how much information you know about the band. If a reader were a BTS ARMY, then they would likely know a little bit of the band's backstory and what they stand for. For BTS, their main message is to love yourself and not let others bring you down, and this album fits that perfectly. "BE" is about struggles related to experiencing the COVID-19 global pandemic, which is something I think many listeners, ARMY or non-ARMY, can relate to.

Another aspect of the band that I want to discuss before moving on to a specific analysis of the three albums I've chosen is that BTS is a Korean band that participates in a diverse community of fans who are not exclusively Korean. This is related to another Writing Program concept, **translingualism**, which refers to the idea that languages, and language learning, cross borders and change over time through interactions with other languages (O'Leary, 2019, p. 62). Most BTS songs are in Korean except for some verses like the ones on the cover of the "BE" album; it reads, "Like an echo in the forest; Like an arrow in the blue sky" (Zach Sang Show, 2020).

There are challenges that can come with being a group with a global audience that includes speakers of many languages. These challenges can come from the fact that their songs are in a language that not all people around the world speak or understand. This means that people who listen to their songs may not be able to understand the words unless they look up translations of the lyrics. In addition to this, another language barrier faced by groups like BTS who are popular in English-speaking countries like the US, is difficulty with the promotional aspects of being musicians, like talk shows and interviews for American media, because not all of the members of BTS are fluent in English. But these challenges are also a part of the strength of BTS ARMY because fans engage in all kinds of activities that help other fans get access to the music. On a range of different social media sites, ARMY members provide translations of lyrics; explain aspects of the Korean alphabet, Hangul; or share information about Korean culture that helps non-Korean ARMY understand the band better.

A person encountering BTS for the first time who isn't fluent in Korean (both the language and the script) might feel pretty lost, especially because most of the lyrics are in Korean. But if that person looked deeper

and engaged in some translation, then their reception could change. When one who does not understand Korean looks at or hears the lyrics "봄은 기다림을 몰라서, 눈치 없이 와버렸어," (Zach Sang Show, 2020), they would not understand what it's saying and the meaning behind it. But if they took the time and looked at the translation, then they would get, "Spring didn't know to wait; Showed up not even a minute late," (BTS—Life Goes On, 2020). So, reception isn't just about the immediate uptake of a new text. It can also involve research—like finding a translation—and collaboration, like engaging the help of the ARMY community.

Researching BTS Albums

OK, maybe that last bit wasn't what you were waiting for, but here's where the real fun begins. I started my research like anyone else, going to the internet and asking Google. Like I said before, I wanted to choose three albums, and essentially, I had two picked out, but I needed the final one. I looked up album concepts and meanings because I wanted an album that had a deep meaning to it, and that's where I found "DARK&WILD." Then I tried to find other articles on BTS and this specific album so I could convey the information accurately. But that's kind of when the road ended. I could only find the surface answers, but I needed to go deeper, and that's when I took the research into my own hands. I realized I had another handy-dandy tool at my fingertips: YouTube! I knew the band had done some interviews, so that's where I looked, and I was in luck. Instead of reading about other people's discussions of what they thought the album covers and lyrics meant, I could try to find comments the band members themselves had made and use those in my analysis.

Genre Research

We don't always call what we do genre research—even when we're doing it.

"**Genre research** is the practice of investigating how we learn about and understand specific genres in use in the world, including the people, tools, and recurring situations that influence how texts get produced in a genre. When we do genre research, we participate in activity like finding our own examples in a genre and analyzing what people do—and how they do it—in those examples" (Genre research terms, n.d.).

After all the research, I thought I might need more from the internet. But then again, this project was about my own analysis, and I had a lot of antecedent knowledge that I could use to understand the visual design of the album covers. **Antecedent knowledge** is yet another ISU Writing Program term, one that refers to knowledge a person already has, which they're using to interpret or interact with new information (Key terms & concepts, n.d.). I have knowledge about BTS and their album cover designs because I've listened to

their music and been a fan for so long. So, I just started putting my thoughts down, and this is what I came up with.

Genre Conventions of Album Covers

What are some common conventions of an album cover, you might ask, or, what in the world is a common convention? Well, common conventions are things you typically see in a specific genre, like the details you'd expect to find on an album cover. The ISU Writing Program refers to these as **genre conventions**—"the characteristics of any kind of text that make it recognizable as participating in a particular genre" (Genre research terms, n.d.). For example, if you look at business cards, some common genre conventions include the address of the place, the name of the business or businessperson, and a phone number, along with other ways to contact them. OK, so that's business cards, but what about album covers?

Well, one common convention that most people recognize first when it comes to album covers is the name of the album. Who doesn't go straight to the album title? It's usually smack-dab in the middle of everything.

As I've mentioned before, BTS is a Korean band, but they use English on many of their albums and songs. While it's true that many Koreans study English and use it in aspects of their daily lives, using English on an album might also attract more English speakers to listen and check out their music.

Some other common conventions that most album covers include are the artist or group's name; the artist or group's logo, if they have one; some kind of picture or artwork; and certain choices with respect to the color(s) of the album cover. But these next couple of conventions are some that you might not pay attention to, or at least, I didn't before I did this research. The artist or group's company name, the production company's name and/or logo, a copyright logo, a barcode, and, on some albums, a track list can be found. But really, the most interesting part of any album cover is the artwork and the way that the visual design of the cover connects to the content of the album (i.e., the song lyrics, musical themes, etc.). What follows is a short **genre analysis** of each of the album covers I've

> **"Genre analysis** is the practice of breaking down what we see people doing in specific texts in a genre, and it is a part of doing genre research. When we do genre analysis, we describe the relationships between visible genre features (length, structure, formatting, different modes, language use) and the social goals of those features, including their cultural-historical contexts in specific times and places" (Genre research terms, n.d.).

Figure 1: Scan the QR code to see the cover of the BTS album "BE" (Big Hit Music, n.d.a).

chosen to study, including both the information I uncovered through research and my own interpretations of the images and words based on my antecedent knowledge.

BTS "BE"

First up, "BE" (see QR code in Figure 1 for an image of the album cover). BTS's "BE" was a studio album that came out November 20, 2020 (Sudario, 2022). That's the obvious part, but let's dig deeper. I knew what the meaning behind the album was by their lead song, "Life Goes On," which is quoted on the album cover, and because I've been in the fandom for a while. When I started my research, I couldn't really find anything about the album, so I decided to create my own interpretation. I already knew that the true meaning behind the album was that in any situation, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, life goes on. In a 2020 interview with Zach Sang, J-Hope (Jung Hoseok) backs this up by saying, "So I think as we were experiencing this COVID pandemic … we experience these emotions: the depression, being sad, powerlessness … We realize we can't give up our work despite the happenings, what we do needs to go on; life goes on" (Zach Sang Show, 2020).

I had known that there were words below the album name, "BE," but I didn't pay close attention at first, especially because I don't know how to read cursive. So how did I figure this out if I couldn't read cursive? The answer is simpler than you may think. I did what any person would do and asked my sister, who also didn't know cursive, yet could read cursive better than me.

With my sister's help, I was able to take a closer look at the words to figure out the meaning and why the artists put them there. Below the English letters "B-E" (which is the album's title), there are lines of text in cursive stating, "Life goes on; Like an echo in the forest; Like an arrow in the blue sky; On my pillow, on my table; Life goes on like this again" (Zach Sang Show, 2020). Now I'm going to go through this line by line:

- "Like an echo in the forest"—To me, this means you can hear an echo of what used to be normal, and one day that familiarity will come back.
- "Like an arrow in the blue sky"—The meaning behind this line is that time will go on. You can't stop time, nor can you stop an arrow flying through the sky. COVID will pass, and this isn't the end of the world.

- "On my pillow, on my table"—This line represents to me how we were stuck at home. When we first were shut down, we spent a lot of time indoors, in our rooms, on our beds. We spent a lot more time with our families eating at our tables.
- "Life goes on; life goes on like this again"—This sums up the whole album. Life will continue moving forward no matter what, like how it was before.

Before I move on, I also want to explain why BTS chose "BE" for the album's title. RM (Kim Namjoon, the group's leader) had stated in one of their interviews, "We were always putting our thoughts on perspectives in our music, but with "BE," we really documented our present lives. … It's for this moment right now, it's happening. That's why we named this album as "BE"" (Zach Sang Show, 2020).

BTS "LOVE YOURSELF: ANSWER"

"LOVE YOURSELF: ANSWER," which was released in August 2018 (Sudario, 2022), was BTS's second compilation album containing previous tracks from their earlier "LOVE YOURSELF" albums. Like "BE," I didn't find a lot of information when I researched. The results contained "LOVE YOURSELF: TEAR," but none of the other albums in the "LOVE YOURSELF" trilogy. This is odd because "LOVE YOURSELF: TEAR" isn't even the first in the trilogy; "HER" is. However, this section of my article is about "LOVE YOURSELF: ANSWER," not how the internet failed me. So, I want to take you along on the journey of my reception of this album.

"LOVE YOURSELF: ANSWER" is the last one in the "LOVE YOURSELF" trilogy (see QR code in Figure 2 for a compilation of the trilogy's album covers). I think that because it's the last one in the trilogy, and it's called "ANSWER," this title is about when you finally find the truth—you start to love yourself and don't let others' negative thoughts get to you.

The first album in the trilogy, "HER" has flowers on a white background, representing the purity of the beginning of love. This also represents a common misconception about love, that it is easy and straightforward with no barriers

Figure 2: Scan this QR code to see a compilation of the three album covers from the "LOVE YOURSELF" trilogy, including the artwork from "HER," "TEAR," and "ANSWER" (Love yourself cover art, n.d.).

or hardships. The color white represents simplicity and cleanliness, showing how people want love to be. In a similar manner, the artwork representing the second album, "TEAR," emphasizes the hardships and reality of life and love. It shows falling petals on a dark background, acknowledging the feelings that one has when love goes awry. The flower symbolizes the cycle of love—when the petals fall, love is being lost and dying away, similar to how the negative thoughts that others can put on you can prevent you from seeing the good parts of yourself. Finally, we have "ANSWER," a reflection on the journey you have taken to love yourself and accept yourself and your flaws. This final album is designed with a heart on a pink cover that fades in and out of shades of pink and blue to express the epiphany of what it's like to love yourself. The colors pink and blue are used to show the beauty and happiness of life after you find the way to love yourself.

BTS "DARK&WILD"

Finally, the album "DARK&WILD" (see QR code in Figure 3 for an image of the album cover). "DARK&WILD" was considered BTS's debut studio album that was released in August of 2014 (Sudario, 2022). Unlike the other two, I was able to find more information on this album. The quote under the title of the album is, "WARNING! LOVE HURTS, IT CAUSES ANGER, JEALOUSY, OBSESSION, WHY DON'T U LOVE ME BACK?"

At the beginning of their career, BTS was a hip-hop group with a bad boy persona. They often abbreviated words and phrases, along with purposely misspelled words such as "Luv," "ORUL82!," "Skool," and "Boyz" (Big Hit Music, n.d.c). They did this to give a more youthful and edgy vibe to their albums.

Figure 3: Scan the QR code to see the cover of the BTS album "DARK&WILD" (Big Hit Music, n.d.b).

This album came out when they first started becoming the artists they are now, talking about love and how it can hurt and how it makes you feel when it goes wrong. The title "DARK&WILD" emphasizes the dark times that come when facing heartbreak. This was a time in their career when it was exhausting for them to figure out how to become a good group. The album is also about how the people that you used to love keep leading you on, only to dump you one day. Suga (Min Yoongi) commented in an interview, "We're young, just in the second year of our career, and we take off our school uniforms and say to the

person we love 'Stop playing around. Don't lead me on.' So yeah, it's dark and wild," (Nicole, 2020).

Conclusion

If you've made it to the end of this article, you might have noticed we've discussed not just the analysis of specific album covers, but also important terms related to studying different kinds of texts and how people use them; the history of album covers; and even some interpretations of BTS, BTS ARMY, and its goals, which include learning to love yourself and to resist the negative impressions you receive from others. Album covers have come a long way and have changed a lot from plain brown paper to now a whole variety of pictures and artwork. But albums aren't the only things that have changed—BTS has changed, from who they are as people to their style of music, starting from their "NO MORE DREAM" album, to "BE," to so much more. Whoa, that was long; now take a second and look back on your accomplishments, give yourself a pat on the back, be proud, and love yourself!

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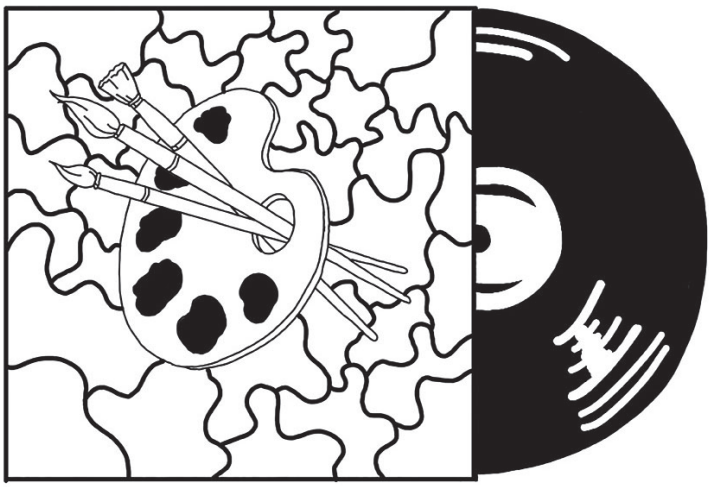
Notes



GWRJ Short: The Multimodality of Texting

Jessica Kreul

In this GWRJ Short, Jessica Kreul dissects the common language, structure, and techniques used in texting by examining the different modes we use to mimic verbal speech. This examination helps demonstrate how texting as a conversational, multimodal genre follows its own set of rules and genre conventions.

For a lot of us, texting dominates our various modes of daily communication, whether it is sending a quick message to someone or engaging in a longer conversation. We don't often think of this activity as writing or explore the intricacies of this **genre**. When it comes to writing in a more professional or academic setting, the texts that we compose look and feel different than the everyday, conversational writing that is a more natural and instinctual part of our texting communications. So, that email being drafted to send to a professor or that essay that still needs to be written are both going to have a certain language, set of grammar rules, and thought process behind them that differ greatly from how we communicate regularly with those who know us. Yet, there are still certain **genre conventions** when it comes to texting that we employ without even realizing it. So, when we are texting, we are still adhering to the rules of the genre and writing deliberately. Perhaps texting just isn't as daunting and draining as professional writing is.

> **"Genres** are typified responses to recurring social situations. Often, when we talk about genres, we include so many different kinds of written texts … seeing them as recognizable responses to recurring situations … that accomplish specific social action in the world" ("Genre Research Terms").

Genre conventions refer to the characteristics of any kind of text that make it recognizable as participating in a particular genre.

Genre conventions include features like length, structure, formatting, different modes in use, language use, and tone ("Genre Research Terms").

In addition to the unconscious ways that we write text messages, we don't always think about how we're using multimodality in texting. We don't always need to compose a message using alphabetic words because there are so many modes that we have at our disposal to make meaning. According to the ISU Writing Program, "**Multimodality** describes how human communication always relies on more than one singular mode to make meaning … how we use multiple modes to compose texts in particular genres, and how our multimodal choices have consequences for making texts, making meaning, and mediating uptake" ("Multimodality Terms"). When we compose a text, we use many of the modes that we have at our disposal: aural, gestural, linguistic, oral, spatial, tactile, verbal, and visual. However, for the purposes of texting as a multimodal genre and what I most often use, I'll be focusing on the linguistic, spatial, and verbal modes of my texting practices.

Texting as Linguistic

The first and most prominent mode that we use while texting is the **linguistic mode**. This mode refers to ways that we use language and consider elements such as word choice, grammar, organization, and tone ("Multimodality Terms"). There may be times that we deliberately say "yes" or "yes!" or "yeah" when they all, seemingly, get across the same idea. However, we use texting as a way to replicate what and how we would say something if we were actually having a face-to-face conversation. In academic writing, this doesn't matter as much because we don't necessarily want our everyday, colloquial voice to show through the text. I know when I write an essay, I'll be far more conscious of my word choice and how I am presenting ideas so that I am conveying a more coherent and well-rounded thought. This can take a certain degree of care and consideration, but so does the way that we manipulate text messages to sound exactly the way that we intend them to. This is why we pick and choose the small details, such as an exclamation point, to better reflect our tone and intended meaning.

There are plenty of other ways that we manipulate words for the purposes of text messaging besides trying to give them a certain tone. We also abbreviate common phrases to make the activity of texting quicker. Common ones are LOL, TTYL, BTW, and more. While these abbreviations don't

exactly reflect the way that we talk in person as we would not necessarily say each word in the abbreviation, texting as a genre is used as a quick mode of communication, so we have adapted and accepted these abbreviations and try to understand and use them ourselves. For instance, in Figure 1, multiple abbreviations make up a conversation that could be spoken out loud. For anyone who may be unfamiliar with these particular abbreviations, here they are spelled out: WYD is "what [are] you doing?", WBY stands for "what about you?", LYK is "let you know," and I think most of us are familiar with IDK ("I don't know"). These are all common phrases in everyday conversation, so they appear frequently in text messages too, which is why it has become so helpful to use the linguistic mode to incorporate some well-known abbreviations, making the activity of texting faster while still being able to comprehend the message all the same.

Additionally, as in Figure 1, punctuation is not often a consideration in texting amongst younger generations. I think this is one of the major differences between the texting that goes on between members of Generations Z and Alpha and the texts between Gen Y and the generations before it. Punctuation is not a factor in spoken communication, and this idea has translated to text messages as well. In keeping with the fast nature of texting, certain punctuation, mainly commas and periods, have become redundant and wasted effort because the message is still interpreted without them. In Figure 1, there absolutely could be a comma placed in the first,

Figure 1: A texting conversation with various abbreviations.

second, and fourth messages to break up the different phrases or ideas. However, the text messages still read the same without them.

Texting as Spatial

Another tactic that we employ instead of punctuation is the use of space. This has become more popular in recent years, but instead of sending a long text message, it is easier to break them up into separate message bubbles to show different thoughts, which can be seen in Figure 2. Here, the use of space signifies a progression of separate ideas that contribute to the larger conversation. When considering the **spatial mode**, we "might use physical spaces and objects (like where items in a classroom are), or physical arrangement, organization, and proximity within a text (like where items are in a brochure)" ("Multimodality Terms"). In Figure 2, the three text messages on the right could have been placed together in one message bubble. However, instead of messages with punctuation, messages are sent separately to indicate an exclamation point or a question mark. The blank space between the message bubbles allows the writer to break up the text and the recipient to understand they are meant to be read as a progression of separate messages coming together to make meaning and create a conversation. This is similar to how we may use line breaks or paragraph indents to represent a shift in content. Whether done intentionally or not, the

Figure 2: A texting conversation with separate messages instead of traditional punctuation.

use of the spatial modality through separate message bubbles operates on the same principle.

Texting as Verbal

Another mode that we consider when composing text messages is the **verbal mode**. When we use this mode, we "rely on speaking or writing and consider some of the same things we do when we use aural or oral modes (volume, voice) or linguistic modes (word choice, grammars)" ("Multimodality Terms"). Verbal is similar to linguistic mode, but instead of focusing on tone through word choice or punctuation, we are manipulating the way that specific words are actually heard by our recipient. For example, in Figure 3, the word "oh" has multiple h's tacked onto the end of it. Writers do this because we want our recipient to hear the elongated sound of the word. Simply putting "oh" sounds blunt and may not best replicate our response. This can be done with many words such as um, uh, and okay,

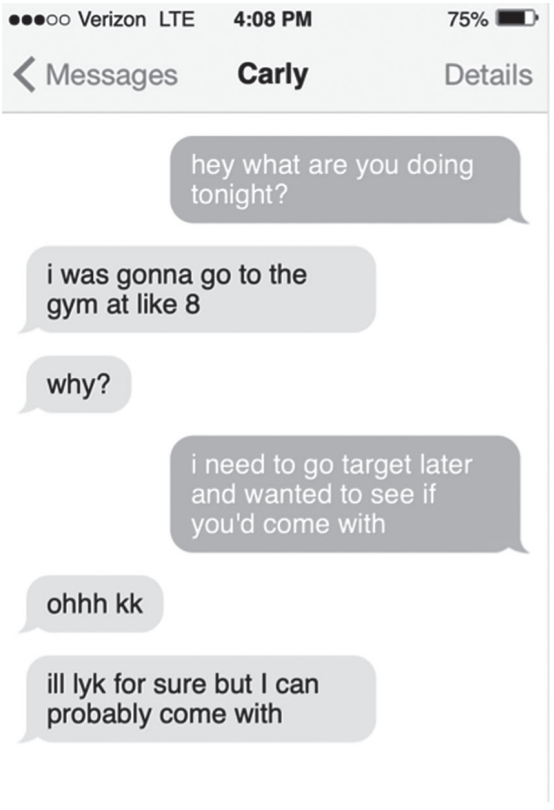


Figure 3: A texting conversation using written language to imitate how we speak.

simply by inserting the last letter as many times as desired. Something like this would most likely not be done in professional writing. However, in casual conversations, we elongate words all the time to give them a different meaning or emphasis. Because texting so closely represents the way that we speak, it makes sense that this feature carries over from verbal conversations into text message writing. This convention of texting communication not only changes the tone, but it also can change the message behind the words; it is deliberate in that the recipient is supposed to hear the words exactly as they are written.

Texting as a Genre

Texting can happen almost as quickly as an in-person conversation. It is not meant to use fancy language, varied sentence structure, or follow a set of rules like we would expect to find in an essay. Yet, texting uses a lot of similar principles, just with lower stakes (usually). We still use the linguistic and verbal modalities by incorporating abbreviations or making words longer than they are. We omit unnecessary punctuation in favor of blank space, using the spatial modality, because who needs those periods and commas anyway? This certainly contributes to a unique sentence structure. We have all these modes at our disposal that we use, intentionally or not. We follow the multimodal conventions of texting as a genre because we have adapted to them and understand the affordances (benefits and limitations) that come with multimodal communication. So, it is helpful to understand why we communicate the way that we do through different modes. With texting, there are different modes at our disposal that we can use to make conversations faster, keep them informal, and still replicate our spoken voice. When we play around with multiple modes in texting, we can use these modes effectively in the texts that we compose—and continue to evolve the conventions of the genre for ourselves and future generations.

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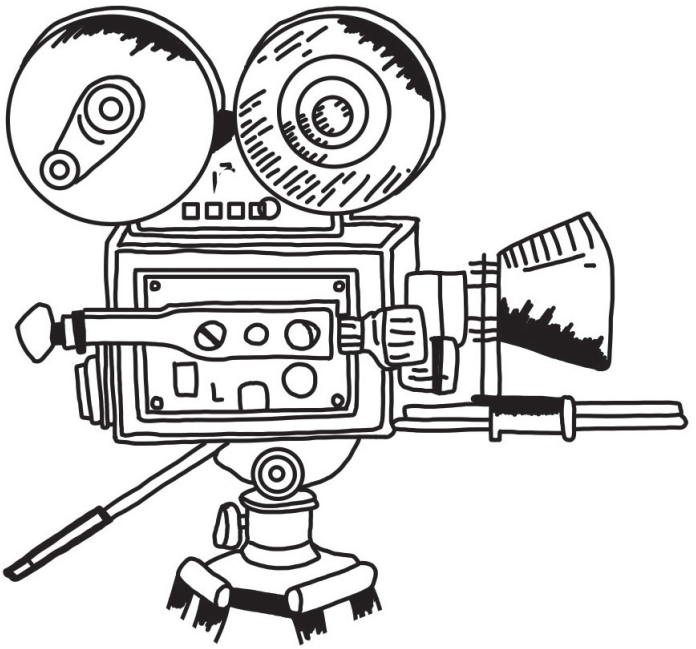
Notes



Documenting Literate Activity: A Stop-Motion Journal Tour

Sofia Link

The *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* presents a new genre: Documenting Literate Activity. Here, using P-CHAT and other writing concepts, Sofia Link shares the journey of making a stop-motion journal tour, exploring what it takes to create something new and finding joy in the process.

The Beginning

My story of uncertainty, progress, joy, and eventual triumph came from an ENG 101 assignment. However, the personal journey that I will share is a universal issue we all deal with at some point in our lives: finding our voice.

My professor, Heidi Bowman, presented an assignment where the main prompt was to create a project based on something that we were passionate about. The only requirements were that (1) research must be conducted and (2) we had to compose a reflection that "described our creation and creative process, while connecting our work to class concepts" (Bowman, 2022). The professor explained that their goal was for us to have complete creative freedom to make something fun and special to us. And there was a lot of variety in the topics, genres, and modalities that people chose. Some of the projects my classmates created were a TED talk on pediatric cancer, a playlist of the year, and a semester long course on Taylor Swift. Other projects included a script for a TV show and a pair of shorts. As you can tell, we were quite a creative bunch.

In my case, I was considering a stop-motion video with a twist, but it took me a while to develop the idea. We were told we could create "anything we wanted," but my mind was blank. I talked about my struggles making choices with my writing professor, and she asked me about things that I loved. But honestly, I wasn't able to answer at that moment. All I knew was that, throughout this year in multiple writing prompts, I have discussed how important writing and journaling is to me. I thought about that question over the next few days and slowly started producing quite a few things: music, poetry, art, and film. So, what I ended up creating really involves all those and embodies what I love and am passionate about. And I think this is something everyone can relate to. When we interact with our passions, it can make parts of our lives easier.

What Is This Thing Gonna Look Like: Production and Representation

My journey into this project began with my first idea: a stop-motion video. I began thinking about what I would make it of. Maybe I could do clay animation or get my friends to act in it? Well, I did not have any clay in my dorm room and did not want to bother my friends with hours of trial and error during finals week. So, I kept thinking. I was sitting at my desk staring at the rubric for this assignment on my computer. Ironically right next to me was my journal, so I ran with it. I liked the idea of flipping pages in my journal for the film but needed more substance.

In that moment, I had a vision of what I wanted my film to be, but it wasn't completely clear yet. My first idea did not give the audience a

P-CHAT and Production

P-CHAT is a framework used by the ISU Writing Program that is designed to "help us think about and study the complex genres we encounter in the world" (Key terms & concepts, n.d.).

The ISU Writing Program describes this part of my story as **representation** (more on that next), and I see it as intertwined with another important term: **production**. Production deals with the means through which a text is produced, including tools, practices, genres, and structures that can contribute to and even pre-shape our ability to produce text (Key terms & concepts, n.d.).

In my case, the decisions to (1) share some of my journals and creative writing and (2) produce a multimodal text both shaped how to begin to learn what I needed to learn to produce the project.

chance to see anything that I had written. Therefore, I was sparked with the idea of doing what some might call a "read-aloud" of some of my poetry. I would slowly move closer to my desk, my journal would come into frame, I would open it, flip through the pages until I got to my most recent ones: the poems. I would read each poem aloud with light instrumental music in the background, use stop-motion editing to turn the page, and then once my six poems were read, the journal would be closed and exit my desk, and I would slowly move out of frame. (If you would like to see this in action, see Figure 5 toward the end of this article. There is a QR code you can scan to view the finished project!)

Representation & Choices

The ISU Writing Program uses the P-CHAT term **representation** to highlight how the people who produce a text conceptualize and plan it, how we think and talk about it, and the activities and materials that help to shape how we do so (Key terms & concepts, n.d.). In my situation, the assignment itself is a genre (we could call it, very broadly, "assignments given in writing classes"), and when I got the assignment, I had to make a lot of choices to plan my text, including what would be in the frame of the video, what I would say and do, how I would move my body, what people would hear, and so on.

The process of planning my text (**representation**) did not happen all at one moment. I had the general idea and returned to my trusty Notes app on my phone every time I thought of something to add, like "put music behind voice," or "start video by turning light on and end it by turning it off." When it came to the way I chose to present it, I split up the video into multiple chunks, dividing the mini "tour" of the journal and each individual poem onto pages that combined to make a cumulative slideshow. (I will talk more about this later!) The foundation I already had laid the framework for me to be able to think of these little quirks.

I had a vision of what I wanted to create but was unsure if I was going to be able to make that vision a successful reality. I was nervous, but most importantly, I was also incredibly excited to get started. Once I began, I didn't doubt that whatever I ended up with would be meaningful to me, and that's what kept me going. As it evolved over time and began to take shape, I grew to love and love it even more. This project is so special to me because I have always viewed my journal as personal and private, but I wanted to be able to share and highlight some of my writing in a unique way.

Reception deals with how a text is taken up and used by others. Reception is not just who will read a text but considers how people might use or re-purpose a text (sometimes in ways the author may not have anticipated or intended) (Key terms & concepts, n.d.).

The **reception** of the piece was also important to me. I wasn't sure who I might ultimately show my stop-motion

video to, but the thought that other humans would interact with my texts was exciting. I am proud of how it turned out. It feels extremely rewarding to get to share something that means so much to me. I finally had a clear vision by the end of the creation process, and I was eager for viewers to interpret that vision in whatever ways come honestly to them.

More Production: Researching Genre, Tools, and Modalities

The genre of my project, I would say, is a mixture between creative film (specifically stop-motion), poetry, music, and digital collage art. If I had to classify it into its own singular genre, I think I would keep it simple and just call it a Journal Tour. Which is what it is, right?! I knew I wanted to include different creative methods because it gives the project layers and depth, which in my opinion is what makes it so neat. This was the first time I had ever made any type of film in a more sophisticated manner. I love watching movies, shows, and creative videos, but have never created something like this myself and had no clue how to do so. Enter: some **genre research**.

Stop-motion is a subgenre of filmmaking and is a type of "animation that captures one frame at a time, with physical objects that are moved between frames" (DragonFrame, 2023). The type of stop-motion I did is called object-motion. The **genre conventions**, or specific characteristics, for object-motion animation set it apart from clay animation, pixelization, puppet animation, silhouette animation, or cutout motion. Specifically, my film involved moving and animating objects by photographing them, moving them slightly, and then taking another photograph. When the images are played back consecutively at a quick speed, the objects appear to move on their own.

Genre Research in Practice

The ISU Writing Program loves genre research! It's the practice of investigating "specific genres in use in the world, including the people, tools, and recurring situations that influence how texts get produced in a genre … so that we can create recognizable, effective texts in genres that are familiar and new-to-us in current and future writing situations" (Genre research terms, n.d.).

As you can see below, when I was doing genre research, I researched the definition of stop motion and its genre conventions, and I used online resources to find and learn how to use the digital tools I needed to produce my videos.

The first place I went to learn about how to make a stop-motion film was the internet. I think I probably searched something like, "best and easiest app to create a stop-motion video." I downloaded a few and did some trial and error to see which one I liked best.

I ended up settling on one called Any Motion because it was the most user friendly and free. After that, I practiced. A lot. I quickly realized that stop-motion is very time consuming! If I messed up one shot, I had to completely restart because it was almost impossible to replicate the angle my phone was at in the previous photo. It was frustrating at times, to say the least, and the most challenging part of this project. I did it over and over, attempting to make it perfect. I would shoot, sit down and evaluate, and then try again to get it just how I wanted it. Luckily the app was of great assistance, and I began to get the hang of things. It took me a full night to practice, and the next day I restarted and completed the animation. The hard part was over!

When it came to recording my voice reading the poems, I had previously worked with an app called Splice that would allow me to do that. See Figure 1 for an example of what this app interface looked like while I was working on this project. The recording part was easy, but the reading was tricky. It was out of my comfort zone for sure. I did multiple takes for each poem to ensure that I achieved the right tone, the recording sounded clear(ish), and my volume was sufficient.

I wanted some soft instrumental music in the background as well, and I debated looking for different songs for each poem but ended up settling on just one. It is one of my favorite pieces of music, and I thought it would be perfect. It is called "Juno" by Harold Budd. It is soft and bold at the same time, and its mood fluctuates in a similar way to the mood of my poetry.

Genre conventions refer to the characteristics of any kind of text that make it recognizable as participating in a particular genre: features that might be visible (length, structure, modes, tone, content) and social goals that we usually have to infer (why these elements, valued by whom, toward what goals)

(Genre research terms, n.d.).

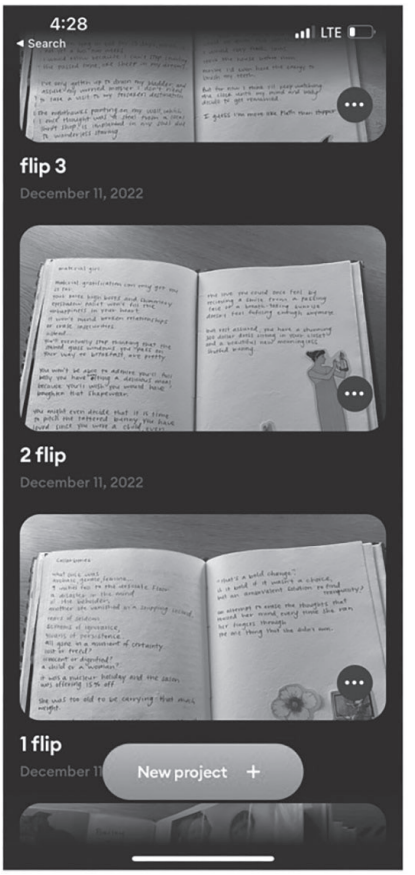


Figure 1: Splice project.

I also knew that I wanted to present my videos in a slideshow. I searched different websites that had premade slideshow templates and came across Canva. I had used it before to create

> **Multimodal composing** refers to all of the modes that we can use to communicate that would include verbal (words), visual (images), aural (sound), oral (spoken), and spatial (arrangement of elements in a space).
>
> Practicing multimodal composing means being aware that a lot of our work as writers includes much more than just a single mode (Key terms & concepts, n.d.).

infographics and posters but was not aware that they had slideshows. I then spent a little time browsing around and toying with different templates to find the best match for what I was looking for. Once I found the perfect one, I assembled the graphics in the way I wanted them, made a cover page, tweaked the formatting, and included a tree diagram (an informal diagram that displays the main concept in the middle, with lines extending to topics and subtopics—looks like a tree!) about what I write in my journal.

Assembling was one of the most fun parts. I split my film into pieces, so there was an opening (minitour), individual poems, and a closing. The different parts of the video each went on their own slides. Learning definitely played a big part in the completion of this project! My result is not perfect or professional by any means, but I would not have been able to even do what I did without researching and lots of practice and experimentation.

Because I wanted to incorporate multiple things I loved into a singular project, that meant doing **multimodal composing**. I relied on multiple visual elements: short videos, photos, graphics, a chart, and animation. Figure 2 is an example of the graphics I chose to use on one of my slides

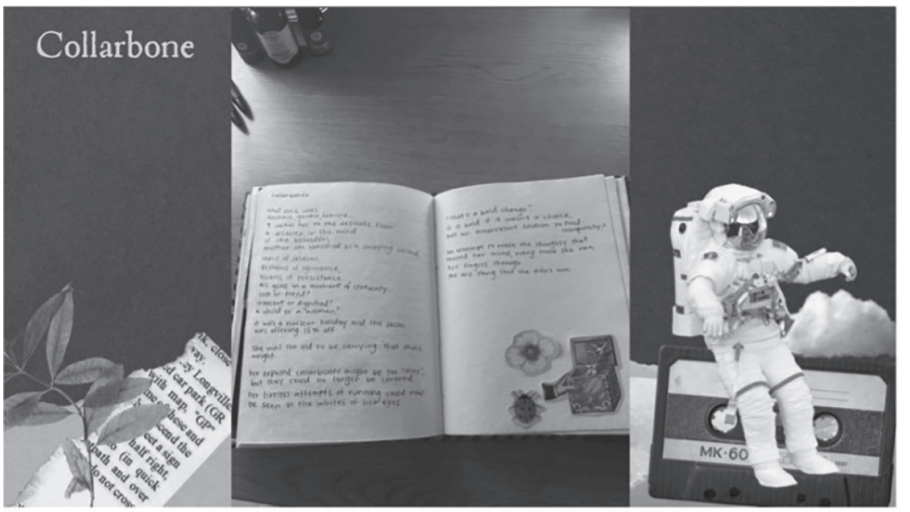


Figure 2: Slide graphic design.

in Canva. I also used the aural elements of music. Then, the reading of the poems was both oral (speaking) and verbal (making meaning through words). These multiple modes helped me produce a creative project that meant something to me, and hopefully to my audience. Originally, this project was only going to be shared with my writing professor, but as I produced the texts, I ended up thinking very differently about reception. As I considered who might interact with my work, I ended up making a lot of specific decisions with an imagined viewer in mind. I wanted the tone to be soft but powerful, so I chose an aesthetically pleasing slide template and a few sweet poems, but also countered that with some poetry that discussed more serious and grim topics. The music was neutral and could be interpreted in multiple ways. I did not want the tone to be too depressing or too happy because I wanted each individual that read, watched, and listened to create their own opinion and feelings toward this project.

New Learning and Antecedent Knowledge

I've talked about the genre research I completed, but I also had some **antecedent knowledge** regarding the genre I was creating texts in. First, I knew what stop-motion animation was. I had watched "Fantastic Mr. Fox," a stop-motion film, the night I got the idea to make my own miniature film. I am also a part of Euphemism (which is a creative arts journal here at Illinois State University that you can look into online at https://english.illinoisstate.edu/euphemism/) and am on their poetry committee this year. So, I spent a lot of time reading poetry, which gave me great insight and inspiration on how to write some of my own. Poetry is an incredibly expressive form of writing, and I think it is special that I was able to write something that might not be conventionally good but means something to me. The production process for the poems I wrote consisted of going to my Notes app and seeing what random spurts of information I had spewed out throughout my day. Sometimes it was a string of words that sounded good together or other times a topic or feeling that I did not want to forget. I then started writing things down on paper (Figure 3).

I also had antecedent knowledge of other digital tools beyond my Notes app. I already knew how to work Splice, which made it easy to navigate. My antecedent knowledge helped me

Antecedent knowledge, or prior knowledge, can be both helpful and problematic. It can help us out as we try to figure out how to do a new thing. But sometimes, it can get in the way because it can cause us to engage in styles of writing or making that were useful in past tasks but don't work (or don't work well) in new situations.

So it's necessary to pay attention to how antecedent knowledge is shaping our current activity.

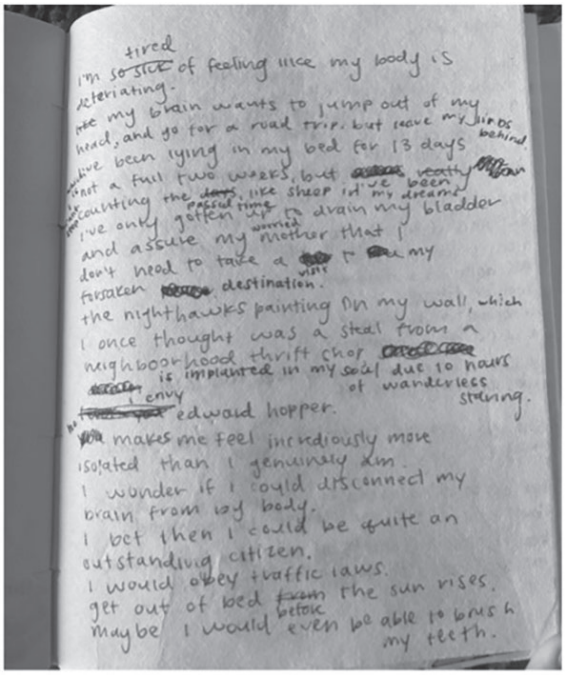


Figure 3: A rough draft of my first poem for this project.

use different modes within this particular genre to strengthen my writing identity and make me more confident in my multimodal composing skills.

Final Thoughts: Creativity, Making, and Living in the Now

I am most proud of the creativity in my Stop-Motion Journal Tour. I could have avoided doing so much work for this assignment and done something simpler, but I stuck with it and made something that I think is quite neat. I really like that I incorporated different modes and truly embodied the idea of multimodal composing. It was not the easiest thing to figure out how to make my vision into something that did not look like a child made it, but I did it and I'm proud of myself (see Figure 4, a screenshot of the final cover image for my project; and Figure 5, a QR code that will take you to the final videos I made!).

I think there are a few areas for improvement in my final-for-now draft. The first being the stop-motion video itself. I spent a lot of time and effort on it, but it still is not perfect, and I think I just unfortunately do not have the skill level to make that happen. The second being my poetry and reading skills. I have never written formal poetry in any manner before this year or ever read

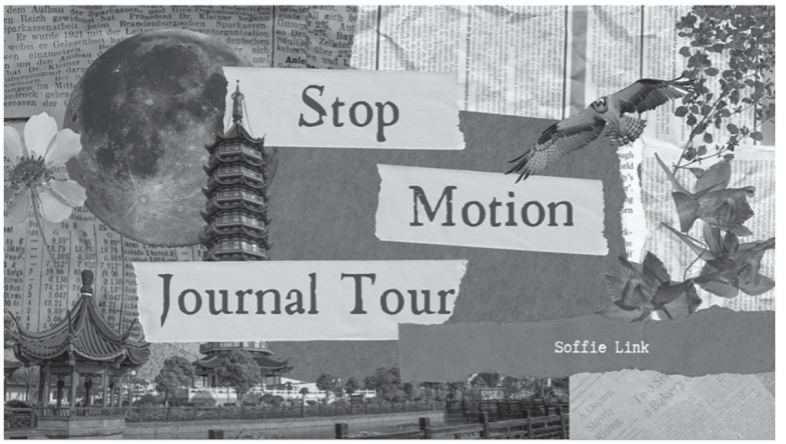


Figure 4: A screenshot of the final cover image for my project.

my work to anyone. I know there is room for improvement in both of those areas, but I am still learning and growing and think I did the best I could do at this moment. This project made me step outside my comfort zone and try new things, and I am proud that I was able to do that successfully.

I can say with confidence that this project has captured and brought together my experiences in my ENG 101 course (what I learned as a writer and producer of texts), my personal interests, my antecedent knowledge, and a whole bunch of new learning. I was able to create a unique idea, rely on multimodal composing, produce the project while thinking about its reception, research a new genre and new tools, use them successfully, and share something I am proud of in a cumulative way.

At the beginning of the semester, I remember that I said I enjoy researching things that I am passionate about, which remains true. However, I might also say that research makes me even more passionate about a topic—and genre research makes me even more excited to compose in a new genre. The more I practiced and researched, the more excited I got. And I think that can be applied to nearly anything a person has to learn both in and outside of school.

I knew I had the potential to improve as a writer. I just lacked confidence, something many people can identify with. Confidence can be hard to gain and even harder to keep. But at this point, I'm finally feeling much more confident in

Figure 5: a QR code that you can scan to view my final project!

a lot of my skills. I enjoy writing more now, and I like to write in different contexts as I did for this project. Ultimately, I was able to challenge my beliefs about myself as a writer, and I hope I will continue to learn and grow in that aspect. I also hope that you reading this article know that you can learn and grow from engaging in new things, especially if you have a passion and vision for it!

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Researching for the GWRJ

Since we know our approach to everyday—or grassroots—writing research might be pretty unfamiliar to a lot of people, we have developed some questions to get you started on your writing research and to show you how we see people approach writing research in the GWRJ.

Getting Started on Writing Research

What might you write about?

Ask yourself: "What is it about writing in the world that is interesting or meaningful to me right now?"

How might you narrow your focus?

Ask yourself: "What kinds of genres are people writing in? Where? When? How? What specific writing practices are visible or invisible in this situation?"

How might you begin with your story?

Ask yourself: "What previous experiences do I have with this writing practice or situation? Where was I? When? Who else was there? What tools was I using? How did I feel?"

Who else has written about this before?

You can visit the GWRJ Past Issues webpage to find a link to the GWRJ Tags that you can use to search our past issue archive for articles by topic and writing terms and concepts. From there, you can locate existing GWRJ articles to see how people have shared their own stories about similar kinds of writing practices and situations.

What might you research?

Ask yourself: "What can I unpack and/or learn more about this writing practice or situation?"

How might you do your writing research?

Ask yourself: "What would I need to do in order to unpack and/or learn more about this writing practice or situation?"

What if you're not sure how to do writing research?

You can think about all kinds of research: things you have done in the past, things you may have been asked to do in school, things you may have done to research things other than writing, and things you have heard about but haven't practiced before.

Some potential research methods include:

- Narrative writing: telling stories about past and/or present writing experiences to make meaning out of your understanding of writing practices or situations.
- Survey or interview: asking other people questions about their experiences to expand your understanding of a specific writing practice or situation.
- Creating an archive: collecting writing texts to look at patterns or practices across different people, times, places, media, or situations.
- Memory work: using your memory of personal experience to do narrative writing, make lists, or map out something you've done in the past.
- Mapping or drawing: creating visual maps or drawings to figure out some of the complexities of a writing practice or situation.

Who else has done this kind of research before?

You can visit the GWRJ Past Issues webpage to locate existing GWRJ articles to see how people have done their own writing research, whether they're writing about writing practices and situations that are similar to yours or not.

You can also search for writing research beyond the GWRJ, to find other published research about writing practices. You can consider popular and academic sources of information that you find online and bring in other kinds of writing terms that can be relevant and accessible to a wide range of readers.

How might you plan to do your writing research?

Ask yourself: "What will I need to do to help my research be credible and reliable?"

Depending on your research method, consider what you will need to write or collect, what you will need to talk to people about and when, what you will need to do and where, and who you will need to ask for research support.

GWRJ Approaches to Writing Research

Investigating my own writing practices

- How do I produce specific kinds of writing for specific situations? Using what tools? For what purposes?
- Who do I make these kinds of texts for? How do people use them? Where and when?
- Where am I when I do this kind of writing? When?
- How do I feel when I am doing this kind of writing? Why?
- How have I learned to produce this kind of writing for what kinds of situations?
- How have I used writing as a tool to do specific kinds of research? How does my research impact my writing practice?
- How has my writing for this kind of situation changed over time?
- How do I use this kind of writing across different situations?
- How does this writing practice allow me to participate in specific cultures and communities?
- What cultural norms and practices do I have to understand in order to produce this kind of writing?
- What are the limitations around this writing practice?

Investigating others' writing practices

- How do other people participate in specific kinds of writing practices? Using what tools? For what purposes?
- Who do people make these kinds of texts for? Where and when?
- How does this writing practice allow people to participate in specific cultures and communities?
- What cultural norms and practices do people have to understand in order to produce this kind of writing?
- What are the limitations around this writing practice?

- How do different people participate in this writing practice differently? Why?
- What can I learn about this by observing people participate in this writing activity?
- What can I learn about this by asking people about their participation in this writing activity?
- How have different people learned to produce this kind of writing differently? Why?
- How do people use this writing practice to generate ideas for research and for writing? Or to revise their writing?
- How do people use this writing practice as a tool to conduct research?
- How has people's participation in this writing practice changed over time? Why?
- How do people use this kind of writing differently across different situations? Across cultural, linguistic, and/or geographic boundaries?

Investigating a genre in use

- What do I already know about this genre? How?
- How do people create texts in this genre? Who are they? What tools do they use? Why do they make texts in this genre?
- What kinds of distinctive features does this genre have? How do people recognize these features as necessary for this genre?
- Who uses texts in this genre? How do people use them? Where and when?
- How do writers learn how to produce texts in this genre?
- What are the technological and/or social implications of this genre?
- Where does this genre sometimes begin? Where does it go?
- How has this genre changed over time?
- How do people use this genre in different writing situations? Across cultural and/or geographic boundaries?

Writing for the GWRJ

Some GWRJ Genre Conventions

We have all learned stories about what writing and writers are "supposed to be." Since the GWRJ publishes different kinds of stories about writing and writers, we hope these genre conventions about GWRJ article content help people who want to write for the GWRJ.

Accessibility to readers

GWRJ articles do not need to privilege any one kind of writing, but they should be accessible to a wide range of readers in their content, style, and approach to research.

Tone and style

GWRJ articles do not need to privilege formal or overtly "academic" language, but should instead use a more informal, conversational tone and style.

Writing as complex

GWRJ articles do not need to tell other people what to do when writing, but should instead show readers how writing is a complex activity that requires more than simple advice.

Making learning writing visible

GWRJ articles do not need to teach other people how to write for any or all writing situations, but should instead show readers how writers can learn about writing and genres through research and practice.

Writing as lifelong learning

GWRJ articles do not need to be narratives of writing success or triumph, but should instead show readers that writing is a lifelong learning activity involving challenges and accomplishments.

Addressing complex readers

GWRJ articles do not need to be aimed at "novice" or "master" writers, but should instead show readers that we are all learning writing in progress as we encounter writing situations that are both familiar and new to us.

Writers learning differently

GWRJ articles do not need to represent ways of learning writing as universal or unique, but should instead show readers how someone learned about writing in some specific ways in some specific moments and genres.

Writing as never general

GWRJ articles do not need to make statements about writing in general, but should instead show readers how writing is specific all the time and related to the genres we write in, the languages and tools we use to write, and the cultures and communities we write for.

GWRJ Writing Resources

Visit our "Writing for the GWRJ" webpage to find resources for writing for the journal.

www.isuwriting.com/writing-for-gwrj

What are GWRJ genres?

Descriptions of all current GWRJ genres, their evolving genre conventions, and lists of examples published in the GWRJ

- GWRJ full-length articles
- GWRJ Shorts
- Documenting Literate Activity
- GWRJ Co-Interviews
- Picturing Literate Activity
- Grassroots Graphic Articles
- GWRJ Uptakes
- Multimodal Digital Grassroots Writing Research

What makes a great GWRJ article?

In brief videos, 7 GWRJ writers and editors share insights about what they think makes a great GWRJ writing research article.

Submitting to the GWRJ

Visit our GWRJ webpage to find full details on "Submitting to the GWRJ."

www.isuwriting.com/grassroots-writing-research-journal

GWRJ editorial stance

- The *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* features writing by anyone looking to engage with literate activity in the world.
- We seek rigorous investigations of how people, tools, and situations influence writing practices in complex ways.
- We publish pieces across many genres, and we welcome submissions that experiment with genres that are new for the journal.
- We encourage submissions that reflect diverse perspectives, explore distinctive genres, and provide richer cultural-historical understandings of how people produce texts within particular genres.

GWRJ editorial team

Email the GWRJ editorial team at grassrootswriting@gmail.com when you:

- Are ready to submit a piece of writing research to the GWRJ.
- Have questions about, or want feedback on, a piece you want to submit to the GWRJ.
- Have ideas for other kinds of genres for publication that can help us expand and explore writing and literate activity research.
- Want to publish an audio or video piece on the GWRJ website as part of a journal issue.

GWRJ submission guidelines

Visit our GWRJ webpage to find full submission details:

- How to submit different kinds of files for text and images
- What elements to include in any GWRJ submission
- Image copyright details
- Consent form permissions needed for some submissions (interviews) or elements (some images)
- Author stipends for publishing in GWRJ (varies by genre)

Questions?

Email us at grassrootswriting@gmail.com.